

empowered, more savvy and better positioned to make political careers.

### Fostering partnerships with civil society organizations

Encouraging a direct relationship between community-based women's centres and civil society organizations (CSOs) ensures broader service provision beyond project's activities. This relationship creates a situation that benefits both parties whereby community-based women's centres gain access to new services (beyond the scope of a particular project) and the CSOs develop new implementation modalities, as well as greater outreach in new communities.

### Women's centres can provide services, not just receive and host them

Community-based women's centres which have solid management structures, large programmes and a wide constituency, can serve as service providers for newer or smaller centres in surrounding areas. This is particularly useful in terms of coaching the smaller centres and building their capacities to become sustainable. Connecting centres in this way is highly effective in empowering women's grassroots organizations and increasing local, regional and national exchange of ideas and skills between women, centres and communities.

### Adequate focus on income generation supports women's continued involvement in other programme areas

Income generation is an under-addressed priority for women in the occupied Palestinian territory. In almost every SABAYA Centre, women expressed not just their preference, but the necessity for more programmatic focus on income generation, particularly because of the difficult economic situation of many rural communities where a single income is not sufficient to sustain a household. While they appreciated and utilized services offered by the centres, income generation strategies as well as relevant training, capacity building and support are vital to ensuring their ability to continue with their involvement in other centre activities.

## SABAYA Model

Key recommendations for the implementation of community-based women's development programming in the occupied Palestinian territory

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## Women's buy-in and physical space: crucial prerequisites to any women's community-based initiatives

At the outset of a community-based initiative, there must be solid buy-in from a core nucleus of women; a group of women who have already decided to set up a centre for themselves and who are convinced of the importance of this centre for the community as a whole. This will allow the initiative to start on solid ground and secure a strengthened outreach towards other women and the rest of the community.

In addition, women's centres must be conceptualized as a women-only space where women are the decision-makers. This is a vital condition for the smooth functioning and evolution of the community-based initiative, where women have their own physical space to meet, mobilize, strategize and define how to manage social change, which will eventually lead to partnership with men and boys in the community.

## Community roots, ownership and involvement are paramount for success

Community-based women centres that are closely linked with local formal institutions and programmes charged with meeting community needs are more likely to last. Building on existing community institutions and relationships is the most effective and sustainable approach to establishing women-specific centres and programming. Additionally, through these linkages, women's perspectives are eventually perceived as benefitting local development planning and the community as a whole.

## Encouraging volunteerism and inclusion

Volunteerism forms the backbone of community-based initiatives. In women's centres, volunteerism fosters a sense of ownership among women and also broadens the scope of outreach to women in the

community. Beyond the sense of community service and civic duty, volunteerism can also reap individual benefits by ensuring access to information, services, resources and opportunities that are generated by the work of the centre.

In all aspects of its work, a community-based women's centre must be encouraged to ensure inclusion, so that the benefits of the centre and its activities are not restricted to a specific segment or segments of a community. Otherwise, it becomes more of a private enterprise.

## Management matters

For women's centres to function effectively and be sustainable, they have to have a clear management and governance structure, with clear delineations of roles and responsibilities. This is a prerequisite for the centres to be officially registered as independent entities and therefore be eligible to manage their own financial resources. It is also important even for informal networks, to ensure transparency and accountability. Accordingly, initiatives in support of community-based women's initiatives should address governance structures and also invest in capacity development for the management of the centres. This includes a volunteer management strategy. It is also important to ensure monitoring and evaluation of centre management through the lifetime of the initiative.

## Sustainability must be a focus from the start

Community-based women's centres must be prepared for the future. Sustainability plans must be a focus from the start and integrated into the establishment of women's centres, including their management structures, capacity development plans and partnership strategies. There are various formulas to ensure sustainability that must be developed in full partnership with the women's centre and community leaders, taking the particular context of each centre/community into consideration. One of the most sustainable options is the formal registration of a

women's centre, particularly in terms of access to funding sources, but again, for the centre to be truly sustainable, this step must be decided by the women themselves. Additionally, it is essential to assist the women centres in identifying and establishing income-generating initiatives that can ensure the centre's economic security.

## Tailored and flexible programming is worth the extra effort

A programming approach that is tailored to the specific needs and existing capacities of a women's group/centre is better received, more consistently utilized, more effective and more beneficial than pre-packaged activity modules. This programming approach requires flexibility because on the one hand, situations, needs and capacities can change directly, while on the other hand, during the course of the programme, women become more confident and talk about their needs and priorities in a different, more strategic, way.

Keeping sight of the objectives is primordial in order to ensure the relevance of the activities. Sometimes, during the course of implementation, the latter needs to be reconsidered in order to be properly adapted to evolving needs and abilities, as well strategic focus. Accordingly, the programming approach should encompass regular needs assessments as part of the monitoring system, to ensure that activities can be redefined to meet women's needs.

## Women's political participation needs a broader understanding

There is a tendency to restrict women's political participation to a formal electoral process. It is essential to broaden our understanding, to acknowledge and value women's role in community advocacy and local decision-making processes, however small, as political participation. Women's political engagement and contribution at the micro level, together with communities' acceptance and acknowledgement of their achievements, if managed properly, will put in place a new generation of women who are more