
**"Earlier, Women Were Just in a Corner of the House":
A Critical Review of FORUT's Programme
on Promoting Gender Equality**

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- **Meera Pillai**

ACRONYMS and ABBREVIATIONS

ADD	Alcohol, Drugs and Development
APSA	Association for Promoting Social Action
BBMP	Bruhad Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike
BWH	Birth Waiting House
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CoCSA	Community Credit and Savings Association
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CWIN	Child Workers in Nepal Concerned Centre
CWC	The Concerned for Working Children
CWC	Child Welfare Committee
EEW	Economic Empowerment of Women
ESI	Employees' State Insurance
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FPAI	Family Planning Association of India
FPP	Focal Point Person
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GEE	Gender Economic Empowerment
HFAC	Happy Family Action Committee
IDB	Industrial Development Board
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
MCH	Maternal and Child Health
MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly
MoH	Ministry of Health
MSI	Marie Stopes International
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
PHU	Public Health Unit
RBM	Results-Based Matrix
SHG	Self-Help Group
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
TBA	Traditional Birth Attendant
TOT	Training of Trainers
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
WHMC	Women's Health and Maternal Care

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¹ FORUT. (2009). FORUT Multi-year Application 2009-2013, Part 2. Norway.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following is a summary of the salient information derived from a mid-term evaluation of the Gender Programme implemented by FORUT-Norway and its partner organisations.

FORUT is a development organisation based in Norway, which focuses on four major programme areas: Alcohol, Drugs and Development; Child Rights and Development; Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment; and Crisis Response and Recovery. An evaluation was undertaken of FORUT's programme on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, which is implemented in Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka through its national offices, FORUT-Sierra Leone (FORUT- Sierra Leone) and FORUT-Sri Lanka (FORUT-Sri Lanka), and in India through a partner organisation, the Association for Promoting Social Action (APSA), over a five-year plan period, with core funding from NORAD. The current evaluation was designed as a mid-term evaluation, to understand progress in implementation and impact at operational level, and the extent of gender mainstreaming, to indicate course corrections if necessary and contribute to greater learning. The specific objectives were to look at Effectiveness, Impact, Relevance and Sustainability. This was particularly in the context of the attempt to shift, in the case of FORUT-Sri Lanka and FORUT-Sierra Leone, from primarily working as funders and direct implementers of projects related to the construction of development infrastructure like schools and toilets to models of empowering communities to address gender issues at the local level.

The evaluation used multiple methods of data collection including field visits to project sites in Sri Lanka, Sierra Leone and India, interviews with multiple stakeholders, focus group discussions with primary stakeholders, document reviews, and two questionnaires, one focusing on internal mainstreaming of gender, and a second on the external mainstreaming of gender in programmes without a specific gender focus.

Major findings of the evaluation of the gender programme in FORUT-Sri Lanka

The FORUT programme on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Sri Lanka was designed with two major components, the Gender Economic Empowerment (GEE) Programme and the Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Programme.

Gender Economic Empowerment Programme: Overall, the GEE programme can be said to have been very effective for multiple reasons. It was to achieve the strategic objective of "Advancement in the status of women and gender equality" specifically by

organizing 2000 women into 210 collectives promoting microsavings and microcredit, of which 500 previously economically inactive women were to become economically active.

Strategies and Results:

- By the middle of year 3, 2048 women had been organised into 206 collectives, in spite of having to curtail the programme in the north-eastern districts of Jaffna and Vavuniya in Year 2 due to changes in government policy.
- The programme had been implemented in 89 villages of 6 districts, and a sum of LKR 10,352,824 was disbursed in the form of mini-grants to about 2000 beneficiaries to start microbusinesses.
- The average grant size was only LKR5,000 and almost completely provided in kind (e.g., machinery, or goods to trade) to prevent diversion of grant funds for other purposes.
- The effectiveness of the programme was influenced by clear strategies, including collection of baseline information on women's income, access to credit, time spent on reproductive versus productive work, collectivisation, and opportunities and barriers to economic activities.
- Other strategies included:
 - selection of programme locations from the government's list of villages identified as needing "rejuvenation",
 - targeting women with no history of engaging in independent economic activity,
 - creating women's collectives,
 - conducting market research about economic activities with potential for the local market,
 - providing the selected women with exposure to a range of possible economic activities, and information about technical and logistical support necessary to undertake these,
 - creating access to technical training from many government and private institutions,
 - helping women use strategies like SWOT Analysis to choose the business activities that best suit their interests and abilities,
 - helping them make business plans,
 - providing microgrants and ongoing business counselling and troubleshooting, and
 - providing assistance with official procedures and paperwork.

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- Livelihood Facilitation Centres, which provide information to help women start businesses and market their products were set up, and the organisation itself laid a lot of emphasis on team learning on the issue.
 - A multi-tiered participatory mechanism, at village, divisional and district levels, was set up for implementation and monitoring, and monthly data was fed through District Programme Coordinators to the Coordinators and Gender Advisor at the Head Office.

Impacts:

Some of the major impacts of the programme were:

- Women's increased ability to earn an income, and increased financial independence and increased ability to contribute financially to the household.
- The programme was able to demonstrate over 70 economic activities which women could engage in to earn an income.
- It reached government resources like training to previously unreachable communities, and created demand for technical training among previously economically inactive women.
- More than 75 per cent of the businesses have broken even and are planning expansions.
- The programme has earned the recognition of the government, which is using this model for its "Divineguma" programme to promote one million home-based businesses.

Challenges:

The programme faced certain challenges, such as:

- Women's lack of prior experience in engaging in independent economic activity.
- Lack of initial support from family, especially husbands.
- Limitations to expansion and securing economies of scale given that these were microbusinesses.
- There was also some initial suspicion on the part of the community, as well as FORUT-Sri Lanka's former partner organisations, which would have preferred the organisation to continue to remain a funder instead of working directly in the field.
- Changes in government policies in some post-conflict areas during the programme period meant that the implementation had to be cut back there.

Sustainability Issues:

- Participatory divisional and district level committees of primary stakeholders have been established, which can contribute to the creation of a core group of dynamic women entrepreneurs who can provide guidance, support and liaisoning services to other women in the future, and hence, also to sustainability.
- The relatively small overhead costs, the possibility of additional labour and marketing support from family members, and the lack of taxation for micro-home based businesses are all factors in favour of sustainability.
- However, a big threat to sustainability is that even fairly small changes in the micro and macro environments can threaten such tiny microenterprises.

Programme against Gender Based Violence: Given that GBV is often perpetrated within the home, and seeking redressal involves making sensitive personal issues public, the outputs and outcomes of the GBV programme are more difficult to measure objectively than those of the GEE programme. At this stage in the programme, the evaluation has to largely rely on qualitative data regarding processes and procedures that have been set in motion, and reported impact from a cross-section of stakeholders. Using these methods, it is clear that the programme has been successful in destroying a major factor responsible for causing and perpetuating Gender-Based Violence, namely the culture of silence and denial that surrounds it.

Strategies and Results:

- The programme was directly implemented by FORUT-Sri Lanka in 68 villages of 5 districts, and through an additional 17 organisations belonging to the Women and ADD [Alcohol, Drugs and Development] Network, reaching at least 7,500 women with information and some services.
- The strong, home-grown conceptualisation of the programme based on local data, identified significant contributing factors to GBV.
- The programme strategised to influence these factors in the local environments, to make it more difficult to perpetrate GBV, and easier for survivors to seek support.
- Liaisoning with relevant government agencies like the police and the health department, and a larger advocacy group of organisations called the GBV Forum, many of whom could provide additional support services (e.g., shelters for battered women or specialised counselling) were also strengths of the programme.

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- The Programme Against GBV was exceptional in its proactive approach, which aimed at involving the entire community, and the men, women and children in individual families in the issue of GBV, instead of focusing solely on a crisis-centric approach, as is often the case.
 - This was combined with applications of a more crisis-interventionist approach in selected cases.
 - Volunteers from each community, organised into "Happy Family Action Committees", assisted with the implementation of the programme at the local level, monitoring 'problem spots' in the village where domestic violence could occur, and providing sensitive support and trouble-shooting assistance to minimise occurrences of domestic violence.
 - Novel and innovative IEC materials and tools, like the "Happy Family Chart" which have proved very effective in the field, were created, and targeted training provided for caregivers, gatekeepers, volunteers and community members.
 - Appropriate support systems and services were identified or created through capacity building at the divisional and district levels.
 - A process-centred approach, which looked for longer-term solutions, rather than an event-centred approach was favoured.
 - Involving youth, and working explicitly with reduction in alcohol usage also contributed to the success of the programme.
 - A three-tier monitoring system, with participation at village, division and district levels was created, with overall supervision from the national head office.

Other Impacts:

Although less than three years old, the programme has already had an impact.

- Families, communities and government have acknowledged the existence of family conflict and domestic violence and identified elements to be addressed to reduce these.
- The programme has created increased roles for women in the public life of the community.
- Government agencies are paying increased attention to mental health issues.
- FORUT-Sri Lanka has demonstrated that the impact of its Happy Family approach has
 - markedly cut down on family conflict, alcohol use, and domestic violence.
 - improved the status of women in the household, with improved decision making power,
 - increased participation of males in the household in domestic work

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- Consequently, the government has issued an order that the model be included in the national poverty alleviation programme, Samurdhi.
 - Police report a reduction in the number of domestic violence cases requiring police intervention.
 - Police also report contribution of the programme to increased links and trust between people and police in a post-conflict environment.
 - Vigilance about child protection also increased.

Challenges and Sustainability issues:

Nevertheless, the programme did face many challenges.

- Obtaining clear data about what people largely perceive as a private issue, and obtaining permission to work on it was difficult.
- Limitation of the programme largely to domestic violence, rather than GBV more broadly, was observed.
- In the absence of sufficient numbers of trained and sensitive personnel, ensuring sensitive and professional handling of crises continues to be a challenge.
- Analysis of certain cases also showed that there can be significant limitations to community-mediated solutions to GBV, especially, if these result in subjugating individuals in small communities to the collective will and wisdom of the community, against individual choices which may be unpopular and against prevailing social/sexual/gender norms.
- Also, while initial enthusiasm for a concept like that of the "Happy Family" is likely to be high, once families have reached a certain level of competence, maintaining motivation levels is likely to be an ongoing challenge.

Major findings of the evaluation of APSA's gender programme

Overall, APSA's Gender Programme has been extraordinarily effective, and can be a model for others around the world. In this programme phase, APSA worked with all the slum communities falling within four legislative assembly constituencies each in the two cities in which it works, Bangalore and Hyderabad.

- The programme was initially conceptualised to address the feminisation of poverty, through collectivisation, microsavings and microcredit, and some encouragement towards skill building and the development of microbusinesses.
- In practice, the programme addresses a range of issues, including girls' and women's education, access to legal support, political empowerment, and eldercare.
- It addresses 'dirty' and 'difficult' issues like sanitation and housing.

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- It sets exceptional standards in working with local authorities and other NGOs, linking and learning for benefiting communities, and in raising local resources.
 - By far the biggest strength of the programme is that it flexibly responds to and addresses issues emerging from the grassroots.

Strategies and Results:

- APSA organises the women into self-help groups (SHGs) of between 12 and 20 women, and as many as 300 women from a slum may be members in the programme.
- Children and adolescents are part of APSA's children's collectives which focus on rights education and leadership development.
- The strategies include helping women in urban poverty build up savings and access credit.
- The programme helps to find avenues of economic opportunity for women and young people, through skill training in APSA's own facilities or those run by others, followed by placement services.
- Credit, training and motivation are also provided to help women start microbusinesses.
- Mature SHGs are encouraged to federate and become self-sustaining.
- APSA helps to address issues of basic needs, including housing, drinking water, electricity and sanitation, all of which have an important gender aspect.
- It supports women in slum communities to get government documents for identification, and food and social security,
- The programme assisted women in the unorganised sector with unionisation and securing insurance.
- The programme assisted with providing scholarships for children of single mothers and other women in poverty.
- A pilot programme focusing on women's literacy is being tested.
- Local solutions to address issues of domestic violence and eldercare support for older women in poverty are also being implemented.
- APSA actively collaborates with other organisations to draw on their specific expertise (e.g., health or legal support) for their primary stakeholders, and raises local resources in cash and kind to supplement the FORUT grants for its community development work.

Other impacts:

In addition to the standard outcomes such as increase in income, increase in decision making power within the household, and increase in the way economic resources are utilised for the family,

- Women have gained greater voice and are able to negotiate for higher wages and more dignity.
- Women are being encouraged to engage in social and political activism beyond their immediate communities to build greater political space for them.
- The programme empowers communities to demand greater accountability from government service providers (e.g., in hospitals and the public distribution system).

Challenges:

- The systemic and structural challenges that the urban poor face from vested interests who stand to lose because of greater empowerment of the urban poor continue to pose challenges for APSA.
- Battles that have been won, may have to be fought again, especially because of the extreme pressure on land and other resources in the city.
- The entry of private players into the MFI sector has also posed challenges to group unity in APSA's collectivisation models.
- Lack of teeth and too many loopholes in the legal system preclude adequate legal redressal in many issues, especially those related to domestic violence and child abuse.
- APSA too does not sufficiently challenge itself in encouraging women to move away from stereotyped gendered means of earning a livelihood.

Sustainability Issues:

- While APSA works hard to build strong local CBOs which can then negotiate with and challenge existing power structures to get their needs met to contribute towards sustainability, the constant in-flow of rural migrants means that new communities of urban poor, who lack the knowledge and skills to draw benefits of collectivisation and available systemic supports, are continuously being built.
- Hence, the relevance of APSA's work, and core funding support to undertake the skilled process of community capacity building and empowerment that it has proved in the field, has also continued.

Major findings of the evaluation of the gender programme of FORUT-Sierra Leone

FORUT directly implements community development programmes in Sierra Leone through its country office. Prior to this project period, the organisation primarily worked as a direct implementer of development projects, especially the construction of development related infrastructure, e.g., schools for an education focus, traditional birthing houses and toilets for a health focus, and drying floors and storage sheds for produce for an economic focus. In this phase, the organisation was to attempt cost-effective approach focusing on development driven by community empowerment and an explicit gender component. The Gender Programme for FORUT – Sierra Leone was designed with two components, the Economic Empowerment of Women (EEW) Programme, and the Women’s Health and Maternal Care (WHMC) Programme. The Economic Empowerment of Women Programme was targeted at previously economically inactive females from extremely poor families in selected programme locations to assist them to gain greater control over economic and social resources. As of March 2011, there was recorded data for the programmes being implemented in 84 villages (of the 100 targeted for this programme phase) in two districts in the Northern and Southern Provinces, Port Loko and Moyamba. Multiple stakeholders confirmed that the programmes serve underserved populations in remote locations.

Economic Empowerment of Women Programme:

Strategies and Results:

- In the EEW programme, men and women have been encouraged to collectivise and become participants in savings and credit groups called Community Credit and Savings Associations (CoCSAs).
- Women have also been encouraged to take up some economic activity; usually this has taken the form of strengthening their participation in subsistence agriculture, and starting petty businesses.
- While prior to the programme, members of the communities served by it believed that they were too poor to save, the programme has made savings appear feasible to extremely poor women.
- Many women have used the loans they obtain from CoCSAs at lower rates of interest than from moneylenders to engage in petty trading or improving agriculture a little beyond the subsistence level, e.g., market gardening.
- FORUT-Sierra Leone also provides support to women farmers from community seed banks, and has provided some information about high-yielding varieties of cassava.
- Consequently, there has been increased visibility for women's work and increased control over resources and improved status in the family.

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- This has also led to a reported reduction in family conflicts and a positive impact on children's education.
 - The CoCSAs provide a legitimate framework in which women can access public spaces and build collective strength, and voice, and this has been a great advantage.
 - The process by which about 100 women are to be provided microgrants to assist with the development of microbusinesses has begun.

The programme faced several challenges. These include

- The lack of a tradition of saving
- Mistrust of NGOs, especially related to economic activities.
- Difficulties with collectivising and meeting regularly.
- As almost all the women participants in the EEW programme are illiterate, almost all the Presidents and Secretaries of the CoCSAs, which were primarily designed to be instruments for women's empowerment, are men.
- The inadequate banking system means that the CoCSAs function without the back-up support that banks usually provide to savings and credit groups, including lack of physical security of the money collected as savings.
- Consequently, there is greater pressure to keep this money in rotation, which may lead to less stringent risk analysis prior to the granting of loans.
- Another consequence of the lack of physical security for CoCSA funds is a practice of paying monthly dividends, which does not seem to be based on a sufficiently technically sound and realistic risk-and-return analysis.
- Also, the limited staff, their limited knowledge of the loan portfolios of the CoCSAs and technical know-how to analyse these, and limited time for supervision, may increase the opportunity for deviation from approved policies and increase the risk of error, manipulation, and in worst case scenarios, fraud.
- The programme has not yet provided women with any skill training to start microenterprises, and education on women's rights and gender issues has also been done only to a limited extent.

Sustainability Issues:

- In the short and medium term, the EEW programme requires technical support to carry out a detailed risk analysis, both of overall components like deposit safety arrangements and payment of monthly dividends as well as of the loan portfolios of the various CoCSAs.

Women's Health and Maternal Care Programme:

Strategies and Results:

- Nearly 87 per cent of the Budget of the Gender Health Programme is aimed at the construction of health related infrastructure.
- The number of health posts and community water wells targeted for construction by end-2011 had been met or exceeded (100% and 140% respectively), while those of latrines and birth waiting houses were on track (73.3% and 80 respectively) by mid-2011.
- Given that there is need for a great deal of post-conflict reconstruction of infrastructure, this is appreciated by the community and the government and makes for visible evidence of FORUT's contribution to the community.
- This also has collateral benefits in terms of credibility, increased community willingness to collaborate on empowerment initiatives etc.
- The organisation also provides logistical support (e.g., community sensitisation, transport facilities) to help the government with outreach programmes like immunisation camps and medical camps in remote communities.
- Some basic community health promotions are carried out on environmental sanitation, nutrition and HIV and AIDS.

Impact:

- Due to the programme, there has been increased visibility on the issue of reproductive health, and government sources report a decrease in maternal and child mortality in FORUT-served areas.

Mid-Course Alteration:

- According to the planned programme, services for pregnant women were to be improved through the construction of traditional birth waiting houses and the training of TBAs.
- However, the increased thrust towards institutionalised deliveries as Sierra Leone tries to reach the targets of the MDGs has meant that there has been need for a mid-course correction.
- Consequently, in consultation with the government, FORUT-Sierra Leone is helping to improve basic facilities, like water, sanitation, and power supplies at existing PHUs in the country.

Challenges:

- There is insufficient data gathering and knowledge management, and insufficient follow-up and monitoring for impact of community health education activities.

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- The sanctioning of an average of 3 toilets per community must be weighed against achieving an ODF community, as otherwise, the risk of water contamination and faecal-oral diseases cannot be eliminated.
 - The community health promotion aspect has tended to focus on 'soft' (though important) issues like environmental sanitation and ignore more difficult, but extremely gender-inequitable issues like female genital cutting.

Sustainability Issues:

- The programme also needs to reevaluate the current high weightage given for infrastructure construction, with its high costs, against long-term sustainability considerations.

Findings of the evaluation of internal mainstreaming of gender at FORUT-Norway and its partner organisations:

One aim of the mid-term evaluation was “to estimate the mainstreaming of a gender perspective at the institutional level in all partner organisations.” FORUT-Norway and its partner organisations (FORUT-Sierra Leone, FORUT-Sri Lanka, APSA, CWIN and CWC) answered a questionnaire, consisting of forty-two questions related to various aspects of gender as applicable to institutional contexts, and also provided gender-disaggregated data on staffing at different levels of the organisation, in a self-assessment process, with data collated and analysed by the evaluator.

- Almost all the organisations expressed their visions in gender-neutral terms, but all expressed a strong commitment to social justice and equality. For FORUT-Norway, gender was one of the "four pillars" of the organisation.
- Fifty percent of the six organisations surveyed had written gender policies; of the rest, FORUT-Norway had strong national laws and gender-equitable union tariff agreements that took the place of an institutional policies and CWC had most institutional mechanisms in place for a gender-equitable workplace, without having a formal policy.
- Two-thirds of the organisations with written policies had extensively disseminated it within the organisation.
- Five of the six organisations had internal gender expertise, and all had accessed support from external gender experts.
- Three organisations reported a gender balance in senior management positions, and the other three had engaged in proactive hiring or promotion of women to senior management positions to address gender balance issues.

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- All the organisations had provided potential avenues for recourse for employees for situations involving sexual harassment, either through the gender policy, or through separate policies.
 - All organisations reported providing ongoing training on gender issues. While fifty percent had a dedicated budget for the purpose, the others drew funds for gender training from the general capacity building budget.
 - CWIN had a commendable 4-step gender training process, and excellent institutional mechanisms for internal and external mainstreaming of gender.
 - All the organisations reported that gender issues were taken seriously and discussed openly on a regular basis, and that active efforts were made to counter gender stereotyping in the organisations.
 - All the organisations provided for maternity and paternity leave and related benefits.

External mainstreaming of gender:

- Three organisations, APSA, FORUT-Sierra Leone and FORUT-Sri Lanka had targeted programmes for improving gender equality, especially focusing on women's economic empowerment and health.
- Apart from this, all the partner organisations, except for FORUT-Sierra Leone, has done extensive work with external mainstreaming of gender.
- In the case of FORUT-Sierra Leone, a beginning has been made with external mainstreaming of gender into the Child Rights programme.
- Gender intersects conceptually, strategically and in practice with other areas of APSA's work like housing, basic needs, water, and sanitation and with its Crisis Response and Recovery, ADD and Child Rights and Advocacy Programmes.
- CWIN's ADD programme is very gender-sensitive, using peer educators to address the vulnerabilities of street boys to alcohol and drug use, and taking into account the large number of women drinkers and smokers in the country.
- In CWIN's Post-Conflict Rehabilitation programme, special attention is paid to assisting survivors of gender-based violence.
- CWIN's child rights programme especially provides support for “girls at risk including street girls, girls from slum areas, girl survivors of child sex abuse, commercial sexual exploitation, labour exploitation, domestic violence, trafficking and armed conflict for their socialization, protection, social reintegration and empowerment.”
- CWC regularly reviews its training and activity materials for countering gender biases and routinely collects gender-disaggregated data. Programmes are

designed taking into account systemic and structural barriers to participation not only by women and girls, but other marginalised groups like people with disabilities.

- The appointment of a Gender Advisor led to a total recasting of the Child Rights programme in FORUT-Sri Lanka. Special curricula for different age groups on issues like were prepared and applied, resulting in significant changes, including in the leadership of the clubs, with 50 per cent of the leaders now being girls.
- The ADD programme in FORUT-Sri Lanka also recast its programme by studying the specific vulnerabilities and strategies to address four different groups - adult males, adult females, young males and young females - teasing out the myths related to alcohol consumption and normalisation.
- In an excellent cross-fertilisation, the ADD programme was able to contribute its expertise to reducing the role played by alcohol in perpetuation gender-based violence, in the targeted programme implemented by FORUT-Sri Lanka.

Overall, the gender programmes of FORUT-Norway and its partner organisations are quite robust. However, while there is a great deal of gender expertise within the family of FORUT-Norway and its partner organisations, more effort must be put into ensuring that linking and learning happens across organisations. Gender is also largely interpreted as "pertaining to women" in about half the partner organisations and the expertise that FORUT-Norway has on issues related to masculinities must be shared with partner organisations. Not all organisations are equally comfortable with the intersections between gender and sexuality, which is central to many of the key issues related to gender, for example, related to mobility, or access to education, or access to types of livelihoods. Other recommendations relevant to each specific programme have been provided in the relevant chapters.

**"Earlier, Women Were Just in a Corner of the House":
A Critical Review of FORUT's Programme on Promoting Gender Equality**

**Chapter 1
Introduction**

1.1 Programme Background

FORUT is a development organisation based in Norway. Begun in 1981, FORUT uses funds raised through campaigns and from government grants to support development activities in five countries: Sri Lanka, Nepal, India, Sierra Leone and Malawi. While FORUT works as a self-implementing agency in Sri Lanka and Sierra Leone; in India, Malawi and Nepal, it works through partner organisations. FORUT focuses on increasing economic access and securing social justice and rights for people in poverty. In particular, it focuses on four major programme areas:

- Alcohol, Drugs and Development
- Child Rights and Development
- Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
- Crisis Response and Recovery

The following is a report of an evaluation undertaken on FORUT's programme on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment.

FORUT's programme on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment is implemented in Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka through its national offices, FORUT-Sierra and FORUT-Sri Lanka, and in India through a partner organisation, the Association for Promoting Social Action (APSA). The current programme is being implemented over a five-year plan period, with core funding from NORAD, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation. The aim in undertaking this programme was to bring about gender sensitivity in the development practice of FORUT and its partners. This was done not only to bring "gender and women's empowerment to the fore as a programme as well as a cross-cutting theme", but also because "experience has... demonstrated that any pro-poor work will only be marginally successful if gender relations are not also addressed."²The primary methodology is through the formation of women's savings and credit groups, to increase access to economic resources. The collectivisation also provides social support and better opportunities to negotiate for greater rights.

²FORUT. (2009). FORUT Multi-year Application 2009-2013, Part 2. Norway.

Training in livelihood-related skill development and entrepreneurship is also provided to varying degrees in the three countries, together with information critical to women's advancement. Such information may include access to basic amenities, prevention and amelioration of gender-based violence and promotion of women's health. In preventing gender-based violence, FORUT's work on understanding the link's between alcohol, drugs and development also pays a key role. As women are increasingly empowered economically and socially, the assumption is that this can contribute to political empowerment as well, with women increasingly being able to participate in the betterment not only of themselves and their families, but their communities and society as well.

1.2 Purpose of the Evaluation

The current evaluation was designed as a mid-term evaluation, in the middle of the current agreement period between FORUT and NORAD, between 2009 and 2013. The evaluation has several purposes:

- To understand how the specific gender programme is being implemented, and the progress and impact so far at the operational level with respect to all standard project performance aspects
- To understand how gender is being mainstreamed conceptually and operationally across other development programmes in the organisations
- To contribute as a tool in project management and administrative follow up for FORUT and its partner organisations, also pointing towards any mid-course corrections that may be necessary
- To contribute towards learnings for further improving development practice through a gender perspective
- To serve as an input for further project and programme planning.³

1.3 Scope of the Evaluation

The evaluation was designed with a two-fold scope.

Firstly, it would seek an evaluation of the specific gender programme as implemented by three organisations, FORUT-Sri Lanka, FORUT-Sierra Leone, and APSA in India. To this end, the evaluation would use various qualitative methodologies to understand the extent to which the programme has been successful in working towards the following impacts by the middle of the programme period of 2009-2013.

³ FORUT. (2011). Terms of Reference for Gender Evaluation. Norway. *Internal document*

Table 1: Showing the key targets for the Programme on Gender Equality and Economic Empowerment⁴

Organisation	Targets
FORUT- Sri Lanka	Increased control and benefit from economic resources by previously 2500 economically inactive females (in 6 districts) from extremely poor families (or men in locations where the women are the sole economically active individuals in the household) in selected programme locations, by Year 5, and sustained beyond the programme period.
	>10% Reduction in the number and severity of incidents of violence by men against women in domestic disputes, in selected programme locations, by Year 5, with this reduction rate sustained and further reduced beyond the programme period
FORUT-Sierra Leone	Increased control and benefit from economic and social resources for 500 previously economically inactive females from extremely poor families in selected program locations of the north and south of Sierra Leone, and sustained beyond the programme period.
	Improved health among an estimated 5,000 women and children in 100 locations of rural Sierra Leone.
India	Increased control and benefit from economic resources by 200 plus previously economically inactive females from slum and migrant families in selected programme locations of Bangalore and Hyderabad, by 2015, and sustained beyond the programme period.

Although FORUT has not explicitly required its partner organisations to have internal mainstreaming of gender in their organisations, the evaluation was also to look into the extent to which this has been undertaken, explicitly or otherwise, within them, and suggest what improvements are required for the future. This was to be examined not

⁴ FORUT. (2009). FORUT Multi-year Application 2009-2013, Part 2. Norway.

only with respect to FORUT-Sri Lanka, FORUT-Sierra Leone, and APSA, but also to FORUT Norway itself and two more partner organisations, the Concerned for Working Children (CWC) in India and Child Workers in Nepal Concerned Centre (CWIN), Nepal.

Finally, the programme seeks to understand the extent to which gender is mainstreamed in all the institutional and outreach work undertaken by FORUT's partner organisations.

1.4 Objectives of the Evaluation

The specific objectives of the evaluation, with regard to the specific programme and the external mainstreaming of gender, as specified by FORUT were as follows:

- **Effectiveness** - To what extent the project has achieved or is likely to achieve its objective, including an analysis of processes that have facilitated or prevented this.
- **Impact** - Analysis of positive and negative effects in society, whether foreseen or not, relating to all parties affected by the project. Analysis of causes and processes to explain the impact of the project.
- **Relevance** - Overall assessment of whether the objectives of the project are still worth pursuing, including an analysis of the consistency of project design
- **Sustainability** - Assessment of the likelihood that benefits generated by the project, will continue beyond the time of the donor's involvement – i.e. durability of the success."⁵

With respect to the evaluation of internal mainstreaming of gender, the evaluation sought to understand the following:

- the distribution of women and men related to tasks and responsibilities in the organisation
- the formulation of the gender policy and the perspective of the staff on the gender policy
- responsibility for mainstreaming the gender perspective within the organisation
- further improvements required to improve gender mainstreaming.⁶

1.5 Evaluation Methodology:

The evaluation was conducted using multiple methodologies. The primary evaluator was a consultant from India with extensive experience in gender and development, and having carried out evaluations on gender and other development issues. The consultant also had knowledge on programme-based management and the result-based matrix and

⁵ FORUT. (2011). Terms of Reference for Gender Evaluation. Norway.

⁶ *ibid.*

had extensive work experience with NGOs in developing countries, including from a gender perspective.

Multiple methods of data collection were used:

- Field visits to project sites in Sri Lanka, Sierra Leone and India
- In-depth interviews with project personnel at FORUT-Sri Lanka, FORUT-Sierra Leone, and APSA
- In-depth interviews with local government officials in Matale and Monaragale districts in Sri Lanka, Port Loko and Moyamba districts in Sierra Leone and Bangalore and Hyderabad in India, including
 - police officers
 - officials of the Industrial Development Board
 - Women Development Officer
 - Science and Technology Officer
 - Human Resource Development Officer
 - District Medical Officers
 - District Medical Nurses
 - District Monitoring and Evaluation Officer
 - District in Charge of MCH Training
 - Counsellor
- Focus Group Discussions with community members, including men and women who were primary stakeholders of the programmes, local leaders, and leaders of community-based organisations in village and estate settings in Matale and Monaragale, in rural communities and health facilities of Port Loko and Moyamba districts in Sierra Leone, and urban slums in Bangalore and Hyderabad in India.
- Document reviews of
 - applications and plan documents
 - reports produced on specific issues (for example, of baseline research, ongoing programme reports, etc.)
 - monitoring and knowledge management formats
 - monthly and annual activity plans
 - budgets
 - reports of work completed, etc.
 - documents putting together relevant statistics for programmes, etc.
- Field observations of associated activities, for example,
 - computer training sessions in India
 - economic activities by women in Sri Lanka

-
- senior citizen's support centre in India
 - revival of a market in Sierra Leone

In addition to evaluating the actual gender programme, FORUT-Norway also wished to understand to what extent gender was being mainstreamed as a cross-cutting issue in the other programmes (e.g., Alcohol, Drugs and Development or Child Rights) among its partner organisations. In the case of the three partner organisations to which field visits were conducted, interviews were also conducted with the staff responsible for these programmes to understand how gender was integrated with these programmes. In the case of the two other organisations which were not included in the schedule of field visits, CWIN and CWC, a supplementary questionnaire sought to understand the ways in which gender was mainstreamed in their programmes.

The evaluation was also “to estimate the mainstreaming of a gender perspective at the institutional level in all partner organizations.” FORUT-Norway felt that it would be useful for the evaluation of such internal mainstreaming of gender to be applicable within its own organisation as well.

Due to practical considerations of logistics and expenditure, it was decided that this part of the evaluation would take place largely through a self-assessment process. This was primarily because, while three of the partner organisations were visited as part of the evaluation of the specific gender programmes, the others were not. As part of applying a similar methodology to all the organisations, a questionnaire to enable organisations to undertake a self-assessment of the internal mainstreaming of gender was designed. In all, there were 42 questions in the questionnaire, relating to different aspects of institutions, and how gender was addressed in their context. Each organisation also provided gender-disaggregated data about staffing at different levels. The Programme Coordinator of the Gender Programme in FORUT, Norway, identified a focal point person (FPP) responsible for leading the self-assessment in each partner organisation.

The guidelines specified that the focal point person would draw together a group of 8-12 staff members of the organisation, preferably two each from the senior management, middle management and junior staff/field activist levels, drawing equitably from program and administrative staff, and two from the support staff (e.g., janitors/cleaning staff, drivers, etc.) to form a focus group, whose discussions will form the basis for completing the self-assessment questionnaire. Ideally, representatives from the governance structure (Board of Directors or equivalent) would also participate in the exercise. The group would necessarily be gender-balanced. If feasible, each level

of staff could nominate the male and female representatives who would participate in the exercise. In case the organisation employed staff with alternative gender identities, the FPP could take a decision about including them (or a representative, based on the number of such employees) in the exercise with their consent obtained through a sensitive consultative process.

Data from the questionnaire were tabulated or coded as applicable and analysed to understand issues of distribution of power and responsibilities within the organisation, the applicability of equal opportunities or affirmative action on gender as required, and the sensitivity to and structural and systemic flexibility of the organisation in utilising the full potential of men and women staff for reasons of both ethical congruence and optimisation of organisational performance.

Chapter 2

A Critical Review of the Programme on Promoting Gender Equality at FORUT Sri Lanka

"Other organisations do work that they want. FORUT-Sri Lanka does work that people need." Mr. Bandula, Public Relations Officer, Divisional Police Headquarters, Matale.

2.1 Introduction

The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka is an island nation that lies off the southern coast of the Indian sub-continent. The July 2008 census put the country's population at about 21.3 million, with the majority being Sinhalese, and the largest ethnic minority, the Tamils, mainly located towards the north and east of the island. The most significant event in Sri Lanka's recent history was the end, in May 2009, of a civil war between the government and a separatist militant organisation, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), which lasted for almost 26 years. Seeking to recover the economic and social ground lost during the years of conflict, and in particular, to address the needs of over 300,000 people who were displaced by it, have been special priorities during the current programme period.

Historically, the Sri Lankan government has been amenable to social spending on health and education, and this in turn reflects itself in the impressive performance of Sri Lanka on many human development indicators like life expectancy, infant and maternal mortality and literacy. As Gunewardena (2006) points out, "Among Sri Lanka's achievements in living standards are several that impinge in a very positive way on the status of women: higher life expectancy for women since the late 1960s, low maternal mortality, parity in primary school enrolments, and higher female secondary school enrolment."⁷ According to a UN report on Gender Equality and the Millennium Development Goals published in 2002, the ratio of female to male rate of enrolment for secondary level education in Sri Lanka was 100⁸. Actual female enrolment in secondary education in 1999/2000 was 74 per cent, whereas the equivalent figure for India was 31 per cent. The ratio of female youth literacy rate to male youth literacy rate for Sri Lanka in 2002 was also 100. 96.9 per cent of the female youth between the ages of 15 and 24 were literate. Nevertheless, there are gaps which require work. According to De Soysa (2000), there is a great deal of regional variation in female literacy, and significant disparity between rural and urban female literacy. Other issues, like the rate of anaemia

⁷ Gunewardena, D. (2006). Exploring Gender Wage Gaps in Sri Lanka: A Quantile Regression Approach. IDRC. Paper presented during the 5th Poverty and Economic Policy Research Network General Meeting, June 18-22, 2006, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

⁸ UNIFEM (2002). Progress of the World's Women 2002: Gender Equality and the Millennium Development Goals

among women (65 per cent) are also often glossed over⁹.

According to the analysis made by FORUT prior to the design of the programme, women have limited access to and control over economic resources, which means that the vast majority of women, whether single or married, “are economically dependent upon men, either husbands, fathers, or elder brothers. This situation is perpetuated by patrilineal inheritance practices.... This dependency also perpetuates a ‘culture of silence’ when it comes to other aspects of gender inequality such as sexual and gender based violence.”¹⁰ Within the larger picture of the vulnerabilities of Sri Lanka's women, the special vulnerabilities of certain groups like war-widows, internally displaced people and migrant workers should be specially noted.

The FORUT programme on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Sri Lanka was designed with two major components, the Gender Economic Empowerment (GEE) Programme and the Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Programme. In the latter half of the 2000-2010, after about 25 years of development work, FORUT Sri Lanka decided to fundamentally alter its mode of functioning, for multiple reasons, including high administration costs, and some instances of inefficient and/or improper financial management by some of the local partners. The shift from the project to the programme approach required that FORUT Sri Lanka undertake very radical changes as smoothly as possible. In the project approach, FORUT-Sri Lanka primarily worked as a funder and direct implementer of development projects, many of which were designed around microfinance and the construction of development-related infrastructure, including roads, schools, toilets for sanitation programmes, etc. After the 2003-2007 project cycle, 2007-2008 served as a transitional phase. During this period, local partners were provided with support to phase themselves out of linkages with FORUT, by strengthening revolving funds, and linking them to other donors and networks working on similar issues. The Gender Programme was significantly recast in the new phase, beginning 2009. The Gender Economic Programme and the Programme against GBV were designed with an emphasis on adopting models that worked to empower communities to understand and address these issues at a local level, with a view to promoting sustainability from the very outset. The programme is implemented with very limited staff. Three staff members direct the programme at the Head Office level, a Gender Advisor, and Programme Coordinators for the two programmes. At the district levels too, each programme has a coordinator, and an intern assigned to it.

⁹ De Soysa, N. (2000). The Truth Behind Sri Lanka's Gender Development Statistics. Third World Network. Accessed at <http://www.twinside.org.sg/title/2093.htm>, July 30, 2011.

¹⁰ FORUT. (2009). FORUT Multi-year Application 2009-2013, Part 2. Norway.

FINDINGS OF THE EVALUATION OF THE GENDER ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME

2.2 Effectiveness of the Gender Economic Empowerment Programme

The terms of reference specified that the effectiveness of the programme was to be studied - or "To what extent the project has achieved or is likely to achieve its objective, including an analysis of the processes that have facilitated or prevented this."

Overall, the GEE programme can be said to have been very effective for multiple reasons. The strategic objective of the programme was the "Advancement in the status of women and gender equality". Within this broad objective, 2000 women were to benefit from increased control of and benefit from economic resources, by being organised into 210 women's collectives. Of these 500 were to become economically active, and at least the same number of men were to demonstrate an improved understanding of the benefits of women's rights to economic participation. Six Livelihood Facilitation Centres were to be established, one in each district.¹¹

By any standards, the project has been effective and on-track in achieving its objectives. Table 2 shows the number of primary stakeholders in the programme, who have benefited from the interventions. 2048 women had already been reached by the middle of Year 3 of the project and organised into collectives, through which they are able to save and access credit. There were some changes that were forced in the programme due to the change in government policies in the final stages of the conflict between government forces and Tamil separatists, and in the immediate post-conflict period. According to these changes, NGOs were allowed very limited access to the sensitive districts of Jaffna and Vavuniya, and in particular, encouraged to do only capital-intensive reconstruction and infrastructure-related projects, with empowerment-related and small-investment based projects being the exclusive prerogative of the government. This meant that the programme could not be expanded in the second year as planned in Vavuniya district. Consequently, the programme is continuing with the 17 women's collectives that were formed in Year 1 in this district. In spite of this, a total of 206 collectives of the 210 envisaged had been formed by the middle of Year 2.

¹¹ FORUT. (2009). RBM-5 Gender Projects. *Internal Process Document*.

Table 2: Showing the number of women's collectives and primary stakeholders in the GEE programme¹²

Sl. No.	District	No. of Women's Collectives	No. of Primary Stakeholders
1	Anuradhapura	41	370
2	Jaffna	43	423
3	Matale	35	353
4	Monaragala	35	370
5	Puttlam	35	362
6	Vavuniya*	17	170
Total	6	206	2048

(*Figures for 2009. The programme could not be expanded in Year 2 in Vavuniya because of the conflict and changes in government policy in the post-conflict situation)

The programme far exceeded its objective of making 500 of the 2000 women economically active. According to internal monitoring documents, the programme was able to provide training and encourage almost all the women in the savings and credit groups to undertake some form of economic activity. Table 3 shows a summary of number of beneficiaries and the grants disbursed in 2009 and 2010, drawn from the monitoring documents for Anuradhapura, Jaffna, Matale, Monaragala, Puttalam and Vavuniya districts.

Table 3: Showing the grant disbursements and number of participants in the GEE programme in Years 2009 and 2010.

Districts	Grant Years	Number of Beneficiaries	Grant Amounts Disbursed (in LKR)
Anuradhapura	2009 1st Round	178	701,982.00
	2009 2nd Round	34	132,740.00
	2010	192	1,004,519.00
Subtotal		404	1,839,241.00
Jaffna	2009 1st Round	179	697,200.00
	2009 2nd Round	159	200,000.00
	2010	244	1,200,000.00

¹² Table created from map showing distribution of GEE programme, an undated internal process document of FORUT Sri Lanka.

Subtotal		582	2,097,200.00
Matale	2009 1st Round	170	700,000.00
	2009 2nd Round	68	200,000.00
	2010	183	900,000.00
Subtotal		421	1,800,000.00
Monaragala	2009 1st Round	189	720,517.48
	2009 2nd Round	94	200,000.00
	2010	181	1,001,415.00
Subtotal		464	1,921,932.48
Puttalam	2009 1st Round	58	144,225.00
	2009 2nd Round	169	703,346.98
	2010	194	944,509.50
Subtotal		421	1,792,081.48
Vavuniya*	2009 1st Round	170	701,000.00
	2009 2nd Round	108	201,369.00
Subtotal		278	902,369.00
TOTAL			10,352,823.96

(The programme could not be expanded in Year 2 in Vavuniya because of the conflict and changes in government policy in the post-conflict situation)

While internal monitoring documents do not provide hard data for the number of men who have improved their understanding of the benefits of women's economic participation, a number of men participated in the focus group discussions during the evaluation. These participants, as well as adult men met during visits to sample home enterprises, expressed satisfaction that the women, usually their wives, were economically active, and able to contribute to household expenses.

Many threads of effectiveness can be traced in this overall picture of achievement.

2.2.1 Conceptualisation:

The learnings of FORUT-Sri Lanka's previous experience with microfinance fed into the design of the new Gender Economic Empowerment Programme. Reviews of the earlier

programme had revealed that there were some flaws that needed to be addressed. For instance, several local partners through whom the organisation had administered the microfinance component had focused very strongly on earning profits and minimising risk. Consequently, often loans were given to people who already had some economic means and had the wherewithal to repay, rather than those who were very poor. *The shift to the programme approach was combined with an increased emphasis on reaching the very poor, and focusing on an empowerment approach. In this phase, the Gender Economic Empowerment Programme (GEE) experimented with moving beyond microfinance to building entrepreneurship skills and support to set up small businesses. It also collaborated with the Programme against GBV in many areas, in that the community discussions around gender roles and stereotypes helped to increase support for and reduce opposition towards women experimenting with non-traditional roles by participating in the GEE programme.*

2.2.2 Effectiveness in Stakeholder Selection:

The GEE programme drew on the strengths of multiple stakeholders, including individuals in the community, community-based organisations, the government, NGO functionaries and to a certain extent, private business. Liaising between these different elements contributed to the effectiveness of the programme. The stakeholders of the programme included:

- **Economically inactive women, and to a lesser extent, men:** The primary stakeholders of the programme were economically inactive women, i.e., women who had no history of engaging in independent economic activity except as unpaid family workers. In a smaller number of cases, where women were economically active and functioning as the "sole breadwinner", economically inactive men were targeted, because of evidence from the field that when such men become economically active, this contributes to improved gender relations in the household. FORUT-Sri Lanka's situational analysis found that "Men suffer more psychologically in terms of lack of self-esteem as displaced 'bread winners' and women who have contributed to family survival and maintenance have been compulsorily 'domesticated' without resources."
 - **Women's Collectives and Divisional and District Level Committees:** The primary stakeholders were organised into women's collectives, which assisted with implementation, monitoring, creation of support systems and trouble shooting at the local level. A sub-section of these committees was elected to committees at the divisional and district level, which performed these functions at these levels.

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- **FORUT GEE Programme Team:** FORUT-Sri Lanka staff were the main secondary stakeholders. At the head office level, they were primarily responsible for conceptualisation of the baseline survey and the programme design, national and local level advocacy, and liaison with government and private actors, troubleshooting during initial implementation, preparation of IEC and training materials, identifying flaws at the end of the first year and making mid-course corrections, and monitoring the programme on an ongoing basis, in addition to reporting. FORUT-Sri Lanka staff, at the district level, were responsible for carrying out the baseline survey, assisting with the conceptualisation of the programme, selecting the primary stakeholders who would be direct participants in the programme, organising the local level implementation of the programme, including organising trainings, helping to source grants in kind and liaising with local level officials, and ensuring local level monitoring and reporting to the national office.
 - **Government officials at the national and local levels:** The programme was designed to support and be supported by existing government programmes and resources. As such, government officials at various levels functioned as secondary stakeholders, and assisted with identifying the villages in which the programme could be implemented, providing technical information and training resources, issuing necessary clearances and licenses and assisting with marketing to a certain extent.
 - **Private business agencies:** To a lesser extent, the programme also drew on some private agencies for technical support and training.
 - **Local community leaders:** Implementing any programme in the community requires the tacit or obvious blessing of local community leaders. Local community leaders, elected and traditional, provided such support. They were also important stakeholders in the ways in which they tried to influence the programme, for example, in the selection of the beneficiaries of the grants given under the programme.

2.2.3 Effectiveness of the Strategies of the GEE Programme

The strategies of the GEE programme included:

- **Collection of Baseline Data:** Prior to commencing the intervention, the programme collected baseline information on income, access to credit, time spent on productive versus reproductive work, awareness related to barriers to and opportunities for economic activity, collectivisation of women, etc. from the six districts where the programme was sought to be implemented: Anuradhapura, Jaffna, Matale, Monaragala, Puttlam and Vavuniya. A minimum

of 150 women (in Jaffna) and a maximum of 209 women (in Monaragala) were surveyed, making a total of 1129.

633 women (56%) of those surveyed earned no income at all, while the rest earned a meagre income (averaging about LKR 1300 per month) from casual work. 59 per cent of the women surveyed said that they had never received loans for any purpose, while the rest had received loans for various family-related needs. The most loans had come from community-based organisations (14 per cent), while nearly 11 per cent had accessed loans from the government's Samurdhi Poverty Alleviation Programme. However, only 1.4 per cent reported that the loans were used for the family's economic activity like farming. On an average, the women reported spending nearly 11 hours every day in reproductive work, and about 4 hours per day in productive work. In comparison, they reported that their husbands spent about 4 hours per day on reproductive work. Examples of such work to which husbands contributed were childcare, household cleaning, shopping and other chores. 91 per cent reported that no childcare facilities were available at preschool or daycare centres in their vicinity. About 46 per cent were aware of the barriers operating against women's participation in economic activity, whereas the rest were unaware of such structural or systemic barriers. Nearly 86 per cent were unaware of economic opportunities for women to earn an income. Women identified the barriers as lack of money, skills, time and family support. Those who reported opportunities said that these were the availability of skills and time. No women in the survey sample were members of collectives, had attended meetings held for women in their communities, or had any approved business plans with start-up capital available¹³.

- **Selection of villages:** The GEE programme also aligned itself with the Poverty Reduction Strategic Plan of the government. Under the 'Gama Negume' (Village Rejuvenation) programme, the government had listed villages in need of support. The villages in which the programme was implemented was selected from this list. While some locations were areas familiar from previous project cycles, some of the locations selected are very remote, supported by no other NGOs.

¹³ FORUT Sri Lanka. (Undated). Gender Economic Empowerment Programme 2009-2013: Indicators and Baseline Values. *Internal process document*.

Table 4: Showing the distribution of divisions and villages where the GEE programme is implemented¹⁴

Sl. No.	District	No. of Divisions	No. of Villages
1	Anuradhapura	3	15
2	Jaffna	2	21
3	Matale	3	12
4	Monaragala	2	15
5	Puttlam	2	16
6	Vavuniya*	1	10
Total	6	13	89

(*Figures for 2009. The programme could not be expanded in Year 2 in Vavuniya because of the conflict and changes in government policy in the post-conflict situation)

- **Selection of participants:** The programme targeted women who had no history of engaging in independent economic activity. *The purpose of this approach was to demonstrate that women with no history of economic activity could, with technical training and support for business planning, set up a range of successful micro-businesses, even when the capital support provided was very limited.*

While the programme focused primarily on women who were very poor, some participants were also drawn from homes which had reasonable resources. To some extent, this was because of prevailing biases, from the earlier microfinance programmes, of working with people who already had some means showing an influence. Thus in Year 1, 75 per cent of the participants selected for the programme were from economically very deprived sections. The team made a definite attempt to address this matter, and in Year 2, the number of participants from these sections went up to 95 per cent of the participants.

However, sourcing some number of the participants even from slightly better off households also served a useful purpose – of focusing attention on the systemic and institutional limitations operating because of gender, even beyond the limitations imposed by poverty. Thus, even these participants in the programme had no independent ownership of economic resources, no independent engagement in economic activity, no savings, no business-related skills, and little

¹⁴ Table created from map showing distribution of GEE programme, an undated internal process document of FORUT Sri Lanka.

decision making power in the household, and hence were justified beneficiaries from the programme.

- **Creating women's collectives:** Women are organised into collectives. Apart from saving with the group, and taking loans from the collective savings, they are also able to discuss issues on which they need support, and obtain advice and strength from the group. The group meets periodically according to a fixed schedule at a designated meeting place. In all 206 such collectives have been formed.
- **Conducting market research:** In each district where the programme was implemented, FORUT-Sri Lanka carried out market research about economic activities for which the local markets showed potential, and compiled this information into a booklet.
- **Providing exposure to a range of possible economic activities, and technical and logistical support information:** Through different methods, women are provided with exposure to a range of economic activities. FORUT-Sri Lanka has prepared IEC materials on potential livelihood promotion activities, including information on various kinds of machineries (with photographs, names of suppliers and contact information). Profiles of resource organisations that can provide technical support, along with booklets with technical information on different kinds of economic activities (e.g., poultry rearing, mushroom cultivation, etc.) to assist women entrepreneurs, have been prepared. *An official of the Industrial Development Board pointed out the Technical Support Manual, produced in Sinhala and Tamil, was the first of its kind in Sri Lanka, and the IDB had assisted FORUT-Sri Lanka with collecting information for the manual. "The Minister for Economic Development was very appreciative of the manual, and he asked his officers why it had never occurred to them to bring out a comprehensive manual like this in all the years of their work," he said.* The GEE team also collects information about the documentation necessary for registration. Information about different banks and the interest rates at which they provide loans to entrepreneurs has also been collated.
- **Creating access to technical training and technical support for different kinds of economic activities:** FORUT-Sri Lanka collaborates with a number of government and private training units to provide women with technical training in various kinds of economic activities.

These include:

- Department of Small Industries
 - Export Development Board
 - Industrial Development Board
 - Ministry of Agriculture
 - Ministry of Fisheries
 - Provincial Departments of Animal Production and Health (Veterinary Departments)
 - Small Enterprise Development Unit at the Divisional Secretary's office
 - Vidhaata – Technical Training Unit under the Ministry of Science and Technology
 - Vocational Training Authority
- Private agencies include:
- Agromart Foundation
 - JKS Pro
 - LDT
 - SEED
 - Businesses that source flowers and cut foliage

The trainings organised by FORUT-Sri Lanka for the participants in its GEE programme related directly to the setting up of small businesses, including:

- Trainings related to Food Products and Agro-businesses:
 - Production of Ice-Cream and Yoghurt
 - Production of Jams and Chutneys (Processing of Fruits and Vegetables)
 - Confectionery Training (e.g., Manufacture of milk toffee)
 - Production of Snack Food Products (e.g., savoury mixture, *murukku*, etc.)
 - Manufacture of Products from Jackfruit
 - Manufacture of Palmyra Products
 - Basic Packaging Technology (for packaging of spices, cereals and pulses)
 - Ice Packing Technology
 - Mushroom Cultivation
 - Setting up and Running Plant Nurseries and Cut Foliage Businesses
 - Poultry keeping
 - Livestock rearing
- Trainings related to Sewing and Apparel Manufacture
 - Dressmaking

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- Manufacture of bras
 - Manufacture of handbags
 - Manufacture of shoes
 - Manufacture of baby clothes and shoes
 - Manufacture of mosquito nets
 - Trainings related to manufacture of other household products:
 - Manufacture of household soaps and detergents
 - Manufacture of candles
 - Manufacture of Ikal brooms
 - Trainings related to other commercial products
 - Manufacture of incense sticks
 - Manufacture of artificial flowers
 - Manufacture of envelopes and paper bags for pharmacies and groceries
 - Manufacture of cane and reed-based products
 - Brickmaking

Mr. Rajakaruna of the Industrial Development Board explained that at their trainings, they provided participants with demonstrations of technical processes for various enterprises, shared information about technology and machinery, and guided them on easier options in manufacturing processes. In addition, they also provided an orientation into the legal aspects of starting a micro business. For example, for participants interested in manufacturing food products, the trainings addressed issues like hygiene standards, packaging and labeling, legal instruments like the Food Act and the Consumer Protection Act, as well as the inspections necessary from the Public Health Inspector's Office. Ms. Indika Jayasimha, the Science and Technology Officer, of the government's Vidhaata Resource Centre, said that her organisation had collaborated with FORUT-Sri Lanka to provide training in dressmaking, candlemaking, mushroom cultivation, vegetable dehydration and preservation, commercial baking, and drying flowers and leaves to make cards and decorative items out of these. The Human Resources Development Officer attached to the Divisional Secretariat also said that they were able to assist participants in the GEE programme with productivity training, teaching them how to minimise waste and how to optimise use of the available resources.

- **Assisting women to choose the business activities that best suit their interests and abilities and make business plans:** Women are helped to use strategies like SWOT Analysis to choose the appropriate business. They determine what the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats are related to carrying out three or four

businesses of interest to them. *For example, in one such SWOT Analysis carried out for Mrs. Vitara in Matale for establishing a poultry farming micro business, the strengths were the enthusiasm of the participant, the support of the family, and some experience in the family with taking care of domestic animals. A weakness was that a previous experiment with micro business in the family had failed. The opportunities were that there was space available in the family home to rear poultry and a local market was available for the produce (eggs and chickens). One threat was that as it was a comparatively easy micro business to set up, there would always be competition. Some amount of travel would also be involved to buy feed and medicine, and reach the produce to the local market.* The SWOT Analysis helped the participants think through their reasons for selecting a particular micro business and the support they would need for this (e.g., raw materials or training). Using this methodology and repeated discussions with the participants, the GEE district team helps them choose the activity which they think best suits their strengths and opportunities, with threats that can be managed. For example, tailoring may not be an option for a particular participant because the grant is insufficient to buy a sewing machine, or because there are already as many tailors in the village as the local market can support.

- **Making a business plan:** The GEE team helps each participant prepare a business plan once they have chosen what they will do to earn an income, so that they have clarity on what to do, how to do it and when. *Elements of the business plan include descriptions of the business, the technical feasibility, the marketing feasibility, the management plan, the plan for raising financial resources, the financial flowchart, calculations of recurring operational costs, templates for maintaining an income/expenditure statement, formulae for calculating the breakeven point and so on. Because of this systematic approach, even within a year of starting, more than 75 per cent of the micro businesses are successful.*
- **Provision of a microgrant:** The women who have been selected for the GEE model programme are provided with a microgrant. *In this experiment, the capital support provided by FORUT Sri Lanka averaged about LKR 5000 (about USD 45). Less than 20 participants in the entire programme (5 per cent) received grants of LKR 10,000 (about USD 90). In one instance, a participant insisted that she only needed Rs. 1,500 for daily capital for a vegetable retail business, and in an example at the other extreme, capital of LKR 35,000 was provided to help set up a clothing retail business. The microgrant support was provided in the form of machinery (e.g., sealing or labeling machines), or goods to trade, and almost never as cash, so **the chances of***

diversion of funds to meet immediate consumption expenses was almost completely negated.

- **Ongoing business counselling:** The team assists participants in the programme with ongoing technical support. For example, they help participants who run petty shops to identify fast-moving items, and items consumed in larger volumes, to increase their profits. They also assist them to identify places where goods can be bought cheaper or in bulk, to reduce costs. In the case of participants who opted for soap and candle-making, the initial attempts produced goods of inferior quality which proved difficult to sell. The team helped to source technical support from private agencies. Faults were identified and rectified and the quality of the products improved substantially, with resulting higher sales. *“The follow-up and monitoring is a key factor for the success of the programme,” said Ms. Vasana Kaluarachi, Women Development Officer of the government at Matale. “There is lots of follow-up. This is very important.” The officers also said that this was a key difference between government programmes and the FORUT-Sri Lanka programme.*
- **Assistance with official procedures and paperwork:** None of the participants have had any prior business experience and require handholding through essential bureaucratic procedures related to running a business, especially official registration of the business. In Sri Lanka, this involves two processes – registering the business with the local administrative body called the Pradesika Sabha, and registering the name of the business with the Divisional Secretariat. FORUT-Sri Lanka helps the participants by collecting the official forms for this purpose, assisting them with filling the forms and submitting them and then with follow-ups. In the case of those participants preparing food products for sale, they assist with the business compliance procedures required by the Public Health authorities.
- **Establishment of Livelihood Facilitation Centres:** The organisation is establishing Livelihood Facilitation Centres, which serve multiple purposes. They serve as information centres, with IEC materials related to setting up businesses available to peruse and photocopy. Samples of useful machinery are displayed, as are samples of products. These are also available for sale from the centre, which thus also serves as a sales outlet, and helps women entrepreneurs living in remote villages reach a wider market with their products. A child corner provides childcare support for women who visit. The centre also serves as a training space. Some centres rent out their training spaces, raising valuable resources to offset the cost of the centre.

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- **Emphasis on organisational learning:** The FORUT-Sri Lanka team made an exceptional effort to learn about working through the empowerment model, and to work on livelihood issues for the GEE programme. In addition to visiting a number of government departments and private entities in Sri Lanka, the team also learned from model organisations like SEWA in Ahmedabad in India, and applied their learnings as they developed the programme.

2.2.4 Effectiveness of the Monitoring Mechanism of the GEE Programme:

The monitoring mechanism of the GEE programme is decentralised and participatory. Women are organised into collectives at the village level. In every division, there are about ten to twelve such village level women's collectives, which meet regularly, record attendance of participants and maintain meeting minutes. Representatives from the village level committees make up another committee at the divisional level, which collects information from the village level and collates it for use for progress review and planning at the divisional level. The district level committee is made up of representatives from the divisional level, who help to monitor the programme at the district level, and obtain feedback from the grassroots levels, and transmit decisions necessary for the success of the programme at the mesolevel.

The FORUT-Sri Lanka District level GEE team collaborates with the District Level Committee, which also coordinates with government officials and other service providers. They meet once a month, to develop a monthly action plan. The action planning for the month determines the schedule of monthly meetings at village, division and district levels for the various committees and sub-committees, the schedule of trainings (empowerment and technical), assigns particular responsibilities and carries out reviews of progress. The District Programme Coordinator collects information from all three levels, using the Results-Based Matrix as a yardstick to measure progress and presents a monthly Amalgamated Progress Report to the head office. These are reviewed by the Gender Advisor and the Programme Coordinator at the Head Office, who again use the Results-Based Matrix submitted to FORUT Norway, to determine the extent to which the programme is on track.

The need for different kinds of handholding support are identified through both the design of the programme and the monitoring that happens at different levels, and these are then provided within the community, or through the facilitation of the GEE team or through external technical experts. Government officials observed that this has contributed to the success of the programme. For example, the Industrial Development Board is mandated to carry out workshops to provide technical training to assist people

to become small and medium entrepreneurs, and they do so regularly. However, in the absence of the kind of ongoing handholding support of the kind provided by FORUT-Sri Lanka, the conversion rate from those who attend trainings to those who actually become entrepreneurs is low. *As Mr. Rajakaruna of the IDB pointed out, “FORUT-Sri Lanka’s success rate is higher than ours. We train more people, but the equipment and other support you give is valuable, so more of your people use the training and actually become entrepreneurs.”*

2.3 Impact of the Gender Economic Empowerment Programme

The evaluation was to take into account the positive and negative effects of the programme in society, whether foreseen or not, and to explain the impact in terms of causes and processes. The programme has demonstrated that, with the appropriate support and strategies, previously economically inactive women can become economically active, in a relatively short period of time. Some of the major impacts of the GEE programmes are listed below:

- **Increased ability to earn an income, and increased financial independence:** Women valued the skill training they had received and the support they had received to earn incomes through home-based businesses. “Through the FORUT programme, I received skill development training. I am engaged in dressmaking, bagmaking, mosquito net-making and batik production. I am no longer totally dependent on my husband financially,” said Chitravati Kumara. Mrs. Ratnayake, another participant, said, “Earlier I had no money. Now I do. When various needs arise, I am able to meet them without asking my husband.”

Dayanagi Thakumari shared how critical the participation in the FORUT programme had been for regaining her confidence and sense of self after some difficult personal times. “I was married, with one daughter, when my husband took another partner. I came back to live with my parents. There was a court case going on for my divorce, and I had to go to the courts regularly. On one such visit, I met with an accident and hurt my leg badly. My child was also with my husband. I was very depressed. The FORUT District Coordinator and intern encouraged me to join the programme. I underwent skill training, and FORUT assisted me to start a dressmaking business, which became successful. On an average, I earn between LKR 6,000 and 7,000 a month. Now my brothers want to help me to improve my business and are constructing a small shop for me. I have been able to overcome my depression significantly.”

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- **Increased ability to contribute financially to the household:** In community after community, women confirmed that participating in the GEE programme had increased their ability to contribute economically to the household. In particular, women valued being able to contribute towards the education of their children. “I am able to spend more for my children’s education. My daughter is studying for her A levels and I want her to go to college. Now I encourage my children to participate in sports activities, because I can afford to buy their sports kits.”

 - **Demonstration of an extensive range of economic activities:** The programme has been able to demonstrate that women can earn an income by engaging in an extensive range of economic activities. A listing of the kinds of activities currently being undertaken by participants in the programme is given below:
 - Poultry farming
 - Pig rearing
 - Goat rearing
 - Pisciculture
 - Floriculture
 - Market gardening of foliage plants for cut foliage
 - Market gardening of vegetables
 - Mushroom cultivation
 - Paddy cultivation
 - Harvesting and sale of betel leaves
 - Harvesting, processing and sale of palmyra products
 - Production and sale of food products
 - Snacks
 - Breakfast foods
 - Ice-cream
 - Yoghurt
 - Confectionery (like milk toffee and sesame sweets)
 - Processing and sale of coconut oil
 - Production and packaging of rice flour
 - Packaging and sale of spices
 - Packaging and sale of tea
 - Packaging and sale of coffee
 - Packaging and sale of cereals
 - Packaging and sale of pulses and peanuts
 - Packaging and sale of soy nuggets
 - Packaging and sale of dry fish

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- Running micro-retail stores (petty shops)
 - Retail sale of firewood
 - Retail sale of coconuts
 - Retail sale of exercise books
 - Retail sale of vegetables
 - Retail sale of fish
 - Retail sale of fruits
 - Retail sale of phone cards
 - Retail sale of plastic items
 - Retail sale of aluminium utensils
 - Fabric painting
 - Book binding
 - Tailoring and dressmaking
 - Manufacture and sale of baby clothes and baby shoes
 - Manufacture and sale of pillowcases
 - Manufacture and sale of bras
 - Manufacture and sale of shoes and footwear
 - Manufacture and sale of other leather products
 - Manufacture and sale of mosquito nets
 - Manufacture and sale of schoolbags
 - Manufacture and sale of incense sticks
 - Manufacture and sale of brooms
 - Manufacture and sale of artificial flowers and vases
 - Manufacture and sale of flower garlands
 - Manufacture and sale of paper bags for pharmacies
 - Manufacture and sale of grocery bags
 - Manufacture and sale of kitchen utensils made of coconut shells
 - Manufacture and sale of candles
 - Manufacture and sale of lamp wicks
 - Lunch sheet packaging
 - Manufacture and sale of cloth rugs
 - Manufacture and sale of soap and household detergents
 - Manufacture and sale of oilcake
 - Manufacture and sale of wall hangers
 - Manufacture and sale of cane and reed products
 - Manufacture and sale of costume jewellery
 - Manufacture and sale of brass craft items
 - Manufacture and sale of wood craft items

- Manufacture and sale of other handicraft items (e.g., made of coconut shell)
- Running a cycle repair business
- Running a tea stall
- Running a grinding mill business
- Running a make up salon
- Working as masons
- Cement/concrete business

The extensive product differentiation and the use of a collaborative, rather than competitive, business model means that several women are able to make a living through fairly simple economic activity, within a small local market.

- **Reaching government resources to previously unreached communities:**
Through the intervention of the GEE programme, several government resources, which were previously inaccessible for women at the village level due to structural and systemic reasons, are now reaching them.

A case in point is the service provided by the Industrial Development Board. Mr. Rajakaruna, a Deputy Director with the Board, admitted that prior to collaborating with the GEE team of FORUT-Sri Lanka, it had not occurred to them that they could work with women from rural areas and estates as possible clients for their services. “We typically work with small and medium industries. And we only have an office and staff at the district level, not at the divisional or village levels. So though we have services, we don’t have the resources to go to the village level. By linking with FORUT-Sri Lanka, we have been able to identify needs at the village level for our support, discuss with communities and individuals, and find solutions. We also recognise that sometimes people find government offices and officers unapproachable. Through the collaboration, people attend our programmes and come and ask for support. Now, in some rural areas, people have developed the confidence to approach us directly. We have also changed. Our attitude now is that whether the business is small or large, the question is whether it can produce a marketable item that caters to consumer satisfaction.”

- **Increased Demand for Training:** With evidence of increased income among the participants in the programme, women who were initially suspicious about the programme and declined the opportunity to participate in it, or women who did not receive an opportunity because theirs was not a village selected for the programme are approaching FORUT-Sri Lanka for training support. This is confirmed by government officials too. *According to Mrs. Vasana Kaluarachi,*

the Women Development Officer at the Divisional Secretariat, “There is a huge demand from areas that are not covered to join the programme. They are putting pressure on us as well.” The GEE team is now organising training for this extended group of potential women entrepreneurs; however, the women are being charged a fee for this training. What is more, some of the ‘model’ participants are now serving as trainers to this new group of entrepreneurs.

- **Plans for Expansion, and Recognition by Government Bodies:** Already, according to assessments by FORUT's GEE team, more than 75 per cent of the businesses have broken even, given the very small capital investment in most cases. Hence, many participants in the programme are thinking of expanding further. Although government bodies like the Industrial Development Board assisted with the technical training for the programme, they were initially very skeptical. However, the programme has proved itself and now this body, as well as the Central Bank, are convinced about the viability of the FORUT-Sri Lanka model and are willing to support the programme. Consequently, in Matale district, 172 women’s business plans have been sent to the Central Bank to apply for funds for expansion, and the IDB now invites FORUT-facilitated women entrepreneurs to participate in the district level trade fairs, where they can exhibit their products and reach more customers. Earlier, these exhibitions were restricted to small and medium entrepreneurs; however, now the IDB has provided an opportunity for the women who operate micro-businesses with support from the GEE programme to exhibit their products and learn about the standards expected by the market. About ten entrepreneurs have reached a level where they have paid Rs. 1000 to register themselves with the Small and Medium Industries Board.
- **Seeking out new resources, and setting higher standards for themselves:** Even in a short span of one and a half years, the confidence of participants in the GEE programme that there are resources and opportunities to be explored has increased. This is a big change as at the beginning, the GEE team had to do a lot of work to convince the women to even consider participating in the programme, before any technical support could be provided. As the Women Development Officer at the Matale Divisional Secretariat pointed out, “The confidence of the women has increased. They have stopped coming to us as the only source of government support, and are able to go out and search and seek out more resources. The GEE programme has created a big impact.” Also, after starting very small, to cater to a very local market, some participants are now

considering making products that have to meet more demanding standards. As Ms. Rajapakse, Human Resources Development Officer, points out, “Participating in Trade Exhibitions helps the women to identify faults in quality, but it also helps them identify new markets.”

- **Influencing government policy and practice:** The Economic Ministry of the government is launching a new programme called “Divineguma” to encourage the creation of one million new home-based businesses to promote self-employment and livelihoods. This programme has been influenced significantly by the success of the FORUT-Sri Lanka GEE programme, as was acknowledged by several government officers during the evaluation. As one official said, “Earlier, we only provided technical support. Now, we are going to give business development support as well as equipment through grants. We are copying from you. We have taken over the model because we can see it works.”

At this point, it is sufficiently early in the programme that it is difficult to trace negative impacts of the programme. The workload of women has gone up. However, at this stage, they do not view this as a negative, because of the increased income and improved status in the family as a consequence.

2.4 Challenges of the Gender Economic Empowerment Programme

Nevertheless, the programme had to overcome several challenges to achieve the impact that it has had, and it might be useful to list them.

- **Selection of participants in the ‘model’ programme:** The programme aimed at selecting women who were not only poor, but also marginalised in other ways, e.g., widows, women with disabilities, single mothers, etc. In practice, especially in Year 1, some of the biases operating from the earlier microfinance programme, in staff members at the field level, led to the selection of women with some resources. Another reason for this slightly skewed selection was that FORUT-Sri Lanka was implementing this programme in many villages where it already had an ongoing relationship. It was difficult to sideline certain women who had been providing ongoing cooperation for the activities of the organisation for a long time. According to one of the senior staff members of the programme, “There was about 10 per cent favouritism in the first year.” However, this was identified as a weakness by the leadership by the end of Year 1, and in the second year, this error was largely rectified. Moreover, this need

not necessarily be seen as ‘favouritism’ – to include a few opinion leaders may have been a strategic necessity for the success of the programme.

- **Lack of prior experience in engaging in independent economic activity:** While women have traditionally helped in a number of the household’s economic activities, for example, in farming related activities like weeding, transplanting, winnowing, watering, etc., women participants in the programme had not engaged in economic activities which required them to establish contact with the outside world, spend some significant time outside the household, etc. Hence, a lot of motivation and training was necessary before the women could be provided with the specific technical and business planning-related training necessary for implementing the programme. *Also there was some amount of suspicion about what the benefits were going to be for FORUT-Sri Lanka from this new economic activity. As one participant in the programme confessed, “Initially we were reluctant to do this work and participated in the programme only because you followed up so much. Now we realise that you are not getting anything out of this, and all the money I earn is for me.”*

Government officials acknowledged that understanding this background and proactively addressing it this was one of the major reasons for the success of the FORUT programme. As Ms. Sepalika Rajapakse, a Human Resources Development Officer at the Divisional level acknowledges, “FORUT-Sri Lanka works very hard at changing the attitude of the people. This is very important. People don’t know about their own strengths and weaknesses. Through this programme, women get to know about their own strengths. Then they are motivated, ‘Look, there is a way for you to get ahead.” This was echoed by Mr. Rajakaruna of the IDB who said, “Earlier, the attitude was one which looked for handouts. Now these women are mentally changed. They want to do something and earn. They want to stand on their own feet.”

- **Lack of initial support from family, especially husbands:** For various reasons, families were not always supportive, especially initially. *There were concerns about whether care of the family would suffer, and husbands worried about whether it would reflect badly on their images as providers for the family. Women, too, continue to be very particular about fulfilling their traditional gender roles as caregivers, no matter what the burden, partly because that has been their traditional perception of themselves, and partly because they do not wish to attract any blame from the family or community. Hence, encouraging*

them to learn to share household tasks has been a challenge. While generally true, this has also been particularly true in the case of many women from the Muslim community.

- **Lack of a voice:** With no independent access to economic resources, and consequently, little decision-making power, women who were invited to participate in the programme needed a lot of support to help them learn to trust their own judgements about business choices, develop a voice, etc.
- **Ambiguous support from former and current local partners:** Former and current local partners of FORUT-Sri Lanka had some reservations about the programme. Some objections were related to the fact that the FORUT-Sri Lanka itself was going to implement the programme; while the partners wanted the organisation to continue to play the role of a funder and allow them to do the implementation. Secondly, they were not happy with the decision to give grants as part of the programme. They felt that if the women were given grants, they would not take loans from the MFIs.
- **Limitations to expansion and securing economies of scale:** While the GEE programme have achieved an enviable degree of success within one and a half years, with 75 per cent of the women having broken even and earning a valuable income, it is important to remember that most of these are micro businesses, catering to very local markets, and the incomes earned are small, from LKR 3-10,000 per month. Participants usually lack the capacity to produce more than a certain small amount of goods, and lack skills related to adjusting elements like pricing for positioning according market variations.
- **Inability to implement the programme in post-conflict areas:** The scope of the GEE programme as originally envisaged included the Jaffna and Vavuniya districts. However, in the post-conflict context, the government has imposed certain restrictions on the kinds of work NGOs can undertake in these areas, with permission being granted largely for humanitarian work, usually involving large capital outlays for the development of infrastructure. Since the GEE programme is an empowerment-based, small grant programme, this work does not meet the government's current criteria. Hence the planned expansion for Year 2 had to be dropped. In Jaffna, FORUT-Sri Lanka offers conceptual and technical support for implementation through the government's Samurdhi programme. The funds

meant for these districts have been reallocated to reach more participants in the other districts.

2.5 Relevance of the GEE Programme

The female share in wage employment in Sri Lanka in the non-agricultural sector has been on the rise, from 24% in the early 1980s, to 44 per cent in the mid-1980s, to 46 per cent in 2002.¹⁵ The Global Gender Gap Report, which ranks economies based on their gender gaps, and in particular, about the percentage to which the inequality between women and men has been closed, has consistently given Sri Lanka high rankings, 12 in 2008¹⁶, and 16 in 2009¹⁷ and 2010¹⁸. However, Gunewardene (2006) points out that while the expansion of female labour force participation till the early 1970s saw women being employed in the services sector, like in teaching, healthcare and clerical jobs, largely in the public sector, the expansion that happened after the 1980s came from opportunities in the Free Trade Zones and the new agricultural lands opened up by the Mahaweli River Diversion Scheme¹⁹. Anthropologists like Hawamanne (2010) have documented the "difficult work routines, sad living conditions, sickness and tears" of workers in the Free Trade Zones²⁰, and Gunewardene observes that in the paddy sector, women often work as unpaid family workers. He further cites Jayaweera and Sanmugam's (1998) findings about inadequate working conditions and poor legal conditions for other sectors like the coir workers and agricultural workers who migrated to the Mahaweli region²¹. Examining public and private sector wage distribution for men and women from the mid-90's to the middle of the first decade of this century, Gunewardene found that "at the lower quantiles of the distribution, males enjoy an earnings advantage over females", suggesting the operation of the 'sticky floor'

¹⁵ UNIFEM (2002). *Progress of the World's Women 2002: Gender Equality and the Millennium Development Goals*.

¹⁶Ricardo Hausmann, Harvard University, Laura D. Tyson, University of California, Berkeley, Saadia Zahidi, World Economic Forum, Editors (2008). "The Global Gender Gap Report 2008"World Economic Forum, Geneva, Switzerland.

¹⁷Ricardo Hausmann, Harvard University, Laura D. Tyson, University of California, Berkeley, Saadia Zahidi, World Economic Forum, Editors (2009). "The Global Gender Gap Report 2009". World Economic Forum, Geneva, Switzerland.

¹⁸World Economic Forum. "Rankings: Global Gender Gap Report 2010"

¹⁹ Gunewardena, D. (2006). *Exploring Gender Wage Gaps in Sri Lanka: A Quantile Regression Approach*. IDRC. Paper presented during the 5th Poverty and Economic Policy Research Network General Meeting, June 18-22, 2006, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

²⁰ Hewamanne, S. (2010). *Stitching Identities in a Free Trade Zone*.

²¹ Jayaweera, S. and Sanmugam, T. (1998). *Women's Rights in the Informal Sector - Mahaweli Settlements - Coir Industry*. Colombo: Centre for Women's Research. Cited in Gunewardena, D. (2006). *Exploring Gender Wage Gaps in Sri Lanka: A Quantile Regression Approach*. IDRC. Paper presented during the 5th Poverty and Economic Policy Research Network General Meeting, June 18-22, 2006, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

phenomenon, though he found less evidence of glass ceilings. Thus, social, cultural and economic factors complicate Sri Lanka's picture of a higher level of gender development than average for the South Asian region. For example, a large number of the women may be engaged in informal employment, having no contract, and often no legal and social protection even if they work in the formal sector (e.g., daily wage workers in factories), or be engaged in subsistence farming, have their own informal enterprises or work as paid domestic workers²². Other constraints relate to the limited mobility of labour, especially women workers, including "high travel costs, lack of information about casual employment opportunities in neighbouring districts, or institutional barriers...especially where female workers are concerned, family ties and responsibilities as well as issues of safety may constrain the distance that they can travel in search of work."²³

Within this complex scenario of women's work participation, FORUT-Sri Lanka's Gender Economic Empowerment (GEE) Programme sought to target women who were currently economically inactive, to encourage them to collectivise and empower them to engage in economic activity. The rationale was that this, in turn, would increase their control over and benefit from economic resources, leading to increased decision-making powers related to economic resources, and increased negotiating power within the home on other issues as well. Simultaneously, the programme sought to bring about an increased understanding on the part of the men in the families of the targeted women about the benefits of women participating in economic activity, and an improved appreciation of their rights. The programme also foresaw the establishment of regional Livelihood Facilitation Centres, which would serve as technical and entrepreneurship resource centres, both for the participants in the FORUT-Sri Lanka programme, and at a later stage, for other women in the area who are not direct participants in the FORUT-Sri Lanka GEE programme.

The programme was perceived as relevant by the participants, their families, community leaders and government officials. FORUT is receiving requests to upscale the programme both from communities close to the selected villages, and from government officials, who have seen the impact and relevance of the intervention.

²² *ibid.*

²³ Gunatilaka, R. (2003) "Real Wage Trends and Labour Market Integration." *Sri Lanka Economic Journal*, 3(2):1-31. Cited in Gunewardena, D. (2006). Exploring Gender Wage Gaps in Sri Lanka: A Quantile Regression Approach. IDRC. Paper presented during the 5th Poverty and Economic Policy Research Network General Meeting, June 18-22, 2006, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

2.6 Sustainability of the GEE Programme

The establishment of the divisional and district level committees have been an important step towards improving the chances of sustainability of the GEE programme. Already, government officials have confirmed that, whereas a year or two ago, participants in the programme would have relied on FORUT staff to liaise with government organisations to ask for technical trainings and seek out assistance with registration and other official procedures, now several of them approach them directly. It is to be hoped that the additional support, which will be provided through the next two and a half years of the programme, will result in the creation of a core group of dynamic women entrepreneurs who can provide guidance, support and liaising services to other women who want to earn an income. The sizes of the grants are sufficiently small that for the most part women can avail of these from their savings collectives. The proposed launch of the government's 'Divineguma' programme, which intends to provide assistance for setting up a million home-based businesses in the country, will also create a structural climate amenable to providing support to micro-entrepreneurs. The relatively small overhead costs, the possibility of additional labour and marketing support from family members and the lack of taxation for micro-home based businesses are all factors in favour of sustainability.

However, sustainability is threatened by some factors as well. One of the biggest threats to sustainability is the extremely small size of the enterprise. Even fairly small changes in the micro and macro environments can threaten such tiny microenterprises. An example of the impact of a change in the micro environment might be how someone operating a petty shop can be wiped out by the opening up of a small shop in the vicinity, which is able to offer door delivery services and two weeks credit. Likewise, a number of the women who currently make a living packaging rice and other cereals, chilli powder and other spices, groundnuts and other pulses, and tea and coffee do so by their enterprise differentiation, as a result of which they can all supply to the petty shops in the village. A small shop would source from the nearest wholesale market and cut out these small entrepreneurs. These threats would be especially severe if the new shop belongs to a retail chain, of which many are entering Sri Lanka. A number of new projects in Sri Lanka are currently being sponsored by China. If the quid pro quo requires that Sri Lanka opens up its markets to China, the market can be flooded with cheap goods, e.g., bras and brooms, to give examples of two goods being manufactured by participants in the GEE programme which could be threatened by dumping – this is an example of a threat from the microenvironment that can threaten such micro businesses.

Findings of the Evaluation of the Programme Against Gender-Based Violence

2.7 Effectiveness of the Programme Against Gender-Based Violence

Examining the extent to which the Programme against GBV has achieved its objectives or is likely to achieve its objective of advancing the status of women and gender equality by specifically causing a reduction in gender-based violence, the evaluation found that the Programme has made significant progress towards its objectives. Given that GBV is often perpetrated within the home, and seeking redressal involves making sensitive personal issues public, the outputs and outcomes of the GBV programme are more difficult to measure objectively than those of the GEE programme. At this stage in the programme, the evaluation has to largely rely on qualitative data regarding processes and procedures that have been set in motion, and reported impact from a cross-section of stakeholders. Using these methods, it is clear that the programme has been successful in destroying a major factor responsible for causing and perpetuating Gender-Based Violence, namely the culture of silence and denial that surrounds it, in the areas where it is in operation.

The strategy envisaged by the Programme against GBV at the initiation of the programme was as follows:

- " Community understands the magnitude of the GBV problem
- Community understands that women are relatively most affected and violence against women hinders happiness for all members of the family and the community
- Community understands the relative importance of different contributors that promote GBV
- Community understands why they should counteract these influences
- Community understands how they should counteract these influences
- Community takes effective actions
- Measure progress with indicators"

Currently, as compared to the 75 villages envisaged in the proposal, this strategy is being directly implemented in 68 villages by the GBV team of FORUT-Sri Lanka, as indicated in the table below.

Table 5: Showing the locations and number of villages where the Programme against GBV is directly implemented by FORUT-Sri Lanka

District	Divisions	Number of Villages/ Estates
Colombo	Thimbirigasyaya	8
	Colombo	7
Hambantota	Weeraketiya	8
	Apelessa	8
Jaffna	Point Pedro	8
	Karaveddy	8
Matale²⁴	Rattota	4
	Ukuwela	2
Monaragala	Badalkubbura	8
	Buttala	8
5	10	68

In addition, the strategies and methodologies of the programme are being implemented by an additional 17 organisations belonging to the Women and ADD Network, with which FORUT-Sri Lanka shares its tools, methodologies and strategies, in addition to providing a small grant. Hence, the total number of communities being reached is well over the 75 envisaged. According to the FORUT-Sri Lanka staff, on an average, 75 per cent of the members of the communities in all the target locations have been reached by the programme, suggesting that the 7,500 women targeted by the programme have at least received information and some services.

As a result of the programme, GBV is a matter that is openly discussed in all the communities where this programme is in operation, and it is no longer perceived as a private and personal matter in which the community cannot intervene. The very way in which the topic has been opened up in the community makes it difficult for perpetrators (for example, habitual wife-beaters) to continue GBV within small communities, in which houses are located fairly close together, without intervention. In addition, committees have been set up in each village to actually intervene during crises, and proactively provide resources and solutions to reduce the possibility of crises developing. These communities are backed up by resources like counsellors, police and

²⁴ Five of the six locations at which the programme is being implemented in Matale are in the estate sector. Estates are large and have multiple hamlets located on a single estate, whose communities are reached by the programme.

legal aid. Hence, according to reports by multiple stakeholders, incidence of GBV in the targeted communities has come down.

A more detailed analysis of the perceived effectiveness of the Programme against GBV is provided below.

2.7.1 Effectiveness of the Conceptualisation of the Programme Against GBV

The Programme Against GBV was born out of the significant experience that FORUT-Sri Lanka had in dealing with alcohol and drug-related issues. Recognising that this was a new area of work, the team began by educating itself on the issue, including understanding the different contexts within which sexual, physical and psychological GBV can occur, like the family, the community and the state. The team studied the different forms of violence like domestic, economic, socio-cultural, sexual and political or collective, and the socio-cultural, legal, structural and systemic, economic and policy-related factors involved in the causation and perpetuation of such violence. The team arrived at the decision that there was enough secondary evidence to suggest that a programme was warranted.

It then analysed some significant contributing factors, including gender inequalities and stereotyping, and identified potential points for intervention including socially constructed roles and relationships and the values attached to them, the socialisation of boys and men who witnessed or participated in such violence, and the glorification of aggressive behaviour for men, and the socialisation of girls and women who normalised such violence, and the glorification of submissive behaviour on their part, and determined contributing factors that could be modified and which it would be useful to address. Thereafter, through discussions in the community, efforts would be made to influence the environment to change so that it would be more difficult to perpetrate GBV. The Programme against GBV also worked in collaboration with the GEE programme in several locations, which strengthened women's access to and control of economic resources.

2.7.2 Effectiveness in Stakeholder Selection

To combat against the typically normalised and secretive nature of GBV, the participation of multiple stakeholders appears a necessary strategy. Among the stakeholders in the Programme against GBV were:

- **Over 75 communities from 5 districts:** The primary stakeholders in the Programme against GBV were the families from over 75 communities from 5 districts who were sensitised about gender-based violence and provided with

strategies to analyse its occurrence within their families and communities and assisted with tools and the development of support systems to bring down such incidence of GBV.

- Within these communities, the programme directly worked with and through local community-based organisations, like farmers' groups, women's groups and youth groups.
- **FORUT Programme against GBV Team:** As with the GEE programme, FORUT staff constituted the main secondary stakeholders. The functions at national and district levels were similar to those of the GEE team, i.e., for conceptualisation of the baseline survey and the programme design, national and local level advocacy and liaison with government agencies, including the police and health departments, networking with other civil society organisations for broader advocacy as well as to source resources, troubleshooting during initial implementation, preparation of IEC and training materials, refining the programme from one year to another, and monitoring the programme on an ongoing basis, and reporting at the national level. FORUT-Sri Lanka staff, at the district level, were responsible for carrying out the baseline survey, assisting with the conceptualisation of the programme, building rapport and relationships with key opinion leaders and local CBOs at the village, division and district levels; organising the local level implementation of the programme, including organising trainings; helping to source resources of various sorts (e.g., counselling facilities) and liaising with local level officials to ensure official countenance to the implementation of a programme dealing with a very sensitive subject, ensuring local level monitoring and reporting to the national office.
- **Government officials at the national and local levels:** Sri Lanka has national legal instruments against GBV. However, in practice, government officials are part of the larger culture of denial related to the issue and the associated lack of resources to address it. As such, government officials at the national, district, divisional and village levels were key secondary stakeholders. Winning their support was key for even initiating the programme, and once initiated, ongoing support was essential from important functionaries like the police, officials of the Ministry of Child Development and Women Empowerment, officials of the health department like doctors and counsellors and the courts.
- **Women and ADD CSO Network:** In addition to implementing the programme directly, the Programme against GBV team shared some of their methodologies and tools, together with a small grant, with 17 civil society organisations (CSOs)

to work on the issue of GBV and the role played by alcohol in contributing to it.

These organisations were

- **Dehena Foundation**, Peradeniya
- **Eksath Lanka Foundation**, Nuwara Eliya
- **Gami Kantha Peramuna**, Galle
- **Nawalanka Manawa Samagi Sanvidanaya**, Kotapolla
- **Nusrath Foundation**, Passara
- **RPDF**, Medawacchiya
- **Ranga Kala Alternative**, Galle
- **Rural Supportive Foundation**, Hanguranketha
- **Sawijana Foundation**, Marawilla
- **Sunila Women and Child Foundation**, Welikanda
- **WDC-Mathele**, Kandy
- **Wayamba Farmers, Environmental and Human Development Foundation**, Kurunegala
- **Women and Child Care Organisation**, Rikillagaskada
- **Women and Child Development Foundation**, Kaluthara
- **Women Development Foundation**, Hambanthota
- **Women in Action**, Peradeniya
- **GBV Forum**: FORUT-Sri Lanka is also part of a larger advocacy group against GBV, called the GBV Forum. Chaired by the UNFPA, the members of the GBV Forum are:
 - ActionAid International
 - ActionAid Sri Lanka
 - Association of War Affected Women (AWAW)
 - Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)
 - CARE International Sri Lanka
 - Christian Children's Fund-Sri Lanka (CCF)
 - FORUT-Sri Lanka
 - International Labour Organisation (ILO)
 - National Commission on Women (NCW)
 - National Peace Council (NPC)
 - Oxfam-GB
 - United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
 - United Nations Development Programme Regional Centre (UNDP)
 - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
 - United National Population Fund (UNFPA)
 - Women and Media Collective (WMC)

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- Women Defining Peace (WDP)
 - Women in Need (WIN)
 - Women's Development Centre - Kandy(WDC)
 - World Health Organisation (WHO)
 - World University Service of Canada-Sri Lanka(WUSC)

Partnership in the FORUM means that FORUT-Sri Lanka is able to draw on allies in its national advocacy efforts, as well as source critical resources like legal support and crisis support for community members who may seek the kinds of specific support related to GBV which FORUT does not have the infrastructure or resources to provide.

2.7.3 Effectiveness of the Strategies of the Programme Against GBV

Given the sensitive nature of the issue being dealt with, identifying appropriate strategies was critical to the effectiveness of the programme. The strategies of the Programme against GBV included:

- **Collection of Primary Data:** A baseline survey was carried out to understand the extent and nature of gender-based violence prevalent in the communities, and in particular, home-based violence. **This was done both to understand the scope of the issues, to assist with the design of the programme and to advocate with the community and officialdom about the relevance of the programme.** This was essential because at initial informal gatherings that were held to gauge public opinion on this issue, the attitude was one of denial – “This does not happen in our village, or in our community.” The results of the study also helped with the advocacy to get official support and resources for better implementation of the programme.

FORUT-Sri Lanka was initially reluctant to do the baseline study in-house, because they felt that they lacked experience to do this. However, the team bit the bullet, and designed the questionnaire, and then conducted the survey and focus group discussions using interns in the programme and programme staff. An external resource person was sourced only for writing the report. Hence, the team challenged itself and was able to test and exercise its research skills through the baseline study.

- **Selection of a proactive, community-wide, family-friendly approach:** Many interventions related to GBV tend to be reactive, focused on the individual victim/survivor and/or perpetrator of the violence, and associated with dealing with the crisis. The Programme Against GBV was exceptional in its proactive

approach, which aimed at involving the entire community, and the men, women and children in individual families in the issue of GBV, instead of focusing solely on a crisis-centric approach. This took into account many factors such as the extent to which the violence may have been normalised for a woman who has experienced domestic violence for years; the possible economic and emotional dependence of the survivor on the abuser, who is often the spouse; and the extent to which active community disapproval of the perpetrator and active, open, community support for the survivor within small, closely-knit communities may act as a deterrent for further incidence of violence. In such cases, a sudden crisis-centric intervention, involving taking the wife to a battered women's home and the husband into police custody may seem inappropriate and cause more lasting damage to family harmony than an approach where the community takes responsibility of ensuring safety for the woman and good behaviour on the part of her spouse. This was combined with applications of a more crisis-interventionist approach in selected cases.

- **Selection of volunteers from the community:** Based on interest and skills, a group of volunteers was selected from each community to assist with the implementation of the programme at the local level. The qualities and skills sought included people with influence and skills to work with men, people with skills and influence to work with young people, people willing to work with issues of reproductive health and alcohol prevention, people willing to coordinate the raising and management of external resources (including human resources like training), and people with mediation, negotiation and communication skills.
- **Preparation of Training, Monitoring and Advocacy Materials:** The Programme against GBV has prepared a number of IEC materials related to the Happy Family concept, alcohol as a contributor to domestic violence, and posters and stickers related to making the community free of GBV. *One tool that has proved particularly effective has been the "Happy Family Chart", which tracks on a weekly basis, how many "happy" days the family has had that week, using 'emoticons' - a 'smiley' face, a 'sad' face and a 'neutral' face. These are usually filled in by the children in the family, who clearly remember if a parent has been disruptive of family harmony or actively provoked conflict. Since the family takes stock on a weekly basis, usually at a time when family members are relatively calm, the children are often able to call the parent to account. "On this day, we were unhappy because you came home drunk and shouted at us." While*

occasionally this strategy has provoked irritation and negative reactions like tearing the chart off the wall, by and large, it has proved a very powerful tool in promoting self-reflective behaviour as a precursor to reducing family conflict.

- **Training of the Volunteers:** The selected volunteers received specific training on gender-based violence and its causes. **However, this was often not explicitly presented as gender training, which was perceived as based on an ideology that promoted competition and confrontation between the sexes, but rather as collaborative brainstorming and reflection on ‘Happy Families’ and the roles to be played by both sexes, and different family members for promoting the happiness of each member of the family.** For this, the GBV team used methodologies like the ‘Problem Tree’ to get families to think about obstacles to their happiness, and tracing these back to their causes. This helped communities identify and acknowledge issues like domestic violence and the contribution of alcohol use to such violence, and agree that these needed to be addressed as a community. They also learned to use tools and techniques from paracounselling, negotiation, mediation, and communication skills that would help them address these issues within their own families and other families in the community.
- **Establishment of ‘Happy Family Action Committees’:** The trained volunteers in each community have established small voluntary bodies called ‘Happy Family Action Committees’, who assist with monitoring ‘problem spots’ in the village where domestic violence could occur, and providing sensitive support and trouble-shooting assistance to minimise occurrences of domestic violence. **The 16-member committees are further divided into 8 sub-committees, with two members each taking responsibility for the issues of reproductive health, promoting intra-family communications, teaching tools and techniques for implementing the ‘Happy Family’ concept, alcohol prevention, special case intervention, external resource coordination, working with men, and working with young people.** The committee members actively work with the community to promote harmony within and between families, focusing on bring about behavioral and attitudinal changes that promote such harmony.
- **Identifying appropriate support systems and resources or helping to create these:** Recognising that there will be situations where the sensitised laypersons serving on the Happy Family committees will need more professional support, the district team tried to provide support in two ways. Firstly, Action Committees were also established at the divisional and district levels, including

government officials and service providers who could provide official countenance to the initiative, as well as service delivery support in cases involving domestic violence. Members included representatives of the Social Welfare department, the Ministry of Health, and the police, as well as the Divisional Secretary.

Normally, when an NGO or an INGO undertakes work in an area, the police inquires into the nature of the work. We were aware that FORUT-Sri Lanka works on various social activities like alcohol and drug prevention. We got more actively associated with the organisation in 2009. We supported the anti-GBV campaign. When the Divisional Level Action Committee was set up, I became the Chairman. Other government officials, for example the Officer on Mental Health, are also members. This collaboration is valuable for solving a number of issues. FORUT-Sri Lanka also organised a training in counselling techniques for us which was very useful. The police collaborated with FORUT in the two family camps that they organised on GBV. I also serve as a resource person during their village level training programs.

- Mr. Bandula, Public Relations Officer, Divisional Police Headquarters, Matale

Further, recognising that sensitive professional support necessary to address crisis situations was woefully lacking in these locations, FORUT-Sri Lanka tried to build these resources at the divisional level. For example in Matale, the GBV team organised a 6-month long certificate course on counselling techniques conducted by external resource persons from the Institute of Professional Psychosocial Intervention. Classes were held every weekend for volunteers from the different areas in the division. At the same time, the course was made available for representatives from the Divisional Police Headquarters, staff from the Ministry of Health like the Public Health Nursing Sister and midwives, and social workers at the Divisional Secretary's office at the divisional level. Thus, the programme was able to build the skill and sensitivity level of key officials who would support the GBV programme. Those trained were then able to conduct awareness programmes and workshops in the field. In addition, midwives were trained to use a list of suspicion indicators to identify signs of domestic violence and depression when pregnant women received ante- or post-natal check ups, and to follow up and make referrals to doctors and mental health professionals as necessary.

In addition, the lack of a private space in which people could receive counselling support was addressed, and FORUT-Sri Lanka sponsored a Counselling Room at

the Ministry of Health office in Matale. These interventions have had an impact. As the local Women Development Officer testified, “Small matters create problems in families. The GBV programme teaches people how to defuse these situations, how to work at relationships instead of rejecting them when problems occur. The counselling programme has also contributed a lot for government officials to understand these dynamics and support people better. **The most important thing is credibility. When we have that, people approach us with problems.** The counselling programme was very useful for that.”

- **Focusing on processes, not events:** The active collaboration with the government is appreciated by the Ministry of Health officials. As was the case with the GEE programme, collaborating with FORUT-Sri Lanka created a change in the way officials provided support to the community. According to the medical officer in charge of Health Promotion for Matale district, Dr. Khasun Jayaratne, “Earlier, a lot of the time, we focused on Health Education. We would go to a place to provide some information, and come back happily, thinking we had given a good lecture. Also, we are based in the district headquarters, and the distance was a deterrent to reaching out to communities in the villages.” *Adds the Counsellor, Ms. Renuka Jayawardene, “If an intervention is an event, it stops with the event. If it is a process, there is a possibility of making a real difference.”*
- **Scaling up through the Women and ADD Network:** FORUT-Sri Lanka has facilitated the formation of a network of 17 community-based organisations (CBOs) called the Women and ADD Network. Once the effectiveness of the programme's strategies through direct implementation by FORUT-Sri Lanka was established, the organisation sought a scaling up of the programme, by sharing the strategies, tools and methodologies with its network partners, together with a small grant. These network partners had been working in their communities on other issues and therefore already had the credibility to take up an issue like GBV. This enabled FORUT-Sri Lanka to reach a larger number of communities, communities with which it would have had to work for several years to establish rapport before taking up a sensitive issue like GBV.
- **Advocacy at the national level through participation in the GBV Forum:** FORUT-Sri Lanka is one of the founding members of a network of organisations comprising several UN organisations, international NGOs like ActionAid and CARE and national NGOs like the Women and Media Collective called the GBV

Forum. Participation in the GBV Forum enables FORUT to take its learnings from the grassroots to the national level and try to effect changes at the level of the government's programmes and policies to include a perspective that is more gender-sensitive and directed towards reducing GBV.

2.7.4 Effectiveness of the Monitoring Mechanism of the Programme against GBV.

The project monitoring system of the Programme against GBV is similar to that for the GEE system. The volunteer committees or the Happy Family Action Committees at the community level monitor the programmes at the community level, and representatives of these committees, together with representatives of the police, the health department and service providers like counsellors and midwives, form an Action Committee at the divisional level, and again representatives of the divisional committees, together with the relevant government and NGO players, form the Action Committee at the district level. The action committees at all levels provide support and liaise with different actors to ensure support for individuals and communities in crisis, while also ensuring that ongoing programmes necessary for creating an environment amenable for the prevention of GBV are organised. For example, training programmes and family camps are scheduled with community support. The action committees also help identify areas which require additional support, and trainings which can meet these needs.

The FORUT District Level GBV team coordinates with the action committees at all three levels and also undertakes advocacy with service providers for assistance with specific cases. They also collect information from different levels and uses the RBM framework to understand the extent of the progress. They collate the district level report for analysis and feedback from the Gender Advisor and Programme Coordinator at the national office. The District Level and National Level GBV teams also coordinate and collaborate with the partners in the Women and ADD Network to ensure that they receive adequate technical and troubleshooting support as required. The RBM is also used by the national team to determine to what extent the programme is meeting its objectives, and to report to Norway.

In the GBV programme, another level of monitoring happens through FORUT-Sri Lanka's participation in the GBV Forum. The GBV Forum consists of 20 other organisations, including national and international NGOs and multilateral UN-related organisations, with expertise in GBV related issues. Participation in this Forum provides the Gender

Advisor with a Community of Practice with whom to share challenges and successes, and brainstorm for improved implementation of the programme.

2.8 Impact of the Programme on GBV

Although less than three years old, and addressing a very sensitive issue, the Programme against GBV is already showing a noteworthy impact.

- **Acknowledgement of family conflict and domestic violence:** As a result of the Programme against GBV, families and communities have acknowledged the existence of family conflict and domestic violence. Further, they have helped to identify several elements that can be addressed to reduce these and increase harmonious relationships in families and communities, at the level of the individual, the family and the community.

The awareness programmes, followed by the GBV programme's use of discussions in small groups as a methodology has made a significant difference. These discussions are organised with different groups, e.g., men only groups, groups consisting equally of men and women, groups of newly married couples, etc. Initially, fathers did not participate. However, the Happy Family concept has gained more currency, and "families are now introspecting – For how many days was the mother sad? When were the children sad? Men are thinking, "How can I contribute to their happiness? Consequently, happiness in families, and also generally, relationships in the communities where this programme is in place, have improved."

- **Increased roles for women in the public life of the community:** Whereas earlier, women had no significant role to play in the public life of the community, now, eight women are necessarily members of the Happy Family Action Committees at the village level in every community where the programme is being implemented. Thousands of women in the five districts have attended trainings held in different places, away from their home villages. Women are present in equal numbers in the divisional level and district level action committees. The social positions are not just formal, they are also functional. Earlier, the men dealt with any matters that arose in the community, and if they involved domestic violence, then usually, it was seen as a private matter, and people did not intervene. "Now we have respect in the village. If we go and intervene, our husbands respect us."

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- **Increased attention to mental health issues by government agencies:** After the GBV programme had actively implemented its interventions, the Ministry of Health (MoH) too began paying more attention to the promotion of mental health as a process, and not just on preventing diseases like tuberculosis or malaria. One example where MoH officials felt such a difference had been made related to post-partum depression and depression in pregnant women. Earlier, they reported, there had even been a few cases of suicide, which had not received appropriate attention. Sometimes, these were triggered by serious conflicts within the family, at others, because of lack of support during a period of acute stress, operating in tandem with chronic stressors like overwork, inadequate family support, etc. As a result of the GBV programme, the MoH midwives, who have received training through the FORUT-Sri Lanka Programme against GBV, actually use a protocol to check if they can detect warning signs of violence or depression, and refer women who they think need support.

The awareness programmes in the community have also empowered people to identify themselves if they need help. They then receive support from the counsellor, or if necessary, from the consultant psychiatrist. The district had also seen two suicides and three attempted suicides of girl school children over a short period, usually related to sexual abuse, unwanted pregnancies and early marriages, and now there is greater emphasis on providing information related to sexual and reproductive health.

Malini, a 23 year old garment worker, had lost her parents and was living with an uncle's family. She fell in love with a colleague, who promised to marry her, and eloped with him, taking with her savings of Rs. 30,000. After living with her for two weeks, the young man took her money, refused to marry her and asked her to go back. The girl was devastated, and given that she would face ridicule and social ostracism if she went back to her village, felt that the only way for her was suicide. However, because the GBV programme was operational in her area, she had been to meetings which suggested that she might find support from it. She telephoned the GBV Programme Coordinator for Matale district, and told him that she was going to commit suicide. He persuaded her that there were options for her beyond taking her life. He contacted network partners who could provide her with temporary residential support and counselling in a setting away from her village. The team also contacted the police who arrested the young man on grounds of breach of trust and recovered Malini's money from him. During mediation meetings, Malini made it clear that she did not wish to marry the young man who had betrayed her. The entire team kept all the proceedings

confidential, knowing that any breath of scandal in the community would affect her badly. This was also made possible because of the training that had been provided to government officials and the police by the GBV team. After two months of counselling and other supports, Malini was able to go back to work. She is stable now, married (to someone else) and happy.

- **Incorporation of concepts and methodologies at the level of policy and practice with Government programmes:** FORUT-Sri Lanka has been able to demonstrate the conceptual and methodological impact of its Happy Family approach, has markedly cut down on family conflict, alcohol use, and domestic violence, and improve the status of women in the household, with improved decision making power, and increased participation of males in the household in domestic work. Consequently, the government has issued an order that the model be included in the national poverty alleviation programme, Samurdhi. Currently, FORUT-Sri Lanka is training all the managers of the Samurdhi programme across the country in the concepts and methodologies of the Happy Family.
- **Increasing linkages and trust between people and the police in a post-conflict situation:** According to the Public Relations Officer at the divisional police headquarters in Matale, associating with FORUT-Sri Lanka in their GBV-related activities has had the added benefit of increasing the confidence of the people in the police in the post-conflict context. According to Mr. Bandula, “Tamil people had a very negative image of the police. Because of our association with FORUT-Sri Lanka and our participation in their programmes, our relationship with the people has improved. Now, people feel more confident about coming into the police station and asking for support.”
- **Reduction in the number of domestic violence cases needing police intervention:** According to police officers, providing training to the community on gender-based violence, the importance of communication, and sharing of household responsibilities, with mediation and negotiation support from Action Committees in the village, is paying off in terms of a reduction in the number of cases being brought to the police of conflict within and between families. “Earlier, there was a totally male-dominated environment in the houses. After couples participate in the family camps, they are able to discuss problems and solve many of them, without matters escalating to a point where the police need to be involved,” according to a local police representative.

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- **Increased awareness and vigilance about child protection:** The Happy Family concept, and explicit communication and trainings relating to the different aspects that help to realise the concept, has also increased awareness of child protection issues. According to the local police, “People are more aware now of child abuse, more vigilant, and know who to inform when they feel a child needs to be protected. There is greater awareness about child labour too.”

In addition to the various elements listed in the section on effectiveness, certain other factors appear to have contributed to the success of the Programme against GBV.

- **Involving young people:** Young people were receptive to the rights discourse that opposed gender-based violence. Organising youth and encouraging their participation in youth camps, where they learned strategies that helped to counter such violence was a useful factor.
- **Working on alcohol prevention:** According to the Gender Advisor at FORUT-Sri Lanka, “A major way in which we differ from other NGOs and INGOs in Sri Lanka is that we are the only ones addressing Alcohol, Drugs and Development.” The homegrown methodology that the organisation has developed to address these issues has proved a great asset in addressing domestic violence as well, because of the links between alcohol and domestic violence.

During the focus group discussions, both men and women said that the consumption of alcohol had come down individually in families, and also noticeably in the community, and gave credit to the Happy Family concept and methodologies promoted by FORUT-Sri Lanka. “Earlier, if my husband’s drinking was at 100 per cent, now it has come down to 25 per cent, after participating in the Happy Family programme,” said Santhi Edirisinghe. Renuka Devi of Elkaduna Estate said that as long as she could remember, her father drank every day. “I am twenty years old. The change that we as a family could not make in his behaviour for 18 years, this organisation was able to bring about it two years.” Men too testified to the reduction in the consumption of alcohol. “I used to be a habitual drinker. Now I have stopped. I go to work, and come back and look after my family.”

Mrs. Padmalatha spoke of how her husband would get drunk and beat her up on an almost daily basis. Looking around the room full of neighbours, where the FGD was

happening, she said, “It was no secret, the whole community knew about it. I participated in all the trainings, obtained a lot of knowledge on this kind of behaviour, and got a lot of ideas on how to deal with my husband, when to discuss matters with him. The children also got involved. They would use the Happy Family wall calendar to mark the days on which his drunken behaviour had upset us. They would tell him not to drink and hurt us. My husband gets upset when the children show that they understand that his behaviour is hurting them and me. He has now cut down his alcohol consumption considerably. I have also taken over some of my parents’ land which was lying fallow, and begun paddy cultivation on it. Now I am financially independent too, and that helps in dealing with my husband’s behaviour too.”

- **Understanding the importance of communication:** On the one hand, this factor led to the programme developing good IEC materials that helped communities and individuals understand the complexities of alcohol use and abuse, the assumptions made by individuals and families as they tried to mitigate the impact of such use and abuse, and how such assumptions could be reframed and specific actions undertaken to help individuals reduce or even stop alcohol consumption, and reduce the negative impact on families. On the other, the programme helped families develop improved communication mechanisms at intra-family level so that this process could be further supported. As Ms. Nishanti Priyadarshini, a programme assistant at the Matala Divisional Secretariat pointed out, “Though it is a very small programme, it makes big changes at the level of the family.”

The programme has led to more considerate behaviour by family members towards each other. At all the focus group discussions, both men and women said that prior to the programme, there had been much less communication. As communication had improved, several changes had taken place in the behaviour of family members. “Earlier, my husband would not eat with the family. He would walk in at any time, and demand his dinner. Now, we eat together as a family.” “Earlier, relationships were primarily about exerting power, about exercising ego,” said Udaya Devi of Elkaduna Estate. “Even when these are things that we know, we may not have reflected on them, and used these reflections to change. When FORUT uses different methodologies to discuss these matters, we realise many things.”

Not all the changes contributing to increased harmony have come from the men. Mrs. Ratnayake, President of the Village Level Committee on GBV in a village in Matale District, says, “My husband is very calm and quiet but I am hot-tempered. If my husband said something I did not like, I would react very sharply. Thanks to the FORUT programme, I have calmed down a great deal, and try to see his point of view.” Participants said that there was a change even in the children. As stability and better communication have increased in the home, children are also focusing more on their studies.

- **Use of advocacy at the macro and meso levels to gain acceptance at the local levels:** Government acceptance of the GBV programme helped to contribute to its success. As a result of advocacy at the central level in Colombo, FORUT-Sri Lanka received permission to collaborate with the official Poverty Alleviation Programme in Sri Lanka, called ‘Samurdhi’, implemented by the Economic Development Ministry, in implementing the GBV programme. However, in practice at the ground level, several Grama Sevakas (local administration officials at the village level) and Samurdhi officers were negative about the programme, so much so that there was outright rejection of the programme in some areas. Every village also had its own community-based organisations, like Women’s Societies, Farmer’s Societies, and Funeral Societies, with an established leadership. Often, these established leaders had rather traditional attitudes, for example, that men might beat their wives when they got drunk; and while this was unfortunate, it was a private matter, and for the most part, women should put up with it. For FORUT-Sri Lanka staff to suggest that others (for example, young people who did not accept these views) should lead this programme would have made traditional leaders upset and uncooperative. Strategically, FORUT-Sri Lanka, used officials from Colombo to spell out, at district level meetings, what they expected from the anti-domestic violence work as part of the Samurdhi programme. Consequently, the traditional leaders themselves suggested the names of people from their villages who could do this work, saying they were not suitable for this.
- **Advocating more broadly on domestic violence:** In addition to implementing the GBV programme, the team also advocated on the issue with a network of 17 women’s organisations, facilitated by FORUT. Apart from ideological support, individual members of the network were able to provide resources and support services which became necessary once the programme began to be implemented – for example, trainers to carry out gender training in some

locations, legal advice and shelter for battered women, and rape counselling – resources which FORUT-Sri Lanka itself did not have.

- **Innovating with media advocacy:** In addition to the standard media advocacy activities, FORUT-Sri Lanka also came up with the innovative idea of a workshop with prominent short story writers in the country, explicating the ‘Happy Family’ concept that was at the core of the GBV intervention. What emerged from the workshop was an anthology of short stories on key concepts like establishing relationships and communication, which could then be used for further teaching and learning within the communities.

2.9 Challenges of the Programme against GBV:

The Programme against GBV also has certain challenges associated with it.

- **Obtaining information through the baseline survey, and comparing this with endline results:** Given the sensitive nature of the issue of GBV, notions of family honour, and the perception of GBV as a private and personal matter, getting information through the baseline survey was difficult. Again, the number of incidents as reported to independent sources like the police are also not necessarily an indicator of the level of GBV in a community, as in the interest of the continuance of the relationship, women tend to underreport incidents of domestic violence. Hence, getting objective documentary evidence, as against anecdotal evidence, will be much more difficult.
- **Obtaining permission to work on issues related to gender-based violence:** In several locations, this was difficult. While government officials are more amenable to allow NGOs to work on issues like developing infrastructure and livelihoods promotion, they are more reluctant to allow work on ‘soft’ issues. Sometimes, the Divisional Secretary, the highest government official in charge of the local administration, challenged the staff – “How do you know that such issues [like domestic violence] are even there in our area?” The staff persuaded the official to give permission to conduct the baseline study. Only after the results of the baseline study established that the problem was genuine, was permission granted to work on the issue.

Carrying out the baseline survey on domestic violence proved a challenge in certain areas, particularly in urban slums, because of the sensitive nature of the questions. In many cases, men in the households that were approached refused

to grant permission to their womenfolk to answer the questionnaire. In one unfortunate incident in which the first step of a project aimed at reducing domestic violence actually provoked it, a man who discovered that his wife had answered the questionnaire (of her own will), physically assaulted her. Some areas which were surveyed showed sufficiently high levels of hostility to the project that these had to be dropped from any further interventions.

- **Limitation of activities primarily to domestic violence: Although the programme is designed as one against gender-based violence, the bulk of the activities and strategies are related to reducing domestic violence.** This is not necessarily a bad thing, as domestic violence, occurring as it does within the confines of the home, and complicated by conflicting loyalties, economic relationships and other constraints, is much more elusive, complex and sensitive to address, and FORUT-Sri Lanka's approach has proved very efficacious in the country's context. Nevertheless, the organisation does not have the resources in-house to deal with or provide support in cases of major GBV crises like sexual assault, and the name of the programme does not quite reflect the nature of the work undertaken.
- **Ensuring sensitive and professional handling of cases:** By and large, the GBV programme undertaken by FORUT-Sri Lanka is a success in the two and a half years since its conception, according to members of the community who have been participants and beneficiaries, as well as according to government officials, with a number of cases of conflict being settled locally without escalating. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that it is still a fledgeling programme, with tremendous challenges in terms of encouraging the community to function in ways that may be contrary to traditional norms, as well as to find adequate resources, infrastructural as well as human, to support it. Two case studies, shared during the evaluation as 'achievements' by district-level programme staff, exemplify the difficulties created by these challenges.

X is an 8 year old boy, whose classmates complained to their teacher that he was attempting to touch them sexually. The headmaster of the school brought the matter to the attention of the Divisional Level Action Committee. Investigations revealed that the boy had been repeatedly sexually abused between the ages of 6 and 7, by an older boy who had since left the district for higher studies after completing school. The child had then tried to touch his classmates in ways that would be perceived as intimate.

After the investigations, the Divisional Level Action Committee decided to admit the child into the Probation Centre, where he was currently living.

Y is a woman in her late twenties living in a local village, with three very young children. She developed an intimate relationship with a man other than her husband and made plans to leave her family and go abroad with him. The local community found out about her plans and alerted members of the GBV Action Committee. They informed the police, who located the woman at the airport with her lover, and brought her back to her family home, where she now lives.

In the first case, the response by the Action Committee, of separating the 8-year-old child from his family and putting him into a Probation Centre is based on an assessment of him as a perpetrator of child abuse. Not enough weightage has been given to the fact that he is a very young child, who had himself experienced sustained abuse at a very young age, as a result of which sexual contact may have been 'normalised' for him at a very young age. When he made attempts to touch his classmates sexually, he may not have been aware that this was inappropriate behaviour. Added to this is the fact that some amount of sexual experimentation through looking and touching is normal in young children. To separate the child from his family and place him in a probation centre, instead of providing him with support to recover from his own experience of sexual abuse and assist with re-establishment of a trajectory of age-appropriate, positive sexual development, is clearly a case of the cure being worse than the disease.

In the second case, the woman was perceived by the community as a bad wife and mother, who had transgressed by taking a lover and abandoning her husband and children. Both the Action Committee members and FORUT-Sri Lanka's local District GBV coordinator insisted that bringing the woman back from the airport, with police help, was an 'achievement'. Even the District Level GBV Coordinator (a man), found it very difficult to understand that there were many nuances to the situation that needed to be explored before resolving the 'problem'. On the one hand, bringing up three very young children can be very stressful at the best of times, and it was not clear whether the woman had the necessary counselling, familial or other support necessary to cope with this. It is not clear whether taking a lover and leaving her children were flight responses contingent upon an unhappy marriage or stresses associated with motherhood and family responsibilities, as social norms would have made it almost impossible for her to negotiate another way out of her marital and maternal

responsibilities. At the same time, there have been cases of human trafficking agents who profess love for young women, and trick them into going abroad where they may be forced into domestic or sex work, in which case, the young woman may have actually been in some danger, and have needed to be rescued.

However, regardless of which scenario may have been true, the response of bringing her back using the police and putting her back with her family would have been undoubtedly humiliating for her, reducing her status within the family to less than nothing. This was also an instance of the community strongly enforcing existing social norms and gender expectations, with the active support of the FORUT-facilitated GBV-Action Committees, to the detriment of individual choices that may run counter to these norms and expectations. At the very least, it would definitely have been more appropriate and less traumatic to place the woman in a transitional care facility, where she could receive counselling and time to consider her choices. If she did choose to go back to her family, it should have been with mediation support, so that the effects of any prevailing social sanctions could be mitigated, and her status within the family could have been protected to some extent, and with ongoing social support.

The two cases clearly show that there can be significant limitations to community-mediated solutions. The organisation of certain influential community members into an ‘Action Committee’, at every level, undoubtedly gives them much more clout than they would have had as separate individuals. Thus, they can become powerful instruments of subjugating individuals in small communities to the collective will and wisdom of the community. While this may work well in a majority of the cases, in cases such as those described above, they can actually cause more pain and rights violations, especially when the actors in the situation have had insufficient training in both rights discourses as well as in professional counselling, or access to good legal and mental health backstopping support.

2.10 Relevance of the Programme Against Gender-Based Violence

Bourke-Martignoni (2002) cites Dr. Deepika Udagama, Director of the Centre for the Study of Human Rights at Colombo University, who points out the paradox in the status of Sri Lankan Women: “Many people in South Asia think that women in Sri Lanka are better off than their counterparts in other countries of South Asia. To some extent this is true. In terms of education levels, women holding management positions, women in

professions and even in normal social norms, Sri Lankan women enjoy a better position than those in Pakistan, Bangladesh or India. But in the recent past there's been a tremendous upsurge in acts of violence against women.²⁵ Incidents of sexual violence, rape of girl children and adult women and domestic violence are regularly reported in the press and in police records. Bourke-Martignoni suggests that it is unclear whether there has been a real increase, or whether this is because of the reforms to the Sri Lankan Penal Code, enacted in 1997, and the rise in reporting of such incidents²⁶.

Because it is a culturally sensitive issue, data is limited. While there was evidence of a problem, it was decided that the precise nature of the interventions would be designed after the FORUT-Sri Lanka Programme against Gender-Based Violence generated some baseline data on the issues in their project areas. Making a case for the programme, FORUT says:

Women are subject to and often accept domestic violence as part of being women in Sri Lanka. Sexual abuse and rape is common within the household, usually by a family member or close relative. Wife beating is the most common form of domestic violence within families, and this is commonly explained as an issue of ownership by the man of the woman after marriage. It is common for women to report that their vulnerability to domestic violence increases when the man has been consuming alcohol. Men often use alcohol as an excuse for their actions.

The effects of gender based violence on the individual and the family include: Unplanned pregnancies, often leading to abortions or self-induced miscarriages; Economic burdens of additional children; Physical injury; Trauma; If un-married then social stigmatisation and difficulties to get married; Fear, humiliation and helplessness.²⁷

This is independently corroborated by other sources. According to IRIN, a service of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, which provides humanitarian news and analysis, "at least 60 per cent of all women in Sri Lanka have experienced domestic violence." The report cites Lene K. Christiansen, the UNFPA country representative, as saying that such violence cuts across class, race, ethnicity and religion, and further, largely "remains hidden in the private domain, shrouded by a veil

²⁵Bourke-Martignoni, J. (2002). *Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in Sri Lanka*. Geneva: World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)

²⁶ *ibid.*

²⁷FORUT. (2009). FORUT Multi-year Application 2009-2013, Part 2. Norway.

of silence and denial...Breaking the silence is one of the biggest challenges facing Sri Lanka in addressing gender-based violence.²⁸

The FORUT-Sri Lanka Programme against Gender-Based Violence sought to break this silence in communities, and make communities responsible for ensuring that their women could feel safe and access support if they did not. They also meant to target men, both to help them understand their roles as the most common perpetrators of GBV, and of their potential to take on the roles of advocates for women's security. Children were also participants in monitoring the 'happiness levels' in the family, potentially a valuable learning experience that would contribute to breaking the perpetuation of the vicious cycle of GBV from one generation to another. Evidence from the field suggests that the intervention has contributed to improved gender-relations, increased acknowledgement of men of their contribution towards incidence of GBV and responsibility in working towards reducing it, and it has proved its relevance.

2.11 Sustainability of the Programme Against GBV:

Even in the case of those who have not had to face significant violence, women have received enough benefits from the impact of the programme against GBV, in terms of improved communication and more considerate behaviour from husband and children, at the level of the family, and more social countenance and an increased role in the life of the community, at the community level. Consequently, there is a self-motivating factor for women to continue in the programme. There is comparatively, less incentive for men to continue in the programme, as often, they are the ones forced to re-examine many of the traditional assumptions that safeguarded their 'superior' status, and occasionally, giving up privileges as well. Nevertheless, the improved atmosphere of harmony in many homes has proved to be self-motivating.

Another aspect is that the notion of leadership has grown more diffused. With, typically, eight men serving on the Happy Family Action Committees in each community, more men than the traditional leaders have taken on more important positions in the community. The creation of Youth Associations in every community has also meant that there is the creation of a second line of leadership in the community being created. All these are positive contributions towards sustainability.

²⁸ SRI LANKA: Violence against women on the rise. *IRIN*. 27 November 2008. Colombo. Retrieved at <http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportid=81693> on July 30, 2011.

However, with a concept like this, while initial enthusiasm is likely to be high, once families have reached a certain level of competence, maintaining motivation levels is likely to be an ongoing challenge. Hence, the programme will need to develop more training modules, materials, and associated events to keep motivation levels high. At the same time, *traditional gender stereotypes tend to have a long-lasting pernicious effect, and may reappear in different forms and shapes. Hence, ongoing gender analysis and recasting the programme to look at areas which need support is important to ensure its ongoing relevance.*

2.12 Value-Added Elements to the Programmes on GEE and GBV:

In addition to the core work associated with the individual programmes, the programmes on GEE and GBV also included certain elements to both programmes, adding value to them. These were:

- **Health Education on Maternal and Child Health and Reproductive Health:** Both the GEE and GBV programmes provide participants with health education related to maternal and child health and reproductive health more generally. Using the advantage of the collectives of women who meet regularly, such information is provided to promote women's health.
- **Savings Campaign:** To encourage women to have a buffer of economic resources for their own security, the programme carries out a savings promotion campaign, so that some portion of the income generated from the programme is compulsorily saved. The campaign also provides tips to help women identify potentially "wasteful" household expenditure (e.g., on alcohol, excessive use of mobile phones, etc.) to try and free up funds that can be saved for a rainy day. According to Ms. Sepalika Rajapakse, the Human Resources Development Officer, at the Divisional Secretariat in Matale, "Women from poor households always have to contend with limited resources. The home financial management techniques that they learn help them organise these scarce resources better and also save."
- **Promoting Food Security and Environmental Awareness:** Participants in the programme are provided trainings towards producing things for household consumption to help make households more self-sufficient. In particular, attention is paid towards promoting vegetable cultivation to promote food security for the family in general, and contribute towards women's nutrition in particular. Women are also provided inputs on improved environmental

awareness, with attention to skills related to saving energy (unnecessary consumption of electricity) and conserving water resources.

2.13 Benefits of the Combined Impact of the Programmes on GEE and GBV:

Both the programmes reach out to women in the villages as well as in the estate sector. It also makes an effort to be inclusive across communities. In some districts, 99 per cent of those reached through the village sector belong to the Sinhala community, while 99 per cent of those reached through the estate sector belong to the Tamil community. The programmes also make an effort to reach the Muslim community by targeting areas where this community is in a majority. It became very clear during the course of the evaluation that, within this broad scope, the combined impact of the GEE and GBV programmes was definitely greater than in those areas where either programme worked alone.

- **Improved negotiation skills:** Many participants in the focus group discussions testified to reduced conflicts, because of the programme had taught them to improve their negotiation and communication skills. "Now I understand better, how to deal with my children and how to deal with my husband. I don't discuss important issues when I am angry and they are angry. I identify a suitable time to bring up issues that we need to discuss, and we find that many matters get sorted out easier."
- **Improved position in the household, and increased mobility:** During the focus group discussions, women shared that their positions in the household had improved. As one participant said, "Earlier our role was just to cook and feed the children, and prepare a lunch packet for the husband – I was just a housewife. Now I am earning, I have money and have dignity." Women also said that they had greater mobility. However, in some cases, this was still seen as an 'allowance' granted by the husband. "Earlier, my husband did not allow me to go out of the house alone. After the FORUT intervention, he allows me to go out and participate. He also allows me to hold our meetings here in our house, because we don't have a community hall in our village."
- **Increased ability to save, with a consequent increase in sense of security:** One of the principles of the GEE programme is that women should save some part of their income. Even in areas where the GEE programme is not in operation, women are often organised into collectives for savings and credit, which serves to build motivation to remain together as a group, and obtain the benefits of collectivisation. Participants in the programme shared that this also contributed

to an increased sense of security that they would be able to deal with crises better. In many cases, the husbands continued to be primary providers in the family, so that a good part of the woman's earnings could be saved. For example, a participant in the GEE programme from Pitamulla village said that on an average, she was able to save Rs. 5000 out of the Rs. 7000 that she typically earned every month from her dressmaking business.

- **Increased decision-making power:** In many families, this change in women's status within the family has resulted in increased decision-making power within the family. "Earlier my family was a male-dominated one. All decisions were made by my husband. After participation in the trainings and the family camps, we discuss matters related to our household. I have power too, and we make decisions about what is good for our family together. **Earlier the wife was just in a corner of the house, now she is a part of the family.**"
- **Improved social position and voice:** Several women spoke of how participating in the GEE and GBV programmes had helped them increase their confidence and develop a voice. Several had accepted positions of responsibility in their own villages, or been elected to sub-committees at the Divisional Level or to the District Level Committee. According to one participant from the Pitamulla village in Rathota sub-division, who holds positions at the village, divisional and district level, related to both GEE and GBV, "Earlier, I was afraid to speak to people. I was afraid to go out of the house and ignorant about matters in society. After joining the FORUT programmes, I have the courage to go out and deal with people. I am proud about holding these positions."
- **Improved assertiveness skills:** Many of the women who participated in the FGDs said that whereas earlier, they were very timid and shy, they now had the courage to speak up when necessary. Sunetra Nishamani spoke of how she had had to deposit her bag at the entrance of a wholesale mall where she went to do some New Year shopping. When she came back, she found that the bag had been lost. She complained to the shopowners, who refused to help. She found the police and complained to them, and fought until the shop paid her a sum equivalent to the lost item. "Earlier, I would have just come back home, accepting that the bag was lost. Thanks to the FORUT programme, I have more confidence. I fought, because they had taken responsibility for keeping my bag, but not safeguarded it, so I was entitled to the value of the lost item."

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- **Optimising use of time:** Several women said that engaging in their home-based businesses was a better use of their time than in the past. “Now I don’t idle my time away in front of the TV.” “Earlier, I was losing valuable time.” “Now, 24 hours in a day are not enough for all the things I want to do.” To a question about whether they did not mind losing out on recreational time, they were emphatic that they felt that earning an income and becoming financially independent made the loss totally worth it. “Besides, we still watch TV in the evenings.”
 - **Increased future orientation:** Several participants in the programme said that prior to participation in the FORUT-Sri Lanka programme, their families had lived for the day, often believing that they were too poor to think about investing for the future. However, the training in saving, and the small increases in income created by the programme had changed their perspectives. Consequently, they are able to recognise the potential of their existing economic resources to optimise their use. As one participant said, “I have a garden. I have now bought tea bushes and pepper vines and am cultivating these. They are investment for the future.” What is more, though only a limited number of women in a village were selected as grantees for the GEE programme, their financial success has had a ripple effect. “Now the village has developed. All the women now have an interest in finding suitable work and earning.”

2.14 Institutional and Stakeholder Issues

By far the most pressing institutional and stakeholder issue is the fact that as of June 30, 2011, FORUT changes from being an international NGO with a local presence in Sri Lanka to working entirely with local partner organisations. While some of these are long-term partner organisations, others will be new organisations, with a significant presence of key staff from the former FORUT-Sri Lanka, who are very familiar with the philosophies and strategies of the organisation. This combination will ensure that there is continuity into the second half of the project agreement period with NORAD.

However, there will be limitations to the extent to which the new organisations will be able to appropriate and utilise the enormous credibility and goodwill that FORUT-Sri Lanka has built over thirty years in the country, especially through investment in very local and essential infrastructure, like schools, roads and toilets. Using rapport-building measures and maintaining high levels of professional excellence, these stakeholders will need to work to get communities to re-dedicate the existing credibility to the new organisations.

Secondly, there are tremendous expectations from FORUT that have been created by the success of the GEE and GBV programmes, from the community and from the government. From community members who are already participants in the GEE programme, there are expectations that FORUT or its local partners will support them to scale up their businesses. For those communities which were not in the target areas, there are expectations that the programme will be extended to them. The government on its part is enthused by the strategies that have demonstrably succeeded in the two programmes and is looking for further collaboration and support too.

2.15 Recommendations

For the GEE Programme:

- **Consider extending the programme to young people:** The programme has hitherto focused on mature women. The inputs on economic self-reliance are also valuable for young people, especially for those who for personal or social reasons, have no opportunity to continue their formal education. In some rural and Muslim communities, such inputs may actually be critical, and a rare chance for young women to think of being economically self-reliant through home-based self-employment, which in turn could improve their status within households and communities enormously and advance gender equality.
- **Consider extending the programme to older women:** Currently, the upper age limit for participants in the programme is 55 years. However, the ability to earn an income is critical for older women, to maintain their status in the household, and, as they grow older, increase the possibility of caregiving from younger members of the family. For those older women, like widows or women abandoned by their spouses or children, livelihood options are even more critical. If low-effort options like poultry rearing, goat rearing and pig rearing can be extended to this age group, the programme could make a valuable contribution, given that social security schemes in the country are still rather limited.
- **Document the model properly:** The programme has achieved sufficient success to prove the validity and viability of the model. To enable other organisations, especially the local partners in the new dispensation to learn from the model, the GEE programme of FORUT-Sri Lanka should be properly documented.

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- **Build the capacity of a core group of outstanding women entrepreneurs who are, or could be, good contributing members of the District and Divisional Level Committees:** In the interests of increasing the probability of sustaining and upscaling the intervention, with fewer inputs from FORUT local partners, a core group of outstanding women entrepreneurs from the pilot phase of this programme, who have also demonstrated their social commitment and inclination towards public service could be identified. Their capacities can be built through Training of Trainers (TOT) programmes in building savings and credit collectives and in helping women entrepreneurs develop business plans. This would be the next logical step in building up the community to take ownership for the programme.
 - **Exposure visits to organisations like AWAKE, ASCENT and Gramalaya:** As FORUT's local partners attempt to further build up the GEE programme, it would be useful to learn from other organisations working on entrepreneurship development. Learning from the business incubator models of Association of Women Entrepreneurs in Karnataka (AWAKE) and Asian Centre for Entrepreneurial Initiatives (ASCENT) in Bangalore could be one example. As local partner organisations of FORUT also try to think of alternative ways in which to fund infrastructure projects, a visit to Gramalaya in Tiruchirapalli, Tamil Nadu, could also be useful in showing how loans from savings and credit collectives can be used to fund sanitation initiatives, which contribute enormously to the dignity and empowerment of women.
 - **Explore further possibilities of collaboration with government:** The GEE programme has set an excellent track-record of collaborating with the government. However, this has largely been in the area of technical support. The government has already acknowledged the superiority of the model practised by the GEE programme by explicitly referring to it in its policy documents on the new programme to support one million home-based businesses. Local partner organisations of FORUT could consider how to collaborate further with the government in teaching it the model, both through this programme, as well as through the women's collectives which are promoted through the government. Undoubtedly, to work through a government programme, or through structures and institutions promoted by the government would pose a great challenge. It would mean that the non-governmental organisation would have much less control, and consequently, the intervention would be much more difficult and messy to implement. The NGO would have to

accept a lower rate of success and also give the government the lion's share of the credit. Thus, for many reasons, such collaboration may not appear attractive.

Nevertheless, there are a couple of arguments in favour of such collaboration. Firstly, as long as a national NGO insists on doing its own programme, it may be able to demonstrate an excellent, and neat, model, but it will essentially remain a demonstration model. NGOs typically lack the reach and resources that will enable it to increase the scale of the intervention to a point where it makes a large impact. Secondly, given that its own resources are necessarily limited, it could consider providing government structures and programmes with support in the one area in which they are traditionally particularly deficient – namely, individualised business planning support, and individualised follow-up, including support with problem-solving and trouble-shooting. By doing so, it can stretch its own resources to reach a larger number of people, and increase the possibility of success of the government programme. However, to undertake this would require tremendous courage, perseverance, and generosity, while knowing, even at the outset, that the endeavour will be a mixed blessing. Nevertheless, this remains the only opportunity to create a national impact. As Mrs. Sepalika Rajapakse, Human Resources Development Officer at Matale pointed out, “There are 52 villages in Matale Division alone”, where currently, FORUT-Sri Lanka works in 3 villages, in addition to 5 estates.

For the Programme against GBV

- **Creation and promotion of protocols to deal with different kinds of gender-based violence:** FORUT-Sri Lanka has done excellent work in helping the government in introducing a checklist for midwives to look for suspicion indicators of depression or domestic violence and make referrals to appropriate professionals for support in the areas where they are working. It is important to secure feedback on how the system is working and advocate for its upscaling throughout the country, as it is a relatively low-cost intervention that can be introduced into the system without too much funding, provided there is appropriate backing.

Also, while many of the FORUT-led interventions are community-based, it is important to remember that, currently, the Ministry of Health has no formal response protocols for GBV-related crises, including sexual assault. The local partners implementing the GBV programme in the second half of the

programme period could extensively document the nature of the crises arising which require a broader response beyond one that can be dealt with in the immediate community. This can be a valuable contribution to the database on GBV in Sri Lanka, which needs to be built up as well. Further, this can help to feed into the development, on a priority basis, of a series of response protocols for different kinds of GBV-related crises, with broad stakeholder participation, including national, district and divisional level officials from the health and social welfare departments, mental health professionals, gender experts and academics. Using the GBV Forum, these can then be part of an advocacy initiative with the national government for adoption and implementation of the protocols, in a phased manner, beginning with the districts and divisions where the Programme against GBV is currently being implemented.

- **Advocacy for starting community-based safehouses in the absence of battered women's shelters:** Apart from a few private shelters like those run by Women in Need and the Women's Development Centre in Kandy, there is a severe shortage of places where women can receive residential and allied support in a crisis in Sri Lanka. Setting up such homes may be important in the long-run, but in the short and medium term require the commitment of extensive resources, political will and technical know-how. In this context, the Programme against GBV, after appropriate study and discussion with the local authorities, has the potential to set up a network of safe houses in the community (perhaps 3 per district to start with, in areas with strong HFACs, with families willing to provide shelter to a stranger in crisis for a limited period (1 week to 3 months) who have received appropriate training, in return for a small compensation. The HFAC will undertake to ensure that the survivor can be supported to access counselling services, legal aid, etc., as required.
- **Pilot and test a module on gender training for children:** To ensure that the cycle of perpetuation of GBV does not continue from one generation to another, it is very important that young children be introduced to the concepts of gender equality, to counter the gender-biased socialisation messages that they typically receive. Currently, as part of the MoH's Health Promotion programme, health clubs have been created in local schools and sessions on Life Skills and Reproductive Health are held for students in Grades 9 through 11. The national organisations emerging out of FORUT-Sri Lanka should design and test a module on gender training which can be included with these.

- **Document the intervention thoroughly:** As in the case of the GEE programme, it is important to document the Programme against GBV thoroughly too. This is especially important as the issue is sensitive, and the responses are community-based, which means that any effort at replication must be handled very delicately. Further, FORUT must seriously consider the possibility that while district level staff may have been happy to work for an INGO, rather than working for a local partner organisation, they may prefer to take their skills and experience for implementing programmes with other INGOs, when FORUT no longer employs them. In such a case, there would be a great loss of institutional memory and relationships, and it is important to document and institutionalise interventions as soon as possible.
- **Document and further research the Happy Family concept:** *The Happy Family concept was developed on the basis of very particular feedback from the ground, and it has proved itself successful in its implementation and impact. Although it is based on very sound principles, for example, acknowledging family conflict, self-reflection and family group reflection, taking responsibility for family harmony and acting accordingly, ongoing monitoring and adjustment, etc., it suffers from a slight image problem because of its name, appearing sentimental and 'twee', because of which gaining academic acceptance for the model might be a challenge. Nevertheless, the name is what provides an excellent advocacy edge for taking the Programme on GBV into communities and families. Given this paradox, it is important to carefully research the concept and its impact, given that it has proved so valuable.*

It must be noted also that by and large, the concept appears to have been successful in fairly rural and isolated estate contexts, where communities live close together, and some opinion leaders are able to exert a lot of social pressure to ensure compliance in community-based solutions to GBV. After documenting and researching the concept, it would be useful to pilot test it in other contexts, e.g., in urban slums, and in other countries, e.g., India, Nepal, Sierra Leone and Malawi, where FORUT has partner organisations, to see whether it is replicable. If so, this must be documented and advocated more widely, as domestic violence within the home is one of the most pernicious problems within the larger GBV context, which is also very difficult to access and address.

- **Adding a sexual health component:** Value-addition through the maternal and child health component was one of the strong elements in the GEE and GBV

programmes. However, it is also important to add a sexual health component to the existing components. This is because traditional society's differential attitudes to male and female sexuality is a major determinant in the causation and perpetuation of gender roles and stereotypes, as well as what society chooses to regard as 'transgressions' and the way in which it responds to perceived transgressions. To address such societal attitudes, it would be useful to include a sexual health component. APSA's Sexual Health Intervention Programme has both expertise and materials, which can be adapted for use by the Programme on GBV.

- **Begin work on GBV and marginalised groups:** Currently, the Programme against GBV focuses exclusively on the mainstream, working with families and communities in collaboration with government agencies. While this is an important area of work, and provides enough work for the programme, it would be useful for the programme to acknowledge the existence of GBV against groups like commercial sex workers and transgenders, who tend to be marginalised and stigmatised on those counts, which makes it even more difficult for them to access support than women in families, especially from government authorities. M to F transgenders, and even men perceived as effeminate are derogatorily called 'ponnaya', and discriminated against. It would be useful for the programme to educate itself on this issue, and consider piloting a small extension of the intervention to these vulnerable groups. At the very least the programmes on gender equality needs to educate itself on transgender realities and issues in the areas where it works.
- **Mainstreaming of HIV and AIDS:** Given Sri Lanka's commitment to the MDGs and the fact that HIV and AIDS is a cross-cutting issue, both the programmes on GEE and GBV should consider mainstreaming HIV and AIDS. This can be done with little capital expenditure and by embedding in the two programmes. Apart from the fact that mainstreaming makes economic and social sense, it can also be the first step in protecting women from spousal transmission of HIV.

Chapter 3

A Critical Review of the Programme on Promoting Gender Equality at Association for Promoting Social Action (APSA), India

"APSA told us about a lot of things that we didn't know, taught us about official procedures, and encouraged us to fight for our rights." - Mr. Sadiq, Area Sabha member and Ward Committee member, Vengal Rao Nagar, Hyderabad.

3.1 Introduction and Context

Moser, Gatehouse and Garcia (1996), identified three distinct factors which distinguished urban poverty and vulnerability from its rural counterpart. The first is "commoditization" – the "set of risks faced by urban dwellers arises from their integration into the cash economy" – having to pay for everything like food, shelter and transportation to work, without being able to rely on their own production at all, and insecurity of tenure. The second is "environmental hazard" resulting from "(a) inadequate access to environmental services (water, sanitation, drainage, and solid waste management); (b) poor quality housing; (c) overcrowding; and (d) settlement on marginal or degraded land", with the resulting health and economic costs. The third is "social fragmentation... because community and inter-household mechanisms for social security are less likely to operate in urban than in rural areas."²⁹

India has been steadily urbanising, and by 2030, India's urban population is expected to have grown from the present 286 million to 575 million. The percentage of India's urban poor is reported to be, depending on whether the estimates are those of India's Planning Commission or other agencies, from 25 to 42%. With the limitations on land availability, and the lack of sufficient commitment on the part of the government to ensure equitable access to services, a significant number of India's urban poor live in conditions which are unfit for human habitation, close to sewers or garbage dumps, with little access to sanitation or clean water. For example, 54.71 per cent of urban slums have no toilet facility³⁰ (UNDP, 2009). While a number of welfare schemes have been designed for the urban poor, the government does not actively reach out to

²⁹Moser, C., M. Gatehouse, and H. Garcia. 1996. —Urban poverty research sourcebook module II: Indicators of urban poverty, UNDP/UNCHS (Habitat)/World Bank, Working Paper No 5, September.

³⁰UNDP (2009) India: Urban Poverty Report 2009. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

communities to ensure that they can access them, and the communities often lack the necessary information and social capital necessary to seek these out for themselves.

The urban poor did not all necessarily live in slums, according to the 58th and 61st National Sample Surveys conducted in India in 2002 and 2004-5. The surveys distinguished between three types of communities – non-slum communities, notified slums (which are ‘recognised’ by the government and which therefore receive some limited facilities), and other slums. Analysing the data, Chandrasekhar and Montgomery found that 35.5% of non-notified slum dwellers lived in dwellings that interviewers considered unsafe, access to electricity was “very limited for those below the [poverty] line, especially for those in non-notified slums.” More than 75 per cent of the households in non-notified slums, 60 per cent of those in notified slums, and 27 per cent of those in non-slum areas, did not have access to drinking water in the building³¹.

According to Amis (1994), the National Institute of Urban Affairs in India found that women and children formed the biggest sub-group, constituting 73 per cent of those below the poverty line in urban India.³² As such, the negative aspects affect them in multiple ways. For example, while accepting that access to health services was usually much worse in rural than urban areas, Mark Montgomery (2009) found that among urban dwellers, only 42 per cent of poor women had the attendance of a physician or trained nurse-midwife at delivery compared to 87.2 per cent of their non-poor counterparts.³³

It must be noted that India’s skewed sex ratio of 933 females per 1,000 males, comes down further to 900 for urban India, and to as low as 861 for the country’s million plus cities. While to some extent, the reason could be greater inward migration of males, sex selective abortions must also be taken into account, suggesting that even being born is a gender-related challenge in India’s cities. Renu Khosla’s (2009) detailed listing of the gender concerns of India’s urban poor included access to municipal services (water, sanitation, solid waste management and waste water disposal systems); women’s rights to urban spaces – land, housing and finances; access to livelihoods and employment, especially the problems of working in the informal sector; issues related to the right of

³¹Chandrasekhar, S., & Montgomery, M. R. (2010). Broadening poverty definitions in India: Basic needs in urban housing. *Human Settlements Working Paper Series: Poverty Reduction in Urban Areas - 27*. London: International Institute for Environment and Development.

³² Amis, P. (1994). Indian Urban Poverty: Labour Markets, Gender and Shocks. *Journal of International Development*, 6(5), pp. 635-643.

³³Montgomery, M. R. (2009). “Urban Poverty and Health in Developing Countries,” *Population Bulletin* 64, no. 2.

social services; safety and security (including safety in urban spaces, security from evictions, and gender-based violence); and urban transport.

Findings of the Evaluation of APSA's Gender Programme

APSA's gender programme was conceived as a Women's Economic Empowerment programme with the strategic objective of improved gender equality and women's empowerment by economically empowering 200 plus previously unemployed women from economically poor and socially/politically excluded communities. However, in practice, the programme has a much wider reach and scope, both in terms of numbers reached, issues addressed and strategies employed, that it would be more appropriate to term it more broadly as APSA's Gender Programme.

3.2 Effectiveness of the Gender Programme

Overall, APSA's Gender Programme has been extraordinarily effective, and can be a model for others around the world. Although initially conceptualised to address the feminisation of poverty, through collectivisation, microsavings and microcredit, and some encouragement towards skillbuilding and the development of microbusinesses, in practice, the programme addresses a range of issues, including girls' and women's education, access to legal support, political empowerment, and eldercare. It addresses 'dirty' and 'difficult' issues like sanitation and housing, which many community development NGOs are loath to work with because of the extraordinary systemic and structural challenges involved, apart from the social engineering difficulties associated with necessary attitudinal and behaviour changes. It sets exceptional standards in working with local authorities and other NGOs, linking and learning for benefiting communities, and in raising local resources.

By far the biggest strength of the programme is that it flexibly responds to and addresses issues emerging from the grassroots. In this sense, APSA's Gender Programme may be said to be a programme of continuous grassroots-based research, reflection and action for finding solutions to the social and economic challenges faced by the urban poor, especially the women and children. APSA's drawbacks are its inadequate documentation and theorising (not for its own purposes, which happens orally during staff meetings, but for the larger learning community) from the learnings of its actions on the ground; inadequate presentation of its skills, strengths and achievements to the larger body of women's organisations working in Bangalore, Hyderabad and India, and inadequate presence in policymaking and programme design with government agencies, in matters related to gender. APSA continues to be known

largely as a child rights organisation, when its strengths related to working with gender issues are very impressive.

The effectiveness of APSA's Gender Programme has been discussed at greater length under the headings of Conceptualisation, Stakeholder Selection, Strategies, and Monitoring Mechanism.

3.2.1 Conceptualisation:

Although the programme appeared to be narrowly conceptualised, aimed at achieving an “impact target for the 5-year period of economically empowering 200 plus previously unemployed and socially/politically excluded communities”³⁴, the outcomes/ medium-term results anticipated in the programme showed that the conceptualisation was actually much broader than indicated by the name of the programme, “Women's Economic Empowerment Programme.” These anticipated results not only included “A significant increase in the number of economically active females within the target locations”, but further that “Federations of women's self help groups are actively raising issues to elected government officials and public servants relating to unfulfilled rights and entitlements” and that these “Federations of women's self help groups are 100% financially sustainable”. Thus the programme aimed at increasing voice and space for negotiation related to securing basic needs and rights.

Apart from this, the programme has proved that it is effective at conceptualising goals, strategies, and possible outcomes, based on issues emerging from communities, above and beyond the goals initially designed for the programme (e.g., addressing gender-based violence, making government services more accountable to poor women or eldercare). APSA raises local resources and establishes collaborative relationships with government and non-government agencies to meet these challenges, empowering communities, and flexibly deploying its extraordinarily skilled staff to meet these emerging challenges.

3.2.2 Stakeholder Selection:

APSA changed its strategy of stakeholder selection in this phase of the programme. As an organisation with nearly three decades of experience in community development, APSA relied on invitations from communities of the urban poor which had seen APSA's work and been impressed by the change it had brought about in similar communities, to decide on project locations. On reflection APSA found that this approach meant that its work was spread over a number of isolated pockets all over the city. While this was

³⁴FORUT. (2009). FORUTMulti-Year Application. Part 2. Strategic Goals 2009-2013. Norway.

sufficient to bring about development to these individual communities, their diffusion made it difficult for them to come together to negotiate on strong terms politically.

Hence, in this programme phase, APSA decided that it would try and work with all the slum communities falling within four legislative assembly constituencies each in the two cities in which it works, Bangalore and Hyderabad. In Bangalore, the constituencies are C V Raman Nagar, Jayanagar, Krishna Raja Puram (K R Puram) and Mahadevapura. In Hyderabad, the constituencies are Cantonment, Musheerabad, Sanathnagar, and Secunderabad. Within the slums in these areas, APSA organises the women into self-help groups (SHGs) of between 12 and 20 women. An area may have as many as 15 groups, which means that as many as 300 women from a slum may be members in the programme. Children and adolescents are part of APSA's children's collectives which focus on rights education and leadership development. These are called Hasiru Sanghas and Indradhanassu Balala Sanghams in Bangalore and Hyderabad respectively. Special efforts targeting girl children are also made, for example, targeted tutoring or sexual health education services. Specialised services may also be provided for especially vulnerable stakeholders within the larger stakeholder body, e.g., widows may be supported to get government pensions, single mothers to get scholarship support for their children and senior citizens for elder care.

3.2.3 Strategies of the Gender Programme

- **Collectivisation of women and teaching SHG groups how to manage themselves:** APSA's main strategy is to motivate and organise women to form self-help groups, with savings and microcredit as a central feature of such organising. This further aims at creating the base for active women's community-based organisations that would be empowered to take up, work for and find solutions for their own issues, as well as issues facing their communities.

They also teach the women how to manage an SHG group well. As Muthu of Ambedkar Nagar in Bangalore said, "We learn how to run the weekly group. We elect our President and Secretary. We keep accounts and decide how much is available to be used as loans. We listen to loan requests and take decisions on which requests will get prioritised depending on need. We ask borrowers how they will repay. When we can decide on a satisfactory repayment schedule, we grant a loan. If people default on their payments, we confront them and help them work out how to pay."

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- **Building up savings:** Through self-help groups, women are encouraged to save and increase their sense of financial security, prepare a base from which they can start microbusinesses, and contribute to the family.
 - **Access to credit:** Through membership in the self-help groups, APSA helps women who lack collateral to secure credit, on repayment terms that they find less burdensome than those of the local moneylender. After one or two loan cycles, the self-help group is assessed, and then linked with cooperative banks or nationalised banks. The groups then receive loans that may range from INR 25,000 to INR 250,000, depending on their credit history, which they then divide amongst themselves according to need, purpose and repayment capacity.
 - **Finding avenues of economic opportunity for women and young people:** APSA works in multiple ways to provide avenues of employment for women and young people of both sexes.

- **Skill training in APSA facilities:** Through Kaushalya, APSA's skill training centre located in Bangalore, and the Spoorthi Institute of Computers in Hyderabad, APSA directly provides training to young people in basic computer skills, web design, desktop publishing, tailoring and embroidery, electronics, and screen printing.

“The difference here is that the faculty is very sympathetic. They are aware of our background. Our teacher adjusts his teaching according to the student's capacity – fast or slow. He knows how to communicate with us. Because of the way they teach, it's not just computers that we learn, but our personality develops, our self-confidence improves. Before joining this course, I had been for a couple of job interviews. I was terrified and didn't do well. After doing this course, I went and faced the interview with confidence and now have a good job.”

- Swati, alumna of APSA computer centre

- **Linking people to other facilities which provide training:** Apart from admitting young people to its own training facilities, APSA maintains contacts with several other agencies providing training and preparing them for employment, and links young people with them.

Mr.Venkat Rao, District Coordinator of the Nehru Yuva Kendra, a central-government sponsored autonomous body of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, said that his organisation worked closely with APSA, because

APSA had close links with that segment of young people for which his organisation's programmes were meant. "We provide a 45-day long capacity building training for young people, both girls and boys. A number of central government agencies like the Railways, Police, Civil Police, Border Security Force, etc. recruit employees from time to time. They have certain requirements, a written test in Hindi that candidates need to pass, a certain standard of physical fitness, etc. Our training is designed to help candidates prepare for recruitment. We provide special coaching in Hindi for 45 days, with a programme in physical culture, together with Personality Development, Time Management, and Leadership Skills components. We also assist with placement. Last year, we trained 500 young people, half of them girls, and 370 of them were placed. I have very limited staff and cannot reach out to the community. APSA helps us to mobilise young people from the communities that really need support."

- **Working in collaboration with the government agencies:** In Hyderabad, APSA has been able to persuade the local government to provide employment for women from APSA-facilitated SHGs in service provision, for example, in cleaning and maintenance contracts of public buildings, environmental sanitation and maintenance of plastic-free zones in public parks, etc.

Mrs. Tilasundari and Mrs. Urmila Grace have found work with the Lake Task Force to ensure a plastic-free zone in the gardens around the Hussain Sagar lake. They each earn Rs. 4,000, working in shifts from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., and again from 3 p.m. to 9 p.m. The public deposits any plastic goods they bring to the gardens with them, and collects these on the way out. "Because we work together, we are able to work flexible shifts to attend to pressing matters if we need to, and cover for each other."

- **Providing credit, training and motivation to start microbusinesses:** Women are encouraged to start microbusinesses. APSA also links up with the Government of India's Institute of People's Education, Jan Shikshan Sansthan, to provide various kinds of skill training to help women start their own businesses.

Mr. Manjunath, Programme Assistant, Jan Shikshan Sansthan, said, “I am responsible for doing programmes in the Bangalore East Zone, but I do not have contact with needy communities and it is difficult for me to mobilise people. The government’s approach is that people have to approach them for support, which does not work because people do not know about the support we can offer. I take the help of APSA and collaborate with them to reach different livelihood skills to the slum communities in the city.”

- **Encouraging groups of SHGs to come together in federations, and encouraging mature SHGs to become self-sustaining:** APSA encourages the SHGs in proximal localities to form federations so as to be able to use the strength of numbers to negotiate for their communities. As SHGs gain experience to run their own affairs, complete several loan cycles, build up their savings, and their leaders become recognised as leaders in their communities, APSA encourages them to become self-sufficient, not requiring the ongoing support of APSA staff with their work.

Federation meetings are held once a month, and representatives of SHGs come together to share news from their groups and communities, and APSA staff use the opportunity to share news about the organisation, about schemes that the women and their communities can access, etc. The groups also share their financial results. The sharing not only creates an atmosphere of support and of learning from each other, but also motivates them to do better in a spirit of friendly competition. Several groups have been inspired by the good performance of other groups to increase their savings, or get into businesses that others have shared about.

On International Women’s Day last year, a number of groups which had been in existence for ten years, organised a celebration that also marked their tenth anniversary. They persuaded the local Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) to sponsor the rent of a large community hall in their area, as well as of the sound system. The women put together an impressive programme, which recalled the history of the women’s movement and how women around the world, and Indian women in particular, had slowly progressed towards securing their rights and entitlements. There was also a cultural programme, in which a number of women, (including women in their fifties and mothers of as many as five children) participated in dances and plays, completely contrary to the norms of their communities. The celebrating groups also sponsored lunch for the

members of all the groups in their area, almost 500 women, a measure of how much their collective economic strength had grown. The APSA directors and staff were honoured guests on the occasion.

- **Addressing issues of basic needs:** APSA encourages communities and supports them to address issues of basic needs, including housing, drinking water, electricity and sanitation. “APSA told us about a lot of things that we didn’t know, taught us about official procedures, and encouraged us to fight for our rights. When APSA came to work in our community, conditions were really bad. Now, thanks to all the effort, we have *pattas*[land tenure documents], roads, and drainage. Our areas are serviced by *shubhraks* [solid waste management workers], which we did not have earlier,” said Sadiq, an Area Sabha Member and Ward Committee member from Vengal Rao Nagar. APSA has collaborated with the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation on a pilot project to improve the quality of water supplied to the slums. To this end, women in slums have been trained in the use of water quality testing kits, and provided with these kits. Periodically, the women test the quality of the water supplied to the slum and if there are any issues, they immediately take it up with the officials of the Water Board.
- **Assistance with securing identification documents:** APSA supports women in slum communities to get government documents for identification and benefits like the Voters’ ID card, and the Ration Card for the Public Distribution System. These increase women’s social security and negotiating power with the government and political leaders, apart from being necessary to exercise their franchise and get subsidised food and fuel supplies from the government for their families.
- **Addressing environmental sanitation issues:** APSA works with communities and local governments to work on environmental sanitation issues and find solutions to these. APSA has collaborated with the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation on a pilot project to improve the environmental sanitation of 33 slums which surround the Hussain Sagar lake which lies at the centre of the city. The project aimed at carrying out settlement-level meetings on awareness related to environmental sanitation, reducing plastic waste, eliminating open defecation on the shores of the lake, renovating existing toilets and building new sanitation infrastructure, including the slums in the solid waste disposal system of the city, etc.

Venkubai, a resident of the Ambedkar Nagar slum in Hyderabad said. “We used to have only one toilet. It was unclean, there were no water facilities, and it was very difficult for women. With support from APSA, we lobbied the local government. The old public toilet complex was renovated, and water facilities provided. In addition, another toilet complex was built. The entrance to our area used to be filthy, and used to be used for open defecation. Now we have converted that into a garden where our children can play.”

- **Helping government publicise and implement schemes meant for the slum community, and communities to benefit from these:** From time to time, the government formulates schemes meant for the welfare of people living in slums. However, they do not have a good mechanism for publicising and implementing these, and hence the schemes do not bring the intended benefits to the communities. APSA keeps in regular touch with various arms of the government like the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation, Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority, Bruhad Bangalore Mahanagara Palike, SC Corporation, BC Corporation, Nehru Yuva Kendra, Jan Shikshan Sansthan, etc. to learn what government schemes are available, and to link potential beneficiaries in the community with them. Thus, APSA was able to link up 5 slums in its operational areas to a programme for solid waste management and others into a programme for testing water quality. APSA has helped raise scholarships of Rs. 183,000 from the Child Welfare Committee in Bangalore to help very poor single mothers in poverty educate their children.

At many of the community centres in the slums where it works (at least one per assembly constituency), APSA Hyderabad has set up Citizen Service Centres to serve the people. Accessing government benefits and schemes requires a citizen to produce a number of certificates to prove his or her claim. These certificates are issued by the government, and obtaining them involves cumbersome procedures, often requiring several visits to government offices. The Citizen Service Centres source various kinds of forms so that members of the slum community do not have to run from pillar to post to secure them, and also helps them with filling up the forms, putting in the correct enclosures, etc. so that officials have fewer opportunities to reject the applications on flimsy grounds. The Citizen Service Centres help the community with forms related to securing:

- Income Certificates
- Caste Certificates
- Date of Birth Certificates

- Proof of Residence Certificates
- Senior Citizen Pension
- Widow Pension
- Disability Pension
- Family Benefit Scheme
- Passport
- Driving License
- Death Certificate

“APSA helps us with a lot of official procedures. They teach us how to get things done in the government offices,” said Sadiq, of Vengal Rao Nagar.

- **Advocacy with the government to create options for the urban poor:** APSA consistently lobbies with the government to create space for the urban poor in its policies and programmes. As the most vocal lobby, the middle-class garners a lot of the attention of the government in the city. While state and central government schemes target the rural poor, the urban poor frequently get left behind. APSA lobbies the government to bring an urban poor focus into its activities. For example, the government has some funds earmarked for senior citizens welfare. The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation had invited Resident Welfare Associations from middle-class neighbourhoods to send in proposals for senior citizen centres. APSA is currently advocating with the Corporation to assign such centres to slum areas, as the middle class had other care and recreation avenues like social, religious and special interest clubs. APSA Hyderabad is also advocating with the Andhra Pradesh government to recognise rag picking as an important economic and environmentally valuable activity and to constitute a separate Welfare Board for ragpickers.
- **Creating space and voice for women:** By collectivising women and improving their economic conditions, APSA tries to create conditions for increasing space and voice for women, within the family, in the community, and beyond. For some women, especially those belonging to the Muslim community, the change has been significant. “We never used to be allowed out of the house. Now we are coming to the community centre, participating in meetings, and learning to use the computer,” said Rashida, a resident of VengalRao Nagar. According to Padma, community leader in Valmiki Nagar, “We are now confident that we can represent our problems to the MLA, the Councillor, to the Commissioner. We have the confidence to do this. Government officials too directly contact us now when they want something implemented in our area.”

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- **Focusing on women's literacy:** APSA Hyderabad is focusing on adult literacy for women. It is experimenting with a community-based model in Rasoolpura. It has organised groups of ten women each, sourced teaching-learning materials from the Department of Adult Education and organised a volunteer teacher from the same area who teaches the women for two hours every evening. According to Shivarani, Programme Coordinator at APSA, "The volunteer-teacher undertakes to make her entire group literate, and if a woman is very busy, then she undertakes to go and sit with her in her kitchen and ensure that she keeps up with the group." The model has just begun to be implemented. There are twenty such groups in Indiramma Nagar, and 100 groups in all in the Rasoolpura area. APSA will probably need to provide some technical support to the volunteer teachers and it will be interesting to look at the results at the end of this phase of the programme.
 - **Unionising workers in the informal sector:** The bulk of India's economy (92 per cent) is in the informal sector, and the bulk of the female labour force works here, with the attendant issues of poor pay, inadequate social security, etc. Previously, APSA used to support women workers in the informal sector, like domestic workers, whenever they were in crisis. In this phase of the programme, APSA has been paying particular attention to organising them more formally, unionising groups like domestic workers and construction workers so that they have a little more social support and negotiating power. They are linking the women to unions like Karnataka Domestic Workers Union, Fedina, and the Construction Workers Welfare Board.
 - **Building greater political space for women:** APSA has also been actively encouraging women from urban poor communities to become interested in social and political activism, at the level of their communities, and also beyond, with campaigns related to the public interest. On the one hand, it has been encouraging women's leaders to take up problems from the community with the local Councillors and MLAs. On the other, it has been encouraging women to get involved in social campaigns related to the public interest like the anti-liquor movement, the public awareness movement against corruption and the Election Watch campaign to reduce corruption in elections.

The women of the Bhattarahalli slum in Bangalore are working to get their slum declared so that they can access some basic services from the BBMP (the city corporation) and also take the first step towards recognising their rights to land tenure, a long and arduous bureaucratic process that the government does not make easy at all. “The men went initially, but then gave up. Then the women took over. We have submitted the application. The engineer has visited our area and carried out the inspection. Now the Slum Board has to submit our proposal to the Deputy Commissioner. Earlier, we never got involved in such issues. Now we follow up with the area leader. We are confident that we can work to get roads and sanitation. Through a BBMP scheme, 26 women in our area got tailoring training. Now, through our advocacy with the local government representative, these women have been sanctioned sewing machines under a BBMP scheme to benefit SC, ST and Minority Women. We have also linked the older women in our area to a government scheme that provides them with a hot meal in the middle of the day.”

- **Addressing issues of domestic violence:** APSA has also raised awareness about gender-based violence among the SHGs and encouraged them to use the collective strength of the group, and the voice that they have developed to provide support to women facing issues of domestic violence and dowry harassment. In Hyderabad, committees aimed explicitly at reducing domestic violence, called Asara Committees, have been formed in several slums. By linking them with the police and NGOs providing legal aid, they are also able to provide the next level of support to survivors if necessary.

“One of the women in our neighbourhood was facing violence from her husband, who beat her up regularly and even cut her up with a knife,” said Shanti of Byrasandra. “The women of the area confronted him, and rather than face them, he ran away. Later, when he had come to his senses, a group of women spoke to him, and told him that if he treated his wife badly, the community would take action, including getting the police involved. Now, he no longer troubles his wife.”

- **Providing support for senior citizens:** Apart from trying to link up senior citizens to the government’s pension scheme for senior citizens, APSA Hyderabad has begun piloting a day care centre for indigent senior citizens in the Kawadiguda community care centre, with women forming the bulk of those using the centre.
- **Assisting with social security:** There is no one comprehensive social security scheme which covers citizens in India, which is a great disadvantage for people in

poverty. However, a number of piecemeal schemes are available under various government departments and ministries. APSA tries to obtain information about these schemes, find out eligibility criteria and link up beneficiaries to the schemes. Various government bodies like the Construction Workers Welfare Board and the Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) provide insurance coverage, and APSA helps to extend this support to men and women in poverty. *Because LIC makes no money out of this scheme, and is forced to administer it as part of its social responsibility work, they put in no effort to locate or register beneficiaries. APSA locates the beneficiaries, helps them complete application forms, scans the forms onto the computer and enters the details in the prescribed formats and then offers the data to LIC officials on USB pen drives, so that women in poverty get the benefits of insurance.*

“We organised an interaction with APSA staff and gave them an orientation on the Construction Workers Welfare Board and the schemes available for them, especially the social security schemes. Most builders are afraid of legal liabilities, and don’t inform the workers that they should register with us. We have very good schemes, which are very beneficial for the workers, provided they register. The workers need to fill out forms, provide some supporting documentation, a photograph, some kind of proof that they are genuine construction workers, etc. Motivating the construction workers to join the scheme is difficult. Then for the supporting documentation they need to get a certificate from the trade union. That involves a lot of legwork. Our office simply does not have the staff to do this.

I used to go to construction sites with my team and the labour inspectors to provide orientation to the workers on the Board and its schemes. But the conversion rate was very poor – less than five percent. Now APSA collaborates with us. They first motivate the leaders of the construction workers, and then get access to the workers and motivate them in turn. They make persistent visits for building rapport with the workers. But the workers can’t take time off from work to come to the office and lose a day’s wages, even if they are literate and know how to put the papers together. APSA helps by providing publicity, getting all the documentation together, bringing it to the registering office, following up, collecting the cards and giving it to the workers, thus converting them into beneficiaries of our schemes. It’s very good working with APSA – it’s trouble-free and hassle-free. They do quality work, not haphazard work.”

- Vasantkumar Hittanagi, Joint Secretary and CEO, Karnataka Building and Other Construction Workers' Welfare Board

- **Collaborating with other NGOs for legal and health support:** Both in Bangalore and in Hyderabad, APSA collaborates with other NGOs and private organisations which can provide specialised support as required. In Hyderabad, the Indian Red Cross conducts health camps and health promotion trainings, while in Bangalore, APSA collaborates with community medicine departments of local hospitals for the same purpose. Apart from organising these health camps, APSA encourages health-seeking behaviour and offers follow-up support, for example in getting poor patients inexpensive eyeglasses, raising funds for operations, accompanying them to hospitals when they are unaware of procedures or too diffident, etc. In both Bangalore and Hyderabad, organisations like the Alternative Law Forum and South India Cell for Human Rights Education and Monitoring provide legal support for members of the urban poor community who need support. Women especially seek support in cases involving dowry harassment, domestic violence, disputes with employers, etc.

“We support APSA with their community development work by organising health camps and carrying out health promotion trainings, focusing on subjects like sanitation and hygiene. APSA’s staff are committed and dedicated, and the organisation does good work. They work at the grassroots with direct contact with poor and vulnerable people. Whenever we plan a collaborative programme, they respond immediately. We don’t have confidence in some NGOs, which do a couple of unrelated activities and disappear. But APSA does consistent good work.”

- Mr.Lakshman Rao, Retired Chief Justice of the Allahabad High Court and Chairman, Indian Red Cross Society

- **Raising local resources:** APSA raises a lot of resources for its work from local sources. For instance, all the computers and equipment for the Hyderabad computer school and for much of the Bangalore training centre is raised from the corporate sector. APSA raises the funds for the snacks and food supplied at the eldercare centre and for excursions and outings from local sources.
- **Media Advocacy:** APSA has improved its media advocacy since the last evaluation. Especially in Hyderabad, APSA’s activities get regularly reported in the media, and APSA’s staff are regularly invited to be part of programmes

relating to social issues and the urban poor. In Bangalore too, media advocacy has improved – however, a lot of it tends to be focused on children’s issues. Nevertheless, many of the reports relate to domestic child labour, and hence have a gender orientation.

- **Focusing on recreation:** While the business of making a living takes up so much time, recreation for urban poor women is not a priority. This is compounded by the fact that there are few spaces where women can meet and enjoy themselves. APSA encourages women to go on picnics and outings and organise celebrations, actively making rest and recreation a part of their lives. APSA also organises summer camps for children, ensuring that girl children and adolescent girls also get these opportunities.

At the end of a focus group discussion with women beneficiaries in Byrasandra, the women surrounded APSA’s Programme Coordinator. “When do we next have sports?” they asked her excitedly. “When are we going to play games, dance, when are we going on a picnic?” Then, recognising that their behaviour was contrary to many social norms, they turned to the evaluator and laughed. “Now we don’t cry. We are ‘free birds’ – we are jolly.”

- **Working to improve educational outcomes:** APSA tries to identify gaps in its programme and source funds for it wherever possible. It provides targeted educational support for children in crisis or at risk through the Dream School, with support from FORUT. In addition, APSA may provide other support services in particular areas. For example, the Government High School in Kawadiguda was known for its poor results. APSA organised tutoring classes in the local community centre with a volunteer from the community who was an engineer. All 26 of the students who attended classes regularly, of which 8 were girls, passed the Xth Standard Public Examinations. Recognising that educational outcomes for girl children tended to be low, APSA provided tutoring services for girl children in several in slum communities, with some funding support from Oxfam.
- **Getting children involved in community development, and challenging gender stereotypes in practice:** Through children’s collectives, APSA also tries to get children actively involved in thinking about and problem solving around community development issues. Girls are as actively involved in this as boys. There have been a number of cases where children have found the water and

sanitation situation in schools too inadequate to encourage them to attend schools regularly, made representations to local government representatives, and got the matter rectified. In APSA's institutional projects, children are active participants in the management, and there is equal participation of girls and boys in the various committees. When children do chores within the home, gender stereotypes are actively challenged, and boys are required to roll out *chapatis* [flatbreads] or sweep, as girls are required to look into budget and administration issues.

- **Addressing issues of adolescent sexual health and life skills:** APSA has been proactive in developing an excellent curriculum which helps adolescents understand and make responsible choices related to adolescent sexual health, and training its own staff as well as the staff from about 20 different organisations working with street and slum children in southern India on using the curriculum. There is also a life skills programme which benefits children in APSA's institutional settings, assisting children from difficult circumstances with essential support to develop essential skills like decision making, conflict resolution, stress management, etc.
- **Addressing issues of alcohol and drugs:** APSA also links up with hospitals to organise sensitisation and health promotion camps particularly around issues of alcohol and drug abuse, and provides referral and social support services for people who take the initial step towards giving up such psychotropic substances. Said Saroja, a grateful old mother from Ambedkar Nagar slum in Bangalore, "My son was an out-and-out drunkard. He would get drunk every evening and beat us all up, throw things about and break all the things in the house. We were at our wits' end. APSA staff persuaded him to go into hospital. They took him with them and got him admitted. They didn't tell us where he was but assured us that he was doing well. They didn't want us to visit in case he persuaded us to buy him alcohol. My son is fine now – he doesn't drink now, and is very responsible about how he takes care of us. After he got back from hospital, we learned that the APSA staff member had visited him every single day of the 22 days that he spent in hospital, checking on him and taking care of his needs. I am so grateful – APSA saved our family."

3.2.4 Monitoring Mechanism of the Gender Programme:

APSA organises a four-day long retreat once a year in which it evaluates the achievements of the previous year, and the different groups chalk out their plans for the

coming year. These plans are thoroughly discussed and vetted, with all staff members providing their inputs. The Accounts team provides a break up of the budget available for the different activities. The atmosphere is very dynamic, and all staff members are encouraged to learn more about, and if necessary, challenge each other's work. APSA's senior management uses the occasion to ask critical questions and assist with strategic planning, or mid-course corrections as needed. Smaller versions of these retreats are held at the end of the three quarters following the annual retreats to ensure that teams are on track with respect to their goals. APSA also invites external resource persons to provide inputs on content areas in which its staff needs support during these meetings.

In addition, every month, at a meeting called the Avalokana meeting, typically held on the 2nd or 3rd of the month, the senior staff members meet with the senior management to present and discuss the plans for the month. At the same meeting, accounts for the previous month are presented, monetary issues sorted out and expenses for the following month projected. Every week, meetings of the constituency-level teams break down the month's goals into weekly goals and activities and present the work done the previous week.

3.3 Impact of the Gender Programme

- **Expansion into new project locations, to work with some of the most marginalised of the urban poor:** APSA's new strategy of trying to locate and work with all the slums in eight assembly constituencies in two cities has meant that it has expanded into new project locations. Because it is now seeking out all the slums in a particular area, it is also working with the most marginalised groups, especially the new migrants to the city, who are only one step up from being homeless, with 'homes' made of plastic sheeting, discarded and rusted galvanised iron sheets, etc., with no access to basic amenities, and supporting and collectivising them.
- **Making communities self-sustained in strategies of community development:** APSA's decision to confine its work to four assembly constituencies in two cities has also meant that APSA has had to give up working in a number of slums where it previously worked. Since it would have been unethical to abruptly stop working in these communities, APSA has worked hard to build the capacities of community leaders and CBOs in the area so that they can independently work to negotiate and secure their needs. In this way, several slum communities have become self-sustaining in terms of taking care of their community development issues. APSA still maintains sketchy contact (about once in six months) to

maintain the relationship and goodwill, and is invited for various community celebrations, but for the most part, communities are managing well on their own. In the current phase, 112 SHGs (75 in Bangalore and 37 in Hyderabad) are functioning almost completely independent of APSA's support. APSA provides support once a year, doing an external audit of their accounts, calculating their profits and disbursing the interest on savings. These SHGs also participate in Federation meetings, sharing their successes and stories.

Even in the communities that APSA is currently working in, the strategies of collectivisation, conscientisation and building CBOs has paid off well. In Vengal Rao Nagar, the community contributed to help to build a small community centre, which now serves multiple purposes. It serves as an *anganwadi* (early childhood care and education centre) in the mornings, a computer centre in the afternoons, it also serves as a Citizens Service Centre, health camps are held there, and the SHG groups use it as a meeting space as well.

- **Establishment of a successful savings and microcredit model:** APSA has been successful in establishing a savings and microcredit model that works for the community, as borne out by the figures in Table 6.

Table 6: Showing the performance in collectivisation, savings and microcredit of APSA facilitated SHGs in Bangalore and Hyderabad

Information about collectivisation and membership	
Number of groups	443
Number of members	6827
Number of federations	15
Information about microcredit	
Loans channelised through SHGs (in INR)	207,845,070
Loans repaid (in INR)	169,991,076
Interest recovered from loans (in INR)	36,073,904

Information about savings	
Savings (in INR)	68,500,191
Interest on savings (in INR)	2,000,878
Savings Withdrawn (in INR)	4,750,800
Information about running expenditure	
Sangha expenditure	402,057

This is an ongoing process with APSA. For example, by 2008, APSA Bangalore alone had facilitated the formation of 275 SHGs, and after these had become self-sustaining, APSA withdrew from those areas. In the current programme phase, APSA has supported 75 groups to become self-sustaining, and is currently providing only minimal support. 182 new SHGs have been formed in the four constituencies in which APSA works in Bangalore. As a support to certain slums which APSA's field staff have identified as being 'extremely needy' even though they fall outside the designated constituencies in which APSA currently works, 35 SHGs are currently being facilitated. A similar process of building, forming, norming and strengthening to become self-reliant is followed by APSA Hyderabad as well. The collateral benefits of using the SHG as a unit of organisation and change in the advancement of gender equality is explained further in this section.

- Independence from the moneylender:** Prior to the APSA intervention, women took loans from the moneylenders at interest rates of 10 per cent per month. They also asked for collateral in the form of gold (usually the *mangalsutra* – the symbol of marriage), household articles, etc. With the SHGs, the women pay an interest of 2% per month, and the profit is shared out as a dividend among the women. "We started with savings of INR 30 per month, which we then raised to INR 50 and now, we are required to pay in INR 100, according to the decision of our group. However, many of us are able to save a lot more. Through our savings, the revolving funds we get from the government and the loans from the banks, we are able to help each other. We don't have to take out loans at an interest of 120 per cent per annum." Mrs. Madhumani of Ambedkar Nagar said

that her group had savings of INR 150,000, and had earned an interest of INR 56,715 the previous year. The profit had been shared out between the group, and the members of the group had earned an annual profit that ranged from INR 1000 to INR 4,500, based on the extent of their savings. “We started with savings of INR 10 a week, then it went up to INR 20 and then INR 50. Now, most of us are able to save even INR 200 most weeks,” said Mrs.Saroja, also of Ambedkar Nagar.

Access to credit helped the women in multiple ways, and they used it for many purposes, including:

- Payment of children’s school fees
 - Repairing or constructing dwellings
 - To deal with emergencies and crises
 - To meet health expenses
 - For business investments
 - To purchase two wheelers (to help with commutes to work)
 - To pay security deposits for renting dwellings
 - For family functions like weddings
-
- **Development of microbusinesses:** Supported by APSA, women from slum communities have developed a number of businesses, which include:
 - Doll-making – the dolls are sold at the many traditional fairs and festivals
 - Buying three-wheeler goods transportation vehicles which are rented out
 - Purchase of cows for dairying and sale of milk
 - Beauty parlours
 - Tea shops
 - Snack vending
 - Vegetable shops
 - Sales of greens
 - Sales of flowers
 - Sales of seasonal fruits
 - Sales of tender coconuts
 - Sales of ice lollies
 - Sales of breakfast foods
 - Sales of evening snacks
 - Sales of spice powders
 - Manufacture and sales of sweets
 - Papad making business

-
- Sales of fish
 - Sales of firewood
 - Tailoring centre
 - General store/Petty shop
 - Sari sales business
 - Sari painting business
 - Sari embroidery
 - Zari work (intricate embroidery with silver/gold thread)
 - Sari rolling business
 - Costume jewellery business
 - Sale of sari petticoats
 - Sales of other clothes
 - Manufacture and sales of jute bags
 - Taking up sanitation contracts
 - Manufacture and sale of soap, detergent and other household cleaning products
 - Filling matchboxes.
- **Development of savings:** “Our group has more than INR 50,000 as savings,” said Jyothi of Indiramma Nagar. Said Vijayalakshmi of Reddypalya, “We have savings. We feel we can face any crisis.” Many groups in Bangalore and Hyderabad have stopped taking external loans, and are rotating their own savings as loans. A representative of Geethanjali Self Help Group in Bangalore said, “[After we had learnt how to run the group, and our performance at savings and credit had been assessed] We took a loan of INR 100,000 from the bank and repaid it. The second time around, we took a loan of INR 150,000 and repaid that as well. Now our group has savings of more than INR 200,000. We have decided that we will no longer borrow from any banks. We will use our own resources to support each other.”
 - **Development of a sisterhood:** The collectivisation has also helped women get a great deal of social support from a peer group. “We can vent to each other about our problems. Having a group of sisters is really useful,” said Ramadevi of Rasoolpura. Shobha added, “We were at home, isolated, with our problems. Now we get to meet, discuss and think of how we can make things better.” Said Amudha, “Even if something happens to our husbands, we know we can run the household.” A number of women also said that their families were aware of the strength they derived from belonging to the sanghas [SHGs]. Mohsina, a Muslim woman from Byrasandra in Bangalore, said that her husband sometimes teased her about her newfound strength and support. “He says, ‘Now you have your

Chitra Madam [APSA Programme Coordinator] and APSA. If you complain about anything, a hundred thousand women will come to support you. I'll work and give you my earnings – please don't throw me out of the house!" However, jokes apart, the support makes a tremendous difference during times of crisis.

Latha of Byrasandra works as a domestic worker and has five daughters. Tragedy hit her family when her husband was first diagnosed with tuberculosis, and then lost his leg in an accident. As the family lost the income of its main breadwinner, Latha's husband asked her to pull her girls out of school and send them for domestic work. However, with support from her group, the first daughter has completed a Diploma in Computer Science, and the second daughter is due to graduate from secondary school this year, while the last three are in school. APSA has helped three of the children to get scholarships from the Child Welfare Committee. Whenever Latha's responsibilities get too onerous, the SHG works out a break in loan repayment for her until she can start repaying her loans again.

- **Women and young people of both sexes are supported to get out of unemployment, or the unskilled labour sector:** So far, APSA's Spoorthi Institute of Computers has trained 18 batches of students (approximately about 500 students), and typically the female-male ratio in the courses tends to be about 70:30. For example, the current batch of 32 students has 23 girls (72 per cent). Initially, students were recruited from the 18-25 age group. After the baseline survey, a number of unemployed people were found in the 25-35 age group, and accordingly, Spoorthi has now begun offering admission to people from the 18-35 age group, and they are able to place 99 per cent of the people who graduate from the course.

Shahina, a young Muslim woman, explained the difference that receiving an opportunity through the APSA's computer centre had made to her and her family. "I studied up to secondary school. My father is a driver, and we had financial difficulties, so I had to give up my studies. Thanks to the training, I now have a good job and am able to support my family. We eat better at home, and my younger brother is able to continue his studies. Earlier, my family had made me discontinue my studies, but now they say, use a part of your earnings to study further. They seek my opinion on various family matters, which they never did earlier. My position in the family has improved tremendously."

APSA has also found that the young men who are encouraged to join the course also become much more responsible both personally and socially. Several of them who had given up their studies, or worked in unskilled jobs as office boys, were encouraged to continue their studies, and do voluntary work in their community in their spare time.

Kishen, a young man from the Kawadiguda area, said that after failing his 10th standard examination, he had found a job as an office boy, sweeping the office and bringing tea for the other employees. The APSA staff had told him about the computer course and encouraged him to study. Motivated, he had reappeared for his tenth standard exam and passed. He did the computer course at the APSA centre and got a job. He now works in desktop publishing and earns INR 6,000 per month. He has since passed secondary school, and is now studying in the first year for an undergraduate degree. "I now encourage all the youngsters in my area who I see losing their motivation to study. I tell them, 'I used to be like you, hanging around and wasting my time.' I have encouraged 35 young people from my area to join the course."

- **Placement services:** APSA's staff help with the placement of the young people who graduate from its skill training programme. Over time, they have begun supporting the urban poor community more broadly. More than a hundred people have been supported to find jobs with salaries ranging from INR 4,000 to INR 12,000. Examples of areas in which people, including women, find placement are:
 - Housekeeping jobs in hotels and offices
 - Store maintenance
 - Gardening
 - Couriers
 - Drivers
 - Security personnel
 - Marketing and Distribution
 - Data entry operators
 - Retail sales support staff

A number of illiterate women in the urban slums are employed as domestic workers, because they often lack the skills and education to get other jobs. A lot of women find this very burdensome, because the work they do for pay is more of the same reproductive work that they do in their own homes like cooking and

cleaning. Hence there is no break for them and life becomes an endless routine of domestic drudgery. In Ambedkar Nagar, APSA has helped about 25 former domestic workers find jobs with a printing company. The women earn about the same or more than they did as domestic workers, and are also eligible for benefits like bonus, provident fund, and Employees State Insurance (ESI). More than anything, women are thrilled at not having to do more domestic work.

APSA encourages individuals and communities to improve. As Jyothi of Ambedkar Nagar said, “I had a 10th grade education, but I worked cleaning offices. APSA found a place for me to learn computers, spoken English, and soft skills. I now work as a receptionist.”

APSA also links women to government schemes like the Swarna Jayanthi Shehari Rozgar Yojana. Under this scheme, women have received training as drivers and beauticians, and four women from Rajiv Gandhi slum have applied for loans to start their own businesses.

This past year, APSA has secured admission for three young women to the Air Force Engineering College, where fees are typically about INR 30,000 per year. They have secured free seats and are now studying Electronics and Mechanical Engineering. On successful completion of their training, they have a high probability of being provided employment in the Technical Wing of the Air Force, which entitles them to good salaries and many benefits.

- **Increased income and increased control over financial resources:** All the communities visited during the course of the evaluation testified that women’s income had increased, or that women’s control over financial resources had increased. According to Radha, “We used to ask the men for everything. Now we are able to manage.” Almost all the women who were met in the course of the evaluation echoed this. Said Lakshmi in Rasoolpura, “We don’t depend on our husbands anymore. We know we can handle things.” Added Padma, “We are standing on our own feet, and we can support the children in their education.” Fatima Begum of Reddypalya in Bangalore said, “We have the courage that if we take a loan, we can repay it.” This has gone a long way in improving living conditions in many families, especially those of women and children. Said Mary Kamala, “I started out saving just INR 5 a week. Now I am able to save INR 200 to 300 a week. We are motivated because we think, ‘Things were so difficult for us, we should work to make things a little easier for our

children. Now two of my children are in school and college.” Apart from feeling more confident about managing their own resources, women had also become more confident about dealing with larger sums of money, and discussing its management. Nazima of Byrasandra said, “I can now speak to the bank manager quite confidently. “Earlier, if I had to carry INR 100 on my person, I would be petrified. Now I can bring INR 100,000 from the bank, and it doesn’t scare me,” said Thenmozhi of the same area.

“My husband works in the railways and earns a decent salary. But he is a drunkard and does not bring a single paisa home. I work, save and have brought up my children. Just last week, my oldest son got married. We have eleven women’s groups in our area, and all the women are standing on their own feet, and taking care of their children.” – Padma, Community Leader, Valmiki Nagar.

- **Finding solutions to issues of basic needs, resisting pressure from the moneyed, and countering bureaucratic apathy:** Communities work in collaboration with APSA to resist threats to their security of land tenure, and to try and secure land rights by going through the slum notification process, which the government resists. Assisting with land tenure is a significant contribution to the security of urban women in poverty.

According to Mrs.Ghousia of Ambedkar Nagar in Hyderabad, “The government said that they would support us through a housing scheme and said that they were going to shift us to the outskirts of the city. We were told that someone very close to Sonia Gandhi wanted the land to build a five-star hotel here. Supported by APSA, we organised ourselves and fought. Luckily, our MLA supported us, and put pressure on the government to recognise our rights.” Adds Padma, a community leader, “We received our land tenure documents because of APSA.”

“In our area, there were only dirt tracks. In the rains, the whole area would get very slippery. If a vehicle, like a motorcycle or a rickshaw goes past, the slush would dirty the uniforms of the children going to school. We made a representation to the local government and got a road sanctioned.”

- Saraswathi, SHG leader, Rasoolpura

“We have been living in this area for more than forty years and thought we had legal rights to live here. Then the Forest Department showed up and said it was

their land, and wanted us to clear out. We used the RTI Act to find out the status of the slum – we got the Slum Board officials to unearth the files pertaining to our land. We spoke to the Legal Officer and found that the Board had already reached a certain critical stage (technically called 3P) in the slum declaration process. Now we are working on getting this area de-notified as forest land and recognised as a slum. We sent 1,800 petitions to put pressure on the BBMP, asking them to carry out the surveys necessary for the process. During the “Meet the Candidate” programme organised during the last election, we established contact with the local councillor and now she is supporting us. The slum board wants to put us in flats, in buildings which will be ground plus three floors. We are not agreeable. We say, give us individual houses. The women are the ones going to the slum board to get the area declared.

- Pushpalatha, SHG leader , Rajiv Gandhi slum, Bangalore

For many communities, APSA has also contributed to ensuring the supply of clean drinking water. As Rama of Vengal Rao Nagar said, “Water was sanctioned for our community, but the Water Supply Board did not lay a pipeline. It was really difficult for us, and fights at the public water tap as we tried to get a little water were common. APSA’s staff walked and walked and walked [made repeated visits to put pressure on the authorities] and finally got us water.” Apart from the implications on public health, since the collection of water is regarded as ‘women’s work’, such support has gender implications in that it helps to free up a lot of time from reproductive work, which can then be used towards productive work, or rest and recreation for women.

- **Making contributions to good governance and greater accountability on the part of government’s service providers:** APSA works together with other NGOs working to improve civic amenities, governance and accountability.

The community at Rajiv Gandhi Nagar slum were facing a big challenge with their Fair Price Shops, through which government-subsidised food supplies and fuel are supplied to families in poverty.

- Though the shops are supposed to be open throughout the month, owners would open the shops only three or four times a month, so that women would typically find the shop closed. When stocks were not lifted by beneficiaries, owners would sell these on the open market at a higher price.

- Even if customers need (or can afford to buy) only one item during a visit, the shopkeepers would insist that customers buy all the supplies they are entitled to at once. Customers who found it difficult to lift all the supplies are regarded as having lost their chance to get supplies, and the owners sell these stocks on the open market at a higher price. Women are therefore forced to borrow money on interest to get their subsidised food supplies, which robs them of the intended benefit.
- Shopkeepers would stock other items (like soap, detergent, etc.) and insist that the community buy these from him if they wanted him to give them their PDS quota.
- Shopkeepers would give wrong measures of the goods. Thus, what he gave them as 10 kgs of rice would actually be only 9 kgs, 7 litres of kerosene would be 6 litres.
- Any effort to assert their rights would be met by rude behaviour and abusive language from the shop owners.
- Officials from the Food and Civil Supplies department who were supposed to monitor the smooth functioning of the system preferred to turn a blind eye in return for 'considerations'.

In collaboration with CIVIC, another local NGO working on civic amenities, APSA convened a Face to Face meeting between shopkeepers, officials of the Food and Civil Supplies Department, and Vigilance officials. For three hours, the community provided the officials with instance after instance of exploitation at the hands of the shop owners. The shopkeepers were publicly humiliated and defensive, but could not counter any of the charges. However, there was also some realisation of how marginal the consumers were – one shopkeeper wept when he heard that one of his customers had had to pawn her mangalsutra [sacred symbol of marriage] to meet his insistence that she lift all the supplies she was eligible for at once. As an outcome of this face to face meeting, a Community Vigilance Committee of SHG leaders has been formed, who report to the officials in the case of any departures from official procedure, shopkeepers are following official norms, and the community is not harassed or shortchanged.

APSA also collaborated with Public Affairs Centre to carry out action research into the state of health services at several government health facilities in its operational area. Armed with the data, APSA convened two similar Face to Face programmes with the hospital staff and higher officials in the Health Department of the Bangalore City Corporation. In one hospital, (Zilla Hospital, K R Puram) a Patients' Welfare Committee (Rogi Nivarana Samiti) has been set up with

community participation for ongoing social audits of the services of the hospitals. In another hospital, the Government Maternity Home in Frazer Town, corruption has come down, and supplies of food and milk meant for the patients are reaching them. “Earlier the Auxiliary Nurse Midwife would ask for money, and we were scared that she would do something to us or our baby, and so we would pay up. But after the Face to Face, they are scared. They know we have all the information about all the benefits, and give us all that is legitimately due to us,” said Vani of Rajiv Gandhi Slum.

- **Greater voice for women:** Women reported that their self-confidence had increased, personally and socially, since participating in the APSA intervention. Remarks like “I now go to the bank by myself” or “I never thought that I could study computers” were common during the meetings. In every slum visited during the evaluation, women reported an increase in their voice, within the family as well as in the community. Said Swati, “Now many financial decisions affecting the family are taken together. Men are also beginning to think of the future, instead of just providing for the day. Women have been able to influence them, and now they think the education of children is important.” There is no doubt that financial independence has contributed to this improvement in voice. As Hamsaveni of Ambedkar Nagar in Bangalore said, “I save and I can get loans of up to INR 100,000. I also have the right to make decisions in my family. Some women leaders have become so well recognised that “the men come and call her to speak on behalf of the community,” Muthu explained. “When we have problems – if the garbage isn’t cleared, if the street lights aren’t functioning – we complain to the area leader. Even our menfolk don’t confront the area leader, but we do.” Hamsaveni also said, “Even if a hundred men are present, we have the courage to speak.” Fatima Begum of Reddypalya said, “We used to sit at home – we didn’t know anything. But now we have gained courage. We can speak to the teachers at school, to the local councillor, to the MLA.”

As Malleswari of Rasoolpura said, “We have the courage to speak about issues in our families. And also about issues in the community. We noticed that youngsters who were 17-18 years old, and had just begun working, would get together, and hang about in the corners. They would blow up their earnings, drinking alcohol, and eating *biryani*, and were a nuisance to the whole community. Women and girls found it difficult to walk on the road. We spoke to them and encouraged them to behave well in the community. The boys are now no trouble at all.”

Devi of Nagamiahkunta explained that the local community hall had been taken over by young men of the locality, and they kept some exercising equipment there and used it as a gym. When the women put forward a proposal to hold some embroidery classes at the hall, they were warned off by the young men, who told them not to bother putting in a proposal, since they would not give up the gym. The women negotiated with the young men, and told them that the space was unused through the day as the gym functioned only in the mornings and evenings. They said that they could push the gym equipment back against the walls when the women met for their classes. Now the women hold all their meetings and classes in the community centre and have claimed it as their space as well.

- **Negotiating better wages:** As women gain voice and the support of a sisterhood, they are able to negotiate for better wages and working conditions, particularly in the domestic sector. As Anuradha of Basavanna Badavane in Bangalore said, “We had no courage and could not speak up for ourselves earlier. Whatever our employers gave us as wages, we took quietly. Now, we ask them, give us so much for so much work, and they do.”
- **Benefits of unionisation:** APSA has overcome the fears of 228 women working in the domestic sector, provided them with a thorough orientation on the unionisation process and got them registered with the Domestic Workers Union. The women now have ID cards and the social support of an organisation behind them. The registration process is underway for another 630 women working in the domestic sector. 378 construction workers have been registered with the Construction Workers Welfare Board and become eligible for insurance and benefits. Another 545 workers are currently going through the process.

Domestic workers are able to use the support of APSA and the Workers Union to resist injustice at their workplace. In one case, a domestic worker was wrongfully accused of theft of a piece of jewellery. Representatives of the union accompanied her to her employers and insisted that they do a thorough search of the house. The employer searched again and found the misplaced item. In another case, a worker who was illiterate had sought the help of her employer to get an insurance policy for Rs. 10,000, and kept the relevant papers at her employer’s house, because of the lack of security in her own house. Thereafter, the employer became lax about paying her salary regularly, threatening that she

would not give her the insurance policy if the worker raised the issue. Representatives of the union helped the woman get her insurance papers, and also warned the employer that they would register a case against her if she did not pay the domestic worker regularly.

- **Cleaner environment in the slums, and greater dignity for women.** Given the space limitations of the city, where sanitation facilities were not available, women had to get up very early in the morning, or wait for the cover of darkness, before they could defecate near drains, or by the shores of lakes. Apart from being a public health issue, this is an issue that affected women's safety and dignity. Women in several communities reported being very happy that they could use the toilet whenever they wished, after the intervention on sanitation, and that they did not have to carry water with them when they needed to use the toilet. Mrs. Ghousia, of Ambedkar Nagar slum in Hyderabad, also says that the solid waste management in the slum has also improved. "Earlier, the slum used to be very dirty. Now we have a system for removing solid waste. Each household pays INR 10 per month to get their garbage cleared." Saraswathi of Rasoolpura said, "We used to throw garbage into an open drain. In the rains, the drains would overflow and the slum would be filthy. We spoke to the officials and arranged for the lifting of garbage."
- **Reduction in the culture of silence around gender-based violence:** Whereas earlier, domestic violence was regarded as a private matter, today issues where women are facing problems in the family are discussed in the women's group and social support provided.

In Hamal Basti, the Asara Committee was able to provide social support to a young bride who was being harassed by her in-laws who complained that she was not beautiful enough, and that she had not brought enough gifts. They were able to speak to the family and warn them that they would take the issue to the police if the harassment was not stopped.

In another case, a woman was being harassed by her married son to sell her one-room house and give him a share of the money. This would have meant losing the roof over her head. The Asara Committee tried counselling him but when he refused to stop the abuse and harassment, complaints were registered with the police and Women's Commission. Once he realised that his mother had support, he stopped harassing her.

The Asara Committee in Nagamiahkunta supported a young woman who was tortured by her husband, who beat her, burned her with cigarette butts and even tried to strangle her. When the initial community interventions failed, the Committee approached the police, who helped her leave him, get all her wedding jewellery back, and also get INR 100,000 as compensation.

- **Increased political empowerment:** One of the main reasons for APSA's decision to start working with the legislative assembly constituency as the basis for intervention was to encourage slum communities to collaborate and collectivise so that they could make an impact on the political scenario of the city. There is evidence that this approach is already beginning to pay dividends, as women are learning about their rights, how official systems work, and how to put pressure on these systems to bring benefits for their communities. Nazima, of Byrasandra, explained how their area was served by only a single bus service. "We filed an application under the Right to Information Act, and then appended the official information we got from them, to an application that we made to the Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation. As a result, we now have 7 or 8 buses plying from our area to all the main areas of the city."

Nirmala, of Ambedkar Nagar in Mahadevapura constituency in Bangalore, said that prior to the APSA intervention in her area, she had been a domestic worker. APSA began a tailoring centre in her area with four sewing machines. She learnt how to sew and now makes her living by doing piecework for garment factories in her area. However, what is more remarkable is her transformation into an active political worker in her community. "We use the tailoring centre as a means of establishing rapport with the community and the women, in addition to our connections through the SHGs. In six months, 30 people have been trained at the centre. There was no power in our locality, though nominally it is part of Bangalore city. We organised 60 women from our sangha and organised a sit-in protest for four days on the busy Whitefield road [which leads to several important factories and a huge Information Technology Park, where many multinational companies have their offices.] Thanks to our political action, 5000 houses in our area now have electric power. We are now working on our land rights. We spoke to our councillor. He said there was no question of our getting land rights. With APSA's help, we have been making enquiries at the various offices. What we have learned unofficially is that some of our local politicians have collected the *hakku patras* [title deeds] on behalf of the community

members to hold them to ransom. We are now planning to file an application for official information using the Right to Information Act, so that we can take action to make the title deeds ours.”

Some of the women have taken another step, from political action at the community level to entering party politics. The evaluation also provided an opportunity to meet Lakshmi and Vijayalakshmi, the general secretary for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for the Jayanagar constituency, and the president of the BJP unit for the Byrasandra ward of the city respectively, at the APSA field office in Jayanagar. The two women spoke animatedly of how they had entered party politics, each taking up where the other left off as they described their work. “Before APSA came to work with us, we didn’t know anything about collectivising. We didn’t know how to fill a form or a bank challan or how to use the post office. Even those of us who had been to school were not allowed to go out of the house, and knew nothing about official procedures. We started with savings of INR 25, and today we have savings of almost INR 30, 000. “

The opportunity to enter politics occurred when they organised a celebration for International Women’s Day. The two women were important members of the group that organised the function at which women gave speeches and performed in cultural activities. The local MLA and Councillors, who had been invited to the function, were impressed. “They said ‘you are so active, why don’t you work with us?’ We discussed it with our families and in our *sanghas* [SHGs] and started our work. We get no salary, no benefits. But we are the first to get information whenever the local government formulates any schemes to benefit the people, and we take that information to the people. We help them get voters’ ID cards, ration cards, subsidies and pensions. People also trust us, and talk to us. When very poor people in the community get sick, or die, we speak to the leaders and mobilise funds to support the families in crisis. The local government has just started a new scheme to teach women driving, and we have just filled up forms for 150 women from our area to undergo the training.” Their hard work is paying off, and their stock has risen, both with the members of their communities, and with their party leaders. Says Lakshmi, “Everyone knows us. When we go to the community, they say, ‘Why have you come? Surely you have come to tell us about some scheme that benefits the community.’” Adds Vijayalakshmi, “When we go to meet the MLA, he doesn’t keep us waiting at all. He immediately tells us to come in, makes us sit down, gives us tea, and talks to

us about our concerns. He tells the larger team about the good work we are doing, and tells them to respect us.”

What is more, these are not just stray incidents, but there is a movement towards greater political participation by women from the grassroots. The 74th Amendment to the Indian constitution, provides for a three-tier system of urban governance for large cities, consisting of ward committees, zonal committees and the corporation. There has been a great reluctance on the part of the state and the local administration to implement this system in letter and spirit, with the required funds and functions. However, an initial step has been taken in Hyderabad in terms of the constitution of the ward and zonal committees (the latter called Area Sabhas in Andhra Pradesh). About 60 women from the APSA operational areas contested for these positions, of which about 30 were elected. Though these bodies currently lack any powers, it is a first step towards the recognition of these women and their work by the community, and it is to be expected that step by step, the bodies will gain more powers. In Bangalore too, a start has been made with a few women from APSA-facilitated CBOs having been nominated to zonal committees.

- **Change in traditional attitudes towards boys and girls, and women working outside the home:** Traditionally, Indian society has valued male children, and tended to see female children as burdens, taking wealth away from the family when they married. If a woman had only female children, she was stigmatised, and felt the pressure to conceive again and again to have a male child. However, as women earn an income and become more sure of their own worth and value, they also begin to value their daughters and aspire for more for them too. Some of the opinions expressed were: “I have two daughters. I had an operation [tubal ligation for contraception] done. I am happy with my daughters.” “We want our daughters to study.” “If a son earns Rs. 100, he immediately tries to establish his power over the household. Daughters are better any day.” The men also tended to appreciate their wives' economic efforts. “When only one person was earning, it was very stressful. Now we can manage.”
- **Reduction in child labour:** When they are formed, APSA-facilitated SHGs take an oath that as soon as possible they will declare their SHGs child labour- free. The increased income from encouraging women to engage in economic activity, as well as the access to credit, helps families put their children through school, and child labour has come down dramatically. “All the children go to school in our

area. There are no dropouts,” said the representatives of SHGs in many slums. Gouramma, a woman in a very marginal slum in Nagawarapalya in Bangalore, barely up one degree from being homeless, said, “We used to pull our children out of school at the first opportunity and put them to work. Now we are retaining our children in school, because our savings help with our financial situation.”

- **Greater awareness in the community about child care and child protection issues:** Through its activities through Childline and also more broad-based advocacy activities with the community, APSA has created greater awareness about child protection issues among the community. This is important especially for girl children who come on to the street without the protection of family because they tend to quickly disappear off the street, lured by agents who sell them for labour or commercial sexual exploitation. Within the slum communities, the SHGs are vigilant and responsive about child protection issues. Also, soon after they begin working with communities, APSA tries to ensure that that space and resources are found for a functional anganwadi (early childhood education centre) there. Not only does this provide some supplementary nutrition and stimulation for young children, it reduces women’s child care burdens for a few hours. Apart from this, factory workers, schools, auto drivers, employees of barbershops, staff of religious institutions like mosques and temples associate with APSA in alerting them to children in risky situations.

APSA collaborated with the International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (IPSCAN) to conduct a workshop on child abuse and neglect for health professionals. As a direct impact of this workshop, Child Rights Committees have been set up in two big hospitals in Bangalore.

- **A successful model of eldercare in the community has been tested:** At its Kawadiguda community centre, APSA has successfully tested a model of elder care in the community.

Recognising that several senior citizens in the community were treated badly by their families once they could no longer contribute economically to the family, APSA began encouraging them to come to the community centre initially for an hour a day, and then increased this to two and then three hours, until now, senior citizens from the community, come to the senior citizens’ centre between 10:30 a.m. and 4 p.m. every day. 28 women and 6 men regularly come to the

centre. At the centre, they socialise, do meditation and some basic physical exercises, watch TV and play games. They get a snack of tea and biscuits and one nutritious meal a day. Once a month, all of the attendees get a medical check-up and APSA staff assist with any follow-up medical support that they need. Once a month, they go on a picnic or an excursion, to the zoo, or places of tourist interest in the city. 240 senior citizens in the area have been supported to get covered by a government scheme that entitles them to free transport, and a small pension of Rs. 200 per month.

- **Increased social security:** 1360 women members of SHGs in Bangalore and 700 in Hyderabad have been linked up to a Central Government Group Insurance Scheme, managed by the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC).

According to Mr. Manjunath, Senior Branch Manager of the LIC, under the Janshree Bima Yojana, the Group Insurance Scheme of the government, the lives of the SHG members are insured for the payment of Rs. 100 per annum, with the remaining premium of Rs. 100 coming out of a Central Government Fund. The insurance entitles them to apply for support for their children's secondary school education (Rs. 1200 per annum per child for up to two children for grades 9 through 12), with payouts of Rs. 30000, 37,500 or 75 000 for a natural death, partial disability or permanent disability and accidental deaths respectively. However, because LIC makes no money out of this scheme, but is the nodal agency to administer it as part of its social responsibility work, they put in no effort to locate or register beneficiaries. APSA locates the beneficiaries, helps them complete application forms, scans the forms onto the computer and enters the details in pre-prescribed formats and then offers the data to LIC officials, so that women in poverty get the benefits of insurance. APSA has already helped beneficiaries collect scholarships of INR 225,000 from this scheme.

Construction Workers are insured with the Construction Workers' Welfare Board. For a payment of INR 125, workers are covered for disability, accidents, and deaths. The insured are also provided with support for hospital expenses at the birth of a child up to INR 10,000. This scheme also provides for scholarships for children. APSA has also accessed 61 scholarships from the Child Welfare Committee for single mothers struggling to educate their children.

- **Proactively addressing issues of sexual health and gender norms on sexuality:** The curriculum of the APSA-Sexual Health Intervention Programme (SHIP)

proactively tries to help young people understand and negotiate issues related to sexual and reproductive health. Data from research studies conducted among street and slum children show that young girls buy very strongly into the fantasies and myths of romance and marriage as projected by India's active regional film industries, prompting them to get into relationships and marriage early, not necessarily making stable choices, and making these choices before they are themselves stable. The programme explicitly addresses themes like love and infatuation, and skills like weighing options and pros and cons before decision-making to help young women make good choices. Likewise, it works with adolescent boys to address issues like responsibility of the male partner in matters of pregnancy, especially unwanted pregnancy. In this way, the programme actively addresses gendered norms on sexuality, a topic that is typically taboo in Indian society.

“Initially, I wasn’t very interested when I heard about the classes being held through the APSA-SHIP programme – I thought I had enough classes to attend by going to school. Then I thought I would try one class. The classes were really interesting – everything was taught through pictures and games. I learnt a great deal, like protecting myself from abuse, and the mental and physical changes that I am undergoing in this period.”

- Rupa, Rasoolpura.

As you can imagine, it is very difficult to get permission to do a programme on matters like sexual health in schools. One of the students from an earlier batch, a young Muslim girl called Taslima, went to her teachers and told them about the programme and how beneficial it had been to the children in her community. She persuaded them to give permission to do the SHIP programme in her school, the Gun Bazaar Government School. Now we are working with the second batch.

- Anitha, APSA Programme Staff Member.

- **Support with health:** APSA also holds health camps fairly regularly, including specialised camps, for example, eye camps. Follow-up support is provided to help the participants in the camps get medical care, medication, support with hospitalisation and surgery (for whwich APSA negotiates reduced rates with hospitals, and helps with fundraising). Over a hundred women have been provided with spectacles in the last two years. In Hyderabad, 250 women from the Kawadiguda, Rasoolpura and Valmiki Nagar areas were supported to attend

a screening camp for cervical cancer, 15 were screened positive, and were supported to get treatment.

- **Willingness to address mental health issues:** Most community-development NGOs in India are unwilling to address mental health issues because of the lack of support services and the prolonged sense of responsibility when the organisation takes on the task of supporting someone with mental illness. The risk of sexual abuse of mentally ill women and girls is very high, and hence there is additional need for this support. APSA has not shied away from this responsibility, and provides prolonged support for children with mental health issues. 7 girl children with serious mental health issues were provided with support to access psychiatric care for several years and are now well enough to hold down jobs. APSA also provides referral support for people who need such support in the community.

Sangeetha was a “hard-core” street child who had been earning her living through ragpicking, when she came to APSA. Extremely dishevelled in appearance, she was aggressive and very resistant to change. Over time, APSA’s acceptance of her, and her own observations of how children were valued and cared for at Nammane, made her amenable to accessing professional psychiatric care, supported by APSA. She was diagnosed with clinical depression, and hospitalised for a period at the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences and was provided ongoing care and support by APSA’s caregivers and management. Thereafter, she received long-term out-patient support, while she lived in Nammane. Meanwhile, she obtained a functional basic education, followed by training in tailoring at Kaushalya, APSA’s skill training centre. She has since found a job, found a house and has shown herself capable of independent living.

- **Nammane doubles as a short-stay home for women in crisis:** While Nammane has been designed as and is primarily a residential support centre for children at-risk or in crisis, over time, the community has begun to perceive it as a broader resource. Hence, on a number of occasions, the police have brought in women in need of crisis care at midnight, or in the early hours of the morning. Women in crisis also come in brought by the general public, or because of calls to the helpline. In this project phase, APSA has provided short-term residential care and crisis intervention support for 62 women, before referring them to other organisations which could provide longer-term support. Even among the

children, typically, for boys, support is provided up to the age of 18 at a maximum. However, there have been occasions when girl children who have completed the APSA intervention have come back for short-term support at times of crisis, sometimes when they are as old as 25 or even 29, and APSA has not denied that support.

3.4 Challenges of the Gender Programme

- **Pressure on land, and on housing for the urban poor:** Housing is by far the biggest challenge for the urban poor in the cities, and the lack of security of tenure especially affects the security and vulnerability of women. Apart from the pressure on land in general, further pressure is generated by the fact that many of the slums now are in central locations in the city, where there is little other land available and land value is very high. Hence, the government is under tremendous pressure from private business, and especially the real estate lobby, to find other accommodation for the urban poor. Hence, the government regularly comes up with schemes to relocate the urban poor to the outskirts of the city. This immediately puts pressure on the livelihoods of the urban poor, because most of the jobs are in the city, and commuting puts tremendous pressure on their relatively inelastic budgets. The problem is compounded for women in poverty, many of whom have no choice but to rely on public transport.

Another solution the government regularly proposes is vertical housing. The government's argument is that because of the pressure on land, there are no options, and even the middle and upper classes have no choice but to live in flats. However, there are two big differences. Firstly, practically all urban poor families do some home-based work, hence the space on the road outside their houses is critical for their livelihoods – whether to dry incense sticks, store the handcarts from which they do some streetvending, etc. Secondly, the middle and upper classes tend to live in flats that are larger than the 10ft by 10 ft flats (usually comprising a room, a kitchen space and a tiny toilet) that the government provides for a whole family. Hence, families desperately need the space on the road outside their houses to find light, air, and sleeping spaces at all times except during rainy weather. Hence APSA is helping communities advocate for themselves to get land rights to even a small piece of land, so that they can use it as best suits their purposes.

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- **Inability to resist certain systemic and structural challenges:** While many communities have been empowered to a significant extent, and are able to resist oppression and fight for their rights, the fact remains that class issues limit the space and resources available to resist entrenched vested interests and systemic and structural challenges like corruption.

About ten years ago, APSA pulled off a coup when it convinced the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation to hand over the maintenance of its parking lots to APSA-facilitated SHG groups. From looking after two parking lots on a trial basis, the women so impressed the authorities, that over time, more and more parking lots were handed over to women's groups to maintain. At the last elections, GHMC got a new mayor (ironically, a woman) who called for tenders to maintain the parking lots, and allegedly demanded a bribe of INR 1 million per accepted tender. Naturally, the poor women were in no position to pay. Hoping that the eight years of precedence that had been set would help them continue earning a living, they used many means of civic protest, including hunger strikes, representations to the local and state governments, meetings with Ministers in the state government, and media advocacy. However, the power of money was too strong, and the mayor would not budge. They then went on another campaign to insist that the contractors whose tenders had been accepted employed them. Though the contractors resisted, the women were able to persuade them. However, from being self-employed, women have been reduced to contractual employees with poor pay and no benefits.

2 per cent of the construction costs of any structure costing more than INR 1 million must be deposited with the Construction Workers Welfare Board at the time of the sanctioning of the building plans. The Construction Workers Welfare Board has over INR 4000 million rupees to be disbursed as benefits; however, only a small fraction of construction workers are registered with the Board. Building contractors and construction companies are also required to get all their workers registered with the Welfare Board so that they can be eligible for the benefits and insurance offered through the Board. This is supposed to be enforced by the legal arm of the government's Labour Department. However, construction companies are wary of workers collectivising or being in any position to bargain with them. So they prefer to bribe the officials of the Labour Department, or sub-contract the work to smaller building contractors so that they are not liable. In order to get benefits, the workers need to be certified as bona fide construction workers, as typically, workers tend to migrate from one

site to another. Typically, these certificates needed to be issued by the builders who employed them. However, the builders are not willing to grant these certificates.

APSA therefore negotiated with the Labour Department and the Construction Workers Welfare Board to accept registration with an accredited union as credentials for workers to register with the welfare board. This proposal was accepted, and accordingly, the construction workers are now registered with the Karnataka Rakshak and General Workers Union, of which APSA's Executive Director is the Vice-President. This is helping construction workers now register for benefits with the Welfare Board. The Union is also providing capacity building training in leadership skills for construction workers. APSA is also negotiating with the Welfare Board to allow NGOs of good standing in the community to certify the credentials of construction workers.

- **Challenges from MFIs and Banks:** Till about five years ago, microfinance was largely being managed by local NGOs, who knew their communities well, and spent a long time on the social processes, strengthening group bonds, loyalty and trust, and slowly building the capacity of communities in poverty to absorb credit without stress. However, in the last five years, a number of private players, lured by the need for credit among the poor and the high repayment rate by poor women, have entered the area of microfinance. Without spending any time on group building, staff of these private microfinance institutions pressurise women to take loans, and loans are approved very fast without a proper vetting of the individual's capacity to repay. When borrowers default on payments, the MFIs send goons to threaten them. This is worse than borrowing from traditional moneylenders, because at least the traditional moneylender lived in the same community, and had an ongoing relationship with it, so even when he was exploitative or even abusive, he rarely threatened bodily harm. Some of APSA's groups were lured by these MFIs; however, negative experiences are forcing them to give up their association with them. There have been some extremely unfortunate incidents in the meanwhile. For example, one woman who had borrowed from an MFI from YaRab Nagar was drowned, when she hid in a large barrel meant to store water to escape from the debt collectors. Also, some nationalised banks are providing individual loans directly to poor women, as long as they have been 'introduced' by the member of some CBO, who collects a commission of between INR 1500 to INR 2500 for this service.

Again, there is no process of vetting the customer’s capacity to repay, and there is a threat of poor women borrowing more than they have the capacity to repay.

- Conforming to stereotypical gendered professions:** Although Jan Shikshan Sansthan offers a range of courses, including Auto Electricians, Electrical technicians, computer hardware and software, plumbing, radio/tape/TV technician, etc. APSA seems to largely organise courses in tailoring and embroidery for the women in its operational areas, using the expertise of the Sansthan. Training women in tailoring, apart from conforming to gender norms and expectations, also raises concerns about the microbusiness model, given the limited number of tailors a community can support. The other alternative is that the women may choose to go to work in garment factories, under conditions that APSA’s own studies have revealed to be less than optimal at best, and downright exploitative at worst. While there have been occasional instances of cooperative mini garment-manufacturing units, taking piece work and allowing flexible working conditions (as at Reddypalya), these are the exception, rather than the norm. Under these circumstances, APSA might do well to create an interest and a demand on the part of women to build other livelihood skills that not only challenge gendered expectations, but have a ready market, like household plumbing and electrical repairs.

Table 7: Showing admission information for Kaushalya Training Institute

Course	2009-2010			2010-2011		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
Computer Applications	22	22	44	23	24	47
Electronics	16	04	20	18	02	20
Tailoring	0	15	15	0	16	16
Screen Printing	6	0	6	3	0	3

This concern about APSA paying insufficient attention to challenging gendered expectations is also evident when we consider the admission information for Kaushalya, APSA’s Skill Training Institute in Bangalore in Table 7. While admission for male and female students were fairly even for computer applications; for electronics, there were 4 and 9 times as many male students admitted as female students, in the 2009-10 and 2010-11 batches respectively. With screen printing and tailoring, there is an absolute gender divide, with only males admitted to the screen printing course, and only females admitted to the

tailoring course. APSA needs to do some reflection regarding this, and take corrective action as required.

- **Marketing is a challenge:** APSA organises several trainings for women in the community, and they learn to make various products. However, they lack the contacts and the knowledge to market these products properly, and hence are unable to put their skills to the best possible use and increase their income earning potential adequately.
- **Legal hurdles:** Getting support from the legal system continues to be a challenge in issues related to child abuse. Most often, girl children are used for domestic labour. When APSA discovers cases, the children are rescued and legal options explored. Whenever cases need to go beyond the CWC into the larger legal system, getting justice is very difficult. The state has an abysmal track record of convicting or punishing people responsible for child abuse.

Maya³⁵ is a child from West Bengal, who was working as a domestic labourer and child care provider in the house of an engineer working for a prominent IT firm in Bangalore. The professional and his wife subjected the child to enormous amounts of physical abuse, including scalding her with boiling oil. Neighbours, hearing the child's cries, called APSA Childline, who rescued the child. The media proved supportive to APSA, but otherwise, this case presented a continuing series of challenges for APSA. To start with, the hospital refused to give a medical certificate testifying to the extent of injuries suffered by the child, which was necessary to file an FIR with the police against the employers. APSA had to petition the Chairperson of the Karnataka State Commission for the Protection of Child Rights, who had to speak to the Principal Secretary (Health) of the Government of Karnataka who directed the hospital officials to provide the necessary certificate. Stung by the negative press coverage, the IT company where the child's employer worked tried to get the child transferred to another friendly NGO, which it supported extensively through donations, in an attempt to influence the child to withdraw the case.

With APSA's persistent follow-up of the case, the child's employers were imprisoned for 17 days. However, after their release on bail, the former employers began working actively to manipulate the progress of the case, by

³⁵ Name changed.

influencing the public prosecutor, the police and the child's extended family. An uncle of the child was brought from West Bengal by these former employers, and he came to APSA and demanded that the child be released to him, as an extended family member. When APSA explained that this was not possible, in a matter that was *sub judice*, the employers prompted him to file a *habeas corpus* petition in the court. Spurred by the employers, he pleaded that the child should not be allowed to stay with APSA, and if not released to him, the child should stay in the Government Girls' Home, knowing that the conditions in the home would prompt the child to leave. Accordingly the child was sent to the government home. However, at the next hearing, the child herself pleaded with the judge to be sent back to APSA. The judge then appointed an *amicus curiae* to look into the living and caregiving conditions at both APSA and the government home and submit a report. The *amicus curiae* provided a report that was favourable to APSA, and the child is currently living in APSA and attending school, while the case is still *sub judice*. Given the poor track record of the state of convicting people responsible for employing and abusing children, APSA is not very hopeful, but continues to doggedly fight the case. In the meanwhile, Maya is well cared for, and happy at Nammane.

3.5 Relevance of the Gender Programme

The introduction emphasised the challenges faced by the urban poor in India in general, and those faced by urban women in particular, and established the particular context in which APSA's gender programme was relevant. However, the programme is also relevant within the broader context of the status of women in India, which is summarised by Sudarshan (2011), on the basis of data drawn from the Central Statistical Office of the Government of India, as follows:

Persistent gender gaps and inequalities are a feature of the economy and society in India. Despite substantial progress over the years, gender gaps continue to persist in education, health, work participation, and decision-making. Poverty, early marriage, malnutrition and lack of health care during pregnancy are associated with high levels of maternal and infant mortality. Data shows that in rural India almost 60 per cent of girls are married before the age of 18. Nearly 60 per cent of married girls bear children before they are 19. Almost one third of all babies are born with low birth weight. Although gender parity in school enrolments has largely been achieved, there are gender differences in the reasons for drop out, irregular school attendance, and for the pathways that open up through education. Against a male workforce participation rate of 54.8 in rural areas and 55.4 in urban areas, the female workforce participation rate

was 28.9 and 13.8 in 2007-8. Women continue to be concentrated as ‘marginal’ workers, in home-based informal economy work, and as unpaid family labour. They remain under-represented in decision-making positions, even though quotas have enabled more than a million women to enter local governance institutions.³⁶

3.6 Sustainability of the Gender Programme

APSA’s approach for working with gender related issues has been developed and refined over a period of time. Part of the approach is also to build leadership and capacity in some significant subset of the women involved in its programme, so that over time, these women become local leaders in the community, capable of negotiating with existing power structures to get their needs met. APSA is then able to largely de-link from the CBOs that have been built, except for providing certain specific technical inputs (e.g., external auditing of accounts and overseeing payments of dividends) or providing information on new grants, schemes or programmes introduced by the government. In this way, a sustainability element is built in. However, two factors argue in favour of continued support of APSA’s gender programme. Firstly, the increase in rural migrants to the cities of Bangalore and Hyderabad implies that new communities of urban poor are continuously being built. With only their unskilled labour to offer in return for survival, these new migrants lack the knowledge and skills to draw benefits of collectivisation and available systemic supports, and hence APSA’s support for the gender programme in urban poor communities has a continued relevance.³⁷ Secondly, while APSA is able to raise a lot of resources locally in kind, and by linking the urban poor to government benefit schemes, the success of its community development programmes, with their focus on gender, has been primarily due to the skilled process of community capacity building and empowerment that it is able to undertake with the

³⁶ ISST (2011). Engendering policy through evaluation: Uncovering exclusion, challenging inequities. New Delhi. *Internal process document*.

³⁷ In this context, it is useful to recall the characteristics of urbanisation in India, as enumerated by Datta (2006):

Basic feature [sic] of urbanization in India can be highlighted as :

- 1 Lopsided urbanization induces growth of class I cities
- 2 Urbanisation occurs without industrialization and strong economic base
- 3 Urbanisation is mainly a product of demographic explosion and poverty induced rural - urban migration.
- 4 Rapid urbanization leads to massive growth of slum followed by misery, poverty, unemployment, exploitation, inequalities, degradation in the quality of urban life.
- 5 Urbanisation occurs not due to urban pull but due to rural push.
- 6 Poor quality of rural-urban migration leads to poor quality of urbanization(Bhagat,1992).
- 7 Distress migration initiates urban decay

Datta, P. (2006). Urbanization in India. Kolkata: Indian Statistical Institute. *Paper for European Population Conference, June 21-24, Liverpool, UK.*

help of its skilled staff. Currently, no sources are available for such core programme funding apart from FORUT, and this needs to be taken into account.

3.7 Institutional and Stakeholder Issues of the APSA Gender Programme

- **Securing a response from the authorities on issues affecting the urban poor:** Governing systems and structures in India have a rural poor or an urban middle class bias, the former because of their numbers and the large amounts of data available about their development indicators, the latter because they are educated and vocal about their needs. Securing a response from the authorities on issues affecting the urban poor requires persistence, wearing out shoe leather through repeated trips to government offices and officials, and endless negotiation. APSA has proved itself as consistently employing these strategies to assist the primary stakeholders of the programme.
- **Unrest over the Telangana issue:** Andhra Pradesh has seen a virtual breakdown in administration several times over the past two years due to a number of agitations related to the Telangana movement to create a separate state, comprising the Telugu speaking regions of the erstwhile Hyderabad princely state, from the present state of Andhra Pradesh. Coupled with the state's political elite's struggle to re-establish itself following the death of the powerful and charismatic Chief Minister in 2009, it has been difficult to persuade officials to take a decision on the implementation of many important schemes.
- **Working with women is a cornerstone of the programme:** On the one hand, APSA strongly believes that making women and children part of development initiatives is not only part of an empowerment agenda, but also helps to deepen the initiatives and make them more equitable and ethical. On the other, it is much easier for them to work with women – partly because women are more easily available to work with, especially during the work day when the men are mostly away, and also because their own experience bears out Masika, de Haan & Baden's (1997) observation that community organisations in which women have a major role are more effective than those controlled by men³⁸. APSA has to actively ensure that it puts in enough effort to ensure that men are also active participants in the programme, and that the empowerment of women, and the assumption of greater responsibilities by them, does not create a concomitant decrease in men's responsibilities.

³⁸Masika, R., de Haan, A. & Baden, S. (1997) *Urbanisation and Urban Poverty: A Gender Analysis*. Sussex: BRIDGE (development-Gender), Institute of Development Studies.

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- **Cooperation with the Child Welfare Committee:** APSA works closely with the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) in Bangalore, and currently, two APSA staff members are also members of the CWC. APSA also provides several support services in collaboration with the committee. This close cooperation makes it possible for APSA to negotiate more individualised solutions for children in crisis, compared to the more standard, bureaucratic, one-size fits all solutions which tend to be the norm with governmental childcare organisations. However, the same level of cooperation and collaboration has not been built up by APSA Hyderabad with their local CWC, and this needs to be addressed.
 - **APSA continues to be a learning organisation:** An earlier organisational evaluation commissioned by FORUT found that APSA was a learning organisation. This evaluation finds that APSA continues to be a learning organisation. Organising their work at the assembly-constituency level is already beginning to pay dividends in terms of increased political exposure for women from urban slums in both Bangalore and Hyderabad. Their deliberate move away from working in the project mode to issue-based work is also gaining them greater recognition that enables them to undertake advocacy at the state level in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, and to a lesser extent at the national level, for example in the anti-liquor campaign movement, or the movement for cleaner election practices. The baseline survey helped APSA find areas in which they were complacent, e.g., immunisation and nutrition awareness for children, and pregnant and lactating women, and these areas are now receiving a little more focus. The previous evaluation also recommended that APSA expand its funding base, and in addition to raising local resources, APSA has increased collaboration with other agencies that can fund complementary components of its community development work.
 - **Adjusting to the work-timings of communities:** In order to be able to work effectively with communities, APSA's staff have to be available to work with them when they are free. Based on their work, different communities are available at different times. For example, domestic workers can be met in the middle of the day, when they have a break between the morning and evening schedules of housework. Construction workers can be met only late in the evening, and usually they are too tired at this time to discuss community development issues. Thus, APSA staff often have very long and demanding work days.

3.8 Recommendations

- **Investing time and effort into exploring the APSA-facilitated SHGs as a potential market for urban poor women entrepreneurs:** As identified earlier, marketing of products manufactured by women micro-business entrepreneurs has been a challenge. However, both in Bangalore and in Hyderabad, APSA has direct contact with at least 3000 families each. APSA must consider investing time and effort into developing a cooperative internal marketing system within the gender programme.
- **Internal auditor for APSA Hyderabad:** While APSA Bangalore has an internal auditor who audits the books of all the APSA facilitated SHGs, APSA Hyderabad does not have such an internal auditor. General supervision is provided by the programme coordinators. In addition, when any of the Hyderabad SHGs apply for loans from nationalised banks, they are externally audited. Nevertheless, it is important that an internal auditor is appointed for APSA Hyderabad. The programme coordinators have too many other responsibilities to painstakingly oversee the auditing of the accounts of the SHGs, and they also lack the technical skill to spot discrepancies, identify trouble spots and provide guidance to the organisation based on good management of the information emerging from the raw data related to savings, loans and interest.
- **Tapping the corporate sector for marketing ideas:** APSA has collaborated well with the corporate sector to raise resources and marketing support for its computer and electronics training centres. It needs to establish contact with marketing professionals who will help the slum communities identify products in demand, provide guidelines on quality maintenance, and help set up marketing and supply chains. For example, one of the products for which many communities have been given training, carrybags made of newspaper, has gained a great deal of prominence because many cities have brought in policies to reduce the use of plastic bags. Many businesses are now providing customers with paper bags. This could potentially be an income earner especially for older women, who cannot do domestic work any more and no longer have an income source.
- **Learn from FORUT-Sri Lanka's methodology of assisting women to undertake small business planning:** APSA has supported women from the urban poor communities to start microbusinesses, largely by helping them to find easy

sources of credit through SHGs, develop confidence, and to some extent, by supporting them with skill training through organisations like the Jan Shikshan Sansthan. However, a great deal of the onus is on the individual woman entrepreneur, and her drive and motivation to build a business. APSA could learn a great deal from the model developed by FORUT-Sri Lanka, which provides extensive handholding support for business planning for encouraging hitherto economically inactive women to become more economically active.

- **Link up women from slum communities to Marie Stopes International and Family Planning Association of India:** APSA is making a commendable effort to make public health services more accountable in their operational areas. However, the fact remains that services are below par, and the other alternative for urban women in poverty is to access private medical services, which is very expensive. There is a third option, to access services provided by NGOs working in the field of sexual and reproductive health and rights, who also provide clinical services, like Marie Stopes International and Family Planning Association of India. These organisations offer a range of services at subsidised rates, including
 - Contraceptives (for men and women)
 - Abortion (medical and surgical)
 - Emergency contraception
 - Maternal health care
 - Child health care
 - Diagnosis and treatment of reproductive tract infections and sexually transmitted infection and other reproductive health care (for men and women)
 - Infertility
 - Adolescent sexual and reproductive health care
 - Counselling
 - Prevention and management of HIV/AIDS
 - Pathological/diagnostic facilities

Also, while the APSA-SHIP programme is excellent in terms of building knowledge, attitude and skills, it does not provide enough information about services. To access services, young people have to contact the adult facilitator for support. If they desire greater confidentiality and do not wish to use the mediation of the adult facilitator, they do not have support. Providing an exposure visit to the clinics of FPAI and MSI will be useful to the young people.

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- **Pay attention to masculinities and motivate fathers to take up more responsibilities:** While APSA's gender programme deserves commendation for its work in making women-focused and women-implemented development initiatives, the fact remains also that APSA finds it more convenient to work with the women in its operational areas for multiple reasons, including accessibility (men are often away during the day when APSA staff visit the areas) and women's stated and actual commitment to working on matters directly affecting the well-being of their children, families and communities, like education, health, basic amenities, water and sanitation and security (including housing and land tenure). APSA must strengthen its team's conceptual and technical capacity on issues related to masculinities, and then actively take up the challenge of working with the men in the communities. As women take on more and more responsibilities, this should not be an incentive for men to abdicate from their responsibilities, otherwise the gender equality agenda cannot be adequately addressed. Strengthening young people's CBOs would be a good start, though understandably fraught with challenges, because of the potential for muddying a clear community development agenda with the pulls and pressures of party politics, as political parties are likely to lure young people who distinguish themselves with any community organising ability. However, this is a risk that must be reckoned with, and which APSA must try to turn to the community's advantage by building the perspectives of rights and accountability into the young people's notions of community and public service from the very beginning.
 - **Address to right to recreation for girl children in slums:** The space constraints endemic to urban areas is highly exacerbated in slums, leaving almost no place for children to play. While more liberal social norms allow boys to wander further afield and find playspaces in corporation playgrounds or vacant lots, this is forbidden to girl children who face greater social regulation. APSA must actively problem solve with communities to find safe playing spaces for girl children (if necessary with adult supervision from the community) which they can use regularly. Further, they must actively promote team sports for girl children, as these have been positively correlated with other desirable outcomes including increased educational aspiration and attainment and development of leadership skills.
 - **Strengthen cross-learnings between Bangalore and Hyderabad:** The APSA senior management needs to pay more attention to improving learnings across

Bangalore and Hyderabad. Hyderabad needs to learn more about the information management and internal auditing systems for SHGs from Bangalore, and put into place the necessary technical support for this. Bangalore should seriously consider implementing the models of elder care, Citizens' Service Centres and women's literacy piloted by Hyderabad.

- **Provide technical support and management supervision of the women's literacy model being tried in Rasoolpura:** About 20 years ago, the Indian government gave a big thrust to women's literacy through the Mahila Samakhya movement. This was part of a larger thrust to adult literacy at the time. Although Mahila Samakhya continues to be strong and effective in many ways, the thrust on women's literacy has faded with lack of policy and budgetary support from the government. Nevertheless, the need for adult women's literacy programmes persists, as literacy plays critical roles, both intrinsic and instrumental, for advancing gender equality. The model currently being tested in Rasoolpura has a lot of potential, but requires technical and motivational support. If it can be proved successful, it can be widely advocated to improve women's literacy throughout APSA's operational areas and beyond. APSA's senior management must take the lead in strengthening the strategic planning for this initiative, and provide necessary technical support and management supervision to increase the possibility of success.
- **Showcase APSA's strengths as an organisation working for gender equality and increase policy role:** Currently, although APSA has done excellent work in promoting gender equality and has enormous grassroots experience in piloting successful models contributing to the same, it continues to be largely perceived as an organisation working for child rights, or basic needs of the urban poor. This means that APSA's very real strengths are not sufficiently acknowledged or utilised either by NGOs that are perceived more explicitly as promoting women's rights, nor by the government. While APSA is regularly called for discussions on policy issues related to child rights and issues related to the urban poor, it is not as actively involved in contributing to policy and programmes for women. APSA must showcase its strengths so that it is viewed as a strong stakeholder in this matter. For instance, it could organise consultations on urban poor women in the context of some relevant theme, for instance, local government initiatives to support them in Bangalore and Hyderabad, and use the forum to share the findings of this evaluation with players in the field, so that its contributions are recognised, and it begins to be consulted on relevant issues.

Chapter 4

A Critical Review of the Programme on Promoting Gender Equality at FORUT Sierra Leone

"FORUT takes their interventions to the most remote areas." - Dr. Adikali Kamara, District Medical Officer, Moyamba district.

4.1 Introduction

Sierra Leone was colonised by the British, before gaining independence in 1961. 45 per cent of the country's GDP comes from agriculture³⁹. The country is rich in minerals, and the bulk of the economic activity comes from mining diamonds, titanium, bauxite and gold and rutile. The capital, Freetown, is an important centre for shipping, with the third largest natural harbour in the world. The country suffered a civil war between 1991 and 2002, which destroyed the infrastructure and killed more than 50,000 people, before the UN Forces backed up by sections of the British Army restored peace. The post-war period has seen an emphasis on peace and democratisation processes, building the capacity of state institutions like the justice system, and of national parliamentarians⁴⁰, as well as a heavy inflow of foreign aid, "in the form of debt relief, budget support and technical assistance from the World Bank and the IMF, development loans from the African Development Bank (AfDB), and bilateral aid, mostly from the European Union and North America."⁴¹

The country has been making slow and steady progress, but faces many challenges. Sierra Leone "has 5.4 million acres of fertile land, capable of producing palm oil, cocoa, sugar, rice and tropical fruits"⁴². Currently, most of the population practises subsistence agriculture and the commercial potential of agro-business has been insufficiently explored. Sierra Leone also faces challenges in terms of inadequate power supply, a road system that is still developing, and an insufficiently large supply of skilled labour, suggesting that it will be a while before the industry sector can generate a significant number of jobs.

³⁹UNDP. (2007) *Sierra Leone Human Development Report: Empowering Local Government for Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction*.

⁴⁰"Sierra Leone: Belated International Engagement Ends a War, Helps Consolidate a Fragile Democracy." Accessed at http://www.diplomatshandbook.org/pdf/Handbook_SierraLeone.pdf on August 5, 2011.

⁴¹Green, A.R. (2010). Sierra Leone Turns a Corner. *Africa Policy Journal*. Fall Online Edition. Accessed at <http://isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k74758&pageid=icb.page414911> on August 5, 2011.

⁴²Ibid.

The following tables, drawn from the Human Development Report of 2010, called *The Real Wealth of Nations: Pathways to Human Development*, provide an overview of the development challenges facing Sierra Leone, and places the challenges related to gender within this larger context.

Table 8: Showing the Human Development Index Trends for Sierra Leone from 1980-2010

Human Development Index (HDI) Value							HDI Rank Change		Average Annual HDI Growth Rate (%)			HDI Improvement Rank
1980	1990	1995	2000	2005	2009	2010	2005 - 2010	2009 - 2010	1980 - 2010	1990 - 2010	2000 - 2010	1980 - 2010
.229	.230	.226	.236	.292	.313	.317	1	0	1.09	1.62	2.95	53

Table 9 : Showing the Human Development Index and its Components for Sierra Leone (2010)

Human Development Index (HDI) value	Life expectancy at birth (years)	Mean years of schooling (years)	Expected years of schooling (years)	Gross National Income (GNI) per capita (PPP 2008 \$)	GNI per capita rank minus HDI rank	Nonincome HDI value
0.317	48.2	2.9	7.2	809	4	0.360

Table 10 : Showing the Inequality-Adjusted Human Development Index for Sierra Leone (2010)

Human Development Index (HDI)	Inequality-Adjusted HDI			Inequality-Adjusted Life Expectancy at Birth Index		Inequality-Adjusted Education Index		Inequality-Adjusted Income Index	
	Value	Overall loss (%)	Change in Rank	Value	Loss (%)	Value	Loss (%)	Value	Loss (%)
0.317	0.193	39.3%	-1	0.248	44.5%	0.150	48.2%	0.192	22.2

Table 11 : Showing the Multidimensional Poverty Index for Sierra Leone (2000-2008)

Multi-dimensional Poverty Index	Population in Multi-dimensional poverty		Population at risk of multi-dimensional poverty (%)	Population with at least one severe deprivation in			Population below income poverty line	
	Headcount (%)	Intensity of Deprivation (%)		Education (%)	Health (%)	Living Standards (%)	PPP \$1.25 a day (%)	National Poverty Line (%)
0.489	81.5	60.0	11.1	60.6	58.2	92.4	53.4	70.2

Table 12 : Showing the Gender Inequality Index and its Components for Sierra Leone

Gender Inequality Index		Maternal Mortality Ratio ⁴³	Adolescent Fertility Rate ⁴⁴	Seats in Parliament (%)	Population with at least secondary school education (% ages 25 and older)		Labour force participation rate (%)		Contraceptive Prevalence Rate any method	Antenatal coverage of at least one visit	Births attended by skilled health personnel
Rank	Value			Female	Female	Male	Female	Male	(% of married women ages 15 -49)	(%)	(%)
2008	2008	2003-2008	1990-2008	2008	2010	2010	2008	2008	1990-2008	1990-2008	2000-2008
125	.756	2100	126	13.2	9.5	20.4	67.1	68.1	8.2	87	42

⁴³Defined as maternal deaths per 100,000 live births

⁴⁴Defined as the number of births per 1000 women ages 15-19.

Table 8 shows the Human Development Index Trends for Sierra Leone from 1980-2010. The table shows that except for a dip when it was calculated in 1995, in the middle of the civil war years, the HDI has been increasing slightly but steadily. In the past five years, Sierra Leone has moved up one place in the HDI ranking, and the average annual growth rate in the HDI in the past decade, since the civil war, has been nearly 3 per cent, which is a creditable achievement. However, a more detailed look at the components of the HDI for Sierra Leone, shown in Table 9, shows what an uphill task this is, and how much more there is left to do. Life expectancy at birth is still only 48.2 years with the average years of schooling for the population working out to 2.9 years. Nevertheless, in 2010, the expected years of schooling was 7.2 years, suggesting that this generation of children, on an average, will receive a middle school education. The country had a Gross National Income per capita of USD 809 at 2008 PPP, and if income was not considered as a factor in looking at a decent standard of living, while calculating the HDI value, this went up from 0.317 to 0.360.

Most countries are plagued by problems in inequality in the distribution of income, and the Inequality-Adjusted HDI, which takes into account such inequality, shows to what extent poor people may be left behind even if overall average development improves. As Table 10 shows, when we account for the fact that there are significant differences in income distribution in the country, Sierra Leone's HDI falls from 0.317 to 0.193, and its rank actually falls one place, negating the apparent rise in rank that has happened in the past five years. What this means in real terms becomes clearer when we examine how adjusting for inequalities in incomes affects the indices for Life Expectancy at Birth (an indicator for Health), Education, and Income (an indicator for basic survival and a decent standard of living). These fall by 44.5%, 48.2% and 22.2% respectively.

Consequently, as Table 11 shows, 81.5 per cent of the population is in multi-dimensional poverty with another 11.1 per cent at risk for multi-dimensional poverty (making a total of 92.6% of the population). 92.4 per cent of the population suffers from at least one severe deprivation in living standards, which 60.6 per cent and 58.2 per cent having at least one severe deprivation in Education and Health respectively. 70.2 per cent of the population falls below the National Income Poverty Line.

On the Gender Inequality Index (GII), shown in Table 12, Sierra Leone fares better, with a rank of 125 and a value of .756. However, it is against the context of extreme overall deprivation shown by the HDI data that the data on the GII and its components needs to be examined. However, there are several positive signs on the horizon. Female

enrolment in primary, secondary and tertiary education is going up. According to the Local Government Act of 2004, 50 per cent of District and Ward Committees must comprise women representatives. Further, “Women hold 135 of ministerial posts, 11 % of local council and 7% of paramount chieftaincy posts; also 19% of civil service posts, some at the highest level.”⁴⁵

FORUT directly implements community development programmes in Sierra Leone through its country office. Like Sri Lanka, FORUT-Sierra Leone was to move from the project-based to the programme approach in the current project period. Also, as in the case of FORUT-Sri Lanka, prior to this project period, the organisation primarily worked as a direct implementer of development projects, to a limited extent based on microfinance, and to a greater extent on the construction of development related infrastructure, e.g., schools for an education focus, traditional birthing houses and toilets for a health focus, and drying floors and storage sheds for produce for an economic focus. In this phase, the organisation was to largely focus on similar thematic areas, but with a more cost-effective approach focusing on development driven by community empowerment. Further, a strong gender component was explicitly included in this phase.

The Gender Programme for FORUT – Sierra Leone was designed with two components, the Economic Empowerment of Women (EEW) Programme, and the Women’s Health and Maternal Care (WHMC) Programme. The Economic Empowerment of Women Programme was targeted at previously economically inactive females from extremely poor families in selected programme locations. In the short term, women were to obtain “increased knowledge on credit management, skill development, rights-based knowledge, and savings and credit utilisation”, with the ultimate goals being that of women obtaining increased control over economic and social resources, men securing “an improved understanding of the benefits of women’s right to economic participation and ownership of time; and an increase in the number of women articulating their rights individually and collectively.”⁴⁶ As of March 2011, there was recorded data for the programme being implemented in 84 villages in two districts in the Northern and Southern Provinces, though programme staff said that the programme now covered the entire target of 100 villages. *It should be noted here that the programme is*

⁴⁵UNDP. (2007) *Sierra Leone Human Development Report: Empowering Local Government for Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction*.

⁴⁶Part 2: Strategic Goals 2009-2013.

implemented in a few towns, but the rest of the ‘villages’ are fairly small in size, ranging in size from clusters as small as 3-4 houses, to 20-25 houses.

4.1.1 Strategies common to the EEW and WHMC programmes

The EEW and WHMC programmes work together even more than the GEE and GBV programmes of FORUT-Sri Lanka, because separate staff are not assigned for the two programmes. Consequently, some strategies apply for the implementation of both the programmes, in other words, for the Gender Programme as a whole.

- **Project location and stakeholder selection:** In the 2009-2013 phase, FORUT-Sierra Leone decided to expand the project. Accordingly a baseline survey was undertaken and based on the survey, Port Loko and Moyamba districts were selected for the intervention. Several factors decided the choice of chiefdoms and villages in this district, including
 - The accessibility of the project locations by road
 - The remoteness and vulnerability of the project locations, which make them unlikely to be reached by other NGOs and many government programmes
 - Permission and support of the traditional chiefs for FORUT’s work
 - Willingness of the community to participate in programmes
 - The language spoken by the community (Timene or Mende), which were also spoken and understood by the FORUT-Sierra Leone staff.

- **Serving underserved populations:** Both the programmes focus on populations that have access to very few services. Most of the villages are very remote, and have no access to banking systems. Most also have very limited access to health support, and some are especially inaccessible, being tens of miles from the main roads, and major towns, with few means of transport. Dr. Adikali Kamara, District Medical Officer of Moyamba district observed, “My work takes me all over the district, and I have seen that FORUT takes their interventions to the most remote areas.” His colleague, the District Health Nurse of Moyamba District, Sr. Beatrice Tommy, added, “Through FORUT’s help we are able to reach hard-to-reach areas.”

- **Pragmatic project planning, with the participatory element worked in later:** According to the FORUT-Sierra Leone team, much of the planning for the project “occurred in the office”, with the participatory element operating in a pragmatic way. “We would go to communities and say, ‘This is what we can offer: how can

we make this successful for your community?” This was especially so, because in this project period, FORUT-Sierra Leone was working in new project locations. Planning for this phase has been largely top-down, and as FORUT-Sierra Leone gets to learn communities better, and understand each other’s strengths and limitations, participatory planning can begin at an earlier stage.

- **Working with the consent of the leaders of the village:** To ensure cooperation, FORUT-Sierra Leone carries out the initial sensitisation exercises for the community with the permission and in the presence of the local town or village chief. In addition to the traditional local authorities, collaborative links are built with members of the local elected councils. Efforts are made to convince the community that the collaboration with FORUT will be beneficial for the village. An equal effort is made to convince the community that the programme aims to build knowledge and skills and will not provide handouts.
- **Advocacy to secure the support of the men:** The programme staff takes special pains to initiate and maintain dialogue with the men. “We tell them we are not here to destroy your marriage, but to see how we can support women’s health,” explained the Programme Officer. They suggest that empowering women economically means that they too can contribute to sharing the burden of household expenditure, and that the programme could also help to support widows, older women, and single women.
- **Preparation of a Manual on Gender Sensitisation:** The Gender Programme Officer has put together a manual on gender sensitisation for help with providing the community with training on women’s rights and gender issues.
- **Common staffing:** The same team works on both the EEW and WHMC Programmes. The staffing consists of the Gender Programme Officer and Assistant, with some support from the Field Officers and Field Activists.
- **Some initial efforts at advocacy:** The programme has made some initial efforts at advocacy related to gender issues in the country. While Sierra Leone has passed three laws aimed at improving the status of women in the country, in practice, things have not changed much. The programme carried out a series of focus group discussions in the community to identify gender issues of relevance, which women felt were not being addressed adequately because of culture of silence surrounding many of them. Four issues came up repeatedly: Customary

and forced marriages, inheritance laws which discriminated against women, domestic violence and lack of space for women in decision-making. Accordingly, the programme has produced jingles to create awareness about these issues. While the jingles were launched on International Women's Day 2010, to date they have not been disseminated.

Findings of the Evaluation of the Economic Empowerment of Women (EEW) Programme

4.2 Effectiveness of the Economic Empowerment of Women Programme

Looking at the effectiveness of the Economic Empowerment of Women (EEW) Programme, or the extent to which the programme “has achieved or is likely to achieve its objective”, the evaluation finds that it has been effective to a limited extent. The first steps of helping women understand the benefits of collectivising and becoming participants in savings and credit groups has happened, and as a result, they have access to some economic resources in the form of their savings, and small loans from their Community Credit and Savings Associations (CoCSAs). This has been done in tandem with offering the same services to men.

Like men, women have also been encouraged to take up some economic activity; usually this has taken the form of strengthening their participation in subsistence agriculture, and starting petty businesses. Both men and women have received loans from the CoCSAs. *On the one hand, the extreme poverty in Sierra Leone makes it difficult to carry out an intervention that targets only women; on the other, the fact that men are also gaining benefits means that there is less resistance to women participating in economic activities.* In addition, there was evidence of men recognising the benefit of women engaging in economic activity, because it reduced the expectation that they had to be providers for almost all the family's needs, and has also cut down on conflicts centred on money.

However, the project has been less effective with respect to assisting women with skill development and rights-based education. Apart from some introduction of communities to improved varieties of cassava, and a different variety of oil palm, no attempt has been made to give participants in the programme any skill training that can convert into the formation of microbusinesses. Rights-based education, especially with regard to gender, has been quite limited so far, largely because of inadequate orientation of field staff, and too many responsibilities on the part of the designated staff of the Gender Programme. The project is beginning to give out mini-grants to about 100 women in a pilot project to encourage women's entrepreneurship at this

stage. This is largely because the project has chosen to err on the side of caution, encouraging women to save, and start microbusinesses using microcapital from their own savings, building up capacity to absorb the grants.

The context for the relative effectiveness of the programme has been discussed in this sub-section with reference to conceptualisation, stakeholder selection, strategies and the monitoring mechanism.

4.2.1 Conceptualisation:

The core of the EEW programme is the building of Community Credit and Savings Associations (CoCSAs). In Sierra Leone, the CoCSAs are mixed groups, consisting of men and women, with the leadership in the hands of the men. The aim of the CoCSAs is to provide a socially approved methodology for women to come out of the private space of the house to collectivise, save, access credit, discuss ideas about undertaking economic activity and reflect on social and gender norms. The programme also aimed at providing small grants to a sub-set of the women empowered in this fashion, together with some skill building support.

It is noteworthy here that FORUT-Sri Lanka and FORUT-Sierra Leone have taken different approaches to the grant making process. FORUT-Sri Lanka identified economically inactive women, provided them with intensive training, related to personal development, development of skills which could be converted into microenterprises, and intensive business planning support, so that these women with no prior business experience could absorb the grants given to them. FORUT –Sierra Leone has followed a different approach. It has encouraged previously economically inactive women to save and start microbusinesses using their savings and loans from the CoCSAs. Once the Programme Officer is convinced that the women have developed enough of a commitment to their business and some experience, the grants are to be disbursed. A beginning has been made with this

4.2.2 Stakeholder Selection:

The Economic Empowerment programme operates in two districts, Moyamba in the Southern Province and Port Loko in the Northern Province respectively. In Moyamba, the programme operates in two chiefdoms, Bumpe and Kongbora, and in Port Loko in one, Moforki. As of March 2011, the programme was operational in 84 ‘villages’.

It is important to remember that, currently, the programme is functional only in the form of the Community Credit and Savings Associations, with a limited amount of

support with agriculture in the form of the development of community seed banks, and some amount of technical inputs on high-yielding varieties.

Participation in the Economic Empowerment Programme is reflected in Table 13.

Table 13: Showing the membership in CoCSAs in the EEW Programme

District	Chiefdom	Section	Centres	No. of Villages	Members		
					Men (No.)	Women No. (%)	Total
Port Loko	Moforki	Gberay Morie	Rofanyea	6	61	129 (68)	190
			Kareneh	3	38	59 (61)	97
			Limpkakuru	6	40	43 (52)	83
			Makoth	1	11	12 (52)	23
			Makempitha	1	10	15 (60)	25
		Magbenie	Magbene	4	20	55 (73.3)	75
			Rosint	4	40	56 (58.3)	96
Rokon	3		43	75 (63.5)	118		
Moyamba	Bumpe	Mokebbie	Mokebbie	3	9	30 (77)	39
			Moboya	4	6	44 (88)	50
		Greema	Rotawa	4	29	43 (60)	72
			Mamenkeneh	4	31	116 (79)	147
			Mobekoh	5	59	113 (66)	172
		Yeinkessa	Yeinkessa	2	2	31 (94)	33
			Mosenese	2	7	19 (73)	26
			Saahun	4	34	82 (71)	116
	Kongbora	Senehun	Senehun	5	5	43 (89.5)	48
		Mongere	L. Njormeh	2	17	37 (68.5)	54
			Mosegbendeh	1	8	18 (69.2)	26

			Mokong	2	17	49 (74.2)	66
		Gibina	Bauya 1 & 2	2	18	71 (80)	89
		Tongea	Moyuba Town	3	11	28 (72)	39
		Mokorewo	N. Yokie	6	18	34 (52)	52
			Magbenka	4	77	121 (61)	198
			Mokorewo	1	4	20 (83)	24
		Not specified	Gondoma	2	23	46 (67)	69
TOTAL	3	11	26	84	638	1,389 (68.5)	2,027

(Source: FORUT-Sierra Leone Gender Programme, 2011)

As of the end of the first quarter of 2011, 1,389 women were members of CoCSAs, 68.5 per cent of the total membership of 2,027 members. At the village level, participation of women ranges from 52 per cent (N. Yokie, Limpkakuru, Makoth) to 94 per cent (Yeinkessa). Selection of some men into the programme has been strategic to a certain extent, given the high levels of poverty experienced by both men and women. It reduces the likelihood of opposition to the programme targeting only women when this is introduced, and to the women participating in this programme, from the men.

Currently, the process of the final selection of beneficiaries for receiving mini-grants through the EEW intervention is in place. The caution has been because almost all the women in the programme are illiterate, and prior to the programme had no experience with running a business, with their primary economic activity consisting only of unpaid labour in subsistence agriculture for the family. (In comparison, in the Sri Lanka programme, almost all the women were functionally literate.) Prior to the programme, almost all the women had almost no savings at all, believing they were too poor to have savings.

The programme envisages a grant of Le 3 million for 100 women, and it is important that women build the capacity to absorb the grant and apply it to their business, instead of having it diverted to other pressing basic needs. Although a first list was compiled by field staff, the objectives and strategic goals of the programme had not been clearly shared, according to senior officers. Consequently, when the list was prepared, it was felt that the field-level staff had been swayed to some extent by local political

considerations, either choosing women because of their connections within the power structures of the villages, or choosing very aged women, who were in poor health and were less likely to be economically active, to be potential grantees. In the latter case, the grant would have served like a handout, and was assessed as being unlikely to be used for economic activities. Consequently, a mid-course correction was made. The Gender Programme Officer and Programme Assistant reviewed the list to identify potential participants both according to need and the capacity to absorb and utilise the grant. Thus, the selection of participants for the mini-grant component of the EEW programme has begun at the mid-point of the programme period. Nevertheless, the attention to ensuring careful participant selection is worthwhile, and is likely to increase the likelihood of success of the programme. The current selection targets women between the ages of 30 and 60, especially widows, single women, etc.

The savings and credit part of the EEW programme is apparently effective in the short term, in terms of the increase in savings, small beginnings with microenterprise, and some of the benefits of collectivisation such as more social and psychological support. However, **the microcredit component is undermined by certain significant issues related to risk management of the loan portfolios**, which are described in detail in the section on challenges.

4.2.3 Strategies of the EEW Programme

- **Collectivisation of women (and men) into Community Credit and Savings Association:** The programme encouraged women from the village to come together and meet regularly in CoCSAs. This served to create a socially legitimate opportunity for women to come out of their houses with a possibility that there might be some economic benefit. The officers of the programme clarified that the programme would not provide food or non-food handouts (since most communities have come to expect handouts from NGOs in Sierra Leone), but would try to provide knowledge and skills to improve their lives in multiple ways. *Currently, many of the groups are mixed groups, of which the Presidents and Secretaries are men, because most of the women are illiterate, and cannot handle account keeping.* Members are enrolled on payment of a registration fee of Le 2,000, which also gets them an accounts card and a copy of the byelaws. The nominal registration fee increases the value of the programme to the members, and encourages them to be regular in their participation.
- **Encouragement of savings:** Members of the CoCSAs are encouraged to save money using the CoCSA mechanism. While initially they had felt that they were

too poor to save, the programme had encouraged them, saying that even if they saved as little as Le 100 per day (a sum equivalent to USD 0.22), they could save Le 3000 a month. Thus, it made savings appear feasible to extremely poor women.

- **Provision of loans from group savings:** The CoCSA extends loans to members from their savings against a smaller rate of interest than that charged by local moneylenders.
- **Encouragement of microbusinesses:** Members of the CoCSAs are encouraged to engage in some kind of economic activity using their savings and the credit from the CoCSAs. Most businesses either involve petty trading or improving agriculture a little beyond the subsistence level, e.g., market gardening.
- **Support for women from the community seed banks, and high-yielding varieties:** FORUT-Sierra Leone has a programme of providing seed for crops like groundnut and paddy, with beneficiaries returning a quarter of the crop to serve as seeds for the next batch of beneficiaries. Women are also supported through this programme, and they were appreciative of the support. “Earlier, if we sourced seedlings from somewhere, for every bushel we received, we had to give back two bushels. It is the opposite with FORUT: they give us two bushels of seedlings, and we have to return one.” Information has also been provided to the community on high-yielding varieties of cassava.
- **Selection of grantees for FORUT- EEW grants:** Of the women supported through the CoCSAs, 100 are to receive a grant of Le 0.3 million to be used towards a microenterprise. The process of selection has begun.
- **Skill training for women to start microbusinesses:** The programme is also to provide skill training for women to start microenterprises. *This component has not begun.*
- **Rights-based education:** The programme is also to provide women with education on women’s rights and gender issues. *This has been done to a limited extent.*
- **Construction of multi-purpose centres:** The project also envisages the construction of eight multi-purpose centres, community centres that provide a

space to hold CoCSA meetings, trainings, etc., and potentially, also a safe space to keep community savings. Two such centres have been constructed.

4.2.4 Monitoring Mechanism of the EEW Programme:

The Presidents and Secretaries of the individual CoCSAs maintain accounts, with some assistance from the Field Activists. These are checked and disputes resolved with support from the Programme Officer and Assistant. The Field Officers and Assistants also provide inputs into various aspects of the programme (e.g., the selection of beneficiaries for the grants). On a monthly basis, the Programme Officer and Assistant collate data related to the programme and this is reviewed at the Head Office in consultation with the senior management, while plans are made and discussed for the following month. Some challenges exist related to technical capacity for monitoring the EEW programme, which are discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

4.3 Impact of the Economic Empowerment of Women (EEW) Programme

While the EEW programme faces several challenges, it has nevertheless begun to make a small impact within the communities within which it operates.

- **Building up of savings:** Thanks to the programme, people who felt that they were too poor to save are now saving on a regular basis. The byelaws of the CoCSA require that members save at least Le 6000 within six months to qualify to continue in the programme. The programme is finding that even the poorest of the poor are saving about Le 2000 every month, while there are some participants who manage to save as much as Le 24,000 per month. This has increased participants' confidence in themselves, and they have begun to see themselves as economically valuable persons. According to Mr. Sineh Fofanah, a Chairman of a CoCSA in Kareneh, "We never had the idea of saving. Because of the intervention of FORUT, people are saving regularly now." Mrs. Amniata Koroma of Magbenka said, "We are making an effort to save because we want to have a larger sum available to use at a time of need."
- **Access to credit:** With no banking systems operating in the villages and without collateral, women had almost no access to credit, except to borrow from moneylenders on exorbitant terms. Mrs. Hawa George of Magbenka said, "It was not easy to ask for money or get it. Now, we share our resources and take loans." According to Mrs. Mariatu Kamara of Rofanyea, "Earlier asking for a loan of Le 100 was a problem. Now I can easily get a loan of Le 100,000, it is not a problem. Also, when I take a loan of Le 100,000 from the CoCSA, I pay an interest of Le 20,000 for a period of 4 months. And I don't mind paying it,

because I know that the interest is an income for the CoCSA, of which I will get a share too. Earlier, when I borrowed Le 100,000 for four months, I had to give the moneylender 5 gallons of palm oil as interest, a value of Le 70,000. “ Belonging to the CoCSAs has provided women with a credit source which they can access without fear, with repayment schedules that take into account their capacity to pay. Mrs. Fatu Kanu of Rofanyea said, “At first I used to borrow money from the moneylender. If we did not pay, we were harassed and taken to police station. With the CoCSA, there are no negative experiences, and we can pay a little at a time.”

- **Building collective strength:** The process of belonging to a group and attending regular meetings, where they also receive some inputs on empowerment and gender issues, has begun to make slight inroads into the traditional culture of keeping problems private, and is beginning to help women seek support from each other. As Mrs. Mariatu Kamara from Rofanyea said, “We now have the facility to gather together to exchange ideas when somebody has a problem.”
- **Access to public spaces:** The programme has provided both the rationale and framework for women to come together regularly into a public space where the CoCSA meetings are held. As Mrs. Hawa George of Sosowa noted, “It is not easy for our husbands to allow us to come outside. Through CoCSA, we have come to know many things. Earlier, we would wait at home to know what happened if there was any meeting in the community. Now, thanks to CoCSA, we are coming out.” Thus, the CoCSA meetings provide a setting where men and women sit together to discuss issues relevant to them and their communities. While many women still remain silent when men speak, and do not contradict them, others are beginning to speak up. Mr. Sineh Fofanah, Chairman of the CoCSA in Kareneh observed, “Women did not speak in public earlier. Now, because of the intervention, women are speaking in public.” Even when women have not developed the courage to speak up, their visibility in the community has improved to start with. According to Mr. John Paul Gbato, a Field Assistant with FORUT-Sierra Leone, “Earlier, women were not encouraged to come out of the houses. They did not participate in any meetings. Now women are invited to meetings whenever there is a decision to be taken in the community. They are involved, and they contribute to the discussions.”

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- **Income generation activities have increased:** More women have developed the confidence and accessed the credit necessary to engage in microbusinesses. By and large, this takes the form of petty trading.

Among the microbusinesses begun by women in the project locations, following FORUT's interventions, are:

- Retail sale of
 - Fresh fish
 - Dried fish
 - Rice
 - Cooked rice
 - Spices and seasonings
 - Cooking utensils
 - Firewood
 - Charcoal
- Farming or market gardening, involving
 - Rice
 - Swamp Rice
 - Millets
 - Corn
 - Coconuts
 - Groundnuts
 - Cassava
 - Oil palms
 - Bananas
 - Pineapples
 - Mangoes
 - Garden eggs (a local aubergine-like vegetable)
 - Peppers
 - Potatoes
 - Okra
 - Vegetables
- Palm oil processing
- Palm kernel processing
- Poultry farming

This was especially appreciated by some of the women who headed their households and were struggling to make ends meet before the intervention.

Mrs. Eissatu Bangura of Rofanyea said, “I am a widow, and thanks to the loans, I am now selling rice and cooking utensils. I am now able to comfortably pay for my children’s clothes and school fees.”

Women also felt that if they were given the technical training, they would be interested in taking up other income generation activities, such as

- Soap-making
 - Weaving
 - Tie-dyeing of cloth
 - Baking
 - Sewing
 - Brickmaking
- **Increasing visibility for women’s work:** While women have always contributed economically to families and communities, in the areas where FORUT-Sierra Leone works, almost all of this was in the form of unpaid agricultural labour in family farms. As women access credit to start microbusinesses, or add market gardening to their agricultural work they are beginning to bring in incomes, which increases the visibility of their work. According to Mrs. Dbassui Forna, “I began to sell fish and used the profit to repay my loans. I have no more debt.”
 - **Increased control over resources and status in the family:** With increased access to funds, in the form of savings, credit or income from microbusiness, women reported being able to contribute financially to the family, e.g., towards children’s schooling expenses. They reported having control over some financial resources, which they did not have to ask for from their husbands. As Mrs. Liliane Fatimatu Bangura of Kareneh said, “In the evening, when I want to cook, I don’t ask anymore. I take from what I have and I cook. So there is peace in the house.” Apparently, this contribution to food security was not an isolated instance. Mrs. Jalu Conteh of the Magbenka community said, “Earlier, when I wanted to cook, I had to borrow. Now I buy and sell fish and palm oil, and make money. I have taken loans twice from the CoCSA and repaid them. I have never run out of money since joining the group.” Consequently, several reported that their standing within the family had improved. “I get more respect from my husband,” said Mrs. Salemah Conteh, and then repeated emphatically, “*I get more respect from my husband!*” The men too reported satisfaction with the changes. “Earlier, the women asked the men for everything. We are glad we

don't have to provide everything now. This programme has brought more power for women. They now assist us in everything.”

- **Reduction in family conflict:** All the communities that FORUT-Sierra Leone works with are economically marginal communities, with the resulting stresses and strains as families try to meet basic needs. Several women and men reported that the impetus for economic activities provided by FORUT has contributed to a reduction in family conflicts related to economic difficulties. As Usman Kamara, headman of Rofanyea said, “[Women’s participation in the CoCSA] brings peace to the home. Earlier, husbands tormented their wives, knowing that they were monetarily dependent on them.”
- **Positive impact on children’s education:** A number of people reported that the increased incomes went to pay children’s fees and other educational expenses. As Mrs. Fatu Sisay of Kareneh said, “It was not easy to pay my children’s fees unless I took loans. Now I am not only free of debt, I can pay their fees without stress.” Mrs. Kodiachu Bangura concurred, “When we told our husbands to pay school fees, they would say, you try and pay the fees – the children are studying for their mothers.” As communities come together to talk about their priorities, they are also getting support from their leadership. According to Mr. Abu Mamah Kamara, headman in Kareneh, “We are now making bye-laws. If any child over 6 is not in school, the parents are punishable.”
- **There is a demand for the extension of FORUT-Sierra Leone’s services from communities which are not part of the target locations:** Several communities that are not covered by the FORUT programme are asking for it to be extended to their communities after seeing that communities are benefiting. In some instances, they have begun organising themselves, and are asking for technical and infrastructure support. For instance, one community from the Yoni chiefdom, which is not part of FORUT’s target area, walks to the Sosowa community where FORUT offers support to start CoCSAs, and has started accessing services (the technical know-how to start CoCSAs)from there.

4.4 Challenges of the Economic Empowerment of Women (EEW) Programme

- **No tradition of saving:** Most of the communities that FORUT-Sierra Leone works with live in very marginal circumstances aimed at coping for the day. Encouraging individuals and communities to save and to aspire for an improved

economic status, has been a challenge for the staff, especially in the case of the women.

- **Mistrust of NGOs:** Some communities had had negative experiences with other NGOs and were reluctant to trust a programme which involved depositing their money. Admitted Kadiachu Bangura, “ When the CoCSA was first introduced, I didn’t join. I was not sensitised initially. Later, I found out how it was working, and then joined. I had never been able to save earlier. Now, through the CoCSA, I know what I am capable of doing.” The Chief of the Sosowa community, Mr. Ali Koroma, said, “To be honest, when the FORUT Field Officer, Mr. Sandi, said that the organisation would help our community, I thought he was joking. Now I see that Mrs. Edith Jumu visits the field every month to monitor the work that is being done.” *Chief Morie of Magbenka said, “It is not easy for people to change, but FORUT works persistently with our communities and helps us come together. We appreciate their efforts.”*
- **Collectivising and ensuring regular meetings:** The first challenge for the programme was to encourage community members, and especially the women, to collectivise. Individuals and families have to struggle to make a bare living, and it is difficult to make additional efforts. As Mrs. Abiseh Koroma of Sosowa said, “It was difficult for us to come together as a community.” The distance between villages means that it is impossible for programme staff to visit every village. CoCSA centres in one central location for clusters of 2 to 6 villages are the solution. However, this means that the members from some villages have to walk several miles to a meeting, while those in the village where the CoCSA centre is located do not. This causes some resentment, and programme staff find that ensuring regular meetings of all members in the collectives is a challenge.
- **Illiteracy of almost all the women participants in the programme:** According to the programme staff, almost 95 per cent of the women participants in the programme are illiterate, which leads to difficulties. Women cannot check the written accounts, but have their own personal systems of keeping track, and disputes are not uncommon, with women insisting that “we paid, but it was not written down”. This puts an unfair burden on the programme staff, who end up spending some part of the little time they have every month with the community settling such disputes. Besides, such disputes have the potential to escalate into credibility-related, or even legal problems. Some ad hoc attempts have been made to address illiteracy, but they suffer precisely from being ad hoc, and not a

clearly designed programme on the delivery front, and without critical elements like motivation and social support as part of the design and implementation. On the demand front, the women are affected by shame, at having to study at the same time as their children, and are often mocked by their husbands, who make remarks like, “Why are you studying now? Your eyes are already dim.”

- **Lack of Banking Facilities in the Communities:** The banking sector in Sierra Leone is still fairly under-developed, and services are not available in the remote locations where the project operates. There are banks in some of the larger towns, but since demand outstrips supply, it is very difficult to open accounts, and may even involve the payment of bribes. Hence the CoCSAs are hard-pressed to find a safe space to keep their collective savings.
- **Limited staffing and technical expertise of the Gender Programme Staff to manage the risks of the CoCSA programme:** The CoCSA programme is primarily supervised by the Programme Officer and the Programme Assistant of the Gender Programme. Both these individuals are committed, and work very hard, being out in the field for three weeks in a month. However, they lack both time, because of all the other responsibilities associated with the programme, and the technical expertise for risk assessment, sound portfolio information systems and loan portfolio risk management.
- **Significant risks in the CoCSA model:** The combination of the operation of the four challenges mentioned above means that there are serious shortcomings to the CoCSA model.
 - **The money collected in the group is not physically secure:** The money collected in the CoCSA is kept in an iron box, provided by FORUT-Sierra Leone, which is stored in the house of one respected individual in the community. The box is only of such a size that, at the time of the CoCSA meeting, this box is carried on the head of an individual and brought to the venue of the meeting. This raises serious concerns about theft and physical safety of the assets.
 - **The physical security issue is addressed by keeping the money in rotation:** The way the CoCSA model addresses the issue of physical security is to keep only a minimum amount in the box. This is done in two ways: by having the bulk of the money out in rotation in the form of loans to members, and by paying out a monthly dividend. Only “10 per cent of interest income collected is kept as ‘earnings’”, according to the Programme Officer. Aggregated exposure is therefore a major concern. Apart from this, there are concerns about liquidity risks in the programme.

In fact, as of March 2011, there are five CoCSAs that are in debt, while another has a balance of 0, with the next five CoCSAs with positive balances showing a range in balance from USD 5 to 28. However, not all of them may be equally exposed. For instance, Mokebbie, which has a balance of only about USD 27, has savings of Le 142,000 as against loans of Le 100,000. *At least about a quarter of the CoCSAs require priority risk analysis support, and it would be ideal to carry out the process for all of them.*

The details are provided in Table 14 below:

Table 14: Showing financial transactions of CoCSAs with zero or negative balance as of March 2011.

CoCSA Centre	Regn. Fees	Savings	Repayment	Total Cash In	Loans Out	Balance
Magbenka	396,000	4,196,000	7,245,000	11,839,000	12,353,000	-516,000
Bauya 1&2	178,000	2,180,000	4,545,000	6,903,000	7,300,000	-397,000
Rokon	236,000	1,056,000	794,000	2,086,000	2,438,000	-352,000
Gondama	138,000	1,622,000	3,387,000	5,147,000	5,338,000	-191,000
Saahun	232,000	3,046,000	2,626,000	5,904,400	5,970,000	-65,600
Makoth	46,000	687,000	527,000	1,260,000	1,260,000	0

- **Compulsion to keep money in rotation may reduce risk management:** Traditionally, the evaluation of credit happens on the basis of five primary credit factors, called the ‘Five Cs of Credit’: capacity (sufficient cash flow to service the obligation), capital (net worth), collateral (assets to secure the debt), conditions (of the borrower, the loan, and the overall economy) and character (integrity).⁴⁷ In the case of microcredit, two of these factors, capital and collateral, are already not being considered. In most microcredit models, some conditions of the loan (for example, interest) are not changed depending on the creditworthiness of the borrower, because that is not possible in a group operating according to a social contract. For borrowers who are extremely poor, small events

⁴⁷Derrick, T. H., Peterson, L., & Premshak, C. (Undated). *Loan Portfolio Management*. Virginia, USA: Office of Congressional and Public Affairs, Farm Credit Administration.

can trigger financial difficulties that affect capacity. Hence, risk management is already an issue in microcredit, and the primary credit factors that work in microcredit are character and collective responsibility to the group, which must outweigh difficulties in the other three Cs.

Given this context, the compulsion to keep the money in rotation because of the security issues described above may put a burden on the lender (the CoCSA) not to make as careful a risk analysis as it might do if it had a safe space to keep deposits. This may be compounded by pressure on the President and Secretary because of intra-community relationships and political factors, to sanction loans even when there are significant credit risks.

Given all these complexities, the risk management process of the CoCSAs needs to be analysed and strengthened, as if the model fails, the credibility risk is not just for the individual CoCSA, but for FORUT-Sierra Leone. Likewise, given the marginal circumstances within which the participants are operating, even a couple of failures can create a run on liquidity, which can put serious pressures on the programme.

- **The practice of paying monthly dividends is unrealistic and risky:** Currently, a monthly dividend is paid out by the CoCSAs. Without a realistic risk-and-return analysis, followed by strategies for balancing risks and returns, this is not an advisable strategy. A month is a very small time frame for a banking operation with relatively low levels of technical expertise to understand how the loan portfolio is really doing, and how much can be paid out as dividend. When larger banks pay monthly dividends, they have already calculated how they expect the loan portfolio to do over longer terms of one, three, five or ten years and have calculated their interest rates accordingly. The annual returns on investment are then distributed over twelve months, not calculated on a monthly basis. Short-term financial instruments may make calculations on a monthly basis, but they do this using sophisticated technology and statistical modelling which calculates the influence of multiple variables in the short term. For a small operation, this strategy of monthly dividends creates unrealistic expectations among members and is risky to the fund.

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- **Decentralisation can cause deviations from prescribed credit policy:** As of March 2011, the EEW programme had 1,196 loans, distributed over a wide geographic area of two districts, with 26 centres. Some amount of decentralisation is necessarily involved in the management of the portfolios, handled by the Presidents and Secretaries of the CoCSA (mostly men) and by some of the Field Officers and Assistants, with the Programme Officer and Assistant only at a centre once a month to handle both the EEW and WHMC Programmes. Comparatively few staff members are involved in approving, disbursing, monitoring and collecting each loan. An increase in the number of loans, and insufficient supervision of clients and loan officers may increase the opportunity for deviation from approved policies and increase the risk of error, manipulation, and in worst case scenarios, fraud.

During a field visit to one of the CoCSA Centres during the evaluation, the Programme Officer discovered that one of the field assistants had made the decision to disburse loans to one CoCSA out of the savings of another CoCSA, against established procedure of providing loans to a CoCSA only from its own savings. When the Programme Officer challenged his decision, he argued that he saw no reason why one CoCSA, which had enough savings, could not lend to another, which needed the loan. He had not taken into consideration the difficulties involved in exerting collective moral pressure on borrowers who belonged to a different village to make repayments.

- **Programme officers may have only limited portfolio information:** With three weeks spent on the road, the Gender Programme staff have to support roughly two CoCSA centres a day, or the activities related to about 6 villages every day. Given that several hours every day have to be spent on travel, this severely limits the amount of time available to collect information about and supervise the functioning of the CoCSAs. Lack of portfolio information and insufficient supervision of clients and loan officers can result in lower portfolio quality. Besides, weak information systems may prevent the staff from even recognising bad loans and delinquency in time and following this up. At the same time, the final responsibility of the EEW programme rests with the Gender staff. This is a serious challenge.

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- **The office bearers of groups meant to encourage collectivisation of women are men:** The Presidents and Secretaries of almost all the CoCSAs are men, as they need to keep accounts, which severely undermines the philosophy of the programme to give increased control over resources to women and improve gender equality.
 - **Selection of grantees will be a challenge:** Already, FORUT-Sierra Leone faced a challenge in identifying the project locations. “Countering political pressure to choose genuinely needy villages where we would work was difficult,” according to Mr. Maxwell Samoh, Field Officer. Now, given that almost all the participants in the programme are extremely economically marginalised, making a selection of 100 grantees, strategically speaking, involves very difficult choices for FORUT-Sierra Leone, and care will have to be taken to ensure that there is good communication with the community, to cut down resentment and maintain goodwill. Emphasis should be given to single women, women-headed households or older women who obviously have fewer social security safeguards that will help the community acknowledge the need for help for certain persons more than others.

4.5 Relevance of the EEW Programme

The overall marginalisation of women, described from the secondary data in the introduction and verified in the field emphasises the relevance of the EEW programme. Labour force participation rate in the country is almost identical for men and women; however, the picture is more complex than this statistic suggests. As the Sierra Leone Human Development Report (2007) clarifies, “The 2004 Census showed the 15-64 age group has 13 % more women than men, an imbalance due to war and migration. Half the age group are self-employed; fewer than 6% are paid employees (for women, less than 3%). There are wide gender disparities: women are in jobs giving meagre incomes. About 65 % of employment is in agriculture.”⁴⁸

The report goes on to say that only “a tiny minority have managerial or professional posts.”

These general statistics must further be examined in the context of the urban-rural divide, and structural and systemic factors (e.g., the underdeveloped banking system

⁴⁸UNDP. (2007) *Sierra Leone Human Development Report: Empowering Local Government for Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction*.

and government resources that are stretched in the post-conflict rebuilding priorities) make for a very limited access to economic resources and credit in the rural community in general. This is exacerbated in the case of women because of the lack of collateral, lack of prior business experience and lack of a culture of accessing credit by women. Both Christian and Muslim religious traditions, apart from traditional Sierra Leonean customary law, also emphasise submissiveness, which also makes it difficult for women to show economic initiative in the rural context. The EEW programme, by reaching out to women in their communities, provides them with the social and economic support to use their time and labour for purposes other than unpaid work on the family farms, and earn an income over which they can also have control, which could be essential conditions in their developing greater voice and space for participation in family and community decision-making.

4.6 Sustainability of the EEW Programme

The rewards of the EEW Programme in terms of providing people in poverty with savings and increased income opportunities have the potential capacity to make it self-sustaining. However, in the short and medium term, the EEW programme requires technical support to carry out a detailed risk analysis, both of overall components like deposit safety arrangements and payment of monthly dividends as well as of the loan portfolios of the various CoCSAs, , consequences for loan default, etc.. Exploring issues like cash flow cycles in the context of seasonal enterprises like agriculture which demand loans with longer maturities will also be relevant during the risk analysis. These factors will be critical before the EEW programme can be said to have addressed important sustainability concerns.

Findings of the Evaluation of the Women's Health and Maternal Care (WHMC) Programme

The Women's Health and Maternal Care programme aimed at improving health outcomes for approximately 5000 women and children in 100 villages in Sierra Leone. Among "the mid-term targets...planned to be achieved in the programme period: Reduction in utilisation of unsafe water source in 100 villages of rural Sierra Leone; Increased practices in safe sex in 100 villages of rural Sierra Leone; Increased number of assisted births in 100 locations of rural Sierra Leone; and Increased utilisation of nutrition rich foods by pregnant and lactating mothers and their children (6-24 months), in 100 locations. Short-term results/outputs will include increased access to potable water and sanitation facilities, increased community-based knowledge on nutrition and

public health, increased availability of trained birth attendants, and improved access to health posts dispensing medicines.”⁴⁹

4.7 Effectiveness of the WHMC Programme

Nearly 87 per cent of the Budget of the Gender Health Programme is aimed at the construction of health related infrastructure. Of the total outlay of Le 650 million, Le 564.8 million was to be used towards construction of toilets, water wells, traditional birth waiting houses and a health post. Table 15 shows the details of construction undertaken in 2009 and 2010.

Table 15: Showing targets and achievements for construction of health related infrastructure

Type of infra-Structure	Target by end of project period	Target by end 2010	Numbers constructed by 2010				Total constructed (Percentage of target for end 2010)
			Port Loko (Moforki Chiefdom)		Moyamba		
			Magbenie Section	GbarayMorie Section	Kongbora Chiefdom	Bumpe Chiefdom	
Latrines	300	150	25*	30	30*	25	110 (73.3%)
Community Water Wells	20	5	1	2	1	3	7 (140%)
Health Posts	4	1	-	-	-	1	1 (100%)
Birth Waiting Houses	10	10	2	2	2	2	8 (80%)

* Including two attached to birth waiting houses

Analysis of the progress on this element of the WHMC programme shows that it is largely on track. The infrastructure is appreciated by the community and the government and makes for visible evidence of FORUT’s contribution to the community, which also has collateral benefits in terms of credibility, increased community willingness to collaborate on empowerment initiatives etc.

⁴⁹FORUT (2009).FORUT Multi-Year Application. Part 2: Strategic Goals 2009-2012. Norway.

“Resources are scarce and the government cannot do all the work that needs to be done in the health sector by itself, so we welcome collaboration to fill in the gaps,” said Dr. Max Lebie, District Medical Officer of Port Loko district. “Initially, FORUT-Sierra Leone wanted to do some construction of health facilities. However, we already have 102 PHUs in the district, and we really need to strengthen what we already have to be able to give quality care. For example, we need water in each facility, and sanitation, as basic needs, and to try and reduce infection. Power shortages are a problem, and we also need solar power to be able to provide services. Based on our discussions, one staff member from FORUT–Sierra Leone and one from the Ministry of Health went on a series of assessment visits, and now a decision has been taken to improve facilities at some of the centres with support from FORUT.

Providing logistical support to the government health authorities to extend the reach of their programmes (e.g., immunisation programmes and medical camps) to remote areas has also earned the appreciation of the government and the community.

The community also reported satisfaction with the support provided by FORUT-Sierra Leone in improving services for pregnant women through the construction of traditional birth waiting houses and the training of TBAs. Taking into account the distance of many target villages from health facilities, FORUT-Sierra Leone had supported the construction of Birth Waiting Houses (BWH), to which pregnant women can be transported a few days or weeks before the expected date of delivery so that they can get some rest from domestic responsibilities immediately prior to the delivery and also be closer to health facilities. The training of TBAs had also helped to reduce the possibility of infection and increased referrals in high-risk cases. However, the programme has had to make a mid-course correction due to changed strategies and priorities of the government, as it seeks to increase the number of institutional deliveries as part of its progress towards the millennium development goals, and discourages the use of birth waiting houses and traditional birth assistants.

Creating health-seeking behaviour changes are not easy, and while some sensitisation training has been carried out on basic issues of environmental sanitation, these need to be combined with follow-up and monitoring mechanisms to create lasting and effective change.

A more detailed discussion of the effectiveness of the programme is provided in terms of its conceptualisation, stakeholder selection, strategies and monitoring mechanisms.

4.7.1 Conceptualisation:

The WHMC programme is conceptualised to work at different levels. The programme supports the construction of health related infrastructure like health posts, and assists with service delivery by providing logistical support to reach government immunisation programmes to remote communities. In this way, it contributes to the post-conflict reconstruction of a country whose physical and social assets had taken a heavy toll, and also helps to stretch government resources which might otherwise not have reached less accessible communities. The programme takes into account the current shortages in numbers of health personnel. It tries to raise the capacity level of non-formal community health workers like traditional birth attendants so that they can serve communities better, and also realise and act according to the limitations of their knowledge and make referrals to better health facilities at an early stage. The conceptualisation currently focuses primarily on infant and maternal mortality, and to a lesser extent on HIV and AIDS, and would benefit from a broader focus on sexual and reproductive health, as explained in greater detail later in the report.

At the grassroots level, the programme also emphasises preventive health by assisting with the construction of safe water sources and sanitation infrastructure at the village level. However, the conceptualisation of this part of the programme lacks clarity. For the project period, a total of 300 toilets have been sanctioned, which works out to an average of 3 per community. However, without 100 per cent sanitation coverage, i.e., unless a community can be declared open-defecation free, the risk of water contamination remains. If only a small number of toilets are being sanctioned, this needs to be part of a larger community sanitation initiative, as otherwise it proves ineffective. If these are individual toilets, some system of financing e.g., through CoCSA loans for sanitation (in the third or fourth loan cycle), along with technical support, should be part of the strategy for it to be effective. Finally, the programme provides sensitisation and training of community health promotion personnel and the community itself. The conceptualisation of this part of the programme covers basic awareness raising on environmental sanitation, nutrition and HIV and AIDS, and could be strengthened by adding follow-up and monitoring procedures, as health-related behaviour changes do not usually happen with one-off communication events.

The lack of a planned and sustained awareness raising and advocacy component reduces the effectiveness of the sanitation and clean water infrastructure provided, and combining the provision of infrastructure with a handwashing campaign, campaign on

boiling water, providing technical support on chlorination of water sources, etc. will provide greater meaning to and improve effectiveness of this component.

4.7.2 Stakeholder Selection:

Both the WHMC and the EEW operate in the same areas, with the same programme staff covering these project locations, and the primary stakeholders remain the communities identified by FORUT-Sierra Leone for the project period (84 communities at the end of the first quarter of 2011 to be increased to 100 by the end of the 2nd quarter). A mid-course correction to the envisaged contributions to the health infrastructure has changed the focus from birth waiting houses to the rehabilitation of community health posts and creation of maternal and child health posts. As a consequence, the number of primary stakeholders have increased beyond the 5000 women and children envisaged in the initial plan, to include the men and youth in the community as well. Basic health promotion activities are also carried out in all the communities.

FORUT-Sri Lanka has built good working relationships with Ministry of Health officials in both Port Loko and Moyamba districts, who form the most important secondary stakeholders, and need-based logistical support is provided to personnel at the District Health Office or the Community Health Centres to serve the communities in the project locations. The Ministry of Health also provides trainers for trainings organised by FORUT-Sierra Leone.

“FORUT does not come and impose. Rather, we negotiate on how we can work together. They are not just sitting in Freetown telling us what to do. They have field officers who help us liaise with and sensitise the community. They can do one-to-one communication that is difficult for us. Most of the time, they do the groundwork before we do the intervention.”

-Dr. Adikali Kamara, District Medical Officer, Moyamba District

The other important secondary stakeholders are the FORUT-staff themselves, who need greater buy-in into the social marketing and health promotion aspects of the health project. Also, as noted earlier, the project currently focuses on reducing maternal and infant mortality, and covering adolescent girls and boys in a broader sexual and reproductive health component would make an important contribution.

4.7.3 Strategies

The programme undertakes a number of activities that are vertically integrated.

- **Construction of health-related infrastructure:** The bulk of the budget for WHMC is used for the construction of health related infrastructure. FORUT-Sierra Leone negotiates with different stakeholders like communities and local authorities to identify the locations where toilets and water wells will be built to improve sanitation and access to clean drinking water. They also negotiate with Ministry of Health officials to identify sites for building health infrastructure like health posts. They then identify builders, source raw materials and supervise construction before handing over the facilities to the community. The community makes a contribution in labour or kind towards the construction of this infrastructure.

“The Mosella hospital was destroyed during the war,” said Mr. Brima Kamara. “Since the destruction of the building, we had had no offers of help. Now FORUT is assisting with the rebuilding of the health centre, and we hope they will also renovate the quarters of the hospital staff, so that the facility is properly staffed. The hospital is in the centre of three sections, Ribbi, Bumpe and Kongbora, and also close to Yoni, so it serves several communities. Some of the people who use this hospital are not even from FORUT project locations, but this facility will support those communities too. Without this facility, people had to travel to Freetown to get medical help.” The knowledge of support has also enthused the community. Mr Abu Koroma had moved to Freetown during the war. “Though I was living in Freetown, when I heard that FORUT was coming to work here, I came back because I thought I would like to work to help the community recover from the war. I now work voluntarily as a storekeeper, safeguarding the building materials while the renovation is in progress.”

- **Extending the health resources of the government:** The programme also helps to extend the health resources of the government. For example, during an immunisation campaign, the WHMC programme publicises the campaign in remote areas, and also helps to transport government personnel and equipment like solar-powered freezers to fairly remote areas so that community members can be immunised. For other health outreach programmes of the government as well, FORUT may provide some need-based logistical support to ensure coverage of FORUT project location. As Sr. Rosaline Johnny, of the Sahun MCH post, said, “As health workers we are not able to do our work effectively by ourselves because of the large areas we are supposed to cover. The FORUT-trained TBAs

assist us to spread health promotion messages and motivate women and children to come to the clinic.”

- **Sensitisation sessions related to health issues:** Staff provide sensitisation on important health and hygiene related issues, including basic environmental sanitation
 - Discouraging open defecation
 - Encouraging the construction of toilets
 - Discouraging the practice of drying clothes on the ground, drying them on clotheslines instead
 - Encouraging the creation of compost pits
 - Encouraging the construction of raised cooking platforms
 - Encouraging the use of plate-racks on which to keep dishes
- **Training of Traditional Birth Attendants:** FORUT-Sierra Leone has supported the training of Traditional Birth Attendants, particularly with respect to management of normal delivery (with a focus on hygiene to prevent maternal and neonatal infections and placenta management procedures) and identifying risk signs for timely detection and referral of women with obstetric complications. While the actual training is provided by Ministry of Health officials, FORUT pays the costs of transporting trainees, other costs like rent and food and also provides certificates to the participants and an honorarium for the trainers. According to Mrs. Lilianne Fatimata Bangura, who attended the TBA training, “FORUT helped us get a lot of ideas so we could do our work better.” Sr. Mabel Brewah of the Sahun Maternal and Child Health Post felt that this investment had paid off. “The FORUT trainings for the TBAs have really supported us. The TBAs help in caring for the mother and refer the women for antenatal checkups. They track the children and refer them for the necessary immunisations.”
- **Training on Nutrition:** Malnutrition rates are among the highest in the world in Sierra Leone and an estimated 40 per cent of child deaths in the country can be linked to poor nutrition. The Gender Health Programme provides some training for communities on making nutritional supplements using ingredients like groundnuts and sesame to combat this.
- **Training on HIV and AIDS and STIs:** In collaboration with the Ministry of Health, the programme also provides some training to communities on HIV and AIDS.

4.7.4 Monitoring Mechanism

The bulk of the funding for the WHMC Programme is used for the construction of health-related infrastructure. Responsibility for making collaborative decisions regarding locations of toilets, water wells, traditional birth waiting houses and a health post, in consultation with the communities and Ministry of Health officials rests with the Field Officers and the Projects Coordinator. The Field Officers and Activists are also responsible for sourcing raw materials in coordination with senior management at the head office and overseeing the implementation of the construction. This is supervised by the Programme Coordinator, who also negotiates with the Ministry of Health officials on relative contributions to be made by FORUT-Sierra Leone and the government. For example, the construction of a health facility by FORUT-Sierra Leone is matched by deployment of health personnel from the ministry.

Field Officers also collaborate with Ministry of Health officials to negotiate technical trainings like the trainings of the TBAs. Local sensitisation trainings are supposed to be the joint responsibility of Field Officers, Field Activists, Programme Officer and Programme Assistant. The WHMC Programme is also reviewed on a monthly basis with the senior management including the Programme Coordinator and Director, and plans made and approved for the following month.

While monitoring of programme implementation happens regularly, monitoring for impact is less effective. The programme envisaged the measurement of the main impact targets through “Maternal and child mortality rates; Number of new cases of HIV/AIDS identified in women and children; Average days reported sick (by sickness) per year compared to pre-intervention (m/f/children); Reduction in cases of water borne diseases (m/f/children); and Age/weight and age/height ratios more in line with ‘normal’ expected distribution.”⁵⁰This needs to be implemented.

4.8 Impact of the WHMC Programme

- **Increased visibility of the issue of reproductive health:** Staff in the programme reported a culture of secrecy, embarrassment and silence around pregnancy and other reproductive health related issues in Sierra Leone culture. By putting maternal and child health at the centre of the health initiative, the programme has increased the visibility of the issue of reproductive health, and helped communities acknowledge some of the associated difficulties, instead of taking these for granted. Building birth waiting houses and setting up the support

⁵⁰FORUT (2009).FORUT Multi-Year Application. Part 2: Strategic Goals 2009-2012. Norway.

structure helped pregnant women travel closer to a health facility some time prior to the delivery and get some rest. Training the TBAs and giving them uniforms helped to increase their status in the community, and increase their authority as they sought support for pregnant women like referrals to hospitals. Observed Sr. Mabel Brewah of the Sahun MCH Post, “The TBAs now know how to support us and when to refer.”

- **Reported decrease in maternal and child mortality in FORUT-served areas:** The scope and time-frame of this evaluation did not allow for the collection of secondary data from FORUT-served areas and control areas to make an objective comparison of maternal and child mortality to understand the extent to which the WHMC programme had made a positive impact. However, Ministry of Health officials (nursing staff) and community members reported fewer maternal and child deaths in the areas supported by the FORUT programme. The training provided to TBAs has resulted in increased attention to issues of hygiene and maternal and child infection, and also helped them to identify risk factors in advance and make hospital referrals early.

“FORUT helps us in many ways. It does community sensitisation on matters like nutrition and breastfeeding. It raises the awareness of parents on the importance of immunisation and mobilises the community for our immunisation drives. They encourage pregnant women to come to us for their ante-natal check-ups. In the past year, we have had no death in our area of infants below the age of one,” said Sr. Miriam M. Kamara, Head-in-Charge, Kareneh Health Centre. According to the District Health Nurse of Moyamba District, “In the past, when the children saw the immunisation team arriving, they would swim and go across the river, or go and hide in mosques and churches. The liaison services that FORUT provides between service providers and community members is invaluable.”

- **Increased attention to environmental sanitation:** The scope and time frame of the evaluation did not allow for studying the impact of these interventions in terms of decreased morbidity. However, communities reported a decrease in open defecation and increased use of toilets, decreased use of open water sources at risk of contamination due to open defecation and increased use of shallow water wells as water sources, increased use of compost pits, a reduction in the practice of drying clothes on the ground, and increased use of raised kitchen platforms and plate racks. Sr. Mabel Brewah of the Sahun MCH Post

reported that the environmental sanitation programme had brought down the reported cases of malaria and diarrhoea.

- **Some attention to issues of malnutrition:** The programme has provided some trainings on nutrition, including on the preparation of comparatively inexpensive nutritional supplements from locally available foods (e.g., using peanuts and sesame, among other ingredients). In addition, encouraging improved food security through the cultivation of low-maintenance starchy tubers and high-yielding cassava varieties, and improving income levels through the EEW programme also contributes to the impact on malnutrition. However, basic field observations suggest that the issues of malnourished children need still more attention in the FORUT-Sierra Leone project locations.

4.9 Challenges of the WHMC Programme

- **Change in government strategies:** With the government eager to show progress towards the achievement of the MDGs, its policies are now making a strong push towards increasing the number of institutional deliveries. Consequently, clear guidelines have been issued that TBAs have only one role to play, namely, to make referrals to the government hospitals. The launch of the “Free Health Care Medical Insurance” for children under five years and pregnant and lactating women has provided further support to these policy initiatives. This has currently affected the FORUT-Sierra Leone programme in two ways, and necessitated mid-course corrections.

Firstly, the BWHs constructed by FORUT-Sierra Leone have become redundant, in the face of the strict government guidelines, and the organisation is in negotiation with the communities and the government to see how the infrastructure can be utilised best. In the meanwhile, communities use the facilities according to their needs. Usman Kamara, the headman of the Rofanyea community said, “When there was a crisis, a fire and houses were burnt down, families were provided temporary accommodation in the BWH.” In one community, the BWH was serving as a temporary school during the rainy season, and in a couple of other cases, negotiations were underway to improve the infrastructure so that the BWHs could be upgraded to maternal and child health posts, with the government agreeing to post a qualified health professional once these have been upgraded. FORUT-Sierra Leone is also undertaking to renovate two community health posts which were damaged during the war.

Secondly, from having their capacity built and status upgraded through the FORUT-initiated trainings, the TBAs have seen a shrinkage in their roles, so that now their only task is to refer pregnant women to the hospitals. This is a transitional stage, with both the community and the TBAs unhappy with the changes, and FORUT-Sierra Leone caught in the middle. Currently, negotiations are on to raise the status of TBAs to community health workers, with increased responsibilities related to improving child nutrition and providing some primary health care support. However, given the increased costs to the exchequer of taking on another set of health professionals, these discussions are at a preliminary stage.

- **Not enough time for ongoing empowerment, gender and health-related trainings, on the part of Programme Staff, and insufficient buy-in on this component from field staff:** The Gender Programme staff are responsible for conducting most of the gender and health-related trainings. However, even at the stage where 26 CoCSA centres are being served, on an average, staff have to provide services to an average of two CoCSA centres a day, while they are in the field, and check the accounts and settle disputes of the CoCSAs of about 6 villages a day. Taking into account the time taken to travel as well, in practical terms, this leaves very little time for these staff members to carry out these trainings. Field staff see Gender as the domain of the Gender Programme staff, and focus on infrastructure and logistics-related support. Also, the manual of health related sensitisations and trainings to be carried out in the field over the project period needs to be reviewed, updated and regularly used by the field staff for a schedule of minimum health promotion activities to be carried out (e.g., say 8 per year per village, working out to 40 per village over the course of the project period, with enough attention paid to monitoring and follow-up). Currently, this component appears less than robust.
- **Insufficient data gathering and knowledge management:** Whereas some basic information about loans and savings is collected for the EEW programme, there is little data collection for the WHMC programme apart from the record of constructions completed. Appropriate data gathering systems would help to set the provision of infrastructure in context, and assess their health impacts, and justify the programme's continuation, especially given that indicators have already been laid down in the strategic goals of the programme.

- **Insufficient follow-up and monitoring for impact:** Currently, most of the health sensitisation events and trainings are one-off events, which public health experience shows are not effective in creating behaviour change and inducing health-seeking behaviour. The programme needs to invest more time and technical capacity to follow-up and monitor the WHMC programme for impact. E.g., Weigh-ins of all children with suspected malnutrition, pre and post-nutrition training with monthly follow-up, using creative and fun handwashing monitoring chart which list critical handwashing moments, and do family follow-up using children, follow-up of training on HIV/AIDS with follow-up of pregnant women to ensure ante-natal testing for PPTCT procedures and setting up condom distribution points in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, advocacy for equal availability of female and male condoms, advocacy and training for use of female condoms, etc.,.

4.10 Relevance of the WHMC Programme

According to the Sierra Leone Human Development Report (2007):

Public expenditure on health is increasing: in 2001 spending per capital was the lowest in the sub-region; by 2004, it was over US\$ 2.00. Coverage of health centres and clinics has expanded since 2005, but many are of poor quality, inaccessible, with inadequate personnel and medicines. Only Western Area meets WHO staffing ratios or one doctor per 12,000 population; Kailahun district has one per 191,340⁵¹.

Life expectancy at birth in Sierra Leone, which is associated with “heavy disease burden” and high child and maternal morbidity and mortality, averages less than 50 years. The maternal mortality ratio for Sierra Leone is 2100 per 100,000 live births, whereas the equivalent figures for Malawi, Nepal, India and Sri Lanka, the other countries where FORUT has partners, are 1100, 830, 450 and 58 respectively. Public health systems in Sierra Leone are stretched, and according to the WHO, “There is inequitable distribution of service delivery points, rural areas suffering neglect.”⁵² As such, the support provided by FORUT-Sierra Leone, focusing as it does on remote rural areas, is relevant and useful.

“FORUT helped us to get a [Maternal and Child] health centre. We weren’t expecting it. If a child fell ill in the past, we had to take it to Moyamba. Often, as women, we did not

⁵¹UNDP. (2007) *Sierra Leone Human Development Report: Empowering Local Government for Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction*.

⁵²WHO. Country Cooperation Strategy: Sierra Leone. Retrieved at http://www.who.int/countryfocus/cooperation_strategy/ccsbrief_sle_en.pdf on August 3, 2011.

have money, and the child would not be taken unless the father took responsibility. So this medical centre has really helped.”

- Mrs. Teway Bangura, Sahun

The areas on which it has chosen to focus are all priority areas, namely maternal and child mortality, diarrhoea prevention, addressing child malnutrition and prevention of HIV and AIDS. However, the latter three areas could do with some technical support in terms of conceptualisation, strategy planning and follow-up, as currently health promotion activities are patchy and largely one-off activities. Attention to environmental sanitation also contributes to the control of vectors of lassa fever, and other epidemics that affect the country, like yellow fever and cholera.

4.11 Sustainability of the WHMC Programme

The great weightage currently given to infrastructure construction, which is very expensive, is a factor affecting the sustainability of the WHMC programme in the absence of continued external funding. Investing in the creation or sourcing of a good basic health promotion manual, in young people’s capacity building as community health educators, follow-up, monitoring and additional support services (e.g. advocacy for improved transport services to remote areas), together with an advocacy programme to improve provision of basic services in the community health posts, community health centres and district hospitals would help the gender health programme be more sustainable in the medium and long-term.

4.12 Institutional and Stakeholder Issues of the FORUT-Sierra Leone Gender Programmes

- **High expectations from FORUT:** Both as an international NGO, and as one providing infrastructural support, which provides increased visibility, FORUT-Sierra Leone raises high expectations both from the government and the community. The large amounts of aid that have flowed into the country in the post-conflict period have also made both governments and communities expectant of handouts. With the government, this raises issues of wanting the programme to expand, and create infrastructure in other areas; with the community, this makes it difficult to work with them with the empowerment model. Even when the government collaborates on trainings, the sense of *quid pro quo*, or the recognition that FORUT-Sierra Leone’s contributions help improve the government’s showing on health outcomes does not preclude the trainers, who are usually MoH staffers from expecting both transportation and a

handsome per diem for their contributions, rather than seeing it as part of their work.

- **Shift from project to programme mode, and from the welfare to the empowerment model is difficult:** While FORUT-Sierra Leone has made a reasonable beginning, it is still struggling with the shift from the project to the programme mode. Many of the field staff who are primarily used to commissioning and supervising infrastructure projects, and working through a service-delivery model need support to make the transition into putting in the consistent and creative work to serve as mobilisers and animators, and equipping communities with the skill, methods and knowledge to take self-reliant action and develop the confidence and voice to act as change agents themselves. In fact, some staff, who were unable to make the transition had to be dropped as the organisation underwent a restructuring. The challenge also appears with many communities who seem deeply resigned to the marginal conditions in which they live, and need support to make the transition to becoming actors in the development of their lives, families and communities. Thus, while the work has shifted from project to programme mode nominally, the organisational development process that would help FORUT-Sierra Leone, internalise this change and realise the bottom-up empowerment model needs more support.

A covered market had been built in Bauwya town. However, this was not being used by the community. The Gender Programme Officer in her visits to the communities around the town, encouraged the women now engaging in petty trading to consider reviving the market. The women were very reluctant since, most of them carried on their trading from their houses, and to come to the market, they would have to walk several miles. Through her repeated advocacy, a date was set for the revival of the market. At that point, the local administration entered the picture, and organised an official opening. The disconnect between the local administration and the community was evident. The official opening ceremony was organised in the community hall, about half a kilometer away from the market, and about half a dozen men, associates of the local councillor, had gathered there. Meanwhile, at the market itself, the women traders were having their own inauguration ceremony, with spontaneous singing and dancing. They had also set up their tables with the goods they had to sell. What was interesting to observe on the first day of the market, was that except for a couple of men, who sold second-hand clothes, and a couple of women, who sold pineapples, bananas and processed cassava,

almost all the women sold a limited assortment of basic food items – a few peppers, a few garden eggs, a few dried fish, little screws of paper with about a tablespoon of salt or sugar, tiny packets of spices and seasonings for food, etc. This assortment was perfect for a tiny shop catering to the varied needs of community in a small village. However, when thirty women sold the same assortment in one location, which had only limited through traffic and footfalls, it was difficult to see how the business model could sustain itself. The women needed support to think through how, using product differentiation, all of them could have offered different products, and thus all made a profit. This had not occurred to the FORUT staff either.

- **Gender sensitisation and related capacity building needs to be ongoing to create change in staff and communities:** While the staff of FORUT-Sierra Leone have undergone gender training once, this is clearly not enough, especially given that staff may change, or may not have been able to attend a one time training. Almost all the field staff are men, and during the evaluation, several of them made remarks in the course of their conversations that revealed how strongly held gender stereotypes and roles continued to hold sway even within a development organisation with nearly two decades of experience. Examples of such utterances by staff included “The men do all the hard work”, “The women are very slow to walk [when women were slightly late to a planned community FGD, not taking into account that they might have domestic or childcare responsibilities]”, “The men do the agricultural work and they leave the domestic chores to the women as their share.” Women in the community also reported that fathers were often reluctant to pay for food, for children’s school fees and treatment when they were ill, and women themselves played a big role in the perpetuation of gender stereotypes.
- **Need for support when systems change:** The country office felt that many of the changes in this phase were driven from the top down from the head office. They felt that the country office needed to be involved in programmatic changes much earlier, with support to build capacity to incorporate these changes better. For example, the senior management also felt that the organisation needed more support to be oriented towards working with the Result-based Matrix (RBM) system. There was insufficient time to do a proper baseline survey, and the effort was primarily to try and identify villages in which the organisation could implement the programme.

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- **Pressure from political leaders:** FORUT-Sierra Leone has to deal with pressure from local politicians who seek to have infrastructure allotted to areas or individuals where they have a vested interest. The organisation has to negotiate strategically to maintain their support, while ensuring that facilities or grants go to the most vulnerable communities, or individuals who fulfil the appropriate criteria.
 - **Shifts in policy, or policy gaps:** At the time when the programme was conceptualised, birth waiting houses appeared to be an appropriate intervention according to the constraints of the context in which health interventions were being provided. However, the government's strong policy push towards institutional deliveries has necessitated a mid-course correction. The introduction of the scheme providing free health care to pregnant and lactating women and children under 5 came in 2010. Otherwise, in the planning phase itself, the focus could have been on other important issues. Likewise, the lack of a law banning Female Genital Cutting makes it difficult for an international NGO like FORUT to address a critical, but sensitive issue. However, FORUT-Sierra Leone is making efforts to adjust, and the shift of the construction work from Birth Waiting Houses to MCH posts and rehabilitation of war-affected hospitals is one example. Another example is the shift in the emphasis of the roles of the TBAs. According to Sr. Beatrice Tommy, District Health Nurse, Moyamba District, "We have another training planned and in the pipeline with FORUT-Sierra Leone, this time for Community Health Promoters."
 - **Gender Programme Staff are spread thin, and needs the support of a creative and proactive leadership:** As explained in detail in the earlier sections of the report, Gender Programme staff find little time to do adequate gender training in the field. With little time in the capital, the staff also have barely enough time to manage the project. The programme needs support to do advocacy, seeking out resources and building collaborative relationships, especially for technical support and training. Creative and proactive leadership support is also necessary to help the programme transition and develop.
 - **Limitations related to the extremely small scale of the business enterprises, and the fairly limited technical capacity of the government:** Given the extremely small scale of the microbusinesses being started, even fairly small changes in the micro and macroenvironment can cause difficulties to the model.

The extent of technical support that the programme can draw from the government is also limited.

- **Limitations related to being an international NGO:** As an international NGO, it is strategically more difficult for FORUT-Sierra Leone to work on sensitive issues like female genital cutting, and also to negotiate collaborative partnerships which involves sharing of resources.

4.13 Recommendations:

- **Technical support with organisational development and multiple aspects of project management for the organisation:** Given that FORUT-Sierra Leone as an organisation has had a great deal of experience with implementing development projects with a focus on identifying and supplying appropriate infrastructure, the organisation needs technical help as it makes the transition to empowerment-oriented development project management. It also needs support with organisational development to assist the staff to transition from the welfare model to the rights-based, facilitation for empowerment model. The entire Gender Programme, with both its components, needs assistance with reviewing its strategic planning in line with the strategic goals identified initially, feeding into sounder conceptualisation for implementation and advocacy. It also requires realistic reviews of human resources and time required for the different tasks, taking into account travel time to project areas, and appropriate resource allocations as required. The EEW component will also need support to understand and implement risk management, which will need to be a data-based intervention. Overall, technical support for better knowledge management that feeds into strategic planning and periodic adjustments in implementation will help the organisation improve its performance. For example, exploring the differential reasons for low participation of women in CoCSAs (e.g. in North Yobie or Makoth) and high participation (in Yeinkessa) and devising appropriate support strategies to increase women's participation.
- **Technical support with understanding and implementing loan portfolio management for the EEW programme:** The current loan portfolio management systems are very minimal, and the organisation requires technical support with understanding and implementing risk management of the loan portfolio. This includes assessing factors such as the credit culture (including pressures on women borrowers from husbands, factors affecting poor repayment, etc.), calculating risk tolerance limits for each CoCSA, setting up good management

information systems, exposure of members to loans from other lenders, exception systems to loan underwriting, effective control functions, etc.) *Even if the processes involved in a community banking system like a CoCSA may be less formal than those with a regular bank, the loan portfolio risks should be addressed professionally and effectively.*

- **Training on gender and empowerment strategies for field activists and strategic communication with them:** The field staff are supposed to support with the implementation of all the focus areas of FORUT-Sierra Leone, in addition to that of gender. In practice, a lot of their attention and interest is focused on the infrastructure projects, especially construction-related activities. They also handle logistics issues related to the health programme, e.g., liaising with the MoH officials to carry out inoculation and vaccination drives, negotiating with them on issues like locations of infrastructure projects, relative contributions of FORUT-Sierra Leone and the government, etc. They are also responsible for identifying communities with which FORUT-Sierra Leone can work, establishing rapport, and maintaining ongoing communication. There is comparatively less focus on their part in providing the ongoing empowerment and gender training essential for more substantial benefits to accrue from the programme. Further, issues of relative status means that a lot of the communication happens with the male traditional leaders of the programme, including accommodating their interests. For all these reasons, it is important that the programme provide training on gender and empowerment strategies for field activists, including on gender-based violence, time-use studies which establish women's economic contributions to families and communities and basic gender budgeting. The programme also needs to improve communication related to the strategic goals of the programme, and provide skills on monitoring for impact to them.
- **Training on masculinities:** Gender training should include training on masculinities, on the social construction and perpetuation of masculine roles and stereotypes and how to slowly begin challenging and extending these. Such training should cover staff, the community and young people. Dr. Adikali Kamara, District Medical Officer of Moyamba district, bemoaned the reluctance of men to be part of fathers' groups that would take on more responsibility for children's health and hoped that FORUT would be able to support the government through advocacy with the community.

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- **Drawing on and adapting FORUT-Sri Lanka’s ‘Happy Family’ approach:** Given that gender biases are very strongly entrenched in the communities with which FORUT-Sierra Leone works, it might consider to what extent it can draw on and adapt FORUT-Sri Lanka’s ‘Happy Family’ approach, which has increased gender sensitivity, by using language and concepts that are culturally acceptable and not strongly confrontative and alienating.
 - **Conversion of the mixed COCSA groups into women’s and men’s only groups:** Established patterns of social relationships, in addition to the disadvantages of illiteracy ensures that the mixed COCSA group system is not contributing to improving women’s leadership in the communities. Women’s only groups are essential to serve as incubators for women’s leadership skills and increase their confidence for broader-based participation in the public life of the community, and build strength for greater political involvement. This can be started on a pilot basis with the stronger and larger CoCSAs, with representatives of the men’s and women’s groups coming together in mini-federations to discuss community issues of common concern.
 - **Identification of appropriate organisations for exposure visits:** The programme staff would benefit from exposure visits to organisations successfully implementing microfinance models and empowerment-based development in West Africa, which FORUT-Sierra Leone can learn from, and the programme needs support to identify appropriate ones.
 - **Listing of possible economic activities:** Like FORUT-Sri Lanka, it would be useful for FORUT-Sierra Leone to make a listing of possible economic activities that grantees can undertake (e.g., rearing livestock like pigs, goats and poultry, floriculture, agro-processing, food processing and preservation, etc.) and where technical support is available for training and ideas for value addition and marketing, from both government departments and private agencies, in addition to information about sourcing machinery and costs. A number of multilateral agencies and INGOs are carrying out livelihood promotion activities in Sierra Leone, and investing some time in learning from them in the short-term would benefit FORUT-Sierra Leone greatly in the medium and longer-term futures.
 - **Listing of technical training centres:** It would be equally useful for FORUT-Sierra Leone to invest some time in the short-term to identify vocational training centres in their areas of operation and build relationships with them so that

young people, especially girls, can be referred to these centres for vocational training (e.g., the Catholic Vocational Training Centre in Moyamba).

- **Business planning and SWOT Analysis:** The grantees will greatly benefit from empowerment training, motivational sessions, business planning support, and SWOT Analysis support to help them choose an appropriate business activity, as provided by FORUT-Sri Lanka. The target communities, especially the women, have very little exposure, and hence may not be able to think beyond the limited opportunities in their immediate environment, even with regard to traditional economic activities like agro-processing.
- **Appointment of an internal auditor:** FORUT-Sierra Leone needs immediate support with analysing the quality of its loan portfolio, strategies such as the payment of monthly dividends and putting almost the entire CoCSA corpus into circulation, etc. Also, given that there are now at least 26 CoCSA centres and 84 villages being served, the programme should have an internal auditor, freeing up the position of the Gender Programme Officer for training, advocacy, building collaborative partnerships and leadership of the programme.
- **Grants in kind:** FORUT-Sri Lanka made a considered decision to provide the bulk of their grants in kind (e.g., machinery or initial stock of raw materials) for starting businesses. This was a way of ensuring that the grant did not get diverted for other immediate economic needs, considering the marginal group being assisted, and worked well as a strategy. FORUT-Sierra Leone should consider this approach as well.
- **Adult literacy classes for women:** Programmes for functional literacy and numeracy should be taken up as a priority by FORUT-Sierra Leone in its operational areas, as literacy will contribute towards health promotion as well as economic empowerment. Effort must be put into creative conceptualisation and design of the programme (e.g., using literate adolescent girls in the community as teachers, as part of an empowerment strategy for both girls and women), with strong components for motivation and community support structures.
- **Identification of women community animators:** Currently, all the field officers and field activists are men, and all the community animators are men. In almost all the CoCSAs visited, there were at least one or two women with leadership potential. FORUT-Sierra Leone should encourage and train these women to

become community animators to help build women's leadership and to create role models that can inspire others.

- **Formation of girls groups in the villages:** The programme should take up empowerment of girl children as a priority to counter the socialisation into gender norms and stereotypes at a young age. Ideally, this should consist of two groups, one for young girls, and another for adolescent girls, with age-appropriate education and empowerment strategies. Even creating a designated play area for girls in the village, and carving out time for them to participate in team sports like volleyball and basketball can have a tremendous impact in terms of increasing self-confidence and support systems, while increasing space and visibility for girl children in village society. Women who have become more empowered by the CoCSAs can assist with identifying appropriate spaces, negotiating with parents for a suitable time when girls can play, supervision of playtime and countering possible teasing and harassment from boys and young men, etc. This can have multiple spin offs, like creating change agents, empowering women, and creating a group of key informants who can monitor change (or the need for it) in the community. Participating regularly in team sports also contributes to other important outcomes, e.g., it improves leadership skills, increases motivation and aspirations for achievement and creates future orientation.
- **Addressing issues of mobility:** Many of the communities are remote from markets, and often, the women have to carry their goods on their heads for 8 to 10 miles if not more, to reach markets. Hence addressing issues of mobility should be a priority, considering that petty trading is the main economic activity that has been identified as feasible by most of the participants in the EEW programme. Encouraging and teaching women and girls to bicycle, providing bicycles on credit to CoCSAs and individuals which can serve as a resource for women, encouraging the use modified bicycles (e.g., with extended carriers or bicycle carts), and training girls and women in bicycle maintenance and repair can help women access markets, and save time and energy for more productive work, or rest and recreation according to need. Teaching girl children to bicycle and encouraging families to use CoCSA credit to buy bicycles will help them get to high schools which are often located several miles away. Currently, girls drop out of school because the high schools are far away from their homes. Those children who do go to high school, often stay with relatives or friends in Freetown. Community members and programme staff raised concerns about

physical and sexual abuse of children when they live far away from their homes. Experiences from a number of countries in Africa including Burkina Faso, Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda show that introducing bicycles in the community can be a great source of empowerment for women and girls, contributing to economic empowerment as well.

- **Follow-up on health education activities and monitoring for impact:** As detailed earlier (*see Section 4.9*) in this chapter, the WHMC project needs to be strengthened with follow up activities and monitoring for impact. Several of the health facilities visited (e.g., the Sahun Health Post and the Magbenka Health Post) maintained morbidity-related data and displayed it in their waiting rooms. It would be useful to collect data from the beginning of FORUT's intervention in the area, and at yearly intervals, share it with the community and brainstorm on how to bring this down further, so that communities take active responsibility for reducing morbidity, instead of accepting maternal and child deaths as routine.
- **Seeking out collaborations for medical camps:** Collaborating with organisations like the Lions and Rotary Clubs to conduct medical camps would be useful, as would conducting camps aimed at identifying and treating STIs and RTIs, without necessarily publicising these as such, to increase attendance.
- **Leadership skills for women:** Limited exposure and lack of social and political space for women to take on leadership roles makes it imperative for the FORUT-Sierra Leone Gender Programme to include leadership training as part of its training. Important elements would include self-development, vision building, listening and communication skills and skills to create shared meaning, build consensus and foster learning partnerships at home, at work and in the community.
- **Training on Legal Issues related to violations of women's rights:** Several violations of women's rights remain a concern in Sierra Leone, including the persistence of laws, political and legal structures and criminal justice systems which are discriminatory to women, violence against women, unequal status in marriage, family and inheritance, and unequal access to property. Three new laws were adopted in 2007 to improve the status of women's rights. These were
 - **The Domestic Violence Act**, which criminalises domestic violence

- **The Registration of Customary Marriages and Divorce Act**, which sets the legal age for marriage at 18, and makes forced marriages illegal.
- **The Devolution of Estate Act**, which requires that a deceased man's property be distributed between his widow and children after death, and criminalises the expulsion of widows from their homes after the death of the husband.

However, the observance of these laws has been very limited and most women and communities do not know of the existence of these legal protections. While the Gender Programme has provided some limited orientation to these new protections, this needs to be extended, especially for men in CoCSAs, traditional chiefs and elected councillors, police and legal officers etc. FORUT-Sierra Leone must consider collaborating with NGOs in the country working on legal issues to make these laws real for the women in the communities they work with.

- **Bring women into public and institutional spaces:** As part of an empowerment strategy, a regular programme which brings women and girls into public and institutional spaces is recommended, given the lack of exposure of women in the community. For this, FORUT-Sierra Leone will need to build relationships with public and institutional spaces such as post offices, banks, police stations and courts and arrange exposure visits and face to face meetings with officials, which will help to empower women and teach them about available institutional services and safeguards, while also simultaneously sensitising government officials about the limited access that women have to these spaces.
- **Review elements of the health promotion element of the WHMC programme, and introduce explicit programmes related to sexual and reproductive health and rights and gender-based violence:** One area that should probably receive greater attention in the programme is malaria prevention (including prevention of malaria in pregnancy) and related health promotion, given that "Malaria accounts for about 48% of out patient attendances, accounting to about 25% mortality in children and under-fives."⁵³ HIV sentinel surveillance prevalence data for pregnant women in major urban areas for 2006 shows that the range is from a minimum of 4.4 to a maximum of 5.4 with a median of 4.9, and outside major urban areas, the range is from 1.7 to 8.9, with a median of 2.9, suggesting that HIV is a general epidemic in the country, contrary to the comparatively optimistic view on HIV expressed by the FORUT staff. Particularly worthy of

⁵³WHO. Country Cooperation Strategy: Sierra Leone. Retrieved at http://www.who.int/countryfocus/cooperation_strategy/ccsbrief_sle_en.pdf on August 3, 2011.

attention is the jump in the minimum prevalence from 2.4 to 4.4 for major urban centres and 0.6 To 1.7 outside major urban areas.

Given that the WHO has also highlighted STIs as an area of concern, focusing on sexual and reproductive health and rights at the community level might be a strategy that yields good results, especially as experiences at APSA and FORUT-Sierra Leone indicate that attention to SRHR helps to increase empowerment in general. Both the District Medical Officers of Port Loko and Moyamba districts also identified SRHR, especially of adolescents, as being a priority. “We recently had to deal with the case of a 9-year old child who was pregnant,” said Dr. Max Nebie of Port Loko District, who said that the kind of sustained work that would change community attitudes to these sensitive issues could not come through isolated government initiatives, it needed the hands on support of community development organisations. His concerns were echoed and detailed by Dr. Adikali Kamara of Moyamba district, who also sought FORUT’s support to reduce teenage pregnancy, domestic violence, child sexual abuse, sexual assault and early marriages. This is also backed up by the secondary data. Looking at adolescent fertility rate, or the number of births per 1,000 women between the ages of 15 and 19, the figure for Sierra Leone is 126, and higher for Malawi at 135.2. The figures for Nepal, India and Sri Lanka are 64.8, 68.1 and 29.8 respectively. Only 8.2 per cent of married women between the ages of 15 and 49 use any method of contraception, while the equivalent figures for Malawi, Nepal, India and Sri Lanka are 41.0, 48.0, 56.3 and 68 respectively. The one bright spot in an otherwise dismal sexual and reproductive health scenario lies in the fact that 87 per cent of the women have antenatal coverage of at least one visit. However, less than half this number (42 per cent) have the advantage of having births attended by skilled health personnel⁵⁴. Hence, incorporating a sexual and reproductive health and rights programme for the community, and particularly adolescent boys and girls will definitely have a greater gendered impact in health promotion.

Also, if FORUT-Norway can source technical support to do a cost-utility analysis, it might be useful to examine whether it is appropriate for 87 per cent of the budget to be directed to the creation of health infrastructure, and whether several other lower cost interventions (e.g., advocating for the use of treated

⁵⁴UNDP. (2010). Human Development Report 2010. 20th Anniversary Edition. The Real Wealth of Nations: Pathways to Human Development.

mosquito nets, especially for pregnant women and children) might be considered as options.

- **Undertake gender-related advocacy work, including on female genital cutting:** Currently, FORUT-Sierra Leone’s advocacy work (except as required for collaborative work at the local level) is minimal. However, there are a number of gender-related issues that require significant advocacy in the community and with the authorities, and the organisation needs to link up with partners and build capacity to undertake this work. One such major issue is female genital cutting (‘bundu’ or ‘souwe’, in Temine or Mende respectively), which is practised in almost all communities except the Christian Krio in the Western Area as a rite of passage. Usually, what the WHO classifies as Type II cutting (excision of the clitoris, with partial or complete excision of the labia minora, with or without partial or complete excision of the labia majora) is practised in Sierra Leone. Almost the entire community is involved in the perpetuation of the practice, and men’s attitudes to women’s sexuality and the social pressure from older women and religious factors are all factors.⁵⁵ Equally, local leaders, who receive a payment for every initiation, have an economic incentive to continue the practice, and there is a clear lack of political will to combat the practice, as politicians actually pay for several cutting rituals at a time to win votes, and ministers speak publicly against opposition to the custom⁵⁶. Sierra Leone currently has not passed a law against Female Genital Cutting.

Given the difficult context, working on the issue will not be easy. However, the programme will suffer from credibility questions, especially about ethical congruence, if it chooses to focus on using plateracks and clotheslines in its health promotion activities when there is such a serious issue of women’s health and rights at stake. As a possible starting point, the Draft Bye-Laws for the Protection of Children in Port Loko district has made a beginning suggesting (fairly low) fines and a month’s imprisonment for children undergoing the procedure. FORUT-Sierra Leone can make a beginning emphasising the health risks and rights issues involved in continuing the practice in their target communities, identifying alternative livelihood options for women responsible for carrying out cutting rituals, start building relationships with older women in

⁵⁵GTZ. (2007). Female Genital Mutilation in Sierra Leone. Eschborn.

⁵⁶IRIN. (2005). Sierra Leone: Female Circumcision is a Vote Winner. Retrieved at <http://www.irinnews.org/InDepthMain.aspx?InDepthId=15&ReportId=62473&Country=Yes> on August 3, 2011.

the community, churches and other religious leaders and institutions to come up with alternative initiation rituals, using the leverage of donating community resources in the form of infrastructure to influence local leaders to oppose the practice, and begin to push for the draft bye laws to come into force in the project locations. Once the CoCSAs have been sensitised and federated, they can undertake this work with lesser political fallout than an INGO like FORUT.

- **Funds for sanitation should ideally come from WASH programmes:** Currently, a number of WASH programmes are providing dedicated resources for water, sanitation and hygiene, and Sierra Leone is a recipient of such funds from multiple sources. Ideally, FORUT-Sierra Leone should collaborate with agencies doing WASH programmes to bring water and sanitation to the communities in their operational areas, and use the funds freed up for other work.
- **Making efforts at raising local resources:** Raising local resources has not been a priority for FORUT-Sierra Leone, unlike INGOs like ActionAid, which tries to raise both in-country and external funding. In the interests of sustainability, the organisation should look into making a beginning for this, e.g., getting suppliers of construction materials for FORUT projects to act as sponsors for some activities.
- **Consider having a local advisory board:** If FORUT is not considering working through national NGOs in Sierra Leone (as recommended by an earlier NORAD evaluation), the organisation should consider having a local advisory board. This board could consist of several prominent figures with expertise in the legal, administrative and financial fields, or in the social sciences, economics, gender, social welfare, etc. While such a body would largely provide a kind of ceremonial supervision, it could prove invaluable to deal with criticism or negative fallouts of any advocacy or intervention undertaken by FORUT.

According to the senior management of FORUT-Sierra Leone, prior to the design of the Gender Programme, men had proved the main beneficiaries of many of the activities (e.g., support provided for agricultural activities) because women would not come forward to access the benefits. Secondly, at community meetings, women would sit at the back and would not speak. Thirdly, the conflict in Sierra Leone had increased the number of single women in need of support and women-headed households. For all these reasons, a gender-oriented programme had seemed very relevant.

That said, it must be emphasised that the current programme supports both men and women, and in particular, that men are the leaders of the CoCSA groups. The inclusion of men in the programme has been undertaken less to make men active partners in gender mainstreaming and more to reduce resistance to it. There is noticeable reluctance on the part of staff (especially the field staff) to interfere with local cultural practices. To make the programme more relevant, building literacy and leadership skills in the women will be as important, as analysing and encouraging reflection on the nature and construction of masculine roles and identities, and helping to push the boundaries of these roles and identities in ways that are amenable to improved gender mainstreaming.

Chapter 5

A Critical Review of Internal Mainstreaming of Gender at FORUT-Norway and its Partner Organisations

This chapter analyses in some detail how gender is mainstreamed within FORUT and its partner organisations, and also presents a somewhat briefer account of how mainstreaming of gender occurs in programmes implemented by the partner organisations that are not explicitly designed to promote gender equality, for example, programmes on child rights, or on alcohol, drugs and development.

5.1 Internal Mainstreaming of Gender

A major aim of the mid-term evaluation was not only to examine the operation of the specific gender programmes designed by the various partner organisations, but also “to estimate the mainstreaming of a gender perspective at the institutional level in all partner organisations.” FORUT-Norway and its partner organisations answered a questionnaire, consisting of forty-two questions related to various aspects of gender as applicable to institutional contexts, and also provided gender-disaggregated data on staffing at different levels of the organisation, as part of a self-assessment process to achieve this aim.

The data provided by FORUT-Norway and its country offices in Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka, as well as its partners, Association for Promoting Social Action (APSA) and The Concerned for Working Children (CWC) in India, and Child Workers in Nepal (CWIN) in Nepal, were coded or tabulated as appropriate, and analysed to understand how power and responsibilities, benefits and rights, were distributed within the organisation. It was also hoped that the self-assessment would reveal the organisation’s observations of and sensitivity and responsiveness to gender issues, and how these were integrated in policy and practice. This would be necessary to achieve both ethical congruence (to consciously ensure that there was no need to resort to a “Do as we say, not as we do” approach in relation to their community interventions), and to fully utilise the potential of all staff, whether men or women, or of alternative gender identities. The table below (Table 16) shows how the organisations assessed themselves with respect to several key dimensions of internal mainstreaming of gender. A more detailed discussion of data generated through the self-assessments is provided in the rest of the chapter.

Table 16: Showing self-assessment of FORUT and partner organisations on some key dimensions of internal mainstreaming of gender.

Sl. No.	Questions on internal mainstreaming of gender	APSA	CWC	CWIN	FORUT - Sierra Leone	FORUT - Sri Lanka	FORUT - Norway
1	Does the organisation have a written gender policy?	Yes	No [√]	Yes	No	Yes	No*
2	Has the policy been translated into local languages?	No	N/A	Yes	N/A	Yes	N/A
3	Has the policy been well disseminated throughout the organisation?	No	N/A	Yes	N/A	Yes	N/A
4	Does the organisation have internal gender expertise?	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
5	Does the organisation access support from external gender experts?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
6	Does the	Largely ^β	Largely ^α	Largely ^α	Largely ^β	Largely ^α	Yes

[√] Although CWC does not have a formal written gender policy, most dimensions of internal mainstreaming of gender are addressed, according to the self-assessment.

* Although FORUT does not have a formal written gender policy, formal adherence to strict Norwegian laws and tariff agreements between employers' and labour unions covers most aspects that would be covered by such an organisational policy, including protection from sexual harassment.

^β The organisations adhered to gender stereotyped roles, especially for support staff (cooks, caregivers, drivers, security personnel) positions.

^α The organisations had some concerns related to security and extensive travelling in remote areas which affected recruitment of women to certain field positions.

	organisation have a commitment to providing equal opportunities in recruitment and promotion?						
7	Has the organisation engaged in proactive hiring/promotion of women for senior management positions to address gender balance?	Gender balance largely exists	Yes	Gender balance exists	Yes	Gender balance exists	Yes
8	Does the organisation have a written policy and formal procedures related to sexual harassment?	Included in Gender Policy	Yes	Yes	No	Included in Gender Policy	No*
9	Does the organisation provide ongoing training on gender issues?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	For gender programme, yes; to a limited extent for rest of organisation	Yes

^ Resources for gender training are drawn from the broader capacity building budget.

10	Is there a specific budget for gender training?	No [^]	Yes	No [^]	Yes	Yes	No [^]
11	Is training provided for women to move to more senior positions?	Yes	Yes	Ongoing mentoring – not gender-specific	No	No	N/A
12	Are gender issues taken seriously and discussed openly on a regular basis?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Largely	Yes	Yes
13	Is gender stereotyping actively countered in the organisation?	Largely	Yes	Yes	To some extent	To some extent	Gender stereotyping not accepted
14	Does the organisation provide for maternity leave and associated benefits?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
15	Does the organisation provide for paternity leave?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

The data from the self-assessment from the self-assessment carried out by FORUT and its partner organisations provided for rich data with respect to many aspects of internal mainstreaming of gender.

5.1.2 Vision and Policy:

The visions of FORUT and its partner organisations are largely expressed in gender neutral terms; however, all of them express a strong commitment to social justice and equality. FORUT's vision speaks of a world "where all are secured human rights and social justice" and CWIN states a commitment to "social inclusion" and a "Nepal which is ...just and prosperous to all". APSA's commitment is to "development without exploitation" and CWC envisions a world in which children and adults "establish and maintain together a secular, equitable, just and non-discriminatory world." FORUT Norway sees gender as one of the organisation's "four pillars", and "a just world in terms of gender" as "a fundamental purpose of the organisation."

The commitment to gender is more explicitly evident in the objectives and activities of these organisations. One of FORUT Norway's most important programmes is on gender equality, and it funds programmes focusing on women's empowerment its partner organisations. It is also a leading member of the MenEngage network and has organised several events on the topic of masculinities. Three organisations, APSA, FORUT-Sri Lanka and FORUT-Sierra Leone have targeted programmes aimed at improving gender equality, particularly on women's economic empowerment and health. CWIN and CWC collect gender-disaggregated data and design strategies which ensure that there is as much, if not more focus on girls as boys in its work related to child rights, citizenship and migration. APSA too designs and implements specific interventions for girl children and young women.

Three organisations – FORUT Sri Lanka, APSA and CWIN have written gender policies. APSA and CWIN followed a broad participatory process within the organisation for the development and refinement of the policy. In FORUT Sri Lanka, the Gender Advisor prepared a draft policy, which was then circulated and comments invited, before being finalised. Norwegian laws regulating public and private enterprises and organisations, and the tariff agreements between the central employers' and labour unions have laws and regulations that explicitly address most issues related to gender equality in the workplace, and these are "well and effectively enforced". The organisation felt that this precluded the need for a specific gender policy. While CWC does not have a written gender policy yet, most of the elements related to internal mainstreaming of gender are explicitly practised within the organisation.

The CWIN policy on Gender and Social Inclusion was first developed in Nepali, and then translated it into English. Care has been taken to make the policy a living document, with all staff having signed the policy, a copy of which is kept in their personnel files. New staff members are provided with an orientation to the policy as part of the induction process, and must sign the policy soon after receiving their appointment letters. FORUT-Sri Lanka organised discussions on sections of the gender policy handbook for the entire organisation during “programme/policy” meetings and gender focal point meetings and the policy was made available at all the district offices. The APSA policy is relatively new, and steps are yet to be taken for the broad-based and formal dissemination of the policy among its staff. However, because the policy was formulated in a participatory way, there is a reasonably high level of knowledge of the provisions of the policy within the organisation.

5.1.3 Structure and staffing:

CWIN has paid close attention to setting up formal systems and structures to ensure internal and external mainstreaming of gender. A focal person is responsible for mainstreaming gender and social inclusion in the organisation, and takes the lead in dealing with any complaints relating to the violation of its gender and social inclusion policy in its operational areas. There is also a separate department that foresees gender mainstreaming in all its programmes of action and intervention, including campaigns, trainings, research and advocacy. CWIN’s gender expertise is also drawn on by various national-level and government organisations to train police, social workers, medical personnel, etc. on gender and gender-based violence.

FORUT Norway has gender expertise in the administration as well as in the human resource and programme departments, and expertise on masculinities as well, especially as relates to programming. Cases related to issues like sexual harassment are handled by a personnel safety representative, and “purchase of sexual services or a sexual relation that can be interpreted as an abuse of power” are explicitly prohibited. In FORUT-Sri Lanka, when the organisation followed the project approach, a gender focal point was identified for each project. When the organisation shifted to the programme approach in the current phase, the organisation set up separate teams for the programmes on Gender-Based Violence and Gender Economic Empowerment under a gender advisor. In FORUT-Sierra Leone, a Gender Focal Point Person identifies gender-related training needs, carries out training, sources resource materials and creates manuals as necessary, and also implements the women’s empowerment and health

related programmes, in association with the Programme Director who also has relevant expertise.

APSA's policy provides for a committee to address issues of gender within the organisation and its programmatic work. Gender is a cornerstone of the work done by APSA and CWC and hence is integrated with its normal process of planning, implementation and review.

Organisations also revealed that they had the flexibility to convene special groups or set up particular mechanisms to assist staff to address specific gender-related challenges, which may be dissolved later when the issue has been adequately addressed. For example, at a time when the organisation was largely gender-insensitive, and measures were first being put in place to increase attention to gender issues, FORUT-Sri Lanka set up a dedicated email-id, which only a limited group with a commitment to empowering women in the organisation could access, to which staff could address complaints related to sexual harassment or other gender-based violence. As gender became more foregrounded within the organisation, and the organisation more explicit in its commitment to promoting gender equality, and established systems and structures to support this commitment, the staff became more and more confident about openly approaching senior management with sensitive issues that needed to be resolved. Once the organisation found that a couple of years had passed without any complaints being received at the email id, because staff were addressing such matters directly, the mechanism was dismantled. Most organisations practised an open-door policy and staff were encouraged to use it. In addition, CWC had a post-box system during its periodic reviews to enable staff to raise sensitive issues. From time to time, the organisation found that separate women's only or men's only spaces were valid for raising and dealing with particular sensitive issues, for example, "domestic abuse". Once the group felt that issues had been dealt with adequately, these ceased to be active.

Examining the staffing patterns of FORUT and its partner organisations more broadly as revealed in Table 17, FORUT Norway has a fairly gender-balanced staff, with an overall female to male staff ratio of 3:2 at the levels of total staff and middle management, and 2:3 at the senior management level, in a fairly small organisation with a total staff strength of 20. While FORUT-Sierra Leone staffing shows gender balance at the middle management and senior management levels (female to male staff ratios of 3:2 and 1:1 respectively), the balance is skewed dramatically in favour of male staff at the levels of junior staff/field activists and support staff respectively, with only one female staff member across both these levels. The organisation, in its self-assessment, felt that

women were not actively discriminated against in recruitment, but at the same time, underlying assumptions about “gender difference and inequality were clearly manifested in roles [assigned, due to assumptions related to] requirements of physical strength.” Accordingly, jobs involving truck driving, bike riding, security and the cranking of generators were assigned to men, while women were deemed more appropriate for roles like secretaries, or involving caregiving and counselling. The self-assessment honestly acknowledged that “these stereotyped roles undermine the commitment to equality and empowerment.” All caregiving and cooking roles in APSA’s institutional projects are also held by women. In contrast, CWIN has male cooks, male caregivers, a female driver, and female field workers. CWC has a female security employee.

Table 17: Showing Gender Disaggregated Staffing Data for FORUT and partner organisations, based on position

Sl. No	Types of Staff	Gender	APSA	CWIN	CWC	FORUT - Sierra Leone	FORUT – Norway
1	Senior Management	Male	3 (75%)	4 (66.6%)	5 (71.4%)	2 (50%)	3 (60%)
2		Female	1 (25%)	2 (33.3%)	2 (28.6%)	2 (50%)	2 (40%)
3		Sub-Total	4	6	7	4	5
4	Middle Management	Male	7 (46.7%)	26 (61.9%)	7 (53.8%)	3 (60%)	4 (40%)
5		Female	8 (53.3%)	16 (38.1%)	6 (46.2%)	2 (40%)	6 (60%)
6		Sub-Total	15	42	13	5	10
7	Junior Staff/ Field Activists	Male	4 (12.1%)	41 (66.1%)	14 (53.8%)	5 (83.3%)	NA
8		Female	29 (87.9%)	21(33.9%)	12 (46.2%)	1 (16.7%)	NA
9		Sub-Total	33	62	26	6	NA
10	Support Staff	Male	19 (33.3%)	19 (59.4%)	8 (53.3%)	8 (100%)	1 (20%)
11		Female	38 (66.6%)	13 (40.6%)	7 (46.7%)	0	4 (80%)
12		Sub-Total	57	32	15	8	5

13	Total Staff	Male	33 (30.3%)	90 (63.4%)	34 (55.7%)	18 (78.3%)	8 (40%)
14		Female	76 (69.7%)	52 (36.6%)	27 (44.3%)	5 (21.7%)	12 (60%)
15		Total	109	142	61	23	20

CWC's overall staffing patterns, as well as those at the levels of support staff, junior staff/field activists and middle management are fairly balanced in terms of gender; however, the equation becomes slightly more skewed at the senior management level, with a female to male staff ratio of 2:5. Roughly a third of the staff employed at all levels at CWIN are female. However, CWIN is aware of this gap, and recently hired two female staff at the programme officer level in an effort to reduce it. Gender equality has been reached and surpassed, so that the balance is now skewed in favour of female staff at a ratio of 70:30 in APSA. This pattern of more female than male staff applies also for staff at the support, junior and middle management levels. However, at the seniormost level, the ratio falls to 75:25 in favour of male staff.

As FORUT-Sri Lanka was in the process of winding down its operations, prior to closing down completely at the end of June 2011, the organisation was operating with a skeleton staff during the period of the evaluation. Hence, staffing patterns were not studied. However, it must be noted that the staffing of the gender programme itself was markedly skewed in favour of male staff – apart from the Gender Advisor, and one other staff member in the field, all other staff were male.

5.1.4 Recruitment and Promotion

Even those organisations which do not explicitly mention equal opportunities as part of their hiring practices largely follow principles on non-discrimination on the basis of gender, according to their self-assessments. Most organisations used a variety of channels in advertising positions, including informal methods like word of mouth, as well as advertising on the internet on sites devoted to development-related jobs and on college campuses to reach out to a wide variety of potential applicants. However, FORUT-Sierra Leone said that the organisation largely depended on the print media to advertise for positions, but women were at a disadvantage with this medium because few women are literate and most lack the resources to buy print media. The organisation also felt that dissemination of information about openings to other parts of the country tended to be slow. However, FORUT-Sierra Leone is aware of these shortcomings. The last management position that was created was filled by a woman

with the view to maintain gender balance. All the organisations also said that promotion was based on criterion-based assessments of professional competence and gender was not a limitation for promotion.

5.1.5 Benefits, Rights at Work and Family-Friendly Work Practices

As Table 18 shows, the majority of the staff in FORUT and all its partner organisations except for CWIN are permanent staff with full benefits. In the case of CWIN, only 11 per cent of its staff are permanent. However, the other 89 per cent, in spite of being contract staff have full benefits. Roughly, 15 per cent of APSA's staff are on contracts, but have significant benefits. FORUT-Sierra Leone and CWC have 9 and 10 staff members respectively who are contractual, with very few benefits, and the bulk of these are men. All CWC's contract staff are part-time staff, and contracts are usually used only to meet short-term requirements. By and large, the organisation believes that job security is "a critical aspect of the benefits package given to employees." All the organisations felt that criteria like formal education, experience, and performance by criterion-based assessment determined decisions about salaries and that implicit reasoning related to assumptions about men being primary providers for the family or women being unmarried did not affect negatively affect decisions related to pay. CWC and FORUT-Sri Lanka mentioned 'slabs' and 'salary scales' associated with job categories to ensure equal pay for equal work more formally.

Table 18: Showing Gender Disaggregated Staffing Data for FORUT and partner organisations, based on tenure and benefits

Sl. No	Types of Staff	Gender	APSA	CWIN	CWC	FORUT - Sierra Leone	FORUT-Norway
1	Permanent, with full benefits	Male	29	6	34	9	7
2		Female	64	4	27	5	8
3		Sub-Total	93	10	61	14	15
4	Contractual, with full benefits	Male	NA	84	NA	NA	1
5		Female	NA	48	NA	NA	4
6		Sub-Total	NA	132	NA	NA	5
7	Contractual, with significant benefits	Male	4	NA	NA	NA	NA
8		Female	12	NA	NA	NA	NA
9		Sub-Total	16	NA	NA	NA	NA
10	Contractual, with very	Male	NA	NA	8	9	NA
11		Female	NA	NA	2	0	NA

12	few benefits	Sub-Total	NA	NA	10	9	NA
13	Total Staff	Male	33	90	42	18	8
14		Female	76	52	29	5	12
15		Total	109	142	71	23	20

In CWIN, job descriptions and organisational norms were reviewed annually, including from a gender perspective, and CWC had recently completed such a process within the organisation. However, such a periodic review was not being undertaken by the other organisations.

Most organisations reported the existence of structures and systems which enabled all staff (women and men from different levels) to participate in decision making including open door policies, post-box systems, etc. to raise confidential and sensitive issues. All the organisations provided for paid maternity and paternity leave, ranging from a maximum of a year (shared by mother and father) as laid down by Norwegian law and tariff agreements to paternity leave of 5 days after childbirth granted by FORUT-Sri Lanka. FORUT-Sierra Leone also provided maternity and paternity leave. Some organisations like CWIN and FORUT-Sri Lanka provided breaks during the workday to employees in the first year following childbirth for nursing their infants. Most organisations made some provision for flexi-time to assist with childcare. Some organisations (APSA, CWC, CWIN) permitted women to bring very young children into work (in the case of CWIN, together with a caregiver, and in the case of APSA, permitting the existing institutional facilities to extend child care support for staff as well.) CWC provides for three weeks of leave in the cases of miscarriage or medical termination of pregnancy (MTP). Organisations also informally provided moral support to staff, especially women, facing marital problems, assisted with school admissions and related support for children when staff members had faced abandonment by their spouses, etc. FORUT-Sierra Leone provided moral and financial support to staff during critical life events in their families, including births, sickness, accidents and deaths. Even without formal policies on HIV in the Workplace, some of the organisations like CWC, APSA and CWIN had provided confidential support to people living with HIV in their organisational spaces.

5.1.6 Training, Monitoring and Financial Resources

Gender training was systematically undertaken by CWIN for its staff through a four-phase process:

Phase 1: Training on gender definitions and conceptual clarity

Phase 2: Orientation on organisation's gender policy

Phase 3: Training on gender at the programmatic level, focusing on specific topics like gender-based violence, UN Resolutions 1325 and 1820.

Phase 4: Refresher training by external experts.

In addition, CWIN systematically links gender with the other programmatic themes, like ADD and Gender and Child Participation and gender, apart from issues related to children's and women's rights, including trafficking and child sexual abuse.

The gender focal person in FORUT-Norway has had extensive training on gender issues and is obliged to share this expertise through short seminars held throughout the year, which all staff are obliged to attend, according to the organisational culture. The orientation programmes at CWC and FORUT-Sri Lanka include a component on gender, and there is ongoing gender training related to programmatic aspects involving gender. FORUT-Sierra Leone reported one training for its entire staff on gender. However, in the lack of ongoing training or a clear understanding of mainstreaming, the gender programme is viewed as a separate programme, and male staff in particular tended to see gender as the responsibility of the Gender Programme Officer and Programme Assistant. FORUT-Sierra Leone also felt that the training had focused primarily on sensitisation and awareness, and less on gender-related analysis and planning. APSA reported hosting two trainings in recent years by external experts using a range of methodologies including questionnaires and discussions, and said that the trainings had been especially appreciated by male staff. 50 per cent of the organisations participating in the assessment reported dedicated budgets for gender training, with the rest drawing resources from the general budget meant for training and capacity building.

Organisations had also been open to inviting external resource persons on gender. CWC reported using external support for a focused organisational process to integrate gender sensitivity with organisational culture and programme strategies. Both CWC and CWIN used external experts to look at the special focus that the girls among their primary stakeholders would need to support their empowerment. FORUT-Sri Lanka used external support to assist with the baseline studies on their Gender-Based Violence and Gender Economic Empowerment programmes. FORUT Norway has used the service of gender experts both to improve the organisation's internal competence and for conferences arranged for other organisations, as well as for gender assessments of the work of the organisation and its partners.

Systematic monitoring related to gender was done by CWIN, which had gender and social inclusion indicators included in the management information system. Further, in

the staff personal evaluation grid, attitudes towards gender and social inclusion are explicitly included as indicators for performance measurement. Gender impact assessments are included as part of mid-term evaluations. CWC systematically collects gender disaggregated data (for example, tracking women's participation in local government processes) and teaches children to analyse data and issues from a gender perspective, as part of their training for empowerment. APSA's gender impact assessments have tended to be more informal, except as related to expected gender-related outcomes of programmes, which are also tracked by FORUT-Norway, FORUT-Sri Lanka and FORUT-Sierra Leone.

5.1.7 Organisational Culture

Most organisations reported gender sensitive behaviour and regular discussions related to gender issues. APSA felt that the openness in the organisational culture was not necessarily used to its full potential to discuss gender issues, and FORUT-Sierra Leone felt that discussions occurred, and openly, but not regularly. CWIN and CWC reported that many of their male staff were regarded as "role models in gender sensitivity" and powerful advocates of gender equity.

The biggest change in organisational culture over time with respect to gender sensitivity as a result of an institutional process was reported by FORUT-Sri Lanka. The organisation was under the impression that because it worked with women, through its microfinance component, it was automatically gender sensitive. The assessment held that "prior to the recruitment of a gender advisor and the development of the gender policy, there was a permissive environment for gender insensitive behaviour" in the organisation. An earlier evaluation had highlighted the lack of a gender policy. The person hired as the gender advisor felt that "initially, [she] had no one to support her theoretically or morally. 100 per cent of the field leadership was middle-aged male and females working at the field level reported verbal abuse or worse." The gender advisor reviewed several gender policies and came up with a first draft, which was then circulated to the districts for feedback. Over a six month process, very little feedback was received. A series of "programme/policy" meetings were then held at which, the help of strong support from the then Resident Representative and Programme Manager, detailed discussions were held and the policy was adopted. The policy also provided for an external mainstreaming component, and representatives from other programmes like Child Rights and ADD reported that adopting a gender sensitive approach had significantly altered their programmes. The creation of targeted gender programmes, and the positive impact that these had had in a relatively short while, including on national level policies and programmes in which the government explicitly

acknowledged the contributions made by FORUT-Sri Lanka had also made a difference in changing the internal environment. Nevertheless, there were staff at FORUT-Sri Lanka who felt that the organisation still had progress to make. To a question on perceived gaps “between how men and women viewed gender issues in the organisation”, the response was that “With certain men and women, there was no identified gap as they reacted to gender issues in the same insensitive manner. With other groups, there were mixed feelings, where they would support gender issues if it was beneficial for them, and just ignore in other cases. There were also women and a few men who are actually sensitive and supported wherever possible.”

Organisations reported that women employees in particular, were strong about countering gender insensitive remarks. APSA reported instances of gender stereotyping being brought up for discussion in large open meetings for resolution. CWIN has formal procedures associated with personal gender insensitive conduct. Erring employees are warned, the conduct is recorded in the staff member’s personnel files and written explanations are sought. In extreme cases, staff members’ services have been terminated and the organisation had recorded examples of zero tolerance policies and resultant actions for gender insensitive language and behaviour. FORUT-Norway stated baldly that “Stereotyping is not accepted. Persons who are likely to comment and express stereotyping views are not likely to be employed at all.”

CWC drew particular attention to the importance of “language and how it embodies gender discriminatory statements”: “We are conscious of terminologies. We will not say he, we still use she/he. We are conscious of terminology like Chairman, manhours, etc. we instead say chairperson, cameraperson, personhours. In Kannada, our regional language, the word generally used for ‘youth’ (Yuvakaru) translates into ‘young men’. However, we consciously use the word Yuvajanaru, which translates into young people.

FORUT-Norway perceives no apparent challenge on issues related to alternative sexuality/sexual identity issues in the organisation, and has had individuals with alternative sexual orientations both as employees and in the board, including in the position of board chairperson. Both APSA and CWC have done extensive work on gender and sexuality. APSA has organised a number of events within and outside the organisation to increase the openness to and increase comfort levels in working with sexual minorities. CWC and CWIN too report good comfort levels associated with collaborating with organisations working on alternative sexuality issues. FORUT-Sierra Leone felt, as for masculinities, that “as of now” there were no issues related to alternative sexualities that the organisation needed to address “as far as we know”.

Nevertheless, all the organisations were honest about gaps in how men and women viewed gender issues, and the extensive influence of the external environment which reinforces many regressive norms. FORUT-Norway felt that in their case, the gap arose “mostly due to the fact that we are different individuals and our view will be coloured by our own experiences. It is not a gap related to gender roles but more...[the] interpretation of male and female characteristics and values.” CWC felt that there was a lack of synchronicity between the values and attitudes to gender within the organisation and outside, which created dilemmas which the staff had to negotiate. APSA felt that some male staff tended to be apathetic during gender trainings and FORUT-Sierra Leone cited the generally prevalent cultural norms that there were “no vulnerabilities related to masculinities” and the roles played by “cultural and religious orientations” that helped to fix and maintain gender roles. CWIN too emphasised the importance of expending energy and effort to challenge certain regressive traditional value systems.

5.1.8 Looking Ahead

While FORUT-Norway felt that it was pretty much on track with its internal mainstreaming process for gender, provided that it strove to maintain general gender balance in recruitment in the future as well, most of the other organisations had plans to improve this aspect in the near future. Both FORUT-Sierra Leone and CWC looked forward to developing formal gender policies, and FORUT-Sierra Leone sought to improve capacity building within the organisation on gender analysis and planning, and budgeting and advocacy to improve gender mainstreaming. APSA looked forward to creating the implementation mechanisms for the gender policy, including good systems for dissemination within the organisation, in addition to setting up a cell that looked into policies and practices that addressed the multiple vulnerabilities of disability, gender and HIV and AIDS. The organisation also wished to pay greater attention to the monitoring and evaluation aspect with respect to gender, both within the organisation and programmatically. CWIN felt that there was a need to aspire towards 50 per cent representation of women at all levels of employment and in the board, and to promote more male staff as trainers on gender and inclusion. The organisation also intended to carry out training on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) issues for staff. Sumnima Tuladhar, Executive Coordinator of CWIN, felt that FORUT needed to make it essential for all its partner organisations to have a gender policy to demonstrate their commitment to the issue and to guide them in ensuring "gender sensitivity at all levels - governance, advocacy, reflection, organisational strategies, etc." She also suggested that the partner organisations work collaboratively to "develop creative assessment/evaluation tools for gender and social inclusion...to encourage them to

continuously assess their efforts to maintain gender sensitivity in their organisations." She felt that such tools would also "help partners to professionally respond to changes that are required."

5.2 External mainstreaming of gender

Though not part of the original terms of reference of the evaluation, which sought to focus on the mainstreaming of gender at the institutional level in FORUT-Norway and its partner organisations, and to assess the performance of the targeted gender programmes in the current programme cycle, at the request of FORUT-Norway, a 'quick and dirty' assessment of the external mainstreaming of gender in the programmes not explicitly targeting gender was also carried out, given significant limitations in time and data collection opportunities. Information regarding how gender intersected in theory, strategy and practice with the other programmes of FORUT's partner organisation was obtained in two ways. In the case of APSA, FORUT-Sierra Leone and FORUT-Sri Lanka, some information was obtained during the field visits through limited interactions with staff associated with programmes other than those that explicitly targeted gender. In the case of CWC and CWIN, information was obtained from the organisations through a supplementary questionnaire which asked about how gender was mainstreamed at the levels of conceptualisation, participatory planning, activities and monitoring in the various programmes supported by FORUT.

5.2.1 APSA:

How gender is critical conceptually, strategically and in practice for APSA's programmes, beyond the economic empowerment programme been discussed at length in Chapter 3. In exploring how gender intersects with issues such as housing, basic needs, water and sanitation, it is possible to understand external mainstreaming of gender with the programme on Crisis Response and Recovery. Providing families with health information, referral support, assistance with detoxification and rehabilitation; economic assistance through microcredit and microbusiness development to offset the economic impact of alcohol abuse in the family; social, legal and short-term crisis support for women and children affected by alcohol-induced domestic violence; and short-term residential care support for children in crisis are all available to reduce the gendered negative impacts of the abuse of psychotropic substances through the Programmes on Alcohol, Drugs and Development. Countering gender stereotypes at an early age through modelling, differential role assignments, educational opportunities, and leadership development for boys and girls through its institutional programmes for

residential support and education, children’s collectives and advocacy initiatives all play a role in gender mainstreaming in APSA’s Child Rights and Advocacy programmes.

5.2.2 CWIN:

In its ADD programme, CWIN uses peer educators to address the specific vulnerabilities of street boys to alcohol, drug use and HIV, and community level interventions which take into account the fact that Nepal is a country with many women drinkers and smokers, thus avoiding the common bias. The programmes also address the role of alcohol in domestic violence. Currently, CWIN is playing an active role in influencing the draft national policy on alcohol and drugs in Nepal to make it gender friendly. In its Post-Conflict Rehabilitation Programme, special efforts have been made to provide social support to children who have faced conflict-related violence, including gender-based violence, and the resultant social stigma. In addition to counselling, educational support and residential support, family integration support has been provided to both boys and girls. Adolescent education training modules, specially addressing risks faced by girl children, are regularly used, and adolescents’ clubs which encourage the creation of local social support networks are actively facilitated. The CWIN Balika programme especially provides support for “girls at risk including street girls, girls from slum areas, girl survivors of child sex abuse, commercial sexual exploitation, labour exploitation, domestic violence, trafficking and armed conflict for their socialization, protection, social reintegration and empowerment.” CWIN also works to create greater public accountability towards child rights in general and the rights of the girl child in particular, lobbying for gender sensitive policies, laws and programmes with the government. It serves as a watchdog with media and law enforcement agencies, demanding sensitivity to the rights of girl children. CWIN also works closely with the MenEngage initiative in Nepal. It has been trying to raise the issues arising from assumptions related to masculinity in forums with adolescent boys and girls, engaging adolescent boys with the issues faced by girls, and in particular, working with them to increase their role in minimising violence against girls and women. CWIN has also actively been trying to raise the issues of sexual abuse and commercial sexual exploitation of boys in Nepal, carrying out research to understand gender issues in a no-stereotypical way. Many of the advocacy issues that it works with, e.g., ensuring child-friendly schools, trafficking of children for labour, child sexual abuse, protecting children from harm from online sources, etc. also have an explicit gender component.

5.2.3 CWC:

CWC uses participatory needs assessments in the panchayats where it works to determine the differential needs of boys, girls, young men and women of differential

ages and abilities which directly feed into planning and implementation of activities to avoid discrimination. For example, the Makkala Grama Sabha process is designed to ensure that children with disabilities are able “to participate at par with other children.” Girl children who need support with transportation to attend various programmes are provided with such support. Materials used in CWC activities, for example, songs sung at meetings and get-togethers are reviewed for gender sensitivity, and many of them actively challenge gender stereotypes. Gender training, including the importance of looking at data and issues from a gender perspective, is provided to children in the various programmes dealing with child rights. All programmes collect gender-disaggregated data. CWC intervened with office bearers of 5 panchayats (local governments) to alter the timings and venues of grama sabhas – meetings to plan and review programmes – to enable women, especially those from the most marginalised communities to participate. The organisation reports a significant increase in quality and quantity of women’s participation in all programmes in 2010, including in submissions related to the State Finance Commission, the Migrant Workers Campaigns, responses to political manifestoes, etc.

Providing an example of how gender intersects with its work, CWC notes that “The Gender and Sexuality training modules that were piloted at our Regional Resource Center and subsequently in our rural and urban field programmes have now been considered a role-model for the entire state. CWC’s lead trainer in this area has become a member of the State Resource Team and has played a key role in developing the Training Module on the subject for the entire State. The State has printed 35,000 numbers of the books for distribution in the entire state and our Resource person has trained 70 State Trainers from 28 Districts and 175 Taluks in an extensive Training of Trainers (TOT) programme. In each Taluk, 300 girls have received this training in each one of the Taluks, making a total of 52,500 girls.”

5.2.4 FORUT-Sierra Leone:

As discussed in Chapter 4, FORUT-Sierra Leone has largely tended to look upon gender as an issue to be addressed through its gender programmes on health and economic empowerment rather than a cross-cutting issue, and the organisation requires technical support to enable it to undertake a more gendered analysis and planning. That said, it must be noted that the Child Rights Programme has demonstrated a significant degree of gender sensitivity both in terms of content and participation. The programme primarily focuses on advocacy on child rights with a view to keeping children in school. To this end, orientation on the Child Rights Act of 2007 is provided both at schools and in communities, and in particular, awareness related to preventing child labour and

bringing down teenage pregnancy by increasing awareness about the legal age of marriage, prohibition of forced marriage, etc., is carried out through the programme. The gendered impact of this advocacy is strengthened by creating children's clubs in schools, where children themselves receive information about their rights. Leadership in the clubs has tended to be equally shared by boys and girls, and in general, girls are using the space of the Children's Clubs to become more vocal. A beginning has been made to provide some information on sexual and reproductive health with a view to preventing teenage pregnancies, and in some areas, children themselves have started monitoring groups to try and prevent female genital cutting in young children, as in a case in Gbaray Morie Section of Port Loko district, in which their intervention prevented the cutting of a 5 year old child.

The Alcohol, Drugs and Development Programme of FORUT-Sierra Leone is its only urban based programme, and targets children between the ages of 13 and 19 in 25 schools in Freetown. With a view to starting "Peace Clubs", which serve as an entry point for discussions related to alcohol and drug use, trainings have been provided to guidance counsellors and teachers in schools who serve as animators. The programme raises awareness about alcohol and drug use, especially as drugs, especially marijuana, are becoming more easily accessible in schools, through talks during school assemblies, and discussion programmes on TV and radio. Some recreational materials are also donated to the clubs. While the awareness raising services are provided equally to all students without discrimination, the programme does not undertake more gendered analyses or apply strategies arising from such analyses, for example, to challenge notions of masculinity that valorise use of alcohol and drugs by young men as more "manly" and hence encourage young men in risky behaviours, even as these notions are accepted by young women as "natural" behaviour by men which must be accepted and condoned, or even "glamorous" and "desirable". Broader systemic issues changing the environment also need to be taken into consideration. For instance, until recently, there was little or no advertising related to alcohol in Sierra Leone; however, this is increasing.

5.2.5 FORUT-Sri Lanka:

Discussions with the programme advisors of the Child Rights and Alcohol, Drugs and Development programmes revealed that mainstreaming of a gender perspectives within these programmes had made an enormous difference to these programmes. "Gender was a totally new concept in FORUT-Sri Lanka, and in introducing it, we thought we would start from the easiest level," said Mrs. Champa Gunasekara. At that time, a review of how children's clubs had been functioning revealed that they were not

structures for empowerment as had been envisaged. Typically children came in, sang, danced and dispersed. Boys were presidents of the clubs, because of the perception that boys could take decisions, while girls served as secretaries, as they were seen as having “beautiful handwriting”. With the support of the gender advisor, curricula for child rights, including modules on gender, addressing issues such as gender roles, stereotypes, power relationships, etc., appropriate for three different age groups (6-11 years, 12-15 years, and 16-18 years) were prepared. The modules were designed in the form of participatory exercises, and as they began to be implemented, significant changes began to be seen. As an impact of these changes, more than half the presidents of the children’s clubs are now girls, who, apart from addressing issues that affect children in their communities, try to influence policies through, among other means, media conferences, drawing attention to violations of child rights. An example of a big impact that their work has had was shown when, following a big campaign in which children spoke out against it, a big Indian liquor company was denied permission to advertise in Sri Lanka on the cricket pitches during the World Cup in 2010.

Likewise, after introducing a gender perspective in the Alcohol, Drugs and Development programme, the approach shifted from focusing primarily on users to include non-users as well. The programme worked on how to address the issue with four groups – adult males, adult females, young males and young females. For men, the effort was to tease out the myths surrounding alcohol (e.g., that it contributed to relaxation, enhanced sexual performance, or contributed to making a man more masculine). For women, the focus was on their assumptions and expectations around alcohol (e.g., that men were entitled to drink to ease their tiredness after work, or that violence was ‘natural’ when a man was drunk) and how these could facilitate, condone or contribute to the socialisation associated with alcohol. As these expectations and assumptions were challenged, women were encouraged to take actions that made it more difficult for men “to get away with” drinking alcohol. Likewise, work with young women helped to play a role in de-glamourising alcohol, and this in turn affected the behaviour of young men. This was combined with campaigns to reduce drinking on festivals like the New Year, alcohol-free wedding celebrations, etc. There was a lack of literature on strategies that worked at the community level, and content for the training materials was developed from the grassroots. According to Mr. Ravi Kandiah, “There was excellent cross-fertilisation between the ADD and Gender programmes in developing training materials and the development of the ‘happy family’ concepts that addressed key gender concerns like gender stereotypes, domestic violence, and abuse related to alcohol consumption.”

5.3 Recommendations

- **Increase sharing of gender expertise between FORUT-Norway and its partner organisations:** Clearly, there is a great deal of gender expertise within the family of FORUT-Norway and its partner organisations, as detailed in the analysis above. For instance, CWIN has excellent formal systems and procedures to assist organisations like FORUT-Sierra Leone and CWC which need to develop a formal policy, and APSA, which needs to set up dissemination and implementation systems for its new policy. CWC has reported their expertise with collecting gender disaggregated data, gender analysis and planning. The FORUT-Sri Lanka Gender Programme has led from the front by example to drive attitudinal changes within conservative and complacent elements within an organisation, and can probably offer ideas on strategic troubleshooting. FORUT-Norway must explore mechanisms and find time-slots during partner meetings to ensure that enough linking and learning occurs across partner organisations.
- **Improve attention to issues related to masculinities:** Organisations varied in their understandings of and engagements with masculinities. Given that FORUT-Norway has considerable in-house expertise of the theoretical aspect, and FORUT-Sri Lanka has taken some bold steps in challenging masculinities in the programmatical aspects, FORUT-Norway can show leadership in actively encouraging partner organisations to explore masculinities issues that may be relevant, and strategise as necessary. Both FORUT-Sri Lanka and FORUT-Sierra Leone for instance, have raised some concerns that as women take on more responsibility for expenditure on children's education and health, it allows greater leeway for men in some families to become less responsible, instead of identifying other responsibilities. Again, although the bulk of the microfinance literature, as well as evidence from this evaluation, suggests a reduction in domestic violence following increased access to financial resources and group support through microfinance initiatives, there is also some limited evidence in the literature that insistence on attendance at meetings and increased empowerment has led to an increase in domestic tension, and in some cases violence. Proactively working on masculinities issues would therefore be a logical step.
- **Increase attention to issues of gender and sexuality:** While all the partner organisations have a good basic awareness on issues related to gender, there may be a case for providing some partner organisations like FORUT-Sierra Leone with technical support to help staff understand and address issues related to gender and sexuality, including differential social and sexual norms, and how these relate to social controls, mobility, access to education and health, family



health expenditure patterns, and which in turn increases their responsiveness and ability to strategise towards improved gender equality outcomes in their work.

- **Assist organisations with theoretical and technical support to tease out complex gender issues:** Such issues, differentially according to organisational contexts, include gender-responsive budgeting, land and property rights for women; rights, protection and social security for women migrant workers; UN Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888 and 1889, and gender-based violence more broadly; gender and governance; and gender and HIV and AIDS. As some organisations have expressed the need to improve more formal gender impact assessments and the development of appropriate gender sensitive indicators for management information systems, this may also be a potential area for support.



Chapter 6

Concluding Remarks

The preceding chapters provide an orientation to the purposes and methodology of the evaluation and detailed and critical analyses of the Gender Programme as designed and implemented in FORUT-Sri Lanka, FORUT-Sierra Leone, and APSA in India. In addition, Chapter 5 provides insights into how gender is mainstreamed internally within FORUT-Norway and its partner organisations, as well as how it is mainstreamed externally into all the projects and programmes of all the five partner organisations that were not specifically part of the gender programme. The detailed recommendations relevant to each organisation have also been provided at the end of the particular chapter, as the organisation of each chapter is quite specific. An executive summary is also provided at the beginning of the report. As such, a standard conclusion is not provided at the end of the evaluation report. Rather, a few concluding remarks are presented with respect to the three main organisations which were studied as part of the evaluation of the Gender Programme, for consideration of the nature of the technical support and leadership that could be provided by FORUT-Norway.

6.1 FORUT-Sri Lanka: Since the completion of the evaluation, the majority of the activities of the Gender Programme have been hived off from FORUT-Sri Lanka to national NGOs, some of which have been newly formed. These have the responsibility of following through on the elements that remain to be completed or continued till the end of the programme phase. Some of these national NGOs are fortunate in that their human resources include some of the senior staff members of FORUT-Sri Lanka, with the expertise, contacts and institutional memories which are very significant for the successful continuation of the programme. However, these organisations will require handholding support from FORUT-Norway to ensure that internal mainstreaming of gender receives the same priority that it did in FORUT-Sri Lanka, which was required to maintain certain compliances as the national arm of an international NGO. It might be useful for FORUT-Norway to provide its new Sri Lankan national NGO partners with a checklist of institutional strengthening mechanisms and processes, with a view to ensuring that these continue as strong and ethically congruent partners of FORUT-Norway. These institutional strengthening mechanisms and processes will also help these new national NGOs to meet compliance requirements of other bilateral or multilateral funding agencies from which they may seek resources for their work at any point in the future.

6.2 APSA: APSA is clearly an organisation that leads from the front when it comes to gender, so much so that it is difficult to distinguish its specific gender programmes because of the thoroughness with which it weaves these elements through almost all of its activities. APSA's challenge now is to ensure that it works with equal commitment and creativity with adult men in the community and within its organisation, so that they can be equal partners in development.

Another point of departure for APSA is that it works exclusively with urban poor communities, and this means that certain strategies may have to be tailored to some of the realities of working with these communities. For instance, at the beginning of this programme phase, FORUT-Norway required that partner organisations carry out baseline surveys of the primary stakeholders that they worked with, to serve as points of comparisons for measuring results at the end of the programme. FORUT-Sierra Leone, due to paucity of time and technical resources, carried out a general survey primarily as a means of identifying communities with which it could implement this phase of the programme. FORUT-Sri Lanka carried out separate surveys for both GEE and GBV. Both these organisations work with more or less settled communities, and hence an endline survey is likely to clearly indicate the impact made by the programme. The reality of the slums in which APSA works is that there is a steady shift in the slum population. While a slum may have been in existence for thirty or forty years, its population changes from year to year, much faster than it would in a village in the rural areas where FORUT-Sri Lanka and FORUT-Sierra Leone work. A family of ultra-poor in-migrants from the village will first live on the footpath, then when its finances improve, move into a tent-like home of blue-plastic sheeting in a shanty town, and then, as their finances improve still further, into a shantytown where homes have walls and roofs made of old corrugated iron sheets, tin sheets and palm fronds; and then into slums with brick walls and corrugated iron roofs, etc. Thus, the population occupying the same slum is likely to alter significantly over five years: new entrants who require basic services will have moved in, while those whose circumstances have improved will move out to a lower economic class area, which is a step upwards from a slum. Hence a general baseline survey is unlikely to be comparable to a general endline survey in APSA's operational areas, and unlikely to give a representative indication of the work that may have gone in. Hence, it is recommended that instead of doing one general baseline survey, APSA should conduct a series of targeted, mini-surveys. In other words, APSA should carry out listings of households without ration cards, of individuals without Electoral Ids, individuals eligible for senior citizen, widow or disability pensions, individuals eligible for support for microcredit, individuals to be supported to start microbusinesses, etc., and performance measured against these listings. APSA as an

organisation is very sound with strategising and implementing exceptionally effective interventions on the ground. However, FORUT-Norway could provide assistance with academic support and technical backstopping to help think through areas in which APSA has comparatively less in-house experience.

6.3 FORUT-Sierra Leone: Although the national arm of FORUT-Norway in Sri Lanka, FORUT-Sri Lanka built up a strong identity for itself, evident in details like its strong advocacy presence in the country or even having a comprehensive website of its own. According to Mossige and Haarberg (2008), the Scanteam experts who carried out an organisational performance review of FORUT, including a field visit to Sierra Leone, FORUT-Sierra Leone was the second largest recipient of FORUT funds. However, the current evaluation suggests that the two decades that the organisation has worked does not appear to have translated into the growth of as strong a voice as an advocate on the national stage contributing to the country's development. The Scanteam evaluation also recommended that "in the future, FORUT should try to have even more partner focus and work more through local partners in all countries, including...Sierra Leone. In Sierra Leone, FORUT should start identifying potential local partners and see how they can be strengthened and involved in FORUT's work (Mossige & Haarberg, 2008, p.9)."⁵⁷

This evaluator concurs with this recommendation for multiple reasons. Firstly, while it appears to be reasonably well-funded, the Sierra-Leone national arm of FORUT appears to need a significant amount of organisational development support, and currently, the difference in capacity between FORUT-Norway and FORUT-Sierra Leone appears more marked than that between FORUT-Norway and the erstwhile FORUT-Sri Lanka, or for that matter, between it and any of the other partners considered in the course of this evaluation. Secondly, if the threats to working with microcredit and microsavings in a national context which does not include a well-developed banking sector in the rural areas, to provide back-up support for the safety of deposits, were to escalate or be actually realised, the fall-out, in terms of effect on credibility are likely to be much greater for an international NGO. Thirdly, it is much more difficult for an international NGO to raise the subject of and work on sensitive topics like female genital cutting, given the extent of political, social and religious support for the practice in the country, as compared to a national NGO, whose commitment to the national interest cannot be questioned. Attention to such subjects are critical if gender is being addressed holistically, to address important matters of gender-based violence and associated health issues. Fourthly, while an international NGO like FORUT is perceived as a source

⁵⁷ Mossige, A. & Haarberg, K. (2008). Organizational Performance Review of FORUT, Campaign for Development and Solidarity. Norad Report 23/2008 Review. Oslo: NORAD

of funding, and therefore finds it very difficult to raise local or international funds for work within Sierra Leone, national NGOs would be able to raise resources from a variety of funding agencies. For example, as suggested elsewhere in the report, funds for hardware in the sanitation sector could come from WASH programmes, of which there are many focused on Africa. Apart from this, funds to improve women's mobility could come from organisations like Cycling out of Poverty, funds for poverty alleviation from organisations like CIDA, funds for improving peri-urban agriculture and development related research from organisations like IDRC, collaborations with organisations like Planned Parenthood Federation of Sierra Leone and Marie Stopes International for support with SRHR, etc. This could mean that funds from FORUT could be used for the really important work of developing an excellent team, capable of empowering the community and implementing, managing and monitoring projects, as is the case with organisations like APSA and CWIN.

Overall, the Gender Programme has performed extraordinarily well in APSA and FORUT-Sri Lanka, and has had a good initial impact in Sierra Leone. All the partner organisations also understand the concepts of internal mainstreaming of gender and have implemented many of these. All the partner organisations except for FORUT-Sierra Leone have also understood and is implementing external mainstreaming of gender, and FORUT-Sierra Leone has made a beginning with this with its Child Rights programme.