UPDATE REPORT
on
the Issues Affecting Women Programme's

STRATEGIC LEARNING AND EVALUATION SYSTEM (SLES)

September 2013

I. Introduction

In early 2012, the Issues Affecting Women Programme (IAWP) adopted a new strategic plan, supported by a strategic learning and evaluation system to track progress and feed into the strategy on a regular basis. Our strategy is centred on four core programme areas (movement building, intra-familial violence, trafficking & exploitation, and violence in situations of crisis) and guided by the following principles:

- **Adopt a human rights based approach**, where every women is recognized both as a person and as a rights holder of the full array of rights outlined in international human rights conventions
- **Have a participatory and empowering approach** that places women centre stage, building on their strengths and ensuring their full and equal participation in society
- **Take an integrated and holistic approach**, considering women in the context of their environment and culture as well as understanding the nature and causes of the issues affecting them
- **Promote systemic changes** that hold duty bearers (i.e. governments and institutions) fully accountable for respecting, protecting and fulfilling women's rights
- **Contribute to building strong and vibrant women's rights movement** comprised of women that are empowered individually and collectively, by complementing individual and community action with networking and joint advocacy initiatives
- **Affect change at three levels**: 1) Grassroots and women's groups and initiatives, which are not necessarily formally constituted or registered; 2) Middle-sized women's organisations or organisations with a women's rights programme that we view as "anchors" or that are key to bringing about changes in the field; 3) Women's funds, international women's NGOs and global women's coalitions or networks
- **Build evidence** that contributes to best practices and catalyses innovation

Our strategy calls for an experimental approach to determine tactics and interventions to achieve our ultimate goal of contributing to a world in which women have the rights, capacity and opportunity to experience safety of violence and to enjoy their full and equal human rights. Therefore, IAWP approaches evaluation in a way that is:

- **collaborative** – we aim to work with our partners and other actors in the field to contribute to the information we seek to collect, to determine the best ways to go about doing so and to share in the findings
- designed to generate **actionable** and **on-going** learnings – we strive to only gather information that can guide our strategies and decisions; and we view evaluation as an on-going process, not a one-time event at the end of a grant, project or strategy
- **flexible** and **adaptive** to the many dynamic contexts we work in – we work with grantees of all shapes and sizes, working in contexts that are in constant flux; we thus do not subscribe to a rigid one-size-fits-all approach to evaluation
- and **mindful** of our partners' time and resources – we appreciate how precious time and resources are and thus strive to engage in evaluation that is not an onerous side-activity but rather strengthens the internal learning and capacities of our partners

2012 and 2013 to-date have been the first years of implementing this new strategy. In August 2013, we held our first annual IAWP Learning Summit to review the past 18 months of grantmaking and grantee reporting and reflect about what we've learned and how our programme strategy has evolved. This included a review of hundreds of documents from our grantees including grant application, progress reports, end of grant reports, and supplemental learning documents. We would like to warmly thank the community of key partners that worked with us to answer the

learning questions we developed to inform our strategy. The following update brief lays out some of the learnings captured through this process and puts forward the strategic evaluation questions that we hope to answer about our Programme's work over the next learning cycle. These serve as important guideposts for measuring the extent to which and how, we are meeting our strategic goals.

II.   Update on Programme Areas

a. Movement Building

The Movement Building Programme Area aims at building strong, visible, and effective women's movements – unified by rights based principles – that are explicitly dedicated to removing barriers, catalysing engagement, advocating for and increasing resources for women's rights.

Over the course of this first learning cycle, our grantees have identified some of the necessary elements of movement building that need to be catalysed to foster and sustain strong women's rights movements:

- Common vision and joint action
- Culture of partnership, solidarity, teamwork and "sisterhood"
- Strong common ideological base and shared expertize
- Broad, diverse and cross-sectorial constituency (e.g., civil society, academia, media)
- Strategic approach to resource mobilization and use
- Effective and streamlined communication and collective campaigns
- Space for dialogue and strategizing
- Strong visionary leaders and connection with the next generation of feminists
- Innovation and adaptation capacity
- Integrated security and self-care, and ability to deal with conflict within the movement

Over the next learning cycle we hope to better understand **how we can best catalyse these necessary elements through our grant-making**.

Women's Funds (WFs) have played a central role in IAWP's movement building efforts. IAWP especially values their role in ensuring that the voices, experiences and perspectives of grassroots women are connected to a larger common agenda of change for women's rights. WFs further contribute to movement building in the following ways:

- Provide flexible financial support to seed and grow hard to reach grassroots women's rights organisations/groups
- Strengthen women's rights organizations/groups through capacity building
- Mobilize resources (e.g. volunteers, funds, etc.) and advocate for local/regional/international feminist philanthropy
- Provide platforms for convening key actors within the region and across regions for collaboration, strategizing, knowledge sharing and agenda shaping
- Identify and implement country/region specific approaches and priorities (e.g. promoting inter-faith dialogue in the Balkans or supporting women's groups in Central America to promote and defend women's economic and labor rights)
- Broaden and sustain the diverse constituency of the movement by including, supporting and protecting commonly excluded groups (e.g. young women activists, sex workers) and Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs)
- Support research and learning to amplify the perspectives from women around the world

and act as "knowledge hubs" to educate donors and other international stakeholders
- Foster innovation (e.g. around resource mobilization or M&E processes that look at the impact of small grants to grassroots groups)

We appreciate that this is only a portion of a broad array of ways WFs can contribute, and we would therefore like to complete and nuance our understanding of their role by capturing **WFs' own appreciation of their contribution to women's rights movement building**.
Furthermore, since WFs' role in developing and empowering the groups they support is so critical, we hope to keep learning in this area to be able to fully gauge **to what extent WFs strengthen the capacity of their grantees in the following domains of capacity building**, and determine **how we can best contribute to the process**:

- Administration/operational effectiveness
- Content/specific thematic areas
- Knowledge of women's rights and gender/ethnic-sensitive approaches
- Financial management/fundraising (e.g. proposal writing)
- Security, self-care, and protection
- Political advocacy
- Monitoring & evaluation
- Networking and articulating synergies

Since Oak and WFs are often co-funding the same grantees, we would like to undertake a joint mapping exercise in 2014 with some of our partners that would allow for better understanding the nature and magnitude of the overlap and jointly work on a coherent approach going forward. This exercise will allow for joint determining if the **resource allocation between IAWP and WFs is optimal with regards to supporting women's groups**.

IAWP is also committed to supporting WFs in making the case to local or international donor communities on how they are advancing women's rights. For that we constantly challenge WFs to improve their capacity to showcase the impact of their work based on strengthened Monitoring & Evaluation capacity, as well as through researched evidence on how they affect change. In order to improve our support in this area, we hope to understand to **what extent we are helping WFs to make their case around their important role in advancing women's rights**.

We also became aware that not all WFs contribute to movement building in the same way and also that they are not the only organizations contributing to this process. Thus, we will take a more nuanced approach to this important pillar of our strategy going forward. In 2014, we would like to explore **what else we can do** to build strong movements, and **which other actors are capable of contributing to movement building, and how we can best support them**.

b. Ending Intra-Familial Violence

The Intra-familial Violence (IV) Programme Area aims at promoting rights based laws, policies and services to guarantee an environment in which women experience safety from violence and are empowered in their homes and other intimate settings and relationships.

Over the course of the year, based on the work of our many partners, we were able to identify some of the necessary elements that need to be catalysed jointly in order to effectively address IV

at a country level:

- Strong specific legislation on IV, implemented by trained and unbiased law enforcement and government representatives (e.g. police, judges, lawyers) and regular monitoring of law implementation
- A change of society's perception of IV from a minor issue, to a crime to be punished
- Empowerment of women – who are often more vulnerable to IV due to income, family background, earlier experiences of violence, limited access to education – so that they can understand and advocate for their rights and access services.
- Comprehensive, rights based and sustainable services are accessible by all, including by remote and vulnerable groups (e.g. ethnic minorities, disabled people) and respond to the connection between women and children experiencing violence/abuse
- Availability of governmental funding for quality services (e.g. shelters, healthcare, police, etc.), including civil society run programmes for victims of IV and violence prevention activities. Strong, vibrant and independent social movements capable of offering a coordinated response based on a common advocacy agenda/strategy, and maintain a constant dialogue with the state

During the next learning cycle we hope to understand **how we can best catalyse these necessary elements through our grant-making**. Also, the critical nature of at least three of these elements calls for a more thorough understanding:

1. First, in order to promote participatory and empowering approaches to IV we would like to understand **to what extent our grantees are implementing approaches that empower their clients** in their programmatic activities.

2. Second, since autonomous and sustainable women's organisations are the entry point to catalyse the above mentioned elements, IAWP advocates for state funded service models that don't compromise women organization's ability to serve as independent advocates of women rights. Navigating this tension between autonomy and sustainability is critical for success, thus in the upcoming year, we hope to identify the different **sustainable funding models for autonomous/independent service providers that serve as advocates for victims**.

3. Lastly, based on strong evidence that IV cannot be addressed without a holistic approach including children, we would like to pursue our on-going effort to identify and characterise **models that explicitly recognize and respond to the connection between women and children experiencing violence/abuse**. This will help determine **how we can help services and systems better explicitly recognize and respond to this connection**.

Prevention is a cornerstone of IAWP's ending violence against women programme pillar and we are therefore committed to understanding **how we can best drive progress in this area**. We have observed that there is a limited evidence-base on the impact of prevention work, which creates a hindrance in identifying the most effective models. Thus, in the upcoming year, we will be seeking guidance on **how can we support meaningful evaluation of IV prevention activities**. We also plan to explore a number of dimensions in order to identify the most **relevant, realistic and impactful interventions that Oak can support to prevent IV** in view of **capturing the learnings from funding at these different levels**:

- Primary prevention activities reach the general population through resource intensive campaigns aimed at changing underlining social norms that perpetuate a culture of violence against women

- Secondary prevention activities target specific risk and/or vulnerability factors that contribute to violence against women
- Tertiary prevention activities focus on breaking the cycle of violence, for example by changing the behaviour of perpetrators and promoting alternative masculinities.

c. Ending Trafficking & Exploitation

The Trafficking & Exploitation (T&E) Programme Area aims at promoting rights based laws, policies and services that guarantee an environment in which women experience safety from all forms of trafficking and severe forms of exploitation.

IAWP advocates for a human rights based approach to preventing and responding to T&E, of which some of the core elements are:

- Promotion of the agency of women to make decisions and/or choices for themselves throughout the process of response, recovery and reintegration, including responding to their needs and recognising their potential and capacities during recovery
- Community awareness of trafficking and human rights, to ensure trafficked or exploited women are aware of their rights and have the capacity to claim them
- A holistic approach to prevention that addresses the various factors of risk and vulnerability
- Protection of rights through victim friendly frameworks and formalized procedures that are easy to understand and access
- Accountability mechanisms to ensure that ratified treaties translates into implementation (e.g. mechanisms to review State's policies and laws) and that anti-trafficking laws and policies do no harm those they seek to protect
- Accountability mechanisms that hold NGOs and service providers accountable to their clients and partner organisations
- Victim-centred service provision that are tailor-made to fit the needs of vulnerable individuals
- Self-organized groups that include groups affected by specific laws in anti-trafficking efforts (e.g. trafficking survivors, migrant women, sex workers, etc.)
- Accurate data to inform policy, advocate for positive change and bring perpetrators to justice

Over the next learning cycle we hope to determine **how we can best support the adoption of a rights based model to prevent and respond to trafficking at the organisation, national and international levels**. We will also pursue our on-going effort to determine how **we can we best support self-representation of victims and groups at risk in decision making that promote rights based anti-trafficking policies**. For example, in the US, IAWP has supported the development of trafficking survivor caucuses and networks that provide leadership development and media training to trafficking survivors so that they can speak publically about their experiences to inform anti-trafficking public policy.

The Palermo Protocol provides a narrow definition of trafficking that excludes many victims and therefore hinders a rights based approach. Thus, IAWP has broadened our grantmaking to include "severe forms of exploitation" such as slavery-like conditions and exploitative labour practices. In order to define the boundaries of this expanded scope, over the next year we will be looking at **how broadening our grantmaking to include severe forms of exploitation will impact the expansion of our T&E program**. For that, we will also look to our grantees to identify approaches that work and observe **to what extent and how they are themselves addressing victims of**

trafficking as well as victims of severe forms of exploitation.

A human rights based approach also posits a holistic approach to prevention that addresses the factors of risk and vulnerability that contribute to T&E. We define risk factors as belonging to the external socio-economic environment of women at risk, and factors of vulnerability as being at the individual or personal level. The first learning cycled allowed identifying some of the elements belonging to each of these factors.

Risk factors:
- Corrupt and inefficient authorities
- Strong migration flows exposing women in countries/regions of origin, transit and destination to T&E
- Culture of violence against women leading to the normalization and tolerance of T&E
- High unemployment driving women to accept employment in informal sectors that don't offer labour protections
- Unregulated labour markets making women less visible to law enforcement and/or NGOs and leading to the normalisation of the absence of workers' protection
- Isolation/Marginalisation:
  - Private and isolated workplaces prevent workers from meeting family, friends and peers to learn about their rights
  - Language barriers or illiteracy can prevent victims from becoming aware and claiming their rights (e.g. Asian domestic workers in the US)
  - Belonging to a minority group reinforces discrimination on the labor market (e.g. Roma women in Serbia)

Factors of vulnerability:
- Dysfunctional families act as a "push factor" for trafficking, due for example to the absence of family support when leaving residential institutions or starting independent living
- Prior history of abuse or violence that impedes the ability to exercise personal strength, resilience, confidence etc.

Based on this, we hope to develop an understanding **of the most relevant, realistic and impactful interventions that Oak can support to reduce vulnerabilities to, and mitigate risks of trafficking and exploitation**.

d. Ending Violence in Situation of Crisis

The Violence in Situations of Crisis programme area aims at providing flexible and responsive support in crisis zones where violence against women is systemic and stands in the way of rights based recovery, for example in conflict, post-conflict, refugee and immigration settings, and following natural disasters. For example, we are currently active in this programme area in Afghanistan, DRC, North Caucasus (Chechnya) and Somalia.

Our engagement in situation of crisis is underpinned by some guiding principles such as the choice of situations of conflicts where IAWP can make a unique contribution, has an added value, and where there is a lack of other donors funding women's organisations and/or women's rights. IAWP engagement is catalysed opportunistically through a trusted partner or organisation. In the upcoming years, In the upcoming years, we will be **monitoring the extent to which our funding has an added value for advancing women's rights in these situations**.

III. Concluding Reflections

2012 and 2013 to-date were the first years of implementing our new strategy and strategic learning and evaluation system (SLES). Thanks to our partners' contributions we were able to glean precious insights that will feed into our work going forward. Reflecting on the journey so far was a very humbling exercise that made us aware that many new areas of learning will continue to open up as we progress down the road. Our learning from this past year has answered some of our previous questions, while raising new ones for us to explore. We expect that our strategy will continue to evolve each year as we formulate a new set of learning questions to integrate into our SLES based on what we have learned during the previous year. Our partners' input is critical to this process and we look forward to continuing this journey alongside them.

In addition to programme specific learning questions, we will also continue to **improve and evolve our role as a funder in this space**. This includes continuously striving to improve **our relationships with grantees** and ensuring that we help build their potential **capacities**, engage in productive **communication** and feedback loops and reduce **administrative processes** related to receiving our funding. On the capacity building front we have identified two areas that we feel are important for sustaining the work of our partners: strengthening **leadership** and improving **security and self-care.**

Moreover, we will continue to reflect on how best we can refine our **role beyond grantmaking**, for example, by promoting the creation of a new women's rights funder affinity group, and acting as a resource to new and emerging funders in this space. We will also devote energy in 2014 to better understanding how to **unlock resources for women's rights and catalyse increased engagement from the corporate sector**.

Finally, through this annual learning process, we are committed to reviewing the scope of our strategy to verify if it addresses the **essential elements** necessary to ensure that women have the rights, capacity and opportunity to experience safety from violence and to enjoy their full and equal human rights. We look forward to your ideas and experiences on all these fronts.

Thank you again for contributing your knowledge, passion and commitment over the past months and years. We look forward to working hand-in-hand with our partners to meet your impact goals and ours.

IV. Summary of 2013/2014 Programmatic Strategic Evaluation Questions

Movement Building	• How can we best **catalyse the necessary elements of movement building** through our grant-making? • How do Women's Funds (WFs) **see themselves contributing** to movement building? • To what extent do WFs **strengthen the capacity of their grantees** and how can we best contribute to this process? • Is the **resource allocation between IAWP and WFs optimal** with regards to supporting women's groups? • To what extent are we helping WFs **make the case** that they are advancing women's rights? • Which **other actors and partners** could contribute to movement building, and how can we best support them? • **What else can we do** to build strong movements (e.g. other levers and/or strategies beyond grantmaking)?

Ending Intra-Familial Violence	• How can we best **catalyse the necessary elements to effectively address IV** at the country level?
	
	 • To what extent are our grantees implementing approaches **that empower their clients**?
	
	 • What are **sustainable funding models for autonomous/independent service providers** that serve as advocates for victims?
	
	 • How can we help services and systems to better explicitly recognise and respond to the **connection between women and children** experiencing violence/abuse?
	
	 • How can Oak best drive progress in preventing IV:
	    ○ What are the **most relevant, realistic and impactful interventions that we can support** to prevent IV?
	    ○ How can we support meaningful **evaluation** of IV prevention activities in order to determine the most effective models?
	    ○ What **drives our grantees to address prevention at different levels** (e.g. **primary** prevention targeting the general population; **secondary** prevention targeted specific risk and/or vulnerability factors; and **tertiary** prevention focusing on breaking the cycle of violence)?

Ending Trafficking and Exploitation	• How can we best support the **adoption of a rights based model** to prevent and respond to trafficking at the organisation, national and international levels • How can we best **support self-representation of victims and groups at risk in decision making** that promote rights based anti-trafficking policies • How does **broadening our grantmaking from trafficking to "severe forms of exploitation"** impact the expansion of Oak's T&E program? • To what extent, and how are Oak's grantees addressing **victims of trafficking as well as victims of severe forms of exploitation**? • What are the most **relevant, realistic and impactful interventions** that we can support to reduce vulnerabilities to, and mitigate risks of trafficking and exploitation? •
Ending Situations of Crisis	• To what extent does our funding have an added value for advancing women's rights in the situations of crisis in which we're engaged?

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