



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
29 November 2012

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women

Fifty-seventh session

4-15 March 2013

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”: implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

Statement submitted by To Love Children Educational Foundation International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.



Statement

Cross-sector collaboration with civil society

Although many socioeconomic issues necessitate the education of public officials, owing to the global focus by the United Nations on HIV/AIDS prevention, educational training of local actors on HIV/AIDS prevention as a human right has not been necessary. Governments are already informed and are responsible signatories to international human rights treaties and global social development targets such as the International Guidelines on HIV/AIDS and Human Rights (2006) and the Millennium Development Goals.

How does civil society motivate local men and women who ultimately will be responsible for the implementation of national social policy to advocate on an issue as complex as the prevention of HIV/AIDS and the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls? The objective of To Love Children is to promote a peer-to-peer support system through a train-the-trainer model adapted from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to include a gender justice and human rights approach when implementing public-health policy. Teachers, local leaders and parents already have difficulty carrying out social policies owing to lack of financial resources. To overcome this challenge, To Love Children trained trainers to accept the advantage of gaining additional resources from working with a non-governmental organization (NGO).

Determining programme and policy focus

The Vice-President of the organization, Margaret Meador, assumed that the ideal scenario was to approach a community with a blank needs assessment and formulate programmes and policies based solely on what emerged from the community. However, the reality is that this approach is usually not feasible or practical, and funding is often granted to address a specific social or health issue, rather than awarded open-ended for non-governmental organizations to determine the most effective use. As a result, NGO leaders must be cautious not to fall into 1 of the 13 challenges indicated below, but rather to balance top-down and bottom-up approaches.

13 top challenges of NGO leaders

1. Non-democratic policy decisions influence civil society;
2. Corruption of actors and stakeholders;
3. Perception of international NGOs as imposing Western ideas;
4. Lack of a whole-systems policy approach to policy issues;
5. Failed government policies that block gender equality and women's empowerment;
6. International developmental and humanitarian help creates aid dependency;
7. Local negative bias against girls and women;
8. Culture, traditions and religion hinder girls' and women's development, including women's own cultural perceptions of women;

9. Lack of political will; ineffective legal enforcement and implementation of human rights treaties;
10. Weak coordination of programme efforts and resources;
11. Lack of democratic governance in all sectors, extremist viewpoints and diversion of the world's attention;
12. Instability of world economic markets;
13. Lack of a unified evidence-based trans-disciplinary sustainable social development paradigm.

Building capabilities and competencies

The old paradigm for most international non-governmental organizations was to advocate for human rights, deliver humanitarian aid or create prevention-based programmes for the most poor and marginalized girls and women. International NGO programmes were often premised on Western teaching methods that addressed Western determinants of health issues. Moreover, many interventions were implemented without measurable objectives or means to collect data to determine their effectiveness.

Rarely did an NGO develop a monitoring and evaluation process with the express purpose of capturing progress indicated in its programme inputs and outcomes on the elimination of violence. As a departure from these earlier models, Ms. Meador developed an HIV/AIDS prevention curriculum taking into account the culture and learning approach of the population and designed a learning methodology based on a monitoring and evaluation plan that incorporated standardized HIV prevention indicators developed by the World Health Organization. A built-in capacity was required in order to measure prevention and monitor violence against girls.

Partnership paradigm

New philanthropic trends in how money was donated did not alter the fact that Governments were still wary of NGOs and individuals sitting down at the policy table. NGO leaders still maintained the responsibility of implementing social public policy centred on individual local needs in order to empower men and women to eliminate cultural-based forms of violence against women.

According to the USAID New Partners Initiative, optimal NGO partnerships are with organizations that have clear objectives grounded in the volition of their constituents, mutual interests, support one's mission in some capacity and, ideally, fill a gap not currently addressed by one's own organization.

HIV epidemiology to inform best policy and procedures for Healthy and Smart

Healthy and Smart — a participatory model

The organization's HIV/AIDS prevention programme, Healthy and Smart, was designed to reach the populations most vulnerable to HIV. HIV has detrimental biological, social and economic costs, hampers efforts to reduce poverty, and has negative impacts on educational development and the elimination of violence against girls. AIDS can kill sexually active adults; therefore, it has the greatest

impact on a country's labour force. This reduction in labour causes a domino effect beginning with poorer economic revenues that negatively affect education and health services; this, in turn, results in orphaned children and grandparents, potential for increased violence and, often, the removal of children (especially girls) from school.

Assessing needs

In order to best understand how to make a curriculum culturally appropriate, effective for the target population and sustainable, our process began with conducting an informal needs assessment. According to the National Institute for Clinical Excellence, a health needs assessment is a systematic method for reviewing the health issues facing a population, leading to agreed priorities and resource allocation that will improve health and reduce inequalities. Our needs assessment to plan for Healthy and Smart involved establishing dialogue and consulting with field and public managers at the local, national and international levels, including the Ugandan Government Ministers of Education and Sports, Health, Gender, Labour and Social Development. Community leaders also provided important insights on the most feasible and acceptable intervention strategies and actions.

Achieving cultural appropriateness

Experts from varying levels of government, and international and community-based organizations also helped the organization to understand how current officially sanctioned HIV/AIDS programmes fail to effect real social change. Existing approaches are often didactic, literacy-based and Eurocentric, and ignore the rich oral African traditional forms of communication. Therefore, Ms. Meador intentionally focused on increasing visual graphics, using modelling and role playing, and created scenarios that would both resonate with and be socially acceptable to the organization's target audience.

Further, Ms. Meador developed a curriculum appendix outlining how to weave *Ngoma* in with other teaching methods. *Ngoma* is a traditional East African teaching practice that involves using local artistic language and performance to communicate information and motivate participants towards positive action (for example, healthy behaviours). The organization felt it would be appropriate to encourage the use of *Ngoma* to convey non-Western communication where this type of oral tradition is part of the core of daily life. The focus for an NGO is first to do no harm, and not to blunder into a village and create cultural divisions between men and women.

Policy alignment

While cultural appropriateness is paramount to acceptance of policies and programmes that originate inside a target nation, global approval depends on whether NGO leaders follow international law. Effective NGO leaders will additionally seek to show their Government's cooperation in aligning its policies with United Nations goals. Ms. Meador found that alignment with strategic national policies is imperative to receptiveness. Relationships with public officials at the national level allowed the organization to obtain much-needed input to match Healthy and Smart's objectives and aims with national health and education standards. In particular, Ms. Meador ensured that Healthy and Smart was consistent with the most recent official Ugandan HIV/AIDS policy at the time: the Revised

National Strategic Framework for HIV/AIDS Activities in Uganda: 2003/2004 and 2005/2006.

The organization expanded the “ABC” intervention concept to “ABCDEF”: Abstinence; Be faithful; Condom use; Do not do drugs; Empowerment with life skills; and Financial independence through livelihood skills-training for adolescents to provide them with chances for gainful employment and help protect themselves from exploitation and risky behaviours.

Future recommended actions

The creation of a social justice programme model that incorporates cross-cultural communication, gender justice and equality, human rights and culturally appropriate democratic governance institutions reinforces the capability of the United Nations to empower women and girls and advance positive social change. Women who are empowered with universal acceptance nationally, locally and in civil society can enact positive educational social change for the girl child and benefit from enhanced quality of life.

Conclusion

Ms. Meador agreed with Irmak Renda-Tanali, a specialist in crisis, disaster and risk management, that in order to respond to crises, public administrators are required to be experts in policy and to know how to best leverage the resources of their Government. Applying this precept, To Love Children assumed that it was important to work with public leaders by first understanding their political culture to gain influence for the organization’s HIV/AIDS public policy. Our intent was to build on a posteriori evidence of Ugandan prevention strategy success and then construct a culturally appropriate conceptual and theoretical prevention curriculum in response.
