

NORWEGIAN CHURCH AID - NCA

CENTRAL AMERICAN REGIONAL OFFICE
Guatemala and Nicaragua

EXTERNAL EVALUATION

PROGRAM FOCAL POINT: GENDER BASED
VIOLENCE

Period 2005-09

FINAL REPORT

External Evaluation Report

Written by:

Ada Zambrano and Kristina Rodahl

Guatemala, C. A. February 2010

ACRONYMS

COCODES	Consejos Comunitarios de Desarrollo
ACT	Action by Churches Together
DIAKONIA	Organización Cristiana de Cooperación
CAID	Christian Aid
FOKUS	Foro de Mujeres y Cuestiones de Desarrollo
AIN	Ayuda de la Iglesia Noruega
AMC	Asociación Médica Cristiana
BOOJ NOJ	Asociación Booj Noj
CAV	Centro de Atención a la Violencia contra las Mujeres
CECG	Consejo Ecuménico Cristiano de Guatemala
CEIBA	Asociación Ceiba
CEPREV	Centro de Prevención de la Violencia
CIEDEG	Conferencia de Iglesias Evangélicas de Guatemala
CIEETS	Centro Intereclesial de Estudios Teológicos y Sociales
CODEFEM	Colectiva para la Defensa de los Derechos de las Mujeres en Guatemala
COMMA	Asociación Comunitaria de Comalapa
DEMI	Defensoría de la Mujer Indígena (Guatemala)
FUNDESCO	Fundación para el Desarrollo Comunitario
KAQLA	Grupo de Mujeres Mayas Kaqlá
GGM	Grupo Guatemalteco de Mujeres
IEPADES	Instituto de Enseñanza para el Desarrollo Sostenible
OBF	Organizaciones Basadas en la Fe
ODM	Objetivos de Desarrollo del Milenio
POP NOJ	Asociación Pop Noj
MOLOJ	Asociación Política de Mujeres Mayas - MOLOJ
PPG	Perspectiva de equidad de género
REM	Red Ecuménica de Mujeres
UKUXBE	Asociación Ukuxbe
VBG	Violencia Basada en Género
SEPREM	Secretaría Presidencial de la Mujer (Guatemala)
INIM	Instituto Nicaragüense de la Mujer
CONAPREVI	Coordinadora Nacional para la Prevención de la Violencia Intrafamiliar

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Executive Summary

One of the standing thematic priorities for Norwegian Church Aid – NCA, is “Women and Men working on Gender Based Violence”, that is warranted in the **Global Strategic Plan (GSP)** 2005-2009; in this framework, as part of the learning activities, this evaluation has been done on the *results* and on the *lessons learned* obtained from the Central American Regional Office in the implementation of this thematic priority.

In this development report, the focus is on the main institutional and programmatic activities that have been developed in this five year period and how they have impacted the work towards equity and against the GBV from the Regional Office; likewise, attention is paid to the NCA Central America (Guatemala and Nicaragua) accomplishments, limitations and challenges in collaboration with their counterparts, when implementing the thematic priority of Gender Equity and the Gender Based Violence; and also value the NCA commitments towards the principles of responsibility and transparency.

During the last three years of this period, the relationship between the Regional Office and the Main Office in Oslo has been much more effective. With the revision of the GSP as of the year 07, this global plan has become a much clearer operational tool to guide the work; the possibility of contextualizing it in the region has been taken and the thematic resource has been used in a more effective way.

The incorporation of Gender Equity as a cross-section theme and the GBV as a thematic main line, has had its difficulties in this process, mainly the solitary work that had to be carried out during the first two years of the period; the weak relationship with the Oslo Main Office and the work overload. Also, during this period, it was a challenge to fit the projects of the counterparts into the standing strategies of the GSP. Because of this the Program should have been called **Protection against Violence** and Insecurity that has included paying attention to violence against women, as well as to citizen’s insecurity; it has taken into account the sub Thematic of armed violence, the rights of migrant people, intra family violence, femicide, peace and reconciliation, and violence in youth gangs.

This situation was overcome as of 2007 with the new GSP and the arrival of the new Representative for the Regional Office, and the institutional line became clearer to incorporate the focuses of Equity and GBV. Likewise, the revision of the GSP was the opportunity for the Regional Office to submit a proposal of sub regional changes on the line of the GBV that were accepted by **NCA Main Headquarters**. Starting here, the big lines of work were redefined, emphasis was placed on implementing specific activities, and other thematic nature counterparts are selected. For this reason, the main line of GBV and the cross-cutting section of Gender Equity take on force as of the year 2008 and the **reinforcement** begins of the possibilities of incorporating Gender Equity and GBV into the other programs of the Regional Office (HIV-AIDS, Water and Sanitation, and Emergencies), although between officials and Programs **Assistant**, the interrelation occurs in practice, it is still necessary to work on a strategy and institutionalize it, **that is to say, that in addition to carrying out details in the plans and programs, you also have to put them into practice and document them adequately.**

An important point is that during the five year period 2005-2009, the Regional Office has worked from a Focus based on Rights, seeing that all projects be approached under this

framework. A void is that the Focus based on Rights does not make any direct reference to the specific rights of women and neither does it make constant reference to the international frameworks that protect the rights of women and make the States responsible for the compliance. It would be convenient to incorporate this specificity in order to strengthen the political vision of the focus towards women's work.

Since Gender Equity is a cross-section line, all counterparts are requested to incorporate it into their work; since the **Program of Protection against Violence and Insecurity**, special efforts have been done, such as **the dissemination of the GEA Manual, and in Emergencies work was started with the IASC Manual, but these advancements are not enough to have a strong level of ownership that allows the counterparts to put their tools into practice and systematize good practices**. It is assumed that most organizations are looking on their own for this type of advisory services, but it is evident that more training is needed to achieve an efficient cross-section of gender equity at organizational level.

Regarding the thematic line of GBV, the Regional Office has carried out dialogues with its counterparts about the content of the concept; in Guatemala the result was a reconceptualization toward Violence against Women; with the organizations of Nicaragua, the broadness of the concept was more accepted, it is recognized as a global concept that includes injustices, discrimination and oppression against women.

The Program of **Protection against Violence and Insecurity**, has a **methodological** strategy for both countries that prioritizes: (i) the awareness of women and men (formation and information); (ii) facilitate the institutional practice (exchange, analytical tools, pay attention to emergencies) and, (iii) incidence (influence of religious leaders, government officials, etc.) in order to act based on the awareness that inequitable power relations between women and men are a violation of the human rights of women, which is being implemented with relevance and there is a great wealth of working methods, **but the more systematic facilitation function is lacking between the work of Faith Based Organizations – FBO and the Resource Counterparts – RC**.

As part of the **cross-cutting methodological strategy of Gender equity to the interior of NCA**, a sensitization process with the staff of the Regional Office has also occurred, and it has contributed to modify personal values and practices, but a systematic follow up is lacking. **It is positive that** NCA is adequately complying with the intention of making visible its position against violence towards women with slogans in the documents and official correspondence, with posters and explanatory booklets, amongst other things, and it also involves its counterparts in these activities.

Currently, the main work from the Program of **Protection against Violence and Insecurity** involves seven counterparts, four in Guatemala and three in Nicaragua, of which three are FBO organizations. The **Resource Counterparts** are those that have greater thematic experience and are looking for an integral approach between equity and gender based violence. The FBO's, in the framework of development projects that include other thematic areas such as organized participation, access to water and sanitation, benefits from an organic agricultural practice, for example, their strongpoint is the increase of participation, equity and protection for women; **with the FBO's**, although the problem of GBV is being focused on, it cannot be said that it **is** the main point of their work. Nevertheless, it is positive that all counterparts have taken up a political position in favor of denouncing and bringing to light GBV, an institutional attitude that

contributes to the prevention of violence against women, especially in the rural townships and communities where access to information is much more limited.

Although the intention of the Regional NCA Office is to work strongly on femicide as the extreme form of violence against women, it is the focus of only one Resource Counterpart in Guatemala, and that is GGM; although it is also approached in the ideas reflected under the framework of other types of violence, such as the case of armed violence with IEPADES, of intrafamily violence and amongst youths with CEPREV; and in Nicaragua the talk is about institutionalized femicide upon denying the right of women to sexual and reproductive health services. Nevertheless, it is necessary to define if other counterparts or projects that focus directly on femicide should be added, and to which one of the edges should support be reoriented in order to confront this forceful problem.

Regarding the focus of the GSP, it is obvious that as transformation activities, the following have been carried out: support to increase access to education of girls; although formal education is not a strong component of the portfolio of the Regional Office, it has been part of the specific objectives of the Country Plan for Guatemala 2005-2009, through the support for four school scholarship projects addressed mainly for Mayan girls.

Regarding the increase in the number of men who are focusing on GBV, progress has been made in the sensitization on gender equity, but the need to focus men on GBV in a systematic way is still lacking. Currently, there is an active participation of the counterparts of the Regional Office in the Campaign of the “16 days of activism against violence toward women” coming from the Regional Office, that promotes that the counterparts take up these activities.

The natural disasters and complex emergencies Protection Program of the Regional Office in coherence with its strategic framework and the Gender Policy of ACT, includes in its work the protection of women against violence and psychosocial assistance for women, also based on the IASC Manual. So far it has not been possible to incorporate tools for risk management that bring to light and prioritize the work with women that are in process, so that GBV becomes a priority in the agenda of the ACT Forums.

From the projects, there is an emphasis in increasing the access of women into the processes of organization / participation / formation / information / proposal. Which means creating the foundation for women to become the owners of their rights as citizens, and this points in a wise way to giving more power to women. In order to contextualize the GSP to the Central American region, no specific projects have been supported to increase access of women to basic sexual and reproductive services, but these thematics are being approached with some counterparts as part of sexual violence against women and girls. It can be said that with the projects promoted during the five year period by the GBV Program, there are more women who know their sexual rights and their link to sexual violence, through their participation in organizational and formation processes that delve into the rights of women.

The Regional Office has organized several workshops with their Main Counterparts and their Resource Counterparts on specific subjects such as Focus based on rights; Gender Based Violence / Violence against women, and the role of churches and FBO's on these themes. All counterparts refer to these workshops as offering valuable spaces to obtain relevant knowledge and to meet with organizations with which, otherwise, it would not have been possible to have

a discussion on gender equity and violence against women, as well as exchange work methods and experiences in different contexts.

These horizontal meetings with sectarian nature show a great potential to increase the impacts in the fight against GBV. In the same manner, knowing each other and the trust developed amongst the organizations are important and help to identify new thematic and geographic alliances with specific projects, both with NCA as with other partners, through new perspectives where common work methods and objectives can be achieved.

At NCA there is no **structured incidence strategy** for the region on the main lines of equity and GBV, but activities are carried out linked to the participation in Forums and Country Boards. Each counterpart also has its own ways, although not explicit either, of making advocacy to the powers of the State. This aggregate of advocacy (or incidence) ways could be reinforced by clarifying **what role NCA should play** and what is understood and expected of the advocacy in each country and in the region.

For monitoring **and evaluation from the point of view of gender equity**, we have the Gender Empowerment Assessment –GEA- tool. In 2009 half of that tool was incorporated into the projects format of the Regional Office, but **it has been taken up gradually by the counterparts; as of this year its use has become compulsory so that its use starts to become institutionalized and makes the planning and monitoring procedures easier, for the counterparts as well as for NCA. The orientation of planning towards obtaining results is still missing, in order to achieve greater efficiency in the implementation of the projects and make the joint ambitions visible in a better way.**

The institutional relationship between NCA and its counterparts is considered to be transparent and solidary. The **added value of NCA** is that it has promoted development and cooperation from horizontal and ethical positions, and giving equilibrium to the power relations between donors and beneficiaries. Likewise, value is given to its commitment to work from a focus based on rights; insistence and promotion of working in alliance; positioning of the importance of the problem of GBV; support to institutionalization of the perspective of gender equity in the organizations and their projects; and the will to increase advocacy towards churches with a theological vision of rights.

Based on the analysis of the main points of the evaluation of this report, we include a chapter on conclusions and recommendations, reference to which is made both at NCA regional / country level, as well as at global level.

Introduction

Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) is one of the largest international NGO's of Norway. It is a diaconal organization based in the church that Works in the whole world, providing assistance in long term development, aid in emergencies and advocacy (incidence). NCA shares a vision of a fair world and works with people and organizations of diverse creeds and faiths. As such, NCA empowers the people, subjects to rights, and fights for achieving human dignity without importance to race, nationality, gender, political conviction or religious beliefs.

One of the standing thematic priorities for NCA is “Women and Men working on Gender Based Violence”. NCA defines Gender Based Violence (GBV) as the physical, sexual and

psychological violence aimed specifically against people due to their gender roles and identities, mainly violence against women. This is a great violation against the human rights of women, and increasingly more and more it represents a problem for the development of women. Therefore, NCA has prioritized promotion and respect for the rights of women from a holistic point of view, which comes from recognizing the complex reality that surrounds women in the different stages of their lives, and thus, wants to offer integral answers.

In Central America, NCA prioritizes the work with two countries: Guatemala and Nicaragua. Through its **Protection against Violence and Insecurity Program** it focuses its work on GBV, working mainly with counterpart organizations who also involve other local groups and organizations in order to achieve their objectives. Amongst these groups there are community groups of women and men, groups of religious women, church and faith based organizations (FBO) leaders, at different levels. And the focus is on giving support to impoverished and oppressed persons, especially to women, boys and girls, who are vulnerable to violence at all levels, due to the lack of protection, equity, citizen participation and empowerment.

- **Scope and objectives of the evaluation**

NCA, in its Strategic Global Plan (GSP) 2005-2009, states that a profound documentation of the *results* and of the *lessons learned* must be provided for each one of the five thematic strategies and the prioritized countries during its standing. This will allow NCA to ensure and improve its development and to show its *relevance, legitimization and effectiveness*.

With this basis, NCA has carried out a thematic global evaluation of its priority “*Women and men working on Gender Based Violence*”, that covers Guatemala, Mali and Nicaragua with specific exercises, and the whole Institutional Program with a documentary evaluation. Under this framework, the purpose of this evaluation exercise has been to document the accomplishments that were achieved, limitations and challenges of NCA Central America (Guatemala and Nicaragua) in collaboration with its counterparts, in implementing the thematic priority of Gender Based Violence; and also to value NCA’s commitments towards the principles of responsibility and transparency.

This external valuation exercise has examined the period from January 1, 2005, to December 31, 2009. Even though the reviewed work has been by country, the evaluation has been focused from a regional perspective, recognizing the impact of the work in this larger scope and the links between the counterparts to promote participation, equity and protection for women, from a perspective of rights. Likewise, the analysis has taken into consideration how GBV is integrated into other thematic areas of the country programs of the NCA Regional Office and it has reviewed the coherence between the comprehension of GBV between NCA and the counterparts. And in the same way it wants to contribute to the knowledge of the implementation of the main line of GBV at global level, as it is a part of this joint exercise.

The specific objectives for the evaluation have been:

- Evaluating the degree of progress and scope of the Specific Objectives stated in the Guatemala and Nicaragua Program, regarding interventions on GBV.

- Examining the relevance of the GBV focus of NCA in Guatemala and Nicaragua. (For example, if it reflects and is synergic both with the national and regional priority focuses, as well as with the plans.)
- Evaluating whether the implementation ways, integration and intervention of the GBV focus are sustainable, relevant, efficient and effective within the main areas of activities of NCA (emergency preparations and assistance, long term development and advocacy).
- Identifying the limits and challenges that need reinforcement in the GBV programs/projects of the counterparts that NCA is financing.
- Documenting non planned effects.
- Identifying Lessons Learned.

Both the scopes as well as the purposes of the evaluation have oriented this external exercise in order to have a real rapprochement with the central american context, providing emphasis to the GBV problem; analyzing the relevancy, efficacy and effectiveness of the design against the implementation of the Program; identifying NCA's added value in both countries; and issuing recommendations for the NCA global goals and for its Specific Objectives within the thematic priority of GBV.

○ **Methodological strategy**

For this evaluation exercise, NCA decided to form a team of two consultants, one local Main Consultant, who has been in charge of the leadership of the evaluation, based on her professional and thematic experience, and she has taken up the main responsibility in the presentation of the report; and an Assistant Consultant, who is a part of the team of the Main Office in Oslo, who through her good knowledge of the region, her broad experience within NCA, and her lack of link with the work of the Regional Office, has been able to contribute to the institutional learning without conflict of interests (divided loyalty).

In this way, as a team, the phases of collection of information, analysis and presentation of findings were planned and oriented. The method used has been qualitative, incorporating institutional perspectives (from NCA and its counterparts), thematic (focus based on rights, rights of women, GBV) and contextuels (violence, insecurity, corruption, impunity). Collection of information was favored through semi structured interviews (individual and group interviews) from the generating questions agreed upon in the framework of the evaluation. Likewise, a study has been carried out of the main Global NCA documents, the documents that warrant the performance of the Regional Office and of its **Protection against Violence and Insecurity Program** in both countries; as well as the projects' documents of the counterparts and other products related to the GBV main thematic line, and more broadly with the work done regarding women's participation, equity and protection.

The people involved in the evaluation were: NCA's staff, **both in Guatemala as well as in Nicaragua**, Representatives of NCA's Counterparts, those responsible for the projects, leaders of grassroots level organizations; Women and men associated to the community level groups; a representative of the Norwegian Embassy in Nicaragua; representatives of the ACT Forum in Guatemala and Nicaragua; Women (and one man) leaders of organizations of cooperation from

the women's and social movement of both countries; and two women representatives at local level of government bodies in El Quiché, Guatemala.

Although the Regional Office in all its programs includes around 40 counterparts, who in some way are incorporating into their work the promotion of gender equity and protection against violence based on gender, for the purposes of this evaluation and the short period it covers, a sample was chosen of seven counterparts who are directly linked with the Protection against Violence and Insecurity Program, who form the universe of the evaluation. The organizations that were included in the evaluation in Nicaragua were: CIEETS (FBO and main counterpart); CAV (FBO and resource counterpart) and CEPREV (SO and resource counterpart). In Guatemala: Guatemalteco de Mujeres (Secular Organization and resource counterpart); CONSEJO ECUMÉNICO (FBO and main counterpart); CODEFEM (SO and resource counterpart); Representatives of the ACT Forum Guatemala and Nicaragua.

It has been foreseen that the evaluation process will take 25 effective work days, from January 20th to March 19th, 2010. This period includes time for synthesis/independent work, 11 days in the field, outside of the capitals, work with independent NCA players/partners and a consolidation meeting of the global evaluation in Europe.

Regional Context

Although all constitutions of the **States of the Central American region formally guarantee rights to their people**, the structural historical problems persist in the unequal distribution of wealth, in the relations of subordination and oppression of the State towards the citizens, the unequal access of women to the enjoyment of goods and services; racism and discrimination toward indigenous people and afro descendants, specially toward women. In addition, these inequities particularly affect women and men who live in the rural zones of the region.

The **region continues being a red focus on the subject of violation of human rights, insecurity and impunity**, diverse groups continue transgressing due to the national and transnational networks of corruption that conceal mainly businessmen, the military, government officials and former officials. These networks, that have become parallel powers of the State, also have links with drug trafficking that as a criminal activity, limits the work from a focus on rights. The structures of this power that replaces the State on many occasions, exert strong control over the people and involve them more and more in their illicit activities; it is alarming how they are expanding, in Guatemala there is talk about the accelerated growth of two branches of the Mexican cartels, who have extended their presence into 10 of the 23 departments of the country¹; in Nicaragua this problem is also growing, in the Caribbean Coast it plays a perverse role by using youngsters, and mainly women, as part of their drug and persons trafficking, that has international dimensions.

The problem of **drug and girls and women trafficking is increasing** in the region and it is perceived as another form of violence and slavery of women. Despite its forcefulness, the problem is approached very slightly within the women's organizations, and one can see that there is a need for instruments and mechanisms to follow it up at all levels; at present, the Central American Feminist Network, where women organizations participate, both from

¹ Periodismo de investigación y CIACS. El Periódico y FUNDADESC. Guatemala, 8 de febrero 2009.

Guatemala as well as from Nicaragua, is coordinating alert efforts from the expelling countries to influence the receiving countries, but there are not enough human and financial Resources to take the subject to the agendas of the region and work jointly with the States and with other players, due to the high risk involved in the work of disarticulating these mafias.

The **religious fundamentalisms in this Region have had a boom in influencing the increase of oppression and subordination of women from the States that** mainly affect the freedom of women, imposing a centralizing, dogmatic and patriarchal project of the nation. The negative effects have been felt and they can be perceived in the intention of exerting control over the women's bodies, sexuality and autonomy; example, it is the judicial retrocession that happened in Nicaragua with the penalization of therapeutic abortion. These conservative expressions **are using** their powers to weaken or modify the public policies in ways that are profoundly discriminating, both for women as for other marginated groups, such as the ethnic and sexual minorities. Therefore this is extremely important for Guatemala as well as for Nicaragua: the actions that are being done from an ecumenical focus by organizations such as CIEETS, CIEDEG, CECG, to approach the gender inequities with women and men, and make violence against women visible from a feminist theological focus; the efforts to influence religious leaders and congregations are very important because in both countries, at least 80% of the population say that they belong to a specific church. Likewise, the work of reinforcing Ecumenical Women Networks and Movements is very important, because they incorporate a great part of rural women as a part of the affirmative activities for the empowerment of women within the churches and faith based organizations.

In the region, retrocessions can also be perceived in the **States, who tend to impose government programs with family focuses that restrict the rights of women**, example, Hambre Cero (Zero Hunger) in Nicaragua and Mi Familia Progresiva (My Family Progresses) in Guatemala. That is why it is necessary to continue with advocacy toward the State and citizen surveillance so that the national mechanisms in favor of women, Instituto Nicaragüense de la Mujer – INIM – and the Secretaría Presidencial de la Mujer (Presidential Secretariat for Women) – SEPREM – **la Coordinadora Nacional para la Prevención de la Violencia Intrafamiliar y contra las Mujeres (the National Coordinator for Prevention of Intrafamily Violence and against Women) – CONAPREVI, la Defensoría de la Mujer Indígena (The Defense Bureau for Indigenous Women) – DEMI, amongst others**, maintain their autonomy and play the role they are meant to play in ensuring that the national and international commitments are complied with, for the progress of women.

The **difficulties that persist in Guatemala and Nicaragua to consolidate the democracies** are also barriers against ensuring the effective exercise of human, economic and social, political and cultural rights of indigenous and mestizo women. The indigenous and afro descendant women are those **that are more** affected, those that geographically live in the poorest zones of both countries, and who, in general terms have less access to education, health, land, housing and paid jobs, and their community and collective rights are not respected either.

Even so, in the reconstruction process of the social and popular fabric **the presence, activism and proposal of the women movements have been an important social strength**. It is encouraging that the organizations of indigenous women in Guatemala, like the Group of Mayan –Kaqlá Women and the Political Association of Mayan – Moloj Women have become social and political players, reinforcing an expression of the women's movement who exert

pressure for the enforcement of international agreements² and for the fulfilment of their individual and collective rights; as well as for the implementation of effective policies against racism and discrimination towards indigenous people. The women movements, today, present regional transcendence because of the symbolic and political courage shown when questioning the States about their patriarchal, racist and discriminatory practices. Thanks to their radicalism and proposal, progress has been achieved above all in social, cultural and judicial matters.

Due to **multiple efforts since two decades ago, the organized and political participation of women has increased**, but it still is low, for example, few women participate in decision making structures of mixed organizations at different levels; very few women run for office for public positions; and only a few are in their government cabinets. Although Windows have been opened for citizen participation of women, Consejos de Desarrollo y los Consejos del Poder Ciudadano (Development Councils and Councils of Citizen Power **amongst others**) in practice the limitations to exercise that right are still large, women have little experience in public participation, many are illiterate and speak only one language, their low self-esteem and insecurity is a self-limiting factor, home tasks take a lot of time and above all, the male chauvinism (“machismo”) exercised by men restrains their participation and mobilization. Despite this complex reality, many women and mixed organizations, supported by the solidary cooperation, are **taking advantage of the government and citizen spaces to overcome the multiple exclusions of women**, Guatemala is an example with the formulation of Local Development of Women Agendas, that prioritize the attention given to practical and strategic needs of women, linked to the execution of the municipal or township budgets. This has required a strong sensitizing work with the local authorities, so that the mayors support the activities of women and also the Women Municipal Offices. Subjects such as education for women, school scholarships for girls and seed capital for productive projects have been included in the agendas; very rarely has it been possible to include the problem of violence, this shows that work must continue in order to make this problem visible and treat it as a public matter in the communities and not only as an intrafamily problem.

Because of the efforts of the women’s movement, **making violence against women visible has increased**, it has made possible the creation of mechanisms such as Comisaría de la Mujer, Comisiones Gubernamentales contra la Violencia, redes y observatorios ciudadanos (Women Commissariat, Government Commissions against Violence, citizen’s networks and observatories) to bring to attention, sanction and records of the different types of violence against women and their most exacerbated expression, **femicide / feminicide**³. The greater amount of data available and the technical progress made, have shown that violence against women is not a private matter, but a historical phenomenon, of social nature, that happens to women with the aggravation of age and poverty; and that it is used to perpetuate the male power in the patriarchal societies.⁴ It is alarming that since a decade ago Guatemala is amongst the ten countries at world level, together with Nicaragua, although with lower numbers, but the

² Al 2008 solamente 20 países habían ratificado el Convenio 169 de la OIT, dentro de los cuáles figura Guatemala.

³ BOLETINA. Año 2, Número 3, Guatemala, noviembre 2006. El concepto de femicidio ayuda a comprender el carácter absolutamente político y social del problema: solo es posible porque socialmente existen dispositivos y lógicas culturales que han institucionalizado y reproducen relaciones de poder opresivas entre los sexos. Existe, sin embargo, un debate que enfrenta como distintos los conceptos de “femicidio y feminicidio”. El mismo aduce que el primero es un anglicismo que deviene de “femicide” que refiere a los asesinatos por odio a mujeres, realizado por hombres, mientras que el concepto de “feminicidio” amplía al primero... porque sólo existe feminicidio cuando hay impunidad. En Guatemala el movimiento de mujeres ha posicionado el término de “femicidio”, mientras que en Nicaragua es el de “feminicidio”.

⁴ Aguilar Th. Ana L. BOLETINA: informe estadístico de muertes violentas de mujeres. Año 2, No. 2. Guatemala, marzo de 2006.

numbers of assassinations of women have been increasing, following the tendency to triple since the year 2,000 to this date; Guatemala is the country with the highest record of femicides in the Central American region, a number that has had an increase of 33% from the year 2,000 to 2009.⁵ The most important activities that can be identified to confront violence against women and femicide are associated **to two levels of intervention, one refers to the responsibility of the State, and the other one, to the construction and reinforcement spaces for full citizenship for women**, where the women organizations and their activities coordinated with other social movements and the State, have been fundamental. In the region, there is progress in creating legislative frameworks for the protection of the rights and life of women in legal terms.

The most important activities that can be identified to confront violence against women and femicide are associated to **two levels of intervention, one refers to the responsibility of the State, and the other one to the construction and reinforcement spaces of full citizenship for women**, where the organizations of women and their actions, coordinated with other social movements and the State have been fundamental. In the region, there is progress in creating legislative frameworks for the protection of the rights and lives of women; an encouraging example on judicial matters is that both Guatemala and Nicaragua have national laws that prevent Intrafamily Violence, and in Guatemala, in the year 2008, the **Law against Femicide and other forms of violence against Women** was passed, Guatemala being the second country in the Mesoamerican region, after Mexico, to legislate the murder of women in a specific manner. Although these advancements are given more value in political than in legal terms from the perspective of the Women's Movement, since the passed laws still have gaps and require time and resources in order for the judicial system to operate in favor of capturing and sentencing the perpetrators.

Despite all the efforts made, **there still is a high percentage of men who keep on perceiving women as their property** and the male control over the bodies of the women still is exercised through ill treatment and blows, sexual harassment, **rape, incest and murder; in addition to other forms of oppression, exclusion, and repression towards women**. This situation shows that there still are social images of oppression, violence and discrimination against women in their most perverse and severe manifestations, and that the work of sensitizing citizens, both women and men, still is a priority, as well as the empowerment of women to stop and denounce violence based on gender.

It is also **necessary to work on political advocacy** in a parallel way, to break the impunity with which these crimes are perpetuated; as well as reinforce the judicial systems because citizens accusations shows only few results; the victims, their family members or those that represent them, face institutions that demonstrate the government incompetence and ineffectualness, to prevent that victims and their family members who go looking for justice, repeatedly find only indifference in taking care of the accusations and convicting the murderers, since the convicting sentences, in the whole region are approximately at an average of 8% of the cases.⁶

Reality shows that **violence prevention and eradication and the murders of women continue being one of the greatest challenges** on the subject of human rights. Since this

⁵ Estadísticas proporcionados por el Grupo Guatemalteco de Mujeres. febrero de 2010.

⁶ www.cerigua.com

problema is very complex it also demands the governments to take definite measures against trafficking of arms and drugs, reconvertng their police and jail systems, make the laws against violence towards women work effectively; the same as with the churches, cooperation, social movements **and society in general**, take up institutional and personal positions and practices that send positive messages, free of attitudes and practices regarding sex, racism and patriarchy, that promote more human and democratic ways of living together between women and men.

In this sense, the **support and accompaniment that solidary cooperation provides to the movements and organizations of women for their reinforcement and political consolidation** is extremely important, that allows them to accumulate strengths and experiences, as well as the reconstruction of the social and popular fields, both at the national as at the regional level. And above all in the commitment to work from ethical and political positions that have impact on the eradication of exclusion, injustice and the weakness of state institutions. Likewise, solidary cooperation must maintain the responsibility of caring out critical readings of the problems of women in each country and region, and of its own objectives and ways of working, in addition of situating itself adequately in the themes, agendas and debates **of the movement of women in a critical way and approaching the relations of inequity and power, also pointing towards removing the structural obstacles that prevent the full enjoyment of human, political and social rights of women, showing in this way a genuine commitment to work without imposing agendas and build relations that do not reproduce symbols of dominance.**

Main Findings

1. The GSP, the regional and country plans

At the Regional Office of Central America, regarding the Global Strategic Plan – GSP, Since 2005 there have been two situations: one, the ambiguity and flexibility caused by a highly general plan without the support of the Main (Central) Office that did not facilitate the concretion of the work, and tension between the global ambitions and the regional possibilities of carrying it out. This was the feeling of the programmatic team during the first two years of the five year period 2005-2009, and it was reflected in the Regional Plan.

In the year 2005, the objectives that the GSP states were hardly linked to the Project portfolio that existed at the time; it was more linked to contributing to guarantee human security through giving follow up to the compliance of the Peace Accords and national reconciliation processes in Perú and Guatemala. One intention was that NCA should achieve the involvement of its counterparts in the frameworks of the national security plans that were to be formulated by PAHO, seeing insecurity as a Health problema; this was never achieved because those plans were never created, not in Guatemala or in Nicaragua. Their emphasis was not on women, but on citizenship. At this moment we had counterparts such as CIEDEG, FUNDESCO, la Pastoral de Movilidad Humana (the Human Mobility Pastoral) in Guatemala; in addition to taking care of counterparts in Perú, El Salvador, Brazil and Cuba. It is evident that the amount of countries and projects demanded a lot of effort from the Program Officials, and also added to the fact that the responsibilities were by country and not thematic.

Because of this situation, since the year 2006 the Regional Office proposes the modification of the Program for Central America, wherein the proposal is to adjust the activities in order to directly take care of the protection against violence and insecurity of women through the approach of: peace accords and truth commission; domestic violence / intrafamily violence; small and light arms proliferation linked to the high indexes of armed violence; prevention of youth violence in gangs and protection of the rights of the migrant population, specially of the women.

As of the year 2007 the thematic changes begin, and the affected the country programs in a positive way and allowed the identification of new counterparts and more funds within NCA. With the modification of the objectives, the focus on gender equity and violence against women starts to be stronger, but it is not total. Until this year, emphasis on the work against violence towards women had taken place mainly in Guatemala, since in Nicaragua the emphasis was on HIV AIDS. With the change of the programmatic strategy of going from attention by country to thematic attention, as of the year 2008 the programmatic development of VBG was favored as well as the cross sectionalization of Gender Equity in Nicaragua, showing the need of hiring a Programs Assistant with headquarters in Managua to facilitate the relation and follow up of all the Programs of the Regional Office in that country.

For the year 2009-2010, in harmony with the extension of the GSP until 2010, VBG is emphasized as the main priority of the Regional Office and it is applied as the cross section main line on the thematic aspects of the current Regional plan that is itemized in detail in the country plans of Guatemala and Nicaragua. It is very important to point out that during this

period the Regional Office takes on this thematic as the central main line that involves its three Programs; it is until this moment that the cross cutting of equity begins in the three programs.

The Global Plan was adjusted in a gradual process from 2005 to 2009, the main focuses and the work methods described in the GSP, such as Focus based on Rights, the strategy based on mobilization and empowerment, have been emphasized to challenge the bearers of obligations and the development of alliances. Likewise, assistance in emergency situations, the work of long term development and lobbying are considered important methods in both national plans.

Amongst the “groups with most influence” (stakeholders) emphasized in the GSP in the country plans, reference is made to churches and faith based organizations (FBO), other organizations based on faith, that for Guatemala could be the indigenous organizations that work from the Maya spirituality; and the resource organizations (that are referred to in the GSP as organizations based on values), civil society players and the national and local governments (as state players), meaning it is clear who should be involved. Reference is also made to alliances with international institutions as part of the relations strategy of NCA. But no reference is made to intergovernmental institutions and organizations, neither to transnational cooperation nor to enterprises as work (job) objectives or influence, despite the fact that they are included in the GSP.

2. Institutionalization of Gender Equity and VBG in the NCA Regional Office

In the last three years of this period, the relationship with the Main (Central) Office in Oslo has been much more effective, and there is more access to the advisory resources. With the revision of the GSP in the year 07, the GSP has become a clearer operational tool to orient work, to begin the concretion of the guidelines and with the possibility of contextualizing it in the region. It has contributed to currently having, at the Main (Central) Office in Oslo, more people in different departments who are interested and have the capabilities to support the cross cutting of Gender Equity and the focus of Violence Based on Gender VBG.

As has been mentioned, until 2007 the Violence and Insecurity Program included more countries of CA and also of South America, so, the dispersion was large and the distribution of responsibilities was thematic; the programmatic / administrative overload was very heavy and less efficient; and that did not allow thinking more profoundly about the main line of VBG and the cross cutting of gender equity. It seems that NCA was an aggregate of countries; as of the revision of the GSP, greater internal coherence was sought, and that favored the work of the Regional Office in regard to these two thematics.

The incorporation of Gender Equity as the main cross cutting line and VBG as the thematic main line has had its programmatic difficulties, one is that at the beginning the Programs Officer worked alone, with the resource of her experience and her relationship with feminist organizations and individuals, it seemed that her position was more personal than institutional. There was little strategic clarity and also her relationship with the Main (Central) Office was weak, because support and direct coordination had been limited and the thematic resource at Oslo's Main Headquarters was very isolated. As of 2007, with the new Representative for the Regional Office, the internal dialogue within the team increased as well as with the

counterparts; the institutional line becomes clearer, although the mandate already existed, it became evident that it was necessary to combine both things, mandate and political will, to advance in the cross cutting of gender equity.

Despite the progress during part of the 2005-07 period, it has been a challenge to make The projects of the counterparts coincide with the standing GSP strategies. An example is that in the GSP the focus has been on Violence Based on Gender, and for the Regional Office (Guatemala and Nicaragua) it is more general, as it includes violence against women and also citizen insecurity. The Program implemented during the 2005-09 period has been called Protection against Violence and Insecurity and it has approached the sub thematic of armed violence, rights of migrant people, intrafamily violence, femicide, peace and reconciliation, violence in youth gangs. Under projects of investigation / dissemination of information, data bases on violence, sensitization / awareness, advocacy toward public policies, increase in the participation of women, analysis of the rights of women from theological perspectives.

This has been due to the need of making the program more flexible, and to include some of the main lines of the counterparts with whom long term commitments had been agreed upon, and above all, that there was interest of the Regional Office in continuing supporting them. Likewise, negotiations were carried out with the counterparts to reorient the work that they were already doing toward gender equity; in this way we have been advancing with some difficulties, because male leaderships can still be identified, resistant and patriarchal, within some FBOs. Also, the program was centered on protection against violence and insecurity, due to the high indexes of generalized violence that the region is experiencing.

The revision of the GSP was also the opportunity for the Regional Office to submit a proposal of sub regional changes on the main line of VBG, that were accepted by the **Main (Central) Headquarters in Oslo**. From here on the big lines of work were redefined; emphasis was made on implementing specific actions from the Regional Office, counterparts of thematic nature are selected that allow offering specific spaces to work on Gender Equity and VBG. Likewise, the approach to the VBG program is planned from the context of Guatemala and Nicaragua, and it is visualized more clearly, because agreements are signed with organizations that have immense experience regarding this problema.

Because of these reasons, the VBG main line and the cross cutting of Gender Equity take force as of the year 2008. It has been something positive that during the year 2009 more work was done to incorporate Gender Equity into emergency situations (protection and participation); and the meeting on **HIV AIDS** and Gender took place with the support of two thematic resources from the Central office (thematic resource for VBG, Emergencies and HIV). The personal and institutional commitment shown by the Representative of the Regional Office has been important for positioning both thematics, as well as the negotiations within NCA for receiving support from thematic advisors in order to reinforce capacities, create identity and exchange between regions, and consolidate teams to promote, coordinate and give counseling on the thematics to make them more professional.

The strategy that includes an internal process of awareness with the staff of the Regional Office in order to achieve better comprehension of the thematics in different environments, and as of this sensitization should include contributing to the modification of personal values and practices, is also being implemented, although not yet in a systematic way. The intention of making NCA's position against violence toward women in all institutional work more visible

has been fulfilled, with slogans on documents and official correspondence, with posters and explanatory booklets, amongst other things.

Coordination between Program Officers happens in practice, many times as a response to situations or specific activities, for example a thematic workshop on HIV-AIDS or Emergencies and Gender. **The fact that the Program Officers are sensitized, some more than others, on the priority of working in order to improve the situation of women and the eradication of VBG, contributes in a positive way to the thematic coordination, but it is necessary, and still lacking, that everybody use in a systematic way, from the perspective of gender, analytical and planning tools, and also link them to VBG prevention and eradication as part of their programmatic plan.**

It would be very useful that in a dialog process between thematic Advisors of the Central Office and the Officers of National Programs, specific guidelines were agreed upon for a VBG regional inter programmatic strategy, both for HIV as for A&S Emergencies; although general ideas exist on how to intervene, it has not been clearly expressed what the specific interests and possibilities are for each Program, and in addition, there has been no agreement yet regarding which could be the most useful analytical and methodological tools for the work of each Program. And above all, clarity about the joint positions (best) should be sought.

3. The focuses on rights, equity and VBG

- **Focus based on rights and the rights of women.**

NCA provides content to its Focus Based on Rights, supporting poor and vulnerable people so that through empowerment processes they become *Persons subject to Rights*; in this case, the women with whom it wants to promote gender equity in accessing the basic rights, opportunities and resources to reduce their vulnerabilities. Likewise, it wants to involve *Persons Bearers of Obligations* in the change, referring to individuals, groups or institutions who have the obligation of granting basic rights, and also those that have more power or resources than others. Looking for the situation where the rights of less favored people are complied with. The people designated as Legal Persons are also bearers of obligations insofar as they have more resources than others. Both, the poor and the less poor have rights and obligations to make sure that the rights of the majority are fully respected.

The Focus based on Rights has been a priority during the 2005-2009 period and in the same way it has been incorporated in the Plans of the Regional Office, hoping that all projects, in Guatemala as well as in Nicaragua, work under this framework. This focus implies the active involvement of the Legal Persons as part of the partner organizations in the planning, programming, execution, monitoring and evaluation processes (EMP). Currently, the Legal Persons are consulted about their needs, and these are the basis for management, but their involvement is still needed in the processes of valuation in order to promote thoughts that allow people at all levels to obtain lessons learned and good practices. **Also, the Regional Office must be realistic and reflect on the implications that the implementation of a planning, follow up, and participatory evaluation has up to the level of the Legal Persons, that implies that these actions, as well, be part of the NCA system itself.**

To point at a good understanding of the Focus based on Rights, the Regional Office has disseminated the conceptual concept and a discussion session of it was held with all the counterparts. A positive effect of promoting the focus based on rights is that the organizations have felt influenced, and they have also incorporated it to give content to their institutional work.

A void in this focus at global level is that it doesn't allude directly to the specific rights of women, regarding the full enjoyment of human, sexual and reproductive, social, political and economic rights; and neither specifically to the right of a life free of violence. At the Regional Office, with the **Protection against Violence and Insecurity Program**, although this framework is mentioned in the country plans, in the reports there is no **direct allusion to these international frameworks of rights for women**. The feminist counterparts, for example GGM and CODEFEM in Guatemala, do take them as a constant reference in their work.

To express a political position in favor of women, it is necessary to incorporate the international frameworks that protect the rights of women and make the States responsible of their compliance. For example, it is basic to include the International Convention for the Elimination of all types of Discrimination against Women – CEDAW -, and the Interamerican Convention for the Prevention, Sanction and Eradication of all types of violence against the Women of Belem Do Pará. Likewise, it is important to make reference and to link the plans to the cyclical or short term reports issued by the United Nations Special Rapporteurs on Equity and Violence, who with specific mandates investigate, monitor and make recommendations regarding problems of human rights, in this case the rights of women regarding these two problems.

- **Cross- sectioning of Gender Equity**

The surge of influence in the region to work from a gender perspective and its cross sectioning has been happening at least since two decades. Despite multiple efforts, there are still few organizations that have clarity and commitment in taking on equity on a cross sectioning basis, that is to say, that it shows up in political and regulatory frameworks, that it is a part of management and implementation of programs and projects, that adequate human and financial resources are assigned to it, that it is included in the planning, monitoring and evaluation systems with adequate tools; and that there is an internal mechanism (office, specialist, focal point, board, etc.), that takes on the responsibility of impelling the thematic and reporting the progress.

As has been mentioned, NCA incorporates GSP 05-09 into its mandate and prioritizes gender equity as a cross sectioning main line. In general, NCA doesn't have a specific Manual or guideline to induce cross sectioning of Gender equity **in each one of the domains mentioned in the previous paragraph, but it does have** the GEA Manual that orients the evaluation of programs and projects, however, there are no orientations to take this focus to the practical level. **There also is the IASC Manual, that is still undergoing the process of being adopted and that should be a very important reference, especially in the work of prevention and care taking during emergencies.**

- **Thematic Focusing: Violence Based on Gender and Femicide**

VBG is understood at the Regional Office as violence (physical, sexual and psychological) aimed specially against women and girls because of their gender condition, that can occur in the family as well as in public life, and that affects women in all stages of their life. It is also recognized that VBG is a consequence of the existence of patriarchal structures, inequitable power relations between women and men, and of their reproduction through culture, tradition and religion.

In the interest of contextualizing the VBG problem and ensuring coherence in the comprehension of the concept, the Regional Office has held dialogs with its counterparts about the content of the VBG concept, to give the work of VBG in the region a specific sense. In Guatemala this discussion has led to a re conceptualization of the thematic main line Violence against Women, as a result of the political discussion held with at least two of its Resource Counterparts, about the need to politicize the concept. With the **counterpart** organizations in Nicaragua, the broadness of the proposed concept was better accepted, because it is recognized as a global concept that includes injustices, discrimination and oppression toward women.

At the Regional Office there are three levels of making Violence Based on Gender operational:
(i) As a thematic priority that implies making it visible, relations and advocacy (incidence);
(ii) cross sectioning, paying attention to it in all programmatic actions (HIV AIDS, Emergencies, Water and Sanitation), (iii) and especially in the Protection against Violence and Insecurity Program.

Developing activities of information and formation, and mechanisms to increase awareness and advocacy, with the purpose of preventing VBG, have been defined as a methodological strategy for Guatemala and Nicaragua, and where the involvement of religious leaders, men and women, is crucial to achieve the proposed goals, get a commitment from the churches to regard this problem as a priority in their actions. The main purpose is to support a platform, where representatives of the main Counterparts can be informed and trained, where they may reflect and act based on the awareness that inequitable power relations between women and men are a violation of the human rights of women,

Also, under the premise that men's involvement is fundamental because they are part of the problem, men's participation is favored, especially in the traditionally male domains, such as care in emergencies and within political and religious leadership. With the male groups, two steps are supported: the first one, the formation on the gender theory and the use of tools of their analytical framework; and the second one, the use of the analysis of maleness methodology in order to help deconstruct the male chauvinistic and patriarchal identities. It is expected, that for this process, the Resource Counterparts will contribute in a big way, from their formative, methodological and political experience.

Additionally, as far as the intention that NCA will promote the thematic coordination with NCA Programs in other countries (especially The Dominican Republic, Haiti and Cuba), this has not happened. The relationship with sister organizations in Guatemala and Nicaragua (DIAKONIA, CAid, DCA); at FONGI Guatemala with the participation in the Gender Commission, the ACT Forum and with other Norwegian organizations like FOKUS has been achieved; in the annual country reports reference is made to the participation in this spaces, but we still have to carry out internal evaluations on the usefulness and potential of this participation.

- **Other focuses: indigenous people and youth**

Since 2005, the Regional Office has stated its interest about working in a more inclusive way with other approaches, like indigenous people. In 2006, a Program Proposal of Indigenous People was presented to the Central Headquarters in Oslo, where they proposed a programmatic logic based on a multicultural perspective, which meant working with, from and for the indigenous population of Guatemala. The work would be approached starting from a general objective of “contribute to the reduction of forms of structural discrimination that affects indigenous people, especially women, and under two specific objectives: from the promotion of cultural rights (recovery and preservation of the cultural patrimony), and to support the full exercise of citizenship of the indigenous people(civic and politic participation).

This proposal never had feedback from the Central Headquarters in Oslo, therefore it was not implemented as a Program. However, the Regional Office has continued supporting projects with mestizo organizations (CIEDEG, Madre Selva) who work with indigenous populations, and with Guatemalan indigenous organizations like UKUXBE, POP NOJ with whom they supported exchanges and specific actions aimed at favoring indigenous women from a gender equity approach. Equally, since 2005 we participate in the Commission of Indigenous People of the International NGO Forum in Guatemala – FONGI, and actions have been accompanied such as the III Continental Summit of Indigenous People (2007). The visit of the Thematic Advisor for Indigenous People to the Central Headquarters in Oslo was also important, and, in 2009 a meeting between counterparts was held, to reflect about Mayan Cosmvision and the Good Livelihood of Indigenous Women.

Nevertheless, there is evidence that the Regional Office has not had the effective capacity to structure de Program of Indigenous People, but an intention exists of working in geographic areas that are by majority indigenous, make its participation visible and increase the access of the indigenous population to resources, especially the ones from Guatemala. We still have to make the specific work approach with indigenous people concrete, both from Guatemala as well as Nicaragua, formulate a strategy to approach it in a cross-sectional way and above all to search how to incorporate equity aspects from the indigenous cosmovisions and in these, reposition the necessary gender equity and incorporate actions against the VBG. We would expect these elements to be part of this Program’s formulation process in 2010.

As far as including an approach of youth at work, The experience with youth as a specific group during the 05-09 period, has happened in Nicaragua with CEPREV y CAV; in Guatemala with IEPADES, CEIBA, UKUXBE y CECG aimed particularly to the prevention of violence and to the care(formal education/technical training, psycho social care) of young people in risky situations with the purpose of reverting negative leaderships, create new frameworks and renew local leaderships. However, the work intention from a youth approach has not been structured; besides focusing on the young as a target group, a pertinent approach would have to be developed which would be applicable to equity and violence work with young people (male and female) both in urban as well as rural areas. Since we have work experience with adult groups, women and mixed genders both in the urban as well as the rural environments, we could take advantage of the experiences to differentiate between the strategies and ways of intervention where the variables or gender, ethnics and ages could cross over.

The reflection, debate and decision about future strategies with this approaches, are part of the necessary actions to frame the next strategic plan of the region, with the purpose of adopting integral work approaches according to the population and ethnic characteristics of Guatemala and Nicaragua.

4. The thematic implementation with the counterparts

The current Counterparts of the Program of **Protection against** Violence and Insecurity are the **seven counterparts included as a universe** in the current evaluation; these women and mixed gender organizations (men and women) present a high commitment to work from gender equality, and in some cases, we have started to ponder about the socio economic and ethnic inequities; these processes are reflected in the institutional work they carry out.

Currently, the four Resource Counterparts **included in this evaluation, are feminist and women organizations** which have institutional strategies to take care of Violence Based on Gender. These Counterparts are focused on their own thematic experience, and in some cases they look for an integral approach to the problems from different fields, as in the case of intra family violence, juvenile violence between men, and sexual violence to women and girls. Their work is related with the women's movement in the country and the region, and with other social movements. Most of the political advocacy actions they carry out at different levels are of high impact in the Guatemalan and Nicaraguan societies.

With the Organizations Based on the Fe-FBO, the task has been slower because they are mixed gender organizations where men represent most of the leadership, and sometimes there are also more hierarchical types of work. However, it feels like the institutional culture is changing, and because of this, currently all counterparts of the Program for **Protection against** Violence and Insecurity include Policies of Gender and/or Strategic Guidelines for Equity which are becoming institutional standards for working with women and men, even though it has been verified that most of the contents of this documents still is not used in practice, for which is necessary to provide advice and to promote spaces for dialogue and exchange. It is encouraging that organizations, internally, are committing themselves more and more to the progress of women and they are trying to modify the inequity relationships, both with their bases, as well as with the operation of their organizations.

The three FBO's, even though they do not have an institutional strategy to make visible and solve the problems of VBG, have taken a political stance to make visible and report VBG's, an institutional attitude that contributes to the prevention of violence against women, particularly in municipalities and rural communities where access to information is very limited. **Together with the FBO's, the work carried out by CIEDEG in Guatemala with the Coordinadora Indígena Ixil – COI is becoming very important for the prevention of violence against women,** and in Nicaragua, CIEETS for the implementation of the Feminist Professorship which involves religious leaders, women and men, university students in Theology, with whom courses about feminism and theology are being implemented, and starting with a focus on rights, they discuss the condition of women in the religious spaces. The problems about VBG are also included but it is done with less tools.

From the Regional Office of NCA, although there is a will to work strongly on femicide as an extreme way of violence against women, it is only being dealt with by a Guatemalan counterpart (GGM), which has a historical specialization in caring for Violence against Women, and it has been a key player in sponsoring the Law against Femicide and other forms of Violence against Women in Guatemala. This organization is a great resource for the training of all NCA counterparts. Its experience in research, care methodologies and **advocacy strategies** are considered good practices with high potential and replicability inside and outside of the Central American region.

To approach VBG, we have found that there is a great wealth in methodologies, for example, we have: a) a Critical Route to take care of intra family violence; b) a legal model to typify the murder of women as femicides; c) a model of integral care for survivors of intra family violence adapted to the rural context and the indigenous identity; d) a methodology for the analysis of the masculinity and the removal of the patriarchal identities in men; e) a feminist theological study method to approach the gender inequities in society and within the churches; f) Manuals to deal with the violence of youths in urban marginal areas, and others. It would be useful if in the space of exchanges between counterparts, these ways of work could be socialized, and also promote their use and adaptation for different contexts and population groups.

The decision to go deep into **problems like sexual violence against girls (incest, forced marriages, for example), femicide/feminicide; to cover an area of those (sensitization of women and men, training justice operators, research among others); or to expand to other forms of VBG (traffic of women and girls)** must be a reason for joint reflection and to create the next strategic plan. The decision on what and who we should support should be limited, obviously to the GSP of NCA as well as the regional context. **In the lessons learned during these five year period, in the potential of the counterparts and also in the internally available human and financial resources, to start from an ambitious but concrete proposal, taking into consideration the possibilities of external managements in alliances but particularly it has to concentrate on the institutional political bets from the Regional Office.**

- Integrity in the projects: long term development and attention to emergencies and advocacy.

The plan 2005-09 of Guatemala and Nicaragua includes assistance for emergencies, but the focus on long term development is not stated, just like the actions directed at advocacy in emergency situations. In practice, due to the capacity and nature of the Organizations, it is not possible to apply neither a focus on emergencies, nor a focus on long term development with all the counterparts, but it should be made more explicit to how this two approaches, long term development and attention to emergencies, make those projects that contain them, more integral, and how advocacy can also be present in them.

The projects of the Main Counterparts regularly include two components: for example, response to emergencies combined with long term development, and long term development with advocacy. Some examples of these are Risk Management projects at the community level, implemented with CIEDEG that link response to emergencies and the increase of awareness on gender equity. Just like CIEETS are water and sanitation projects, that combine the increase of organized participation and decision making by women in mixed structures.

In the case of CODEFEM, according with its plans for 2009, the increase in awareness about women's rights is related to the increase of participation of women in the decision making community spaces (COCODES, Women Commissions, Municipal Offices for Women among others), this has had the effect that some local authorities are more willing to execute local development projects in response to the needs and priorities of women.

It is important to mention that the incidence in the increase of women's awareness sometimes leads to the increase of their participation in the decision making structure and in the improvement of their life conditions. This is not always the result of an explicit intention, strategy and methodology for the medium and long terms. Currently, work emphasis is sensitization / awareness on women's rights, understood in a very wide sense, acknowledging that it is a medium term process because it has the purpose of modifying ways of thinking and acting, as well as the modification of paradigms about power relations between women and men. So, for the work to be more effective and progress easy to identify, it is necessary to create the strategy to raise consciousness, this means, what does it imply and what are the signs of change expected in each phase or stage of this personal and social communities transformation process.

Other projects supported by the VBG Program are focused first on advocacy work directed to other domains, for example, the increase in sensitivity towards women in public positions and sometimes towards men, with the intent of increasing women's participation in community groups, in government agencies and in church structures, advocacy for the correct implementation of the legal frameworks against GBV, and a formation in feminist theology, among others. In this cases the objectives are very explicit as well as their contribution to the improvement of the gender condition of women.

Also, the Regional Office in its plans and strategies for emergencies, takes on the responsibility of promoting the cross sectioning of gender equity and promoting actions for VBG with the members of the National ACT forums in Guatemala and Nicaragua. These cannot be considered as advocacy activities and part of an integrated focus. The ACT Forum in both countries has a great potential for national and regional advocacy, based on the IASC guidelines and the U.N. Resolution 1325, which up to now has not been utilized to position gender equity and the attention to VBG, transcending from the spaces in the Forum, to a

country level. The required condition to achieve this result is the institutionalization, both of Gender Equity as well as attention and prevention of VBG inside the Forum.

5. Progress of the main Indicators in the thematic area.

The GSP of NCA focalizes within the transformation actions, the following aspects that are considered relevant for women's progress.

o Participation of Men and Women

Girls' education. The Regional Office in 2005 carried out a mapping of the work experience regarding scholarships with its current counterparts. As a result, in 2005-2007 four scholarship projects aimed at boys and girls from Guatemala were supported through FUNDESCO, BOOJNOJ, Martín Lutero School and COMMA / CIEDEG. Starting in 2008 the support to FUNDESCO was stopped and currently, support is still given to the other organizations, where approximately 60% of the scholarships are awarded to indigenous girls from the rural area of Guatemala. With these actions, contributions are made to increase access of girls to formal education, to the GSP indicators and to the achievement of country goals of ODM. There is also the will to reduce dependency of the organizations that receive and manage the scholarships. This is why in 2008 an institutional strengthening process was created for the three projects which resulted in the design, for each organization, of a sustainability strategy and fund raising from other sources. This type of projects is still not carried out in Nicaragua.

The Regional Office does not have a special program that ties together girls' education with VBG prevention. Up to now, adult women alphabetization has also not been supported with the purpose of linking the increase in their educational skills as a strategy to overcome the limitations women have, for example, to denounce and manage legally their rights when facing cases of VBG and other types of discrimination.

We have not been able to increase significantly the number of men who are involved with VBG. This action is being observed in the four counterparts CIEDEG and CIEETS, CECG and CEPREV, and also with the Christian Medical Association in Nicaragua which, even though it has been included in the universe of this evaluation, represents a good experience in the involvement of male religious leaders in the processes of sensitization and advocacy against VBG. These organizations include within their members a high number of men who have been involved in internal sensitization workshops about women's rights, and in the past year (09), as part of the two national workshops on discussion and follow up of Gender Equity and VBG. Only CIEETS has followed an internal process with their male staff for the analysis of building male identity from patriarchy. It is planned to give a follow up to this process in 2010.

As part of the exchange within counterparts for the other mixed organizations, we have programmed the use of Methodology for the Analysis of Masculinity, which is very positive and we could hope to have a pedagogic and methodological adjustment for indigenous and rural groups from Guatemala. Along this line, it would be adequate to emphasize the particular approach of strategies on how to unbuild patriarchal practices, so that the methodology does not become a justification instrument of machismo, and take away men's responsibilities of their

power practices and attitudes which are harmful to women and girls. On the contrary changes should be promoted to take on responsibilities as bearers of obligations to the family and community.

We are also lacking working on a strategy to specifically approach sexual violence against women, which includes making the harmful practices of sexual abuse against girls visible, such as incest and the marriage of girls with adult men. We would expect that in the short term, these types of reflections could happen between the counterparts, with the counterparts and with the participation of women and men versed in the thematic which can give orientation, to choose the most urgent topics, and look for the most effective ways of contributing to the establishment of families and communities free of violence against women and girls.

- **Gender Equity**

All the Counterpart organizations utilize parts of the gender analysis tool as a reference to their work with women and men, where focus is placed on incorporating categories for gender analysis (participation / decision making; practical and strategic needs; access to and control of resources), but still without making an intentional link between the objectives of this tool with the compliance and enjoyment of women's rights. This vacuum could be **overcome** step by step, by taking on a defense and promotion focus on women's rights, which also carries a more explicit commitment against VBG.

From the projects point of view, there is an emphasis on increasing women's access to the formation/participation/information/proposal processes. This means creating bases so that women can own their rights as citizens, and these points sharply to giving more power to women. Facing the reality of poverty and exclusion presented by the communities in both countries, women also demand that attention is paid to their practical needs. These practical supports can contribute to reduce the structural dependency of women, and to overcome the situations of inequity and violence, for example: access to employment and education. Since this is not NCA's objective, **an additional effort could be made, and** search for allies in other organizations that deal in cooperation with whom these types of support could be complemented, for example, responding to the demands of women who are survivors of violence.

FBO's have already started to work with patriarchal culture and gender discrimination within their organizations. Most FBO's have started to incorporate to their work, step by step, focuses that look for equity between women and men. This change in institutional culture has been highly motivated by NCA, and also by a socio political context which sponsors, from different scenarios and players, the need to work under focuses that transform the social cultural reality, especially in women.

However, we are having little direct and systematic influence to the internal part of FBO's, toward its structures and religious leaders. It would be important to define a clear, ambitious and systematic strategy to influence these leaders, women and men, taking into consideration that there is a great potential in the type of influence that they may have at a community level,

and taking advantage that NCA is one of the few cooperation organizations that are promoting changes within the churches. In addition to the sensitization of priest and pastors, it is necessary to design a strategy of systematic support, facilitating tools so that they can more easily place the topics in their congregations.

- **Protection**

The Emergencies Program of the Regional Office, being consistent with their strategic frame and the Gender Policy in **ACT and based on the IASC Manual**, includes in its work the protection of women against violence and psycho social assistance for women **in emergency situations. The intention is that protection should be a part of an integral planning and emergency response system, where women participation in the decision making spaces is made visible and promoted.**

The Regional NCA Office designs its planning and response to emergencies through its counterparts, with actions coordinated in the national spaces of ACT Forum, where responsibility has been taken to “promote the cross sectioning of gender equity, and to take into consideration VBG interventions, in the planning and response to emergencies”. However, in practice, the process is going slowly.

The notion still exists that “when an emergency occurs, the main objective is to save lives and provide safe drinking water, and there is no time to **take care** of the specific needs of women”, even though there is a risk that the gender perspective could be reduced to providing women with “feminine products” like suitable clothing and personal hygiene items, without including strategies and actions to assure the equitable participation and protection against VBG. The planning and execution teams in the first phase of an emergency usually don’t include women. It is repetitively seen that women are not sent to an emergency area before one or two weeks after the event, and then “only” to work on psycho social aspects.

With the purpose of making the mandates regarding protection to women in an emergency situation operational, NCA, in 2008, developed three workshops in the framework of ACT Forums, two in Guatemala and Nicaragua regarding Participation and Protection of Women in Emergencies, and in 2009, a workshop about Gender and Emergency in the Verapaces area of Guatemala. This led to the inclusion of gender perspective in the Operations Plan 09-10 of the ACT Forum in Nicaragua, even though this focus had been absent in the Strategic Plan 06-10; **also, as a derivative of this action, a consultancy is being implemented** to assure the inclusion of gender indicators in the strategic and operational plans of this Forum. The Foro de Guatemala has included Gender Perspective since their 2009 plan, however, the great challenge and main limitation for both Forums, is how to implement the strategies in practice.

With the purpose of assuring an adequate inclusion of the gender perspective (including equity, participation and protection), it is of vital importance to assure an adequate level of awareness and internationalization of the concept and required mechanisms, for all representatives members of ACT that are related to planning and response to emergencies, without forgetting the main players, the decision makers and the operators in the field.

The reorganization of the national ACT Forums because of the merger of ACT International and ACT development into ACT Alliance, should be used as an opportunity to facilitate the development of strategies, tools and drills for emergencies, consistent with the frequently existing gender institutional policies of the member organizations, and the working tools to include gender perspective in their long term work.

- **Empowering of women**

As far as seeing that women and girls know their rights and that they are empowered to act against VBG, due to the projects sponsored during the five year period by the Regional Office, and especially by the VBG Program, there are more women that know their rights through their participation in formation processes. An example of this work is the Ecumenical Network of Women with CIEDEG in Guatemala, which currently involves more than three hundred indigenous women, of at least five ethnic groups of the country. The sensitization work with these groups has been large, and many personal testimonies exist that are evidence of an increase in self esteem in women, that drives them to participate and mobilize for their rights. Another step forward, even though still small, is that some local woman leaders are participating representing women in local decision making spaces (Council Systems, Neighbor Meetings, among others), but we cannot say that this is a direct effect of NCA's work, since the creation of these leaderships have been historical processes; however, it is positive that women's capacities have been potentialized well, with NCA projects and its counterparts.

At the community level, the problems of VBG, even though it surfaces in testimonies, and the report of cases has increased, we have not been able to place it as a priority in Women's Agendas, who present **multiple personal and contextual impediments to follow up the reports**, and many agencies that keep them immersed in the violence cycles. At all levels, we need to raise consciousness even more in women and men, involve local governments and legal agencies in the service to make it easier for women to have access to justice, and to assure integral care of surviving women.

Regarding the promotion and increase of access to sexual and reproductive health services for women and girls, **in objective No. 1 of the revised Regional Plan 05-09, it includes attention to sexual and reproductive rights, through training of the Guatemalan counterparts FUNDESCO AND GGM; Since the relationship with FUNDESCO has decreased and GGM carries out this work without funds from NCA, there is no follow up to these actions; also CAV in Nicaragua is dealing with sexual and reproductive rights as part of their work. However, the Regional Office has kept an interest in supporting some advocacy initiatives that fall in the thematic, like the Family Planning Law in Guatemala.**

There has been a willingness to have incidence in the religious domains, positioning the subject of sexual and reproductive rights of women but still, a strategy that allows it does not exist. Also missing is to create a direct link with the HIV-AIDS Program. In practice, these subjects are dealt with but not in a structured and intentional way. The little support given to this subject is justified, due to the fact that in the contextualization process of GSP to the plans of the Regional Office, it is not possible to include all the problematic aspects in a specific way. It is difficult in 2010 to give priority again to this thematic, it is a challenge and it contributes to the definition of the next five year period plan.

- Relationships between NCA and the counterparts, between counterparts, and with other players.

NCA is explicit in its willingness to be a facilitator of new networks and alliances between the groups of the civil society. The Regional Office has organized many workshops with its Main counterparts and their counterparts. Resources about specific topics like the Focus based on rights; violence based on gender / violence against women, and the role that churches and faith based organizations have in these thematics, and also about the Mayan cosmovision. Coherent with its horizontal strategy, the workshops have been planned and executed in close cooperation with representatives of its partner organizations. The latest link between feminists and faith based organizations is highly valued by both sides. All counterparts refer to these workshops as valuable spaces to acquire relevant knowledge and to meet organizations with whom it would have been impossible to discuss topics about equity and VBG, exchange methods, experiences and ideas.

These horizontal meetings with sectional character show great potential to increase the impact on behalf of equity and the fight against VBG. Similarly, the mutual knowledge and trust developed between organizations have been important and they help identify new thematic and geographic alliances with concrete projects, both with NCA, as well with other partners, through new perspectives where working methods and objectives can be achieved. This is why it is very important to notice that projects in alliances cannot work well if they are done under forced alliances, with two or more organizations that do not have between them enough political and institutional knowledge, as well as trust and respect for each other. These points should be taken into consideration before promoting any type of alliance or partnership between organizations.

According to the GSP, the Regional Introduction **and its regional plan 2005-09**, NCA will be looking to support and link its plans to the Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Churches to eradicate violence, specifically VBG, this, however, has not been **translated into actions**. In practice, the only link with these organizations has been the distribution of their manuals, according to the thematic “The churches say NO! to violence against women”(LWF)and “Streams of Grace” (WCC), to the FBO counterparts, but there has been no follow up to make sure they have been used. There has not been direct contact with the people, resources of LWF and WCC thematic.

With the Latin American Church Council – CLAI, being a counterpart of the Regional Office, we have worked systematically on supporting the dissemination of the violence situation against women, and also, the thematics of the increase in women participation and eradication of exclusion in the indigenous people.

As far as the ACT Alliance is concerned, in the last two years it has taken the responsibility of promoting the inclusion of the gender topic in the development (equity, participation and protection against violence), in emergencies and assuring the existence of plans and capacity building to deal with it in the ACT Forums in Guatemala and Nicaragua. In spite of the existence of The Gender Policy of ACT Alliance, the high level of agreement with regard to the

importance of the subject among members of the Forum, and positive valuation of the efforts carried out by NCA along these lines, the ACT Forums still have not been able to institutionalize the gender perspective in an adequate level.

6. Advocacy at different levels

- Advocacy from NCA

The Regional Office of NCA thinks that its role, regarding advocacy is to facilitate the mobilization of the subjects of rights. In the projects that are approved, it is a requirement that the counterparts explain how they are going to undertake this action. Each counterpart has its own ways of understanding and making advocacy to the powers of the State in different domains and levels (local, national and regional).

A well used advocacy mode used by the Regional Office, has been the space of the International NGO Forum – FONGI in Guatemala, as a mechanism to articulate international cooperation where it participates the Indigenous People Commissions and in Gender. We are participating in the Gender Table of the European Union with the NCA-CODEFEM project in Guatemala. This opens the possibility to approach the U.N. agencies and other international players with whom you can raise your voice.

We do advocacy in the governments in specific public policy aspects through FONGI, in alliance with other organizations. Actions have been performed in the frame of the international woman's day, coordinating with NCA-CODEFEM; in November 2009 the "16 day" campaign was started through radio programs at a department level, to inform about what to do to confront violence; T.V. advertisements and local forums were also included in this action. At the city level we accompanied the 25th of November march.

It is clear to the Regional Office that it is not looking for prominence or a political role, and that it does not have the political visibility of other NGO's of solidary cooperation either; doing direct advocacy is not a mandate, and there is no interest to have the NCA logo appear in all of the counterparts advocacy actions, particularly not to replace roles, since the Regional Office considers that its role is to encourage local organizations, and not compete in the local prominence.

- Advocacy with and from the counterparts

The methodological and human resources to do advocacy are few and more time is needed. Ideas are given, in meetings and follow up visits, to the counterparts that do not work so hard in political advocacy, the focus is not to do new things, but instead, do better what they are already doing. The conceptual frame and tools have been provided to work on advocacy to the government, but also, it has been assessed that this should be two ways, towards the inside, this means actions directed to transform hierarchical and patriarchal institutional structures. A good exercise was the advocacy workshop in the frame of ACT.

NCA has attempted to create counterpart platforms with common central points to create actions from the local players, but there are no specific achievements regarding these actions. We need to take more advantage of the very political, counterparts' experience, which have a wide trajectory in research/dissemination and social auditing, to design new proposals and more alliances to transform the work. A good example is the participation of CODEFEM AND GGM in the activism and lobbying carried out in the Guatemalan Congress for the approval of the Femicide Law.

This set of ways to carry out advocacy could be strengthened by clarifying what NCA understands, and what it expects from the country and regional advocacy, and so, direct human and financial resources to increase the capacity of its counterparts, especially the FBO's, regarding methods which contribute to clarify where to aim advocacy and the strategy to make it effective.

- Advocacy within the churches, and from the churches to society and the State.

The Regional Office establishes in its country plans that NCA will systematically promote the involvement of FBO's in the campaigns and coordination spaces. Because of this we encourage that the counterparts themselves take on this actions. Sometimes there are joint collaborations, for example between CODEFEM, GGM and REM/CIEDEG for commemorative days such as the marches of March 8th and November 25th, but it is no a part of a strategic action for joint advocacy.

The religious leaders are "carriers of commitments"; this is key both for NCA as well as society and within the VBG's main line of global NCA, due to its influence in public opinion and in social mobilization and because they often show practices and attitudes which represent conservative and patriarchal structures and they support theologies that make women's rights implementation difficult.

Advocacy from the churches and FBO's publicly denouncing VBG and domestic violence lies within the objectives of the Guatemalan and Nicaraguan National Plans for the next 5 years, where they state that NCA will carry out a religious leaders training process so that they can take specific actions to deal with and fight VBG in their work. As mentioned before, systematic support from NCA to these partners within this thematic area has been developed only during the last tow years, and active attention to this thematic is still a little new.

However, the three Faith Based Organizations which are part of this evaluation, perform an important task to increase awareness about women's rights and VBG from a theological perspective, still with a high percentage towards the community level. As part of the public advocacy carried out by the FBO, examples are few but powerful; CIEDEG which supports The Ecumenical Network of Women who participate actively and have made public pronouncements related to the commemorations of March 8th and November 25th. Also CECG had a public pronouncement for the "Sexual Education Law" in Guatemala. There is great potential to increase the focalization and development of the "prophetic voice of churches in society", within this thematic and at the same time from the counterparts and NCA, but a strategic road to achieve it is still missing.

The work that has been performed to influence change in attitudes and practices of religious leaders and the church would appear somewhat limited, considering that the Main Counterparts are ecumenical structures that currently represent churches. However, there are some examples of current and future leaders of the church and other church representatives that could be the main driver of the increase in sensitization about VBG through theological studies, workshops and approaching the thematic with “formal” meetings, as well as regional meetings and national assemblies.

At the individual level, these trainings appear to be very successful. All the ones interviewed state that they have increased their level of knowledge, self esteem and motivation to further work in this thematic. Many, however, still pastors, feel that they lack the adequate tools or possibilities of securing a real influence within the structure of their churches. Nevertheless, in some churches the thematic is being dealt with more openly. Important institutional changes are waiting to be identified.

The increase of awareness can not be the main objective of an internal advocacy process. For this it is necessary to clarify what advocacy and awareness are. Raising consciousness, knowledge and change in attitudes at the individual level are very important, but they do not necessarily lead to making changes in practice with others. Raising consciousness does not automatically provide more power to influence people involved in the structure of the church they belong to. The participants must be accompanied and supported with suitable tools to change practices and structures where they can have influence to empower themselves as bearers of commitment.

7. NCA’s added value

The institutional relationship between NCA and its counterparts, is considered transparent and solidary. We consider it as NCA’s added value that has promoted the development and cooperation from horizontal and ethical positions, balancing the power relations between donors and beneficiaries.

In the same manner, its commitment to work is valued from a focus based on rights; the perseverance and promotion of work in new alliances – “challenging” traditional distances, institutionalizing de gender equity perspective in the organizations and their projects and the desire to increase advocacy toward churches with a theological vision of rights. **Another advantage that the relationship with NCA brings is the intention of being a bridge of dialogue and alliances between women movement organizations and women in churches.**

The NCA Regional Office's view is that a focus based on the values of Christian and human equity constitutes an added value for its labor. In addition to trying to make sure that the power interactions created by financing will not jeopardize the cooperative relationships held with counterpart organizations; projecting an image and creating a climate of partnership may be a challenge, but meeting it enables the resolution of critical positions on both sides.

8. Quality and Sufficiency of the Available Resources: Global and Regional

NCA has two thematic advisors for VBG (1 ½ position) in the Oslo headquarters, they are responsible for the development of the global thematic, policies and strategies, the development of staff qualifications, and monitoring and documenting results in the area of gender based violence. They are also responsible for representing NCA in important networks, both nationally and internationally. In this realm, offices around the World have 18 Program Officers with a special responsibility for the gender related issues, in addition to their other responsibilities.

Starting in the year 2005 the Guatemala Regional Office hired a Program Officer whose responsibilities were: to develop a specific program for Protection Against Violence and Insecurity; to design and formulate a specific program for indigenous people; do follow up on the different agreements in the Norway-Guatemala relations, friendship group, a fraternity that promotes school scholarship programs, and also to take care of administrative aspects of the projects, do follow-up on agreements with the counterparts during those years, in Central America, South America and the Caribbean Region.

It is obvious that delays in the institutionalizing of gender equity and the VBG program development was influenced not only by the lack of thematic clarity, but also by the work overload. The fact that since the years 2007/08 a restructuring of work responsibilities and the hiring of a Programs Assistant to follow-up on the agreements with the Nicaraguan counterparts and to facilitate communications with the Guatemala office took place, this had a positive effect.

The Officer of the Protection Program Against Violence and Insecurity continues to do follow-up in the direction of the main line of equity and VBG, while the Program Officers of the other two programs are responsible for including the gender related perspective in their respective action plans. The thematic prioritization and the consolidation of the thematic resources are essential in the development process of a program with a coherent strategy that allows a program interrelation both with VBG and with gender equity.

As mentioned in the chapter about the institutionalization of the gender related perspectives, some of the efforts to develop capabilities have taken place with the purpose of sensitizing the staff about VBG, but there is need for a more systematic process. According to the Regional Office staff, there is a tendency of not assigning the necessary priority to this theme, at an individual, program and institutional level. Given that the lack of implementation of the agreements could seem like a result of passive resistance, of deeply rooted traditional notions, and of unbalanced power structures between men and women, this could result –if there is no actively conscious direction to include the gender perspective– in the eventual disappearance of this perspective from the practical agenda. This does not happen exclusively in the Central

American region. Explained from a cultural perspective, it often happens in Latin America; but a similar tendency has been observed in the entire world and in all types of contexts.

The thematic advisors on VBG that operate from headquarters in Oslo have had an important role supporting the Regional Office, they have participated in some of the workshops along with their counterparts in the region and have provided valuable inputs in the Program's development process. Unfortunately, these thematic advisors have a limited capability because their thematic and geographic responsibility areas are very wide, and consequently, the field offices can not always count with their active support.

The experience with the thematic area regarding HIV AIDS proves that a continuous and solid relation with a relevant thematic advisor from the Oslo based headquarters can be an important source of support for the regional advisors. In addition, meeting points with other regional and national thematic advisors, and AIN's participation in thematic relevance processes or events constitute efficient tools to strengthen the thematic focus and the organizational identity, the motivation and impact of regional thematic advisors in their respective contexts.

In order to insure the institutionalization of the gender perspective and the VBG in the Regional Offices, it is important to strengthen and support those in charge of following-up on the implementation of Gender Equity and VBG. This is a way to promote a qualitative advancement of the decisions towards their implementation.

- Methodology Resources

NCA has not developed specific guidelines, manuals, tools or formats aimed at facilitating the cross cutting perspective of gender and the Organization's activities against VBG. The formal tool that is available in the NCA system is the GEA (Gender Empowerment Assessment). This tool is mostly relevant in the application of development projects and the ACT gender policies regarding emergencies. This tool, even though it was developed within a substantial cooperation of the gender advisors of NCA, and despite the solid focus that NCA places on VBG as a cross cutting topic and a thematic priority; it has not been promoted nor it has been particularly followed up by Oslo headquarters in the field offices. Field Officers have often found themselves in need of seeking support from other organizations or of developing their own tools and guidelines that are adequate for their specific context.

The lack of thematic materials and available funds for this development creates the impression that this thematic area is not being sufficiently prioritized in practice. Due to the strong focus that NCA places on VBG as a cross cutting and top-priority theme in its Mission Document and in the GSP, this is strange and unfortunate.

- Financial Resources

The Latin American region budget is mostly made of NORAD and NCA Non-earmarked funds that are distributed by the Oslo headquarters. Guatemala and Nicaragua do not receive funds from MFA. The Central American region budget frame has been gradually reduced during the GSP period.

In its yearly budget, the Regional Office allocates two kinds of funds: one that comes from the specific budget and the other one originating from the “block grants”. This last one allows working with a discretionary fund and a regional thematic fund. These funds have been very useful. For example, relations were commenced with organizations such as POP NOJ, CEIBA and ESFERA in Guatemala, with very specific activities such as the Third Intercontinental Summit of Indigenous People. These funds have also enabled putting more money into established projects such as the Feminist Theological Workshop conducted along with CIEETS in Nicaragua. The use of “block grants” has proven successful and has been very important in the beginning and promotion of relationships with organizations in both countries.

The Regional Office currently devotes about 28% of its general budget to actions that promote gender equity and protection against VBG. The annual funds for Protection Against Violence Based on Gender have been increased; during 2005 they started with a total of NOK 1,403,000⁷ in Guatemala and NOK 150,000 in Nicaragua. In 2009 the Organization allocated NOK 2,459,183 for Guatemala and NOK 724,000 for Nicaragua. The reason for the difference between these countries is that Nicaragua did not start to implement its Program of Protection Against VBG until the year 2005. Starting from the year 2005 until the present, funds were increased by about 50%. From this increase, at least 25% is used for the external management conducted by the Regional Office with the CODEFEM-AIN project funded by the European Union. This translates into 55% of the total funds for the year 2009. In 2009 the priority in the fund distribution was the counterparts, who have about 70% of the designated funds. These include the funds given by NCA and the ones managed by the Regional Office.

All seems to indicate that the budget execution for thematic counterparts has had good results, consequently, the support for thematic counterparts should be continued in coordination with the development of a strategy to raise funds in addition to the ones granted by NORAD. During the year 2009, a good example of this practice has been Project CODEFEM-AIN in Guatemala and the management of CIEETS-CEPREV in Nicaragua.

9. Program Planning, Follow-up and Evaluation

Up until the present the Regional Office does not directly support the strategic planning processes with the counterparts, acting under the assumption that they have the capabilities to do it on their own. They have been provided with proposal and report presentation formats, but these have not always been used and there has been no pressure for them to do so. For the purpose of follow-up, simple shared indicators that reflect more on actions than results and impacts have been identified. This causes the follow-up of results and impact evaluation to become complicated. There is need of joint exercises of strategic planning in order to be in agreement about the way to evaluate impacts.

Although there is no detailed follow-up plan for the improvement of the organizations' capabilities, each year there are visits by Programs' Officials, who have general guidelines regarding the support of each counterpart. These periodic visits are very well appreciated by the counterparts because they feel it is important for NCA to show an interest for the field projects and to obtain direct knowledge of the projects, as opposed to merely reading the reports.

⁷ See Annex No. 5 Thematic Priority Implementation Financial Chart VBG 2005.2009.

In order to monitor and assess gender equity, there is a tool called Gender Empowerment Assessment –GEA. In the year 2009 half of it was incorporated into the projects format, and from that year on, its use is mandatory. Among the Regional Office staff there is an impression that reading and applying much of the information coming from headquarters in Oslo is a matter of personal discretion. There are defined guidelines about providing input, but there is no follow-up, there is no set rule to send reports; consequently, expectations of compliance are low, and this causes a chain reaction among the counterparts.

There is a shortage of detail in the plans and afterwards in the reports, about the women in all the programs of the Regional Office. This can be solved by increasing the teams' capabilities and by adopting a different planning method that reflects how each program is going to be carried out.

Something that currently limits progress in the learning process is that in the Protection Against Violence and Insecurity Program the systematizing of the processes that have been implemented is not promoted. For example, the incidence and methodological approach regarding the positioning of the Law against femicide and other forms of violence against women in Guatemala could be a significant opportunity to give the region some visibility and to contribute with good practices and learned lessons at a global level; but there is no time to systematize and to comment.

There is also need to revise the presentations of results in order to define the intentions and the means in achieving them. The new strategic plan opens a window of opportunity. The Regional Office should request the counterparts to think about mid-term processes, or five year terms, with a strategic view that would allow the short-term yearly plans to become operational.

Up until the present it has not been possible to integrate programming and financial aspects. The reports, both from the counterparts and from the program, do not relate these two aspects. If the goal is to conduct a cost/benefit analysis, it is essential that all the counterparts use a logical framework in their project planning in order to show the link between expenses and desired results; in other words, formulating a better analysis and correlation of qualitative and quantitative indicators, because a financial follow-up cannot be carried out with qualitative indicators alone.

It is necessary to give visibility in order to achieve equity in organizations with combined projects. The Regional Office still does not include the counterparts in the planning processes. One solution comes in the form of the transparent plans that we hope to implement starting this year (2010) as a strategy to eliminate the power struggle between cooperation and counterpart organizations. Later on, the intention is to promote the same process of transparency from the counterparts towards the communities.

10. Conclusions, Lessons Learned and Recommendations

Conclusions:

- Starting with its revision in 2007, the GSP has provided sound orientation and has opened the possibility to redirect the implementation of the Program of Protection Against Violence and Insecurity in Guatemala and Nicaragua. Nevertheless, the scope of the program is still too broad; and this flexibility impairs the focus of the programming, and spreads financial and human resources too thinly. It also dilutes the results when the attention needs to be divided among many counterparts and multiple problems that are addressed. We hope that starting with the new regional strategic plan a sharper thematic focus will be in place, along with the redefinition of the main counterparts, and the most acute problems of violence in the region, such as femicide, can be addressed more vigorously. The incorporation of other current and relevant problems could also be addressed, such as human trafficking of women and young girls.
- The focus based on rights, is an important reference frame in NCA's work, but it does not express a specific link to the rights of women, especially the right to a life without violence. From the perspective of rights, this work has a great potential and it can be effectively used to strengthen the political vision towards women and towards the focus on VBG, especially of a FBO. It would be best if in the new strategic frame all of this could be taken into consideration in the Regional Office.
- The thematic resources and the time to develop a Regional and National VBG main line have been limited. 2008 was the year when the presence of thematic supports in the region were prioritized and submitted to the Headquarter Offices and, consequently, the possibility of a coordinated team work on the VBG related problems emerged. This possibility has further empowered the Programs Officer and it is allowing her to build a coherent program with the GSP and within the context of each country. Nevertheless, it is still necessary to establish a closer link between the global and the regional levels regarding the thematic advice.
- The institutionalization of gender equity as a cross section main line in the Regional Office is still in process. Two awareness workshops have been conducted and periodic reflections with all the staff are being held. Nevertheless, the degrees of awareness are heterogeneous, it seems necessary to work in an all-inclusive systematic process in addition to providing simple tools and practices that would allow each person, from their own position, to make changes in their attitudes and practices aimed at the mid-term construction of a more democratic and fair institutional culture. In the Regional Office, the advancement of the inter-program integration of VBG/ HIV AIDS / Water and Sanitation, and Emergencies is still too small and non intentional; even when actions have been taken they have not been part of a regional and national strategy, in addition to having a weak follow-up.
- Incorporating gender equity into the Main counterparts (FBO), at least in the institutional rules (gender policies, strategic guidelines) has shown significant advances; even when in some counterparts there is still a tendency to place most resources for purposes that are not related to women empowerment. Still, the step between speech and action still constitutes a

challenge, it has been recognized that the largest contributions in mixed organizations include creating awareness in men and women, especially in religious leaders, about gender equity and less about VBG. In every single case of the FBOs there is need to work on strategies and methodologies in order to transcend the stage of awareness creation and to start to utilize specific tools linked to their projects' actions; in which the connection between these, gender equity and VBG becomes obvious. By the same token, feminist theologians have reached access to positions of power within the FBOs through NCA; especially in Nicaragua. This constitutes a substantial transformation within the organizations that has not developed into a learning subject in other countries, especially in Guatemala.

- The selection of the Counterpart Resources has been a hit, since they bring extensive political and methodological experience in addressing the issues regarding equity between men and women and the different forms of violence against women. There has been a very positive projection by the fact that all the implemented Projects and Programs of Protection against Violence and Insecurity have allowed an increase in organized and political participation of women, in the awareness among women more than among men, about equity and VBG; and it has increased the opportunities of exchanging, gathering, and having access to information, especially among women. In addition, organizations are incorporating in their work programs various strategies (political and pedagogical), tools (diagnostics, formats, manuals) that allow making equity and VBG operational values or issues that translate into real-life actions. These resources are very valuable and, in many cases, very innovative.
- Both Resource counterparts and Main counterparts have an adequate focus on the target groups, as they aim their actions primarily to mestizo and indigenous women organized in local groups of rural areas and marginal urban sectors; and in a smaller scale to adult men and youth that are involved in mixed organizations, especially in churches; and in a greater percentage to the indigenous population in Guatemala. These populations, due to their characteristics have a more limited access to education and training with a focus on equity, and therefore, highly value the contributions of NCA.
- The exchange strategies between FBOs and ORs have promoted a joint thematic discussion, mutual awareness, and it has created the opportunity to build political confidence and trust. These spaces have been very useful and positively valued because of the recognition of new possibilities of coordination and of potential joint work ventures. This has stimulated the promotion of territorial and thematic alliances in the management of projects. In these processes it is important to respect the autonomy of organizations and to avoid imposing alliances, that is to say, the consortiums are advisable when organizations know each other well and have had experiences with joint projects. In cases where there is a climate of institutional and political trust the joint efforts can be very effective in strengthening the focus of work, in the exchange of ideas, in the development of new methodologies, in the coverage of geographic areas, and in order to strengthen impacts.
- The monitoring, evaluation and report systems with the counterparts are weak. Although there are special manuals and forms, up to last year their use for project design and reporting was not mandatory. This creates difficulties in the Regional Office's reporting of results and impacts. There is a tendency to focus on activities and not on results. This is, in part, a result of presenting yearly projects, but also of a lack of planning processes with a

more strategic view. Furthermore, there is need for a closer monitoring and follow-up process by the Regional Office, for a more strategic follow-up and not merely program-oriented on the work of the counterparts, for the implementation of new methodologies that encourage greater participation in the monitoring, reporting and evaluation from a gender equity view-point. There is also need to institutionalize the systematization of the learning processes. Currently, the Regional Office's yearly reports do not communicate the richness of the work that is being conducted nor do they provide much opportunity to make a more profound analysis in order to gain knowledge from the learned lessons and good practices.

- The Strategic Alliances or the Regional Offices regarding equity and VBG related issues prioritize three important spaces in Guatemala, where participation is constant but there is need to systematize the contributions that the Program of Protection against Violence and Insecurity provides in these spaces; and the ways in which these spaces are influencing the work of the Regional Office. In both countries, within the ACT forum the active participation of the NCA Regional Office is highly valued; and its persistent effort in the positioning of inequity and VBG related issues has been recognized.
- The Regional Office does not have an advocacy (political incidence) strategy to address gender equity and VBG, it is not taken on as part of the mandate and the intentions are to not compete with the local roles. Nevertheless, all of the counterpart organizations and even NCA are very active in the relation building realms and in cooperation with the State. Furthermore, all of the counterpart organizations have their own resources to do advocacies at all levels. The wealth of view-points and levels of influence for a joint definition has not been adequately used –by the Regional Office and the counterparts– that could be the common advocacy objectives in the region and in each country.

Recommendations:

1. Form a joined focus of human rights and the specific rights of women, this would create the opportunity to work with, and use the inclusion of both genders as a tool, and not as an objective; and to address within the framework of rights all the forms of violence against women, in order to provide clarity, focus, and to help identify the impacts of reducing the cases of VBG.
2. Formulate a strategy for the Nicaragua and Guatemala Sub-region since they have common problems in addressing Violence Based on Gender. This will allow setting up more ambitious mid-term objectives, wherein the different problems in the region can be prioritized and linked together. In addition, it will help create the conditions to identify the programs' interrelations within the thematic main line of VBG, HIV-AIDS, water, sanitation and emergencies. This exercise should include prioritizing regional and national results.
3. The constant and permanent link with the thematic resources of equity and VBG of the Oslo headquarters, will create the opportunity to give coherence to the work at a central, regional, and national level; to make the work done in regions more visible, and to maintain continuous exchange and learning strategies. In addition, promote the constant positioning of these issues inside NCA. This could also insure larger funding resources from external donors.

4. In order to strengthen the strategic regional alliances of the Regional Office regarding women's rights issues, it has been suggested to conduct an internal reflection within the context of the next strategic plan, and to perform this while the purposes of the main line of VBG and its incidence and programming may be rethought.
5. The reduction of counterparts entails a substantial discussion about the social and political stakes, not only for the Protection Program Against Violence and Insecurity, but also the programs of the Regional Office. Before making decisions about this it would be important to have sound criteria available that would allow assessing the work of each organization, not only in terms of its projects, but also regarding its potential in the political advocacy and thematic impact, especially in the fields of equity and VBG.
6. Strengthening the strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation capabilities of both the Regional Offices and the counterparts. The challenge would consist in the institutionalization of the strategic planning processes, the development of qualitative indicators to facilitate the identification of more specific change signals that would transcend the sensitization activities of the projects. In the strategic follow-up of the counterparts' main line of VBG and equity it would be convenient to change the GEA manual completely; but also to incorporate into the processes of impact appraisal, popularized and participative methodologies that involve target groups.
7. Provide the counterparts with strategic follow-up through special meetings during special instances of the execution of their projects, and not merely with visits to participate in the regular activities. Additionally, an exchange with the counterparts should be maintained in order to strengthen thematic learning. For example, it would be important to discuss work methods that are being used, such as the Methodology of Maleness, the Critical Path to Address Violence, Methods of Analysis of Feminist Theology, amongst others.
8. In order to achieve changes within the Churches, it is essential that NCA and its counterparts clearly define what types of changes should be sought within the Church structures, both at the individual as well as at the institutional levels. Based on this, an operational strategy should be designed that includes specific indicators to be identified on top of awareness. Tools should be developed for the follow-up of multiplication and/or practical implementation activities.
9. To ensure the consolidation of the institutional identity, motivation, thematic coherence and high quality of the programs' executions, at least one Program Official of each country and of each Regional Office should stay involved in the thematic networks, processes and events coordinated by headquarters in Oslo.
10. The reorganization of the ACT National Forums, due to the merger of ACT International and ACT Development into ACT Alliance, should be systematically supported and used as an opportunity to facilitate the development of strategies, tools and practices for emergencies coherent with the frequently existing institutional gender related policies of the member organizations, and the work tools to include gender perspective in its long term work.

LEARNED LESSONS

- The usefulness of mechanisms (workshops, meetings, planning) for program interrelation should be clarified and institutionalized. It is not convenient to leave them at the discretion of Program Officers since the work overload and the lack of a team commitment for the cross sectioning of gender equity, diminish the motivation in meetings, and the possibility of better integrated results gets lost, as well as the achievement of an integral articulation of the different thematic focuses.
- Codes of personal conduct should, in addition to raising awareness, deepen the political discussions well beyond the projects. They should be positioned in a pro-active manner so that they can be useful and remain current. If systematic work is not performed with a person in charge of promoting it, there is the risk of it becoming a passive reference.
- Before and after an emergency that might be viewed as an opportunity, the purposes of the participation of women must be present, otherwise, it will turn into a mere utilitarian participation of women. But if it is promoted based on the emergencies, later on, advantage should be taken of this opportunity for participation and exposure. It is imperative to leap into the practices, to really identify the persons that may lead and promote gender equity processes.
- When responding to emergency situations, during the first 48 hours women delegates must also be present to make sure that the care guidelines with gender perspective are followed more effectively.
- In collective spaces such as forums, despite having regulatory frameworks, tools and individual resources, there is need for a person or organization to take the leadership in order to make political will effective and promote common interests towards equity.
- Although there is more knowledge about gender equity, the modification in power relations is not automatic, and the dissolution of resistance requires systematic processes, not just isolated workshops, but also to have an adequate follow-up.
- At a regional level, options to discuss how to incorporate women must be sought, with more concrete practices, strongly linking them to our topics. To merely speak about history, concepts and categories has not been enough. In this very resistant and patriarchal region there is need to be more effective with the tools used for the deconstruction of patriarchy; otherwise, we are only promoting processes that do not affect the power relations between men and women.
- In order to ensure that rights of women are maintained and respected, indigenous and mestizo women should be hired who have broad knowledge, leadership and strength, so they can assertively promote approaching the problems at an institutional level. This is symbolic for women and men and it has a positive effect in modifying images at every level.

- In the organizations of gay men with whom the HIV AIDS problem is being addressed, there is need to carry out a sensitizing process about gender equity before promoting alliances with women's organizations. Otherwise, a very strong clash occurs, and the gay and women's organizations split up at the end.
- Reports of political results must be sought more forcefully than the description of activities. Agreements must not be signed in an isolated manner, so that in this way the integrity of projects is supported; identifying which are the strategic changes in order to promote equity and a focus against VBG.
- In many cases it is still necessary to maintain affirmative actions in order to support a more assertive advancement of women. An example could be, the literacy programs and the Middle and High School programs for women.