

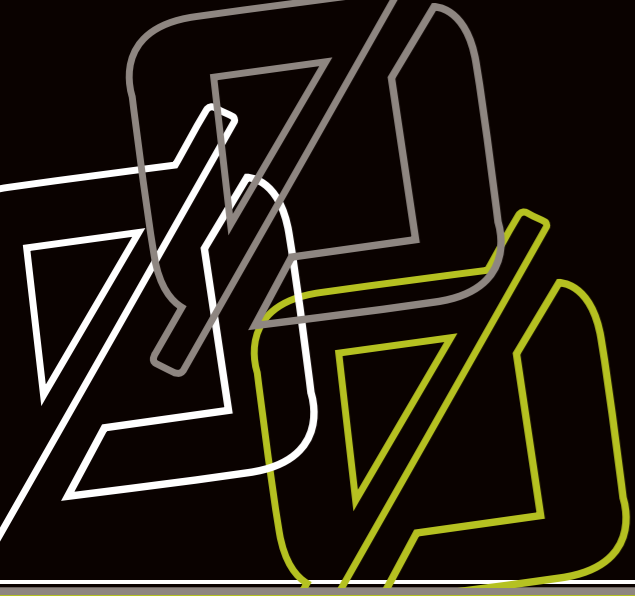
KANSNET



**STRENGTHEN
WOMEN'S
INFLUENCE
IN POLITICAL
LIFE**

**LEARNINGS FROM DANISH NGOS
AND THEIR SOUTHERN PARTNERS**





KØNSNET

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INTRODUCTION

Women's participation and involvement in governance structures at all levels impacts political, economic and social issues all over the world. However, the link between governance participation and gender equality has often been ignored. Therefore a small group of Gendernet's member organisations collected examples of these linkages from their gender governance work. As the collected case studies reveal, Danish NGOs and their southern partners have many important experiences in which women are actively participating in areas of governance, both in government and civil society. The experiences also reflect the obstacles that remain to ensure women's full and equal participation. The intention of this publication is to share this knowledge and support Danish NGOs, their partners and colleagues in both North and South working with gender equality and governance participation.

The main theme of the case studies is the focus on strengthening women's participation in different aspects of political life. All cases show how informal power structures obstruct women's possibilities for participation in development and in political, social and economic systems. The recognition that the lives of women are deeply affected by social norms and expectations has been illustrated by all case studies. The participation of women in governance has long been inhibited by the assumption that women's proper sphere is the "private" sphere, and this assumption has been a hurdle to practical work on the question of gender equality and governance. The patriarchal nature of many societies means that women candidates often fight difficult battles to change attitudes and perceptions to win constituent votes.

Women continue to face societal resistance to gain more influence within the state. At the local level there may be less resistance, but at the national level there is still unwillingness to include women. When women are includ-

ed, they are often given soft work areas that reflect conventional understandings of what is appropriate for women: health, education, children and women's affairs, etc.

Many of the actions of the development organisations show the crucial importance of skills training for women in making political opportunities meaningful for them, and in giving them a voice once they have a political position. The training of women in utilizing political space at local level is necessary for governance work to have any positive effect; otherwise the traditional gender values may undermine them, even though they have governance legitimacy. It is also necessary to train men in order for them to realize the importance of including women and be prepared for social changes when the women start assuming new, untraditional roles.

Continued work at all levels in political parties is necessary to prevent gender policies from being forgotten or neglected. This is a particular challenge at the district/constituency levels where corruption, illiteracy and discrimination are widespread.

As several of the case studies show, women's interests can and have been facilitated through the legal system, through changes in laws relating to sexual harassment and domestic violence, through more effective enforcement of existing law and through new attention to questions of equality and non-discrimination. The cases moreover illustrate how it is possible to work with governance participation at different levels; for example indigenous women of Ecuador fight to gain power in spite of the double challenge of being indigenous and female, and the story from Bukoba in Tanzania centres on what to do when legislation is not enough. These stories are examples of how to work beneath official legislative levels, whereas the cases from Nepal and Bangladesh are illustrations on how to make women visible and give them direct influence in the official political system. The cases provide valuable methodological insight into the importance of operating at several levels in order to target and overcome the challenge of strengthening women's influence in political life. We hope that the case studies in this publication will serve as an inspiration towards future interventions that integrate gender and governance.

MARTIN ROSENKILDE PEDERSEN & OLGA EGE



OLGA EGE GENDERNET



MARTIN R. PEDERSEN DCA

Indigenous women of Ecuador fight their way to power in spite of the double challenge of being indigenous and female

SCHOOL FOR KICHWA WOMEN - LEARNING TO LEAD

Through the 1990s, the indigenous peoples of Ecuador, as well as Bolivia and partly Peru, gained strength as influential political actors in civil society. The women of Ecuarrunari - Confederation of the Kichwa People in Ecuador - formulated a political project for Kichwa women as their contribution to the general political project of the organisation. As part of their political project the women founded the Dolores Cacuango School for Women Leadership named after an indigenous female hero. The School was created as a part of the indigenous movement with the double objective of empowering individual women for their own benefit in terms of education and self-esteem; and providing a base of educated and politically trained women for the leadership of the indigenous organisation.

READ MORE

www.ibis.dk

www.ecuarunari.org

www.ecuarunari.org/es/dolores/index.html

FACT ABOUT WOMEN IN POLITICS IN ECUADOR

Out of the 124 seats in the Ecuadorian parliament women occupy 40 seats equal to 32,3%.

Growing demands for schools

The curriculum included issues such as self-confidence, the ability to speak in public, indigenous culture and identity and indigenous peoples' rights.

Initially there was only one school, but with a growing demand the original school in the capital was changed into a specialised school, while four local (regional) schools were established to ensure the basic educational skills.

The School is organized around so-called semi-presence, consisting of a series of three-day sessions and a range of guided tasks and research activities to be performed at home between sessions.

This form means that more indigenous women were able to attend without getting into trouble for leaving their work and duties at home.

Engage in their community

The School has been a success both for the women at individual level and for the indigenous organisation. At the individual level, Kichwa women have overcome the fear of oppression and inequality and are engaged in self-development processes.

The women have obtained the capacity to be actively engaged in their communities, and their knowledge about life skills and experiences of solidarity among women has given them strength. From the point of view of the indigenous movement, the School has produced a number of empowered women with political knowledge and capabilities to question local government policies,



PHOTO RUNE GERTZEN

and to work for the movement's rights to indigenous territory and identity.

The women are able to mobilise and arrange events throughout the vast Kichwa territory, to maintain the engagement and to pass on their knowledge and skills to younger women.

Few climb to the top

Although the success and the results of the School are very important, there are problems and challenges related to working with gender, women's political leadership and indigenous peoples.

One of the challenges relates to the visibility of the former students. With the amount of women who have passed through the School, relatively few climb to top positions in the organization (Ecuarrunari).

This is partly due to a certain level of rigidity in the organizational structures for letting women through to the top positions; It is also partly to a lack of registration of the students' trajectories after they leave school, which IBIS in an evaluation recognises could have been better systematised.

Tradition is the challenge

The main challenge seems to lie in a traditional issue (male/macho tradition, not indigenous culture).

Indigenous women in Ecuador have many chores in the household, in the fields, cooking, taking care of children etc. The participation of women both in the school sessions and afterwards in the

political organisation is often seen as entailing a "destabilisation" of the marriage and the family.

Men often question the worth of investing time and money in the education of women, especially when they seem to bring neither official education titles nor actual economic improvement to the household.

The Dolores Cacuango School has tried to solve this problem and demystify the women's education by organising so-called Family Workshops where husbands are invited to attend the school sessions and witness the education process.

In 2009 The School decided in to give admission to male students as well.

The issues of gender rights and equality in indigenous organisations are at the same time very important and quite complex.

The Dolores Cacuango School is a unique space for women (and lately also men) to build capacity on issues of political participation and rights of indigenous peoples and at the same time address many of the problems embedded in cultural (indigenous) and traditional (male/macho, non-indigenous) roles and power relations.

TEXT HELENE GJERDING GOVERNANCE PROGRAMME
COORDINATOR LATIN AMERICA IBIS

Shedding traditional practices, challenging hierarchies and questioning orthodox mindsets has been the cornerstone of Laily Begum's long trip from extreme poverty to vice-chairmanship of the sub-district Thakurgaon

WOMEN FEDERATION LEADER TAKES ON POLITICAL MANTLE

"I always wanted to be someone. My first dream was to get educated, but that was not to be. I was married at the age of 14 and had a child at 15. I faced physical and mental torture at the hands of my in-laws for two years before being thrown out with my son and husband".

It is hard to picture that the mature well dressed women sitting in front of us once was a young scared girl with a child. Laily Begum - now 38 years old and with a grand position in local politics - continues her story of how her career all started:

"I returned to my parents with my one-year old son and husband. And I met other women like me; uneducated, with no work and facing abuse. We all started to meet frequently and in time formed a women's group with the help of the NGO, Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Society, RDRS".

Support by women in her group

Laily Begum's story is not exceptional in Bangladesh - but so is her way up the political ladder. Working with the women's group in the village, RDRS early realised that Laily was a woman with potential. She dared to speak out in a diplomatic manner and always supported the weakest in the village.

One of RDRS most important messages to the villagers is that: "Working to-

gether the poor can achieve so much more influence and be heard by the politicians".

Therefore RDRS has helped villagers in the hole region to start federations, where the poorest come together and discuss important issues like education, child marriage etc. and also get to meet politicians to raise their concerns or give suggestions to solve any given problem. Lailys' village became the base of a federation, and in 1994-95 Laily was elected member of the federation. In 1996 she became part of the executive body and had two terms. During that time, through RDRS, Laily also learned to read and write.

The women in her group supported Laily, as they believed that she would be a good leader. In 1999 she became the vice-chairman of the Federation. In 2001 and 2003 she had the opportunity to be part of the Union Parishad (lowest administrative body of the Bangladesh Government) and then in 2008 she was elected vice-chairman in the sub-district.

Challenges for a woman in politics

"As poor, we are vulnerable. As poor women we are especially vulnerable. I believe one of the greatest challenges in rural areas is to bring women to the forefront", Laily Begum says. But Laily did not achieve all this without help and support.

"The Federations has played a big role in this. It has brought people together as a collective to demand their entitlements from the government. It has given strength to women like me to enter politics and work fearlessly. If I have skills and courage, what is the harm if I want to contest elections? Why can't I perform equal to or better than a man", Laily says.

TEXT AND PHOTO ANNE METTE FUTTRUP JOURNALIST DCA, LENE EJC JARBØL JOURNALIST DCA, PRIYANKA MUKHERJEE DOCUMENTATION OFFICER DCA INDIA.



ASSOCIATIONS IN THE POOREST CORNER IN BANGLADESH

- The project is called Empowerment of the Rural Poor through Federations
- The project is a cooperation between RDRS (Rangpur-Dinajpur Rural Service), one of the largest Bangladeshi NGOs, DanChurchAid, Swedish Church Aid, Norwegian Church Aid and FinnChurchAid. The EU development department, EuropeAid, supports financially
- The objective is to establish democratic federations and thereby give the poorest of the poor in north-western Bangladesh a stronger voice

THE TASKS OF THE FEDERATIONS

- To guide poor and uneducated people to use their voice
- To strengthen women's rights
- To establish children's and youth groups and teach them about civil society and social conditions
- To offer the youth training in e.g. sewing
- To secure the land rights of the poor
- To train groups in advocacy
- To train in communication with the authorities
- To open small offices with computers and internet with access for all
- To try to collect books for a small library with access for all
- To motivate parents to avoid child marriages

FACT ABOUT WOMEN IN POLITICS IN BANGLADESH

There are 45 seats reserved to women in the 300-member Parliament. But a new bill passed in June 2011 increases the number of reserved seats for women in the parliament to 50. However, the National Women's Advancement Policy 2011 has introduced a provision that the number of women parliamentarians will be increased to 33% of the total seats in the parliament and direct election will be introduced to these seats.

READ MORE About Laily and the federations: www.danchurchaid.org/what-we-do/political-space

Empowerment of women's group in Mozambique has led to tangible outputs – like more land, seeds and farming equipment

FAMILIES IN CUMBANE GET LOANS FROM THE GOVERNMENT

The Mozambique government has launched a programme of cheap, small-scale loans in order to stimulate economic development. But these loans are difficult to access for women and other marginalized groups, since it requires knowledge of the programme, literacy in Portuguese and knowledge of administrative procedures. ActionAid Denmark's (AADK) local partner organisation ACUDES trains and empowers community-based organisations to access their rights from public institutions. This includes their rights to e.g. like education, water, health services etc.

Got money to buy seeds

In this case they worked with the women community group “Families in Cumbane” in the Jangamo District in Mozambique, and built their capacity by training them in knowing about their rights and helping with the applications, so they could access the loans.

The key element in the success was that administrators and officers from the local government were well informed about the programme and even included in some activities. By including all stakeholders like this, initial suspicion was removed, and “Families in Cumbane” were able to receive the funds. They spent the money on buying seeds, farming equipment and six hectares of land. During the first year of farming they managed to cultivate two hectares with sesame and cassava.

Sometimes it can be difficult to engage communities in governance-related activities, as it will only yield results on a long-term basis. Since the target groups are often in vulnerable positions, they are more concerned with the day-to-day survival. As this case shows, this activity had immediate and tangible outputs, which increased the incentive to participate.

Governance is usually a long-term strategy that does not carry many im-



METHODOLOGY

Innovative approaches:

- Including Local Government in the activities to make them more open to demands from marginalized groups
- Providing sustainable short-term incentives to participate in governance work through the immediate positive effects of better governance

READ MORE

The full story and more details in AADK's Danida Frame Application, 2010-13 Annex 2: <http://ms.dk/sw106776.asp>

mediate advantages for the participants, but by connecting their rights to tangible outputs the incentive increases.

Vulnerable group

Among the challenges are that the group has not been able to organise with like-minded groups at provincial level, because the donor-sponsored network is ruled by briefcase organisations, or organisations with briefcase tendencies.

The group is also still vulnerable to failed harvest, bad weather, ruthless buyers and other problems that may arise.

“Families in Cumbane” had existed for a number of years without external support before they received the training. That the group was in existence and self-organised is probably a key factor in the success of the capacity building, since there was no question about the motivation of the members.

Democratic governance gives women opportunities

Democracy and democratisation processes form the core of all AADK work. This covers work in the field of local democratic governance – characterised by the constructive engagement of citizens and civil organisations with local government and state agencies.

It is within this framework that the cooperation with ACUDES and the successful activities with “Families in Cumbane” should be seen.

TEXT ANDERS LUNDT HANSEN PROGRAMME SUPPORT COORDINATOR ACTIONAID DENMARK



“WHO CLOSED THE DOOR BEFORE I RETURNED?”

“MY GOD IT IS LATE AT NIGHT AND YOU WANT US NOT TO CLOSE THE DOOR?”

A project in Tanzania aims at getting the men to stop behaving violently at home through role-plays

WHEN LEGISLATION IS NOT ENOUGH

A widow is chased away from her home and the fields she used to farm with her husband. It is her late husband's brothers who evict her, as they want the land. One of them says: “The person who brought you here is dead. There is no reason for you to stay. Get lost.”

We are at the southern shore of Lake Victoria in north-western Tanzania, where the struggle for gender equality has entered onto the agenda.

“The problem is not just the laws”, says Anthea Bethge, former coordinator of the Human Rights Desk in the north-western diocese of the Lutheran Church in Tanzania.

Beijing made way for legislation

After the World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, the Tanzanian parliament changed plenty of laws to reinforce gender equality and punish discrimination. For example, the law awards the widow full rights to her land and to the house she shared with her husband.

“The trouble is that these laws are meaningless to many rural dwellers. Even the elected members of local councils are unaware of the laws, or refuse to accept them, or blatantly choose to use their position of power for their own gain,” Anthea Bethge says.

Most violators are men

The example illustrates the core of the problem addressed by a project developed by the Lutheran Church. The project addresses violence against women.

Surveys show that about half of all marriages in Tanzania have, at some stage, been affected by violence.

The victims are usually women and children, the violators mostly men. Consequently, the project has chosen a strategy aimed at drawing attention to this scourge, proposing solutions and ultimately getting the men to stop behaving violently at home. ▶

Three approaches

The project has confronted the problem in three ways: information, training in conflict management and advocacy towards public authorities. The information campaign is intended to generate greater knowledge and attention concerning the problem. Through frank discussions, addressing the men directly – be they violent spouses, chiefs, local civil servants, priests or judges – the project has highlighted the silent violence. The project promotes dialogue and conflict management. Many women are subjected to physical, psychological, sexual and financial abuse. This problem cannot be remedied solely by offering help to the victim. A durable solution is one that changes the violent conduct of the violator. Men known to be particularly violent are invited to the seminars – without being told the true reason why they have been invited. Many of them are so moved by the role-play that they proceed to give their public testimony. “Lots of women then come to us and say: what did you do to him? He stopped just like that,” Anthea Bethge recounts. Community leaders from civil society and local authorities have been trained in conflict management. This has taken place through hundreds

ABOUT THE PROJECT

- The project covers seven administrative districts and involves leaders and decision-makers.
- Through hundreds of seminars more than 10,000 leaders have been mobilised to intervene and mediate in connection with domestic and community violence.
- They have also been equipped to advocate against violence.

METHODOLOGY

The project has applied a genuine gender perspective. Experiences during the project’s pilot phase showed unmistakably that the struggle for women’s rights makes the greatest headway by targeting the intervention not only at the children and women affected by violence, but also at the men and local power structures.

Lasting and positive social change is best achieved if, for instance, the struggle against domestic violence is waged both by women, who have the right not to be subjected to violence – and who have become knowledgeable of that right –, and by men, who have a special responsibility for respecting women’s rights.

FACTS ABOUT WOMEN IN POLITICS IN TANZANIA

According to the law in Tanzania, men and women are equal. But in praxis men earn twice as much as women, and fewer women are chosen to be leaders. The project has been supported with funds and advice by Danish Mission Council Development Department in its pilot phase and by the Project Advice and Training Centre’s Project Fund in its second phase. Danida is back donor.

of seminars, mobilising more than 10,000 leaders to intervene and mediate in connection with domestic and community violence. Previously many community leaders would not know the national inheritance laws and women’s rights issues and therefore advise e.g. widows and relatives according to the customary law which is very patriarchal and often conflicts with the national legislation which in principle grants equal rights to men and women.

Therefore, the project has carried out advocacy aimed at strengthening the official systems’ responses to violence.

Involving the men and the local leaders is crucial

To do this kind of work through a church has been a success, as Anthea Bethge sees it.

“We take full advantage of our special position as church, that is, its grassroots structure, its moral authority and, not least, its safe haven to cry and seek care, to break the silence and be heard, to ask for forgiveness and be forgiven, to re-establish peace between neighbours and within families.”

The Human Rights Desk was taken by surprise by the scant opposition from the men’s side. The intention has been to create more balance in relations between men and women, and this will usually be resisted.

Anthea Bethge explains. “The same man who is a violent spouse is shocked to hear that his sister has been beaten up by her husband. We involve him in solving the problem of violence in his sister’s home, and then we move on to his own case. Since he has taken part in a positive process, through which safety and peace has taken hold in his sister’s home, he already knows the benefits of our work, and usually accepts

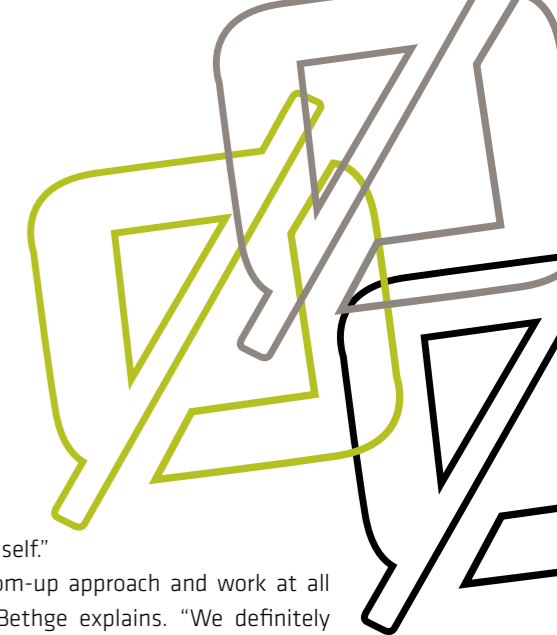
the same for himself.”

“We use a bottom-up approach and work at all levels,” Anthea Bethge explains. “We definitely create change in many people’s personal lives, in their conduct and decisions. But our approach is systemic and far-reaching. We cover over 100 wards, where we involve leaders and decision-makers.”

We can reach the decent man

It has been a solid foundation for the project that a majority of the population sees violence as a problem that not only harms the victims, but also disturbs peace and social development. The timing has been beneficial too. There has been a willingness to discuss the problem of violence in an open and unprejudiced manner and to embrace change. Most gender-related violence isn’t committed by hardened criminals”, says Anthea Bethge, “It’s committed by the decent family man who lives next door, who sings in the church choir and helps the orphans. He can be reached by us, easily and effectively.”

TEXT JOURNALIST FINN RASMUSSEN FORMER HUMAN RIGHTS DESK COORDINATOR ANTHEA BETHGE PROGRAMME CONSULTANT KRISTINE KAABER PORS CONSULTANT DORTHE SKOVGAARD MORTENSEN DRAWING MARCO TIBASEME



Given the political space is not always enough for women – if they do not dare to speak out. Meet a woman who does

MAKE WOMEN TALK

Two years ago Bishnu Kumal from Nepal was a very shy woman and she would go into her house when she saw people in her courtyard. But nowadays she is known as a woman with leadership abilities and is teaching people about human rights.

Even when partner organisations succeed in placing women in decision-making bodies, still they will often be overwhelmed by the force of traditional gender roles, meaning that they do not speak out. ActionAid Denmark (AADK) has a number of partners addressing this issue through training and capacity building of women.

The power games of local politics are never easy, but in order for women to achieve good governanc, they must not only know their rights, but also dare to express them in public forums.

Talked on the radio

Bishnu Kumal lives in the Mushahar settlement in Kerwani of Rupandehi district, Nepal. Here AADK supports a local radio station and its listeners' clubs – Radio Lumbini. In the clubs women discuss health, sanitation, and democratic rights, and through these discussions Bishnu Kumal became aware of her rights.

Since then Bishnu has been elected not only President of Chirag Radio L.C., but also member of a local School Management Committee and woman representative of Kerwani Village Development Committee. In addition, she is also affiliated to about half a dozen local organisations, and recently she was in a radio interview where she emphasised that women and men should enjoy equal rights.

Other women have taken up positions in other user groups such as water management committees and forest user groups and a considerable number of them are in decision-making positions.

Men feel challenged by strong women

This intervention is necessitated by the fact that the creation of political space does not automatically lead to utilisation of the political space. Men can feel challenged and act negatively, when women change their roles.

Women are not a unified group, but are as interwoven in small-scale power struggles and politics as men. Empowering local women intervenes in the local balance of power and may release unwanted dynamics.

The training of women in utilising political space at local level is necessary for governance work to have any positive effect, otherwise the traditional gender values may curb them, even though they have formal recognition of decision-making powers.

TEXT ANDERS LUNDT HANSEN PROGRAMME SUPPORT COORDINATOR ACTIONAID DENMARK



METHODOLOGY

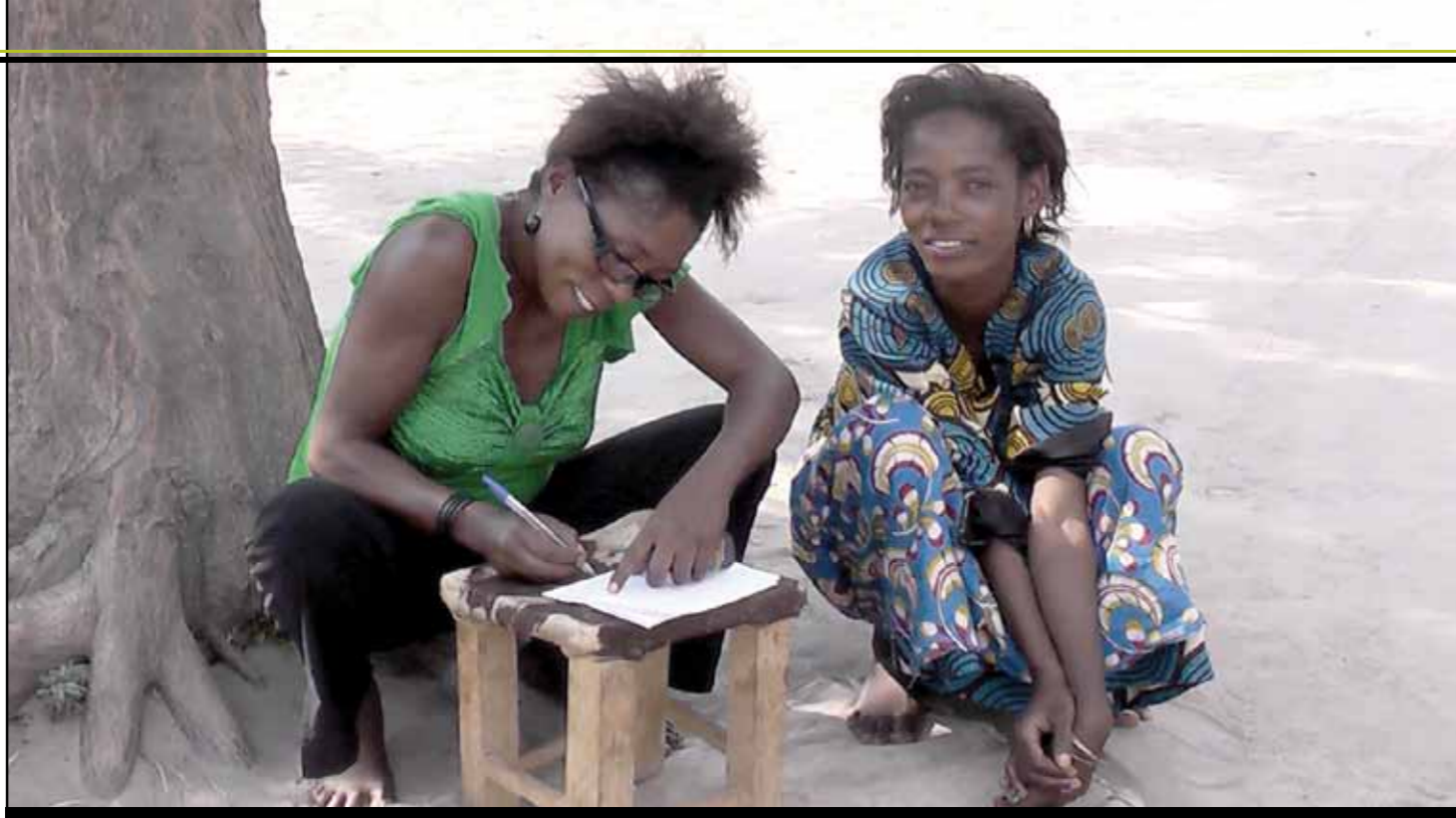
The activities aimed at empowering women are twofold. They both support the local community radio station, and also organise female listeners' groups. Since the radio is in local language and does not require literacy skills, all women are able to receive empowering information this way.

FACT ABOUT WOMEN IN POLITICS IN NEPAL

Nepal's Constituent Assembly has almost one-third (32,8%) female members. This is a result of a legal requirement that all parties must include 50% women among their candidates in parts of the elections."

READ MORE

Full story and more details can be found In AADK's Danida Frame Application, 2010-13 Annex 2: <http://ms.dk/sw106776.asp>



Paralegals help widows' fight for their inheritance rights in Zambia.

MRS B WENT TO COURT AND WON

Mrs B had been married to her husband for over 30 years when he died. They lived in Soweto Compound in Kapiri Mposhi District until his death in a house built by themselves.

After the husband was buried, the family sat down to agree on how the deceased's estate should be administered. The widow volunteered to be an administrator, but she was ignored and the husband's brother was appointed as the administrator.

The brother in law received part of the deceased benefits and gave the widow and children a smaller share than they were entitled to. When she asked him why, he shouted at her and said she should not pry into matters that do not concern her.

Reports of property grabbing

Inheritance rights of the deceased's family and next of kin are regulated in Zambia through the Intestate and Succession Act. However, entrenched cultural practices have seen

the persistent violation of women's rights particularly in rural areas where knowledge of rights and legal redress are limited and where negative cultural practices still work to the detriment of women.

The Victim Support Unit of the Police continues to receive reports of property grabbing in clear violation of the Intestate and Succession Act.

Legal awareness needed

Women in Law in Southern Africa (WLSA) is a Zambian Non-Governmental Organisation working in the field of women's rights protection, particularly in advocating improved legal frameworks.

Recognising the gap in access to justice and the challenges faced by rural communities in accessing legal representation, the organisation became involved in the provision of legal aid services.

The services provided include both primary (legal representation and advice) as well as secondary advice, (legal awareness and education services). Specifically, the role of WLSA paralegals is to offer legal advice to people who cannot afford to hire a lawyer; assist the illiterate with court processes; educate the communities on their rights; and act as a link between their lawyers and the communities.

How Mrs B got help

Luckily for Mrs B, she attended a WLSA sensitisation meeting in which she and the other participants were given the names of the paralegals.

Mrs B approached one of the paralegals to ask for help to ensure she was not given less than her entitlement again. The paralegal helped the widow to successfully file her appeal. The court reviewed her documents and set up a hearing. WLSA came in and groomed the widow to speak well and

defend her appeal. The court ruled in her favour, revoked her brother-in-law's administratorship and appointed her administrator.

Professional lawyers only for the few

While the policy environment has made significant strides, practices in remote areas continue to promote patriarchy. The services of professional lawyers are available only to a very small number of Zambians. Mainly, these services can only be accessed by well-to-do city dwellers.

This poses a serious challenge to the Zambian State in meeting its obligation to ensure the rights to a fair trial; equality before the law and to a legal remedy for its citizens when their rights have been violated.

Paralegals have proved to be necessary in ensuring communities access to their legal rights when they are violated. The example highlighted above helps to illustrate the necessity ►



PHOTO KLAUS HOJSTING

of paralegals in a community. Without the assistance of the paralegal in filing the appeal and running her through the process, it is highly unlikely that Mrs B would have taken action against her brother-in-law and would never have her rights redressed.

Justice for the poor

DanChurchAid's (DCA) work is centred on the rights based approach and women's rights protection is a key element in all DCA programming. However, awareness on rights does not mean that vulnerable groups' rights are protected.

In the current Zambian context access to justice for the poor continues to be a challenge. Most people still cannot afford a lawyer and are ignorant of the process of accessing their right to justice. This is countered by WLSA who is increasing the awareness of women's rights in Zambia by helping women to access justice and by strengthening their position in society.

Mrs B does not want her name published for confidentiality purposes.

TEXT ANNA CARMEN MURRU DCA PROGRAM OFFICER POLITICAL SPACE ZAMBIA

IMPLEMENTING PARTNER: WLSA

LOCATION: SOWETO COMPOUND, KAPIRI MPOSHI, CENTRAL PROVINCE, ZAMBIA.

METHODOLOGY

The project is providing legal awareness competences of individuals so that they can contribute more effectively to the fight against gender violence and injustice through legislation and legal instruments.

This happens by teaching women about their rights through formal and informal courses. Furthermore, WLSA is generating public interest and knowledge about the issues of women and law through legal education and information dissemination. WLSA is also training paralegals in the communities so that they can assist in promoting and protecting the rights of community members.

FACTS ABOUT WOMEN IN POLITICS IN ZAMBIA

Women represent 51% of the total population. Women occupy 14% of the seats in parliament. The share of women in wage employment is 34%.

READ MORE

Gender equality key to the achievement of the mdgs: www.undp.org.zm

WOMEN IN POLITICS

Mozambique has one of the highest numbers of women participating in national politics with women representing 30% of the members of the national parliament.

Before the general elections in 2009, a woman held the position of prime minister, and currently a woman is president of the national parliament.

In 2003 a decentralisation reform began, establishing municipal and provincial assemblies, as well as consultative organs at all levels of the state administration.

The decentralisation legislation stipulated a quota of 30% for women in the consultative organs like school boards and district consultative councils.

Women not considered equal

Nevertheless, despite these new opportunities, women have not significantly increased their political influence in local governance and are not considered equal political agents in local decision-making structures in Mozambique.

Their male colleagues also generally regard them as politically illegitimate, and the women themselves consider their own rights to speak and seek influence inferior to those of men. Additionally, women have less access to district development funds.

In this context, IBIS supports the project "Women in Politics" together with the Mozambican women's network, Fórum Mulher.

The objective of the project is to increase the political participation of women, and to promote the agenda and concerns of rural women within the structures of local governance in the three northern provinces of Niassa, Cabo Delgado and Zambezia.

The activities of the project concentrate on a series of training sessions of

Elected politicians and civil society representatives get training to help increase women's real political influence in Mozambique

male and female elected members in the assemblies and of representatives of civil society as well as the facilitation of dialogue and creation of Gender Action Plans in the so-called base-groups, that unite the elected politicians and civil society representatives prioritizing and promoting the concerns of local women.

Challenge to the party power

One of the challenges of this project is the apparent conflict between women representing their own party agenda as well as promoting a general, non-partisan agenda of women in general.

The dominating party, Frelimo, has been the governing party since the liberation in 1976 and has since the general elections in 2009 dominated all governance structures. The party has explicit policies and institutions for the promotion of women in all areas of life, but when discussing the promotion of women outside the party it is often seen as a challenge to the party power.

Men are more active in discussions

Another dilemma is the involvement of men ►



PHOTO IBIS MOZAMBIQUE

METHODOLOGY

IBIS conducted two studies in 2009 and 2010, documenting that although women occupy seats in assemblies or councils, they hold very few positions of leadership in for example working groups or commissions.

The main approach applied is based on diverse methods and strategic interventions addressing and involving both women and men:

- Capacity building and empowerment of female representatives within municipal and provincial assemblies
- Creation of dialogue space between female politicians and community members (both men and women) in preparing gender action plans to be adopted by the municipal and provincial assemblies
- Training sessions and discussion on gender issues and women's rights involving both male and female assembly members, civil servants and others who are involved in defining development plans and budget at district or municipality level

FACTS ABOUT WOMEN IN POLITICS IN MOZAMBIQUE

- 35.6% of members of parliament in Mozambique are women
- Quota system adopted by the Frelimo Party that requires a third of the election candidates to be women
- Women in municipal assemblies: between 28 and 49% in the 6 municipalities of the project area
- Women in provincial assemblies: between 29 and 33% in the 3 provinces of Zambezia, Niassa and Cabo Delgado

in the project. It is considered a strategic necessity to involve male elected members in the training sessions of the project, first of all to sensitise and train them in issues of women's rights, and secondly to mobilise them as gender advocates. However, it also poses the danger of reproducing the very same male dominance.

This is seen in the training sessions and base group meetings. Despite a majority of women participants it is a recurring pattern that the men are significantly more active than the women in the commenting and discussions; the men have many more opinions about the concerns and needs of women, and the best strategies for implementing them.

The challenge that the project's partner organisations therefore are facing now, is to determine the appropriate number of men involved as well as how to encourage and promote women's participation in every activity of the project.

Approved by the authorities

One of the lessons learned is that in order to work in and with local governance structure to promote an issue that is potentially conflictive, it is necessary to work with the highest-level authorities first.

This means, that working with assembly members is only practically possible if facilitated and permitted by the assembly president, who will then decide which assembly members can attend which meetings.

If project activities are not sanctioned by the Assembly president, the individual assembly members simply do not attend project activities.

A broad target group

Another lesson learned is the necessity to broaden the target group of the project in order to achieve real influence on local governance structures.

In order to promote the concerns of women it is not sufficient to engage with politically elected assembly members and civil society representatives.

It is also necessary to lobby and include in project trainings the municipal councils, members of technical working groups and other civil servants, who have a direct say in the actual development of plans, budgets and accountability procedures of any given district or municipality.

TEXT STINE SKOETT THOMSEN, PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT OFFICER IBIS MOZAMBIQUE

Malawi's rural women have increased their representation in decision-making structures due to work of local Human Rights organisation

MORE MALAWI WOMEN INTO POLITICS

In the 2004 national elections, only 26 of the 191 (13.6%) elected candidates were women and for the Local Government the tally stood at just 8.6%. This disparity is despite Malawi being a signatory to the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development, which was signed in Blantyre. Malawi committed itself to achieving at least 30 per cent representation by women at all levels of political decision-making by 2005 and this target has subsequently been revised to 50 per cent representation by 2015.

DCA's local partner, The Centre for Human Rights & Rehabilitation (CHRR) undertook a study that assessed the challenges that elected and aspiring female political candidates have experienced.

The survey found that women perceived male prejudice and cultural traditions as the main obstacles preventing women from participating in politics in a meaningful way. Furthermore it was compounded by lack of co-operation from male colleagues, little consideration of women's issues and harassment.

CHRR's research also suggests that the campaigns of aspiring female candidates have been sabotaged by intimidation, vote rigging and violence. Indeed the CHR survey also noted that lack of support from political parties was a major reason why women believe they are excluded from governance.

Discouraging women's candidacies

Despite strong gender mainstreaming policies within political parties, which commit to non-discrimination and positive action such as a quota of seats reserved for women, discrimination against female candidates was rampant at district party level and within primary elections.

The quota systems established by political parties were not adhered to and

many women noted that local party leaders demanded financial handouts in exchange for political support and openly discriminated against women in other ways, notably discouraging their candidacies. It is clear therefore that policy evaporation is occurring within political parties.

Gatekeepers of gender

Notably at district and constituency level Party Leaders often lack formal education and are frequently illiterate. Essentially these groups are the gatekeepers of gender at lower party echelons, but effectively they may block many aspirants.

To counter this CHRR implemented training for District Party Leaders that included components of human rights, gender and political party management.

In order to combat these problems in partnership with DCA CHRR employed a number of strategies including capacity building and ongoing support and mentoring of female candidates and advocacy with political parties at national and district level. ▶



PHOTO MIKE KOLDFEEL

More women contesting

CHRR also provided capacity building for female candidates under the national programmes and civic and voter education, which included providing joint platform to female candidates from across the political spectrum. This building of female solidarity across party lines was a strong component in the campaigns.

The most significant change is that despite the challenges experienced Women's Parliamentary Representation increased from 14% to 22%. At cabinet level representation increased to 23.8% from 20% in June 2009.

In part this may be attributed to the large number of women contesting, but also to the impact of the various activities under the DCA and national campaigns.

Corruption is a challenge

There is a need for continued work at all echelons of political parties to prevent evaporation of gender policies. This remains a particular challenge at the district/constituency levels where corruption, illiteracy and discrimination remain endemic.

Additionally there is a need for reform of political parties, greater openness and regulation of campaign activities and individual conduct. Again, no legislation is available to control the conduct and functioning of parties.

TEXT NICOLA NDOVI PROGRAMME OFFICER THE CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND REHABILITATION MALAWI

FACTS ABOUT THE PROJECT AND CHRR

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

METHODOLOGY

The project is increasing the skills of women in decision-making positions. It is also empowering and building cohesion between women from different decision making positions and is lobbying and advocating to produce positive change towards gender equality. Women task forces, with aspiring women politicians, have been formed and meet to strategise. Furthermore, the project is Capacity Building District Political Party Leaders and Secretary Generals of political Parties on gender equality in women in decision making.

FACTS ABOUT WOMEN IN POLITICS IN MALAWI

Since the 2009 election women have occupied 20,83 % of seats in parliament (40 of 192).

The first female vice president Joyce Hilda Banda came to office in 2009. Malawi has not held local elections since 2000. The local elections were supposed to take place in April 2011, but have continuously been postponed, latest until 2014. Observers believe that it is a blow to women's political participation.

READ MORE

- <http://www.eisa.org.za/WEP/malwomenrepresent.htm>
- <http://oneworldaction.wordpress.com/2011/05/26/postponed-local-elections-in-malawi-a-massive-blow-to-women%E2%80%99s-political-participation/>



Women are slowly rising to political power, but mainly when boosted by quotas and other special measures

WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT

The global share of women in parliament continues to increase slowly and reached an all-time high of 19 per cent in 2010. This represents a gain of 67 per cent since 1995, when 11 per cent of parliamentarians worldwide were women. But it is far short of the target of 30 per cent of women in leadership positions that was to be met by 1995, and further still from the MDG target of gender parity.

SOURCE **THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS REPORT 2010**



Two women have been appointed advisors to the local chief of the village in Kasomalwela. In this way women's rights can be promoted

FEMALE ADVISERS TO TRADITIONAL LEADERS

In Zambia the traditional leaders (chiefs, village headmen, advisors to the chief) hold great power in rural communities. They control land administration and regulations and enactment of customary law (which does not formally exist, but is the reality for a large part of the rural population).

The customary law regulates gender sensitive issues such as marriages and inheritance, and thus the gender related issues of women's access to land, early marriages, expulsion of widows from their land and similar issues. Traditions usually disfavour the women.

This is the reason why some ActionAid Denmark's partners as part of their activities have tried to address these issues by convincing traditional leaders to include women in their circle of advisers. They have succeeded in one case, where a chief has appointed two female advisers.

Women paralegals make huge difference

This happened in Kasomalwela in Mansa District in Luapula Province, so the partner Mansa District Women Association tells.

Chief Kasomalwela – a male chief – was sensitised to issues of gender based violence in the chieftom. So he decided to appoint two local village women, who were trained by the partner as paralegals, as his "legal advisers" on matters of gender.

The two women now sit in his traditional court every time sessions are going on. Here they bring in a perspective of women's rights and gender sensitive judgements.

Since they have the paralegal training, they also influence the chief to give judgements that are in consonance with the current law.

As a result of this, the partner organisation Mansa DWA has now seen a lot of women applying for land and also participating in other governance structures in the communities such as Neighbourhood Health Committees and church leadership structures.

On top of that chief Kasmalwela ordered all under-age girls in marriages to be withdrawn and reenrolled in schools – 15 girls have done that so far.

Risk of quiet women

The structures of traditional leadership are thoroughly undemocratic, and by working with these structures we may in fact be consolidating them. However, for much of the rural population the traditional structures are the real and effective governance through which they exercise their rights. These structures cannot be ignored.

There is no possibility to pressurise or replace resistant leaders as the system is not democratic. And although the women are included as advisers, there is a great risk that they will be too quiet and not dare to speak out.

Long – but important - route ahead

The inclusion of female advisers is a major change in the traditional set-up, but it is difficult to achieve. The intervention had a low success rate, with only one in four of the approached chiefs including female advisers. The intervention utilises existing (and thoroughly undemocratic) structures to promote women's rights and further development. The traditional structures are strong in rural areas, so once an inroad is made here, the change will be embedded in local practices.

TEXT ANDERS LUNDT HANSEN PROGRAMME SUPPORT COORDINATOR ACTIONAID DENMARK

METHODOLOGY

The results were achieved by a combination of empowerment of women's groups through their own organisation Mansa District Women's Association and lobbying of the chiefs by the Women's Association.

WOMEN IN DECISION-MAKING IN ZAMBIA

Zambia has had female ministers and members of parliament since independence in 1964. At no time has there been more than 20 female members of the 150-seat parliament.

READ MORE

Full story and more details can be found In AADK's Danida Frame Application: <http://ms.dk/sw106776.asp>

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTING ORGANISATIONS

GENDERNET - NGO NETWORK ON GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT

Gendernet is a network of Danish Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), institutions and resource persons. It was established in 2006 to contribute to the joint coordination and sharing of gender and rights issues in development work in Denmark.

Today Gendernet consists of 50 member organisations, which cover a wide spectrum of thematic areas. The network builds the capacity of Danish development actors to address gender and rights by strengthening awareness and commitment, developing organisational capacity and strengthening cooperation and knowledge sharing between organisations. This is done through a range of different activities, including an up-to-date homepage, newsletters, an electronic library and training events. Additionally, Gendernet arranges public meetings and seminars, and thematic groups established under the network provide a framework for specific capacity building and knowledge sharing.

ActionAid Denmark

ActionAid Denmark (formerly Danish Association for International Cooperation or MS) is an active part of ActionAid International, a worldwide movement of people committed to end poverty together and create change and development. Poverty springs from powerlessness and lack of influence.

ActionAid Denmark seeks to fight poverty by ensuring greater political influence for the world's poor and marginalised at the local, national and international levels. ActionAid Denmark supports long-term development work, capacity building programmes and campaigns as well as exchange of experience and knowledge between people.

Danish Mission Council Development Department [DMCDD]

Danish Mission Council Development Department is an umbrella organisation for Danish churches and church based organisations partnering with other churches and NGOs in developing countries. DMCDD offers advisory, consultative,

counselling and administrative services to their members and partners. DMCDD member organisations have partners in about 40 countries, especially in Africa and Asia, as well as in Latin America and Central Asia. DMCDD's overall objective is to improve the general living conditions of the least-favoured social groups.

Danmission

Danmission is a mission and relief organization within the Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church. Danmission carries out work in the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Denmark. Danmission was created in 2000 through the merging of Danish Santalmission and The Danish Missionary Society, organizations that have worked for more than 180 years in Third World countries.

The many years of interaction with local churches and organizations are the backbone of Danmission's development work.

DanChurchAid [DCA]

Established in 1922, today DanChurchAid is one of the major Danish humanitarian Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), working with local partners, international networks, churches and non-religious civil society organisations to assist the poorest of the poor. DanChurchAid's work abroad is focused on the poorest population groups in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Central America and Central Asia & Eastern Europe. Aid is given regardless of race, creed, political or religious affiliation.

IBIS

IBIS is a Danish member-based development organisation working at global, national and local levels to create equal access to education, influence and resources for the poor and the marginalised people in Africa and Latin America. IBIS carries out work in cooperation with civil society organisations and local national authorities to overcome poverty and injustice. IBIS works within two main areas: Governance and Education.



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