CLUB DE MADRID

SHARED SOCIETIES PROJECT

WOMEN AGENTS OF CHANGE IN BUILDING SHARED SOCIETIES:

Overcoming double discrimination in divided societies

OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF WORKING GROUP MEETING

1-2 October 2013

The Working Group on Women Agents of Change in Building Shared Societies[1] met in Madrid on 1-2 October and discussed the issues widely. Their discussion was assisted and informed by a briefing paper[2] which was prepared by Mari Fitzduff, member of the Shared Societies Expert Advisory Group and Professor of Co-existence at Brandeis University. It was also helped by the Recommendations of the Forum on Minority issues at its Fourth Session: Guaranteeing the rights of minority women and girls (29 and 30 November 2011)[3]. The independent expert who guided the Forum, Rita Izsák also attended the working group.

Sadig Al-Mahdi, former Prime Minister of Sudan and Member of the Club de Madrid, had organised a meeting in Khartoum in association with Ahfad University to discuss the topic in preparation for the Working Group meeting. Unfortunately at short notice Prime Minister Al-Mahdi was not able to leave his country but the outcome of the meeting, the Ahfad Declaration[4] was available and offered insights to the members of the Group. **Chandrika Kumaratunga**, former President of Sri Lanka chaired the working group meeting and shared her personal experience and insights.

References were made to other statements and declarations which have been promulgated and promoted in the last decades like the Beijing Platform for Action, the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen.

The following are conclusions on which there was broad consensus. The group felt it was more important to list the points of agreements and recommendations than a longer descriptive report of the discussions.

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[1] See Appendix 1 for members of Working Group
[2] http://www.clubmadrid.org/img/secciones/Briefing_paper_Women_and_SSP_WG.pdf
[3] http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G12/100/05/PDF/G1210005.pdf?OpenElement
[4] http://www.clubmadrid.org/img/secciones/SSP_women_Ahfad_Declaration.pdf

CONTEXT

Women are differentially and negatively impacted upon compared to men by tensions related to identity - the greater the tension the greater the negative impact. Women in the weaker and more disadvantaged sections of society face greater difficulties and as such are doubly discriminated against – by their gender and their identity group – but women from more powerful identity groups may also be disadvantaged by the inter-group tension.

Some women also face other forms of disadvantage on grounds of disability, age, isolated location, etc. This can be termed "multiple discrimination".

It is therefore important to identify the challenges faced by women in these circumstances and the processes and dynamics involved, and take steps to deal with them. In spite of the difficulties they face, women can often play a key role in this process and in doing so contribute to overcoming intergroup tensions and the disempowerment of women. They have particular strengths and opportunities which are often underutilised.

CURRENT CONSENSUS

It is widely acknowledged that it is both right and helpful to increase the ability of women, particularly from disadvantaged communities, to participate in the development of Shared Societies.

There are a number of process and outcomes which are presumed to be desirable, but they are not well articulated. They include:

- Individuals and groups should have opportunities to fulfil the aspirations
- There must be greater respect for the personal dignity of women from all sections of society and support for their human rights
- There must be opportunities to contribute fully to political, social, cultural and economic life
- Government services and provision should respond to the needs of all women regardless of identity, values and concerns which may mean they need to be provided in different ways to different identity groups

However:

The members of the working group were very aware that progress is frustratingly slow. For example, the poorest are disproportionally found in specific identity groups and within those groups women often carry the heaviest burden, while other groups are much more affluent.

WHY?

The working group considered why this is the case and a number of factors were identified, some related to generally entrenched attitudes to gender and others more directly related to ethnic relations:

- Inertia and lack of political will
- Misogyny and male prejudice
- Existing political culture
- Lack of power and influence to change the male-oriented, sectarian social and political norms, which have often been transmitted from one generation to the next
- Segregation
- Fear and a sense of threat from those who are different leads to hostility
- Harmful traditional practices
- In polarised political cultures the status quo becomes more entrenched and inflexible
    - Challenging traditional gender roles and practices are seen as undermining the community
    - The space to animate for change becomes squeezed.
- The challenge of modernity creates a similar dynamic

THEREFORE:

It is important:

- to focus on underlying dynamics, the process and processes at work,
- to change those dynamics, and
- to locate leadership levels and niches, local and national, where change can happen.

WHAT IS NEEDED?

- Recognition that situations of social tension and intergroup polarisation create opportunities because:
    - Existing system and established (often male) political actors become immobilized
    - New (female) leadership can reach out (often unnoticed) in new ways and initiative change
    - But often at a personal and family cost: taking action and speaking out can break the bonds with one's own community without being fully accepted by other communities
- Partnerships between civil society and decision makers.
- A holistic and integrated perspective
- Mainstreaming of practices and achievement developed and tested in specific situations
- Awareness raising through:
    - Dialogue within and between stakeholders
    - Education, formal and informal
    - More informed and sensitive media coverage
    - Articulating and owning agendas for change
- Renaming and reframing challenges
    - for example, inclusion is in everyone's interests
- Behaviour change (which often precedes attitude change) by

    o   Establishing expectations and standards across gender and identity boundaries

    o   Setting explicit but not exclusive targets

    o   Assessing impact on desirable outcomes of current policies and practices

    o   Audits of progress country by country (possibly naming and shaming poor practice)

HOW?

- Reinforce the importance of existing declarations and statements on the rights of minorities and the rights of women
- Increase the ability of women from disadvantaged communities to participate in the development of Shared Societies
- Increase the ability of societies to engage women, especially from disadvantaged and marginalised identity groups, in the development of shared societies' visions and goals for their society
- Stimulate women to engage and participate politically, culturally, socially and economically in the inter-community issues in their environment
- Provide support to those who do engage by creating networks, peer support and mentoring
- Take affirmative action
- Promote examples of change and transformation across gender and identity boundaries
- Operate in parallel at different levels: with dominant and disadvantaged communities and with leaders and local communities
- Implement pilot activities
- Identify donors supportive to such process-oriented initiatives and ensure continuity of financial support
- Adopt innovative approaches to funding

NEXT STEPS

The working group then identified possible next steps which would contribute to the translation of the ideas that were discussed into societies that were more social inclusive and truly shared both in terms of gender and identity. Many actions were proposed which are included in appendix 2. They were grouped into ten themes, most of which resonate with the Shared Societies Commitments:

1. Collection of data disaggregated in terms of gender and identity
2. Processes of participation and institutionalizing of those processes
3. Preparing and supporting women in participating
4. Ensuring implementation of basic government obligations and donor services
5. Providing security
6. Creating indicators of success
7. Raising awareness and communication
8. Ensuing the economic empowerment of women from disadvantaged groups
9. Ensure sustainability of initiatives
10. Strengthen resilience of women from disadvantaged communities to assist with the overall resilience of the community

PILOT ACTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

The working group recognised that the agenda that it was creating was very comprehensive which makes it's achievement a daunting challenge. The members therefore proposed a series of immediate actions and pilot activities which would build towards the overall transformation processes that are needed.

- Highlight the need for disaggregated data, especially in the context of the Post 2015 process and the creation of new Sustainable Development Goals.
- Promote legally binding mechanisms, at state level, for the participation by women from disadvantaged communities
- Call for the creation of meetings between community members and leaders from disadvantaged communities
- Develop pilot partnerships between local women from disadvantaged communities, national organisations working with them and policymakers
- Bring together women leaders from marginalised communities (NGO members, community leaders, elected and appointed leaders) and create networks (including supportive men) to explore, communicate and engage with the concepts of the Shared Societies Project.
- Call on governments to locate responsibility and accountability for improving the situation of women in disadvantaged and marginalised communities (e.g. a ministry for intergroup relations and equal rights for all)
- Ensure this perspective is incorporated in the Post-2015 Development Agenda (targeting double discrimination and recognising the role of women as agents of change in such situations)
- Call for the creation of inter-identity group forums (with full participation by women) at local and national level, independent of, but supported by government, including their active participation
- Meet with and engage on these themes with women parliamentarians and leaders from disadvantaged identity groups during all missions in specific countries
- Meet with potential donors (ACP, EU, World Bank, etc) and explore how they can be supportive and relevant
- Produce a guidebook of good practices and/or include examples in a website
- Gender-proof existing Shared Societies Project materials

These proposals were mainly directed at the Club de Madrid but are by no means only applicable to the Club de Madrid. The Shared Societies Project will work to implement some of these ideas but it will require other agencies and organisations to share some of the responsibility in order to create Shared Societies in which women play their full and rightful role.

APPENDIX 1
MEMBERS OF THE WORKING GROUP ON
WOMEN AGENTS OF CHANGE IN BUILDING SHARED SOCIETIES

- Maria Elena **Agüero** - Deputy Secretary General, Club de Madrid

- Hajar **Al-Kuhtany** - International Forum for Islamic Dialogue

- Rubén **Campos** - Programs Coordinator, Club de Madrid

- Sean **Carroll** - Senior Director at Creative Associates; and member of the Expert Advisory Panel of the Club de Madrid's Shared Societies Project.

- Carla **Fernández-Durán -** Program Officer, Shared Societies Project, Club de Madrid

- Mari **Fitzduff** - Director and Professor of the Master's Program in Coexistence and Conflict at Brandeis College, and member of the Expert Advisory Panel of the Club de Madrid's Shared Societies Project

- Kinga **Göncz** - member of the European Parliament; and member of the Network of Political Leaders United for Shared Societies (NetPLUSS)

- Kristin **Haffert** - Haffert Global

- Rita **Izsák** - UN Independent Expert on Minority Issues, Human Rights Council

- Sir John **Kaputin** - Former Secretary General of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States; and member of the Network of Political Leaders United for Shared Societies (NetPLUSS)

- H.E Chandrika **Kumaratunga** - Former President of Sri Lanka and Member of the Club de Madrid

- Clem **McCartney**- Policy and Content Coordinator, Shared Societies Project, Club de Madrid

- Beatriz **Merino** - former Prime Minister of Peru; former Ombudswoman of Peru; and member of the Network of Political Leaders United for Shared Societies (NetPLUSS)

- Sarifa **Moola** - Social Activist, South Africa; and member of the Expert Advisory Panel of the Club de Madrid's Shared Societies Project

- Baroness Nuala **O'Loan** - Member of the UK House of Lords and former Police Ombudsman of Northern Ireland; and member of the Network of Political Leaders United for Shared Societies (NetPLUSS)

- Sarah **Silver** - Executive Director, Alan B. Slifka Foundation

- Sergei **Zelenev** - Executive Director, International Council on Social Welfare and member of the Expert Advisory Panel of the Club de Madrid's Shared Societies Project

- Carlos **Westendorp** - Secretary General, Club de Madrid

APPENDIX 2
POSSIBLE ACTIONS TO FACILITATE WOMEN AS AGENTS OF CHANGE
IN BUILDING SHARED SOCIETIES

Categories	Recommendations
1. Data	- Identify needs of significant marginalized and disadvantaged identity groups - Identify groups geographically and racially disadvantaged - Survey data using existing surveys and indices to collect disaggregated data on disadvantaged identity groups - Survey Collate data of minority women politicians in elected or appointed office
2. Participation/institutionalization of processes	- Explicitly seek support from women minority leaders for Shared Societies' initiatives - Enable parliamentarians to raise minority issues - Working at the city and local level and engage political leaders to involve community leaders - Establish legally binding structures for dialogue with public authorities and representation - Give women a right to be involved in decision making in the local level - Identify opportunities for effective affirmative action to overcome disadvantages - Create consultative institutions for development planning and review of implementation, with representation for all groups and government institutions
3. Preparing and supporting women to participate	- Provide funding for leadership development and confidence building among women from disadvantaged and marginalized groups - Create a support platform for women in leadership to build their capacities (psychological and personal) - Implement programs to prepare women from disadvantaged and marginalized groups for public and media positions Play a convening role for women from disadvantaged and marginalized groups to provide a platform for sharing and raising their profile

4. Provision of basic government obligations and donor services	- Enforce effectively existing social and economic rights as a basis for social progress. - Require adequate finance public services at the community level - Provide Ensure women and girls from disadvantaged and marginalized groups have equal access to literacy, education and employment skills
5. Security	- Create programs fighting the multiple forms of discrimination and poverty experienced indigenous women - Ensure human and physical Security
6. Indicators of success	- Develop indicators which will show the achievements of policy initiatives
7. Awareness raising and communication	- Raise awareness of the oppressive and discriminatory nature of certain practice pursued in the name of cultural traditions - Raise funders awareness of opportunities to support organizations - Raise media profiles of minority women - Use positive examples of women coming together from different communities into politics - Raise awareness of access to social protection and promote well being by protecting from vulnerability and deprivation - Highlight the importance of fighting violence against women in minority communities. - Education for Shared Societies: promoting a vision for Shared Societies
8. Economic empowerment of minority women	- Investing into economic empowerment by providing skills training, credit, land and other requirements
9. Sustainability	- Continuity and sustainability of the projects
10. Resilience	- Building/investing in resilience