

## **Gender? Whoops!**

### **Report of Partos Meet Up for Strategic Partnerships, in cooperation with Wo=Men.**

How gender sensitive are the Strategic Partnerships? There is a strong will to work on gender but how successful are we? The MTR-reports are not explicit about it, according to Jelmer Kamstra (DSO/MO) who presented the findings of a review that was made of all MTR-reports at the Linking & Learning Days in February. What can we learn from the experiences so far within the Strategic Partnerships? How can we do better? These were the questions that were addressed during a next learning and networking meet up organized by Partos. With more than 60 participants it was clear that the topic is a concern shared by many.

The meeting was facilitated by Marlou Geurtz (Red Cross Netherlands). She opened by saying that attention for gender will remain important and referred to recent statements by Thierry Baudet (a young right wing populist politician in Dutch parliament) about women being inferior to men.

In her introduction on the topic, Laila Ait Baali (Wo=Men) started by saying that both a gender specific approach, focusing on women's rights, and a gender mainstreaming approach in both program and organization, are important approaches, and that both need strengthening. We should be careful with the instrumental approach to gender, that sees gender as an opportunity to make programs and policies more effective, as it assumes untapped female potentials while homogenizing existing differences between various groups of women. A rights based approach with attention for intersectionality has the preference.

Clear is that to do better we need to (re-)invest in gender capacity. A lot of expertise got lost because of the budget costs of recent times.

Cordaid, one of the members of the gender knowledge platform Wo=Men, developed a tool to monitor progress on gender in lobby & advocacy trajectories: the Cordaid Barometer. Anne Kwakkenbos of Cordaid shortly introduced the Barometer.

The rest of the meeting was organized around two presentations (Capacity Building and Gender Mainstreaming), followed by work in group sessions and a market place where gender tools could be shared.

### **Gender and Capacity Building**

How to bring gender policies in practice? Why is it so difficult to report on gender? Those are the two main questions that were addressed in the presentations by Emma Feenstra van Solidaridad and Joky Francois of the Rainforest Alliance.

Since gender as a theme was introduced to Solidaridad three strategies were followed to build the necessary capacities. Firstly, work was done internally to address personal bias and develop an inclusive organizational culture. Secondly, time was spent to build understanding and support for Solidaridad's gender strategy. The strategy is based on the ABC-approach: analyzing barriers - balancing power relations - creating togetherness. Thirdly, the necessary resources were made available to bring the gender lens into practice. An online knowledge platform was developed and a global task force was installed with the task to integrate gender in all Solidaridad's work. Finally, gender was integrated in the internal management system, policy and processes (HR, PMEL).

Joky stressed the importance of a participatory approach when developing a gender strategy to ensure people feel ownership of it. An important focus of RA's gender strategy is awareness raising

and capacity building of concepts, gender in value chain and tools of the own staff and SP partner organizations in order to get more impact on the ground. Also the formation of a support structure through gender contact persons per department and region is important. At the moment, Rainforest Alliance is implementing a gender scan, a participatory self-assessment tool to measure the state of art of the organization itself with regards to gender (procedures, knowledge, communication, way of working)

### **Gender mainstreaming**

Bart Weijs (Care The Netherlands) and Carmen Reinoso (Oxfam Novib) spoke about Gender Mainstreaming. To work effectively on gender you need to integrate it well into your theory of change. Carmen also addressed the importance of making a distinction between equality and equity and the importance of an intersectional approach. Here she referred to the Gender Integration Framework (GIF) developed by Interaction as a useful tool.

Bart explained how difficult it is to implement gender mainstreaming strategies. When it is not made explicit you easily lose sight of it. For organisations working in a global partnership there are additional challenges: different teams in different countries use other tools which makes it difficult to monitor and report progress. To address this Care works with a gender marker, to measure the difference per country and bring it together in a coherent document.

Carmen discussed important factors of success of gender mainstreaming strategies: extra allocated resources, technical expertise and the political will. From the #metoo affairs we learned to pay attention to the organizational culture and issues of integrity ('walk the talk'). Oxfam developed for this an e-learning module. Remaining challenges to us all are a too instrumental approach to gender and a lack of clarity of what mainstreaming actually means; what are its aims, and who is responsible.

### **Main takeaways from the Workshops**

Organizational culture: Walk the talk

- It is important to have the right procedures in place, attitude and knowledge to ensure a gender sensitive organization, still this is a huge undertaking and should be done step wise and according to the context in which an organization is working (e.g. an organization working on how to address gender based violence should ensure that all staff has a basic knowledge about that and that grievance mechanisms and remediation procedures are in place in the organization itself)
- The process could be started by an assessment of the situation regarding gender and on the basis of the outcomes, context and possibilities of the organization prioritize outcomes and make a strategy/plan to achieve those outcomes
- It is important to define clear indicators that help to monitor progress on the plan and to share the results with the rest of the staff
- Involve whole staff in the process to create ownership and stimulate learning process

Tooling

- It is important that tools and strategies for gender mainstreaming are evidence-based and created through participatory processes and shared ownership, where dialogue and co-creation should be leading.

- Centrally developed tools and strategies for gender mainstreaming can create a common ground and/or baseline, that can be altered to different contexts. However, they should always be the result of gender analysis from different contexts.

#### Gender sensitive lobby and advocacy

- Go beyond the binary and start with a coherent narrative based on human rights approach instead of an instrumentalist approach
- Invest in gender experts, knowledge. Especially on key positions within organisations for example M&E, Leadership positions.
- Include gender outcomes within the ToC. Make a ToC based on power relations and how it affects gender norms.

#### **Reflections on the future**

After a plenary presentation of the outcomes of the workshops Anke van Dam, gender expert of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and presently busy writing the new D&D policy framework, reflected on the way gender was addressed in the Inception reports, the midterm review and the annual reports. On the basis of that she formulated the following recommendations, especially valuable for the new strategic partnerships programs that will be developed this and next year:

- Make gender as well as inclusion part of your context- and power analysis.
- Treat women not as a homogenous group but pay attention to intersectionality.
- Don't look at women only, but also to other gender identities.
- Integrate attention for gender in your program approach, and explain what you aim for with the mainstreaming of gender.
- Include gender in the budget of your program.
- Develop gender indicators but look not only at quantitative but also at qualitative indicators.