

Strengthening the Rule of Law in Conflict

- UNDP's Legal Aid Network in Darfur and Women's Access to Justice

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Background

In 2004, the United Nations Development Programme, in partnership with the International Rescue Committee and a number of Sudanese human rights organisations, embarked on an ambitious Rule of Law Programme in Darfur that seeks to raise awareness of human rights and rule of law amongst law enforcement, judiciary and security officials, strengthen (women's) access to justice and human security, restore confidence in formal and informal rule of law institutions, and gradually build a culture of justice - a culture that is responsive to long-term capacity-building and sustainable human development.

In 2005, UNDP established seven UNDP Legal Aid Centres and a UNDP Legal Aid Network of Darfurian lawyers to empower local communities and improve access to justice. Each Legal Aid Centre is staffed by approximately 25 paralegals who liaise with local authorities and international actors on protection-related issues; raise awareness of rule of law and human rights principles within their respective communities; provide basic legal information and mediation services; and, refer the most serious cases to the lawyers of the UNDP Legal Aid Network.

The UNDP Legal Aid Network consists of sixty Darfurian lawyers who provide legal aid and assistance to people in need. By assisting victims who seek legal redress and by pushing cases through the justice system, UNDP aims to fight the climate of impunity and, indirectly, strengthen the justice system, ensuring it starts living up to basic legal standards.

By 2007, the legal aid lawyers had taken on 550 cases and despite the many obstacles, they have achieved some major successes, including numerous rape and murder convictions, acquittals of women charged with adultery (zina), dissolutions of early and forced marriages, and the release of people held in arbitrary detention. One third of the legal aid cases are Sexual-and-Gender-Based-Violence (SGBV) related, and, slowly but surely, attitudes and mindsets are changing. In 2007, the legal aid lawyers have forced a number of important breakthroughs, including the admittance of psychosocial evidence, the lifting of immunity from prosecution, and actual convictions of government-affiliated perpetrators. In addition, the notion of providing legal aid to SGBV survivors has become far more acceptable to the local authorities.

As such, UNDP undertakes cutting edge work in the context of the continuing armed conflict in Darfur in an attempt to address SGBV, and to create an environment conducive to women's legal empowerment. In addition to empowering the poor and disadvantaged to seek remedies for injustices, strengthening linkages between formal and informal structures, and countering biases inherent in both systems, UNDP actively seeks to strengthen women's security, and advance gender justice as stated in the UNDP Eight Point Agenda.

The UNDP Eight Point Agenda: Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality in Crisis Prevention and Recovery

1. Strengthen women's security in crisis: stop violence against women
2. Advance gender justice: provide justice and security for women
3. Expand women's citizenship, participation and leadership: advance women as decision-makers
4. Build peace with and for women: involve women in all peace processes
5. Promote gender equality in disaster risk reduction: support women and men to build back better
6. Ensure gender-responsive recovery: promote women as leaders of recovery
7. Transform government to deliver for women: include women's issues on the national agenda
8. Develop capacities for social change: work together to transform society

Challenges and dilemmas

In Darfur, UNDP conducts development work within a conflict setting, and has been forced to adapt its traditional ways of working to accommodate such a challenging situation. Building on development principles within an early recovery framework, rule of law programming amidst armed conflict warrants due attention to the crisis realities on the ground. Addressing these challenges requires a flexible and constantly evolving approach that is locally driven. As such, the programme has adopted a pragmatic and highly incremental approach that addresses the multiple challenges of both the current crisis and the future peace building process, ensuring flexibility to scale up activities as recovery and development become feasible.

At present, there is a wide range of obstacles to accessing justice in Darfur, including a deep mistrust among the local population of the very institutions that are tasked with ensuring their safety and security, continuing harassment and violence, severe capacity deficits and overly complex bureaucratic procedures, high costs and pervasive corruption. In addition, the informal justice system, which still enjoys great importance and legitimacy, often fails to protect and safeguard the legal position of women and children. The provision of legal aid and assistance enhances an individual's capacity to deal with these constraints. Indirectly, it also enhances the potential for swift, fair and impartial administration of justice and peaceful conflict resolution.

At the heart of the problem in Darfur lays the lack of physical, material, and legal safety for individuals and communities. The impact of interventions in the rule of law sector will, therefore, ultimately be measured by the degree of physical, material and legal safety experienced by targeted populations. As in any conflict or post-conflict situation, the safe and voluntary return - with dignity - of displaced persons will first and foremost be conditioned by the restoration of security and a minimum degree of the rule of law. Therefore, the number of people who voluntarily return and successfully reintegrate in safety - and with dignity - will constitute a major indicator of success.

On a final note, it is important to bear in mind that assistance to justice structures and professional networks (lawyers and paralegals) will not immediately elevate their performance to impeccable practices in accordance with international standards, but will take on a gradual progress. After all, assistance is especially required in situations and by institutions that operate imperfectly in non-conducive environments, and these environments require time to change. Therefore, initially, progress cannot be measured

according to an eventual yardstick (e.g. full compliance with international standards), but to individual and isolated changes made towards a long-term objective. The most relevant factor is whether there has been a reasonable degree of positive change from the starting position.

Lessons learned

The Access to Justice Programme in Darfur and in conflict-ridden areas in Southern Sudan showed that it is indeed possible to counter “the rule by force” with the rule of law. While the Southern Sudan Access to Justice Programme plays a significant role in balancing ‘security’ with justice - so to avoid ‘rule by power’ - as institutions are being built, the Access to Justice Programme in Darfur made a dysfunctional system shoulder some of its legal protection responsibilities during the actual crisis.

By serving as a catalyst for IDPs, lawyers, local police, judges and prosecutors, the Programme empowered these stakeholders and institutions to address impunity. Thousands of displaced populations gained access to legal representation, assisting them to reclaim their rights and pursue justice. In so doing, rule of law assistance enabled them to address violations through their own local system. It gave them the support required to invoke their own skills to tackle injustices where it was the most needed.

A most powerful element of the Programme was the way IDPs and local lawyers worked together through legal aid centres to seek redress for violations and crimes. It was an inspiring testimony to how their own experience of fear and marginalization converted into a constructive force for peaceful resistance to violence.

It is important to bear in mind that strengthening the rule of law is a highly political process. Particularly in conflict and post-crisis settings, the challenge is not only to build capacity, but also to nurture political will and commitment. Therefore, confidence building should constitute the basic premise for any engagement in the rule of law sector and underpin all programming. A broad spectrum of actors has to be brought into this process - from legal professionals and civil servants to the general public.

The rule of law is not just a matter for a few individual legal professionals, but an issue which affects the whole population. Therefore, national ownership of the process is critical: without proper buy-in from key politicians and legal professionals to change their ways, little will change. While it is important to ally with and support actors who can bring about positive change, it is equally important to engage with potential perpetrators and people who resist change.

The Programme, particularly in Darfur, brought conceptual clarity and a results-driven approach to the rule of law in conflict. It helped establish a concrete example of how early recovery and rule of law begin during the humanitarian crisis. Implemented concurrently with humanitarian protection, early recovery and rule of law activities were designed to strengthen the capacity of national stakeholders in responding to the existing justice/security needs, while also laying the building blocks for full-fledged recovery in the rule of law sector when the security and political situation stabilizes (most often manifested in a peace-agreement and post-conflict reconstruction).

While UNDP aims to strengthen the Sudanese formal and informal justice systems, and address impunity by ensuring compliance to Sudanese domestic law, UNDP does not

condone certain penalties that must be regarded as torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Therefore, the lawyers of the UNDP Legal Aid Network make every attempt to avoid these and advocate for alternative sentencing - thereby setting precedent and reform the law. In addition, diplomatic efforts must be stepped up to promote legal reform at the national level and ensure Sudan's ratification of a number of international instruments, including CEDAW (1979) and CAT (1984).

This lesson learned demonstrates that it is both desirable and possible to put in motion rule of law programming during a conflict and amidst a humanitarian setting. But, it requires linkage between rule of law programming and humanitarian protection in a complementary fashion. The overarching objective of both humanitarian protection and rule of law is the same: to advance justice and security for communities and individuals on the basis of the United Nations legal framework: International Human Rights Law, International Humanitarian Law, International Refugee Law and International Criminal Justice. In practice this means addressing abuses and violation of domestic and international law through prevention, remedial action and environment building.

Perspectives and motives for working with the dilemma

To make a difference on the ground and in women's lives when the most need it:- during an armed conflict. And, to lay the building blocks for peace and a society that rests on the rule of law. If we cannot support one woman to reclaim justice, how can we possibly support the many millions who may never be able to claim it. Each case matters and is a stepping stone to establishing justice and combating impunity for gender-based violence.

Larger than Life

- Or How the Tale of Filder, Selina and Victor Ended up a Tale of Government Planners Turning Activists

Susanne Possing, Community Development Research Network

Background

A registered NGO since 1994, Community Development Resource Network, CDRN is supporting civil society organizations from all corners of Uganda - with a view of creating a vibrant civil society that meets the needs of citizens, and is effective in holding national and local government (LG) institutions to account. Issues of gender, HIV/AIDS, the rights of older people and ethnic minority groups form the backdrop of CDRN interventions. So does democracy, land and civil society accountability. Since 2003, CDRN has partnered with MSU Uganda. Under the MSU' Building Local Democracy program, CDRN introduced a 2008 pilot project in one rural sub county (S/C), Enhancing CSO-LG collaboration in local planning processes. The project proved successful and has since expanded to other S/Cs and districts.

Designed to enhance democratic skills and knowledge of male and female citizens, communities, CSOs and LG officials, the project aims at reducing poverty and improving service delivery for citizens. In addition, it feeds into implementation of the MSU' BLD objectives of 'Making Local Government Accountable', with some activities relating to 'Political Empowerment' and 'Engendering LG policies'.

Two action research projects:

1. pilot project in Inomo Sub County, Apac District, 2008-09
2. second project in Karujubu Sub County, Masindi District 2009-11

CDRN is working through two district NGO networks: NGO LINK FORUM Apac and Masindi District NGO Forum.

Project participants include:

- Representatives of NGOs at Sub County & District level
- Local government politicians (in Uganda: local councilors) of the Sub County
- Sub county civil servants
- Male & female citizens (middle aged and young) from all parishes of the S/C
- Although less intensively, the project also engages political leaders and technical staff of district local governments.

Both projects set out to engage ordinary citizens from all parishes. The purpose is to support citizens raise their issues and begin influencing LG development plans and budgets. In addition, the projects aim at examining options for (improved) collaboration between NGOs, local government and citizens.

Challenges and Dilemmas

Given biting poverty and sub-standard service delivery in the sub-counties, CDRN urges participants to explore and scrutinize critical development challenges in their areas. Based

on this, they would actively engage themselves in practical solutions that can help change, or improve conditions and public services, such as access to marketing of produce, healthcare and education in the area.

Drawing upon the GoU' Uganda Gender Policy, the Local Government Act and the Dezentralisation Policy Strategic Framework, the project aims to respond to a number of inconsistencies between policies, structures and practices of governance and the realities on the ground. To mention but a few:

Limited/lack of funding for public services in sub counties & districts

- GoU' provisions on bottom-up planning & citizens involvement in setting priorities for local development programs are not adhered to
- Citizens are rarely consulted in setting & monitoring of public priorities
- Most government initiatives in S/Cs are designed and set up by central government/donor agencies or NGOs - without grass roots consultation
- Cultural, economic, political and social barriers render Uganda Gender Policy futile
- Local councilors are not trained to knowing their roles & responsibilities
- With close-to illiterate councilors, tensions/conflicts between councilors and (better) educated civil servants are hampering development efforts
- Corruption at district and sub county levels is rampant
- Governance marred by patronage & increasing use of intimidation and force
- Culture of segregation and obedience - men & women, boys & girls to obey clan rules of separate spaces, in family, community and institutions
- 'Dual mandate' of female councilors (as politicians / 'custodians' of women's and gender interests)
- Widespread culture of silence & authoritarian attitude (citizens/CS/LG)

Lessons Learned

CDRN deliberately addresses above challenges by applying a range of tailor-made action research methodologies. Prominent amongst results are two sets of Citizens' Development Proposals (CDPs) drafted by groups of ordinary citizens (Inomo/ Karujubu):

- Middle aged women (imaki/abakazi) - improved markets and access to roads / establishment of a sub county Secondary School
- Middle aged men (odong/abasaija) - upgraded health centre III / establishment of parish health centre II
- Male and female youth (buli/eminyeto) - more & clean water sources in parishes / more & better classrooms and other structures in primary schools

Inomo CDPs feature as annex to the Sub County Development Plan and Budget FY 2008/09, and they are in the process of being included in Apac District Development Plan & Budget FY 2009/10. *Inomo* volunteers, including male & female citizens, NGOs and S/C government officials are currently lobbying for implementation of their proposals.

In *Karujubu*, the Karujubu Community Development Forum, KCDF, a volunteer initiative was set up to lobby LG to integrate the CDPs in S/C and district development plans & budgets. As in *Inomo*, the initiative includes male & female citizens, NGOs and S/C government officials, but KCDF wants to take advantage of the newly established collaboration, going far beyond the CDRN/MS project:

Applying lessons learnt in the project, KCDF is in the process of lobbying for practical results while mobilizing male and female citizens in all villages. With famine, alcoholism, rape, early marriages and many other development challenges huge in Karujubu, KCDF is currently busy strategizing for appropriate remedies and *joint* action plans for the entire sub county.

Perspectives and Motives for Working with the Dilemma

Larger than life-like results are possible:

(i) Deliberately addressing *development issues on the ground* rather than focusing on *governance* in isolation proved successful in *building synergy & unifying* actors, otherwise conflicting or divided (political vs. technical LG wings, central vs. local government, CS vs. LG). Result? A number of practical solutions to curb poverty and promote civic rights of both male and female citizens, drafted in consensus.

(ii) With action research methodologies responsive to the local culture and deliberately building upon current gender segregation of communities, it is possible to create increased respect for women's experiences and capabilities. Allowing space for men and women to articulate their needs & priorities within separate fora proves conducive for mutual learning and sharing of responsibilities.

(iii) Experiences (i) and (ii) carry potentials for duplication in other S/Cs & districts.

Democracy as a way of life project

Rita Popo, MS Action Aid Uganda

Background

Citizenship and rights are considered core concepts by many development practitioners who work with promoting good governance and strengthening community based participation. The dilemma is on how to discuss issues like citizenship when the vast majority of women and youth that live outside capital cities do not have any knowledge about their rights such as in developing countries like Uganda. Gender stereotypes and inequalities are obvious and most women and youth continue to be excluded in decision making and are particularly affected by the wide spread poverty such as in Uganda.

MS-Uganda's Country Strategy 2008/2011 was developed in response to the realities of gender inequalities on the ground in Uganda. "Democracy As a Way of Life Project" is aimed at empowering women and youth to know their rights as well as encourage and give them tools to participate and influence decision making at all levels.

MS-Uganda currently facilitates fourteen (14) partners to politically empower citizens to know their rights, participate in and influence local government and family decisions. As a commitment to empowerment of the marginalized citizens, MS-Uganda has allocated 50% of her total budget to Support Building Local Democracy activities with remarkable results.

To give some examples of results from the Democracy as a Way of Life project :

- Women are able to write petition letters to their area members of parliament to raise issues that affect them.
- Women and youth are now able to make development plans/budgets and demand that their plans are integrated into district plans in Apac and Masindi Districts.
- Police women are now able to demand their rights to be promoted like for the men without basing it on sexual favors.
- The number of women willing to contest for leadership positions in local governments is slowly increasing
- Pastoralists (especially women and youth) are now able to stand up and demand their right to own land and they have indeed moved to occupy degazetted land in Karamoja.

Personal Transformation - As the consultant for the Democracy As a Way of Life I have an interesting story to tell also about social transformation and that I often use in my work with the project to show people on ground how things can change by their attitude and action. I have personally been a victim of gender inequality from childhood where my own brothers opposed my opportunity to go to school, my husband disagreed with my desire to go for Diploma in Education and finally the community denied me chance to contest for a political post with men for the same Parliamentary post. But I decided never to give up. My involvement in the Democracy as A Way of Life project has given me hope and a platform to encourage others for action

Challenges and dilemmas

Gender mainstreaming in building local democracy is seen as a process of tackling gender inequality (deficiencies) in local governance but has the following challenges:

- Poor reading culture and high level of illiteracy at local levels and cultural barriers
- Lack of translation of the IEC materials in the local languages
- Lack of timely access to information from local governments and Ministries to ascertain gender mainstreaming in the plans and budgets
- Gender mainstreaming is being used to sound politically correct with little commitment at implementation level by Government and CSOs, e.g. the national budget allocation for Ministry of Gender is 0.5% (32 billion) for 2009/2010.
- Limited partner capacity to advocate for gender in development.
- Lack of continued National Civic Education programme by government and double standards of claiming that they want civic education for citizens but little is done on the ground.
- Failure to use one or same effective Civic Education curriculum and approach by CSOs leading to poor CSOs coordination and cooperation - competition for donor funds
- Limited financial and human resources.

Lessons Learned

Democracy in this project is seen as a process of governance where citizens (men, women and youth) can exercise their full citizenship - political, economic, social and cultural rights in their daily lives. Building local democracy emphasizes participation by all citizens in decision making processes at all levels of society beginning from the family level and building up. There is a need for deliberate intervention by states (policies), NGOs & CSOs to undertake citizen empowerment programmes. Unless equal opportunities and gender equality are reflected in local government, NGO/ CSO, family plans and budgets and in institutional practices, little will be seen as a result of gender advocacy practice.

Citizen empowerment (poor and marginalized women, men, and youth) results in local Governments being challenged to be more transparent and accountable in delivery of equitable and locally determined services. Holding local government accountable needs a critical and engaged civil society. MS Action Aid is with this project building the important stones to empower the people to challenge the local leaders and civil servants to deliver the services they are expected to make sure is available at local level. Only by engaging people at local level can one change governance structures from below.

Perspectives and Motives for Working with the Dilemma

Democracy in this project is considered to be a process of governance where citizens (men, women and youth) can exercise full citizenship - political, economic, social and cultural rights in their daily lives. The overall motivation for me to work with this project is the remarkable results from the civic empowerment which contributes to the reduction of poverty in Uganda by means of civic participation and engagement in the democratization processes at all levels of governance, beginning with the family.

From the margins of the state to political influence

- The transformation and empowerment of Dalit women through selfhelp groups in Tamil Nadu, India

Louise Nolle, the Swallows

Background

Between 1999 and 2008 the Swallows of Denmark supported the organisation Dalit Women's Development Solidarity (DWDS) in the northern part of Tamil Nadu, India. The organisation consists of the leader Mary Elisabeth and 4-5 female employees. The primary objective of DWDS is to organise Dalit (casteless) women in 26 self-help groups (SHG) with a view to improve the women's capacity to approach the local authorities and obtain basic necessities for their community, such as improved housing and access to water, electricity, better roads etc. The SHG is also a forum where issues, that were previously considered private, are discussed in public - including problems with domestic violence. DWDS has helped several women to use the judicial system in cases of domestic violence.

In the last years of our cooperation with DWDS, the organisation decided to start a federation called Dalit Women's Movement. The federation encourages women from the SHGs to stand for the local Panchayat elections as a way of increasing their decision-making power and fight for their rights. In 1992, India introduced a special quota system on the local governance level with 33 % reserved seats for women in general and reserved seats for people with a Dalit or indigenous (tribal) background based on their official share of the local population (which is less than 33 %). The local governance system consists of three tiers, with most people participating in the lowest tier, the Gram Panchayat. The Panchayat system is a new way of gaining influence on a larger scale compared to the SHG and it is still in a relatively new phase where people are realising its potential. Based on my own research from Karnataka, I know that women usually enter local level politics due to encouragement from either their family or the local community. In this context, the SHGs constitute an interesting forum of learning for the inexperienced local politicians, and is also often an important base of support during the local election campaigns.

Challenges and dilemmas

Like many places in India, Tamil Nadu is dominated by caste related conflicts that are caused to some extent by a competition over resources. The Dalit women experienced these conflicts both in the SHGs and in the local Panchayat councils, where they have to negotiate with upper caste people that constitute the local elite. In one DWDS SHG, the women had a problem with a high caste woman who would attend their meetings even though she was not a part of the SHG. The women of the SHG felt that she was spying on behalf of the high caste community and they did not feel comfortable discussing important issues in her presence.

Based on my own research from Karnataka, I know that the female Dalit politicians retain support from their families for their political activities by fulfilling their many other responsibilities as workers, wives, mothers and sister-in-laws. Compared to high caste women, Dalit women have a high degree of economic responsibility for their family. During my research in Karnataka, I met a female Dalit Panchayat president (the top position in the Panchayat system) who had problems feeding her family because she did not have the time to earn an extra income and her salary as a president was not sufficient to feed her family. She also experienced how high caste women refused to touch the food that she served during Panchayat training sessions, because they considered her to be an impure person due to her caste background. This type of refusal is regarded as a great offence, and reveals the complicated position and challenges of Dalit women.

This type of story is indicative of the fact that not only political participation, but also involvement in community development and rights-based projects, is often a contested and conflict-ridden activity due to the caste culture. Additionally, there is a contextual importance in understanding caste and gender. In many cases the Dalit women work for women's rights internally in the Dalit community and work for Dalit rights externally. This is perhaps due to their problems with women from other caste communities, as there is clearly a lack of solidarity between women from different communities.

Cooperation with people from other caste communities constitutes a major challenge that is difficult to overcome, not only for the target group but also for DWDS and other partners in Tamil Nadu. The main question arrived at is, how do we as donors and partners support our partners and the target groups in situations of conflicts that, as with the caste issue, are very local and at the same time embedded in an ancient religious system?

Lessons Learned

The work of DWDS is an example of how otherwise marginalised people work to gain the rights that they are entitled to, according to the Indian constitution and legislation. In that sense they are trying to become Indian citizens. The SHG institution, which is widely used throughout India, has proven to be a good way of organising marginalised people and making them aware of their rights, despite the fact that it takes a lot of effort to do so. This kind of group mobilisation is important in a country where group identity has been the central marker of rights and citizenship since the movement for Independence in 1947. It has also proven to be an important support base for aspiring local politicians and made them less dependent on support from their family. It is also a good way of creating interplay between group rights and individual rights.

In the case of DWDS, the self-help groups have been so popular that the organisation has had to turn down requests from other Dalit communities to start up new SHGs due to a lack of organisational capacity. It shows the need for flexible civil society organisations where many different issues can be dealt with and where women can get support, both when they claim their rights in the domestic sphere as well as in the public sphere.

The fact that the women obtain rights on behalf of their community has given them a stronger position in the village in regard to the men. However, it is important to note that it has also led to problems of suspicion and, in some cases, violence on the part of the men. In order to support women's rights in India, it is important to consider the woman's community and the specific conditions that she faces. As I have shown in this case, Dalit women often experience double marginalisation due to their caste and gender. There is definitely room for more solidarity among Indian women across caste and religious communities. The barriers of women's rights are plentiful and include high castes,

husbands, in-laws, local authorities and in some case other women. One has to use different strategies to overcome each barrier.

Perspectives and Motives for Working with the Dilemma

The Swallows have chosen to support DWDS and other similar partners in Tamil Nadu because they do not only help people to help themselves, but also help them become active citizens that are involved in their local communities. Through their work as agricultural labourers and migrant workers, the target groups are involved in the national economic system. However, they often live around the poverty level and have not benefited from the economic boom in India. They are on the margins of the state and we help them to discover their rights as Indian citizens. Some of them take a step further and become involved in a political decision making process, that will hopefully benefit other Indians that live on the margins of the state.

Gender Responsive Budgeting in Tanzania

Jens Anders Kovsted, CEBR and Copenhagen Business School

Background

Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) is increasingly mentioned as a key element of strategies aimed at “mainstreaming” gender. The interest in GRB springs from its perceived ability to bridge key disparities between the desire to forward gender equality on one side and the aspiration to improve aid delivery, national policies and economic outcomes on the other.

GRB is, however, neither a new invention nor is it an established methodology. Rather the contrary. As outlined by the South African Economist and GRB expert Debbie Budlender, the first GRB initiative appeared in Australia more than twenty years ago. Since then GRB initiatives have been implemented in a range of different contexts, have served a multitude of different objectives, and have relied on an array of different analytical techniques. The Council of Europe (2005) defines GRB as: a gender-based assessment of budgets, incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of the budgetary process and restructuring revenues and expenditures in order to promote gender equality.

This definition is accurate in the sense that it identifies the overall objective of GRB initiatives (to influence government budget allocations towards ensuring a higher degree of gender equality) but does not describe the methods that should be employed to reach this objective. It is, however, not possible to provide a blueprint for GRB. In part because the considerable differences across budgets, countries and gender contexts does not permit this. Instead, GRB is based on widely used mainstream economic approaches and methods that are transformed by the incorporation of a gender perspective.

Relative to most other sub-Saharan African countries Tanzania can be characterized as a forerunner in terms of Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB). This status can to a large extent be attributed to early civil society initiatives undertaken by in particular the Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (TGNP) working within a broad coalition of local CSO's (FemAct). However, in contrast to the situation in most other countries, the initial civil society initiative has managed to engage and work with the central government in what has become a still ongoing collaborative effort to improve and expand GRB analyses and data.

Challenge: Governance reforms

Overall, the GRB initiatives in Tanzania can be divided into two phases. In the initiation phase focus was on building an active and capable CSO coalition, developing the necessary understanding of GRB and gaining access to the central government. This phase lasted from 1997-2001, whilst the second phase has lasted from 2001 to current day. The second phase did not involve a change of overall objectives or key institutions involved (they remain unchanged from the first phase). Instead, the second phase was marked by a decision to actively seek to build up broader and more participatory support from the general population, more specifically the TGNP assessed that time was ripe to create a

more broadly based, popular movement for social and economic change. This, however, required a change of focus as issues such as resource allocation and democratic governance were considered to be too abstract for a more popular campaign.

Hence, a decision was made to focus on HIV/AIDS, which as a cross-cutting problem of potentially catastrophic dimensions would be of relevance to all. At the same time the overall goals of generating a more transparent and participatory budget and policy process was maintained. In addition, TGNP also continued to: engage with the central government in discussions over the annual budget, undertake a significant number of training activities and workshops and work in a regular (almost institutionalised) manner with key, receptive ministries such as the Ministry of Water.

Overall, the current context for a GRB initiative in Tanzania can be characterized as follows:

- The purpose and general idea behind Gender Responsive Budgeting is well known and accepted. This is in part due to strong CSO presence and pressure and in part due to past GRB initiatives. The latter have in some cases (e.g. the Ministry of Water) even had a lasting impact on both project outcomes and administrative procedures on a sectoral level.
- The CSO's realised very early the importance of a strong civil society coalition conducting a constructive and critical but non-aggressive dialogue with the government. This helped ensure the participation and cooperation of the central government agencies without which a GRB initiative cannot succeed.
- The FemAct and TGNP in particular have continuously sought to address the shortage and poor quality of existing data and information about the conditions under which women live. This has helped to partly overcome another barrier frequently encountered by GRB initiatives, namely the lack gender specific data. At the same time it is evident that the capacity and resources of key ministries like the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry for Community Development, Gender and Children is strained. As a consequence, the Ministry of Finance most likely would not be willing to allocate resources to pursue an isolated GRB agenda. Likewise, the Ministry for Community Development, Gender and Children, who should "own" and direct the GRB project, is far from having the intra-ministerial clout to champion such an initiative.
- The emphasis by both the government and the CSO coalition has throughout the process been on the long-term objective of changing the process and/or the mindsets of key decision makers. The fruits of (also) having long-term capacity building and reciprocal learning in mind can, for example, be witnessed in the unusual level of collaboration between the CSO's and the government.¹ This is only possible due to the mutual trust build up over a long period of time.
- In 2000 teams composed of NGO representatives, government officials and independent experts were charged with the task of analysing budgets and policies from a gender/poverty perspective in six key government institutions.² The results of these processes were subsequently disseminated to both the public and government officials before forming a basis for the ensuing policy and prioritisation discussions. The focus on capacity building and awareness became institutionalised in the subsequent pilot GRB initiative involving six government ministries. Here training of budget officers in gender budgeting be-came mandatory as they prepared their sector budget and for the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) process. In addition, budget checklists and main

streaming tools were developed to enable and assist the engendering process. In a recent analysis Mhina (2007) summarizes the attempt to introduce GRB as follows: “Not all ministries managed to effectively capitalise on TGNP services, except for the Ministry of Water.”

Lessons learned

The pressure to make government budgetary practices and outputs more transparent and accountable can obviously represent both a challenge and an opportunity for a GRB initiative. It can become a challenge because government responsiveness and capacity to respond to yet another budgeting initiative will be limited, or it can become an opportunity if the GRB can be perceived as a smart way to address other, overriding concerns such as transparency and accountability.

Gender Responsive Budgeting initiatives are, however, in many ways similar to other forms of budget reform programmes like zero-based budgeting, target-based budgeting and performance-based budgeting. All require some re-orientation of management and budgetary data and routines as well as changes in the way budget officers work and plan. This, of course, has implications for the short- to medium-term realism of some forms of GRB reforms, making it imperative to differentiate clearly between Gender Responsive Budgeting as a budgeting method and Gender Responsive Budgeting as a (possibly recurrent) policy analysis/perspective. Another important implication is that key government institutions like the Ministry of Finance, despite the fact that they might be positively and constructively inclined to the idea of GRB initiative, most likely will not be able to find the extra resources and time to pursue such an initiative.

Furthermore, just as employees in, for example, the Ministry of Finance often lack an understanding of gender issues and perspectives, CSO staff frequently need a better understanding of how budgets and budget officers work. This reciprocal distance between gender analysts and budget officers is far from unique to Tanzania. It is, however, a more pertinent problem here exactly because the Tanzanian GRB initiatives are relatively advanced. GRB has become accepted and the parties are engaged in dialogue - the government ministries (and the Ministry of Finance in particular) and the CSO's are, however, not yet speaking the same language. Making CSO's like the TGNP and the government interact and work closer together do, moreover, hold a number of challenges and potential resistance from both sides. The TGNP has, for example, repeatedly stressed the problems associated with getting “too” close to the government, potentially ending in a situation where the government appropriates their viewpoints and embraces the CSO to a point where it loses its integrity and/or popular base among the grassroots (Rusimbi 2003a). The government can on its side not afford to get “too” close to one NGO if it wants to retain its democratic and representative credentials. As a result, both sides will actively and deliberately oppose if the cooperation becomes close. This will, by implication, restrict the speed at which the two parties can be brought to a better and more detailed understanding of each others work and objectives.

Whilst Tanzania has made progress in establishing gender disaggregated data, simple and operational GRB tools are also needed if GRB is to be a part of general budgetary procedures. Tanzania's status as a GRB pioneer country again accentuates the severity of this problem relative to countries that are still struggling to generate awareness and understanding about GRB and gender in general. TGNP has in cooperation with government officials made some progress in this direction during past GRB initiatives. This includes the

development of a budget planner checklist for the Ministry of Finance as well as getting gender included in the budget guidelines mandating how all ministries, department and agencies prepare their budget. These locally developed tools are, however, still very general in nature - not stipulating exactly what budget officers have to do in a step-by-step, manual-like procedure.

Perspectives

Rather than try to involve all government institutions and every policy issue of concern, a GRB initiative will given the lack of operational capacities and the significant tasks of developing new GRB tools be best served by prioritising and selecting only a few (2-3) sectors. Focusing the available human re-sources and funding on a targeted initiative would: (i) make better use of the available resources; (ii) enable a demonstration of the benefits for gender equality (and perhaps also other policy objectives such as economic growth); and (iii) accord key actors a chance to build incrementally upon a successful outcome.

This approach will most likely meet resistance from especially the government side as key officials have expressed that all government agencies should move in the same stride when it comes to GRB. The fact that the earlier GRB initiative was also focused on a restricted number (six) of ministries, however, indicates that a focused initiative could be accepted again.

In addition, it makes sense to link the GRB initiative to ongoing budget transparency reforms, which are parts of, for example, PRSP and budget support negotiations and plans. Ensuring that the (natural) connection between GRB, budget transparency and different forms of performance-based budgeting features prominently and visibly in a GRB initiative ensures a much better chance of securing the pivotal support and attention from the Ministry of Finance. This approach could potentially enlist the crucial interest from the Ministry of Finance, presumably also leading to more attention on behalf of the selected line ministries. Amongst the CSO's it will most likely be important for the TGNP to maintain the overall gender focus. Both TGNP and FemAct have, however, as one of their main issues lobbied for a more open, participatory and responsive government at both the national and the local level. Hence, all relevant parties will most likely support the establishment of a stronger link between two already converging agendas.

Any new GRB initiative also carefully need consider the trade-off between one-off analyses and modifying established budget routines. Should a GRB project focus on producing separate and not necessarily repeated analyses, or should it focus on changing existing budget routines? The previous GRB initiatives undertaken in Tanzania include examples of both approaches. The establishment of budgetary guidelines and the Central Planning Commission checklist are thus examples of tools developed to change general budgetary practice, whilst the TGNP analysis of the household cost of HIV/AIDS as well as the recently completed time-use survey are examples of specific and not necessarily repeated analyses. One cannot a priori assess which of the two approaches is most likely to succeed. Rather it will depend on the agencies selected for the initiative, the resources allocated towards its purpose, as well as the availability of other forms of support.

A decision does not necessarily need to be taken before deciding on whether or not a GRB initiative needs to be undertaken - but it is crucial that sufficient time and resources are allocated to reach a decision prior to the design of the GRB initiative. This is because the

decision will have considerable impact upon the orientation of the GRB initiative. If a decision is made to opt for separate analyses that are unlikely to be repeated any time soon, it is thus important to ensure that representative data are collected and proper analytical method employed. If, on the other hand, a decision is made to go for changing budgetary procedures significant efforts needs to undertaken to ensure that the knowledge of budgetary procedures, budgetary routines and overall buy-in of budgetary officers are taken into account.

¹ Early in the process TGNP undertook a mapping exercise, identifying officials in key ministries that were sympathetic and open to GRB methods and projects. Subsequently, strategic plans of how to initiate contact and work with government agencies and officials were drafted.

² The six government institutions included in the first national level GBI initiative were: The National Planning Commission, The Ministry of Finance, The Ministry of Health, The Ministry of Education, and The Ministry of Industry and Commerce.

Dilemmas of Gendered Governance

- Strategy for implementation of National Gender Action Plan of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Anja T. Nordlund, Independent Consultant, EnGender Development

Background

The Project was initiated by Sida to support Bosnia and Herzegovina in developing a framework to make the implementation of the national Gender Action Plan (GAP) feasible. The Gender Action Plan was adopted by the Council of Ministers of Bosnia in 2006 and contains 15 overall areas in society that Bosnia and Herzegovina seeks to gender mainstream (e.g. environment, health, strengthen capacity of public institutions for the implementation of the Gender Action Plan, economic issues, political participation etc).

To reach this aim a team of Bosnia and international consultants were formed to support the responsible institutions in Bosnia in developing a strategic framework based upon needs and requirements to best meet future gender mainstreaming results at state and entity level. The Gender Equality Agency (state level) and the entity gender centres of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and of the Republika Srpska (entity level) are the 3 main actors in Bosnia and with whom the consultancy team worked.

The scope of work was three-fold:

- Support the 3 main gender institutions in developing a Program/strategy for the implementation of Gender Action Plan
- Develop the basis for a multi-donor (a joint financial arrangement) for the implementation of the Gender Action Plan
- Capacitate the Gender Equality Agency as the overall responsible institution for the future management of the Gender Action Plan Fund.

Stakeholders were, in addition to the 3 gender institutions, also ministries of finance (at state and entity levels), Council of Ministers and entity governments, NGOs and a group of donors and multilateral agencies.

The project started May 2008 and ended September 2009.

The budget was app. 350.000 Euro

Challenges and Dilemmas

Related to governance reform there were/are various challenges in the Bosnia setting:

- The state structure with both state level decision-making priorities and the two entities (Federation and Republika Srpska) has an in-built power struggle in almost all political questions of the country. This project was, however, relatively undisturbed by this situation until distribution and control over funds were discussed. Some time and effort went into finding acceptable financial and management solutions for all 3 government levels.

- The existence of public institutions to ensure gender mainstreaming does not necessarily lead to improved gender equality. Especially the Gender Equality Agency (the state level) was relatively weak, understaffed, without significant funds and without a clear strategy to reach the Gender Action Plan objectives and therefore not able to push a gender mainstreaming agenda effectively or efficiently. One aim of the project as well as the future program implementation was/ is to strengthen these institutions so they can work with increased speed and direction.
- The fact that a National Gender Action Plan exist in Bosnia does likewise not necessarily lead to improved gender equality, especially since the Gender Action Plan is without any strategic priorities or clear responsibilities. The future Program/strategy implementation will give the work a direction, and improve significantly both external and internal monitoring.
- Donor driven initiatives, in general, tend to become donor owned, but local ownership can be reached and is essential to ensure responsibility for own development.

Lessons Learned

- To manoeuvre in a political difficult setting requires people with significant knowledge of the specific environment and local capacities are essential to reach project outcomes.
- To strengthen institutions are not only a question of giving them training on e.g. leadership or their topic, sometimes there is a need for basic improvements like office space, IT solutions and the like, which can be facilitated by donors.
- True local ownership requires a lot of effort if the project from the beginning is donor driven, because it has to get back into the hands of stakeholders. There is a donor tendency to push for nicely formulated outputs and not respect that outcomes (e.g. changes in attitudes or behaviour) are in fact the only meaningful results we should strive for.
- True local ownership was reached because stakeholders were in control of the process and decisions and they felt/feel responsible for the result of it. The most significant outcome related to behavioural change is the fact that the gender institutions took over and internalised the program, by deciding priorities themselves, writing the program proposal themselves and performing consultations with relevant state/entity ministries (with support and guidance from consultants).
- By seconding people into Gender Equality Agency on civil servants conditions and salaries, the project staff has now been moved to state budget without any major difficulties. If they would have been hired on e.g. UN local salaries they would most likely had left when the project was ended.
- It is not possible to say what will happen at society level yet. Whether the Program/strategy will reach intended outcome, the next 3-5 years will show. The 3 main gender institutions will without any doubt have a lot to learn and adaptation of the Program/strategy to arising issues will be called for.

Perspectives and Motives for Working with the Dilemma

Gender equality! Because this is their mission and this is what they will be held accountable for.

Funds! Because this is what makes their mission possible

Sufia Islam

- Experiences to become a Commissioner of Rajshahi City Corporation, Bangladesh

Mahal Aminuzzaman, Gender Focal Point, Danish Embassy, Bangladesh

Background

This case has been derived from a project supported by the Danish Embassy, in Dhaka-Bangladesh named Doorbar Network. Doorbar is a platform of more than 500 women-headed development NGOs working on preventing violence against women and promoting political empowerment of women. Support to Doorbar Network has been provided under the Embassy's Human Rights and Good Governance programme since 2000 with an amount of DKK 4.69 million. Doorbar has a countrywide network primarily focused to both political empowerment and combating violence against women. The program interventions / components of Doorbar include: social and political awareness of women on all forms of rights; mobilization of public opinion and awareness at the community level, link with alternative dispute resolution services, legal aid and support, referral link with One Stop Crisis Centres under the national Multi Sectoral Programme on Violence Against Women (VAW). Doorbar is also actively engaged with the Union Parishad¹ VAW Committee to ensure political and administrative support for prevention of VAW. Doorbar as part of its mobilization role impart political training and motivation, confidence building and leadership training among the women to enable them to participate in the local government elections.

Bangladesh has made considerable progress in gender equality since 1990s, with key improvements in: access to primary and secondary education and overall health outcomes; provision of direct election of women representatives at local government. However, Despite progress in other areas, discriminatory legislation in some of the areas like marriage, custody and inheritance etc. relegates women to an unequal status. While this case represents the north-west region of Bangladesh where women are generally considered as subordinate with limited/no voice to their family and community coupled with chronic poverty. Sufia Islam- the President of a women's organisation named Lakshmipur Destitute Women's Craft Association (working on women's economic empowerment, in Raipura Sopura, Rajshahi District and a member of Doorbar Network, was elected to the Rajshahi City Corporation as Commissioner with an independent ticket, in August 2008.

Challenges and Dilemmas

Sufia Islam, born on 10th October 1965, belonging to an average lower middle class family in a district town completed her secondary school in early 1980s. She underwent some skill development training and formed her own organisation in 1985 in order to do something extra for her family and not least for the destitute women. She grew up in a violence prone social environment hit by extreme poverty and always thought about doing something for the women. She has been actively working on issues of women's rights, and economic development programmes by providing handicraft training and credit, and also working to prevent violence against women. The extension work of Doorbar Network

impressed her and subsequently her organisation became a member of the Doorbar Network in 1997. Soon Sufia became more involved and active in the Network activities. Eventually she was active in setting the agenda of the Network and the processes and structures through which it would work. Sufia's participation in the Doorbar Network brought her into contact with many other women's organisations in different parts of the country and she found that the organizations were facing many different challenges. The platform also created opportunities for her to interact with local government and local administration, both as a representative of a large national network of women's organisations vis-a-vis her own organisation. Over the years, Sufia had served in various posts in the Rajshahi Regional Committee of Doorbar Network like Treasurer, Secretary, District Representative and member of Doorbar election commission. These responsibilities helped her develop the leadership skills even further.

A main objective of Doorbar Network was to build capacity of its member organisations vis-a-vis the women leaders. Various operational and decision-making processes were designed so as to encourage democratic and participatory decision-making process, transparency and accountability. While it was an on-going struggle to adhere to such principles, Doorbar Network leaders were challenged to try and live up to these standards. In addition various trainings were provided on leadership development, management and most importantly conflict resolution. All such trainings added substantively to achieve her political and social empowerment.

Sufia had to struggle a lot to become a municipal commissioner and it was not an easy task to become successful. She had to overcome a self inhibition to enter politics as she used to think that politics was a dirty and awful job. However, through her work with people in her community, especially on issues of violence against women and her role as mediator, more people came to know about her and her work, and they eventually convinced her to contest for the municipal elections. She did not think of joining a political party as she felt that the parties were not protecting or promoting women's interests. She therefore decided to run as an independent candidate being encouraged by the members of her organization and selected section of the community, including her family specially from her mother and husband. Once Sufia submitted her nomination papers i.e. once it was clear that she was a serious candidate, she began to face various kinds of intimidations and resistance. Even one of the supporters who had encouraged her to stand for the elections asked her to withdraw her nomination letter. At a later stage even her family members were also threatened.

People at one point began to ask her how much of a budget she had for the elections. The major political parties approached her and offered her their party tickets sensing her growing popularity but she did not show any interest to join any of the political parties. Faced with so much resistance, Sufia approached Doorbar Network and Naripokkho Secretariat who was the convener of Doorbar Network that time and asked for support. In response it was planned that various Doorbar Network leaders, as a part of the network's mission, would go to Rajshahi to help Sufia with her election campaign. They stayed for several days and helped with the campaign activities. This had a major impact in the area and demonstrated to people that Sufia was a strong women's leader and had the support of other organisations from across the country. This created a demonstration effect and made her candidature more visible and stronger amongst the members of the community. However Sufia still lost in 2001 elections but by only thirteen votes. The first failure prepared her even better for the second election battle.

The experience of the 2008 elections was mixed. This time people from the community also helped Sufia to raise the money to buy the nomination form. The experience gained from the 2001 election was extremely valuable for Sufia. Another important factor assessed by Sufia was that the elections took place under the Caretaker Government which offered more conducive election environment. This time, she faced fewer threats and intimidation than in 2001. Until late evening she was able to campaign for the elections and even after 11p.m. she had police protection.

Doorbar Network members of Rajshahi region gave their full support to Sufia in her campaign. Still the experience was not without challenges. Her opponents put up three other candidates in a bid to defeat her. She was under pressure again from various political parties to join their party. As a normal election culture in rural Bangladesh, she was also pressurized from various groups for money, some using the excuse of donations for clubs, asking for money for treatment or directly asking for money for votes.

There were many constraints but in the end Sufia won the elections. She was obviously very pleased and proud that she had overcome the hurdles and won the elections. Her experiences so far as a commissioner have been positive and she feels that she has been able to establish herself as a strong woman leader who is able to justify her opinions with effective arguments and carry out any task successfully including promotion of women's rights.

Lessons Learned

Empowering women politically is a continuous challenge which requires wider facilitative preparation ranging from individual development, community empowerment for enabling a congenial environment along with structural set up. Sufia is indeed self confident but the external support from *Doorbar* Network helped her to consolidate her position in the political race. Ignoring political affiliation Sufia decided to contest independently which was also not so easy for her. She faced with repeated threats and intimidations by various corners of the society including reluctance from some of her family members which was addressed with the supports from her allies in *Doorbar*. This once again proved that societal mindset was very important for allowing political space for women. Nevertheless, Sufia did not want to give up, rather continuously felt encouraged by the cooperation of her allies in women's movement leading towards political empowerment and accountability. Cooperation from law enforcing agencies for her immediate protection was also noteworthy.

Perspectives and Motives for Working with the Dilemma

The macro perspectives of the motivation of the organisation are creating an enabling societal environment so that women are politically empowered and can combat violence against women. The micro perspectives are empowering women to participate in the mainstream political processes by breaking the stereo-typed image of women playing soft and subordinate roles in the society which will in long run contribute in changing the mindset of the society. This is one of several cases in similar nature which treasured success in their relentless endeavour. Although the number of women participation in both national and local elections has increased, but women still continue to have a limited political and economic voice. Significant gender gaps still remain in many crucial areas, including access to and ownership of properties, access to higher education and

employment. The issues of high maternal mortality rate, greater incidence of dowry and violence against women, particularly domestic violence, equal rights to public services, are still at critical level mainly due to low voice of women in policy and owing to gender stereotype views. The incidence of such gender based discrimination is heavily seen among the poor living in the ecologically vulnerable hard to reach areas. Women in Bangladesh specially in the rural areas are under privileged, economically deprived, socially subordinated and politically marginalised. Doorbar network committed to the defence of women's rights has been instrumental to influence Sufia's mind. Doorbar's focus on its entity as nation-wide movement on prevention on VAW, building capacity and promoting political participation of member organisations and decentralisation of network leadership and management helped Sufia to overcome her inhibition and changed her perception about politics.

¹ lowest level rural local government body

Dilemmas in women's access to political office and to decision making

Mme Yarou Sinatoko Kingnaré & Mme Lucie Ablawa Tidjani Sessinou, RÉFEC, Benin

Context

Benin is divided into 12 regions, 77 municipalities and 544 districts. A few statistics give an idea of the defeats to be lifted:

- In Government, only 5 out of 23 ministers are women
- In Parliament, the percentage of women has passed from 6.3% to 10% from the first to the fifth legislature.
- In each of High Court, Economic and Social Council and High Audiovisual and Communications Authority only one or two seats are occupied by women, while men occupy between 8 and 28 seats.
- Among the municipal and district councils, women constitute 3.7% of municipal councillors, 5% of mayors, 3 % of deputy mayors and 3% of district chiefs.
- None of the current ambassadors in Benin's diplomatic corps are women.
- Only 14% of high level functionaries in Benin's administration are women.

RÉFEC is working in this context to support women active in politics. The ambition of RÉFEC is to contribute to the consolidation of a real democracy in a context where decentralisation is taking place but at the same time where very low levels of female literacy and access to information are encountered. All women (currently or previously) elected to Municipal and District Councils of Benin can be members of RÉFEC, which was created in 2002 with support from Danida by a group of women running for office at the first municipal elections in Benin.

Challenges and dilemmas

A woman desirable of entering the political arena, of casting her vote at elections or of occupying a post of responsibility, is faced with a number of difficulties embedded in cultural practices and norms:

- in her family and concession, the woman depends heavily on the consent and support of her husband for being able to pursue her activities outside the home,
- within the political party, the woman must negotiate to obtain a good position on electoral lists. This often requires prior proof of her availability for participation in meetings, of her capacities to keep informed, to analyse, to argue, to give speeches and to take part in political articulations, and not least to manifest herself in a male environment,
- when sitting on decision making bodies, she must lever the challenge of operating with transparency, with complete integrity of incorruptivity and ensuring the participation of all groups of society,

These challenges are to be taken up by women living in a society where tradition still plays a decisive role : The married women is still perceived as the property of her husband, and

is presupposed to stay in the concession and care for its members without exercising any form of authority neither within nor outside the concession. Female illiteracy levels are still only around 80% and the sources of information (radio and television) are still predominantly in the hands of men. Nevertheless, women have an obligation to take up the challenge in order not to contribute to a status quo and to serve as models of encouragement for other women.

The price to pay can be high: many women have been victims of lies, insults and false accusations. Some have been chased out of their marital homes or beaten publicly for having dared to take part in elections or even for not having accepted to vote for the candidate of their husband.

Main actions and areas of intervention for RéFEC

RéFEC was established in 2002 with a small office and a secretary, and since then the organisation is constantly searching for financial support for its institutional development and for implementation of activities. Most funding obtained is earmarked for capacity building of members in their role as municipal councillors and for informing women leaders of governance issues in order to enable them to influence local politics.

RéFEC holds regular member meetings, where actions are identified and tasks assigned. Many successes have been achieved, mainly in the following areas:

- Informing women on politics and on citizen control of local governance,
- increase women's capacity to analyse local political situations and development issues and to express their points of view in council meetings,
- increase visibility of women in local politics in order to serve as an example for other women and to change the perception of politics not being an area, where women can intervene,
- diminish the ardour of some men, especially in rural areas, to sanction women who dare to get involved in local politics,
- enrolment and completion rates of girls has increased due to the new image of women provided by RéFEC and by the women politicians accompanied by RéFEC.

Lessons learned

Important lessons informing the fight for women's entry into the spheres of political decision making are:

- political discourse must be accompanied by concrete actions to fight poverty in order to respond to daily difficulties encountered by specific social groups,
- power must be exercised democratically and with the participation of all different social groups,
- literacy programmes for women must be developed which integrate efforts to increase women's understanding of the political environment in view of inducing reflexes of citizenship and of circulating correct and complete information to women and to vulnerable social groups,
- social groups with no decision making power and limited understanding of the laws and processes of decentralisation should be strongly encouraged to participate in political activities and discussions in their villages as well as in the formulation of development plans and budgets.

- government should very strongly support programmes for female school enrolment and completion,
- programmes responding directly to daily needs of all social groups should be developed and professionally implemented,
- developing female leaders' capacity to intervene in politics allows for fast and effective results,
- women leaders wanting to run for office at local elections should be supported not only technically (training on preparation of political programmes and speeches, of electoral campaigns and campaign budgets), but also financially (posters, radio and video spots, gasoline etc.),
- integrating women in the process and the institutions of decision making should be a strategic option clearly taken up by the government. This constitutes a precondition for making 52% of the citizens contribute to the development of the country.

Perspectives

Women's conscious participation in local politics is an important condition for developing the country. Thus, on the basis of lessons learned and experiences accumulated, RÉFEC will also in the future aim to pursue the fight for women's participation in politics at both the national and local levels. In a long term perspective, the aims of RÉFEC are:

- at both national and local levels, to advocate for gendered governance as a strategy for development,
- at national level, to develop alliances with both parliamentarians and social ministers in order to gradually increase the number of concrete actions of gendered governance,
- at local level, to develop localised actions to weaken the socio-cultural pressures impeding women from taking part in political life,

In the immediate perspective, the organisation intends to:

- work for a strengthened partnership with the Law Commission of the National Assembly
- organise a meeting with female Heads of political parties in order to analyse different strategies for positioning of women,
- appoint a focal point to RÉFEC in each region of the country and support their activities,
- create a space for exchange with religious and traditional leaders in each municipality,
- work to spread knowledge of the laws improving women's conditions (Family Code and others),
- support parliamentarianism and decentralisation,
- install legal mechanisms permitting an increase in the number of women on election lists and in political office.

Window of opportunity in Zimbabwe?

- Women's participation within a situation of political crisis

Cleopatra Ndlovu, Director, Women in Politics Support Unit

Background

WIPSU and MS Action Aid: Women in Politics Support Unit (WiPSU) is a registered Zimbabwean non governmental organisation established in April 2001. WiPSU is a non partisan feminist organization which provides support to women in Parliament and Local Government in Zimbabwe with an aim to increase their qualitative and quantitative participation and influence in policy and decision making. Some of the advocacy work that the organisation has engaged in includes: political education of women as a political constituency, lobbying the media to profile women and be more gender sensitive and finally engaging the public on women's rights in general and women's political participation in politics specifically. During election times, the organisation runs campaigns to profile the need to vote for women and to pressure political institutions to act consciously towards addressing the gender gap in representation.

MS Action Aid has partnered with WIPSU since 2007. The successful implementation of a one year agreement to fund "Women in Local Government Programme" led to the signing of a four year partnership running from 2008. MS Action Aid in Zimbabwe focuses on Building Local Democracy and is working with WIPSU to increase the representation of marginalised women in local decision making. WIPSU and MS Action Aid share a common vision with respect to the empowerment of women. The aim is to hold local government responsive to the expressed needs of women in their respective communities and ensure that women are organised and knowledgeable about their rights and obligations and proactively demand them from local authorities and other decision makers.

Working within a situation of political crisis - the case of Zimbabwe: Zimbabwe has gone through a turbulent decade with the political crisis – relating to issues of governance, human rights, and democratisation – at the heart of the problem. Women's participation and representation in political decision-making is still low in Zimbabwe. Despite the hype around women's participation in the 2008 Harmonised Elections women are still missing in decision-making. As it stands there are only 32 women out of 210 people in the House of Assembly whilst there are only 23 women in the Senate out of a total of 93. With the formation of the Inclusive Government came the appointments which again demonstrated the marginalisation of women in the political structures. Building democracy in Zimbabwe is a challenge: politics whether in the opposition or ruling party is dominated by values of intolerance, lack of accountability, authoritarianism and violence. Traditional patriarchal values which emphasise hierarchy, forcefulness, patronage and unquestioning subordination to those in power permeate all spheres of life, from the household, to the workplace, to the highest political office.

Challenges and Dilemmas

Negative social and political environments: There are many factors that relate to political accountability and space in political parties in Zimbabwe. Some of the challenges include the negative social and political environments characterized by confrontational and violent political processes, which increase women's vulnerability to abuse and violation. WiPSU learnt from working with women candidates that political parties seem to be the greatest enemies to the goal of increasing women's numbers in public office. Most of the women meet the end of their aspirations to political office during party primary elections. While the rhetoric from the political parties asserts political commitment to women and gender equality, the practice is often different when it comes to appropriating power and positions.

The greatest challenges appearing to women acceding to political office paradoxically often lie within the political parties they belong to, vote for, campaign for, work for and many times are unwilling to part ways with. Furthermore, there is significant intra party violence, intimidation, harassment of women candidates and/or their families. There is use of fear to force women candidates to drop out and/or hinder them from running for party candidature during primary elections. Additionally, political parties, in their policies, practices and structures tend to also create a disproportionately skewed-against-women context; party policies, process, procedures on primary elections are not clearly communicated to all candidates and women tend to be the most affected by this. Abuse of office by senior party officials and party staff to impose a candidates or manipulating issues and/or procedures in favour of specific candidates was exposed. Consequently, this means that despite progress achieved towards gender equality and women's rights, women have remained marginalized and gender inequalities have remained persistent in Zimbabwe. Politics is still a male dominated space, where women enter at their peril and where their participation is generally only valued in relation to campaigning for the political parties, voting for males in the parties and supporting party structures. Political parties have thus remained the gate keepers who have shut women out of public office and kept the gender agenda from national discourse.

Lack of accountability

There has also been lack of accountability by political parties in Zimbabwe. They get away with making commitments and promises such as quotas that they do not live up to. While it may be difficult for those in the parties to bring the party leadership to account for the discrepancies in policy and practice, civil society in general has also not pressed the political parties to account for such discrepancies.

Dilemmas emerging

1) to have or not to have women's wings in political parties? On one hand these are important structures which when we do not have within the political parties we are not able to have space in which women are able to caucus and discuss issues women regard as important. On the other hand when we have these spaces, there has been the tendency to relegate women and their issues to these wings.

2) The appointments of women to very significant positions. Zimbabwe has a woman Vice President and a Deputy Prime Minister. These women hold these positions as a result of the 30% quota as stipulated by the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development. The dilemma with appointments when to use them and when they matter. The quota systems may be used not to acknowledge the importance of the representation of women but in some cases it has been to sideline male contenders.

3) Political parties and accountability - who should the political parties be accountable to?

Lessons Learned

Working within this field for years, WIPSU has learnt that political party reforms must be a key strategy to get women's numbers increased and get the women's agenda at the centre of the political agenda within the parties and government. Women's positions, space and access to power in political parties determines their influence on party policies and hence the national developmental agenda. Once strengthened, the parties and the nation are likely to attain better results in the goals of sustainable development. Thus political parties need to reform and open up spaces ideologically, attitudinally, structurally, their systems, processes, programmes and practices and be women friendly. Leaders in the political parties need to assess themselves against their 'speak' and judge their parties according to the commitments made and not realised.

Women in the parties need to harness their capacities beyond their factions and have a common gender agenda. If at the national level women parliamentarians could work together across the party lines in the women's parliamentary caucus during a political dispensation of great enmity between the parties (2000-2008) surely they can work together in their parties. Until they do so, they will remain fragmented, divided and frustrated as they will remain peripheral and be given crumbs.

In the face of heightened political contestation as the March 2008 elections parties will very easily throw away the gender agenda. ZANU PF felt the heat of a formidable opposition and two opposition parties were competing for the same voters against an entrenched ruling party. In this context, the parties regressed on their women's rights record and strategic gender interests somehow diminished in visibility. Women are consequently easily disposed of for political expediency.

There is a need for donors to increase support given to women's organisations especially to issues of political participation. It is such strategic issues that facilitate and enable the tackling of the broader developmental issues of poverty eradication and economic growth.

The onus to ensure that gender equality and dignity to women does not lie on women alone. Women indeed may be absolutely key for driving the agenda due to current gender attitudes and trends however the responsibility lies in the institutions, structures and processes of our political processes and institutions. The current leaders of these political institutions need to move from rhetoric to implementation, from protocols and declarations to realisation of rights by all women in Zimbabwe.

Perspectives and Motives for Working with the Dilemma

Inclusion of women's issues and prioritization of social welfare: Feminists, women's rights activists, NGOs and civil society in general have been campaigning for women's increased participation in public office and decision making motivated by gathered evidence that shows a core relationship between women's entry into parliament with the inclusion of women's issues in parliamentary debates (Common Wealth Secretariat 1999)¹. The Scandinavian countries, which have held the world's highest levels of representation for longer than any other region in the world are a typical example where an increase in

women Members of Parliament (MPs) was followed by an increase and prioritisation of social welfare issues (Sassoon 1987², Bryson 1999)³.

Better policy making: The women's movement has also continuously argued that the inclusion of both sexes in policy-making leads to better policy making that better fits a diverse citizenship. Balancing the genders of policy makers ensures that forgotten and new issues are introduced on to the policy agenda.

WiPSU in 2007 and 2008 commissioned a study of the three political parties represented in Parliament in Zimbabwe with the goal to ascertain the political terrain within the political parties in view of the gender equality agenda and the goal of delivering women's rights. The audit was also intended to capture and document women's position and situation in political parties, the location of women in political parties' structures and the nature of policies, manifestos and programs with regards to women and gender equality. The audit was an assessment of the level of commitment within the parties to women's demands and inclusion of women constituents at decision making levels. In addition, the audit examined the compliance of parties to their commitments to women and their empowerment, which are often communicated through constitutions, policies and manifestos.

The audit gives evidence to the electorate of whether political parties implement their manifesto promises using gender issues as a case study. It enables women to undertake a collective reflection on just how serious political parties are about gender equality and women's rights. This will enable them to make informed decisions when next they go to the ballot. It enables women to compare these parties and begin to align themselves with those that have their interests at heart. Furthermore these findings can be used by the women's movement and the women's wings to determine areas for reform in the political parties so they can fully reflect women's interests. The audit will also help all interested women to realise the need for them support other women to get into power as the lack of their support means no women in positions of power.

The audit also provides opportunities to the political parties to align themselves with their commitments and identify gaps to address so as to best attract voters during elections. Political parties in Zimbabwe like in other countries are important political machinery that is indispensable in representative democracies. They act as the main vehicle of citizen participation, political education, recruitment, agenda setting and framing, engagement with policy formulation and in determining representatives of the citizenry.

¹ Commonwealth Secretariat (1999) *Women in Politics: Voices from the Commonwealth*. London: Commonwealth secretariat.

² Bryson, V. (1999) 'Feminist Debates: Issues of theory and political practice'. Basingstoke: Macmillan

³ Sassoon, A. S. (ed) (1987) 'Women and the state' London: Routledge

Status of the Code of Persons and Family in Mali

Ms Mama Koite Doumbia, Chairperson, Pan-African women's network, FEMNET, Mali

Background

Since its inception, FEMNET has played a key role in advocating action for addressing gender issues within the context of national, regional and global plans of action, including the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies (NFLS) for the Advancement of Women up to and beyond the Year 2000. The Nairobi Strategies then gave rise to the African and Beijing Platforms for Action (PFA), the Beijing+5 and Beijing+10 outcome documents.

Monitoring the implementation of the PFA has been a major activity for FEMNET, particularly working through the aegis of the UN organisations, the AU and sub-regional groupings like the Southern Africa Development Committee (SADC), the Economic Commission for West African Sub-region (ECOWAS) and the East Africa Community among others. FEMNET's core business has included promoting and coordinating the participation of African women's NGOs in these functions and leading the African Women's advocacy at this critical level and also building the capacity of women's organisations to play similar roles at the national and sub- regional levels.

Since 2006 KULU and FEMNET Mali have established a partnership with the object of supporting FEMNET Mali as a national network and the capacity of the network to strengthen Mali women's organisations in their effort to promote women's rights, political representation and advocacy. Focus has been on family laws and the African Women's Rights protocol. Through an extensive training of trainers, a number of the network's leaders have been trained to educate grassroots level organisations in women's rights and participatory advocacy.

Situated in West Africa, Mali is the seventh largest country in Africa with an estimated population of more than 12 million people of whom more than 90% are Muslim. Since 1991, Mali has been known internationally as one of the strongest democracies on the continent. However, as it will become apparent, there is much room for improvement where women's rights are concerned.

At its independence (1960), the Republic of Mali, legislated many fields, especially with regards to the areas of person and family, by adopting certain texts, namely:

- Law on Marriage and Guardianship of February 1962, supplemented by Ordinance 1975 CMLN,
- Code of Malian nationality of February 1962, amended by Laws of March 2 1966, of June 27, 1968. and August 25, 1995,
- Ordinance establishing a Code of Kinship in July 1973
- Act of June 28, 2006 governing civil status.

The current marriage code allows girls under age 15, in some cases girls as young as nine, to marry with parental consent or special permission from a judge. One could argue that as a result, young girls die every year due to a variety of medical complications that are the result of early marriage.

As far as the Code of kinship, it strongly favours men in cases of divorce, child custody, and inheritance rights, as well as in the general protection of civil rights. For example, if a woman wants a divorce, she has to pay approximately \$60 (28,000 CFA francs) to start the process, a prohibitive amount for most women.

Given these findings, the Government initiated a reform of the family law involving all national sensitivities, to obtain a genuine recognition of the rights of all citizens. Thus, at national and sub regional level, the layers most representative of Mali society participated in the work that led to the development of the present bill: "The code of person and family".

In 1996, the idea of recasting the texts governing the rights of people and a revision of the family law towards a genuine recognition of the rights of all persons was articulated with the development of the first drafts on the law of succession. Thus, during 1996 a team of experts was formed with representatives of AMUPI, of the CAFO, and other resource persons on family law. This team was then responsible for drafting terms of reference for an inclusive approach that would take into account the aspirations, views and interests of all groups of citizens (men, women, children). Only after elaborating proposals to reform the family law, two workshops were held with the participation of a wide spectrum of people to ensure a diverse collection of opinions. The outcome of these workshops has provided the basis for regional consultations throughout the Republic. These consultations formed the basis for the national assembly held in Bamako on 11, 12 and September 13, 2001, by a steering committee chaired by and composed of AMUPI.

The outcome of these extensive consultations has been submitted to the Council of Ministers by the Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children and Families. After reviewing it, the Council decided to establish an interdepartmental committee also comprising of members of the AMUPI. This interdepartmental committee reviewed the sensitive points of the reform elements. Only after an exhausting review of all of these questions by the committee, were the findings submitted to the Council of Ministers, "for guidance".

In 2002, however, some Muslim groups declared that they had not been consulted, expressing their disagreement with the issues raised, claiming that they were not in accordance with their cultural values.

It is in this context that I, on behalf of FEMNET Africa, advised the Prime Minister at the time, to establish a Commission composed of competent personalities from various backgrounds. The commission has reviewed the draft, article by article, before submitting its findings to the Prime Minister, who found it necessary to submit these findings to a second commission of reflection. Following their examination, a document answering almost all the questions troubling me was delivered (with the exception of a few points of disagreement).

At the end of this process, unusual in the development of legislation in the Republic of Mali, the draft code was submitted to the examination of five inter-ministerial meetings held at the Secretary of Government. "

Given some misunderstandings of the code issued by the High Islamic Council at its meeting at the International Conference Center in Bamako, a final meeting involving all those who worked within the last commission and other resource persons was held in the Department

of Justice on 1 April 2009. The meeting endorsed concerns of the High Islamic Council for the removal of the sanction of the minister.

Thus, this final version of the draft Code of People and Family revised and adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers on Wednesday, May 13, 2009 was submitted to the National Assembly. August 27, 2009 it was sent back to parliament for re-drafting as a strong Muslim opposition mobilised and walked the streets of Bamako to show their disapproval.

Challenges and dilemmas

The Islamists have secure funding and support from a number of terrorist groups, coming mainly from Asia. However funding to women's organisations is extremely scarce, thus slowing down the process of change and thereby continuing the cycle of the loss of women's lives and the neglect of women's rights.

The process of political change, as far as women's rights is concerned, is very challenging when one of the main stakeholders in this case Muslim leaders and their objection to relinquishing power, in this instance the power of authority on marriage.

There is a dilemma as far as what is perceived to be donor (western) driven equality-demands and demands originating from a local feminist agenda. In a society with a Muslim majority, there is always a risk that the scepticism/hostility towards western donors will contribute negatively to the political process on issues concerning women's rights and gender equality.

There is also the challenge of engaging conservative women in this process, as there are still many women who are content with the hierarchy inherent in the Muslim faith and the harmony that is implied to be present in a family with one boss - not two.

The issue of respect for societal and cultural values is at the heart of the two latter dilemmas. How can gender equality best be obtained in a conservative religious democracy? How can women bridge the gap between secular laws and traditional laws without losing public support in a society that is marred by increasing extremist and fundamentalist voices?

Lessons learned

There is a need for thorough information on the new Law of person and family and its contents and how it may influence people's daily existence and improve women's daily lives for the benefit of their families and the whole of Mali society. It must be ensured that this information reaches all social and geographical fields in the country.

Perspectives and motives for working with the dilemma

Currently in Mali, we live in a high tension situation that may question the national foundations and the democratic principles which have been hard-won by the people. The threat of Islamists has become alarming. FEMNET Mali stand to lose everything it has worked for if that happens, surely no other motivation is stronger than the survival of women's rights activists and the organisations that protect them.

Gender Equality: counting numbers v. structural changes?

Sarah Forti, Senior Consultant, Cowi Belgium

Background

NDI is an international, non-profit, non-partisan NGO with headquarters in Washington, D.C. The Institute currently maintains approximately 60 field offices worldwide to implement its programs. NDI opened its Burkina Faso office in 2004.

The goal of the programme is to *strengthen women's participation in Burkina Faso's political and decentralisation processes* - accompanying the election process at national level from 2005 to 2007.

There are four immediate objectives as follows

1. Increase women's roles and responsibilities within political parties and local governments
2. Strengthen women's ability to compete in elections and to serve as elected officials
3. Enhance public understanding of democracy and its institutions
4. Strengthen partner NGOs' ability (namely CBDF) to play an effective role in promoting women's participation in politics and the decentralisation process

The above mentioned objectives /components of the programme all aim at strengthening Burkina Faso's developing democratic processes and institutions by helping women play a greater role in them.

Challenges and Dilemmas

With regard to the results and possible impact of the programme, the substantive difference the programme made at political, legislative level can be identified in

- a unanimously recognised improvement of intra-party's political dialogue,
- the clear understanding that the political participation of women could be a precious election asset,
- the advances of the 30% quota legislation and consequently
- advances towards equality (at least in numbers) in political participation at national and local level between women and men.

With regard to having a substantive contribution on the poorest lives, on women's rights situation and gender inequalities in the poorest strata of the population, the programme made a difference in creating forums of discussion where citizens (or their representatives) could voice their concerns. However,

- given the limited time frame of the programme and the early stages of election processes and
- the fact that poverty reduction was neither part of the objectives of the programme nor part of the indicators of this programme, the impact on the poorest could not be measured and evidence in this sense could not be identified.

NDI works on the assumption that by increasing the number of women - that are more likely than men to address social issues - these issues stand greater chance to be addressed. However, if the individual commitment to address poverty, structural inequalities and gender inequalities is absent, results and impact will not be visible beyond the increase in number of women participating in politics and the improvement of their personal career and skills. Without such individual commitment, substantive and qualitative changes in Burkina's society towards the reduction of gender and structural inequalities are unlikely to occur.

Lessons Learned

1. The implementation of inclusion / participatory approaches, are an important first step towards democratisation processes but do not necessarily guarantee a qualitative and substantive impact, beyond an increase in numbers and representation, on the reduction of structural and gender inequalities, social justice and poverty.
2. Contributing to increasing women's quantitative participation in political processes fulfils women's civil and political rights per se, and should be highlighted as the programme's main achievement and good practice. However, if rights-based approaches to development are limited to the fulfilment of the principle of non-discrimination and limited to a three-year programme duration, substantive impact on structural and gender inequalities, social justice and poverty may not be achieved.
3. The concepts of rights, like gender, development and democracy are not neutral concepts and may capture different aspects of poverty according to the different political interpretations and perspectives in which they are being used.
4. While strengthening democratic processes through technical tools have direct effects in improving the technical capacity and communication/dialogue skills of the participants to the training courses, there is a sense that programmes may risk merely polishing the façade of democracy without reaching concrete changes in terms of eradicating corruption, power relations, structural and gender inequalities unless these are more explicitly addressed.
5. Involving men in an essentially women-focused project should be noted as a good practice and may indeed need to be further explored, beyond men's participation to the training sessions. Since the advancement of women and Gender Equality is as much dependent on women as it is on men, considering men's changing roles and masculinities - e.g. challenging standard definitions of men and traditional roles towards the reduction of structural, gender and social inequalities would seem pertinent.
6. Women's rights and gender equality within the context of democratisation processes in developing countries need to be understood within a holistic perspective of societal changes towards making a difference to the poorest women and men, rather than reproducing existing patterns of social inequalities and corrupted practices.

Perspectives and Motives for Working with the Dilemma

NDI defines itself as a politically neutral, non-partisan organization. The Institute works with civic and political leaders advancing democratic values, irrespective of party affiliation - except for violent political entities. NDI defines democracy as "a form of government that fosters popular civic participation, open and competitive political systems, and representative and accountable leadership".

Key dilemmas for reflection and debate

- Meaning of gender equality within non-discrimination paradigm v. structural changes and social justice
- Implications for feminist theory and post-modern trends focusing on participation, social inclusion, diversity and intersectionality.
- The ever changing meaning of gender equality

Promoting the Role of Women in Decision Making In Malawi

- Challenges to Women' Participations and Lessons Learned from the 2009 Elections

Nicola Ndovi, Centre for Human Rights and Rehabilitation (CHRR)

Background

The Centre for Human Rights & Rehabilitation has been implementing the above titled three year programme in partnership with Danish Church Aid since 2009. The project aims to enhance gender equality between men and women at all levels of decision making processes in Malawi. The project targets aspiring female politicians at local and national level, as well as political party representatives. Some of the activities under this project include capacity building trainings for aspiring and elected female politicians and political party representatives; advocacy and lobbying of heads of political parties to produce political environments that are more conducive to women's effective participation; and media interface meetings to promote the portrayal of positive female role models through the media.

To place this project in context, over 60 per cent of Malawi's 12 million citizens are estimated to be below the poverty line. Within this large group, women and girls are especially marginalized. Only 48.7 per cent of women are literate, compared to 78 per cent of all men. The marginalized status of women is emphasized by their under-representation in elected positions, despite them constituting 52 per cent of the population.

In the 2004 elections, only 26 of the 191 (13.6%) elected candidates were women. This tally stood at just 8.6 per cent for Local Government. This disparity is despite Malawi being a signatory to the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development which was signed in Blantyre. This committed Malawi to achieve at least 30 per cent representation by women in all levels of political decision-making by 2005 and this target has subsequently been revised to 50% representation by 2015. A constitutional commitment also exists to enhance the participation of women in the social, economic and political spaces. Section 13(a) pledges the full participation of women in all spheres of life on an equal basis with men.

Malawi also has commitments to gender equality and participation under the Millennium Development Goal Three, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Platform for Action. These commitments and the Constitutional pledge provide an opportunity to improve the status of women in Malawi and to expand female participation at all levels of governance. Yet clearly to date progress has been limited. Ultimately women's limited political participation means that laws, policies and government institutions fail to support the human rights of women, and fail to represent the needs of all citizens.

Forces which inhibit the participation in governance of women, especially the rural poor, persist. In order to challenge these, we must recognise them and understand how they

interact with one another to marginalise women and deny them their necessary participation within Malawi's political space. In 2000 CHRR undertook a study that assessed the challenges that elected and aspiring female political candidates has experienced. The key findings of this study were as follows:

Women are heavily discriminated against in Malawi. By virtue of their gender they may be denied the opportunities to realise their human potential. For instance girls may not receive the same educational access as boys. Indeed in the CHRR survey, 50.6 per cent of respondents saw a lack of education as the biggest obstacle to female participation in governance, especially as English is the official language of the local Assemblies and Parliament. This subordination of the girl child continues into adulthood where women may not be allowed to exercise choice in important areas such as marriage, employment and social or political association. Exclusion also affects an individual's confidence: 13.33 per cent cited a lack of confidence as the main barrier to greater female participation in governance. Furthermore women's rights may be violated through a range of abuses including physical, sexual, psychological and financial. Gender therefore plays a key role in determining a human being's life chances.

Family also has a crucial impact on the experience of women in Malawi as the CHRR survey demonstrates: 11.72 per cent of respondents cited marital obligations as an obstacle to participation while 7.53 per cent considered a lack of support from husbands to be the main barrier. In poor rural areas, women are the key household actor. Along with responsibilities for procuring and preparing food for the entire household, there are also caring responsibilities for children and dependents as well as a wide range of household chores. It is clear that in comparison to men, women have heavier workloads and this burden denies them opportunities to participate in community activities which affect their welfare.

The issue of cultural influences is critical in Malawi. From childhood through to adulthood, the female is perceived as inferior to the male. This discrimination was cultivated under the one-party dictatorship of Dr. Hastings Banda as women were deemed subservient, illiterate and fit only for the kitchen and other menial roles. Since the Banda regime ended with multi-party elections in 1994 change has not been swift enough. As has been demonstrated above, this discrimination has repercussions for girls and women at every level of Malawian society. These cultural influences erect barriers against women which prevent their participation in governance at every level of society.

The CHRR survey found that women perceived male prejudice and cultural traditions as the main obstacle preventing women from participating in politics in a meaningful way. Traditionally women have served as dancers at political rallies and this tradition perseveres to this day. Many of the women surveyed mentioned that they had been told by family, friends and political party leaders that politics was a dirty business for which only men were fit.

This was compounded by a lack of co-operation from male colleagues, little consideration of women's issues and harassment. Other research also suggests that the campaigns of aspiring female candidates have been sabotaged by intimidation, vote-rigging and violence. Indeed the CHRR survey also noted that a lack of support from political parties was a major reason for why women believe they are excluded from governance. Such campaigns are further undermined by the extreme poverty many rural women find themselves in and which hampers their efforts to run successful campaigns. This is in spite of commitments

by the MCP and UDF to allocate 33 and 25 per cent of their seats respectively to women. In practise this policy is not adhered to.

Challenges and Dilemmas

The obstacles to women's political participation identified in the 2000 study were also evident in the run up to the 2009 elections, indicating that patriarchal traditions in Malawi persist. These problems occurred despite the fact that a large scale national programme offering technical and financial assistance to female candidates - the 50/50 campaign was launched in November 2009 and involved joint action by a range of stakeholders including government and civil society. The basket fund approach utilised undoubtedly assisted in ensuring coordination of the various activities. Stand alone projects such as the DCA project were also considered and mapped within the 50/50 programme so as to avoid duplication of activities.

From our observations of the electoral processes and dialogue with female aspirants, we noted the following key challenges in relation to the 2009 elections:

Despite strong gender mainstreaming policies within political parties, that pledge non discrimination and positive action such as a quota of seats reserved for women, discrimination against female candidates was in fact rampant at district party level and within primary elections. The quota systems established by political parties were not adhered to and many women noted that local party leaders demanded financial handouts in exchange for political support and openly discriminated against women in other ways, notably discouraging their candidacies. It is clear therefore that policy evaporation is occurring within political parties.

Notably at district and constituency level Party Leaders often lack formal education and are frequently illiterate Essentially these groups are the gate keepers of gender at lower party echelons, but effectively they may block many aspirants. To counter this CHRR implemented training for District Party Leaders that included components of human rights, gender and political party management, Unfortunately however, changing attitudes and mindsets takes time and we are aware that producing change is not instantaneous.

These challenges experienced within political parties led to a number of aspiring female candidates switching political parties or else switching to independent tickets. These tactics backfired as the ruling DPP party won an electoral landslide.

The patriarchal nature of Malawian society also means that many of the candidates fought difficult battles to change attitudes and perceptions and win the votes of particularly the rural electorates. This should have been supported by more concerted civic education to change patriarchal culture and traditions

Pull her down syndrome was also a critical dilemma with many male candidates hiring women to de-campaign female candidates. This possibly originated from the belief that female voters would be more likely to 'listen' to other women. This was exacerbated by unequal financial power of male and female candidates and the tendency for male candidates to 'buy votes' during the campaign period. Women complained that male candidates (especially incumbents) have unlimited money to spend on campaigning.

In order to combat these various problems in partnership with DCA, CHRR employed a number of strategies including capacity building and ongoing support and mentoring of female candidates, advocacy with political parties at national and district level. We also provided capacity building for female candidates under the national programmes and civic and voter education which included providing joint platform to female candidates from across the political spectrum. This building of female solidarity across party lines was a strong component in our campaigns

Challenges were experienced in that whilst some organisations such as CHRR had secured independent funding to implement programmes that sought to produce change for women in politics, the National 50/50 programme was launched relatively late. Blurring of the roles of respective partners also occurred with the Ministry of Women departing from its policy coordination role to that of an implementer. Many beneficiaries also perceived this national campaign to be political in nature as it was spearheaded by the Ministry of Women and Child Development

Lessons Learned

The most significant change is that despite the challenges experienced Women's Parliamentary Representation increased from 14% to 22%. At cabinet level representation increased to 23.8% from 20% in June 2009. In part this may be attributed to the large number of women contesting, but also to the impact of the various activities under the DCA and national campaigns. The challenges experienced however have also provided the opportunity to learn from experience, particular recommendations emanating from the lessons learned are as follows:

Quantitative approaches may be worthwhile but there is also a need for qualitative assurances. In particular only 4% of women retained their seats, therefore the emphasis is now upon providing technical support to ensure re-election in 2014. This includes ensuring that those elected commit and act to addressing broader socio economic issues and gender inequalities. In particular female MP's need to be adept in delivering development results to their communities. There is also need to transform the legislative arena in relation to gender, this is especially crucial given that the gender equality statute exists only in draft form and has yet to be passed by Parliament.

There is need for continued work at all echelons of political parties, to prevent evaporation of gender policies. This remains a particular challenge at the district/constituency levels where corruption, illiteracy and discrimination remain endemic. Additionally there needs to be reform of political parties and greater openness and regulation of campaign activities and individual conduct. Again no legislation is available to effectively control the conduct and functioning of parties and their representatives: Whilst Electoral law governs their conduct during the campaign period this remains insufficient.

There is a need for adequate forward planning and effective coordination of national programmes. This remains a key lesson given that as yet no electoral calendar has been announced for the pending May 2010 Local Government Elections

Perspectives and Motives for Working with the Dilemma

CHRR's mission is to contribute towards the protection, promotion and consolidation of good governance by empowering rural and urban communities in Malawi. CHRR works with citizens to increase their awareness and enable them to exercise their human rights and realise their human development. CHRR has been working in the area of gendered governance since 1999, with the Publication of its "Women in Politics" Research study in 2000.

Gendered Governance Assessment

- User's Guide to Measuring Gender-Sensitive Basic Service Delivery

Bjørn Førde, Director of UNDP Oslo Governance Centre

Background

The UNDP Oslo Governance Centre [OGC] recently produced a User's Guide to Measuring Gender-Sensitive Basic Service Delivery. This knowledge product is a part of a UNIFEM, UNDP, and Gender at Work initiative called Gender and Democratic Governance in Development, which aims to improve the delivery of basic services provision for women. At this point, three pilot countries have been identified that may be interested in participating in this program: Morocco, Rwanda and Tajikistan. These are countries where there are on-going governance reforms that might benefit from an added gender equality dimension of basic service delivery. The inception phase of the program was supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Norway. Assuming the final overall global program is approved, the program will be implemented over a 4-5 year period in 6 countries. Country level initiatives will be reinforced by regional and global knowledge and networking activities.

The programme has developed a typology for selecting countries for pilot interventions based on indicators of the two important dimensions of supply and demand.

For the supply side, we have used Kaufmann's measure of government effectiveness which measures the competence of the bureaucracy and quality of public service delivery. It is one of six measures used in the construction of governance indicators. Our sample include countries which are ranked low [less than 25th percentile - such as Tajikistan], in the middle range [between the 25th and 50th percentile - such as Rwanda] and moderately high [above the 50th percentile rank-- such as Morocco] on government effectiveness.

For a demand-side differentiation, we have used the UNDP's Gender Development Index [GDI]. This mapping tells us that our sample countries all fall within the low to medium range on measure of gender-related development and governance effectiveness. For example, Rwanda has made progress in terms of government effectiveness but has seen very little change in the GDI. Tajikistan is in fact dropping back a bit. These considerations in the country contexts should inform and facilitate the country pilot intervention accordingly.

The User's Guide was produced as part of OGC's Global Program on Democratic Governance Assessments which advocates for national ownership of governance measurements that are pro-poor and gender-sensitive. The Guide provides an analytical framework about measurements of basic service delivery through a gender-sensitive governance lens. It maps and analyses indicators and measurement tools developed by multilateral and bilateral agencies as well as by national counterparts. It also presents national examples of newly developed and innovative measurement initiatives in women's access to public services.

While the focus of the program is on the delivery of services to women at the local level, it will build a systematic feedback loop on the quality of services from women users to service providers at sub-national and national levels. It will pilot a monitoring framework to monitor change:

1. in governance of service delivery [documenting normative reform; documenting and process tracing procedural reform; observing and documenting cultural change];
2. in service delivery outcomes [observing and measuring changing behaviour; scoring changing perceptions of service delivery].

Subsequently, it will build mechanisms for linking information about change to institutional learning. Finally, the program will go beyond national oversight of institutional changes and encourage exchange and learning from comparative experiences at regional and global levels.

The User's Guide as a part of the Gender and Democratic Governance in Development program is an effort to confront the current lack of focus on certain gender-sensitive aspects of public governance reforms. The program aims to go beyond promoting women's access to public office and contribute to improving the governance of the provision of public goods and services in women's interest and in particular in other than the "traditional" areas like education, health, nutrition, water and sanitation. Taking a broader human rights approach, the program concentrates on civil registration, justice, legal and police services, social security, and economic services relating to access to employment, credit, inheritance, property rights, agricultural extension, etc. - and delivery of these services at the local level.

The study provides information on more than 50 individual databases and assessment tools. Some of the key findings are summarized below.

1. Women benefit less than men from current systems of governance

Gender, governance and basic services are inextricably linked. A functioning democratic system of governance enables people to express their needs through the political system, and ensures that the system responds appropriately to their needs. This Guide reviews the role of basic services in development and in relation to the MDGs, arguing that the MDGs will not be achieved unless women are able to contribute to and benefit from development equally with men.

Current government reforms are often not gender-responsive, but neither are they gender-neutral. This is partly because the governance objectives, systems and services at all levels have been defined, designed and managed by men, who are the principal decision makers. They therefore reflect men's assumptions and perspectives on women's needs and situations.

To design and implement programs that are both appropriate and accessible, more detailed indicators are needed to inform in-country policy making. Gender-sensitive changes might include such simple measures as altering opening hours, location of a certain service, providing more female staff at training courses or separate toilets at schools.

For example, a rural health clinic manager noticed that the majority of clients were men although the clinic targeted women. This was to a great extent caused by inconvenient opening hours for women with children and household responsibilities. The clinic decided to open at a more convenient time for women and as a result the number of women clients increased. This is an example of a barrier not recognized in the design of the facilities that prevented women and girls from accessing a service and did not affect men and boys in the same way.

Another example is about why some services cannot or should not be privatized. Policy changes that favor privatization of certain services or introduction of user charges for basic services can affect women users differently from men users and reduce the access of women and girls, in particular in poor families, because of low cash income and control over household expenses.

A High Court ruling against a prepaid water scheme in South Africa's largest township, Soweto, may set a global precedent for the basic right to water. Five residents asked the court to order the city to provide at least 50 litres of free water per person per day, double what they currently received but equal to the basic minimum prescribed by the World Health Organisation. "This is about the fundamental right to have access to sufficient water and the right to human dignity," the Judge said. The South African Bill of Rights in the Constitution states: 'Everyone has the right to have access to sufficient food and water.'

2. Lack of gender indicators of basic service delivery

Gender specific governance deficits exist and are most acute in the area of service delivery. Even countries with adequate resources see women facing discrimination accessing social rights or women perceive a higher level of corruption. Furthermore, governance interventions are supported by statistics and other sources of information that have not taken explicit account of differences between women/girls and men/boys. Consequently, even when women are able to participate in decision making, they [and their male counterparts] are typically constrained by lack of gender-responsive statistics and accurate information on the situation and needs of women, particularly poor and disadvantaged women.

3. Importance of process-oriented governance data.

Gender sensitive governance reforms have often tended to promote women's access to public office. While this is an important goal in itself, it is not enough. Rwanda, one of pilot countries in our program, has the world's highest share of women in parliament, knocking long-time champion Sweden from the top spot. However, this does not necessarily mean that there is greater gender equality because the structural and other levels of inequality can still be very prevalent behind these numbers.

Taking the above into account it is crucial to approach gender equality questions by digging deeper into the statistical evidence. In Rwanda, the program's goal will be to ensure that agricultural services reach women farmers. OGC will help to build the capacity of a new Gender Observatory, which monitors and evaluates progress on gender equality to understand and address the demands of female/male farmers for agricultural services.

It is important to emphasize that there is a difference between gender sensitive data and data that were obtained by sex-disaggregating existing data. Disaggregation alone does not make it gender sensitive. In particular, if the underlying data collection is blind to gender issues and women's specific needs and concerns then the obtained data are not gender sensitive, merely sex-disaggregated. Gender-sensitive data are obtained when the entire data collection, analysis and dissemination process is reviewed from a gender perspective, including recruiting women as data collectors.

In other words, women's interests, concerns and women's perspective need to be incorporated at every stage of the process. For example, the Nepal Population and Housing Census in 2001 was explicitly gender sensitive.

The most meaningful way to measure gender equality in government [or society at large] is by distinguishing between different levels of data and what they actually measure: input, process and outcome data. The methodology of the Gender and Democratic Governance in Development program is to focus on implementation processes as the key to improving the delivery of basic services to women. The User's Guide features new tools for gathering process-oriented governance data that can generate indicators needed to improve service delivery to women, e.g. gender budget analysis and tracking; beneficiary impact assessment; public expenditure tracking surveys; time user surveys, etc. The main use of such process-oriented data and indicators should be at national and sub-national levels to inform in-country policy making.

Innovative projects do involve by its nature a certain level of risk. In our case, one of the biggest potential risks is organizational resistance to a more open and performance-based culture of service delivery. The program addresses the risk in several ways: each of the country initiatives is grounded in existing and long-running programmes; in each of the pilot countries an inception mission was conducted to identify key partners and build foundations for a knowledge base; an inception workshop was conducted with program partners from pilot countries including both local UNIFEM and UNDP staff and government and CSO representatives from the three pilot countries. Monitoring and oversight mechanisms will strengthen vertical and horizontal accountability structures to motivate and enforce institutional and behavioural change.

OGC plans to collect more experiences, methods, tools and general knowledge on gender governance assessments at: <http://www.gaportal.org/areas-of-governance/governance-and-gender>.

Digitalised Citizenship - working with networks

Diane Sheinberg, UNDP, iKNOW Politics

Background

In an attempt to get beyond the numbers, in November 2008, the National Democratic Institute, one of the iKNOW Politics partners, commissioned an independent assessment of the iKNOW Politics website by to determine the extent to which the project has achieved its original objectives of:

- Facilitating a global exchange of knowledge and resources on gender and political participation linking several existing networks and actors in an issue specific discussion; and
- Equipping women at the national, regional and grassroots levels with tools and resources that can be used to inform and support efforts to increase the numbers of women in politics and the contribution women make in the political arena.

After six-weeks of data collection and analysis, the assessment findings affirmed that in less than two years the iKNOW Politics project has positioned itself as a one-stop-shop for women in politics, with significant achievements including:

- Building a strong global membership (over 5,000 members across all continents)
- Creating networks and an exchange amongst women;
- Making available a large number of resources in three languages; and
- Supporting women in their contributions to politics.

iKNOW Politics members canvassed for the assessment indicted that the website is playing an important role to inform and support women in politics, even at this early stage of the project. However, as a global project, the iKNOW Politics website confronts the challenge of balancing between the competing demands of its members, experts and partners.

Building a Strong Global Membership

The iKNOW Politics project has successfully completed its main tasks in terms of “outputs”: the iKNOW Politics website has been launched and has attracted a growing global audience, from 54,000 to 224,000 visitors and 400,000 to 1,800,000 page views per month. Since its launch in February 2007, the site has received over 43 million hits, at a current rate of almost 89,000 hits per day. The assessment also found that the number of resources and members has doubled in the past year, which is an indication of the popularity of the iKNOW Politics website. According to the assessment findings, 70 percent of registered iKNOW Politics members come from developing and transitional countries (thanks to the network of the partner’s organizations and the daily work of the iKNOW Politics regional coordinators).

Creating Networks and an Exchange amongst Women

The iKNOW Politics website set out to facilitate an exchange of knowledge among women, primarily through the following features on the “Discuss” section of the website: Ask an

Expert, discussion circles and E-Discussion. Last year alone, online discussions attracted over 1,600 participants, and iKNOW Politics staff moderated three week-long interactive talks with more than 120 participants from 35 countries, on such topics as women's caucuses, fundraising strategies for women in politics and gender quotas. New knowledge was created, codified and shared within the iKNOW Politics community.

Impact and Results

- In Bhutan, information from iKNOW Politics helped to foster the creation of a women's wing of a political party
- In Sudan, a group of international donors is using expertise shared through iKNOW Politics as a guideline for engaging women in the country's elections later this year
- In Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia, information provided through iKNOW Politics is helping local organizations develop indicators to measure women's political participation
- In Somaliland, expertise from iKNOW Politics has helped overcome clan barriers to women's participation in local elections
- In Kyrgyzstan, a group of 50 women preparing to become candidates are using fundraising strategies that they learned during an iKNOW Politics online discussion

Approximately 10 percent of iKNOW Politics members actively use the "Discuss" features on iKNOW Politics; however, those who did use the features found them beneficial. For example, 85 percent of members surveyed who asked a question through the Ask the Expert feature found the response from the iKNOW Politics expert useful. Instances could also be found where the results of an exchange were used for concrete political actions.

The iKNOW Politics website has been effective in creating two other networks: firstly, the establishment by five international partners of the iKNOW Politics project and their continued cooperation; secondly, the iKNOW Politics project has brought together a group of over 60 experts that have collaborated on consolidated responses, contributed to E-Discussions and responded to questions from iKNOW Politics members.

Making Available a Large Number of Resources in Three Languages

The iKNOW Politics website set out to facilitate an exchange of resources amongst women primarily through the resources available in the Library section that are also available under thematic topics in the Issues section. The News and Discuss sections also offer resources in the form of news items and discussion comments and responses.

This assessment has found that the range and quality of resources available on the iKNOW Politics website have contributed to it successfully positioning itself as a key resource center on women in politics. Currently, the iKNOW Politics library hosts over 1,200 resources in English, French and Spanish. The overwhelming sentiment of the members canvassed was that the resources were a useful support for their political activities.

On average, 31 documents have been downloaded everyday from the iKNOW Politics website. With an average of 3,600 visits (sessions) to the website every day, this means that approximately every 100th visitor downloaded a document during a visit. Many women consulted during the assessment revealed that they had distributed and shared resources from the site with peers, thus creating a multiplying effect in increasing knowledge of women in politics.

Recommendations

The assessment report concludes with a series of recommendations for the project, including increasing promotion of the iKNOW Politics project among key audiences; creating activities to reach out to grassroots; consolidating and reanimating the exchange and networking aspects of the website; introducing more region-specific, language-specific and practical focused resources; and exploring ways to better utilize the network of iKNOW Politics experts.

The report recommendations will feed iKNOW Politics plans in the coming year for bringing on three Regional Coordinators, who will be based in NDI field offices in Indonesia, Jordan and Mali to conduct regional outreach.

Next steps for iKNOW Politics

- Expanding the community
- Launch of the Arabic website and develop the community in the Arab world
- Piloting e-learning

Challenges for independent northern CSOs

- the need for a political openness and financial commitment for CSO diversity to ensure the citizenship of the most marginalised women and girls

Carolina Wennerholm, Gender Consultant, GenderFocus

Background

During 20 years the Swedish NGO Kvinnoforum (KvF) developed its work and program for marginalised women and girls in Sweden and globally. From a small project it developed to run around 70 projects annually, at a national and international level, with around 60 in-house staff, a broad international network of partners and 30 MSEK budget the last years.

KvF worked with outcast girls and women giving them an opportunity to empowerment, through programs within health and abuse, violence such as trafficking in human beings, HRV and FGM, a school for drop-out girls, economic empowerment and women's entrepreneurship, with gender in media and women in politics. KvF worked out of a gender - and empowerment perspective through capacity building, lobbying, methods development, report- and manual writing and management of processes of change.

Challenges and Dilemmas

The case relates to the role of independent CSOs, specifically of women's CSO working with and giving voice to unwanted and unknown groups in society as well as with issues new or unknown on the agenda. It is based on the assumption that CSOs have an important role as to promote and work for the citizenship of women and girls.

KvF aimed at representing women in a modern way 1) as empowered agents despite the target group being marginalised in society at large and 2) organised in a different way, operating through networks as opposed to the traditional Swedish representative democratic model. Challenges of funding and resistance were during all years barriers for the organisation. When this coincided with a focused negative media coverage the organisation could not survive and was forced to close with consequences in terms of ensuring citizenship for marginalised groups of women and girls in Sweden and globally.

In a globalised world, the conditions and challenges that women's organisations meet, either in Sweden or for instance in the South, particularly for those challenging the mainstream, have very much in common despite different agendas and context specific needs. There remains a need for recognizing these similarities and how governance structures play a role in creating an enabling environment for such organisations in order to ensure a true democracy where the voices of women count.

An attempt to describe what happened in Sweden is as follows:

Challenge 1: Organisation for funding

Lacking funding is a well-known challenge for CSOs. Also in Sweden this is a problem, particularly for new organisations, or CSOs not organised according to the traditional Swedish model: with background in the so called “peoples movement” and representative democracy. The model has formed the possibilities for finding financial support so that when democratic values are a requirement for funding, it is the membership affiliation which is the key, not the value of the organisations work or who the organisation represents. Thus, forerunners, to the mainstream “politically incorrect” organisations not adapted to the traditional model have been de facto excluded and obstructed in their participation, as well as to the main channels for funding.

KvF aimed to be organised differently: As a foundation but reaching out through networks and through its concrete work, to groups who for different reasons were not interested in the membership structure (i.e. young girls, women in abuse), or could not risk to be members of an organisation (i.e. victims of HRV, trafficking). KvF had no problems in finding project funding, particularly internationally (EU and UN), as well as private contributions. The organisation was professional and many times nominated with best case project results. However, there was a need for core funding, particularly for covering the costs for support and advice to women and girls, as well as other stakeholders calling daily asking for direct support or information and to which the organisation responded. KvF made during the years various efforts to obtain core funding from Swedish governmental bodies, but even though the work and results were much valued, the request was always turned down with reference to the organisational structure. The project funding obviously did not leave any surplus and thus, when a larger funding was withdrawn due to differences in the project outcome, KvF never managed to get in balance. Core funding would have made the difference.

Challenge 2: External resistance on an independent voice

KvF aimed at working with issues that were new or non-existent on the agenda, as well as with those groups who do not have a voice in society, for instance women’s with HIV/AIDS in the late -80s, trafficking in human beings, girls being harassed and even killed in the name of honour. KvF never hesitated in contesting the mainstream agenda, and had an independent voice. KvF did not belong to any political arena nor popular movement. KvF was independent. This generated resistance and opposition from different groups in society expressed in debates (important) but also through exclusion. The resistance at a bureaucratic level was expressed in that project funding was withdrawn when the project results were politically incorrect. However, the modern methods, unexpected partners and important issues raised by KvF generated processes of change which was highly valued by those interested in change, i.e. Swedish MFA, the police, Stockholm City, EU programs (Equal, Daphne, Stop)UN bodies, international and local CSOs worldwide and many others who supported politically and financially. Thus, through the years KvF developed a global network of important friends but also of, resistance at different levels in the Swedish society, which finally was a hinder for politician’s promises of finding a final financial solution.

Challenge 3: Internal resistance

The external perspective of the organisation, in terms of what it delivered, was that of a strong organisation. Yet, the project funded nature of the organisation, with additional demands on support to women and girls and other stakeholders, which was not funded, implied a reality of an organisation with very tough financial and material resources. This created a sense of insecurity among certain staff members. There was further a high

demand on the employees, who generally were very committed and efficient. But the organisation could not bear employees who did not deliver at a high level. Thus, there was a controversy some thought, on one hand that the externally so strong organisation had so little resources and, that an organisation which aimed at working with weak groups, had high demands on the staff. Also, being an organisation that was questioned externally by those resistant to change, could be difficult by some of the employees who wished the organisation to be more adaptable to the “voice of the master”, i.e. funding structures. Thus, while most staff members either remained working committed, or moved on creating a network of former colleagues, there were people who left the organisation angry, bearing with them misunderstandings and frustrations.

Challenge 4: The role of media

Media was during all years a good friend of the organisation. Despite little finance for communication work, the organisation was often asked for by media when it came to women’s and girl’s situation. However, media played a devastating role which finally broke the organisation. Based on false information and rumours from the small group of former frustrated employees, and interviewing selected external critical persons, one newspaper and one TV Channel managed to build up a program full of lies. All those who stood up for the organisation, among partners, former and present employees and friends, were not heard or disregarded by these journalists. Other media were not interested and did not follow the issue. Yet, the intensity of the focused media campaign created rumours and fear among those unsure of what was what. And many of them who were happy with their experience in one of the arenas of work of KvF were suddenly unsure of its other arenas. The strong friends were not heard and unsure friends were quiet. Thus, a small group of people caused a lot of damage at a moment when the financial situation was particularly delicate.

Lessons Learned

The case of Kvinnoforum represents both general challenges as well as is a unique context specific case. Being a women’s organization it shared many of the challenges of women’s organizations elsewhere: political external resistance, a constant search for funding and internal discussion and debates on the right path. The organization managed to deal with these challenges and developed its work during 20 years.

However, whether it is unique in that it could not survive when these challenges coincided with a focused negative media campaign I cannot tell. I do not believe so. Thus, the main lesson seems to be that in a democracy the governance structures must ensure both a political openness for independent CSOs to operate, allow for a critical voice, and for development of new and emerging issues, as well as to earmark funding for the same purpose, to forerunners and projects who focus on method- and theory development, emerging issues and which try new paths.

The consequences of the KvF case in Sweden was that girls were without their school, many thousands of girls and women without a place to call for support, around 70 projects uncompleted, with counterparts and target-groups in Sweden and globally without partner and project- results. It left a gap in Swedish society among those asking for a resource centre on gender and empowerment, on expertise on working for excluded groups and for processes of change. Sweden was left without an important and independent voice which raised the voice of girls and women who are not, do not want to, or could not be organised in the traditional structures.

There is a strong need for continuing highlighting new and/or sensitive issues and to support the empowerment of the most marginalised women and girls out of a gender perspective. This is important as to ensure the citizenship of those who are marginalised. Civil society has an important role herein. The KvF case aims at high-lighting the challenges faced in the everyday work, although not new, still prevalent, in Sweden and elsewhere and with global impact. The case also urges gender aware decision-makers with an interest in change, to ensure at a structural level political and financial openness and commitment to ensure the existence of a flora of different types of organisations which reach and work for the citizenship of different groups in society