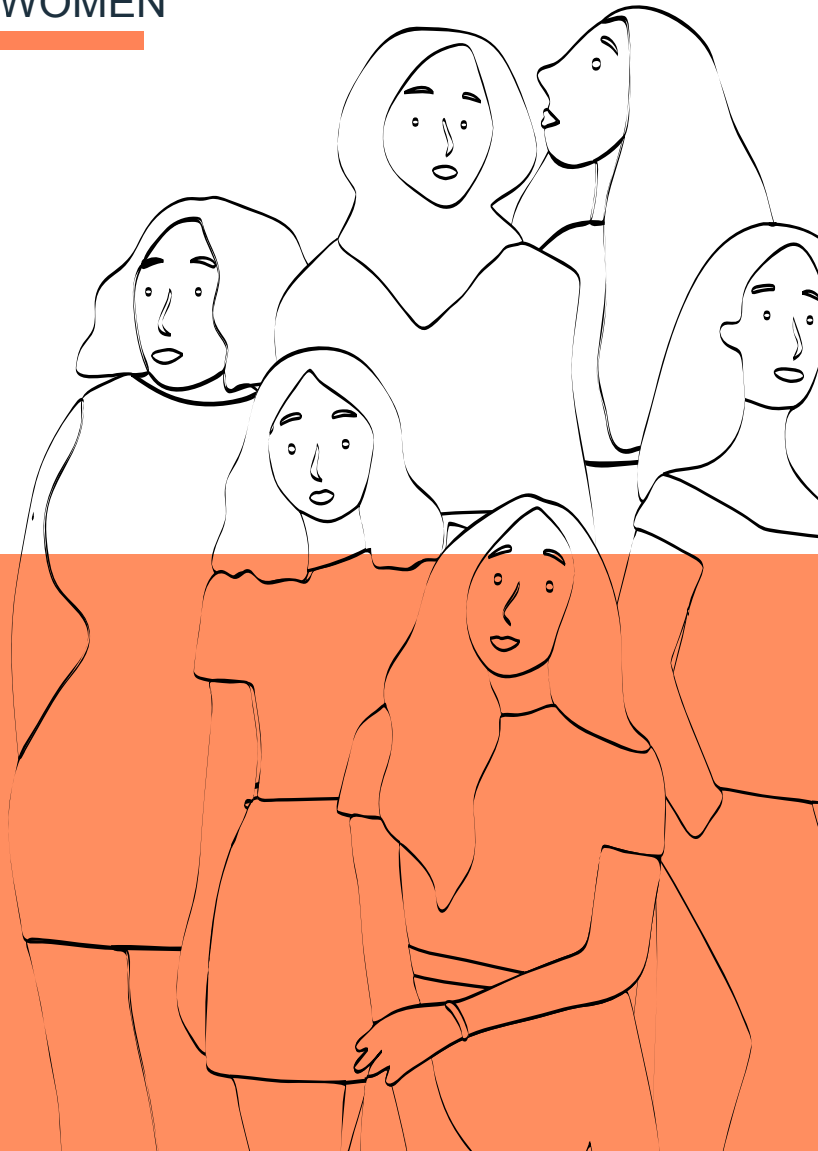


MODULE 2:

FEMALE LEADERSHIP AMONGST LOCALLY ELECTED WOMEN



Outline

User's guide:

- Objectives
- Expected results
- Principles & Methods of Work
- Duration

1. Women in Politics in the Regional Context

2. Gender & Gender Equality

3. Women empowerment

4. Leadership and Decision Making

5. Skills and Techniques

- Communication skills
- Negotiation & conflict resolution skills
- Advocacy

User's Guide:

1. Objectives

- Enhance the capacities of women leaders at local levels on how to maintain their leadership.
- To exchange information on how gender equality is stipulated in the constitution and laws and considered within the political parties' programs of each country.
- To discuss strategies for further integrating gender equality into laws and political parties.
- To further strengthen the networking among women's groups and politicians in the region and with Europe.

2. Expected Results

- Women leaders are aware of leadership techniques, gender approaches and communication skills.
- Women leaders will have the capacities to act as advocates for local issues
- Women leaders will learn the appropriate communication skills related to the field of leadership.

3. Principles & Methods of Work

- Participatory approach.
- Sharing knowledge, good practices and lessons learnt.
- Learning by doing.
- Building consensus.
- Presentation, brainstorming, discussion.
- Documentaries, role play.
- Working groups.

4. Duration: 3-4 days

1. Women in Politics in the Regional Context

The participation of women in politics and decision-making is one of the central areas of focus of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), reaffirmed in 2000 by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) through Goal #3 «Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women» and its target 3.3. «Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament.» At the Arab Summit held in Tunis in May 2004, Arab State leaders expressed their commitment to “...widening women’s participation in the political, economic, social, cultural and educational fields and reinforcing their rights and status in society.» Commitments as made in the Beijing Platform had two goals: #1: «take measures to ensure women’s access to and full participation in power structures and decision making» and #2: «increase women’s capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership.»

Regional and national analysis reports were conducted and discussed in the context of the European Gender Equality Program (EGEP), which focuses primarily on women’s human rights and gender equality in the southern Mediterranean region. The findings are indicative of the situation of women in most Arab countries. In these reports, great emphasis is placed on legislation and legal reform so as to align national legislation with national commitments; on actively continuing the fight against gender based violence (GVB) by primarily changing public perceptions and training service-deliverers to deal with the issue accordingly; and finally, emphasis is also placed on strengthening women’s participation in public life and ensuring their access to decision-making. All countries focus on the application of equal treatment towards women in legislation, consequently according them the status of full citizens able to participate in their societies in every respect.

Equality before the law pertains to issues of women being considered legal minors, personal status codes, increased political participation and decision-making, etc. Attention must be accorded to the implementation of laws by enforcing them nationally with the development of monitoring organizations and ensuring their accordance with international principles such as those of CEDAW and values added by the Istanbul Process (Euromed common framework of action).

It must be recognized that the Arab region is witnessing significant activity relating to women and development in general. Firstly, Arab governments are regionally and internationally devoted to maintaining their commitments to the Millennium Development Goals and the recommendations of the Cairo Conference on Population and Development. Secondly, regional and international institutions are advocating for women's empowerment and capacity building through clear strategies and are competing for achieving the set objectives at the governmental and non-governmental levels.

Exercises

2. Gender & Gender Equality

The term 'gender' is not used to distinguish male from female in a biological sense. Rather, it is a term used to describe a person's social identity formed by societal expectations that determine the way people behave. In each culture and each period in history, gendered identities influence the way either a man or woman behaves based on what is known and believed to be natural for them. This impacts the way people dress, speak, think and react.

That each gender's roles are socially expected to be different is

determinant of the existence of gender inequality in most societies. Facts indicate that men and women do not enjoy the same social, economic and political rights and opportunities in the majority of nations. For this reason, gender equality must be implemented as a recognizable priority in all regions of the world. This is an effort that entails changes in attitudes, social institutions and private sector practices and it is not only the responsibility of governments, but also of individuals, communities, and non-governmental organizations.

«One concern is to strengthen the legitimacy of gender equality as a fundamental value that should be reflected in development choices and institutional practices. When gender equality is recognized as a strategic objective of development, gender equality goals influence broad economic and social policies and the programmes that deliver major resources.» Quoted from: J. Schalkwyk, H. Thomas and B. Woroniuk, *Mainstreaming: A Strategy for Achieving Equality between Women and Men*.

One of the principal ways gender inequality manifests itself in the region is the existence of patriarchal social structures and institutions that are supported and reinforced by value-systems and cultural rules that proliferate the notion of women's inferiority. Patriarchy leads the common belief that women are inferior to men, that they must accept and embrace the roles assigned to them by their culture, and that they are not allowed to benefit from the resources and opportunities available to men, limiting their ability to participate in the society to which they belong. This has immediate repercussions on the exclusion and marginalization of women from social, economic and political processes.

Gender equality requires transformation of the structures and sys

tems that are at the root of women's subordination and gender inequality in addition to the transformation of the condition of women in their respective societies. These transformations cannot be induced by external interventions only; women must themselves become active agents of change.

Exercises

3. Women Empowerment

Gender equality demands women's empowerment, a process that leads to greater participation in social and political processes, greater decision-making power and to conscious action for social transformation.

The process of empowerment encompasses women's multiple roles and interests, and addresses the inter-relationships between them, leading to women gaining greater control over their own lives. Empowerment thus has many dimensions.

- Building a critical understanding of the causes and processes of disempowerment.
- Enhancing self-esteem and altering self-image.
- Gaining increased access to natural, financial and intellectual resources.
- Acquiring the confidence, knowledge, information and skills to understand and intervene in social, economic and political structures and processes.
- Increasing participation in and control of decision-making processes within and outside the family and community.

- Moving into new roles and spaces, which were hitherto seen as exclusively male domains.
- Coming together to question, challenge and change unjust and iniquitous beliefs, practices, structures and institutions, which perpetuate gender inequality.

The process of women's empowerment challenges the basic assumptions, which govern age-old social institutions, systems and values. It is, therefore, inevitable that it should encounter resistance from existing power structures. It is easier for collectives of women, rather than individual women, to take the process of empowerment forward in the face of this resistance.

Extract from: Gender and Development Programme, United Nations Development Programme (GIDP/UNDP): UNDP Learning and Information Pack -- Gender Mainstreaming, June 2000.

Furthermore, it must be recognized that empowerment comes in various forms. Most notably, development agencies deal with economic empowerment, educational empowerment and political empowerment. Women make up the majority of the population living in poverty due to discrimination in the economic sphere and labor market. Women also constitute a large percent of illiterate adults, either for never having received an education, or for having to drop out of school early, which can be due to a variety of reasons, including early marriage. Finally, despite an increase in the number of women holding positions in government agencies, significant challenges stand in the way of women's full and equal participation in senior decision-making positions. These include, but are not limited to, existing negative stereotypes about women's leadership roles, lack of commitment by political parties, inadequate funding

and training for women candidates and government officials, and high levels of violence and intimidation against women in public office.

Exercises

4. Leadership and decision making

Leadership is critical in generating the motivation, will and skill set amongst people working to accomplish an objective. Leadership can be individual or collective. Passion and commitment are at the core of a leader's intentions for action. Leadership is often learned, consisting of certain skills and a genuine desire to lead and make the process of achieving a goal coherent and cohesive. A leader must often recognize that it takes time to create real and lasting change. In most societies, leadership is associated with male figures.

Attitudes towards women's leadership must change. Women themselves must challenge their own perceptions about their suitability for leadership. An alternative framework for women's leadership must also be conceptualized. This can include responsible use of power, challenging existing corruption and promoting a culture of peace and non-violence.

Women must be encouraged to take up leadership roles and to participate in decision-making. They must also believe that they are able to. Women cannot do this alone. Their empowerment entails a shift in societal beliefs and advocacy for what they deserve. Targeted training should be provided to women who want to assume

positions of leadership. Enabling more women to influence decision-making processes might allow for the transformation of the models of leadership, making them more gender-responsive.

Exercises

5. Skills and techniques

- *COMMUNICATION SKILLS*

Communication is generally defined as a two-way process which allows an exchange of ideas, points of view, information, experiences, feelings, positions and inquiry.

Although it is interpreted as social interaction between at least two interacting agents, communication can also be considered a process of information transmission, especially in the field of institutional communication where the feed back is required, but not necessarily delivered instantaneously or verbally.

There are many types of communication: verbal, non verbal, visual, graphic, and scientific. The form in which it is produced depends on the willingness, abilities, competencies, timeline and resources of the part communicating.

Communication skills, even the most basic skills of speaking and listening, are crucial. They are the root of identifying and understanding any problem, as well at the root of resolving a problem or conflict. Utilizing one's communication skills facilitates the ability to act appropriately in a given situation, the ability to manage emotions, feel empathy when needed, resolve issues, coordinate solutions and negotiate. The ability to communicate effectively is key in the implementaion of change.

Rapid changes in technology and in the way people exchange information have implications for communication. New channels of communication such as the worldwide web have significantly influenced the way people receive information and the pace at which they receive it. Communication through any channel of mass media guarantees a wider audience and can certainly help in the precipitation of spreading the message of the importance of issues such as gender equality and women empowerment. It can also serve as an appropriate conduit through which women themselves can spread their voice and prove their ability to advocate and demonstrate leadership.

- *NEGOTIATION & CONFLICT RESOLUTION SKILLS*

Negotiation is communicating for the purposes of getting a joint decision, one that can be congruently agreed upon by both sides. It is the process of getting what you want from others by giving others what they want, and takes place in any situation or meeting where interests are in conflict.

- *ADVOCACY*

Advocacy is the practice through which all people can make their voices heard-not just specific advocacy organizations or policy makers. Advocacy is speaking up for, or acting on behalf of, yourself or another person.

There exist a large number of advocacy institutions for women and girls. They are individuals, governmental and non-governmental organizations, media outlets, volunteer groups, lawyers, etc. These institutions help educate women on their rights, their responsibi

lities, their capacities, their resources, and their worth, amongst other aspects. In most cases, women need these groups who advocate for them, as they often don't have the means to speak up for themselves.

Advocacy can enable people to take more responsibility and control for the decisions, which affect their lives.

The practice of advocacy can include many activities that a person or organization undertakes including media campaigns, public speaking, commissioning and publishing research or poll. Of course, these actions can vary depending on the political, economic and social environment in which they are conducted.

Exercises



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