



## Gender Mainstreaming in Practice

Nine examples of good practice from four continents

## **Imprint**

### **Published by:**

Diakonisches Werk der EKD e.V.

for "Brot für die Welt"

Stafflenbergstrasse 76

D-70184 Stuttgart

Germany

Telephone: ++49 711/2159-568

E-Mail: [info@brot-fuer-die-welt.de](mailto:info@brot-fuer-die-welt.de)

**[www.brot-fuer-die-welt.de](http://www.brot-fuer-die-welt.de)**

**Editorial team:** Jörg Jenrich, Bettina Lutterbeck, Carsta Neuenroth, Dr. Klaus Seitz

**Editorial service and layout:** Jörg Jenrich

**Legally responsible for content:** Thomas Sandner

**Cover photo:** Christoph Püschner

**Art.Nr.:** 129 600 130

Stuttgart, October 2009

---

# Gender Mainstreaming in Practice

Nine examples of good practice from four continents

# Contents

Abbreviations	8
Foreword	9
Introduction	11
<b>1 PROMESA – a promise for the poor</b>	<b>15</b>
1.1 Gender processes in the region	17
1.2 Description of the good practice	18
1.3 Positive and negative factors affecting the implementation of the gender approach	22
1.4 Changes achieved	24
1.5 Conclusions and lessons learned	25
<b>2 EMAS – the united women’s team</b>	<b>27</b>
2.1 Gender relations in the region	27
2.2 Description of the good practice	28
2.3 Conducive and inhibiting factors affecting the implementation of the gender approach	31
2.4 Changes achieved	31
2.5 Conclusions and lessons learned	32
<b>3 AFREDA – economic and social empowerment in the Kilombero women’s project</b>	<b>33</b>
3.1 Gender relations in the region	34
3.2 Description of the good practice	35
3.3 Conducive and inhibiting factors affecting the implementation of the gender approach	36
3.4 Changes achieved	37
3.5 Conclusions and lessons learned	38
<b>4 ISAPSO – active against HIV and AIDS</b>	<b>40</b>
4.1 Gender relations in the region	41

4.2	Description of the good practice	41
4.3	Conducive and inhibiting factors affecting the implementation of the gender approach	44
4.4	Changes achieved	44
4.5	Conclusions and lessons learned	45
<b>5</b>	<b>COMINSUD – promoting democracy through the empowerment of women</b>	<b>46</b>
5.1	Gender relations in the region	47
5.2	Description of the good practice	47
5.3	Conducive and inhibiting factors affecting the implementation of the gender approach	49
5.4	Changes achieved	51
5.5	Conclusions and lessons learned	52
<b>6</b>	<b>SAMVADA – combating marginalisation through dialogue and encounter</b>	<b>53</b>
6.1	Gender relations in the region	53
6.2	Description of the good practice	55
6.3	Conducive and inhibiting factors affecting the implementation of the gender approach	59
6.4	Changes achieved	60
6.5	Conclusions and lessons learned	62
<b>7</b>	<b>ZOTO – a grassroots organisation in the slums of Tondo/Metro Manila</b>	<b>63</b>
7.1	Gender relations in the region	64
7.2	Description of the good practice	65
7.3	Conducive and inhibiting factors affecting the implementation of the gender approach	67
7.4	Changes achieved	68

# Contents

7.5	Conclusions and lessons learned	69
<b>8</b>	<b>YAPIDI – credit associations to aid women</b>	<b>70</b>
8.1	Gender relations in the region	71
8.2	Description of the good practice	71
8.3	Conducive and inhibiting factors affecting the implementation of the gender approach	74
8.4	Changes achieved	74
8.5	Conclusions and lessons learned	75
<b>9</b>	<b>UAW – equality for Albanian women</b>	<b>77</b>
9.1	Gender relations in the region	77
9.2	Description of the good practice	78
9.3	Conducive and inhibiting factors affecting the implementation of the gender approach	80
9.4	Changes achieved	81
9.5	Conclusions and lessons learned	81

## Tables

Table 1: EMAS development stages	29
Table 2: Stages and milestones in the development of SAMVADA	57
Table 3: Importance of SAMVADA	59
Table 4: Effects of SAMVADA work on girls and boys	61
Table 5: Integration of gender equality in ZOTO's work	66

## Abbreviations

AFREDA	Action for Relief and Development Assistance
CEMAC	Communauté Economique et Monetaire de l'Afrique
COMINSUD	Community Initiative for Sustainable Development
DESUNE	Development Support Service
EMAS	Equipo Mujeres en Acción Solidaria
FAKT	FAKT Consult for Management, Training and Technologies
ISAPSO	Integrated Service for AIDS Prevention and Support Organization
KIWODEFU	Kilombero Women Development Fund
MBOSCUDA	Mbororo Social and Cultural Development Association
PIDAASSA	Programa de Intercambio, Diálogo y Asesoría en Agricultura Sostenible y Seguridad Alimentaria (Programme for Exchange, Dialogue and Assistance on Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security)
PME	Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
PROMESA	Programa de Ministerio y Educación Social
SAMVADA	Tamil: dialogue
SIRDEP	Society for Initiatives in Rural Development and Environmental Protection
UAW	Useful to Albanian Women
YAPIDI	Yayasan Pijer Podi (Pijer Podi Foundation)
ZOTO	Zone One Tondo Organization

## Foreword

Just over sixty years ago, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the community of states announced its intention to promote the establishment of the principle of gender equality in all areas of society. This remains however far removed from the reality experienced by many women today. There have undoubtedly been huge efforts in many places to reduce not only legal discrimination against women, but also the discrepancy of power and opportunity that exists between men and women. Nevertheless, no country on earth has yet managed to put an end to all discrimination against women and close the gap between the genders.

Women still have fewer social and economic opportunities than men. That is why the face of poverty is still a female one. Two in every three of the world's poorest people are women. Women possess only about one percent of global wealth. Although they are now more often in paid employment, this usually takes the form of precarious, poorly paid or insecure jobs.

Women in developing countries own only ten percent of the land available for cultivation, but produce approximately 80 percent of the basic foodstuffs. Women enjoy greater parliamentary representation today, yet are seldom to be found in positions of political power. Every year, more than half a million women die owing to a lack of medical care during childbirth. Violence against women and girls – the world over – is an everyday occurrence. These days women are more greatly affected by AIDS than men. Additional phenomena have also arisen such as the international trafficking in women or the consequences of militarisation and state disintegration; these cause particular suffering to women and girls, who are frequently the victims of sexual violence.

The continuing inequality between the genders not only restricts the actual life prospects for women and girls, it also hinders the economic and social development of whole societies. Over a period of many years "Brot für die Welt" ("Bread for the world") has there-

fore supported its partner organisations in improving gender equality by systematically working for the advancement of women and the recognition and protection of their rights.

The advancement of women and gender equality are permanent features of the „Brot für die Welt“ programme and its project work. In our policy paper the aim of "changing gender relations" was inserted as a separate field of action, in recognition of the fact that men's perception of gender roles would have to change to allow both sexes the opportunity to participate equally in the process of social development.

In 2005 „Brot für die Welt“ and the Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst (EED, Church Development Service) agreed on a joint course of action to promote equal life chances for men and women which was launched under the title "Closing the gap between our theory and practice". With this in mind, it is also the aim of the current publication, featuring nine examples of "good practice" from the „Brot für die Welt“ programme, to demonstrate just how this theory is being put into practice. Unfortunately the gender debate still suffers from the fact that the jargon frequently associated with it is often viewed by many sceptics as abstract and inaccessible. In practice, however, gender mainstreaming is extremely tangible, very clear, and highly personal.

The examples from four continents herein documented are graphic proof that gender-sensitive development projects do work; they demonstrate how these projects operate and what successes they can achieve – to the benefit of both men and women. The idea in this instance is not to present them as cases to be copied, since conditions in the different regions vary immensely.

It is obvious that specific, finely tuned approaches are required, particularly when addressing the sensitive issue of gender relations. Nevertheless, the examples presented can and should be a source of encouragement, an appeal to others to be inspired by the commitment of those involved in the projects on the ground, using the ideas and experience gained for the benefit of new initiatives.

## Gender Mainstreaming | Practice

All the examples featured in this publication have been approved by the individual partner organisations concerned and some of the reports have been written by leading members of the organization on the ground. In order to share this wealth of experience with our partner organisations around the world, this information is to be published in English, Spanish, Portuguese and French.

The idea of especially documenting selected examples of good gender practice in this way was proposed by the Ökumenische Diakonie (OED, Ecumenical Service) gender steering group, which has been involved in the publication process from the outset. We would therefore like to extend our particular gratitude to the members of the steering group as well as to the authors of the individual reports for their work, the fruits of which we hereby present to the interested public.

Particular thanks are due to Carsta Neuenroth, publication coordinator, from FAKT, whose task it was to consult those concerned, cross-check and, together with Bettina Lutterbeck, edit the texts. She also penned the introduction, which sheds light on a few aspects of “good practice” and in the process draws attention to a central realisation: namely, that equality between the sexes is not something that can be brought about through resolutions; it is a state that often only emerges from a lengthy process fraught with obstacles and conflicts.

Stuttgart, February 2009

Dr. Klaus Seitz  
Head of Policy Department  
„Brot für die Welt“



Photo: Anel Sancho Kenjekeeva

## Introduction

Creating equal life chances for women and men is one of the challenges and fields of action addressed by the Ecumenical Social Service. The organisation has therefore set itself the aim of strengthening gender competence among both its partner organisations and its own employees, while ensuring it also has a permanent place in its project work.

This publication is intended to contribute to the process by providing a clear and incisive picture of “good practices” of partner organisations in advancing gender justice. The idea is not to promote the copying of successful experiences to other contexts. The aim is rather to provide partner organisation and Ecumenical Social Service staff with access to the positive experiences, as a source of inspiration for developing their own projects.

Successful projects are usually referred to as “best practice” examples. The Ecumenical Social Service nevertheless prefers the term “good practice”. Each case study is the result of an organisation’s “good practice” in the implementation of gender equality. Nevertheless potential weaknesses will not be overlooked.

This publication features nine examples of good practice, three from Asia and Africa respectively, two from Latin America and one from Eastern Europe. These are projects which embrace the difficult topic of gender equality using a variety of thematic and context-related

approaches and which have been realised by the organisations in question with a huge degree of commitment.

- During a protracted process of trust-building, PROMESA has managed to convince elders of the Kuna and Emberá peoples that the advancement of women and gender equality can also benefit indigenous communities. The organisation promotes sustainable farming, food security and gender equality among Panama’s peasant and indigenous communities.

- In Michoacán, Mexico, EMAS demonstrates how a gender perspective can be integrated into areas such as health, farming and human rights. The organisation also works with peasant and indigenous communities. Founded as a women’s organisation, EMAS now actively involves men in its work too.

- In Tanzania’s Kilombero district women have formed groups to manage small credit funds. They are backed by AFREDA. In addition to accounting and loan management the women address gender issues and the HIV and AIDS problem.

- HIV and AIDS form the focus of ISAPSO’s work. The organisation breaks taboos by giving schoolgirls and boys from various secondary schools in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the opportunity to exchange views on issues such as gender equality, relationships, marriage and sexuality.

- In Cameroon, COMINSUD aims to help combat poverty and implement good governance. This also in-

## Gender Mainstreaming | Practice

cludes commitment to the cause of gender equality. Religious, political and traditional institutions receive support in their efforts to change existing power structures that maintain discrimination against women and oppression of women.

■ In Bangalore, capital of the southern Indian state of Karnataka, SAMVADA works to provide disadvantaged young people with the opportunity to lead independent lives. Initially, the project focused on girls and young women. As it became clear how much male youths were also suffering from the role expectations placed on them, a gender-sensitive project aimed at girls and boys was set up.

■ ZOTO is also active in an urban environment. The grassroots organisation encompasses 14,000 poor people from the Metro Manila region in the Philippines who are campaigning for their rights, in particular their right to living space. A independent women's project arose out of a campaign against domestic violence. Once the organisation recognised the link between gender inequality and poverty, the gender approach took on greater significance.

■ Similarly to AFREDA in Tanzania, YAPIDI supports women in the rural north of the Indonesian island of Sumatra in the setting up and administration of credit associations, thereby enabling them to generate income. Here too, the gender approach is increasing in importance. Men are also expected to play a part in overcoming the inequality that exists between the sexes.

■ In formerly communist Albania UAW is committed to improving the legal status of women. The organisation achieves this by organising events and by participating in numerous campaigns, drawing attention to the discrimination against women in Albanian society and lobbying for their equal rights.

The examples in this publication are grouped according to the individual continents in which the partner organisations are active. There are apparently no striking continental peculiarities or differences. The targets set regarding the gender work such as equal opportunities

and the reduction of discrimination against women are usually the same, as are the problems that need to be overcome in order to attain these goals. Nevertheless, the individual examples do illustrate specific national and/or regional factors that have an impact on implementation of the gender approach.

The good practice examples reveal that women are now represented not only in the organisations, but also at a target group level in local committees or grassroots organisations. Many have learnt to speak out in front of and talk to their male counterparts, to make decisions and to represent their own interests. Women actively participate and are involved at different levels.

Access to loans and to income-generating measures has meant an improvement in the economic and social status of many. These women have gone through a process of empowerment that has boosted their sense of self-worth and confidence in their own abilities.

The examples show that the gender approach is being and can be implemented in various cultural contexts with traditionally misogynistic tendencies. Despite many an adverse dimension, there is no such thing as "can't". Although disputes and sometimes even violent clashes can and do occur, the experience of the different organisations has shown that these can often be solved or at least defused by an open discussion of the issues and expert counselling of those involved.

The majority of organisations involved in implementing "good practice" projects focus their efforts on consolidating democratic structures and civil society as a whole. The emphasis and means of implementation may vary, yet it remains a central goal.

The assertion of social justice and ecological sustainability is also a reason for committing to gender equality. In this context gender equality is regarded as helping to advance democracy and promote democratic civil society. Gender relations are observed within the framework of other discriminatory and exclusive situations. Efforts are focused on causing a general shift in social relations that extends far beyond the domestic context.

The examples show that the projects presented generally feature elements aimed at promoting and empowering women as well as an orientation towards gender equality. Prior to integrating the gender approach into a project's concept, most organisations complete an initial phase aimed at the advancement of women, that is, they promote the active involvement of women in programmes and projects, their access to and control over resources, as well as the espousal of women's rights as human rights.

Only with growing experience and the realisation that gender relations can only change if both sexes get involved, do they finally start focusing on gender equality and, by extension, on gender mainstreaming. The advancement of women remains a strategic tool in the achievement of gender equality.

Increasingly work focusing on men is also a part of the strategy. In this context PROMESA's masculinity workshops are particularly worthy of mention. It must be said that the other projects do also encourage reflection on stereotypical male roles, yet in a less systematic way.

Domestic violence and gender inequality are inseparable. Many of the projects presented attach appropriate significance to this link. In one instance this has led to a deepening in gender issue understanding. Here too it is apparent that an oppressive situation can often be defused by discussing the problem and providing appropriate counselling. At the same time it is clear that more attention needs to be paid to overcoming domestic violence in the context of a shift in gender relations.

If gender equality is to be achieved, disputes need to be faced head on. Nevertheless the examination of unequal gender relations does not solely give rise to conflict. Both that which separates and that which unites is revealed.

## Methodology

The examples presented were either identified as instances of good practice during the elaboration of the

Ecumenical Social Service study "Women have become visible, but gender is an issue for both women and men!", or proposed by staff from the different continental groups. In each instance the selection was made on the basis of the following criteria, which may be regarded as indicating the centrality of the gender perspective to the organisations in question, their programmes and projects:

- The existence of a clear conceptual understanding of the differences between and similarities shared by the advancement of women and gender equality;
- Inclusion of gender equality in the organisation's mission and vision;
- Existence of a gender policy within the organisation;
- Integration of gender orientation in planning, monitoring and evaluation (PME) activities;
- Implementation of convincing methodological approaches;
- Process-oriented development of the gender approach;
- Implementation of gender mainstreaming.

In addition to the above-mentioned criteria, another important aspect affecting case selection was the degree of innovation shown in implementing the approach. Moreover, a guide on the presentation of good practices was developed. All the examples therefore feature the following standard headings:

1. Gender relations in the region,
2. Description of the good practice,
3. Positive and negative factors affecting the implementation of the gender approach,
4. Changes achieved,

## Gender Mainstreaming I Practice

### 5. Conclusions and lessons learned.

The case studies were created in a variety of different ways. The organisations PROMESA, EMAS, ISAPSO and SAMVADA were visited by Bettina Lutterbeck, Carsta Neuenroth and Heide Trommer who then wrote the following reports. COMINSUD and UAW compiled their own project presentations with the help of the guide. In the case of ZOTO and YAPIDI, case studies including descriptions of women's promotion and gender projects were compiled within the context of the impact studies "50 Jahre 'Brot für die Welt'". Based on the impact studies and the guide, Carsta Neuenroth compiled the good practice examples of ZOTO and YAPIDI presented in this documentation. The AFREDA case study was also elaborated in the context of the impact studies "50 Jahre 'Brot für die Welt'" report. The author of the case study, Dr. Thomas Döhne, penned the report included here. Final editing of the texts was carried out by Bettina Lutterbeck and Carsta Neuenroth from FAKT.



Photo: Bettina Lutterbeck

## 1 PROMESA – a promise for the poor

Like many of the civil society organisations still active in the country, Panama's Episcopal social programme was founded following the invasion of US troops in 1989. In order to keep church activities and social programmes separate, the Episcopal church gathered its social programmes together in 1998 to form the Fundación para el Desarrollo Humano Integral (foundation for integrated human development).

PROMESA is one of the foundation's programmes and has received funding from „Brot für die Welt“ since the foundation was established. The abbreviation chosen for the Programa de Ministerio y Educación Social (PROMESA) is at the same time its manifesto: PROMESA means “promise”.

PROMESA was set up during a political and economic Ice Age. The country's return to democracy was accompanied by heated debate, as the different power factions thrashed out the course of future political and economic development. At the same time Panama was slow to recover from the deep depression in which it found itself following the trade embargo years. The USA imposed the embargo as the extent of Noriega's political machinations and his involvement in drug dealing became clear.

PROMESA's initial emphases were an aid programme for poor families in a district of the capital flattened by

### Panama: Unequal development opportunities

In the human development report issued in 2007, Panama ranked number 62 just behind Saudi Arabia. Nevertheless, social wealth remains extremely unevenly distributed in Panama. After Brazil Panama is the country with the greatest disparity of personal incomes in the Western Hemisphere: Twenty percent of the population control over 63 percent of the country's annual income, while the poorest 20 percent of the population have to make do with a mere 1.5 percent of the gross domestic product. 1.2 million people, or 37.2 percent of the population, are extremely poor and have to manage on less than one US dollar a day. The income disparity between urban and rural populations is particularly pronounced. Sixty-five percent of the rural population and 95.4 percent of the indigenous population live in extreme poverty.

US troops, human rights campaigns and the provision of mobile health stations to ensure primary health care. Several years later PROMESA intensified its contact with rural communities, where poverty and social and cultural disparities are at their most extreme.

### Projects for the poorest of the poor

The PROMESA programme is aimed solely at the “poorest of the poor”:

- at groups of farmers who own very little land and/or cultivate leased land,

## Gender Mainstreaming | Practice

■ and at indigenous communities of Kuna and Emberá, who live in tribal districts known as comarcas.

For the last three years the PROMESA programme has been led by a teacher with a total of 15 years' experience spent working for the Episcopalian social programme. Three long-term female project workers complete the team. Two of them come from the indigenous and farming target groups respectively, while the third worker has prior experience of women's social work.

### Gender equality as a core feature of rural development

Since 2003, PROMESA has been a partner organisation of the South American Programa de Intercambio, Diálogo y Asesoría en Agricultura Sostenible y Seguridad Alimentaria (PIDAASSA). Since then all PROMESA activities have taken place under the umbrella of PIDAASSA and in accordance with its guidelines. Active in eleven Latin American countries, this programme of dialogue and assistance, which focuses on sustainable agriculture and food security, is funded by „Brot für die Welt“ and assists farming families in securing their livelihood. The focus is on sharing experience according to the “from farmer to farmer” methodology. Questions and experience concerning crop rotation, mixed cropping and natural pest control are shared and circulated.

PIDAASSA regards equality between men and women as one of the basic principles of sustainable development; this principle is integrated at all levels of the programme and in all its activities. Within the PIDAASSA framework, PROMESA supports groups of farmers and indigenous communities in two of the country's most disadvantaged regions.

■ In Coclé province, which is dominated by the agro-industrial production of rice and sugar cane, PROMESA supports groups of poor, mostly landless farmers. They live in remote regions characterised by poor infrastructure – in terms of education, health and transport. Many of the communities have no access to drinking water and electricity. In addition to cultivating land as they see fit, the men in these supported groups also take on day

labour jobs according to season, particularly during the sugar cane harvest, and in the gold and copper mines owned by the Canadian mining company Petaquilla; the women farm and engage in handicrafts, thus generating monetary income. They weave the legendary Panama hats.

■ In Panama province, PROMESA supports groups of indigenous Emberá and Kuna. They live in villages allocated to the indigenous communities at the end of the seventies when their tribal land was flooded by the Bayano dam. Some groups were resettled in the Ipetí region. Other villages sprang up in remote areas only reachable by boat. The indigenous communities have no access to electricity and drinking water. They obtain water from rivers contaminated with agrochemical residues. Land is usually cultivated collectively, with the men working the fields and the women helping out at harvest time. They mainly grow basic foodstuffs such as plantains, yucca, maize and beans. They also produce traditional pieces of sewn art (molos), jewellery and goods woven from palm fibres, which are sold via intermediate traders.

The precarious social and economic situation of the indigenous population is aggravated by disputes concerning the political and geographical classification of the reserves and by the struggle to keep illegal settlers out of tribal areas. Both tribes are seeking legal compensation for their resettlement.

While there were still 14 aid organisations funding projects to improve the living conditions of Panama's indigenous population in 1998, PROMESA is now the only organisation to support the social development of the indigenous communities.

By 2008, the foundation had trained a mixed group of 47 indigenous people and farmers as promoters. Among the farmers the male/female split is approximately 50:50; among the indigenous people some 80 percent are male and only 20 percent female. They advise producer groups from a total of 18 organisations. Of these, six are active in indigenous projects and twelve in farming regions. While the indigenous cooperatives have be-

tween 40 and 70 members each, the farming organisations are comparatively small with between six and eighteen members each.

As part of the “good practice” report, interviews were held with the director of PROMESA, the project workers, the promoters from both farming and indigenous project regions (Kuna Madungandi and Emberá-Ipetí), as well as numbers of men and women from the target groups, some in mixed, some in single-sex groups.

Several of the farmers and indigenous people interviewed had travelled several hours by foot or by boat to reach the venues assigned for the various regions. An interpreter translated the oral reports given by women from the indigenous cooperatives into Spanish. Project records were also consulted. This report is mainly based on descriptions of processes and the current situation as related during the interviews – sometimes you could be forgiven for thinking that you are listening to a gender fairytale.

## 1.1 Gender processes in the region

### Women’s politics and the struggle for gender equality in Panama

An organised women’s movement emerged in Panama at the same time as the Latin American and international movements for the recognition of women’s rights. As early as 1980 Panama ratified the UN convention passed in 1979 on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW). Today the Panamanian women’s movement is still principally supported by mestizo women resident in urban surroundings. It witnessed a certain boost to its ranks during the cruzada civilista, a broad alliance of social movements against the Noriega dictatorship.

For the social movements the US invasion marked a break with the old. Following years of painful repression, the women’s movement reinvented itself to emerge stronger than ever. In 1992, women from a variety of social backgrounds, from churches, unions, uni-

versities and the world of politics, as well as female representatives from indigenous organisations got together to form a national “Woman and development” forum (foro nacional “Mujer y Desarrollo”), which was to further the political cause of equality in Panama in the years to come. One of PROMESA’s project workers was a founding member of this forum.

According to the words of one participant, the first national plan to establish equality between men and women, Pro Igualdad (Pro Equality), was “more a diagnosis of the situation than a plan of action, its recommendations little more than pronouncements”. European Union funding however added considerable political weight to the implementation of the plan. These days Panama’s laws on gender equality are some of the most comprehensive in Latin America.

### Legal equality on paper

An equal opportunities law passed by Panama in 1999 was hailed as a major milestone in the country’s equality policy; among other things it prescribes a quota arrangement for public sector positions, with women entitled to a minimum share of 30 percent. Despite this, no measures have since been taken by the state to ensure adherence to the quota, a grievance highlighted in a shadow report submitted in 2007 by Panamanian civil society organisations parallel to Panama’s official report to the UN Commission on Human Rights. Moreover, criticism abounds that the social ministry department entrusted with the implementation of gender equality measures has one of the lowest budget allocations in government.

In 2002, an ordinance associated with the equal opportunities law was passed aimed at curbing discrimination against women on the job market – the female employment target was set at 50 percent. The labour ministry concerned was not allocated any resources to aid in the removal of existing barriers and promote the employment of women. Unemployment among women therefore remains at a much higher level than among men, while women in employment on average earn 35 percent less than their male counterparts.

## Gender Mainstreaming | Practice

### Gender relations in the Coclé farming population and among the Indian communities of the Kuna-Madungandí and Embera-Ipetí

In Panama disparities between urban and rural communities and between people of different ethnic backgrounds have led to the emergence of parallel societies, which differ greatly in economic, political and socio-cultural terms, as well as in their approach to gender relations.

Among Panama's farming population the number of households headed by women is 25 percent higher than in urban areas. Partly this has to do with the fact that many men periodically migrate to other regions as day labourers, often leaving their families behind for good.

Women are also represented in this migrating workforce, the majority of them young women and girls. In a few especially poor regions such as Machuca, for instance, approx. 80 percent of girls aged between 13 and 16 are sent to work as maids in urban catchment areas. Some go on to work as employees in micro-enterprises within the informal sector. Once they have had children women generally do not leave the family home.

About fifty percent of Panama's indigenous population live in tribal districts, known as comarcas, with their own political and administrative structures.

While five percent of the non-indigenous rural population are illiterate, this figure rises to an average of 30 percent among the indigenous peoples. Representative studies of communities within the tribal areas revealed that 35 percent of the Emberá, 39 percent of the Kuna Yala and as many as 46 percent of the Ngöbe Buglé are unable to either read or write.

Among the indigenous population the illiteracy rate among women and girls is 1.6 times greater than that among men and boys. This is attributed to the fact that indigenous women traditionally adopt roles within the extended family and the community, while contact with the outside world and political representation has been a male preserve.

Within the indigenous population, as is evidenced by the Kuna Madungandí and Emberá-Ipetí groups supported by PROMESA, the power difference between men and women is extreme. All decisions affecting the community are taken by the men. Girls are married off very young, traditionally soon after their first menstruation, at the age of about eleven. They are then considered adults and as such are responsible for the children, the household and the organisation of various ritual customs.

Girls and women help the men get in the harvest; traditionally women have not been allocated land. Among the Kuna, women are not represented at a political level at all, neither as head (sahila) of a tribal group, as the highest representative of a larger communal unit (cacique), nor as delegates to the tribal congress; a handful of exceptions exist among the Emberá.

## 1.2 Description of the good practice

### Conceptual framework: personal identification, commitment and consistent implementation

PROMESA is a small, highly committed programme with a comparatively low degree of institutionalisation and a lean administration. Records for many of the activities conducted, whether in the area of sustainable agriculture or advocacy, merely take the form of notes. There is no tradition of evaluation or impact monitoring. Nevertheless its reports reveal that gender enjoys unparalleled status as a cross-cutting issue.

Despite the gaps in its paperwork, PROMESA has been selected as an example of good practice because the organisation regards the promotion of women and gender mainstreaming as an integral element of project design and accords it priority status in the planning and implementation of activities.

In contrast to other organisations that spotlight gender equality in their policy papers yet accord it mere secondary status in practice, PROMESA sees gender equality as a starting point for social justice and environmental sus-

tainability. Suitable measures aimed at equal rights for men and women can be found in all project activities.

PROMESA has also helped increase the attention paid to gender aspects within the foundation and within the Episcopal church. The bishop has even taken part in gender activities including, among other things, a masculinity workshop.

In 2007 PROMESA decided to put the organisation's gender policy on record. With this aim in mind PROMESA initiated a participatory process which took the form of a series of consultations involving the organisation's director and project workers, the promoters and the target groups themselves. A spiritual dimension to aspects of gender policy and sustainability is also included in the project approach.

*“We must learn that both women and men are like the earth; we are the fruit of this earth, we multiply through her and are socially and spiritually dependent on her; on this place that provides us with food and where we build our homes, where we live and work together. This is part of our outlook on the world. For this reason PROMESA regards gender justice and development as the two main pillars that support social values and structures. Convinced by this goal PROMESA integrates aspects of gender into all its activities, as prerequisite for environmental and social sustainability. With equal rights for all, men and women alike.” (from PROMESA's Introduction to Gender Policy)*

### **Sustainable agriculture, food security and gender equality**

PROMESA's take on the farming household is strategic: a range of measures are aimed at men, women and children as family units; in the case of indigenous groups, the community as a whole is addressed. Since 2001, PROMESA has focused on training promoters from the indigenous and farming target groups respectively. The emphasis is on advising cooperatives and producer groups about sustainable farming methods, especially

the diversification of production and the enhancement of soil fertility.

Improved yields and the diversification of production using suitable seeds from the region is intended to ensure food security, improve nutritional quality and thus play a role in enriching the population's diet. As multipliers within their communities the promoters pass on their expertise in sustainable agriculture. At a local level they are regarded as social role models and leaders.

From the outset gender issues have always played a role in PROMESA's work; since 2001 and owing to their universal relevance, they have been systematically integrated into all training programmes and activities. From 2004 to 2007 a total of 22 training events were held, some lasting several hours, others a number of days, which took the issue of gender relations as their heading, such as “Methods and instruments for promoting gender equality in sustainable agriculture” or “Gender aspects – implications for the organisation's decision-making process”. They were attended by more than 150 men and women from the indigenous and farming target groups.

As a special measure for the promotion of women, PROMESA offered unique support to women taking up leadership positions at a community level by providing services such as training in public speaking. Among the indigenous communities the focus of PROMESA's work has been on founding women's cooperatives.

### **Gender equality strategies with farming target groups**

The producer groups supported by PROMESA in the farming project region are comparatively small, with just six to 18 members per organisation. Some of the groups existed prior to receiving support from PROMESA, others were founded as part of the project design. Most of the active group members are over 40 and cultivate leased land.

Thanks to a switch to sustainable cultivation methods, food self-sufficiency is for the most part guaranteed.

## Gender Mainstreaming | Practice

The majority of families generate a modest monetary income, usually by selling palm fibre handicrafts, in particular Panama hats.

At the outset of the project some of the groups receiving support were mostly male, some solely female, others mixed. Over the years the composition of the groups has shifted slightly; these days most groups enjoy a

mixed membership and leadership roles are generally fairly distributed between the sexes.

Several of the organisations founded by women have even gone on to accept men. The organisation Damas Unidas de Machuca (United Ladies of Machuca) for instance currently has eleven female and six male members.

### Gender work breakthrough: masculinity workshops

The masculinity workshops staged by the Costa Rican organisation WEM (Instituto Costarricense de Masculinidad, Pareja y Sexualidad) throughout the whole of Central America are based on experience and tailored to the needs of the individual groups. Beginning with a gender analysis, they examine established male stereotypes in different areas of work and life.

Using a variety of methods – in addition to cognitive teaching methods, guided psycho-pedagogical approaches (including psychodrama, role plays and film analysis) are used in the group to assess aspects at an emotional level – the participants work through the characteristics of traditional male and/or patriarchal behaviour module for module in areas such as relationships, sexuality, agriculture or organisation.

Together, the participants formulate their ideas for the co-existence of men and women on the basis of equal rights. For many men it was the first time they had ever cried in front of other men, without feeling bad about it afterwards, and the first time they had ever spoken about problems in their relationship or concerning sexuality. Even the director of PROMESA himself admitted that the examination of masculinity had proved a deep and formative experience that had had a lasting impact on his emotional and everyday life as a man, a husband, father, project worker and organisation member. As a result this has been a decisive factor in further heightening the emphasis on gender issues within the organisation. In addition “mixed” men’s courses made up of participants from the different indigenous and farming organisations supported by PROMESA have in-

jected movement into deep-rooted thought and behavioural patterns. As a result it has proved easier to deal with disputes and/or prejudice between the Emberá and Kuna, and between indigenous and farming men and their organisations and communities.

The WEM instructors work with four archetypal male behavioural patterns, which specifically express ideals either personally rejected or revered by the men interviewed:

1. The King (an authoritative figurehead who leads with charisma, expects obedience and is unable to delegate);
2. the Warrior (jealously protects and defends his territory, loyal yet controlling, unable to talk about feelings);
3. the empathetic Lover (a sociable, eloquent individual, gets on well with men, flirts and has “relationships” with many women);
4. the Wise Man (impresses others with pragmatic strategies for solving problems, talks little yet achieves much, limited emotional intelligence).

During the workshop it was possible in many cases to demonstrate that by changing their stereotypical roles men could expect an easing of their responsibilities and improved quality of life, not least at an emotional level.

The fact that organisations originally founded and run by women now enjoy mixed membership and the groups dominated by men count on the active involvement of women can be attributed to changes in the gender-specific division of labour and more harmonious cooperation between men and women, which by turn is reflected in the improved social cohesion of the groups.

These days it is the personal suitability of an individual rather than his or her gender that proves the deciding factor when it comes to position or group membership.

This is the result of a process which the PROMESA project workers and the interviewed men and women from the target group describe as follows: up until 2000 gender work was not integrated, it was regarded as a separate field of activity and therefore remained generally restricted to discussions following gender workshops that were mainly attended by women.

The gender workshops examined the allocation of roles and the balance of power between men and women. The analysis of gender relations generally revealed the extent of the discrimination experienced by women, whereby the men often felt themselves under moral pressure and instinctively adopted a defensive stance.

In order to build gender awareness among both the sexes, PROMESA began addressing gender issues in every training course, whether the topic was cultivation methods, seeds, or access to land.

A few courses, such as communication and leadership training, were directed specifically at women. Simultaneously masculinity workshops have been held regularly since 2003 that, apart from the team's own attendance for the purpose of further training, are only open to men.

With this strategy it has been possible to pinpoint the advantages for men offered by an equal distribution of duties, demands and privileges. According to the men interviewed, the experience kick-started them into feeling "just as much sincere interest in changing the way we live as a family as the women".

### **Equality strategies with indigenous target groups**

When PROMESA began supporting indigenous groups, the initial aim was to build a relationship of trust. In the face of an ethnically discriminated group with a culturally intact code of values and a communal way of life fundamentally opposed to that of the Western world, PROMESA was initially called upon to show respect for indigenous cultural and political independence while at the same time providing convincing proof that the project activities would help improve the group's communal way of life. Moreover PROMESA undertook to ensure that their demands were heard at a political level.

Though sustainable agriculture is based on traditional farming methods, it also teaches new modified techniques. These quickly led to increased yields and were thus appreciated by the indigenous people. By offering nutritional advice and supporting the production and sale of fabric molas – activities designed to appeal to women – PROMESA's female project workers were able to make contact with the women.

### **Traditional decision-making structures as stumbling blocks**

In the case of the Kuna and Emberá-Ipetí it was initially difficult to obtain the permission of the sahila, the chief, for the training of both male and female promoters. The sahilas refused to sanction the proposal, firstly with the argument that the traditional gender-specific division of labour within the community would prevent the female promoter from ever passing on her knowledge: no-one would listen to her.

In the case of both the relatively traditionally-oriented Kuna Madungandi and the Emberá-Ipetí, the latter being already more open to Western pluralistic society, the idea of staging participatory training courses for male and female participants was also fraught with problems.

Only a handful of women were granted permission by the local elders and their partners to attend events out-

## Gender Mainstreaming | Practice

side the comarca. Even when allowed to attend, the women barely took part and seldom made any verbal contribution. Indigenous promoters aside, attendance at gender and/or masculinity workshops was lower than among the farming communities.

### Women's cooperatives – strengthening women in the community

In 2005, the presiding sahila of the Kuna Madungandi forbade the staging of a gender workshop, yet granted permission for the founding of a women's cooperative.

The indigenous congress, the highest body in the comarca, sanctioned the founding of the cooperative upon one condition: that it should be complemented by a “technical team” made up of men.

The economic success of the women's cooperative, now three years in existence, and with a 56-strong membership, has brought high social status and empowerment to the women involved. For the first time women, whose traditional role does not involve field labour, have been allocated their own parcels of land.

On International Women's Day, the women of the cooperative held a celebration for the community. Previously the organisation of celebrations had been the preserve of men. It was therefore of additional symbolic significance that food from the women's lands was served at the event. Today, the “technical team” no longer plays a role.

PROMESA's aim of raising the marriageable age of girls (for health reasons) and introducing health counselling for pregnant women, among others, has proved difficult to realise.

Nevertheless, although some of PROMESA's measures for the promotion of women are still viewed with suspicion by a few traditional elders, the trust that has developed towards PROMESA is clearly demonstrated by the Kuna sahilas' request for an information event on the topic of HIV and AIDS. There is widespread fear that Kuna youths who move to the city to work or study for

a time will return to the villages carrying the virus and infect their female partners.

### 1.3 Positive and negative factors affecting the implementation of the gender approach

A central factor in the promotion of gender justice is the use of an integral approach. PROMESA sees itself as a learning organisation that adopts an integrated approach to its work.

The gender strategy has provoked a shift in gender relations among the target groups and team members respectively; the latter act as social role models, living out the principles they teach during the courses in their personal lives.

The equal participation of men and women in family and public life at the community level is simultaneously regarded – depending on the starting-point of the target groups – as a prerequisite for and a consequence of personal and social empowerment.

Among the farming groups:

- Sustainable agriculture demands changes to the gender-specific division of labour: during the survey target group promoters and representatives agreed that the division of labour within families had changed dramatically since participation in the PROMESA sustainable farming project began. Anyone converting permanently to sustainable farming methods must make a firm decision in favour of the system, since it takes more work than conventional farming and requires that women support their husbands to a far greater degree in the fields, according to season. In return women need far more help from their partners in other areas (household, childcare, handicrafts). Otherwise there would be times when certain tasks would simply remain undone. They also report that such changes to the division of labour within the family are also leading to a shift in the perception of gender roles among children, boys and girls alike.

- Reflection of gender roles: a number of interactive gender and in particular masculinity workshops, designed with a focus on experience and lasting several days, have been described as the catalyst for increased male interest in a change in family structures.

- Role perception: at the same time the equal participation of men and women in farming training courses has led to an increase in self-confidence among women and a boost in status for tasks conventionally completed by women.

- Social intercourse: short half-day training events and contact programmes have created an atmosphere of regular exchange. The experience and information thus acquired has been examined in depth by the groups in question. This has not only increased the social cohesion within the groups, but also generated a collective shift concerning the division of labour between the sexes.

Among the indigenous community:

- Team integrity: the success of the gender work has depended heavily on the fact that one of the PROMESA project workers is herself Kuna. She is one of the first Kuna women to have escaped the marriage process and continued receiving education past primary school level. She is currently completing her university degree. Showing a great degree of sensitivity towards cultural traditions she has picked up on the demands of Emberá and Kuna women in the target group and given them a voice.

- Political cooperation with autonomous government structures: Gender work with the Emberá community has been made a lot easier thanks to close cooperation with the indigenous congress. Despite initial misgivings, the Emberá agreed to allow a woman to take on the role of promoter.

- Empowerment: the economic success of cooperatives run by Kuna women (farming and handicraft cooperatives, grocery stores managed on a cooperative basis) has boosted the self confidence and the status of the

women involved. Moreover it has since caused the traditional elders and the male partners of the active women to approve the participation of women in courses held outside tribal territory, to allow them to express their own opinions in public, and to make their own decisions.

- Education of girls: more girls and women now have access to basic education, often in the form of evening school courses. A knowledge of Spanish is essential to achieving literacy.

### **Factors preventing the advancement of gender justice**

Among the farming groups:

- No access to land: the majority of supported farmers do not own their own land. Sustainable agriculture is quick to produce results as far as soil fertility is concerned, enabling dietary improvement – among other things through diversification and the reduced input of agricultural chemicals. However, as soon as the sustainable farming strategy begins to bear fruit, landowners frequently reclaim the land, and families are forced to begin again from scratch on new plots of land. Political empowerment, which would bring the demands for land to the fore, has yet to form the focus of project activities.

- Migration: the majority of farmers in receipt of support have been getting aid for years and are currently over 40. They feel tied to the region and attempt to eke out a living for themselves despite the lack of perspective, while most of the young people migrate from the region and into the cities. Many farmers see the future of their children as being somewhere else entirely. This restricts the sustainability of both the social processes and the gender equality work.

- Patriarchal structures: The deep-rooted patriarchal structures of Panamanian society impose pressure on those individuals seeking to achieve a change in gender relations. Male promoters report that they are consistently called upon to justify themselves or face ridicule

## Gender Mainstreaming | Practice

at a local level when looking after children or preparing meals while their partners attend training courses. Women on the other hand report that although their ability to negotiate when selling their handicrafts has improved, their expertise is constantly being called into question by their buyers

Among the indigenous community:

- **Hierarchical decision-making structures:** The work with indigenous target groups certainly engages with gender policy; nevertheless, owing to the hierarchical and patriarchal structure of communities, the systematic implementation of gender mainstreaming remains a distant goal. The approval of community elders (sahilas and caciques) is required for every measure aimed at promoting women. There has been success, if only partial, due among other things to the participation of individual elders in courses on gender justice.

- **Cultural autonomy versus women's and human rights:** PROMESA argues that the idea is not to impose a Western model of society on the indigenous communities, but rather to promote measures which redress the particular discrimination experienced by indigenous women and girls and respond to their own demands – for better healthcare for instance, or better education opportunities, e.g. by setting up evening schools. Individual men in positions of authority, however, still fear that any measures aimed at women's promotion could undermine traditional decision-making structures.

- **Adverse health and social effects caused by marrying girls off:** a particular obstacle to any improvement in the lot of indigenous women and girls is their early marriageable age; girls, frequently pregnant with their first child by the age of twelve, are often refused access to basic education.

- **Insecure land and ownership rights:** PROMESA supports the indigenous peoples during ongoing demarcation processes, such as undertaking countermeasures when attempts are made to undermine their administrative autonomy, and defending them against the planned

individualisation of collective ownership rights, or the encroachment of settlers on communal lands. The precarious legal and political situation breeds mistrust towards the structural principle of the mestizo majority-dominated society and arrests any willingness to engage in processes of social change.

### 1.4 Changes achieved

Among the farming groups:

- Both the division of labour between women and men and the decision-making power within families have shifted dramatically in recent years. Women have experienced a boost in self-confidence, men have relinquished some of the burden of responsibility. Women work in the fields, men cook and look after children, or vice versa – as the need arises. Decisions in the family are for the most part a joint issue. This has meant more equal participation of men and women, not only in the family, but also at the producer organisation level, thereby strengthening the community's social cohesion: members of the community subject to discrimination or marginalisation, such as the disabled or women separated from their husbands, receive collective support.

- **Farmers – both male and female – confirm that domestic violence and violence against women remain a major problem at a local and national level.** There are, however, no known cases of violence within the producer groups, owing to their in-depth examination of gender roles and processes of social change. Educational events on HIV and AIDS have been held. However, the illness tends to play only a minor role in the project region.

- In the opinion of PROMESA what has been crucial to the success of the gender strategy is that the sustainable farming courses went beyond the teaching of the merely “practical”. Training courses and contact programmes using the “from farmer to farmer” methodology have grown to become a space in which social, economic and environmental issues can be considered at a far remove from the daily grind. At the same time

it has been essential that PROMESA team members as well as the local promoters leading the process are seen to live out the role models they present. Along with the women's, gender and masculinity workshops, this has led to a breakthrough in the field of gender work.

Among the indigenous community:

- PROMESA has signed a formal agreement with the congress of the Kuna and Emberá peoples formulating the basic principles of cooperation, and has managed among other things to convince the cacique – tribal chief – of the Emberá to participate in a masculinity workshop. Two Kuna promoters have also taken part in these workshops; they have since been playing an active role as multipliers for gender issues. This is regarded as an initial and yet crucial step if the topic of gender equality is to be broached effectively in discussions.

- Within the extremely traditional Kuna society, the position of women has seen a huge boost thanks to the cooperatives. The success of the women's cooperatives has triggered a process of rethinking, especially among the indigenous elders: women and their specific needs and interests have become more visible. These days women are more prone to speak in public and are allowed by the cacique to travel to events outside the comarca, while their husbands stay at home and look after the children.

- Moreover it should be seen as a massive step that Kuna women were allowed to take part in the "From Farmer to Farmer" exchange programme. Even more incredible is the fact that a Kuna woman – the first ever to do so in the history of the Kuna – made a speech reporting about this programme at a national Kuna congress. A further sign is that several women, especially those in leadership positions within the cooperative, are attending evening school in order to complete their primary school education. For their part these Kuna women attach more importance to their daughters' school attendance.

- In general the position of indigenous women in the family and in the wider community is now stronger. The

Kuna women's cooperatives and – in the case of the Emberá – the positive experience with a female promoter have meant that women are now treated with more respect within the communities, even outside their traditional spheres of influence, and have earned a greater right to autonomous action in their public and private lives.

## 1.5 Conclusions and lessons learned

The success of PROMESA's gender strategy can be largely attributed to its integrated approach when implementing gender justice.

During the handling of gender issues the institutional and the personal have remained interlinked – as the saying goes, the personal is political and the political personal. The high degree of correlation between claim and practice is a key element on the road to achieving gender justice.

Nevertheless the bottom line is that the basic economic conditions for many people from the farming and indigenous project regions have improved little in recent years: the families and communities, men and women alike, still have either no or merely partial access to basic public services such as health, education, electricity, drinking water or sealed roads. Their income remains on or below the margin of subsistence.

It is therefore astonishing that the persons surveyed from the target groups – in particular the women – nevertheless asserted that their lives had seen a fundamental change since PROMESA had begun supporting them. The only plausible explanation for this must be that men and women alike, the farmers from Coclé province and the female managers from the indigenous cooperatives, now feel themselves more able, thanks to the support and training provided by PROMESA, to articulate their specific needs and demands on an individual and at a communal level. For many this has been a vitally important and new experience and should be regarded as a valuable basic component for every gender strategy.

## Gender Mainstreaming | Practice

### Lessons learned for the work with farming target groups

The strict implementation of gender mainstreaming focusing on women and men has engendered a process of social change. Equal rights and gender justice, as is reported by men and women from the target group, are no longer long-term goals.

The masculinity workshops in particular represent a milestone. The masculinity workshops with a concept that focused on experience have proved far more effective than the gender training courses in motivating men to examine their societal role closely.

As a result it has become apparent that both men and women can profit from a shift in the division of roles, labour and power within the family and within relationships. Both sexes have shown a similarly strong desire to embark on the journey towards gender justice. Work with both women and men is an essential part of any successful gender strategy.

In terms of sustainability, the land issue is paramount, also in regard to gender justice. If family members are leaving their rural surroundings as children or young people because they see no opportunity for education or future prospects locally, the political empowerment of the adult community, male and female, must be made a priority. The sustainability of the gender approach is currently hampered owing to the high migration rate among young people.

### Lessons learned in the work with indigenous target groups

Adopting a sensitive approach when dealing with ethnic and cultural issues and showing respect for the value systems of the indigenous communities is essential when working with indigenous groups.

The fact that a team member herself is Kuna has been of immense significance to PROMESA's gender work, able as she was to draw on her own intimate knowledge of the indigenous world view and its gender relations.

Even if indigenous majority-dominated communities are constantly being faced with inevitable change brought about by the gradual process of acculturation, gender equality within an indigenous context is an aim that needs to be pursued in ways different from those of Western society. Gender equality – a progressive term that works on the assumption of guaranteeing all individuals, men and women alike, the economic and political framework to facilitate optimum self-fulfilment – is rejected by indigenous communities on the grounds of incompatibility with their collective, community-oriented social structures. In its gender work PROMESA therefore favours the conventional approach of women's promotion, which in this case is valid. PROMESA addresses women's rights issues, thereby strengthening the position of indigenous women within the community. Changes in gender relations are only to be observed over comparatively long periods of time and must take place as a collective learning process.

*Bettina Lutterbeck*



Photo: Jörg Jenrich

## 2 EMAS – the united women’s team

The women’s organisation EMAS (Equipo Mujeres en Acción Solidaria) has worked in Michoacán state, Mexico, since 1987. EMAS’s involvement has developed around two programmes.

1. Programme for sustainable local development with a gender perspective:

The focus is on sustainable agriculture and food sovereignty, health, sexual and reproductive rights, domestic violence, as well as economic, social and cultural human rights. The programme addresses approximately 1,000 individuals; 44 percent are women, 56 percent men. They live in nine communities belonging to three different municipalities. The group is made up of indigenous and non-indigenous peasant farmers.

The women are aged between 15 and 50 and have an average of six children each. They are either single or married, live abandoned or separated from their husbands. The men are aged between 20 and 45 and in contrast to the women are all able to read and write.

2. Programme for influencing local politics and furthering the exercise of women’s political and civil rights:

The focus is on participatory planning at a community and town level, participatory gender budgeting, and women’s political and civil rights. Just under 170 peo-

### Mexican farmers see themselves forced to abandon the land

The economic and social consequences of Mexico’s policy of liberalisation in recent decades have been profound, particularly in the agricultural sector. The income of farmers has sunk drastically; many small and medium-sized farms which used to produce for the national market have been ruined. As a result of this development the numbers of people migrating into the cities and more specifically leaving for the USA have continued to rise. Some two million jobs on the land have disappeared since 1994. The poverty of the rural population has deepened considerably and malnutrition is widespread. In view of these conditions some 600 farmers abandon their land every day.

ple, 108 women and 58 men, from three different localities are involved in this programme.

Both programmes aim to promote leadership and empowerment of women.

### 2.1 Gender relations in the region

Morelia, capital of Michoacán state and home to the EMAS headquarters, is predominantly urban in character. EMAS’s work however concentrates on its rural surroundings. The rural population, both indigenous and non-indigenous families, live far apart from each other in remote villages.

## Gender Mainstreaming | Practice

Michoacán features small-scale farming operations that mainly produce food for self-sufficiency as well as huge mechanised agroindustrial plants aimed at the export market; the latter require only a handful of workers. Unemployment is high. Michoacán has one of the highest migration rates in Mexico. Generally it is the men who emigrate to the USA. The women remain behind and are responsible for providing for their families.

Women shoulder the lion's share of reproductive and productive work, yet rarely have access to resources such as land. Moreover the poor level of healthcare in Michoacán's rural regions is a major problem.

Many women are malnourished, experience health problems, and are not used to looking after their bodies. Their health problems are magnified by air, soil and water pollution. The level of education among women is very low and many are illiterate. Women are frequently subjected to discrimination and domestic violence.

The men foster an aura of machismo and a culture of violence which dominates their personal relationships. High unemployment leads in turn to alcoholism and drug dependency.

Many men see no prospects in farming. The identity of the small-scale farmer does not represent a system of values worth defending. They have to deal with land disputes and bear the consequences of an agriculture policy that takes no account of peasant agriculture. In many places their farming methods destroy the environment and the soil.

### 2.2 Description of the good practice

#### Gender justice and a shift in social relations

In its programmes EMAS implements a comprehensive conceptual understanding of the gender approach, which includes understanding the differences and similarities associated with women's promotion and gender justice. Moreover EMAS is also aware that it is vital to observe gender relations in the respective context,

as well as in additional situations of discrimination and exclusion. According to EMAS, gender work must go hand in hand with efforts to bring about a general shift in social relations. The gender perspective is integral to all programmes and activities, and it is present in the minds of the team members.

EMAS views gender injustice as a barrier which prevents women, particularly the poverty stricken, from asserting their human rights. In this sense EMAS refers not only to women's rights, but also to political and civil, not to mention economic, social and cultural human rights. After all, gender injustice has negative effects on the economic, social and cultural co-existence of men and women and prevents any democratic development. For EMAS gender justice is a prerequisite for a functioning democracy. In order to achieve this it is necessary to deconstruct all those relations currently characterised by subordination and inequality. Gender relations need to be based on mutual recognition and respect, not to mention equal opportunities for self-development.

If gender justice is to be realised, there has to be a shift in awareness among both women and men. In order to facilitate this, EMAS began its work in the area of sustainable farming and food sovereignty with a consistent focus on gender, i.e. for the first time EMAS involved men as a target group in its projects. The initial goal was to challenge in discussion with the men and women the existing balance and dynamic of power. Within this context, topics such as domestic violence, the right of women to be masters of their own bodies and the fairer distribution of household duties were also addressed. In the process the men were supposed to learn to adopt other perspectives and develop an awareness for unequal and undemocratic relationships, including conventional gender relations. This comprehensive approach would also serve as a basis for masculinity processes.

The organisation devotes particular attention to women; according to EMAS the existing inequalities within relationships can only be overcome if those affected receive encouragement and support. For this reason two of EMAS's main concerns are the empowerment of women and a strengthening of their status.

This stance shapes the organisation's work in all areas. Its gender policy prescribes that all decisions should be made by women. Nevertheless men may be employed as project team members. All other areas of employee contracting are regulated according to Mexican law. The female project workers however enjoy sufficient freedom in the structuring of their work to enable the successful alignment of job and family.

### From campaigning for women's rights to integrating the gender perspective

Founded as a women's organisation, EMAS initially focussed on the issue of impoverished women and their state of health. Specific female health problems, women's sexual and reproductive human rights, and the effects of violence against women were all addressed within this context. In addition to asserting women's rights, EMAS attempted to offer women support at an economic level. The activities aimed at generating income were not particularly successful, however.

In the run-up to the 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, EMAS came into contact with the Mexican and Latin American women's movement and with the gender approach. In the years that followed

EMAS became deeply involved in various national and Latin American networks, institutions and forums focusing on women's and gender topics. Ever since, EMAS has been firmly rooted in the feminist movement. The gender approach has become an integral part of the organisation's work.

As a result of an external evaluation commissioned by „Brot für die Welt“, EMAS decided to begin working in the field of sustainable agriculture and food sovereignty and to involve men in project activities. Since then EMAS has ensured that both women and men are represented in the grassroots action groups, that men participate in training courses and also become involved as promoters.

From the outset, the gender perspective has been integrated in the agricultural work. 150 female and 50 male farmers are currently involved in EMAS agriculture projects. As this work continues to develop, EMAS is studying future issues, which include the economic sustainability of the organisation and the upcoming generational change among the female team members.

The table below shows the development stages defined by EMAS.

**Table 1: EMAS development stages**

Stages	Work emphases
1. Work begins in Michoacán (1987–1989)	Work on health topics with women
2. Consolidation of work in rural and indigenous communities in Michoacán (1989–1995)	Work with women on health topics, women's rights (sexual and reproductive rights, violence against women), leadership, training of female promoters, income-generating measures
3. Presence of the women's movement at a local, federal, national and Latin American level	Presence in the women's movement in run-up to the 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 and the follow-up conference Beijing+5 in 2000; participation in various national and Latin American networks, organisation of various events and forums focusing on gender and women's topics, work with female health promoters in Michoacán.
<i>During the third stage EMAS becomes acquainted with the gender approach and develops a women's organisation identity that is firmly anchored in the feminist movement.</i>	
4. Work begins on sustainable agriculture and food sovereignty with a gender perspective (2001–07)	Integration of the gender perspective in all areas of work (health, farming, human rights), beginning of direct work with men
5. Development strategies for the future	Analysis of financial sustainability, record of the organisation's history, establishment of a new team

## Gender Mainstreaming I Practice

Central elements of the programme for sustainable local development with integral gender perspective are networking, initial and further training courses, the awareness-building of target groups using workshops, field trips, practical exercises, and the exchange of experience on sustainable agriculture and food security/food sovereignty, health and alternative medicine, leadership and citizenship, not to mention involvement in local politics. Measures aimed at preserving soil fertility, agro-forestry and reforestation are crucial aspects of this work.

In addition, EMAS has promoted community development, among other things by reintroducing community meetings in order to reach decisions, reviving the custom of offering mutual assistance, examining village development on the basis of participatory situation analyses or discussions with community members and authorities, and considering women's contribution to farming.

### **Exerting pressure for the assertion of women's rights**

In the programme aimed at influencing local politics and promoting the assertion of women's political and civil rights, work concentrates on participation in civil society networks – either all female or mixed. Exchange with male and female representatives from the worlds of politics and science as well as the development and promotion of lobbying and advocacy initiatives concerned with women's and gender issues are central features of the work.

The programme supports the organisation of numerous events, e.g. events to celebrate International Women's Day and Non-Violence Against Women Day, workshops on public policy, lobbying and advocacy for female leaders of social organisations based in Michoacán and other federal states, as well as special days focusing on women's health.

EMAS aligns itself with the principles of the Latin American educación popular (popular education), which bases learning processes on people's experience,

skills and knowledge. These are examined, altered and expanded upon to allow a changed perception of reality and consequently a change in modes of behaviour. EMAS's education work, especially in healthcare, is based on this approach.

The organisation has developed numerous handbooks and training modules on a range of themes, which can be joined together to produce a process-oriented cycle of learning and analysis. Deconstruction and reconstruction play an essential role when examining gender relations in this context. Truths assumed to be incontrovertible, such as "Women are the weaker sex", first need to be "deconstructed" before they can be redefined.

### **Participation as a prerequisite for learning**

In the area of sustainable agriculture and food sovereignty EMAS works according to the "from farmer to farmer" methodology, which also builds on the experience of the local men and women, particularly in terms of farming. This serves as a starting point for continuative learning in workshops and on field trips, sharing of experiences between male and female farmers, and experimentation on one's own plot of land.

Participation is a deciding factor in both approaches. The men and women taking part are in both cases the protagonists of the learning process. Professionals adopt a facilitating and moderating role. Likewise promoters – female and male – play a central part in both, thus guaranteeing the multiplication of the processes launched and achieving a broader impact.

### **Gender-sensitive planning and the documentation of experience**

Gender-sensitive analyses of situations and target groups are essential to the planning of a project and its gender-sensitive implementation. EMAS conducts participatory gender analyses, such as within the context of the Panindícuaro district development plan.

EMAS attaches great importance to the systemisation of experiences – with the aim of learning from them and

sharing them with other interested organisations and individuals. EMAS is currently engaged in recording the history of the organisation. This is also to be systemised.

### 2.3 Conducive and inhibiting factors affecting the implementation of the gender approach

According to EMAS, a decisive factor when it comes to implementing the gender approach is previous experience. In the case of EMAS, this consists of clearly defined concepts, tried and tested methodological approaches, and the comprehensive systemisation and documentation of projects. Today EMAS's reputation as a gender-competent organisation extends far beyond the project region. The organisation's competency is in demand; through talks and lectures EMAS is successfully spreading the discussion about gender justice and the gender approach.

EMAS names the following factors as having a negative effect on the implementation of the gender approach: principally context-related machismo, social conservatism, which is widespread in Michoacán, poverty and the people's lack of trust in their experience and their local knowledge, as well as public politics, which demonstrates little concern either for the rural areas or for the implementation of the gender approach. A few inhibiting factors also exist, however, at a personal level. Team members confess that they too are influenced by traditional gender stereotypes. Breaking free from this system is no easier for them than for other women and men, and is associated with fears that can end up impeding the work.

### 2.4 Changes achieved

The effects of EMAS's work radiate outwards. EMAS's approaches, methods and experience are important points of reference for the Mexican women's movement. This has resulted from the organisation's intensive cooperation during the Mexican and Latin American prepa-

rations for and follow-up on the World Conference on Women in Beijing. The educational and analysis materials published by EMAS are in demand on a nationwide scale. Within the project region, EMAS's involvement at district authority level is in demand. For instance the organisation was involved in drafting the Panindícuaro development plan and ensured that the plan reflected the gender perspective.

As far as EMAS project activities are concerned, the following changes can be seen among the target groups:

- Empowerment of women in the EMAS project area through training and analysis of gender relations in the areas of health and agriculture. Women have experienced a boost in self-confidence; they work as promoters and are visible protagonists within their communities and families.
- Growing awareness among men about the significant contribution made by women in the home and on the land through their increasing involvement in project work.
- Increasing involvement and interest among women and men in the development of and the decisions being made in their communities and towns. In Panindícuaro, one of EMAS's main project areas, a woman was recently elected mayor. EMAS sees her election as an outcome which may be attributed indirectly to the work of the organisation. EMAS sees the success of its work as confirmation. As a learning organisation, however, EMAS also recognises the challenges it will be required to face in the future.

The following challenges affecting the organisation have been identified:

- Creating a new, young team (generational change);
- Concentrating work in a few selected areas;
- Promoting financial sustainability;
- Consolidating networks.

### Gender relations change slowly

For EMAS one major indicator of a shift in gender relations is change in the gender-determined division of labour. In this area the organisation admits it has seen little change. EMAS has nevertheless helped women to become stronger and more visible.

Important processes have been initiated and their effects point in the right direction, even if no lasting change in gender relations has yet been established. The work of EMAS does not appear to be having a negative impact. At a target group level the awareness for and commitment to fairer gender relations needs further reinforcement.

## 2.5 Conclusions and lessons learned

EMAS is a women's organisation which has its roots in the feminist movement. The work of the organisation is guided by the conviction that achieving gender justice is a prerequisite for a functioning democratic society. Its programmes are directed at both women and men.

Owing to the particular economic, social and cultural disadvantages experienced by women, the assertion of human rights for women is the main focus of the work. The latter is characterised by clear concepts, the use of tried and tested methods, and the systematisation of experiences. As a learning organisation EMAS is aware of future challenges and is ready to face them.

The following lessons can be drawn from EMAS's work:

- The shift in gender relations brought about by the implementation of the gender approach is met by opposition among both men and women. An example is reproduction, which is generally the only area where women can exercise any power. The intrusion of men in this area, for instance, by becoming involved in housework and childcare, threatens women's sole power base. The gender approach is therefore frequently misinterpreted by women, giving rise to fears.

- The implementation of gender justice is associated with power redistribution. Conflict is therefore to be expected. Nevertheless, when men and women address the issue they not only discover aspects that separate, but also aspects that unite – i.e., discussions don't merely provoke dispute.

- Gender relations need always to be regarded within the existing context, the individual situations of discrimination and exclusion, and the aim of achieving a general shift in social relations.

- Men and women are equally affected by shifts in gender relations. The involvement of men is crucial to the work's success and enriches the process. Nevertheless, support for women's equal participation in society must not be neglected.

- The engagement for gender justice requires a dynamic and pluralistic movement. The formation of networks is an essential part of this.

- The successful implementation of the gender perspective depends on a concrete methodological approach and the definition of key indicators. Experiences need to be systematised.

- The engagement for gender justice may not be reduced to the mere use of gender as a category for analysis. It means continually re-examining one's own life.

- The assertion of human rights for women must not be restricted to the assertion of women's rights; political and civil rights must also form part of the agenda.

*Carsta Neuenroth*



Photo: Christof Krackhardt

### 3 AFREDA – economic and social empowerment in the Kilombero women’s project

The Tanzanian non-governmental organisation Action for Relief and Development Assistance (AFREDA) was founded in 1990 with the aim of improving the economic and social status of impoverished men, women and children in Tanzania. The following areas are given special emphasis: income, health, education, nutrition and human rights. Initially AFREDA was engaged in providing emergency aid for refugees, subsequently becoming involved in food security and income generation.

The AFREDA main office is based in a suburb of Dar Es Salaam. AFREDA runs two branch offices in Morogoro and Kidatu and employs approximately 30 people. AFREDA first made contact with „Brot für die Welt“ in 1999. Two years later the organisations entered into partnership. Since then, „Brot für die Welt“ has provided AFREDA with funding for the Kilombero women’s project. The top priority of this project is the economic and social strengthening of women in Kilombero district in the Morogoro region.

The specific project goal is the use of training, assistance and provision of loans to improve the economic situation of women. A further aim is to reduce the spreading of HIV and AIDS. The project aims to improve the living conditions of the women and their families in this region lacking in infrastructure, thereby countering the

trend of migration into the cities. At the outset work was focused on 200 women between the ages of 15 and 60. In order to be accepted onto the project, the women had to fulfil certain conditions. For example, they had to have a clear idea of the economic activity they were aiming for. After three years the first phase of the project was successfully concluded and evaluated in 2004. A second project phase began in 2004 through which a total of 460 women received support to establish and expand their small business activities. This second phase ended in July 2007.

#### Micro and small businesses create jobs in Tanzania

Tanzania is located in the “cradle of humanity”. The area within the modern state boundaries was settled thousands of years ago. Tanzania today has a population of 37 million. Eighty percent live on the land, about 50 percent below the poverty line. Agriculture is central to Tanzania’s economy. Approximately 80 percent of the population work in this sector. Eighty five percent of the country’s exports are agricultural products. Most business activities in the rural areas are carried out informally by the farming population or small retailers. Since only few young people can hope for a paid position, the micro and small business sector plays a crucial role in the economic development of the country. These businesses already contribute approximately 30 percent of the gross national product and are responsible for creating some 50 percent of all jobs in the private sector.

## Gender Mainstreaming | Practice

The Kilombero women's project was identified as good practice for the following reasons:

- The project is characterised by a successful combination of offering training courses and assistance concerning economic aspects (accounting, loan management, etc.) with social course contents (gender and HIV and AIDS instruction, group formation, leadership training), which not only address economic status but also additional social cultural and legal aspects associated with the strengthening of women.
- The increasing integration of gender aspects in the project work and their inclusion at the institutional level of AFREDA are a prime example of learning and change processes within a "learning organisation".

### 3.1 Gender relations in the region

The Morogoro region is one of the poorest in Tanzania. The rate of migration is extreme owing to good infrastructural links with Dar es Salaam. 450,000 people live in Kilombero district, most of whom are engaged in subsistence farming. Apart from two major sugar refineries there is no industry to speak of. The local population attribute their difficult living circumstances to the following:

- a lack of support for agricultural activities,
- marketing problems,
- poor education,
- no possibility to take out loans,
- cultural and traditional obstacles,
- discrimination against women, persons infected with HIV and people living with AIDS.

Although there are signs that the perception of male and female gender roles in Tanzania is changing, the image of masculinity is still dominated by the economic inde-

pendence of men, normative heterosexuality and marriage. These rigid gender norms are consolidated by denial, tabooing and discrimination against other sexual orientations and lifestyles. The widespread social expectation is that men assume the role of breadwinner and provide for their families. Young men therefore often migrate from the countryside into urban centres in the search for work and income.

#### **Masculinity: the dictates of a sexual economy**

From an early age boys in Tanzania are brought up to fit in with dominant, mostly traditional gender norms, and are prepared for their role as male members of their own (tribal) community. In the process they are exposed to extreme social pressure to conform – by their family, the community, educational and other institutions, all of them calling on the prevailing image of accepted male behaviour. The attendant expectations, not to mention existing ideas of masculinity within a youngster's age or peer group, which afford status to youths according to, among other things, the frequency of sexual relations, have a huge influence on the adoption of such rehearsed stereotypes within partnerships and families, and young man's own understanding of partnership and sexuality.

Furthermore he needs to be economically successful if he is to measure up to society's key expectation: marriage. In Tanzanian society marriage marks the ritual transition between adolescence and adulthood. Many young men however find themselves competing in this "sexual economy" against older men with income, and are frequently not in a position to fulfil the financial expectations of young women, thereby ruling out marriage. High unemployment and a lack of access to income possibilities prevents young men from fulfilling the social norms and threatens their male identity.

#### **The roles of women: sexual violence and economic discrimination**

In recent years the Tanzanian government has passed legislation on gender equality, the protection of women and the prevention of violence against women and chil-

dren. Nevertheless violence against women in Tanzania remains a widespread phenomenon. Traditional norms and practices ensure that women are subordinate to men in both an urban and rural context. Cultural, family and social pressure prevent women from informing the authorities about or seeking legal counselling on violence or abuse they have suffered.

When it comes to ownership and inheritance rights women are at a huge disadvantage when compared to men. Even today far fewer girls than boys attend school past primary level. Traditionally defined norms and roles assign women a subordinate status. In Kilombero district women are for the most part engaged in farming and household activities. They have little opportunity of taking jobs outside agriculture or of securing paid employment at all.

Since women are often prevented from accessing and managing resources and property, it is particularly difficult for them to achieve their independence. Their economic dependence renders the country's gender equality legislation practically meaningless.

### 3.2 Description of the good practice

#### **A combined approach to strengthen the economic and social status of women**

This is AFREDA's starting point. The project organised 460 women in Kilombero district into groups. They received training and loans from a loan fund. The economic support improved the living conditions of many women and their families. In addition to gaining economic and technical knowledge the women were also trained in ways of preventing and dealing with HIV and AIDS.

This combined project approach and the integrated gender training, directed at both men and women, has been described by the women as extremely relevant to their own everyday lives. The particular quality of the Kilombero women's project does not result from specific individual measures but from the synergistic interaction

of a whole package of measures, including AFREDA's increasing efforts to integrate gender as a cross-cutting issue in all project activities.

#### **Linking practical and strategic interests**

The Kilombero women's project pursues an integrated project approach which combines technical training and assistance on business start-ups and loan management with courses on social topics (gender, HIV and AIDS) and the strengthening of organisational and leadership skills of the women through specific courses, e.g. leadership training. Project plans and strategies primarily target the economic empowerment of women through the setting-up and improvement of small-scale business activities. This takes place through the forming of groups by interested women, specific courses and assistance offered on business start-ups or the expansion of existing business activities.

A group member submits a business plan which is then assessed by the group in its capacity as guarantor for the proposal in question; once approved, the group member receives a low-interest personal loan. The loan must then be repaid according to a specified repayment schedule. Once the loan has been repaid, a new loan can be applied for. Two women per group (group leaders) are trained by AFREDA in group management and strategic planning, as well as in participatory project planning, implementation and evaluation.

#### **Gender politics in the organisation: gender-balanced allocation of management positions and ongoing training**

Over the years AFREDA has taken conscious steps to guarantee the gender-sensitive structure of the organisation. „Brot für die Welt“ has supported this development with specific training courses and networking opportunities, thus giving the process significant support.

The AFREDA board has been led by a woman for years. AFREDA has included a clause in its articles stipulating that a woman must be the deputy managing director if the managing director is a man, and vice versa. This as-

## Gender Mainstreaming | Practice

sertion of the gender-equal allocation of management roles in institutional terms is supplemented by an additional condition which specifies that women must be represented at all levels of the organisation. These days nearly 60 percent of all AFREDA employees are women, which necessarily has a positive effect on the credibility of an organisation which declares the economic advancement of women as its aim.

AFREDA employees demonstrate a high degree of understanding and awareness of gender issues. AFREDA regularly holds gender-related training courses for its own employees. The latter are able to competently talk about the gender relations within the organisation, the project and the project environment. This demonstrates AFREDA's willingness and ability to reflect on its own experiences in the light of changes in practice and to integrate gender topics increasingly into organisation activities.

### HIV and AIDS prevention

Gender-related discrimination and violence are common problems in Kilombero district. In addition there is the threat of the HIV and AIDS pandemic. In the rural areas it is mainly the women who look after people living with AIDS.

AIDS is associated with high costs and can plunge affected families into poverty. Care is time-consuming and expensive. Social exclusion of the sick and their families is often the result, for example of people who make their living by selling food.

AFREDA has analysed these relationships; within the Kilombero women's project HIV and AIDS are now regarded as cross-cutting issues of prime importance. During the gender and HIV/AIDS training the women have learnt to reflect on their situation within their families and partnerships. They have become aware of the risks posed to their business and quality of life by HIV and AIDS. The training has helped them protect themselves and their family members better from possible infection. They admit to using condoms and practising safer sex.

Husbands were intentionally invited to attend the gender and HIV/AIDS course. For many it was the first time they had ever examined gender relations and they expressed appreciation at having been invited to participate. The training heightened the men's awareness of the risks of HIV and AIDS and practices harmful to the relationship between men and women.

Since then AFREDA has adopted the official stance that it is vital to include men in the process if gender relations are to change. Gender issues form a greater part of group discussions now than at the outset of the project.

### 3.3 Conducive and inhibiting factors affecting the implementation of the gender approach

AFREDA has successfully established the Kilombero women's project and is recognised by the target groups as having had a major influence on the positive changes in their lives. One factor that has no doubt contributed to the successful implementation of the gender approach is that AFREDA has itself increasingly adopted a gender-sensitive orientation in recent years, ensuring that its employees receive appropriate training.

The project, initially directed at the small-scale business promotion of women, has also – thanks to its deliberate gender orientation – made significant progress above and beyond the economic empowerment of women, improving their social, legal and cultural status in ways which could not have been foreseen.

AFREDA has proved itself to be extremely open to learning, in terms of the gender policy of the organisation and the gender-sensitive orientation of the Kilombero women's project. This process of learning how to apply the gender approach consistently remains a work in progress, both in the case of AFREDA and the Kilombero women's project. This is demonstrated by AFREDA's intention to pursue a more rights-based project approach in future, putting more efforts into lobbying and advocacy about human and women's rights.

External factors are also important. The Tanzanian government has approved a gender strategy to combat discrimination against girls and women. It has drafted laws concerning the equality of the genders which have yet to be effectively implemented.

Other organisations are also working in Kilombero to reduce the existing gender discrepancies, and a women's promotion fund exists; the latter however has unfortunately only limited financial resources. The percentage of girls attending school and leaving with a certificate has risen in recent years, and social awareness about the detrimental effects of gender discrimination has increased.

The patriarchal system remains an obstacle. It prevents women from gaining access to and controlling resources and denies them their productive and reproductive rights.

The gender-based discrimination against women is structurally reinforced and affects their rights of property and inheritance. Only few women possess property in the form of land, houses or cattle. Women and widows are frequently denied the right to inherit. All decisions, as long as they don't concern the gathering of firewood or the washing of dishes, are made by men. Cultural norms, values and customs that serve to reinforce the existing gender gap are widespread.

Women are frequently overworked. Their workload is on average twice that of the men. Harmful customs and practices that directly affect women, such as female genital mutilation, the payment of dowries, polygamy and child labour, are still common.

More boys are still sent to school than girls; girls are often denied the opportunity to attend secondary school. Poverty breeds tension and friction, both of which have a detrimental effect on the well-being of women and girls in particular.

Drought and the lack of irrigation possibilities, not to mention the difficulty and expense associated with transporting produce, are additional inhibiting factors.

### 3.4 Changes achieved

#### **The formation of groups reinforces empowerment**

The groups and group activities promoted by the Kilombero women's project have had a positive effect on the social status, acceptance and self-confidence of female participants. They state that other women ask them more frequently for advice, and then express interest in joining a group.

The training, the different group activities, and the economic success have motivated a large number of the women to take on leading positions in local committees and organisations. At the outset of the project many of them were unable to speak freely in front of a group owing to a lack of self-confidence. All that has changed. One woman for instance related very emotionally that in the old days she hadn't been able to speak a single word within a small group and now she can address a gathering of one hundred people without getting the least bit nervous.

#### **Improving the economic situation provides new opportunities**

Training courses focusing on project planning and implementation, loan administration and group management, as well as accounting, marketing and loan approval basics have played a significant role in improving the economic status of women and their families.

Many women already had experience with small-scale business activities within the informal sector prior to the beginning of the project. Most, however, were without any knowledge of accounting, marketing, price calculations or dealing with customers. For this reason and owing to a lack of capital, they were often only able to generate a marginal income.

These "competitive disadvantages" have been reduced by project measures such as tailor-made training and business start-up advice, improved access to loans and the networking of groups. When it comes to economic

## Gender Mainstreaming | Practice

success, the gender-relevant message of the Kilombero women's project is: women are just as capable of using the opportunities available to them as men.

Regular monitoring has helped to constantly remind the women's groups of what they have learnt during the courses and whether and how they need to apply their new skills. Continuous follow-ups on the part of the project workers as well as occasional visits by the regional consultancy office DESUNE (Development Support Service) and „Brot für die Welt“ employees have enabled the groups to obtain external opinions and feedback on their activities from a variety of different perspectives. They have received invitations to pay orientation visits to and meet up with other groups, thereby allowing a sharing of experiences.

### A shift in stereotypes

Owing to the expansion of their business activities the women now have less time for household duties, meaning these have to be organised differently. Since they are making a considerable contribution to the family income, they are now receiving far more assistance from other family members – husbands, daughters and sons. To a certain extent this support also includes household duties traditionally assigned to women and girls. Responsibilities within the family have had to be re-negotiated, which has led to husbands and girls helping out in the business, boys occasionally cooking, looking after younger siblings or feeding the cattle. In this way the project has contributed indirectly to change gender roles.

### 3.5 Conclusions and lessons learned

For over six years now, „Brot für die Welt“ has been providing AFREDA with financial support for the implementation of the Kilombero women's project. AFREDA's integrated project approach, in which gender topics and HIV and AIDS education play a major role, has not only strengthened the economic status of the women involved, its assistance has also proved invaluable in the setting up and expansion of their small-scale business

activities, thus improving the quality of life for all concerned.

As a result the women have also experienced direct personal, social and cultural empowerment. Their assertiveness and self-confidence has increased; they are better equipped to deal with gender-related discrimination and violence, not least because they are organised in groups and are more aware of their rights as women than they were at the outset of the project.

The project activities have not only effected personal change for the women and their families, they have also improved the status and position of women in the village neighbourhoods and communities. Training and assistance combines business-related subjects such as accounting and loan management with social topics (e.g., gender and HIV and AIDS courses; leadership training), and the continuous accompaniment of groups, is what makes the project unique.

Although other factors are contributing to a shift in gender relations and the role of women, such as the introduction of a national gender strategy by the government or legislative change towards gender equality, both the target groups and outside observers alike regard AFREDA's project work as having been instrumental in achieving concrete improvements in the living conditions of the women involved.

### AFREDA – an learning organisation regarding gender justice

AFREDA has become – among other things through dialogue with „Brot für die Welt“ and exchange with DESUNE – a learning organisation, capable of reflecting critically on its practice and adjusting it when necessary. The institutional integration of gender equality within the organisation, the increasing orientation of the project work towards the axiom of gender justice, and the success of the project are all interrelated. The implementational loopholes that often accompany realisation of gender justice are gradually closing, while the credibility of the organisation and its actions is being reinforced.

AFREDA has supported the foundation of an umbrella organisation, KIWODEFU, for the existing women's groups and intends in future to increase its focus on its institutional consolidation. Training and assistance for board members, female and male group leaders and local advisors are intended to help the organisation to continue operating once the project has been concluded. This would be a decisive step in assuring the sustainability of the local grassroots organisations which have emerged during the Kilombero women's project, and of the contributions they have made to changing gender relations in Kilombero district.

### **Staying power and the consolidation of the men's work on the path to gender justice**

AFREDA has developed very good approaches – internally, in the structuring of its own operations, and externally in the implementation of the Kilombero women's project – which provide an excellent basis for work in accordance with gender justice and which can be developed further. Even if AFREDA pursues a classical women's promotion approach in many aspects of its gender-related work, there is an conscious attempt in specific areas, e.g. within the context of the HIV and AIDS training, to involve men in gender themes and raise their awareness of them. There is potential for expanding this aspect of AFREDA's project work in future, since it would appear to provide the key to establishing lasting change of the severely asymmetrical and fundamentally unequal gender relations. For instance pilot projects targeting (young) men are conceivable in order to promote change in gender relations also from a different angle.

The development of leadership skills and the protection of women from discrimination and violence requires ongoing attention and commitment. According to the women of Kilombero district it will take additional support, great stamina and determination if individual women are to ascend to and maintain positions of leadership.

Gender equality and the achievement of gender justice are not goals that are quickly reached, nor are they ever reached once and for all. A strong political will and stay-

ing power are needed if progress is to be made in this area.

The United Nations has indicated in various reports concerning the status of Millennium Development Goals that if no progress is made in reaching Development Goal 3, gender equality, the other development goals cannot be attained. A shift in gender relations is therefore essential to the realisation of all development goals. This view is impressively reflected in AFREDA's work and the Kilombero women's project. At the same time, it indicates the necessity of involving men to an even greater extent in a dialogue that addresses male and female role models, the risks associated with certain types of masculinity, and the need for partnership in dealing with gender relations.

*Dr. Thomas Döhne*



Photo: Christof Krackhardt

#### 4 ISAPSO – active against HIV and AIDS

The Ethiopian non-governmental organisation ISAPSO (Integrated Service for AIDS Prevention and Support) was founded in 1997. Its head office is located in Addis Ababa. ISAPSO implements innovative, gender- and target-group-appropriate concepts for the prevention of violence against women and girls. The organisation works with different target groups in the areas of HIV and AIDS awareness, prevention and care in urban and rural contexts.

The work is divided into various projects with different priority areas. „Brot für die Welt“ is financing a project for the prevention of violence against young women and girls in selected secondary schools in Addis Ababa. The project is the focus of this good practice presentation. It should, however, be regarded within the context of the whole of ISAPSO’s work, which will be described briefly.

##### Prevention is a concern for everyone

ISAPSO’s activities focus on different target groups and correspond to their respective needs for information, prevention and/or care. Important target groups are long-distance lorry drivers, factory workers, school children, students, male and female adolescents who no longer attend school, single women, commercial sex workers (CSWs) and ex-sex workers, men and women of reproductive age, orphans and their foster parents,

**Ethiopia: A young population with few opportunities**

Ethiopia is one of the most populous African countries south of the Sahara. In 2003 the population was 70.7 million with an annual growth rate of between 2.8 and 3 percent. Fifty percent of Ethiopians are under the age of eighteen. Approximately half the population lives below the poverty line. The health and education systems are inadequate. This extreme population growth, the increasing frequency of catastrophic droughts and the frequent failure of harvests all have a huge impact on national food security. Women and children in particular suffer from malnourishment and undernourishment.

men and women living with HIV and AIDS, and other bed-ridden patients in several communities, as well as policemen and administrative staff.

In the areas of awareness building and prevention, exchanging information and learning among peers (peer education, peer counselling) play an important role. In villages and communities, support is also given to meetings and events during which important aspects of the battle against HIV and AIDS are discussed.

Normally, women and men take part in these meetings. However, there are also meetings which are attended by either only women or only men. In Muslim target groups, it is the general rule that men and women are separated.

Single women, sex workers and ex-sex workers as well as other needy target groups are supported with income-generating measures (garden cultivation, weaving, manufacturing textiles, running a bakery and a restaurant). To ensure treatment and care for the ill, ISAPSO trains community carers who are supervised and accompanied by professional personnel. Networking with governmental and non-governmental organisations presents a further important field of work for ISAPSO.

#### 4.1 Gender relations in the region

The distinctly patriarchal structure of Ethiopian society determines the position of men and women and their relationship to, and among, each other. The subordinate social position of women is especially evident in rural areas.

Marrying off young girls at an early age and female genital mutilation are still widespread. Eighty percent of all Ethiopian women and girls are circumcised. In urban areas prostitution, in particular, is a problem. Due to the existing patriarchal structures, women and girls especially are affected by violent attacks which are carried out, too, in schools. Domestic violence, beatings and rape in marriage are very widespread.

Men have better opportunities for education than women do. The UNESCO estimates that in 2002 only 33.8 percent of women were literate. The literacy rate of men was 49.2 percent.

As in many other countries, women in Ethiopia are also more strongly affected by HIV and AIDS than men are. The Ministry of Health estimates that around 1.32 million Ethiopians are infected with the virus. Approximately 360 persons die daily of AIDS. HIV and AIDS are especially prevalent in urban areas. Here, the prevalence rate is 9.1 percent among men and 11.9 percent among women, while the prevalence rate on the national average lies at 3.5 percent. In the rural areas, the HIV and AIDS rate is lower. Here the prevalence rate is 1.9 percent, whereby 1.7 percent of men and 2.2 percent of women are affected.

The Ethiopian state has set itself the target of achieving equality between men and women. The position of women has been strengthened by laws which abolish existing discrimination. Thus, women now for example have, in accordance with the law, equal access to land. In addition, early marriages have been legally restricted. How the laws should be implemented is, however, often not clear.

#### 4.2 Description of the good practice

##### Gender approach as a process

ISAPSO was identified as good practice although the organisation possessed neither an institutional gender policy nor had laid down its gender concept in writing. Furthermore, gender justice is not considered in the organisation's mission and vision. It was noticeable, too, that in the staff's presentation of ISAPSO's work given during a visit to the organisation, the presentation of the gender perspective was not emphasised clearly enough. During the same visit, however, it emerged that the organisation is going through a reorientation process in which a competent implementation of the gender approach is being developed.

The project supported by „Brot für die Welt“ is based on a differentiated problem analysis in the form of studies which investigate the situation of violence on, and discrimination against, girls and women in different secondary schools in Addis Ababa. The project is directed at girls/women and boys/men. ISAPSO regards the role of both in combating HIV and AIDS. Objectives, indicators and activities reflect gender aspects. This, for example, is becoming visible by the gradual inclusion of men.

##### Innovative approach with widespread impact

ISAPSO's secondary school project was the first Ethiopian NGO project which initially approached female pupils, and later male pupils, with the argument that self-confident women and girls (and men) are less affected by reproductive health problems, HIV and AIDS and sexu-

## Gender Mainstreaming | Practice

al violence than those who do not have the corresponding self-confidence. Hence, the foci of the project are on strengthening self-confidence, sensitisation to the issues of reproductive health, HIV and AIDS, and violence against women. Many NGOs in Ethiopia have taken on this innovative approach and are currently working as well in secondary schools. ISAPSO plans, in future, to implement this approach in primary schools in order to reach boys and girls at an even earlier age.

The project represents an important initiative in the patriarchal Ethiopian context. It places the promotion of reproductive health, including HIV and AIDS education and control, in correlation with gender relationships and enhancing women's positions in the family and the society.

### Gender in people's minds

ISAPSO has set as its goal the implementation of the gender approach both within the organisation as well as in the project work, and understands this strategy as gender mainstreaming. However, a document in which the organisation has fixed its implementation strategies does not exist. New staff are familiarised with the gender theme through their cooperation in the team. The gender concept which is fixed in people's minds and builds the theoretical framework for gender orientation in the various ISAPSO projects, and which is advocated by the staff can be summarised as follows.

For ISAPSO, the battle against HIV and AIDS, attaining gender justice and promoting women are closely interrelated. In ISAPSO's understanding, gender equality, reducing discrimination against women and strengthening their position in the family and society contribute to successfully combating HIV and AIDS and other health problems. Women and girls must learn to develop self-assurance in order to become more self-confident in dealing with men. Supporting women, especially through income-generating measures, improves their economic situation. The fact that women have more income at their disposal increases their esteem. Hence, their social position is strengthened. In connection with combating HIV and AIDS, promoting women through income-gen-

erating measures also means protecting women from prostitution. ISAPSO is well aware that the gender approach must not only consider women. In fact, in order to achieve sustainable changes, women and men must both be included in the discussion and in the measures implemented to attain gender justice.

### Breaking taboos

ISAPSO employees stress that gender relations are rarely ever questioned and issues such as genital mutilation, abduction and the rape of women in Ethiopian society have, for a long time, been taboo subjects. It was largely in connection with HIV and AIDS awareness building and control that the taboo was removed. This, however, does not include the area of domestic violence, which has remained an issue not openly discussed. ISAPSO is breaking this taboo and is speaking openly about domestic and sexual violence.

### Training to build self-confidence

The focus of the „Brot für die Welt“-funded project is on developing and strengthening self-confidence in women and girls. ISAPSO carried out a series of studies which revealed that young girls and women in schools, and especially in the school environment, are exposed to sexual assault and harassment. In order to protect young women and girls from the different secondary schools from these acts of violence, they are offered the opportunity to take part in training sessions which build up and strengthen their self-confidence and self-assurance. Experience shows that self-confident and self-assured women are less often victims of sexual assaults than women who radiate insecurity and fear.

### Clubs as social learning places with role models

It is normal in schools for pupils to organise themselves in clubs. Each club is assigned a subject. So, meanwhile, HIV and AIDS clubs or girls' clubs have been founded which are increasingly transforming into gender clubs. Initially, ISAPSO promoted the organisation of girls into girls' clubs. In these clubs, topics are discussed which interest young girls, such as sexuality, or relationships to

boys/men. HIV and AIDS prevention is also an important topic in these clubs.

It became obvious that boys and men were also interested in these subjects and requests were made to join the clubs. Hence, girls' clubs were transformed to gender clubs. In the meantime, alongside female there are also male peer educators and peer counsellors who are also being trained by ISAPSO to accompany and advise their fellow pupils as regards HIV and AIDS control, gender relationships, domestic violence and sexuality.

During a school visit made within the framework of an exchange with ISAPSO, a discussion in a gender club was taking place on sexuality and the best time for a couple to start up a relationship. During a follow-up discussion with peer educators the adolescents made it clear that these were not topics which could be discussed outside of the club.

In this project, the increased inclusion of boys and young men in the implementation of the gender approach is becoming very noticeable. The development of girls' clubs into gender clubs is based on the awareness shared by both the organisation and the target group that the gender approach must not only address women but women and men, or boys and girls, equally.

### **HIV and AIDS and harmful traditional practices**

The following examples demonstrate how ISAPSO implements the gender approach in other projects which are not financed by „Brot für die Welt“.

In rural areas, a focus of work linked to HIV and AIDS awareness building is in combating traditional practices which are harmful to women. In Ethiopia's case, the huge concern here is combating female genital mutilation and early marriages of girls. ISAPSO links the battle against these practices with the demand for, and promotion of, education for women and girls.

Combating harmful traditional practices is directed mainly at farmers and herdspeople. Men and women are given the opportunity, either in separate groups or

together, to speak about HIV and AIDS, genital mutilation and the abduction and rape of women.

In this context, the method of community conversation is frequently used. Here, during village meetings the themes mentioned are discussed openly with the support of a male or female facilitator. The aim of the method is to make men and women so aware of the different problems that they recognise them as their own and try to solve them together. This approach is implemented not only by ISAPSO but also by many other governmental and nongovernmental organisations. One can speak here of a country-wide campaign against genital mutilation and other harmful traditional practices which is being supported by the government.

### **Strengthening women economically as a way of preventing prostitution**

Strengthening women economically by means of income-generating measures addresses, in particular, low-income women and sex workers in the urban areas. Although prostitution is illegal in Ethiopia, it is very widespread in an urban context.

ISAPSO works in the field of HIV and AIDS education with sex workers and ex-sex workers in different districts of Addis Ababa. In conjunction with this, the police and administrative staff are included in the awareness campaign and sensitised to the situation of the sex workers.

Sex workers are an important target group for ISAPSO whose work, however, also addresses other low-income women and their children as well as the sex workers' children. In cooperation with other educational organisations, ISAPSO promotes school attendance and education for children to enable them to qualify themselves and find better jobs than those of their parents.

### **Gender policy within the organisation**

There is no written gender policy on the implementation of the gender approach within the organisation. The staff do not miss it.

## Gender Mainstreaming | Practice

Implementing the gender approach at the institutional level is considered less important than its consideration at the project level.

Nevertheless, gender criteria do play a role internally as proved by the organisation's efforts to have a balanced relationship between male and female employees. The balance corresponds to not only the total number of men and women in the organisation but also to the balanced occupancy at the hierarchy levels.

In practice, this is the situation; of 38 employees, 17 are female, with three women and two men working in the project coordination. Currently, the post of executive director is filled by a woman.

Apart from this, personnel politics are in line with national legislation. This stipulates equal opportunities/rights for women and men at the workplace. Working women have the right to three months maternity leave following the birth of their child.

### 4.3 Conducive and inhibiting factors affecting the implementation of the gender approach

For the implementation of the gender approach, both the environment (external) and the institutional situation (internal) play a role. There are positive and negative factors which influence the success of the work.

In ISAPSO's case, the following conducive factors can be listed:

- The equal opportunities legislation in the country has created an environment which has a positive effect on addressing gender relations and the implementation of the gender approach.
- Within the scope of HIV and AIDS education and control, it has become possible to broach taboo subjects such as genital mutilation, abduction and rape of women. These were never before addressed in Ethiopian society.

- The commitment and vision of ISAPSO's director greatly contribute to the development of the gender approach in the organisation, and motivate the team members.

- The successes already achieved also have a motivating effect on both the staff and the target groups.

The following factors have an inhibiting effect on a successful implementation of the gender approach:

- In the conservative Ethiopian society, addressing gender relationships very often leads to rejection. Despite the progress mentioned above there are areas such as domestic violence which are still taboo.

- There is a shortage of temporary shelter, counselling and therapy for the victims of sexual violence, which means they can seldom really be helped.

- Many projects are planned for too short a time period to be able to achieve sustainable changes.

### 4.4 Changes achieved

In conjunction with the activities within the scope of the „Brot für die Welt“ project, the following impacts can be observed. They affect mainly the target groups.

- The number of school boys and girls who took part in the activities and educational events concerned with the topic of HIV and AIDS control has risen. It can be taken for granted that in the project schools there is a high degree of awareness of HIV and AIDS.

- Thanks to the project activities, the number of active members in the gender and anti-AIDS clubs greatly increased. Girls and young women, in particular, have thus gained access to a forum in which they can come together and discuss important topics. It can be observed that the discussions among pupils on topics such as sexuality and violence against women have intensified. In this context, awareness among boys and young men on the effects of violence against girls and women

has risen. In all, there has been an increase in the participation of boys and young men in the activities supported by the project.

- Furthermore, the project has contributed to better coordination between the police, NGOs and schools in combating sexual violence.

- It has already been mentioned that with its school project, ISAPSO has developed an innovative approach which has greatly impacted the NGO environment. Many organisations today carry out similar projects.

- The income-generating measures which were aimed at women and, in particular, sex workers, have led to an improvement of their economic situation. Many women have already given up prostitution.

Negative impacts of ISAPSO's work could not be determined. No concluding statements can be made about the sustainability of the impacts. In all fields of work, important processes have been initiated and the identified impacts are pointing in the right direction.

At the time of reporting, however, it was, for example, not possible to establish whether violence against girls and women in the project's secondary schools had really decreased.

The initiatives to generate income for women are not yet sustainable. Most of these initiatives are being subsidised rather heavily by ISAPSO. If this dependency cannot be removed, there will be no sustainability in this area. This would mean a return to prostitution for many women.

#### 4.5 Conclusions and lessons learned

ISAPSO is an organisation which successfully links HIV and AIDS prevention and control with the integration of the gender approach, both in the project work and in the organisation itself. Despite the weaknesses mentioned, it is possible to speak in this context of the implementation of gender mainstreaming.

The following lessons can be drawn from ISAPSO's work:

- A successful implementation of the gender approach is possible without the gender perspective being included in the organisation's vision and mission statements and without a written defined institutional gender policy. In such cases, however, implementation very often depends on people who place great importance on gender justice. In the long run, it will be just as important to establish written policies as it will be to provide the staff with the necessary training.

- Even gender-sensitive organisations often do not succeed in explicitly making the gender approach of their work visible towards the outside. Strategic information is not utilised in such cases and cannot, therefore, be made available to other interested persons or organisations.

- Combining women's promotion and the gender approach is a wise strategy. Promoting women often results in strengthening them, especially economically, whereas both women and men with the help of the gender approach are motivated and supported to recognise gender discrimination and to lobby for more gender justice.

- The gender approach is still often misunderstood and considered an approach which addresses only women. As a rule, however, experience shows that men will have to be included in gender work if sustainable changes in gender relations are to be achieved.

*Carsta Neuenroth*



Photo: Christoph Püschner

## 5 COMINSUD – promoting democracy through the empowerment of women

The Democracy and Empowerment of Women Project aims at creating favourable conditions for the fair and balanced participation of women and the marginalised rural population in power and decision-making in the North West Province of Cameroon. Methods used include gender analysis and politics as well as comprehensive educational measures and awareness campaigns directed at the population. The goal of the project is the alleviation of poverty while campaigning for good governance at all levels of Cameroonian society. Power dynamics and structures that contribute to discrimination against women and the marginalised population are the target of change.

The project is implemented by COMINSUD (Community Initiative for Sustainable Development). As „Brot für die Welt“ partner COMINSUD works to implement the project in close cooperation with two organisations run by the Presbyterian Church of Cameroon.

### COMINSUD: Sustainable development with gender equality

COMINSUD was founded by five university graduates in January 1996 as a local development organisation. The aim has been to contribute in a meaningful way to the welfare and progress of humanity through a process of reflection, dialogue and actions involving the ac-

tive participation of all stakeholders. The Agenda 21, a result of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, as well as the notion of self-determination as an important condition for sustainable development propelled the philosophy of COMINSUD. Thus, the promotion of sustainable development through good governance practices and partnership was defined as the goal of the organisation. The work has been guided by the following objectives:

- Provide a forum for sharing knowledge and information on contemporary developmental issues and develop local strategies for action

#### Cameroon: Women and children are particularly affected by food insecurity

Cameroon is a multi-ethnic society with a population of 16.3 million. It is the strongest national economy within the Central African regional organisation CEMAC, generating 50 percent of the region's gross domestic product. Nevertheless the country has severe socio-economic problems. Approximately half the population lives below the poverty line. Although the food situation is better in Cameroon than in neighbouring countries, women and children in particular are frequently undernourished. Furthermore poor healthcare results in high mother and infant mortality rates. HIV and AIDS present a huge threat to the health of the population. There is a 12.8 percent rate of infection. The infrastructure is poor, particularly in rural areas. Water and electricity supplies are stagnating and road conditions have got worse.

- Empower target communities, groups and individuals to organise and take action
- Enhance institutional collaboration and networking

COMINSUD's functioning is regulated by three bodies:

- **General Assembly:** It consists of 15 members and is in charge of developing policies, plans and reports as well as electing the members of the Management Board.
- **Management Board:** It has seven members. The board is headed by a chairwoman and is in charge of the periodic review of plans and activity reports, internal control and supervision.
- **Coordination Unit:** It consists of the nine staff members (five women and four men) and is in charge of implementing the programmes.

COMINSUD is a multidisciplinary organisation that intervenes in the areas of natural resource management (sustainable agriculture, environmental education) and the promotion of good governance, human rights and democracy. Gender promotion and HIV and AIDS are defined as cross-cutting issues.

The work of COMINSUD concentrates on the elaboration of baseline studies, education and sensitisation to raise awareness, training to build capacities, and monitoring the project to generate information for lobbying and advocacy.

### 5.1 Gender relations in the region

The North West Province is one of ten provinces of Cameroon. In 1953, it had 429,100 inhabitants. In 1998, the population was estimated to be 1,789,164 and in 2010 it is projected to reach two million. The origin and lineage of the population derive from three ethnic groups (Tikaris, Widikums and Fulanis) and 30 tribes. The province has seven administrative divisions further divided into 34 sub-divisions.

The heads of villages and communities known as Fons (chiefs) and Ardos form very strong administrative and political units that oversee the respect of the people toward the local traditions. The province has a dual society brought about by the coexistence of modern and traditional structures and beliefs. The local customs and traditions are still very strong and some of their vital elements result in serious negative impacts and limitations for women in many aspects of life.

The communities in the North West province are patriarchal. Men dominate all aspects of public life and have a commanding influence at the domestic level. Women live under the heavy weight of a system which discriminates against them and causes major violations of their rights. This situation is further compounded by the high rates of illiteracy amongst women.

Women experience different forms of violence and exploitation. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is common and hinders the development of girls. Since they do not have access to information and education, women are not aware of their rights. Consequently, many accept their fate and live in the belief that a man is superior to a woman in all circumstances and that a married woman is the property of her husband.

The Millennium Development Goal progress report for Cameroon (Dec. 2003) indicates that 52.5 percent of the population in the province live below the poverty line. Countrywide, the poverty level declined from 50.5 percent in 1996 to 40.2 percent today. However, the North West Province is the second poorest of the ten provinces. It is also heavily affected by HIV and AIDS. The prevalence rate of 8.5 percent (11.5 percent for women) is the highest in the country. The 2004 Health and Demographic Survey indicated a prevalence rate of 5.5 percent at the national level.

### 5.2 Description of the good practice

This project is intended to contribute to the eradication of poverty and the enhancement of good governance practices through the transformation of power relation-

## Gender Mainstreaming | Practice

ships and structures that promote discrimination and oppression against women in particular and the marginalised in general.

Its objective is to create an enabling environment for the participation of women and the marginalised rural population in decision-making processes and power structures in 15 sub-divisions of the seven divisions that make up the North West Province. It gives women a chance to learn about governance, human rights and democracy.

Many thousands of people have been targeted and their awareness raised by educational measures conducted by qualified members (male and female multipliers) from the religious institutions.

A political empowerment manual has provided additional information, thereby helping to change views and modes of behaviour. The success of the measures has persuaded the project coordinators to conduct further activities aimed at reinforcing the values and concerns of the project.

Successful measures have included:

- Over the last four years the project has played a major role organising celebrations and events to mark International Women's Day. Employees have organised press conferences, podium discussions and demonstrations. Over 25,000 flyers on a range of women's topics have been distributed to women's groups.
- The project has been scaled up to other areas. In the South West Province a similar project, the "Women Education and Empowerment Project" (WEEP), is being implemented. In the francophone region, 35 organisations were introduced to the project concept and methodology and further equipped with 500 copies of the French version of the manual on grassroots political empowerment.
- The project was also involved in observing the electoral process in order to enhance efforts in promoting grassroots political empowerment.

### Decision-makers as agents of change

The project's aim is to raise the awareness of key religious, political and traditional social institutions. It is directed at decision-makers who are challenged to rethink gender relations in their community or organisation.

The project picks up on the fundamental values of the religious, traditional and political institutions and puts the focus on gender relations within this context. Discussions and the consideration of topics such as involvement, the recognition of others, reaching decisions, leadership, violence, human rights, poverty and HIV and AIDS arouse everyone's interest, regardless of ethnicity, religion or political conviction.

In this way openness towards gender topics is created. This helps modify the institutional values, practices and norms which lead to human rights violations and oppression. The topic of gender relations is introduced with the help of gender analysis. This serves as the basis for developing gender policies in the institutions.

In particular the target groups are:

1. Decision makers in religious bodies (Christian and Muslim) as well as in political and traditional institutions. The political institutions include political parties and local councils. The traditional institutions include traditional councils, village development associations and influential socio-cultural groups.
2. Other persons and groups in the Christian and Muslim communities.

### Raising awareness in two steps

The project enters a community through an introductory workshop at sub-divisional level. The workshop takes place in the local council hall and lasts two days. Invited are the sub-divisional officer (head of government administration), the mayor, representatives of NGOs operating in the area as well as representatives of the Delegation of Women's Empowerment and the Family, a government institution, heads of religious, po-

litical and traditional institutions and other community members (men and women).

The workshop participants are sensitised on the project concept and contents. This is followed by an inventory of and sensitisation on traditional norms and practices which discriminate against women. These workshops have been carried out in 15 sub-divisions across the North West Province with a total of 810 participants (345 men and 465 women).

In a second step, which mainly addresses the heads of the institutions, gender analysis is carried out to identify the positions occupied by men and women in the structures of the institutions. Based on discussions about daily activities of men and women, access to and control over resources, inheritance and treatment of widows and widowers, the gender relations in villages and institutions are characterised. Their implications are further discussed in regard to the challenges women and children (girls in particular) face concerning poverty, violence and HIV and AIDS.

The discussions and reflections generally lead to a decision to develop a gender policy in order to change the status quo. This policy also serves as a guide to monitor the gender situation within the institutions or communities that are committed to transformation. Gender analysis has been carried out in 20 village communities, two church institutions and 12 local councils. At present, 11 villages have developed gender policies and are making efforts to implement them. In order to support this process, a guideline for carrying out gender analysis and developing gender policies has been prepared.

In addition, promoters have been trained in order to facilitate the change process at the divisional and sub-divisional levels. Seven training workshops have been carried out at the divisional level. Two hundred and thirty-eight promoters (85 men and 153 women) have been trained to facilitate women's leadership and political and civil rights initiatives at the grassroots level.

At the sub-divisional level, 16 training sessions for 418 animators (160 men and 258 women) have been organ-

ised. The animators serve as community-based sensitisation and education agents within the religious groups.

### **Public relations and lobbying**

Round table conferences, radio discussions, billboards and banners as well as the distribution of flyers have proved to be successful measures to raise public awareness, especially during the UN Day for Women's Rights and International Peace.

A reflection and advocacy workshop at province level about promoting women's leadership as well as political and civil rights resulted in the elaboration of a manual for grassroots political empowerment. Sixty leaders of traditional, religious and political institutions participated in the event. The information generated during the workshop was incorporated into the manual, which was written by CONIMSUD. 1,700 copies have been printed and distributed to community-based educators (promoters and animators) and other people who have a genuine interest in the promotion of gender issues. The manual is designed to facilitate reflection, discussion and understanding of conceptual issues.

### **5.3 Conducive and inhibiting factors affecting the implementation of the gender approach**

The issues that are addressed by the project are relevant and practical. They touch on the everyday lives of the people at the personal and social levels. In a situation where people suffer acts of violence, illness, poverty, deprivation, oppression and discrimination, change can only come through a raising of awareness. The coordination and administration of the project by COMINSUD is based on a system of participatory planning, controlling, implementation, evaluation and reporting of activities. A strategic plan that is embedded in the vision of the organisation guides the development of the project.

The management board of the organisation, the steering committee of the project and the staff are very committed in regard to the development of approaches, strate-

## Gender Mainstreaming | Practice

gies and tools. A lot of work is done by these people in their free time. COMINSUD provides the office space, equipment and other material necessary for functioning.

The Presbyterian Church of Cameroon institutions play an important role in the project to mobilise the communities and organise ecumenical/interreligious initiatives.

The community-based promoters and animators carry out activities and spread information in a systematic manner at the grassroots level to support the process of change. With the aid of tools such as the manual and reporting forms, they reach out to thousands of community members, especially in worship groups. They also serve in some cases as local counsellors and guides for those in need or for people who attended reflection meetings and are interested in getting more information on a particular issue. Some of them are active in negotiating and facilitating preparatory activities for gender analysis in villages, explaining its importance and benefits to the village authorities.

Many other church and state institutions are actively involved in the implementation of the project. They facilitate some processes and give impetus to the project by exchanging information, providing resource persons and making facilities available for meetings. NGOs such as the Mbororo Social and Cultural Development Association (MBOSCUDA) facilitate access to the Moslem community, a culturally sensitive, marginalised minority.

„Brot für die Welt“ contributes funds for the project, promotes capacity building and facilitates institutional development. It also provides opportunities for sharing experiences and supports external evaluations. SIRDEP, the transfer-of-function office collaborating with „Brot für die Welt“ in Cameroon, provides technical advice, exchange of information, support for capacity building and bi-annual monitoring of activities.

The following factors inhibit implementation of the gender approach.

- Traditional beliefs continue to prevent women's empowerment. Additionally, insufficient knowledge about the importance of gender policies hinders women's development within some institutions. Often there is lack of openness on gender issues.

- Some people are reluctant to embrace the project due to negative experiences with other projects which were introduced in their communities. Other projects were short lived and failed to have any impact on the lives of the people. In some cases, people have even been deceived and exploited by NGOs, causing them to be sceptical. In other instances, NGOs have offered financial benefits for people to participate.

- In the case of COMINSUD the promoters work as volunteers, but they are sometimes mistaken for paid staff. When villagers perceive them in this way, they sometimes expect payment for their participation.

- In some cases, the commitment of the volunteer promoters is weakened by a lack of incentives, resources and transport facilities for gaining access to groups and communities in remote areas. The success of these activities thus often depends on their good will and enthusiasm. As a result, change takes place very slowly, and large areas with thousands of people have not yet been reached.

- In this context, special difficulties arise when a project aims at primarily bringing about social change rather than economic improvement.

- Those involved in the project do not have a common understanding of the concepts of democracy and empowerment. These concepts are understood and applied differently by religious institutions (Christian and Muslim), political parties and traditional institutions, depending on the ideologies and interests each wants to protect.

- Some promoters find it difficult to pass on their message because they are identified as politicians and anything they say is associated with their alleged political interests. In one instance, when animators tried to en-

courage the local population to register and vote, some people thought that they wanted to lure people into their party.

- The role of the promoters is often misunderstood. One promoter was threatened by former community councillors who felt that their positions were endangered because he had encouraged youths and women to run for election as councillors and parliamentarians in the upcoming local and national elections. In this case, the promoter was only advocating the representation of 30 percent women in elective positions. This was defined as a goal by the government in the context of the election process.

- Sometimes volunteers must give up their work because they have to leave their village. Thus valuable resources for the project and the communities are lost, leaving a gap.

## 5.4 Changes achieved

The project is based on a comprehensive development concept that focuses on women and other marginalised persons. A well-developed PME system and regular field visits ensure that it is implemented in a manner appropriate to the needs of the people and that it fulfils its goals.

### Changes for men and women

On the individual level, the project has contributed to build the self-esteem of women and they are now more assertive of their status in society. More women than ever are now accepting positions of responsibility and are interested in playing an active and frontline role in political and public activities.

The empowerment process has encouraged many women to earn and manage their own income in order to support their families. This has also permitted them to become decision makers in their families. The change has led to a decline in domestic violence. Men are more willing than before to accept women as partners. They

acknowledge that women are making very valuable contributions to the development of every level of the society. The people who have been exposed to the project know that instruments and mechanisms exist at the national and international levels that guarantee the rights and freedom of every person. They can now recognise traditional practices that violate human rights. Some women have used these instruments and mechanisms to seek justice, especially to secure their property and personal independence at the death of their husbands.

### Raising awareness of women's rights: learning and sharing experience in all areas of life

Capacity building and awareness raising about human rights have greatly contributed to a reduction of physical, psychological and emotional violence at the domestic level in the project area. Women are more assertive, and men are cautious not to violate their rights.

The COMINSUD manual for grassroots political empowerment, which is used by promoters and animators for raising awareness, pursues a comprehensive, inclusive approach that emphasises learning and the sharing of experience. It thus contributes to change in many areas of daily life.

Some men now share their possessions with female family members. Others advocate education for women and oppose forced marriages. Some men have even assumed child-care responsibilities.

Through this project, traditional leaders and many community members have learnt about the importance of gender analysis. It has enabled them to recognise the existing gender imbalance and its detrimental effect on the lives of women, children, families and whole communities. This exposure has motivated them to develop initiatives and build more inclusive communities.

Gender issues are mainstreamed within COMINSUD. The concept has been internalised. The application of a gender perspective is a natural part of the work. It is not considered as having been urged upon the organisation. COMINSUD members and staff have adequate knowl-

## Gender Mainstreaming | Practice

edge and skills to lead processes and reflections on gender. Gender relations are addressed in the context of issues such as promoting democracy and combating HIV and AIDS. COMINSUD is a leading organisation in promoting collaboration and networking amongst organisations. In this way, a wide network for learning and the exchange of ideas and experiences is created.

COMINSUD's approach has attracted the attention of other organisations. This has caused its services to be solicited by other organisations in order to facilitate communication, good governance, participation and group formation. COMINSUD has also been asked to conduct training events. Some people, after observing the activities of promoters and animators and the changes in the communities, took interest in the project, organised themselves and requested to be trained as animators.

COMINSUD and the Presbyterian Church of Cameroon partners initiated two projects in the Anglophone part of Cameroon: the Democracy and Empowerment of Women Project in the North West province and the Women Education and Empowerment Project in the South West province. Both projects have built grassroots political empowerment and strengthened the participation of women in power structures and decision-making processes through the engagement of over 1,000 trained community-based educators who sensitise and educate the local population on gender, participation, leadership, human rights, politics and democracy. The positive experiences of these projects encouraged the organisation to promote the approach in the Francophone region of the country as well. In this way, the effort has been scaled up to build a truly democratic culture in Cameroon, one which includes women and other marginalised people.

### 5.5 Conclusions and lessons learned

Awareness raising and capacity building are very necessary to enable people to understand and adapt to new situations. They help to reduce or even prevent possible conflicts that may result from new-found freedom. By addressing the economic needs of women, the project

has supported women in taking up economic activities that are contributing to poverty alleviation, family wellbeing and consequently to the improvement of the standard of living.

Men, women, children and the entire society benefit when gender inequalities are reduced and men and women act as partners. Transformation of gender relations, especially in traditional institutions, is not possible as an internal initiative. External assistance (professional and financial) is necessary to enable each institution to take a deeper look at itself in order to determine the path towards change.

Social transformation is possible if it is strongly desired. Appropriate approaches are necessary to promote it and the relevant issues need to be addressed to the right people at the right time. This has been clearly proven through the project. It has been possible to create an atmosphere of openness. Men have shown to be willing to share power, to take up new roles in family and society, and to grant greater respect to women.

COMINSUD has gained increased recognition at the local, regional and national levels because of its proactive approach in promoting gender justice, democracy and human rights.

The project has been causing satisfactory social transformation. It is developing gradually and with a varying pace in the different organisations. The basic project concept is clear. Stakeholders easily identify and work with it. So far, the collaboration that exists between COMINSUD and the Presbyterian Church has helped to implant gender issues in the various institutions. The participation of the Baptist Church and other churches is encouraging as well. In addition, the Muslim community is taking an active part.

The participation of political parties at the higher level remains weak. However, promising chances exist to carry out further activities at municipal council and sub-divisional levels.

*Fon Nsoh*



Photo: Heide Trommer

## 6 SAMVADA – combating marginalisation through dialogue and encounter

*“If you want to change the world, work with young people.”*

This is the motto of SAMVADA, an organisation founded in 1992 in Bangalore, booming capital of the southern Indian state of Karnataka. Over the last 20 years Bangalore has developed into a flourishing industrial city with an economy of global proportions, attracting both academics and unskilled labourers from the poorer regions of India. Nevertheless, even in a glittering modern industrial metropolis like Bangalore, the social effects of the officially abolished caste system are still omnipresent. Most lives are predestined from birth in accordance with Indian society’s strict hierarchy. It is practically inconceivable that people from different castes and classes or men and women share daily life by living side by side. Strict gender roles work to the particular disadvantage of girls and women.

The aim of SAMVADA’s two female founders is to enable young people from different castes, social classes and religions to meet, to prepare disadvantaged young people for a self-determined existence, and to overcome the glass wall between the castes, between poor and rich, between men and women. The Tamil word SAMVADA means “dialogue” and adequately reflects the organisation’s approach. In over ten years of cooperation with „Brot für die Welt“, SAMVADA has made an

### India: economic growth and poverty

With over 1.1 billion inhabitants, India is the second most populous country on earth after China and a multi-ethnic state. Worldwide, India is leading in certain economic sectors such as information technology, services and research (e.g. biotechnology). The economy grew by nine percent in 2006. Despite this some 300 million Indians live below the poverty line, which means that over a quarter of the population does not benefit from the country’s economic growth. An absence of educational opportunities, insufficient health-care and a lack of infrastructure (roads, electricity, water), particularly in rural areas, in which over two-thirds of the population still live, are just some of the reasons.

impact with unique and innovative projects, unconventional approaches which nevertheless have a solid theoretical and practical basis, and a thoroughly participatory approach. This and successes in overcoming class, caste and gender barriers, as well as the transparent reporting of problems when measures could not be realised as expected, were the reasons for recommending SAMVADA as an example of good practice.

### 6.1 Gender relations in the region

Despite its many internal problems India is a stable democracy. The government is making efforts to achieve the Millennium Goals and is passing legislation aimed

## Gender Mainstreaming | Practice

at overcoming gender barriers. The elimination of discrimination against women is a feature of the national and regional political agenda. Nevertheless many obstacles need to be removed – in the country as a whole, as well as in the federal state of Karnataka – if women and girls are to enjoy real equality. Although it is difficult to gain a uniform impression of gender relations owing to the contradictory nature of Indian society, there are a few common features:

1. Class, caste and gender issues are tightly interwoven and cannot be discussed in isolation.
2. Women have fewer opportunities to develop than men – regardless of class, caste or religion.
3. Gender-related human rights violations affecting women are common.

### Gender relations shaped by tradition

Even if the Indian school curriculum specifies sexual education, questions about sexuality, family planning, HIV and AIDS and homosexuality are largely taboo. Friendships between men and women are even rarer than contact between the different classes and castes.

Young middle class women must uphold the family honour, be amiable, pretty and friendly, and above all play the role of the dutiful daughter in dealings with the outside world. The pressure to fulfil family expectations is extremely high. The women are constantly observed by their families and society at large and have little opportunity to develop their own personalities. But it's not just women who are caught in these old traditions, passed on from generation to generation. The expectations towards young men to provide for the extended family and arrange marriages for their sisters are also extremely high.

### Arranged marriages

The system of arranged marriages permeates all religions and castes. In 2005 the average marrying age for women was 20, for men 25.

These days a director of a respected partner organisation of „Brot für die Welt“ avoids going to church on Sunday because his well-educated 28-year-old daughter is still unmarried and comments in the local community are becoming increasingly snide. A 48-year-old SAMVADA employee who has been married for twelve years and is the proud father of two sons admits that he had no friendships, let alone intimate relationships with women, until his arranged marriage.

### Sexual violence, abortion of female foetuses and dowry killings

According to statistics published by the government of Karnataka, 10.6 percent of all women were raped in Bangalore city and greater Bangalore during 1996, and 2.7 percent of the women were murdered for their dowry. During research for this text in June 2008 news of the murder of a young married woman was released; she had been killed by a member of her husband's family because her family had not fulfilled the dowry expectations to the required level.

Although amniotic fluid tests to establish the sex of a foetus have been banned since 1994, daughters are still regarded as such a high “cost factor” owing to dowry demands that illegal tests and abortions remain relatively cheap. “Bringing up a daughter is like watering your neighbour's garden” is a common saying. India is one of the few countries which has a higher proportion of men than women due to the abortion of female foetuses.

### Unequal educational opportunities

The literacy rate has improved somewhat in recent years. Still at 56 percent of the entire population in 1991, it had increased to 66 percent by 2001, with the literacy rate of women growing faster than that of the men. However, girls are more likely not to finish their schooling than boys, since they are often needed for housework and the care of younger siblings.

Educational opportunities in rural areas are far poorer than in the city. Girls from disadvantaged social classes generally have no access to proper education. As soon

as the economic status of the mother improves, however, the chance of attending school increases for the daughter.

### **Gender-discriminating inheritance law**

Indian civil law features a range of legislative measures for the various religions regarding inheritance, marriage, divorce and adoption. Hindu inheritance law excludes daughters from inheriting the parental estate. Even though Christian inheritance law prescribes equal division between the sons and daughters, the daughters are expected to willingly relinquish their claim – which is possibly an even more perfidious way of exerting pressure.

Women are not allowed to own land. In a study recently conducted in greater Bangalore, SAMVADA found out that although agricultural labour is traditionally associated with men, they are only responsible for preparing the soil for sowing, while women see to the seeds, the sowing, watering, weeding, harvesting, the sale of produce and care for the animals. Women are in poorer health than men, since despite their greater workload, they eat after the men, feeding themselves on the leftovers.

## **6.2 Description of the good practice**

### **Communication and networking**

SAMVADA maintains a coordinating office in Bangalore with a semi-public library featuring over 900 titles, a third of which address gender issues. It has set up youth centres in the state capital as well as in four neighbouring villages. Young people can meet there regardless of their social status and pass their leisure time according to interest.

The young men and women experience an unwonted degree of freedom, and are able to discuss their personal and social situation individually or in groups. The discussions frequently focus on relationships between the genders and between the castes, the process of social change, democracy or environmental issues.

During well-attended cultural and sporting events the young people draw attention to their situation, their problems and concerns. They are gaining increasing support from the village authorities. The work of SAMVADA is based on academic research into topics such as sexual abuse or child labour. The publication of such studies puts pressure on the authorities who are then forced to take protective action on behalf of the children and young people.

Topics such as HIV and AIDS or domestic violence are also addressed. Where necessary, SAMVADA puts young people in touch with professional support services.

SAMVADA represents the interests of young people in various regional and international networks and thanks to some extremely effective publicity has helped improve their legal and social situation.

### **Gender work through encounter and education**

Issues of gender justice permeate all areas of SAMVADA's work. During the organisation's early years the situation of girls was a major focus. In discussions, however, it became clear that young males also suffer from the rigid expectations to which they are subjected. "Later" they are expected not only to shoulder responsibility for providing for their own family, but also when the father dies, for the mother; in addition they have to ensure their sisters are married off. Owing to dowry expectations, this is associated with extreme expense and therefore often leads to debt.

An examination of the sexual stereotypes, e.g. the image of girls and boys in the media, made SAMVADA put emphasis on gender work that was not solely targeted at girls but also addressed boys. The gender courses therefore examine the roles of women and girls and those of boys and men. Issues of cooperation within the family and domestic violence are the current foci of discussion.

SAMVADA has recently begun training young women and men in new work areas that take the globalised labour market into account, e.g. eco-tourism. Teaching

## Gender Mainstreaming | Practice

staff in schools and universities are being trained in new teaching methods and gender awareness.

SAMVADA's appeal has found particular resonance among young people from disadvantaged families, particularly those belonging to the so-called untouchables (dalits) and aboriginal population (adivasi) from Bangalore's rural surroundings. The organisation also addresses young people from the urban middle classes with the aim of broadening their view on social realities. All training efforts are designed to allow girls to take part.

Over 10,000 young people, with more or less numbers of girls and boys, have attended SAMVADA events to date. More than 3,000 young people have had direct contact with the organisation, and over 500 have become actively involved in the various projects.

### **Equality in word and deed: institutional gender policy**

The two female founders who still direct the organisation today attach great importance to the correlation of words and deeds. Decision-making is a team activity. That younger female employees can feel free to contradict the founders in an open and even emotional manner is symptomatic of their non-hierarchical style of leadership.

SAMVADA currently employs 21 people, ten of whom are women. The work is shared evenly between the genders at all levels. The employees enjoy a huge degree of creative freedom and take advantage of advanced training opportunities. Their satisfaction is also sensed by the young people. Nevertheless not everyone is able to live up to the organisation's high standards. A male employee, unable to accept the principle of gender equality, was dismissed several months ago.

Such a non-hierarchical organisational culture is rare in India, yet fundamental for youth work. After all, young people are quick to pick up on contradictions, e.g. if all the talk is about equal opportunities for women and men, but the organisation's own practice demonstrates

signs of gender-related hierarchical discrepancy. Every year a team conference is held to address gender issues. These range from the expression of private concerns ("May I as a widow remarry?") to the clarification of conceptual issues (development of the gender training into masculinity and femininity training).

There is great emphasis on the equal allocation of positions within the organisation and a family-friendly policy. Flexible working hours take small children and relatives needing care into account. None of the employees however has a permanent contract of employment owing to the project-dependent nature of funding. This means that despite a high level of commitment among staff there is a danger of employees moving to organisations offering better working conditions. One such employee did return, however, saying he could better contribute his own ideas at SAMVADA.

### **Developmental stages and milestones**

Table 2 shows how nearly twenty years of history may be divided into three stages: founding, growth and organisational development.

### **Measures, approaches and methods**

SAMVADA applies new, unconventional methods to suit the situation in hand: individual counselling sessions, fixed and open groups, cultural and sporting events with wide appeal, exposure programmes and research are a few of the measures which are extremely unusual in India. The focus is always on the different life experiences of the young people, their personal experiences and social backgrounds.

Girls are able to talk about their many concerns in a sheltered environment and single-gender groups, addressing issues such as health and sexuality, legal problems and other aspects about which they would otherwise never be able to discuss. Boys are encouraged to think about the roles society expects them to fulfil. Together girls and boys learn to talk about their feelings, to listen, to appreciate the problems, fears and hopes of the opposite gender and to treat one another as equals.

**Table 2: Stages and milestones in the development of SAMVADA**

Year		Milestones
Founding	1989 – 1992	Founding, accreditation as a non-governmental organisation
	1993	First empirical study into sexual abuse. Breaking a taboo, the publishing of the results attracts huge attention.
Growth	1996	The first youth centres open in villages in which there had previously been no provision for young people.
	1999	Twelve young people visit Pakistan, a country with which India has an ongoing history of conflict. Four girls are among the group.
	1999	Festival of oppressed cultures: Resistance songs rediscovered by the young people draw attention to the diversity of folk art.
	2000	Alternative fashion shows and Miss contests: dalit girls confidently present their beauty and charm in traditional costumes.
	2000 – today	Gender workshops addressing gender relations, issues of masculinity and femininity; inclusion of intimate family issues since 2007.
	2005	Games 4 change: Over 5,000 young people from all classes take part in a 20-day tournament held in five villages (e.g. basketball for girls, village games invented by the young people).
Organisational development	2006	Exhibition of traditional handicrafts: women demonstrate their role in shaping culture.
	2006 – 2008	Film project: 60 young people produce four films about their situation. Boys and girls appear together in public.
	2006 – today	Programme for alternative outlooks on life: young people from disadvantaged classes receive high-quality professional training. Congress of 20 vocational organisations on innovative training and education.

A unique aspect of the SAMVADA approach is the guidance given to the contemplation of self. The young people are encouraged to trust their own perceptions and to compare them with the expectations of society at large. And they learn that the latter can be changed. In these groups young people are also able to reflect on the cynicism they sometimes feel as a result of the severe inequality they experience.

The internal workings of SAMVADA are also guided by personal experience. The organisation demands a high degree of authenticity from its staff and a heightened ability of self-reflection. “We must be extremely aware of the young people’s concerns”, explains one of the directors. No distinction is made between personal and professional issues; both spheres are attributed the same degree of importance.

The employees reflect on their approach to sexuality, HIV and AIDS, the shaping of their relationships and the division of labour within the home. Personal feel-

ings, such as fear of the opposite gender or other castes, are also incorporated.

### **Measures for the successful implementation of the gender approach**

The high degree of social complexity and the specific Bangalore dynamic require SAMVADA to be constantly adjusting and developing so that it is always able to react and pinpoint new areas of attention, i.e. it cannot afford to bask in the success of completed projects. The following innovative and exemplary measures with a gender emphasis deserve mention.

In 1993 SAMVADA conducted the first empirical study into the sexual abuse of children and young people in Bangalore and the surrounding area. The interview with 149 girls and 148 boys revealed that three quarters of the offenders belonged to the victim’s social/family circle, that abuse is common to all castes, classes and religions, and that close relatives were aware of the abuse

## Gender Mainstreaming | Practice

and were covering up for the offenders. SAMVADA initiated a hotline and lobbied for legislation to protect children and young people. These days official refuges exist for victims of domestic violence.

A trip to neighbouring Pakistan in 1999, which has a history of recurrent and often military conflict with India, allowed twelve young people, including four girls, all of whom had never left the confines of their community, to become acquainted with the situation of their Pakistani contemporaries. This peace initiative became known in far wider circles than SAMVADA and its immediate surroundings.

From a gender perspective it is particularly remarkable that the girls were able to obtain permission from their parents to go on the trip, travelled together with the boys, and were able to talk publicly about their situation as young women.

The latest project is the programme for alternative outlooks on life which prepares disadvantaged young people for work in the globalised job market. Relevant commercial sectors in Bangalore are IT and the entire service industry, as well as textiles and the agro-industry.

Young women without access to formal education often work within the free trade zones created especially to serve the international market as unskilled labour, for instance in the clothing industry. Women with English and computer skills aim to work in open-plan offices, typing up documents such as doctors' reports dictated abroad. Young men prefer working as day labourers in the city to working on the land.

SAMVADA provides young people, mostly with a dalit or rural background, as well as women with limited job opportunities with vocational training that matches the expectations of the global market.

Since most young people are not prepared for the altered labour market owing to a lack of essential skills, e.g. no English or computer skills, SAMVADA has developed innovative job concepts based on a feasibility study:

- Ecotourism for wealthy employees of international high-tech companies wishing to learn more about life in the countryside and nature,

- Training child care workers who not only focus on the correct upbringing of children but also defend children's rights and fight to enhance the status of their own occupation,

- Establishment of consumer protection initiatives for the rights of all consumers,

- Courses in water management which address both technical and social issues,

- Sustainable agriculture which helps, for example, to restore pride in agricultural work or focuses on the local knowledge of farmers, female and male,

- Education of journalists, female and male, in peace, justice and development issues, taking into account the perspective of the poor sections of society.

This project in particular broaches the idea that categories such as gender, caste, class or even "development" are social constructs which have an effect on every person and lead to hierarchisation. They determine how we approach others, that we feel linked to people of a similar background and alienated from many others.

SAMVADA aims to provide young people with options that allow them to break free of these identities and release themselves from the pressure exerted by their families and peer groups.

In youth centres with their own libraries in Bangalore and four other surrounding villages, young people from all castes and classes can meet up, read, make music and pursue their creative interests. Young people are engaged as male and female mentors. The centres are run by young women and men from the area.

In one of the youth centres a survey was conducted. Answers to the question "Why is SAMVADA important to girls and boys?" can be seen in Table 3.

**Table 3: Importance of SAMVADA**

Important to girls	Important to boys	Important to girls and boys
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Talking to other girls about problems</li> <li>■ Improving self-confidence</li> <li>■ Receiving advice and comfort</li> <li>■ Discussing health issues</li> <li>■ Having space for oneself</li> <li>■ Girl group meetings</li> <li>■ Discussing and expressing one's own opinions in front of others</li> <li>■ Learning to make music and drumming</li> <li>■ Learning to address conflicts openly and to express expectations</li> <li>■ One 19-year-old: "If SAMVADA didn't exist, I would have been married off long ago."</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Learning to treat girls with respect</li> <li>■ Making friends with girls</li> <li>■ Learning how to behave</li> <li>■ Learning to use less foul language</li> <li>■ Learning household duties, washing dishes and becoming independent that way</li> <li>■ Learning things to which they would otherwise not have access (e.g. making music)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Reading books and magazines</li> <li>■ Making friends with people of the opposite gender</li> <li>■ Experiencing support over problems in school/university, the family and in relationships</li> <li>■ Exchanging experiences, learning more about oneself</li> <li>■ Making contact with others without discrimination</li> <li>■ Discovering common and individual problems</li> <li>■ Understanding myself better and developing as a person</li> <li>■ Learning about HIV and AIDS</li> </ul>

### 6.3 Conducive and inhibiting factors affecting the implementation of the gender approach

SAMVADA has developed an excellent reputation among experts with its innovative, gender-sensitive work. The enthusiasm, credibility and communication skills of the organisation's two female directors play a major role in the realisation of gender justice; these women openly question their own (gender) roles and behaviour, making private issues (e.g. divorce or adoption) transparent in a culture of conservatism.

One of the founders received a scholarship from „Brot für die Welt“'s ecumenical scholarship programme to study in England, gathering important creative stimuli for her work while there. „Brot für die Welt“'s openness and trust in its dealings with SAMVADA, its willingness to embrace new ideas, encourages the organisation's directors to continue along their allotted path, facing the risks as they arise.

This partnership is seen as enriching by both sides. In addition there is the team's equal representation of gender, its motivation and professionalism. Particularly in the case of gender issues, the team concept is clear, drawing on the experience of team members as well as on international and academic discussion. It is very noticeable that the energy which flows between the young people and project workers is beneficial to all involved.

At the same time an increasing number of women and even some men are drawing attention to the violation of women's rights. Social awareness about the abuse of women is growing.

The main obstacles are entrenched traditions in families, social classes, the caste system, the religions and relations between the genders. Inculcated over generations, they are ingrained, presenting a barrier to equal opportunities. "Discussion and even legislation do not achieve much change; you need lots of stamina", comments one of the directors, who has sometimes felt

on the verge of despair in the face of such obstacles. Against this background of tradition some parents forbid their children, especially girls, from taking part in SAMVADA activities. They fear – and rightly so – that the young people will no longer accept existing expectations without resistance.

The influence of fundamental religious organisations is growing. In greater Bangalore, as elsewhere, discrimination against the “others” – those supposedly on the outside – is increasing. Fundamental groups are demanding that women should be forced to readopt their traditional roles in subservience to men and insist that any public discussion of issues related to sexuality be forbidden.

Even SAMVADA is not safe from the growing power of these fundamental movements; this occasionally leads to tension within the team and sometimes even between the young people. A youth centre has had to be closed owing to such conflicts. Fanatic Hindus have already made physical attacks on SAMVADA employees.

The activities of fundamental groups need to be met with an extremely differentiated response. On the one hand, in terms of gender issues, their aims and those of SAMVADA are at complete odds; on the other, however, they campaign for similar issues, such as environmental protection. Charged with emotion, their campaigns are extremely well received by the population.

SAMVADA needs to react appropriately. Particularly where gender is concerned it remains a challenge to maintain a balance between action and reaction. After all, SAMVADA's public image and its habitual breaking of taboos makes it a target.

Since funding is more or less solely granted to specific projects, there is little leeway when it comes to accommodating the unforeseen at short notice. The organisations providing the funding have different reporting systems and accounting periods, which in turn creates a huge amount of administrative work for SAMVADA. A harmonisation of donor expectations would reduce the amount of stress considerably.

## 6.4 Changes achieved

### Overcoming obstacles on the way to equality

SAMVADA plays a major role in overcoming caste, religious, ethnic and gender barriers, and political ideologies. The organisation has managed to make gender equality a major concern among its employees and the young people it works with, and this is reflected in their behaviour.

Boys and girls are standing up for their convictions in their neighbourhoods, schools and universities and drawing attention to social injustices. Girls in particular are losing their shyness, moving more freely and self-confidently in society. They are experiencing increasing support; in one instance they were able to prevent the marriage of a rape victim to the rapist.

Table 4 shows the direct effects of the gender work as experienced by SAMVADA employees.

### Effective consultancy, lobbying and campaigning

These days SAMVADA is regarded as an important organisation by the general public. Where only a couple of years ago the organisation was struggling to assert its place, it has now become a valued partner. Its courses are in demand among schools, universities and communities. Even the public authorities have recognised its success and offered SAMVADA their support.

SAMVADA contributes to the increasing acceptance of youth work in society and the addressing of gender issues. The organisation publicly highlights the rights of young people and provides a counterbalance to conservative forces. This has given rise to new youth work concepts in which the different class, caste and gender-related identities of young people are respected and taken into account to an even greater extent.

As a vital social resource young people are increasingly being taken seriously. Girls appear as a distinct group with clear interests. Schools, universities and even village communities are discussing the situation of young

**Table 4: Effects of SAMVADA work on girls and boys**

Girls	Boys	Girls and boys
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ stand up for their interests, campaign for their right to education and improve their prospects of vocational training and subsequent occupation,</li> <li>■ are aware of health issues and sexuality (empowerment),</li> <li>■ realise they are not responsible for the discrimination which exists against women and girls,</li> <li>■ negotiate their marrying age with their parents,</li> <li>■ dress according to their own tastes,</li> <li>■ engage in sports which have a male image.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ are open to discussing sexuality and their bodies,</li> <li>■ learn to discuss, win people over with reasoning and not with status,</li> <li>■ take on responsibility, even for household duties,</li> <li>■ recognise the strength of girls,</li> <li>■ play sports and games that have a female image..</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ get to know themselves,</li> <li>■ stand up together for their rights,</li> <li>■ are in contact with young people from other classes and castes,</li> <li>■ develop cooperation based on trust,</li> <li>■ their marrying age increases, thus extending their youth,</li> <li>■ demystify sexuality,</li> <li>■ choose leisure activities together and engage in sports.</li> </ul>

people, in particular the possibility of the latter being allowed to make important decisions (e.g. vocational training, marriage) themselves. In this way SAMVADA is stimulating a shift in gender roles and urging on the process of gender democracy.

SAMVADA has occupied a pioneering role in the field of child protection and has made a de facto contribution to norm setting in Karnataka. For young people and for women in difficult circumstances, owing to domestic violence for instance, SAMVADA has become a point of contact that offers an alternative.

**Organisational development**

SAMVADA has built up leadership and reinforced the confidence of employees in their own strength and the strength of the organisation. SAMVADA's gender awareness has also had an impact on the private lives of its staff. One employee describes how he now does the housework and washes his wife's sari in full view of the neighbours: "At the beginning they laughed at me, but that has stopped now. Even my parents have come to accept it."

With all these changes, conflict is inevitable. Arguments arise in the young people's families as well as in the organisation's environment. SAMVADA is aware of this and supports the young people in discussions with their parents.

As far as organisational development is concerned SAMVADA is faced with a series of problems and issues:

- Youth work is dependent on external funding. Financial security and independence present an ongoing challenge. Covering administrative and other costs unrelated to specific projects is becoming increasingly difficult.
- Finding qualified staff who meet the organisation's high requirements and at the same time are prepared to work on a temporary basis for low wages is not easy in Bangalore.
- One of the directors' main concerns is sustaining creativity within the organisation; staff members inevitably age, but they must be able to stay in touch with youth.

## Gender Mainstreaming | Practice

- The reporting system is still inadequate. Records on the SAMVADA initiatives – youth work, political lobbying or internal organisational change – remain incomplete.
- Although globalisation is associated in the minds of many with attractive development possibilities, most people find the prospect threatening. They correctly fear being excluded from this development. These fears could mutate into aggression.
- Some organisations regard SAMVADA's success with envy and distrust and accuse the organisation of being externally funded. SAMVADA must face this criticism.
- Some media present an extremely one-dimensional image of the situation of young people. The complexity of their lives, in particular that of the rural youth, their dreams and realities, is rarely touched upon. SAMVADA aims to acquire more influence in this area.

The empathy for the young people on the one hand and the focus on their actual living circumstances and a trust in their strength on the other, open up new prospects for them along paths that diverge from the traditional one. Thanks to SAMVADA's gender-sensitive approach girls can also take advantage of the opportunities offered by the organisation.

*Heide Trommer*

### 6.5 Conclusions and lessons learned

SAMVADA endeavours in this modern, cosmopolitan and yet deeply entrenched patriarchal society to realise the vision of an equal society and to debunk the taboos that shore up the strict boundaries and inequalities between castes, classes and the genders. One female SAMVADA employee explains this as follows:

*“If people learn from an early age that they are worse and worth less than others, it is almost impossible for them to abandon this role. We can change this with our youth work.”*

SAMVADA has developed youth work approaches which were previously unknown in India. To a certain extent the approach is similar to the open youth work in Germany where the aim is to start with the situation of young people and help them take steps towards a self-determined life. An important factor in this process is that one of the directors studied in Europe and was therefore able to become acquainted with different approaches.



Photo: Carsten Stormer

## 7 ZOTO – a grassroots organisation in the slums of Tondo/Metro Manila

In 1970, the inhabitants of a slum area in the port of Tondo founded the ZOTO (Zone One Tondo Organisation) grassroots organisation. This slum area just outside the capital Manila is the largest in southeast Asia. At that time, the inhabitants got organised to defend themselves against the threat of demolition of their settlements. This was to be carried out to pave the way for the extension of Tondo harbour.

Today, more than 14,100 poor people from the region of Metro Manila are members of ZOTO. Some 80 percent of them are women. The basis of ZOTO is made up of 212 local organisations (clusters and chapters) in 14 resettlement areas. These form the Chapter Council of Leaders. Above these are the Chapter Assembly and, finally, the Regional Congress, which corresponds to a general assembly.

The leaders of the chapters form the Regional Executive Committee, which meets monthly and is made up of five women and five men. The Regional Council of Leaders consists of 19 women and 18 men. It meets every two months in order to steer and monitor the overall programme together with the management of the overall programme.

The principal decisions are taken every three years at the Regional Congress, at which all the units are repre-

sented. The organisation is capable of mobilising more than 89,000 people.

### A tried-and-tested grassroots organisation with a political orientation

As a grassroots organisation, ZOTO defends the interests of its members on issues of economic, social and cultural human rights, in particular the right to an appropriate living space. The organisation works both at the practical level – for example, constructing water systems and providing healthcare centres – and at the political level. The latter is done through lobbying and

### Female labour migration is an important economic factor in the Philippines

Fourteen million of the 84 million inhabitants of the Philippines live in Manila and its environs. Annual population growth stands at around 2.4 percent. Fifteen percent of the Filipino population live below the poverty line; 32 percent of the children are malnourished. Poverty is extreme, especially in rural areas. The rural exodus is correspondingly high. The rural population is further being displaced by road and rail construction, flood-regulation measures and the mining of mineral resources, as well as continuing military conflict between the army and resistance groups. Many of the refugees, especially women, seek work abroad. In 2000, some ten percent of GDP was generated by labour migration, making it the largest earner of foreign currency in the economy.

## Gender Mainstreaming | Practice

advocacy campaigns. The key concern of ZOTO is to organise and build awareness among its members so that they are able to represent their interests themselves.

Special attention is paid to women in this context. A women's department was created in 1989. Gender equality and gender mainstreaming were declared to be cross-cutting issues in 1992. Women are the most important protagonists within the organisation, showing much greater commitment than men both on public and private issues.

The fight against HIV and AIDS is another cross-cutting issue in which ZOTO is involved, as is reflected in all its programmes, notably in its youth and health work. ZOTO is currently running the following programmes:

- A training programme for its grassroots members and leaders;
- A gender equality programme, integrated into all the programmes as a cross-cutting issue;
- A children's rights programme;
- A health programme (basic and reproductive health);
- A small credit programme.

### 7.1 Gender relations in the region

The struggle of Filipino women for legal and economic equality began back in the early twentieth century. In the mid-1970s, the Filipino women's groups gained strength and formed national and international networks. Since the late 1980s, political lobbying and negotiation have been part and parcel of the strategies of the women's movement.

Since the World Women's Conference in 1995 in Beijing, the Filipino government has adopted numerous measures to help to implement gender mainstreaming. For example, at least five percent of public funding

has to be spent on gender and development measures. Furthermore, all authorities are obliged to set up a department to protect women from violence. Despite this, gender relations and roles are changing only very slowly. Men are perceived as the head of the family, shouldering the responsibility for ensuring family income. However, in reality it is increasingly women who act as the principal breadwinners for their families.

In public life and in politics, women are relatively well represented in comparison with other southeast Asian countries. The proportion of girls attending school is rising. Now, more girls leave school with a qualification than boys. Yet it is still men who dominate the labour market. Women represent 45 percent of the labour force, yet more women than men are without a steady job.

HIV and AIDS are (for the moment) less widespread in the Philippines than in other southeast Asian countries. Every year, some 28,000 people are infected with the virus. The illness is a taboo subject and knowledge of it is very scanty. Tourism, labour migration, urbanisation and promiscuous sexual behaviour might mean that the number of new infections is likely to rise in the future.

#### **Poverty with a female face in the slums of Manila**

ZOTO works in the slums of Metro Manila, where the positive developments at the national level regarding gender justice are only gradually bearing fruit. Around 2.4 million people live in the organisation's area of influence.

Eighty percent of the adult inhabitants of the slums are women. Women are much more in evidence in the slums than men, as they usually work within the settlements so as to be able to look after their children at the same time. Most work in the informal sector, for example as washerwomen or food sellers, earning irregular income. By contrast, men often work outside the slums, but most of them also in insecure labour situations. Gender role stereotypes are strongly anchored in the poor districts.

Violence towards women is very frequent. Domestic violence in their own ranks led to the creation of ZOTO's women's department.

Some three million households live in informal settlements in Metro Manila. Every year, some 120,000 families arrive from rural areas and set up their huts at the edge of the city, along arterial roads, on the harbour or under bridges. This is illegal occupation, and the families live in constant fear and danger of eviction.

More often than men, women in the slums bear the responsibility for the children, for earning income and for issues of land and housing rights. This is why poverty, unemployment, the lack of social services and political powerlessness affect women in the poverty-stricken settlements in particular, and frequently harder than men. Since there is no medical care for the population in the poor districts, many women die during pregnancy. Infant mortality is above 60 percent.

Women are frequently unable to work because there are no childcare facilities. Only 28 percent of the children from the slums attend school. Dropping out of school, drugs, early marriage and pregnancy, unemployment, lack of medical care and malnourishment typify the situation of children and youth in the poor districts of Metro Manila.

## 7.2 Description of the good practice

ZOTO was identified as implementing "good practice" because today, the organisation systematically promotes women and implements gender mainstreaming. This was not always the case: at its beginnings, ZOTO was geared to strategies of (radical) community work. Although ZOTO championed human rights, gender justice and women's rights played no role in its work – despite the large proportion of women among its grassroots membership and leadership. For a long time, gender relations were viewed as a private matter.

This only changed towards the end of the 1980s under pressure from female ZOTO members who set up an in-

dependent women's department to combat domestic violence and also treat other issues.

When the organisation recognised the connection between gender inequality and the various consequences of poverty, which affected women disproportionately more, it rapidly made decisive changes to its principles, programme and operations. Although women had always presided over ZOTO, until 1992 all the decision-making bodies were in men's hands.

Initially, the work with women was rather feministic in approach, but it was influenced by the international debate on women in development. Soon after this, ZOTO opened up to the gender approach.

Networking with other women's organisations did much to strengthen the women of ZOTO and push through their demands for an independent department on women's affairs, especially early on. The situation of lesbian and gay people was also discussed, this having been totally disregarded up to then.

### Stages and milestones on the way to gender justice

Table 5 shows to which degree ZOTO has integrated the empowerment of women and gender justice into its work within the past 17 years. The current status of development is reflected especially in the vision and specific goals of the organisation. The example of ZOTO clearly shows that turning gender justice into reality is a long-term, complex process which has to be implemented systematically using suitable concepts and tools.

The initiatives for fostering the empowerment of women and gender justice met with massive resistance from some men initially. More awareness-building programmes were carried out in consequence which raised men's acceptance of the measures. Today, subjects such as women/human trafficking and sex trafficking, domestic violence and child abuse, as well as insufficient medical and social services for women are openly discussed. Gender issues are accepted as a cross-cutting aspect of the work.

**Table 5: Integration of gender equality in ZOTO's work**

Year	Milestones
1989	Creation of a women's department, focusing on the empowerment of women and participation by women in public decision-making sowie Beteiligung von Frauen an öffentlichen Entscheidungen
1992	Resolution by the Regional Executive Committee to introduce the gender equality programme and set up a gender committee, start of gender mainstreaming processes
1993	Special programme aimed at strengthening the position of women
1994	Recruitment of two women for gender coordination
1997	Workshop on gender-sensitive planning
1998	Introduction of gender-sensitive indicators: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase in the proportion of women in decision-making bodies</li> <li>■ Increase of the proportion of men in gender education programmes</li> <li>■ At least five percent of the organisation's overall budget allocated to gender equality programmes</li> <li>■ Integration of gender issues in all areas of work</li> </ul>
2001	Campaign against domestic violence: Ten percent of ZOTO's budget is earmarked for female victims of violence.
2002	Gender audit conducted: ZOTO now pursues an active gender equality policy within its own organisation and at the same time a "Gender and Development" approach in its external work on the issues of sex trafficking, domestic violence, child abuse, teenage pregnancy, HIV and AIDS. The gender audit led to changes in internal management. The small credit programme which was developed during this period was geared explicitly to women. The programme is headed up by a woman, and for credit grants a quota is assigned to women.
2005	Introduction of a gender equality and women's promotion plan.
2006	Gender analyses are conducted in the communities and the various activities are then planned in a gender-sensitive way.

Despite this, the female ZOTO staff are in favour of continuing a separate women's programme. Their argument is that the continuing violence towards women, the unresolved issues of reproductive health, the lack of a right to divorce and the high number of women who are injured or die after illegal abortions are clear evidence in favour of this.

### Measures, approaches and methods

ZOTO carries out its activities in five central programmes: an organisational, training and education programme, a health programme, a children's rights programme, a small credit programme and a gender programme. Under the gender programme, both men and women are offered educational measures first and foremost. However, the courses are brought specifically to women's attention. They include reflections on gender

role stereotypes, advocacy and training in legal issues for staff and members, communication training, training for legal advisors on gender issues, women's rights and good governance, training for organisation and campaign management, and workshops on gender planning and data collection and analysis.

Gender aspects are firmly anchored in all further programmes as cross-cutting issues. Under the organisational, training and education programmes, there is a special focus on training women of different generations to qualify for management and administrative tasks. The health programmes enable women to make use of health services and to practise prevention. The children's rights programmes deal with reproductive health and gender justice. Traditional educational measures which strengthen the formation of typical gender roles are questioned.

The microfinancing programme was set up after a gender analysis to make it easier for women to generate income.

### **Gender-sensitive qualifications for men and women**

To date, 200 actual and potential leaders have taken part in in-depth gender training courses. Some 3,000 people have undergone gender training. First of all, it was primarily women, but subsequently mainly men, who took part in the courses. Now, participation is evenly balanced. There are 360 multipliers who conduct gender training courses in ZOTO or other organisations.

The implementation of the gender perspective within ZOTO is supported and accompanied by competent external gender consultancy. As part of this consultancy work, a gender mainstreaming programme was developed and introduced in 2005. Since then, all measures are inspected to see whether they take gender justice into account. The programme is directed towards:

- Ensuring a balanced occupancy of leadership positions (60 percent women, 40 percent men).
- Ensuring the participation of women in decision-making processes at all levels.
- Implementing a well-defined educational concept on gender issues which also encompasses issues of femininity and masculinity.
- Further improving the situation of women by means of empowerment, for example through the Violence against Women campaign or the small credit programme.

The gender analysis introduced at the community level in 2006 enabled ZOTO to develop gender-differentiated concepts and approaches. Data are collected separately for women and for men. This makes it possible to identify and take into account the differing needs of men, women, boys and girls. Nevertheless, the concept of gender justice is still not fully established in people's

minds in and around ZOTO, as the following example shows: for the parliamentary elections, ZOTO had always proposed exclusively male candidates, with the argument that women did not have time for it.

### **7.3 Conducive and inhibiting factors affecting the implementation of the gender approach**

- The end of the Marcos dictatorship opened up space for the development of civil society. Themes such as participatory development cooperation, neo-colonialism, social inequality, globalisation and good governance, as well as women's and gender issues, were now able to be discussed openly.
- The gender mainstreaming concept became established. International donor organisations fostered a general move towards democracy and a willingness on the part of the organisations to embrace gender mainstreaming.
- The commitment of ZOTO's members to actively implement the self-help approach fostered the development of gender work. The members of the leading bodies and the staff contributed to this success by always being open to new approaches.
- Women's and gender issues were introduced into the debate in such a way as to enable even sceptics and critics to open up to these new themes.
- Another conducive factor was the readiness of the staff at all levels and of the members to undergo training in women's and gender issues on a continuous basis.
- Once it had abandoned its original, rather radical strategies aimed at asserting its rights, ZOTO was able to address development policy issues. As a result it showed a greater willingness to strive towards consensus and was more open to the gender approach.
- The courage and readiness of women especially to address taboo subjects were also conducive.

## Gender Mainstreaming | Practice

■ The competent, ongoing advice supplied by local and, in some cases, international experts both on gender issues and on other capacity-building aspects also largely contributed to the successful implementation of the gender approach.

The following factors are inhibiting the implementation of the gender approach:

■ The repression during the Marcos dictatorship threatened the staff and members of ZOTO. Added to this were natural catastrophes such as typhoons and floods which destroyed houses and offices.

■ Globalisation processes and rural poverty exacerbated migratory movements, spawning additional slum settlements with all the problems that are associated with them.

■ The attitude of the Catholic Church, which refuses to address questions of divorce, family planning, abortion and homosexuality. These factors influence political opinions and decision making within ZOTO.

■ Internal conflicts and misconduct, as well as rivalry and envy amongst the members, sometimes have had an inhibiting impact on organisational development so far. ZOTO has usually reacted to mistakes by discussing them openly and directly, which has led to rapid solutions.

■ Despite existing project planning and monitoring systems, ZOTO's work and its impact are still insufficiently documented. It is striking that the presentation of its programmes is not sufficiently gender-differentiated, especially within the gender programme. However, this problem has been acknowledged and should be corrected through the introduction of new systems.

### 7.4 Changes achieved

The following positive changes resulting from ZOTO's activities have been observed at the target group level:

■ Women have developed greater self-esteem and self-confidence thanks especially to the fact that they have taken on leadership and management tasks within the organisation as well as in their own small-scale businesses, which are fostered by the credit programme. They have greater potential for their own personal development, and their financial situation has improved which, among other things, has made it possible for the children (boys and girls) to attend school.

■ The position of women in the family and the community has been strengthened. They receive greater respect from others, including men, and have more opportunities for decision-making in the public and private sphere. Men and boys help them with domestic tasks. Women are able to play a more active and effective role in the community and support other women in their empowerment processes.

■ The health of women has improved thanks to greater knowledge, access to health centres and family planning measures.

■ The impact on men of ZOTO's work is also largely positive. Like the women, they benefit from the empowerment processes and are developing leadership skills and political awareness. They recognise the right of women to equality and self-determination, especially with regard to contraception and family planning, and actively support this. They are prepared to engage in equal partnerships and combat violence towards women and children. The stronger position of women lightens their burden. Men are learning to reflect on their own gender roles and are realising that they can change them.

■ The impact on girls and boys of ZOTO's work is extremely positive. Girls are exercising their right to education, decision-making, alternative choices and power-sharing. They are defending themselves against sexual attacks and violence, and are doing so openly. They are taking the decisions as what to do with their bodies and their sexuality, and they know how to prevent unwanted pregnancies. They are learning that housework is the task of girls and boys.

- Boys are developing new role models. They are more respectful to themselves and to girls. Violence is viewed in a critical light and opposed. Boys participate in housework and are learning not to be ashamed of it.

- The realities of life for lesbian and gay people are heeded and reflected upon. Homosexuality is an acknowledged part of the reality of the urban poor. Coming out is easier now, especially among young people. Homosexuals are represented at the leadership level of ZOTO.

On the whole, ZOTO's work is having a positive impact. However, there are some problems:

- Participation in the different activities of ZOTO has increased the already heavy burden of work on women. However, the women are prepared to accept this as their situation has improved substantially thanks to their involvement in ZOTO.

- Men sometimes turn violent against their wives if the latter want to change their traditional role. In these cases, ZOTO offers help and support, usually by talking with the men, to solve the problems that have arisen.

## 7.5 Conclusions and lessons learned

ZOTO is a grassroots organisation which fights for the rights of the urban poor while systematically implementing gender mainstreaming.

The issue of domestic violence too is discussed as part of gender equality and empowerment. It is becoming clear that changing gender and power relations is a long-term process which has to be developed step by step.

In this context, gender equality and the promotion and empowerment of women are reciprocally strengthening and complementary approaches which are being put into practice simultaneously.

The following lessons can be learned from ZOTO's experiences:

- To champion social justice by giving the populations of poor districts access to social services, education, policy-shaping powers, the possibility of playing a role in the economy and equal rights, is to simultaneously champion gender equality.

- Conducting a gender analysis improves understanding of gender issues and facilitates the shaping of an institutionalised gender policy. In ZOTO's case, outside counselling proved helpful.

- In-depth discussion of violence towards women also helps to improve our understanding of gender relations. In ZOTO's case, this debate led people to consider, among other things, the question of violence in their own ranks, child abuse, the multiple burdens placed on women, extra-marital sex by men, their non-participation in household tasks and discrimination against lesbians and gays. This debate made the organisation more democratic.

- The political and social relevance of a (grassroots) organisation is higher if groups which were subjected to discrimination and marginalised even within the defined target group are taken into account. In ZOTO's case, these groups are homosexuals, children and new inhabitants of the poor quarters who are today also standing up for their rights.

- The key elements behind ZOTO's success are the creation of a stable organisation, recruitment of new members to create as broad a social basis as possible, organisation and education of its members and sound specialist and management skills on the part of the staff, as well as continuing basic and advanced training and the creation of a basic social services infrastructure. This way, ZOTO has been able to make an effective contribution to improving the lives of the target groups.

*Carsta Neuenroth, on the basis of the study "50 Jahre 'Brot für die Welt'", Zone One Tondo Organisation: ZOTO, 2008 by Fermin Perez Manolo, Jr., and Heide Trommer*



Photo: Christoph Püschner

## 8 YAPIDI – credit associations to aid women

The work of YAPIDI (Yayasan Pijer Podi) began in 1984 in the north of Sumatra. Poverty was widespread, especially in rural areas, and also largely affected women.

YAPIDI fostered the creation of savings and credit associations for women which enabled them to generate income.

Originally, YAPIDI's work was geared exclusively to women. However, their husbands are now also included. The latter are now entitled to membership in a number of credit associations. How many actually do take part varies from village to village, however.

Today, YAPIDI accompanies 90 savings and credit associations, with a membership of 11,656.

At the beginning, the organisation's work focussed specifically on the social and economic empowerment of women through participation in credit associations. Now, YAPIDI has set itself the goal of helping to build an Indonesian civil society characterised, among other things, by equality of the genders.

Experience has shown YAPIDI that if men's behaviour and their understanding of their role do not change, gender equality and social change cannot be achieved. This is why YAPIDI is increasingly addressing its activities also to men.

### Half the population of Indonesia is affected by income poverty

Indonesia, the world's largest archipelago with more than 18,000 islands, is surrounded by more than three million square kilometres of water. With over 220 million people belonging to more than 300 different ethnic groups, Indonesia has the fourth largest population in the world, most of which is concentrated on the island of Java. The country has rich natural resources. Its economy is based on agriculture, yet a part of its staple food, rice, has to be imported. The Indonesian government has so far failed to reduce income poverty. 100 million people live on less than two US dollars a day.

Continual training courses held within the framework of the savings and credit scheme make up YAPIDI's principal activities. Each and every member of a credit association is bound to take part in continuous education courses. These courses cover a variety of subjects, such as the importance of the associations as financial institutions and as an umbrella organisation for women, gender equality, political education and advocacy.

Practical knowledge about farming and animal husbandry is also taught in the courses.

YAPADI collaborates with other non-governmental and grassroots organisations in the project area and in North Sumatra in networks which are working to reduce poverty and promote women.

## 8.1 Gender relations in the region

In the past few years, the general political situation in Indonesia has become less tense and this is having an impact on the situation of women. A number of institutions dealing with women's rights have sprung up, for example the National Commission on Violence against Women, which combats all forms of discrimination based on gender. In 2004, a law was passed which substantially improved conditions for the fight against domestic violence. Also in 2004, a women's quota of 30 percent for candidates' lists was written into the electoral legislation. However, this quota is not binding and women frequently find themselves at the bottom of the lists. Despite this, the awareness of women's rights in society has grown.

YAPIDI's project area covers the districts of Karo and Deli Serdang in the north of Sumatra. Traditionally, gender relations in the region are built around patriarchal family structures which are changing only slowly. These patriarchal values are present in the private and public sphere and correspond to the world view of conservative, Christian population groups who regard the woman as the "servant" of the household and a loyal wife who ought to submit to the interests of her husband and children.

In the families, the relationship between the genders is therefore far from one based on equal rights and equal value. The man is the head of the family and has the authority to make decisions on its behalf. These decisions often lead to bad feeling and conflict between the spouses and give rise to violence which in many cases is exercised openly, that is, in the public view.

### **Gender-focused division of labour to women's disadvantage**

Women are responsible for a large proportion of the farming tasks. They work in the fields and feed the animals. Housework, too, is exclusively women's work. Fetching water and gathering firewood are taboo for men. Men spend only a few hours working in the fields. This unequal division of labour is grossly disproportion-

ate to women's social status. Women cannot expect any acknowledgement for the work they do; they see themselves as second-class people. Inheritance is also determined by the patriarchal system.

Land is generally inherited through the male line. If women are taken into account, they receive far less land than the men. Although it is chiefly women who farm the land, the men have rights over the farming revenues as they are usually the proprietors of the farming land.

Women in Karo and Deli Serdang have less easy access to education and information than men. Women often have low self-confidence, are not very articulate and have virtually no influence or voice in their village or family. Moreover, their freedom of movement is often obstructed by the male members of their family.

## 8.2 Description of the good practice

### **Promotion of women and work with men through economic empowerment**

YAPIDI means joining together something which was previously separated. This symbolic name reflects YAPIDI's vision of creating unity and equality between men and women. On account of their disadvantageous situation, YAPIDI argues, women need special support.

YAPIDI saw the savings and credit associations as a suitable tool, since they correspond to the needs of the village women to improve family income and ensure the family's welfare. Nevertheless, YAPIDI has recognised that promoting women is not enough to establish equality between the genders. The organisation is therefore increasingly applying the gender approach in its work, which, among other things, also makes it necessary to work with men. YAPIDI calls on men too to make a significant contribution to combating poverty and inequality between the genders in the life of their families, in the village community and in Indonesian society.

According to its mission and vision statements, YAPIDI is striving to shape a civil society which fosters democra-

## Gender Mainstreaming | Practice

cy and legal security and champions human rights, gender equality and the integrity of creation. This it intends to achieve by aiding gender-sensitive grassroots and civil organisations and by raising people's awareness of environmental protection. The promotion of women remains a key measure in this context.

### **Stages and milestones: promoting women with savings and credit associations**

Work on the empowerment programme for women in rural areas began in 1984, the objective being to improve their economic and social status and to raise their self-confidence. As part of its efforts to deploy the programme, YAPIDI conducted a study on women's needs and problems in the project region, which made it realise how beneficial credit associations would be for them. The creation of the credit associations was the first step towards the promotion and empowerment of women.

In concrete terms, YAPIDI helped women to form small groups at the local level. Each woman pays a minimum amount into the joint fund every month. When they need it, the members can get credit from the fund on favourable terms. The money is used to buy tools for work, rent additional farming plots or pay the children's school fees. The money does not lie fallow; instead, it works for the members of the groups. This way, a private savings and credit system has grown up independently of profit-focused money-lenders which makes the women economically more independent. The credit associations are a forum for joint activities and training for women.

### **Work with men and partnership within the family**

The YAPIDI Foundation, which now runs the programme, was founded in 1991 by women and men who were active in the church and society. During the 1990s, while the "Gender and Development" approach developed at the international level, the YAPIDI empowerment programme viewed gender equality as an important goal. This objective was reaffirmed between 1993 and 1995. From then on, one of YAPIDI's aims was to

help to foster a harmonious partnership between women and men within the family. Consequently, men were also gradually included in the organisation's activities. The programme content was not static; instead, it was adjusted as the situation and women's needs changed. Between 1995 and 1998, social, political, cultural and economic aspects were added to the approach. The concept of partnership in the family took shape with the formulation of the objective of equality between the genders.

### **Civil movement for justice and welfare**

Between 1998 and 2001, YAPIDI integrated the concept of the "integrity of creation" of the World Council of Churches into its programme and became actively involved in environmental protection. Against the backdrop of the political changes taking place in Indonesia, from 2001 to 2004 YAPIDI actively promoted the creation of civil structures to strengthen democracy, legal security, gender equality and human rights. This engagement was reflected in the strategy planning process for the years 2001 and 2004. The savings and credit associations are set to evolve into a movement for citizens, male and female. At the present time, the focus lies on justice and welfare.

### **Measures, approaches and methods**

Educating women and, increasingly, men as well is the central focus of YAPIDI's work. Training courses are the most important measure here.

Under the credit associations scheme, numerous training courses are held on financial subjects: credit management, accounting and profit-sharing, internal audits, computerised accounting, evaluation and work scheduling, as well as the generation of income.

Other training measures – notably on farming and animal husbandry – are geared both to inculcating practical skills which will help to satisfy practical needs (income, food) and to raising awareness of strategic subjects. Gender equality, human rights and the political system are key elements; knowledge of these subjects is

viewed as a precondition of social change. The role and significance of civil society is also a subject of reflection. Furthermore, training courses are being offered on local government administration and competence-building for women in politics. YAPIDI fosters active participation by the men and women who take part in the basic and advanced training events.

### **Advanced training on gender equality for women and men**

On the subject of gender equality, human and women's rights are put up for discussion and seminars are held on justice for women and families. Other themes for discussion are the consequences of globalisation and horizontal communication. Counselling is also available for the victims of gender discrimination. Access to information is a major aspect of this work. Other themes are sexual and reproductive health, as well as HIV and AIDS and drugs.

YAPIDI fosters participation by couples in the training courses on subjects such as the development and promotion of a new understanding of the roles of women and men, as well as gender equality, so that both genders cooperate more on issues of reproduction and production. The organisation is seeking suitable ways of addressing men, inciting them to think about their role and making them willing to change. The advanced training courses in other fields, such as leadership training, are aimed solely at women.

### **Credit associations as the starting point for self-determination**

YAPIDI lays the foundation for independence and sustainability at the moment it forms a group. The starting capital for the credit associations is built up by the members through their own contributions. All the members have the same rights regardless of how much they deposit. However small the contributions may be, they are valued as an expression of participation and mutual help. YAPIDI supports each group for five years after its creation and subsidises the training courses. YAPIDI encourages the groups to assume responsibility for fund-

ing the training courses and paves the way for autonomy. The rise in capital assures the sustainability of the associations. For the consolidated groups, YAPIDI offers a variety of services, such as auditing and training courses which are fully paid by the association.

Whether or not men may take part in these courses or be members of a credit association is decided according to the policy of the respective association in collaboration with YAPIDI. For the moment, YAPIDI is promoting membership by men in ten credit associations. These are associations in which women have plenty of negotiating power and are therefore able to limit men's dominance. To prevent men from gaining too much influence, they may not sit on the board of a credit association. Otherwise, they have the same rights and obligations as women.

### **Continuous education in institutional competence development**

Further training of its staff is one personal development measure which YAPIDI deploys. The subjects dealt with here are NGOs, gender, credit associations, small businesses for women, advocacy and programme management. It also fosters the competence of its staff by means of internal discussion on specific subjects.

YAPIDI's work is based on an institutional gender policy. At the time of reporting, YAPIDI had a staff of 16, ten women and six men. Staff numbers change depending on the requirements of the programme and the need to balance the quota of women and men. The staff are gender-conscious and discuss issues such as women's and men's quotas and a regulation which enables men also to take leave when their wives have a baby.

The discussion is currently about whether to extend the parental leave of male staff members from one week to a month and a half so that they can support the young mothers.

Other critical debates deal with the issue of the division of labour between the genders. The remarkable thing is that the debate on gender issues within the organisation

## Gender Mainstreaming | Practice

is being conducted with tremendous personal involvement and commitment.

### 8.3 Conducive and inhibiting factors affecting the implementation of the gender approach

The collaboration of a committed target group, a local organisation (YAPIDI) which supports the cause of the target group, and a foreign partner organisation („Brot für die Welt“), which is prepared to support and fund local initiatives over the long term, has proved especially conducive. Also of importance for YAPIDI is the dialogue with the „Brot für die Welt“ staff.

Another conducive factor is the goodwill of the administrations of different villages and hamlets, as well as that of the representatives of religious institutions, towards the credit associations.

Where this acknowledgement and concrete support is lacking, a negative impact on the development of the credit associations is the result. It would pose numerous problems particularly in the start-up phase.

Some associations have been unable to survive owing to a lack of support, which shed doubt on their utility. Even today, there are still mayors who do not give sufficient support to the savings and credit associations.

Other factors which are obstructing the implementation of the gender approach and a change of values in the project region are context-related factors such as traditions and social conservatism which lower women's status to that of second-class citizens.

Indonesian law also acts as a brake on changes because, despite the progress mentioned above, the rights of women are still not taken sufficiently into account.

The lack of understanding in relation to gender and women's issues and the absence of political will on the part of decision-makers at all levels represent major obstacles for achieving greater gender equality.

Conflicts which arise within a village community because of the existence of credit unions can also stand in the way of the process of empowerment for women.

### 8.4 Changes achieved

As a result of YAPIDI's activities, the following positive changes have been observed at the target group level:

- With the aid of the credit and the training courses on farming and animal husbandry, women especially have been able to satisfy the needs of their families better. More clothes and food are available than previously. Children (girls and boys) are being sent to school and health problems can be treated earlier. All in all, women are more autonomous financially and in other ways too.

- Men are more prepared to let women take part in decision-making within the family and community. Men and women more frequently take joint decisions on such issues as the children's schooling and agricultural production. Children are observing that their fathers take more responsibility.

- More women take part in community meetings. They are prevented from leaving the house less often. Men are learning to see things from a different perspective, which makes them more prepared to acknowledge the capabilities of the women to generate income and manage the credit associations.

- Domestic violence towards women and children by men, as well as the violence on the part of the women towards their children, has decreased.

- Civil society has been strengthened by the fact that women are more self-confident and their ability to communicate before men and the authorities has grown. Women express their opinion to men and state institutions, including through public demonstrations. They apply for public posts and already occupy posts at the local level.

- Many credit associations are already managed independently by women. However, it is often difficult to ensure that these posts are subsequently filled as necessary. That is, there are problems surrounding the training of successors.

- The diversification of farming production is one of the most successful measures promoted by YAPIDI, although it demands more work than a monoculture. Men, too, are diversifying production and working longer hours in the fields and, as a result, spending less time in the tea house.

- At the village level, contacts and solidarity within the village community have increased, and the isolation of women especially has been broken to the benefit of social harmony. For example, the situation in the villages has improved thanks to the recruitment of midwives, cleaning up of the market place and campaigns against pornographic videos.

- YAPIDI's work is also affecting surrounding areas. Numerous NGOs are coming to learn from its experience and to seek advice in setting up their own savings and credit associations. Even governmental organisations are now beginning to show an interest in YAPIDI's experience.

On the whole, the impact of YAPIDI's work on the target groups can be judged as positive.

However, some negative effects can also be observed:

- The situation of women who do not belong to the credit associations for a variety of reasons is unchanged. They remain isolated.

- It also proving difficult to involve men. The changes for the better mentioned above do not happen automatically. Although they say they are interested, men frequently fail to take part in the various training courses. Instead of assuming greater responsibility for their families, the opposite has been observed in some men. They assume less responsibility for their families because of the improved financial situation. They spend more mon-

ey on alcohol, sex and gambling and spend even more time in the tea house or in front of the television.

## 8.5 Conclusions and lessons learned

YAPIDI has moved from the promotion of women at the local level to the gender approach and, through the savings and credit associations, has given women the chance to acquire numerous skills, strengthen their position in the family and the community and to defend their interests. Men have been included in this approach.

A gender policy has consciously been implemented within the organisation as well. YAPIDI has achieved gender mainstreaming.

YAPIDI is currently looking for ways to take a more political stance in its work. The objective is to strengthen civil society as a measure of democratising Indonesian society as a whole. In this respect too, the organisation aims to implement the gender approach.

However, it still lacks suitable strategies and tools. There is still a need to ensure that with the stronger focus on political work, the organisation does not get out of touch with the grassroots.

Even now, only a few of the women who belong to the credit associations are prepared to become politically active.

One challenge for the future therefore is to train the staff and expand the organisational capacities to carry out this political work.

The following lessons can be learned from YAPIDI's experiences:

- A process-oriented approach to empowerment which deals with problems step by step is successful. In YAPIDI's case, the credit association scheme was chosen in order to meet practical gender needs (access to credit, generation of income) first of all. Only later did it

## Gender Mainstreaming | Practice

begin to treat strategic needs (gender equality, women's and human rights).

- Women play a strategic role in the development process and in the transformation of values and culture. YAPIDI's programme is successful because of the commitment and values of the women (discipline, thoroughness, honesty, a great sense of commitment).

- The example of YAPIDI shows that successful implementation and deployment of the gender approach calls for appropriate internal gender competencies.

- Measures aimed at satisfying practical gender needs already strengthen the position of women and raise their self-confidence. In this situation, resistance in the women's environment, including from their husbands, diminishes.

- Under YAPIDI's savings and credit association scheme, women play an important role in promoting peace and pluralism and in countering a constricting and divisive identity policy. The members of the credit associations are Protestants, Catholics and Muslims from a variety of ethnic groups in North Sumatra and Java. Membership can strengthen interreligious and interethnic solidarity as well as creating a feeling of belonging and a culture of peace.

- Continuous accompaniment is the key to the success of a project or programme. Quality is still more important than quantity; that is, the competencies of the women in managing the credit associations are more important than the number of members.

- Governmental support at the village, district, provincial and/or national level is required to achieve empowerment and gender equality. State programmes and structures which are not committed to gender equality can lead to conflicts which weaken the empowerment process.

- Up to now, YAPIDI has had little experience of lobbying and advocacy, or of supporting political processes. The kind of gender-conscious political work which

YAPIDI is hoping to achieve must be deployed with care. It requires special strategies and tools which take into account the grassroots as well as the gender approach.

*Carsta Neuenroth, on the basis of the study "50 Jahre 'Brot für die Welt'", YAPIDI self-assessment, 2007 by Wallia Keliat Liman and Mr. Suryono*



Photo: UAW

## 9 UAW – equality for Albanian women

In English, “Shoqata Në Dobi të Gruas Shqiptare” means “Useful to Albanian Women” (UAW). Founded in Tirana in 1993, this women’s organisation today is known far beyond Albania’s borders as one of the country’s most active non-governmental organisations. UAW’s purpose is to promote life with dignity, empower the poor and marginalised, and achieve a just and democratic society.

To achieve these goals, UAW is strengthening local partner organisations to build local and regional networks and develop institutional capacities. Its development programmes include areas such as advocacy and gender. They aim at promoting a holistic response to human need by linking relief, development and reconciliation in a way that encourages partners to develop relationships, joint action and mutual responsibility. UAW focuses especially on the situation of women.

Within this framework, UAW defines the achievement of social justice and equality as its main goal. Its objectives are to inspire, encourage and support women to defend their own as well as their children’s rights against all forms of discrimination and abuse. In addition, it promotes the re-examination of the role of women and girls in the family in order to bring about change towards greater equality.

UAW sees itself as an ecumenical development programme, and it is active in a number of regions in Alba-

### Albania: a changing society

Albania has a population of around 3.2 million. Half the population lives in the cities. Albania is one of the economically weakest and poorest countries of Europe, with one person in four living below the poverty line. The huge gap between rich and poor and the enormous discrepancy in development between urban and rural areas are feeding a rural exodus. Nevertheless, agriculture continues to play a key role in the Albanian economy. Some 58 percent of the workforce works in this sector. However, in the context of Europe, agriculture is not competitive and its share in the creation of value is shrinking. Overall, the country’s annual growth rate is over five percent. Strong domestic demand is boosting the construction sector and the transport and services sector in particular. In addition, the money sent to Albania by migrant family members from abroad is having a positive impact on development.

nia. The different projects are implemented by regional coordination bureaux.

### 9.1 Gender relations in the region

Following the collapse of the socialist regime in 1990, Albania went through a period of profound political, economic and social change. In 1997, the country experienced a crisis in which a large part of the population lost most of its savings and the economy collapsed.

## Gender Mainstreaming | Practice

Earning one's living by legal means became increasingly difficult. Unemployment surged, and the underworld flourished. Globalisation, population increase, urbanisation and migration aggravated the existing problems. Albania's recovery from this state of economic, social and political instability has been slow and difficult. Its severe social problems and continuing turmoil in political and economic life have also had an impact on gender relations.

The existing gender relations favour men. Stereotypes based on gender are deeply implanted in society. The status of women is traditionally low and they are excluded from political and cultural life. Violence is widespread, particularly against women. Their situation is further characterised by a lack of property rights, poverty and above-average unemployment.

Although women are better educated than men, employers in both the private and the public sector preferably employ men. There are no strategies about how to address gender issues in society, and there is no education on gender equality.

UAW assessed the need of the target communities in regard to gender justice and designed its activities and services accordingly. Evidently, given the present situation, women have a greater need for supportive programmes than men. Since unemployment and the lack of education are crucial problems of the communities in question, the UAW projects aim at fulfilling these needs.

### 9.2 Description of the good practice

UAW works in Tirana, the Albanian capital, as well as in eight other regions of the country. Fifty-four people are employed by the association, including 40 women and 14 men. According to the policy of UAW, all staff members need to be sensitive in regard to gender and social justice. They have to be experienced in the field of women's rights and promotion before getting employed by UAW. The usefulness of this policy is demonstrated by the evident commitment of the staff.

The organisation works with different groups of women, including women who migrated from rural areas, divorced or widowed women and violated women. The organisation is involved in numerous activities. It publishes a newspaper called Diella which informs women about gender issues and reports news from all over Albania.

#### Campaigns to educate the public

Women are among the groups that have experienced the most discrimination. In order to improve the situation of women in the country, UAW supports the development of a women's movement in Albania and advocates improvements in their legal status.

The organisation has undertaken public campaigns against gender inequality and sexual violence to support the development of a women's movement. Women have been learning about their rights and have been encouraged to reflect about their power – or lack of it – and status in society. This has stimulated them to think of possible actions to change their situation. In this context, UAW has been carrying out awareness raising activities which aim at motivating women to exercise their right to vote in Albanian elections.

The campaign and civil action organised for the International Women's Day helped many people to understand the importance of the day in the Albanian context. The message "Not a day to celebrate, but a day to protest" was spread at the national level in order to encourage women to fight for their rights and raise their voices about the problems they are facing.

The campaign activities were supported by state institutions and the municipalities of different cities. The event was covered widely by the media and attracted considerable public attention. In support of it a helicopter was offered to distribute leaflets.

The campaign was clearly innovative. It reached many women and made them aware of ways to improve their status in society and to promote a new image of Albanian women.

A second campaign, organised in the context of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, was also very successful and had a great impact on Albanian society. It centred on making public the cases of violated and killed women. The campaign was largely supported by volunteers who distributed leaflets and posters of the stories of these women in all the streets of Tirana.

Support also came from the local and central government as well as from the Albanian Media Institute. Due to the public interest in this initiative, the campaign was extended to four days; each day was named after one of the killed women and her story was the central theme of the day. The approach helped women to understand that domestic violence is a widespread phenomenon which must not go unnoticed but needs to be reported to the authorities. A book, available to the public during the whole campaign, invited people to write down their thoughts or report cases of violence against themselves or others.

The cases which were presented during the campaign were taken to court. UAW followed the trials in collaboration with representatives of the justice system. In order to assure that the cases were taken to court according to the procedures prescribed by the legal system and that they were presented in an unbiased way in the media, UAW organised round tables and training sessions with journalists and judges.

### **Lobbying and advocacy for a gender-sensitive legal system**

Besides lobbying for women's rights, UAW aims at improving the legal status of women. The organisation has been active in the following areas:

- UAW was part of a coalition that fought for the implementation of an abortion law as well as one against children's work.
- The organisation also fought for the implementation of the Family Code. The law regards domestic violence as a crime which needs to be punished and pro-

vides measures to be undertaken against it. It obliges the spouse who committed acts of violence to leave the house and live elsewhere. In this way, the law protects and offers security for violated women.

- UAW collected 2,580 of 20,000 signatures needed to submit a bill against violence to the Albanian parliament. This was the first time that a bill was submitted through a bottom-up approach.

The experience shows that some important improvements have already been achieved. Different laws have become more gender sensitive. UAW has been engaged in lobby and advocacy through:

- Membership in various networks, coalitions and forums at the national and international level in order to influence decision making in regard to the ratification of domestic and international laws and treaties
- Promoting a gender perspective in regard to issues such as domestic violence, women trafficking, capacity building and women's economic development
- Promoting the cooperation between civil society organisations and state institutions in order to implement the gender approach.

### **Supporting women through counselling and exchange**

Another issue UAW is engaged in is women trafficking. Approximately 100,000 Albanian women were trafficked for sexual exploitation between 1990 and 1999. This incredibly high number has been estimated by the Albanian government. According to a Save the Children report, girls from Albania are amongst the youngest victims worldwide: 80 percent are under 18. In view of the widespread nature of women trafficking in Albania, UAW has joined other organisations to demand that the state take more effective measures to control the problem.

The organisation participated in a campaign against women trafficking and is a member of the National Stra-

## Gender Mainstreaming | Practice

tegy against Women Trafficking. It is fighting to make the problem visible in society and is promoting greater awareness of gender equality. It is also campaigning for the development of a successful national strategy to fight women trafficking.

Apart from advocacy and lobbying, UAW addresses the problem by offering concrete help to victims. This consists in social and psychological counselling. Also, there are shelters available where the women are safe and receive vocational training.

Counselling is also available for women who are not victims of trafficking. A telephone hotline for women offers psychological counselling to all women who are in need of it. Often, it provides the first opportunity to get into contact with UAW. The support of various women groups has started this way.

Individual counselling is one of the main services offered to the women invited by the association for counselling sessions. It implies a more comprehensive relationship.

Individual counselling is done in a professional way and is more helpful to the women than counselling over the phone, especially for those who have suffered a complex abusive relationship, prolonged in time, with severe physical and psychological consequences.

In Tirana, women can meet and discuss different issues such as education, health and psychological wellbeing at the Women's Competence and Culture House Club Teuta e Re. The club started in 1998 and serves as a meeting place for women of different backgrounds.

Club members have participated in round table discussions with representatives from the community, local government and civil society. The organisation of various cultural activities has aimed at promoting women and involving them in the cultural and political life of the city.

The experience has been so successful that a similar club was established in Puka, a city in northern Albania.

### **Economic empowerment through self-help initiatives and work**

Unemployment is one of the most problematic issues in Albania today, often resulting in conflict, crime and lack of future perspectives. For women in Albania, unemployment is an especially serious problem. UAW was among the first organisations in Albania to support women in improving their economic situation. It negotiated agreements with local government authorities to combat poverty among women. At present there are long-term agreements with the towns of Durrës, Elbasan and Burrel.

In a campaign with the slogan "Help yourself through work", UAW founded an employment agency for women and girls and established community centres with educational opportunities for marginalised women and children. The organisation is acting as an intermediary for women in the search for work and is preparing them for jobs by offering training opportunities. After training, the women get a certificate which is recognised by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

Each woman who finds employment through the agency receives a work contract signed both by the employer and the employee. By offering education and work, women get a chance to create a better life for themselves and live through a process of empowerment.

### **9.3 Conducive and inhibiting factors affecting the implementation of the gender approach**

The following conducive factors for implementing the gender perspective can be identified:

- The multicultural environment which exists in the main cities of Albania offers men and women the possibility to evaluate gender relations in other cultural contexts and compare them with their own.
- Steps are taken both in the private and public sector to develop a more gender-sensitive employment policy.

- Thanks to the work of UAW as well as other organisations and stakeholders, public awareness about human rights and gender issues is growing.

In spite of the changes which are becoming visible, gender inequality and patriarchy are still deeply rooted in Albanian society. This impedes the implementation of gender equality.

Traditional gender roles are accepted by both men and women. It is still rare that women address issues such as domestic violence, the need for divorce and the desire for change. It is very difficult to convince men as well as women that gender equality is right and necessary.

It is hard to convince women that they should abandon their secondary role in the family, the community and the society in general.

#### 9.4 Changes achieved

- The work of UAW contributed to the passing of a number of laws which take into account a gender perspective.

- Many girls and women have had access to education and training and thus have improved their employment opportunities as well as their awareness in regard to their rights.

- Many Albanian women have become actively involved in activities, campaigns and community actions.

- The work of UAW is recognised by government institutions. Usually, NGOs have to renew their work licence every year. However, UAW was granted a four-year licence by the respective institution.

#### 9.5 Conclusions and lessons learned

- UAW is promoting gender justice because this is regarded by UAW as being part of general social justice and a democratic society. By working with women and

girls who live in degrading conditions, it is improving their opportunities to be integrated into society.

- Awareness-raising campaigns, civil movements and community involvement have been successful strategies for improving the situation of women in Albanian society. They can serve as a model for the development of civil structures. The impact of these measures has brought UAW to the attention of local and central government as well as of different networks and NGOs. The good reputation of the organisation improves its credibility and the success of its actions.

- Networking is crucial in order to advance the issues of gender and women's empowerment.

- It is possible to achieve change and to create a better society if there is the desire and the will to make a difference.

*Sevim Arbana*







Diakonisches Werk der Evangelischen Kirche  
in Deutschland e.V.  
for „Brot für die Welt“  
PO Box 10 11 42  
D-70010 Stuttgart  
Staffenbergstraße 76  
D-70184 Stuttgart  
Germany

Phone: ++49 711/2159-568  
E-Mail: [info@brot-fuer-die-welt.de](mailto:info@brot-fuer-die-welt.de)  
[www.brot-fuer-die-welt.de](http://www.brot-fuer-die-welt.de)

**Brot**  
für die Welt  
[www.brot-fuer-die-welt.de](http://www.brot-fuer-die-welt.de)

Im Verbund der  
**Diakonie** 