

A faint, stylized illustration of a balance scale is positioned on the left side of the page, behind the main title. The scale has two pans hanging from a horizontal beam, and a vertical post supports the beam from below.

Women Can Do It
– an evaluation of the WCDI
programme in the Western Balkans

Executive Summary

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The Women Can Do It (WCDI) idea and concept was originally established within the Norwegian Labour Party Women's Movement (NLPW) in the 1980s, but has later been introduced in several countries all over the world. Since 2001 the Norwegian People's Aid has co-ordinated a WCDI programme in co-operation with the NLPW and local partner organisations from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Kosovo province, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.

The programme

Aims: Each WCDI seminar has a twofold objective. It aims at raising awareness about gender inequality *and* creating the capacity to change the situation. As a training programme, WCDI has the immediate objective of increasing political skills and motivation among women to take on responsibilities and decision-making positions in public and political life. The long-term objective is a society where women's influence is increased.

Target groups: The WCDI programme in the Western Balkans aims at covering all districts of the countries and territories involved. The focus is on smaller towns and relatively peripheral areas. The programme is expected to have a larger impact in such areas, since seminars and similar activities take place less frequently in remote areas.

The programme targets women who are already active or who could potentially become active in public life. In bigger towns, participants tend to come from Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and local political parties, in rural areas from the health and social care sectors, schools and local administration.

The programme's four steps: The annual programme cycle has four core elements. *Training-for-trainers* is the first step. Two-day *local seminars* constitute the basic activity of the programme. During the seminar participants learn about and are familiarised with the gender equality status in their own country: statistics and relevant legislation as well as international conventions. Moreover, participants are trained in giving speeches, coping with domineering techniques, solving problems in a creative way, managing stress and defeat, campaigning and networking. After finishing the seminar, participants may carry out *a local action* planned by the participants themselves. This way they immediately get a chance to practice new skills. Every year an *evaluation seminar* takes place.

Actors and division of labour: The Stability Pact Gender Task Force (SPGTF) first introduced WCDI to the region in 1999. The SPGTF and the Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) have divided the labour involved in staging the seminars between themselves in order to complement each other and avoid duplication. The NPA is more oriented towards resource persons at local and grass roots levels. The SPGTF focuses more on national advocacy campaigns, gender equality institutions and building partnerships between women in NGO's, trade unions and political parties, as well as in local self-governments, national assemblies and governments.

Since 2002, local partners (women's groups) have been the main actors within the programme, thus carrying the main responsibility for the seminars. As of 2005 there are 16 partner organisations altogether. Local organisers and trainers co-operate during the planning of the seminars. The NPA co-ordinates the programme on a regional basis ensuring that activities are carried out according to plans. The NPA is responsible for reporting to the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The NLPW has contributed with expertise and experience, particularly in the initial phase of training trainers, but also later as supervisors.

Conclusions

The scope: One of the programme's main achievements is its ability to reach a large number of women. Altogether 7,888 women (and some men) have taken part in the seminar. No less than 227 trainers have been educated in the period 2001-2004, thus constituting a pool of skilled seminar leaders.

The quality of the seminars: In the seminars gender equality issues are presented in a simple way, and the skills taught are down-to-earth and practical. An overwhelming percentage of respondents in the survey as well as among the interviewees are very satisfied with the seminars. They report that the knowledge and skills gained in the seminars are useful in everyday life.

Adaptation of the seminars: Through internal evaluations, experiences have been identified and analysed. Because of this, the programme has been amended and improved.

Institutional sustainability: The WCDI partner organisations have the skills and organisational apparatus needed to run a WCDI programme on their own. This is due to several factors: a) partner organisations were selected on the basis of the programme co-ordinator's extensive knowledge of the groups' prior performance; b) at an early stage of the programme (in 2002) the partner organisations were highlighted as the operative actor; c) the NPA has applied a flexible approach to the programme, which has made local partner organisations look upon WCDI as *their* instrument; d) organisations that have been acquainted with WCDI have integrated it into their own activities (e.g. some political parties make use of WCDI as in-house training); e) the programme's regional profile makes partner organisations less prone to feeling isolated and giving up if they encounter problems; f) close to 230 trainers have been educated; g) local partners are well connected to the relevant authorities and the international community present in the region; h) WCDI is relatively simple and easily adaptable, and can be distributed independently by small, locally-based women's groups without major difficulties.

Co-operation with gender equality agents at international, national and local level: Overall, the WCDI programme is well linked to the processes of strengthening gender equality in the region, which is the result of an intense interplay between supra-national/international organisations, central state agencies, local authorities and non-governmental actors. In many cases, seminar participants keep in touch and function as local support groups for initiatives and legislation in favour of gender equality, through the WCDI local actions and in other ways.

Regional Western Balkan and reconciliatory perspective: The programme links gender equality activists from all six countries/territories of the region and contributes to the exchange of experiences. Programme activities are inter-ethnic. In addition, they cross the otherwise sharp dividing line between political blocs in each country. The approach, which reaches across political party lines as well as state and ethnic boundaries, contributes to the much-needed reconciliation in the region.

Overall, the Evaluation Team found a well-functioning WCDI Programme. The immediate development objective of increasing skills and motivation among a substantial number of women has been reached. Moreover, the programme activities have strengthened women's organisations and underpinned the work done for gender equality in general. This way, the programme lays the foundation for reaching the long-term goal of more women influence in politics and public life. Nevertheless, the Evaluation Team has identified programme activities that should be improved.

Recommendations

WCDI in the Western Balkans still needs external assistance financially. In order to secure continuation of the programme, financial support should be assured for some time. During this time, NPA's partner organisations must prove their ability to develop and implement a strategy for financial sustainability. Likewise, the NPA should perform an analysis and create a strategy for reducing its direct involvement in WCDI in the region. An important task of the NPA will be to uphold the regional-level WCDI network. The NLPW has successfully transferred skills in how to carry out WCDI seminars. Given the organisational and analytical capacities of the involved organisations, seminar organisers and trainers, the NLPW is not needed in the next phase of the programme.

The Norwegian support to WCDI should be limited to the basic WCDI seminars in local communities. These seminars should emphasise policy contents in addition to general awareness-raising and female representation in decision-making bodies. On the other hand, the seminars should not be too compact. Therefore, the future seminars should consist of modules. Not all modules need to be included in all seminars. However, all seminars should aim at carrying out a local action. In order to maintain links and uphold networks, follow-up seminars should be arranged after two years. Including male participants in the seminar activities should not be made an objective, but could be done when local WCDI actors find it conducive to the overall programme objectives.

The programme's output and result factors are not clearly distinguished and indicators are not quantified. This makes it difficult to use indicators for monitoring and evaluation. Therefore, the success indicators should be made more directly linked to programme performance.

The WCDI concept could be replicated in other regions of the world, and not necessarily in post-conflict areas. In case of replication an explicit phasing-out strategy should be made at the outset. Moreover, the role of the NLPW should be to supervise and train trainers during a two-year period. In order to prepare for financial sustainability, all payments and remunerations to local partners and helpers should be adapted to real-life price levels in the country in question. In case a WCDI programme is initiated in a new country or region, experienced trainers from the Western Balkans should be involved as trainers-of-trainers and supervisors.

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