

Strategy for Mainstreaming Gender and Targeting Women

The inclusion of women and gender perspective is essential in any programme that aims to transform the way the world deals with conflict. The effect of conflict and violence cannot be assumed to be the same for women and men. As social fabric is disrupted in conflict, so are gender roles: this should be taken into consideration. Gender is a relevant dimension in peace building and women, too, are essential component in implementing the outcomes of peace negotiations and rebuilding community cohesion. Women play key roles not only in conflict prevention and resolution, but also in early warning. Their position at the centre of the community during war often makes them more aware of issues at the root of the conflict and enables them to gather information regarding impending conflict. As conflicts conclude, women often hold the family and community together, becoming heads of households and community leaders. Any intervention strategy designed to transform attitudes towards conflict needs to encompass a gender perspective and develop a clear understanding of the vulnerabilities, the different needs and capacities of all sectors of society, men and women, young and old.

At SFCG, our goal is ***to shift the way women and men are engaged in conflict and conflict transformation so that they contribute more effectively in building a sustainable peace.***

Strategy

Gender mainstreaming as a strategy implies making the concerns and experiences of women and men an integral part of the identification, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes.

SFCG's approach towards gender issues has been specific in terms of targeting women as a separate group to empower them, for example with the Women's Peace Centre in Burundi; and mainstreaming gender by including women in all our activities, often in societies where women are generally excluded from participation in decision making and public discourse. In most of the countries where we work, radio is used as a tool through the various radio programming formats -roundtable discussions, debates, and radio dramas- to mainstream women's issues

Our gender strategy builds on what exists already at SFCG in terms of targeting and mainstreaming gender in our programmes and provides:

1. Trainings in gender sensitivity and gender analysis
2. Technical assistance whenever needed and requested
3. Design, monitoring and evaluation expertise on gender issues
4. Research and Development of new programmes on gender and conflict transformation

SFCG Current work with Women and gender issues

In Burundi; the Women's Peace Centre was established in January 1996, recognizing that Burundian women must be included as key players in the process of ethnic reconciliation and must have access to the tools necessary to fulfil that role. As women across the ethnic divide have had to struggle with the same hardships, addressing those needs became a natural means by which women could be brought together around common concerns and mutual interests.

The Women's Peace Centre in Burundi initiated a project of translating the family code into the vernacular, and capacity building in legal action for women in terms of personal and family rights. This project aimed to inform and ensure the respect of the family code, although it's main aim was to enlarge the debate on the issue, ensuring the debate is inclusive in terms of gender and ethnicity.

In Angola, we have an Integrated Women's programme in which we provide leadership and conflict resolution training to build the capacity of women as peacebuilders. SFCG also produces and broadcasts radio programmes on issues related to women and refugee resettlement, IDPs, violence against women etc. To ensure that gender continues to be integrated long after design, SFCG has monitored participation in activities according to gender. Additionally, social promoters are always one woman and one man to ensure formal leadership positions for women. Lastly, conflict themes are reviewed for gender content. The combined effect has resulted in SFCG not only targeting women and their concerns but also making sure that they are brought into larger venues of how communities function.

In West Africa, radio soap operas are a key way of including the voices of women. Across our radio programming, we give space to women's voices from different sectors of society, from women leaders to "ordinary" women. In Guinea, SFCG has organized exchange meetings and workshops on conflict resolution with women, and produced radio programmes to ensure the link between civil society work and media and to multiply impact. Woman is a radio programme by and for Liberian women. This programme has featured discussions and debates on such topics as the role of women in the 2005 elections; health issues including HIV/AIDS and abortion (and the effects on the family), and the involvement of women in the reintegration of child soldiers. Another example is Unity Boat; a radio drama that has tackled issues such as women's inheritance rights, girl child education, corruption, trafficking, and gender-based violence

In Indonesia, our Women Transforming Conflict Programme began in 2002 and focuses on working with women and youth groups. We have successfully integrated gender into all programmes, ensuring input on the content to reflect gender issues in the comic books and the Community programme, and in the scripts of the radio programme Menteng Pakalan. A staff member focusing on gender has enabled the team to become more aware of the gender implications of conflict and avoid sending out overtly masculine messages.

In Macedonia, we take gender into consideration in all our projects, and as specific subject matter in the TV or Journal series. SFCG also uses print media such as news bulletins to engage women in the political process. For example, we did a year long series of newspaper with four women reporters from four media outlets, and four ethnic groups, who worked exclusively on women's issues.