

A transversal study on Empowerment

cfD Empowerment Projects
in Palestine, Israel, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo,
Morocco and Switzerland

cfD working paper
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Preface

cfed is a feminist peace organisation that initiates and supports empowerment projects in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Israel, Palestine, Morocco and Algeria, as well as in the context of migration and peace politics in Switzerland. The connection between gender, empowerment and feminist peace politics is a basic question that characterises all of cfd's projects and policies. The *Gender and Peace-building* project commissioned by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) provides additional scope for groundwork at the point where empowerment and peace politics converge.

cfed understands empowerment as an individual and collective process of acquiring power with the aim of increasing women's access to resources and causing social attitudes to evolve towards a state of fairness and equality. Empowerment processes must take place at all social levels, which is why cfd's projects and policies focus on achieving personal empowerment (micro level), as well as social and macro-political changes. cfd has many years' experience of empowerment projects in Switzerland and other countries. In 2003 and 2004 the organisation conducted a study that systematically analysed the impact of empowerment. The question of empowerment as a strategy for widening women's scope of action is a core theme of the study, while feminist peace politics remains a general background theme. Nevertheless, by focussing on violence, security and resources, the study highlights the three central areas of feminist peace politics.

We are pleased to publish the results of our *Transversal Study on Empowerment*, which we hope will give rise to some interesting discussions.

Objectives

The study aims to investigate the connection between gender, empowerment and peace politics in 16 cfd projects in the context of migration in Switzerland, as well as in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Israel, Palestine, Morocco and Algeria. The study is intended to show how our local partners perceive the concepts of empowerment, security and peace. It also describes the strategies adopted and the impact of empowerment on people's personal, social and political environment. Finally, the main objective is to clarify whether and to what extent empowerment projects can widen women's scope of action with regard to violence, security and resources.

We hope the study will also contribute to a deeper understanding of the empowerment approach. The results should be used for future projects and programs for the promotion of peace and gender equality, as well as becoming instruments for the monitoring of empowerment and peace-building processes.

Procedure

At a preparatory workshop held in August 2003 with the German sociologist Birte Rodenberg (Rodenberg und Wichterich 1999: *Macht gewinnen. Eine Studie über Frauenprojekte der Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung im Ausland*) cfd examined the meaning, methods and aims of empowerment and determined how to use the idea of empowerment in cfd's feminist peace-building approach. cfd then drew up a research concept based on the findings of the workshop. The concept was discussed with the researchers from Morocco, Croatia, Palestine and Switzerland at a further workshop held in Bern in March 2004, with the aim of reaching a common understanding of the issues involved and adopting a uniform methodical procedure.

From April to July 2004 the researchers conducted studies in their respective regions: Faiha AbdulHadi and the project team in Israel and Palestine, Martina Belić and Susanna Kunac in Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina, Jamila Bargach in Morocco and Maritza Le Breton in the context of migration in Switzerland. Ethnologist Anja Sieber has analysed the regional studies in the final report: *A Transversal study on Empowerment*.

The final report was completed at the end of October 2004 and served as the basis for the cfd conference held in Bern on 25 and 26 November 2004, entitled *Perspectives of Feminist Peace Politics: Empowerment*,

Gender and the Prevention of Violence, as well as for a series of events held in 2004 entitled *Empowerment in Contexts of Violence*. Both the conference and the events provided an opportunity for an initial exchange of views between cfd, its partner organisations, the field researchers and external specialists.

Lessons learnt

Research process

Study concept

In addressing the issues involved and drawing up a research concept cfd was careful to combine theory with practical experience gained from projects and political discussions. The research concept was structured to cover the issues of violence, security and resources, making it possible to compare the regions concerned and discover where they had things in common and where the differences lay. However, the model character of the concept means that the results of the study are normative, and individual case histories and experience gained during the project tend to be pushed into the background.

Local researchers

Cooperation with local researchers in the project regions enriched our discussions and enabled a context-related study of empowerment. At the same time, this presented a considerable challenge: supervising the concurrent research processes in the different regions required greater capacities than foreseen by cfd. In future, we must cooperate more closely with local researchers when drawing up concepts for projects, as well as giving them a greater opportunity to exchange news and views with each other while gathering data.

Exchange of views with and amongst the project partners

Exchanging views with and amongst our project partners was an essential part of the research work and the conference itself. This was the first meeting in Switzerland of representatives from all cfd's partner organisations. Apart from the official program, many interesting discussions took place that went beyond the context of the conference; there was an exchange of news and views, and common aspects of daily work were discovered. cfd will endeavour to hold a partners' conference every 3-5 years, in order to strengthen the networks and to consider the most suitable approach for empowerment projects and the impact such projects might have.

Discussion of regional reports

Participants at the conference had an opportunity of discussing matters beyond the confines of the final and regional reports, thus enabling them to compare different project contexts. This meant, however, that insufficient consideration was given to the regional studies and the experiences of individual project partners. cfd will give due consideration to this point and will continue to discuss the study and its results with project partners, as well as implementing the findings in their projects.

Contents

Empowerment: transversal aspects

The regional studies confirm that a consensual understanding of empowerment is a prerequisite for the development of programs and projects in a spirit of partnership. All the partner organisations recognise that empowerment and violence, security and resources, are closely linked. They regard empowerment as "the power within", i.e. the power of an individual or group of people to act and take decisions of their own accord. The study confirms that, in order to change existing conditions of domination and violence, the individual, collective and socio-structural levels must all be taken into account. In the opinion of the project partners, structural changes can only take place via horizontal and vertical networking, and through the additional efforts of the organisations concerned. It is thus still necessary for cfd to consider in which context and at what level alliances should be formed in order to influence social structures.

Empowerment within the organisations

On several occasions the study underlines the need for empowerment within the organisations. We are convinced that empowerment processes can only be promoted and supported if the project workers themselves experience empowerment. For a project worker to analyse social power structures critically, she must be able to identify hierarchies in her own organisation and help to install a participative, democratic organisation culture. For example, this might mean systematically encouraging employees working on projects and within the organisations, increasing their competences and granting them a say in organisational structuring. This is where external financiers play an important role. With long-term support they can create security and stability for employees and enable the organisations to build up the necessary competences and structures.

Feminist peace politics

Gender-related violence is a central theme in feminist peace politics. All the organisations involved have an extended understanding of violence that includes personal, structural and culturally-legitimised violence. Our findings indicate that individual empowerment strategies help to curb gender-related violence. Our study cites numerous examples of financial, legal and social empowerment that enable women to break out of violence-breeding situations of dependence. Women's collective efforts can go beyond the individual level and bring about structural changes that will reduce the incidence of violence against women. The example of the reforms in Moroccan family law underlines the importance of broadly supported political networking when implementing structural changes in the interests of women.

The study of empowerment in the three thematic fields of violence, security and resources establishes a link with feminist peace politics. However, the significance of empowerment as a peace-building strategy has only received a brief mention in this study. It will be the subject of further reflection and examination within cfd, bearing in mind the findings obtained from feminist peace research. A first step in this direction was taken in the cfd Newsletter *Focus on Gender and Peace-building 3/04*.

Including men in the projects and the perception of men's and women's roles

One of the most important recommendations of the study is the inclusion of men in empowerment projects. However, it is not yet clearly defined what this entails. Should men be sensitised to women's rights? Should there be more men in women's organisations so that their demands are more likely to be socially accepted? Or is it more important to establish strategic alliances with men in positions of power in order to achieve specific feminist goals and thus exercise more influence? During the conference it became clear that our project partners had already begun in many ways to include men in their projects. For example, in Kosovo, women's organisations place emphasis on mediation between spouses as a means of combating domestic violence. Many organisations in different regions have developed programs to sensitise the authorities and the police to the problem of violence against women. Advocacy and lobbying campaigns are oriented towards politicians and other decision-makers.

When debating whether to include men in the projects, as well as what roles men and women are to play in such projects, we must bear in mind social structures, processes, institutions and acts that give rise to gender-related violence, inequalities in access to and control of resources, as well as precarious living conditions for women. With regard to empowerment as an aspect of feminist peace politics, we need to examine more closely which concepts of men's and women's roles need to be questioned and which concepts are to be developed and encouraged to avoid reinforcing the existing gender dichotomy and to overcome hierarchical gender structures.

Speaking and writing about empowerment – a critical reflection

cfid critically examines hegemonic statements concerning gender, religion and origin that legitimise violence. This means being aware of stereotyping and culturalising, especially when presented in the form of facts, and looking for the underlying social and political motives.

Several times, the study describes the exclusion of women and the degeneration of their position in the context of war or crisis as a "return to tradition" due to local concepts of "honour and shame". This raises the question as to whether cultural-symbolic explanations might discursively conceal inequalities between the

sexes in the distribution of power and resources. In other words: under what circumstances do cultural factors actually cause violence against women and the exclusion of women? By reverting to arguments that are based on cultural explanations, there is a real danger of conveying an image of backward, violence-prone societies.

Often, when giving reasons for project strategies in the field of women's empowerment, the focus is on deficits only. Ways are proposed to free women from their "social isolation" or "oppression by men", but no place is given to positions and positioning, resources and established scopes of action, and the discursive reality is, in fact, disempowerment.

The challenge remains: empowerment must also be practised in our representations and communications if we are to claim and acquire powers of definition.

It is in this spirit that we invite you to read the different reports included in our empowerment study.

cf

Bern, June 2005

Part A: Introduction

1 Purpose of the study and terminology used

The feminist peace organisation cfd¹ works with partner organisations and empowerment projects in Israel, Palestine, Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Morocco. In Switzerland, the cfd empowerment project *wisdomna* holds workshops for female migrants and is involved in local and national migration politics.

Based on a study by the German Heinrich Böll Foundation (Rodenberg and Wichterich 1999), a cfd working group carried out an interdepartmental study on the impact of cfd empowerment projects (cfd 2003). After examining conditions in the regions and organisations concerned, cfd plans to systematically apply the findings of this study at a practical level. The results of the study can be put to good use in the future development of cfd programs and policies, as well as providing monitoring and evaluation instruments for assessing the impact of projects (cfd 2003: 2). In this study, one of the key issues was ascertaining the scope of action of those involved in or benefiting from such projects. Feminist peace politics characterise the study, and the focus is on analysing people's understanding of empowerment and the correlated thematic fields of violence, security and resources. The study is based on qualitative principles.

The basic view is that fairness between the sexes is essential for the promotion of justice and peace. Men and women must enjoy the same rights and opportunities, and have equal powers of decision over their lives and in deciding their future. In the regions investigated, the discrimination of women and unequal opportunities at the social level are facts of life. Women are confronted with a large number of restrictions and outright bans. They are excluded from the social life of their community and the sphere of decision-making. They have limited freedom of movement, unequal power structures determine their daily life, and their personal safety is constantly in jeopardy – not only in war zones. The aim of the present study is to identify the structural discrimination that marginalises women and denies them any say in their lives. (cfd 2003: 3)

At the same time, however, the study tries to identify opportunities and possibilities open to women. It attempts to show how women can change power structures that they believed to be firmly entrenched, where and how they can break down discrimination, and how they can win equal access to social resources. The chapters on individual countries show possibilities for taking action and the strategies with which women can bring about radical changes. Such changes may be at a personal level, i.e. in everyday relationships between men and women, or in the macro-political structure of their society.

The key question that prompted this study and underlies all the contexts of our investigations was: **How and to what extent can empowerment projects reveal and reduce discriminating structures and thereby enlarge existing scopes of action that enable women to achieve more individual and collective control in their personal and social/political life?** cfd has defined the themes which are relevant to answering this question and which concern the impact of empowerment processes (cfd 2003: 3). These themes deal with the phenomena of violence and safety, as well as access to resources, which will be discussed in greater detail later in this report.

However, we must first attempt to define the rather vague term **empowerment** (Kabeer 1994 (2003): 224)². The concept of empowerment dates from the closing conference of the UN Women's Decade, held in Nairobi in 1985, and was first presented by a women's network from the southern hemisphere called DAWN (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era). It describes a feminine political strategy whereby women

¹ The abbreviation "cfd" will be used throughout the text.

² This expression clearly needs definition, not only for the purpose of academic debate, but also for the gathering of data. Discussions during the preparatory workshop for the study revealed the difficulty of translating this expression into the local languages of the regions investigated. For this reason it was important, and at the same time a considerable challenge, for the researchers to formulate the questions in a manner that would be understood by the local people. The researchers unanimously agreed that the understanding of empowerment needed to be researched from various perspectives. (cfd 2004: 2).

collectively build up their powers from the basis, with the aim of combating those structures that exploit and oppress them (Rodenberg and Wichterich 1999: 25). Women should be able to control resources and hold decision and planning powers in the household, in politics, in the economy and in cultural matters. At the same time, other inequalities such as race and class discrimination can be included, so that women are freed, not only from male domination, but also from colonialism, neo-colonialism and globalised economies that exclude women and other underprivileged people. The women from the southern hemisphere in fact introduced a change of perspective that demanded feminist pluralism. The differing needs and problems of women in various environments had to be addressed and defined by the women themselves (Sen und Grown 1988). This way, the duality of power versus powerlessness and the stereotype of women's submission and lack of rights could be challenged. At that time different points of view were presented, as well as the observation that even people with apparently little power had the potential to transform their living conditions (Kabeer 1994 (2003): 224). Women were described as political actors with specific resources who could consciously adopt strategies that would bring about changes in their lives. Thus, today, the focus is no longer on the universal submission of women, but on the origin and functions of women's role in relation to the role of men, in other words, femininity in relation to masculinity³. As a consequence of this change of paradigm the focus has shifted from the rather static aspect of "power versus powerlessness" to a dynamic level, namely "power as a process", whereby power structures are perceived to be changeable. Kabeer (1994 (2003): 223-263) identifies three different forms of power and power relationships that are crucial to the concept of empowerment in development projects. These are: firstly, "**the power to**", a productive force that can lead to more power and thus new opportunities to shape the future. The second type is "**the power over**", which means the power of controlling. The third type is "**the power within**". For the empowerment of women, Kabeer describes the last-mentioned type of power as the most suitable instrument. With the help of "the power within" women can control resources. They are enabled to shape their own lives, as well as assuming responsibility for their decisions. Apart from individual changes, empowerment processes can lead to a change in social relationships and socio-cultural norms (Rodenberg and Wichterich 1999: 28) – i.e. to changes at a collective social level. It is important to remember that empowerment is never one-dimensional, but needs to take place at all levels of society (micro-, meso- and macro-levels).

Empowerment is – in the words of von Rodenberg (1999: 17) – "a complex, dynamic process leading to the improvement of individual and collective capacities and to the extension of women's social and political scopes of action". Kabeer (1999: 437) extends this definition and describes empowerment as "inescapably bound up with the condition of disempowerment and refers to the processes by which those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such an ability. In other words, empowerment entails a process of change." The researchers were interested in empowerment and disempowerment in three areas: first of all, the understanding of empowerment by local organisations and those who stood to benefit from the projects (i.e. the participants). The second and third areas concerned the strategies used in the regions covered by the empowerment projects and the impact of empowerment on individual, collective and socio-structural conditions. The researchers unanimously agreed with the above definition and incorporated it into their questionnaires (cf. 2004).

Another term that plays a major role in the study and thus needs to be defined is "violence". Our research was based on the **extended meaning of violence** which was first used by Galtung (1969; 1990): "We shall refer to the type of violence where there is an actor that commits the violence as personal or direct, and to violence where there is no such actor as *structural or indirect*" (Galtung 1969: 170-171). Later, he expanded on this definition by adding a cultural component (1990: 291): "By *cultural violence* we mean those aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence – exemplified by religion and ideology, language and art, empirical science and formal science – that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence". Thus, three different forms of violence can be identified:

- personal (direct, physical) violence committed by clearly defined actors

³ Further explanations can be found in: (Fishburne Collier and Yanagisako 1987; Moore 2001; Morris 1995).

- formal (indirect, structural) violence that exists in social, political, economic, institutional or other structures
- cultural, symbolic violence that propagates and ultimately legitimises personal and structural violence

This definition, together with a feminist interpretation of Galtung's triangle of violence, enables us to perceive violence in the discrimination of people because of their sex, origins or ethnicity, as well as their religion or political views. Such discrimination can be addressed and curbed if we adopt a broad understanding of the term "violence". It was on this understanding that the researchers asked the following questions during their investigations: What is the local understanding of violence? How, where and from whom do women and children suffer violence in their specific environment? How can those affected react to and curb this specific violence? (cfd 2003: 4, 9)

Parallel to the extended meaning of violence, the study also used the **extended meaning of security** as defined by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 1994: 23–25. In relation to the extended meaning of violence, the extended meaning of security encompasses freedom from violence at a personal, structural and cultural level, as well as social justice. However, people's security cannot be achieved by military action, but must be based on the individual's need for security. Kofi Annan puts it very clearly: "Human security, in its broadest sense, embraces far more than the absence of violent conflict. It encompasses human rights, good governance, access to education and health care and ensuring that each individual has opportunities and choices to fulfil his or her potential" (Annan 2000). From a feminist point of view human security also includes fully guaranteed and implemented women's rights, equal opportunities, freedom from (domestic) violence, protection against sexual aggression and equal rights in politics.

The questions were formulated according to these requirements: What do women understand as "security" and what form of security do they need? How do conflicts affect women's security in- and outside the home? Do the projects help to create a scope of action for women that improves their security? Do the projects have any impact on the public discussion of security? (cfd 2003: 4, 9)

In view of the above mentioned concepts of empowerment, cfd adopted a **resource-oriented** approach. Our research focused on the following areas of resource: legal rights, education, work/income and health, as well as immaterial societal resources. It is interesting to observe how women gain access to these resources, how these resources can increase women's scope of action, and how they help women to overcome their everyday problems. But we also investigated the areas that are still denied to women and the reasons for this. The aim was to identify the resources open to women and to determine whether access to and control of resources helps women to shape their lives themselves. (cfd 2003: 5, 9)

Similarly to the extended meaning of violence and security, the study adopted the **extended meaning of peace** (cfd Mai 2004) and accordingly was based on a positive concept for researching conflicts and peace⁴ – peace means far more than just the absence of war. **Feminist peace politics** investigate the causes of domination and violence, the political and social functions of gender stereotypes, and the classification of people according to cultural, ethnic, religious or social criteria. The focus is on all forms of social violence, but particularly on the very common incidence of violence towards women (Mathis 1998: 30). However, the feminist concept of peace is not only concerned with violence, but also the availability of, access to and control of resources – in other words, empowerment (cfd 2002). The themes of violence, security and resources are examined in all our projects. The promotion of empowerment, as well as networking, access to resources and participation in politics, are major topics of discussion. These subjects are correlated and are a mark of cfd's policy of peace-oriented action.

⁴ For example, compare Galtung 1971; Galtung 1985; Reimann 2000; Reimann 2001

2 The field researchers

To realise the target of cfd mentioned in the introduction – the systematic processing of experience gathered in the field – local researchers were engaged in the project regions of the Middle East, the Balkans, Morocco and Switzerland to investigate 16 projects supported by cfd.

Ms **Faiha AbdelHadi** (Ph.D.) was entrusted with the projects in Israel and Palestine. She holds a doctorate in Arab literature, teaches at Bir Zeit University, and leads a research program on the subject of the "Oral History of Palestinian Women". Ms AbdelHadi advises the UNDP and the Palestinian government on "Gender Planning and Development".

Ms **Martina Belić** (MD) researched the projects in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, assisted by Ms Suzana Kunac. Ms Belić is a doctor and coordinator of the women's organisation B.a.B.e. (be active, be emancipated) in Zagreb. She is co-founder of a centre for the female victims of war. Thanks to many years' experience in peace politics, she is extremely knowledgeable on issues such as gender and women's rights, war-induced traumatism, non-violent communication and strategies for resolving conflicts.

Jamila Bargach (Ph.D.) was responsible for the study in Morocco. She holds a doctorate in ethnology and works at the Institute of Social Sciences at the National School of Architecture (ENA) in Rabat. She is a member of the international research project "Religion and Human Rights Project" of the University School of Law in Atlanta (USA) and in 1999/2000 worked at the College of Science in Berlin on the subject of "Modernity and Islam". She is also an advisor to the German Heinrich Böll Foundation.

Maritza Le Breton (lic.phil.) analysed the wisdom empowerment project in Switzerland. She is a qualified sociologist and ethnologist who teaches at the University of Applied Sciences in Solothurn. She has carried out various research, including a project financed by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) on the subject of the trafficking of women from the point of view of female migrants in Switzerland.

The ethnologist **Anja Sieber**⁵ (lic.phil.) evaluated the analyses for the different countries and has summarised the findings in a final report. She is a teaching and research assistant at the Institute for Ethnology at the University of Bern and is a member of the scientific supporting group for the project "1000 women for the Nobel Peace Prize 2005", which is associated with the interdisciplinary centre for women and gender research at the University of Bern. Her dissertation was on the subject of "The Social Networking of Women as a Resource for Reconciliation in Bosnia-Herzegovina." This research is financed by a 1-year grant from the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF).

3 Procedure and problems

The methods used for this cfd study were based on qualitative principles. The basic requirement for gathering information was – as already mentioned – that the questions should follow a resource-oriented approach. This approach had two distinctive advantages: firstly, it avoided argumentation from a victim's point of view, and secondly, it precluded victimisation of the women interviewed (cfd 2003: 2).

The field researchers used the questionnaire⁶ which had been drawn up and jointly discussed in Switzerland. However, they adapted both the questionnaire and their own approach to the specific situations of the organisations concerned. The information was gathered by means of open and semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, as well as participative observations and working from archives.⁷ All the participants placed great value on transparent procedures.

All our field researchers found that the limited time allotted for gathering information made their task more

⁵ The first-person form used in the introduction refers to the author of the final report.

⁶ Compare with the final report of the workshop in Bern (cfd 2004).

⁷ For details of the procedures adopted please refer to the individual chapters with local reports: (Abdul-Hadi 2004a: 6-8; AbdulHadi 2004b: 6-7; Bargach 2004: 7-8; Belić and Kunac 2004: 3-12; Le Breton 2004: 24-25).

difficult and limited their options. This is also the reason that some aspects of the problems are not discussed in our report, e.g. an analysis of conflicting statements.

Researchers were also confronted with context-specific difficulties. For example, due to the acute conflict situation in Israel and Palestine, Ms. AbdelHadi was limited in her movements and had to coordinate and supervise both an Israeli and a Palestinian research team. Due to these difficulties, there are certain gaps in the report, which I have attempted to fill with the help of the person in charge of cfd projects in Israel and Palestine. Wherever necessary, individual reports on the countries concerned were complemented by means of discussions with cfd project leaders and on the basis of internal sources. Due to the limited time available and the volume of the study, I was not able to draw on other sources. I hope the reader will bear this fact in mind.

From an academic perspective, the inclusion of so many different projects and organisations in our study proved a daunting challenge. The limited time for gathering information and subsequently analysing it here in Switzerland did not allow any profound investigations, either by our researchers or myself. For example, the long-term influence of the projects on social reform could not be assessed and thus little criticism is levied against the organisations or their methods. The statements made during the survey, and therefore also in the final report, tend to reflect the status of all 16 cfd projects and serve as a basis for discussion of the local understanding of empowerment and the three correlated topics. I hope that this final report will serve to launch the next step towards the targets formulated in the research concept – the further development of the cfd program based on experience, and the creation of monitoring and evaluating instruments.

4 Outline of the structure of the final report

This final report comprises three parts: immediately after this **introductory section (Part A)**, you will find the **second part (Part B)**, which presents empirical data from the different regions. Each individual report is divided up as follows: an account of regional peculiarities leads to a description of the organisations involved, their activities and their understanding of empowerment. Building on this, the transversal thematic fields of violence, security and resources will be discussed. Wherever possible, any planned further project stages are discussed. The sequence of the regional reports originated from the writing process: first of all Palestine and Israel, followed by Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo and Morocco, and lastly Switzerland, where women migrants suffer from structural inequalities. I have shortened the regional reports (ranging from 40 to 110 pages) into a maximum of 8 pages each. For this reason alone, I cannot claim that they are exhaustive and precise right down to the smallest detail. If you want to read a more profound consideration of the subject, may I suggest you read the full reports made by our researchers.

In the **last section (Part C)** the regional findings will be compared with the specific questions posed by the study, against the background of understanding of the cfd terminology and focussing on the central theme of empowerment.

Part B: Regional Focuses

5 Palestine

As already mentioned, this final report is based on the texts submitted by our local researchers. In the case of Palestine, our researcher was restricted in her movements, due to the current conflict situation, so that she was unable to gather data herself. This made it very difficult to gather data at all, and there may be some difficulty in interpreting the results. Above all, discussion of the local context proved to be quite a challenge. To counter these difficulties, I have used additional material in the possession of cfd (Becker and Weyermann 2004; Shamas 2003). For the description of the organisations and their activities I have concentrated mainly on the cfd overseas program (2004). Otherwise, unless specially marked, I have used the report submitted by Faihaa AbdulHadi (2004b).⁸

5.1 The situation in Palestine (West Bank, Gaza Strip)

The political, social and legal situation in Palestine is extremely complex, as well as very tense, owing to the war. In addition, the situation can change from day to day. It is therefore not possible to describe the situation in detail in this report. However, the following issues are very important in the planning of projects: Since the outbreak of the second intifada (September 2000) the living standards of Palestinian families have diminished dramatically throughout the land. Before the intifada, some 30,000 Palestinian cross-border commuters from the Gaza Strip were working in Israel. By the end of 2003, this number had shrunk to 4,000. Depending on the region, **unemployment** may be as high as 41.2%. The majority of people (78.9%) depend on support, 63.3% live below the breadline and 47.4% of families have lost all their possessions. This situation means that many donors and NGOs have had to adapt their activities to provide everyday survival aid and have been forced to withdraw their financial support from long-term projects (Becker and Weyermann 2004: 11).

Women are particularly hard hit by the lack of governmental authority and Israel's brutal suppression of Palestinians' right to self-government. With the aggravation of the power struggle, women's rights become marginalised. Under these circumstances, the status of women cannot substantially improve (Shamas 2003: 31). Curfews and barricades restrict women's freedom of movement and deny them access to resources such as health and education institutions. The repercussions are becoming increasingly noticeable in the **private sphere**, which was formerly the domain of women. Men who have lost their jobs are beginning to take over the private domain. This, in turn, forces many women to take a job outside the home and to become the family breadwinner (Shamas 2003: 29). The resulting **inversion in the roles of the sexes** undermines traditional Palestinian culture, whereby men claim the prestige of protecting their **family honour**, and this is why women are often isolated from public life (Becker und Weyermann 2004: 12). According to the moral code of "Honour and Shame"⁹ the honour of the men depends on the correct behaviour of the women. However, this principle does not only apply to relations between men and women, but also to the honour of the household. Women are responsible for the reputation of their household and for this reason they are subjected to closer social supervision. Due to the occupation of their land and the associated humiliation, men are under pressure, at least to maintain control over their family and household. Thus, situations of war and economic crisis generate an even stricter social code, which is particularly disadvantageous for women.

Domestic violence is one possible consequence of a stricter social code. There have recently been several investigations into this problem but, since this type of violence is taboo in Palestinian society and tends to be

⁸ This also applies to the description of the situation in Israel (see page 18 of this report)

⁹ For a critical, feminist consideration of the moral code of "Honour and Shame", I refer the reader to (Goddard 1987; Goddard 1994; Lindisfarne 1994). The main argument of the feminist essay is that, despite the stereotype idea that "Women bring shame, men defend honour", the activities of women and their contribution to society must be taken into account.

regarded as a strictly private matter, it is difficult to obtain reliable statistics. Nevertheless, it can be assumed that husbands are responsible for most of the violence against women, and that marriages between relatives and marriage at an early age aggravate the problem.

Girls' **education**, too has been hindered by the militarization of the conflict (Shamas 2003: 31). Although 86.4% of Palestinian women can read and write and the population is conscious of the importance of education, there is an increasing tendency for girls to leave school early. There are plenty of reasons for this: e.g. stricter controls at the checkpoints and parents' fears that this may present specific dangers to girls, or the unaffordable costs of transport to school. The construction of the wall has further aggravated this situation. The increased desire to protect girls and keep them at home for the sake of family honour is then justified by the restrictions on freedom of movement and the constant exposure to danger.

There is yet another way in which women suffer from the consequences of war: their sons and husbands who die fighting the occupiers are feted as heroes and **martyrs** by Palestinian society. It is considered unseemly to grieve for martyrs. The women must thus hide their grief and suppress their sense of loss (Becker and Weyermann 2004: 13). According to Shamas (2003: 31) Palestinian society's refusal to recognise and accept people's grief causes many women to become so depressed that they withdraw from society altogether.

5.2 The regional organisations and their understanding of empowerment

5.2.1 The School of Community Health – Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committees (UPMRC) in Ramallah

UPMRC has been providing basic health care in Palestine ever since 1979. The organisation has established mobile clinics and outpatient centres, as well as a school medical service. Since 1987, a focal point in the work of this NGO has been the two-year training program for young community health workers, who are usually people from rural parts of the West Bank and destitute families. After they have received their diploma, these health care workers run the outpatient centres in their villages, make home visits and give talks on health education to schoolchildren and adults. The training program comprises the following modules: primary health care, social work / health education, and health care for women and children. The curriculum is practically oriented, with an alternation of theory and practice. This officially recognised educational institution also offers a wide range of advanced courses for qualified health care workers and other medical personnel. These courses are adapted to deal with the current emergency situation and should enable the health care workers to assume more responsibility in critical situations.

UPMRC hopes its activities will improve health conditions in rural areas, as well as the status of women within their local community. The aim is to individually and financially empower the young trainees, which should lead to the ultimate strengthening of their home communities.

The organisation understands **empowerment** as an interdependent process at an individual, collective and socio-structural level that strengthens the status of women. By receiving vocational training, acquiring knowledge and being made aware of certain very important points, students learn to act independently and confidently. It is also significant that they have an opportunity to earn money, which they can control themselves. This educational program helps the young women in several ways: personally (increased self-confidence, knowing to stand up for their rights, financial independence), in the family (reordering of the hierarchy and their own position in the family), and socially (the local community will accept and respect them as health care workers). The report also mentions the "trickle-over effect" of the project, i.e. women who meet a qualified health care worker may enrol for a course themselves.

5.2.2 The Jerusalem Centre for Women (JCW) in East Jerusalem

Unlike the first-mentioned organisation, the Jerusalem Centre for Women is an organisation run only by women, its main objective being the political empowerment of women. Situated in East Jerusalem, the organisation is committed to peace politics and demands the active political and social participation of women. In 1994, JCW founded the Jerusalem Link, with the aim of maintaining a political dialogue with the Israeli women's organisation Bat Shalom. The two organisations published magazine articles calling for dialogue and a just peace settlement. At present, the Jerusalem Link is forming an international women's peace commission, made up of Palestinian, Israeli and international women specialists, to ensure the formal participation of

women and women's organisations in the peace process. JCW is organising platforms for discussion in order to strengthen links and solidarity amongst Palestinian women.

At the JCW centres there are training courses for women in subjects like gender, human and women's rights, democracy and political participation. The courses always include a practical activity, such as launching a campaign. Young women from NGOs in Jerusalem and Ramallah can attend the JCW Leadership Program to discuss political and legal topics and to learn how to handle the media. With a view to the local elections at the end of 2004, JCW supports female candidates in their public relations work. Another service provided by JCW consists of legal advice and psychological counselling for female prisoners and their relatives.

Empowerment is seen as the strengthening of social and individual awareness. Through the political and social awareness that women acquire in workshops and training courses, they learn to participate in discussions and convince people with their arguments, which results in the diplomatic handling of family matters. After participation in the project, women feel they are in a stronger position, and they learn to recognise their own skills, which they can use in family life. For example, they feel sufficiently confident to help their children with their school work. On the social plane, too, women are reporting progress: the participation of a woman at a village meeting or the founding of a club for women point to new freedoms within society and the general acceptance of work done by women.

5.2.3 Palestinian Working Women's Society for Development (PWWSD) in Nablus¹⁰

The third organisation in this report has been running a children's library and a centre for women and children from Nablus and the surrounding refugee camps since 1992. The information and social centre is intended to be open and free from violence. At this centre, women, children and adolescents (male and female) who are in psychological or social need can benefit from professional counselling, a wide program of training courses and a leisure program with games and educational activities. The activities of the centre are extremely varied, including the library, a day-care centre, a telephone hotline for women and children, a crisis intervention program and discussion groups. A further major activity of PWWSD is the organisation of workshops for women and young people on subjects like women's rights, family rights, gender issues, domestic violence, elections and political participation, or the role of women in the local community. The organisation networks with other local organisations and institutions. In addition, PWWSD is committed to regular public relations campaigns on current social and political issues, organises lobbying and makes Palestinian society aware of women's and children's rights.

This organisation sees **empowerment** as increasing women's confidence in their own abilities, so that they can use them to improve their status in the family and in society. By discovering their rights, extending their network of contacts and learning to discuss and advance arguments, women become more self-confident and can widen their scope of action (influence). Both the organisation and the women who benefit from the project emphasise the importance of financial resources in widening their scope of action. The present political and economic situation forces women to (co-)finance the upkeep of their families. Apart from encouraging and mentally strengthening the women, the courses teach them how to conceive and initiate employment projects. This should help women to achieve financial independence and, if all goes according to plan, acceptance of women's new role by the family and by society in general.

5.2.4 Women's Empowerment Project (WEP) / Gaza Community Health Program

The Women's Empowerment Project (WEP) was founded in 1995 as part of the Gaza Community Mental Health Program (GCMHP) and operates four centres in Gaza City, Beach Camp, Deir El-Balah and Rafah. WEP aims to support and rehabilitate women living in a violent environment and/or who are victims of domestic violence, and to increase their self-confidence. The women concerned participate in courses, which the organisation hopes will enable them to assume a new role in society.

¹⁰ The organisation has seven branches – six in the West Bank and one in Gaza. One of the main services provided is the women and children's centre in Nablus, which cfd has supported since 1992. The following report focuses only on this branch of the organisation.

WEP provides a combination of different services: women receive psychological counselling and legal advice, or training in health education, and they can attend vocational training courses ranging from hairdressing and cosmetics, through video and photography, to Internet and the management of micro-projects. Since this program enjoys a high level of social acceptance, it represents an entry point for contacting women and awakening their interest (Becker und Weyermann 2004: 2). Thereafter, it becomes possible to discuss sensitive issues with them, e.g. taboo subjects like domestic violence, sexual and psychological aggression, or sexual health. Other subjects that are frequently discussed are poverty, suicide, women's rights in Islam, custody of children, divorce, etc. WEP is also a place where women can meet outside their families and talk about their problems and fears, as well as developing new perspectives. The opportunity of networking and exchanging opinions outside the family circle is clearly important for the empowerment of these women.

WEP holds workshops for the community and organises lobbying with the long-term objective of changing women's status in society and increasing respect for the organisation.

WEP sees **empowerment** as "Becoming stronger; making women stronger". Women should be made stronger by increasing individual awareness and changing the social networking system in society. The means to this end are law reforms and the availability of a place where women can feel secure. At the WEP centres women should be able to express themselves freely, network with other women and learn strategies that will lead them to a better future. They should also receive practical support in solving their problems, especially problems caused by violence. Women who have benefited from the project describe the centre as a place of security and individual empowerment: "When I feel exhausted and pressured I go to the centre to feel safe. When I talk to the psychological specialist, I feel that I belong there. I also ask the lawyer about how to demand my rights without feeling ashamed." (Participant in a WEP project AbdulHadi 2004b: 36).

5.3 Discussion of transversal thematic fields

The following section will describe context-related examples of discrimination that excludes and marginalises women, as well as strategies that can be applied against such discrimination, drawing on the experience of the organisations and their understanding of the transversal thematic fields.

The four projects investigated have one thing in common: they all recognise the importance of, and promote **personal empowerment**. It is quite clear that the status of women can only improve if women gain self-confidence and individual autonomy. Personal empowerment can be achieved by boosting women's awareness and giving them a positive self-image and personal values. It should be noted that active reflection can and should provoke a change in women's awareness. All the organisations also underline the importance of the exchange of opinions between women and the opportunity for networking. Depending on the focus of the project concerned, the process of empowerment may take place through preliminary or advanced training, political sensitisation or discussions about violence. Knowledge, in the broadest sense of the word, is an ideal source of personal empowerment. The projects usually also provide *entry points* that will enable women to take a further step to achieving a higher level of empowerment. For example, by training young women to become health care workers, these women acquire knowledge about the allotted role of women in the family and society.

All the organisations consider that individual empowerment has a major influence on the collective empowerment of specific groups, as well as at the **socio-structural level**. The School of Community Health shows clearly how individuals can be given confidence and how individual empowerment can affect society in general: the qualified health care workers return to their villages, serve as an example to other women and indirectly sensitise their community to the gender issue. A further example of the complementary effect of empowerment can be seen in the projects of the Jerusalem Centre for Women, which enable women to actively support their friends, neighbours and daughters.

Emphasis is often placed on the long-term perspective of the projects, which is indispensable if social reforms are to take place. It must, however, be said that this objective is often difficult to achieve, since international financing policies do not allow for such a long-term perspective.

It is very surprising how seldom inclusion of **men** is mentioned as an objective for individual and social empowerment. While PWWSD and WEP explicitly mention the inclusion of men and boys, the explanations of how this should be done remain vague and superficial. PWWSD already works with families, mixed groups of stu-

dents and even with exclusively male groups. WEP makes home visits, during which attempts can be made to include men in the discussions, since unemployment is often one of the reasons for domestic violence. In my opinion, including men should be an important part of the project orientation, so that empowerment projects can actually address the issue of power relationships in society. I will revert to this subject in Chapter 11.

According to the project reports, **financial resources** are of vital importance. Women with financial resources, who can earn and control money themselves, acquire more powers of decision in their lives. "After being trained here I can work in a make-up salon, or as a photographer in a studio, which means that I will earn income." (Project participant WEP, AbdulHadi 2004b: 41). They achieve independence from their husbands and families and are able to contribute to the upkeep of the family: "My husband is satisfied with my work, because I started earning money, helping with home needs, and fulfilling the needs of my children" (Project participant PWWS, AbdulHadi 2004b: 40). Moreover, due to the high level of unemployment amongst men, women may become the main and, often only breadwinner in the family. Since the beginning of the intifada, the percentage of women in employment has risen from 7% to 35%! This fact indicates that an external cause of financial crisis may have positive repercussions for women. Given the precarious situation, men have to recognise and even accept the "new" role of women, which can lead to a change in the understanding of the roles of men and women. In conflict environments and extreme situations, a change in the roles of the sexes has frequently been observed (see Meintjes, et al. 2001). During peace negotiations, it is important for organisations to maintain this change and see that women are able to keep their new powers of decision in the post-war period, so that there is no return to the traditional role of women (as has sometimes been observed in Kosovo).

All the projects provide women with access to the **resource of education**. The women are also reminded of the importance of education for themselves and their daughters. "I will never get my daughter married before she completes her education" (Project participant PWWS, AbdulHadi 2004b: 47). Apart from education, the women's networking and exchange of opinions are an important factor in empowerment. It is the aim of the projects for women to free themselves from their social isolation and acquire awareness in society, so that they will be regarded as equals.

Since the beginning of the intifada, all Palestinian women are restricted in their mobility, due to the barricades and blockades of the Israeli army. This report only mentions in passing what effects this has on the role of women. I am convinced that it is urgent to increase women's mobility, in order to allow them free access to educational and health institutions. However, the firmly established tradition of honour and shame seems to have the upper hand: men feel responsible for their womenfolk and fear that they will lose control over their wives and daughters if they are allowed increased mobility.

The occupation and the impossibility of imposing laws are often blamed for the high incidence of **violence**. However, violence can also be caused by traditional restrictions, particularly the stricter supervision of female members of the family, which has increased with the general climate of insecurity. "Violence cannot always be quantified; it could be social restraints from communicating with the ones you love, or violations of financial rights, in not owning a home's basic needs, or psychological damage such as in the miserable life my children and I live. My children now want to only stay at home and do not wish to leave the house, in order not to hear people talking about their father's paralysis. My husband is used to hurting me verbally. I prefer being hit or beaten to being insulted or psychologically hurt. Verbal violence is not only used against me by my husband, but also by my father and mother-in-law" (Project participant WEP, AbdulHadi 2004b: 31). Projects concentrating on domestic violence have set themselves the target of sensitising women to this problem. They are shown possible ways of freeing themselves from violent relationships. The main thing is to break through the wall of silence, i.e. a conscious effort is made to talk about social taboos. "In the past we used to see violence only in beating or physical mistreatment. After we gained more knowledge concerning this issue we understood that violence involves lots of things, including psychological violence, and the inferiority with which the society views women, which is part of psychological violence, as well as verbal harassments in the streets. Any action that makes women inferior to other members of the society is violence, and any action that uses force against women is violence." (Project participant JCW, AbdulHadi 2004b: 28). In the WEP project it can be observed how these taboos are discussed. Vocationally-oriented programs first try to reach women suffering from violence and then, in a second step, offer them psychological and legal counselling.

The subject of security is closely linked with violence. In the Palestinian organisations, **security** is nearly always associated with the Israeli occupation. Women participating in the projects find the organisations' centres a place where they feel secure: "...a safe haven giving them [the participants] a feeling of security" (AbdulHadi 2004b: 47). In this connection, it is clear that the second intifada has brought about a deterioration in the security of Palestinian women. The reasons for this lack of security can be found not only in the restrictions on freedom of movement, militarization or the general threat to safety, but also in the fact that women are increasingly affected in their private sphere by very strict family surveillance and they suffer domestic violence. "My father does not mind my attendance of some of the workshops, but he is afraid that the neighbours or society will think otherwise. He prevented me from attending a workshop on cinema, only because people do not accept this idea" (Project participant WEP, AbdulHadi 2004b: 36). (It should be mentioned at this point that the conservative code of morals has always restricted the role and freedom of women). Women enjoy far less security and freedom than men. What is certainly important for participants in the projects is that the centres should continue to be considered as places where they can feel secure, move about without restriction, freely discuss their problems and acquire knowledge: "Participants talk about the increase in their feeling of security after learning about their rights and how to demand them, in addition to knowing how to communicate and discuss different matters with other women and men." (AbdulHadi 2004b: 34) In connection with the term "security", a study of the region of Palestine shows that the **subjective feeling of security amongst the women running the projects** is greatly affected by the fear of losing their jobs, as well as by the hierarchy within the organisations. The report reveals that women employed on the projects cannot develop any feeling of security because they lack the competence to take decisions. This hinders or makes impossible the empowerment of the employees, which means, in turn, that their scope of action is restricted. The result is a paradox situation where participants in the courses ought to be given support and awareness by employees who themselves are limited in their autonomy to make decisions and whose competence is limited. Staff interviewed in three of the four organisations were therefore of the opinion that first the employees must be empowered, so that they can pass on the concept of empowerment to the project participants. This challenges the **structures within the organisations**. Apart from lack of competence to take decisions, these people feel bound to their organisations, as well as depending to a large extent on their superiors. Another big obstacle to the achievement of empowerment targets is the dependence on **external financing**. "I always have a feeling of insecurity concerning my job and fear that I could lose it because of the external financing policies" (Staff member of PWWSD, AbdulHadi 2004b: 46). Moreover, the conditions imposed by investors can create some paradox situations that hinder the targets of the organisations: "...whenever we think of working on a project in a specific direction, funding comes and takes it to another direction, as a result of the condition imposed in funding" (Coordinator of JCW, AbdulHadi 2004b: 55). I will discuss this problem in more detail in my overall summary, at the same time including other project regions.

I think the following closing statement underlines the main impacts of empowerment, which apply to all the projects described in this report:

"...I can say that my personality is now stronger. Coming to the centre makes me see other women and learn from their experiences. My relations with my husband and children have improved, I can feel now, and I can go out and meet people. Before joining the centre I felt I was in jail..." (Project participant WEP, AbdulHadi 2004b: 48)

Despite the mainly positive achievements of the organisations, they realise that most of the activities mentioned are merely the beginning of equality between men and women. Further project stages are therefore essential, and these will address:

- Further support for participants after the project has ended
- Inclusion of men in the projects and making them aware of women's issues
- Changing the internal structures of the organisations
- A long-term perspective for the projects, including the conditions imposed by foreign investors

6 Israel

6.1 The Situation in Israel

About one-fifth of Israeli citizens are Palestinians or Bedouins. Most of the Palestinians live in Galilee, to the north, while the Bedouin settlements are mostly in the south (Negev). Although both these groups possess Israeli citizenship, they have always suffered from massive **discrimination** by the Israeli government on account of their origins. The traditional way of life of these peoples has been lost with the confiscation of their land and forced resettlement. For example, Bedouins have been forced to settle in one place. They have lost their traditionally important position in the **subsistence economy**, and thereby their powers of decision in their families and communities. About half of the total of 120,000 Bedouins live in villages in the Negev that not recognised by the Israeli government. The people living in these villages are denied **access to any kind of infrastructure or state services** like electricity supplies, sewage systems, public transport, schooling and health services, which makes the everyday lives of the women even more difficult. These developments have had a massive influence on social and family structures, as well as on people's social and economic security, whereby the women are particularly hard hit.

Palestinian women's **freedom of movement** is currently very restricted. They are often confined to their houses and suffer the effects of rampant unemployment far more than their menfolk. The loss of their previous source of income from farming has forced these women to seek paid employment outside the house. However, the ever-deteriorating economic situation, including the closure of many factories, has increased unemployment among women. Women who are still employed are often not reimbursed and, even if they draw wages, they are clearly underpaid. This circumstance, combined with the constant threat of eviction or the destruction of their homes, further increases their sense of insecurity.

Apart from the above mentioned disadvantages and the climate of insecurity, the report reveals the negative influence of the patriarchal structures and conservative standards of Arab-Israeli societies on the status of women. These women suffer from **domestic violence** in the form of sexual abuse, early and/or forced marriage, polygamy and so-called "honour killings". The situation is not helped, either, by lack of confidence in women's ability and the deeply-rooted suspicion that women's empowerment will have negative repercussions for men. Furthermore, as minorities, these two societies are oppressed by the Israeli authorities.

The above facts show that these women suffer **multiple disadvantages**, firstly because they are women and secondly because they are Arabs. If they want to gain access to education, income and political participation they must reckon with opposition, not only from the Israeli authorities, but also from their own society. The status of women needs to be defended against the conservative circles that have attracted numerous supporters since the beginning of the second intifada.

6.2 The regional organisations and their understanding of empowerment

6.2.1 Kayan in Haifa

The Palestinian women's organisation Kayan has set itself the target of improving the living conditions of Palestinian women in Israel through information campaigns, education programs and lobbying. The organisation recognises that women's place in society needs to be improved, and that men and women should have equal rights. It examines social relationships and structures in society. In order to create discrimination awareness amongst women, the organisation proceeds as follows: women's groups in the villages are asked to inform Kayan of their actual needs; Kayan then follows this up by offering support and negotiation services. The strategy lies in networking, building up cooperation within the networks, creating access to vital facilities and encouraging the women's groups to strive for their targets, despite the obstacles. Kayan's activities are adapted to the needs of the local population and the girls' and women's groups. Apart from functioning as a "door-opener", the organisation offers educational and cultural programs for schoolgirls and female students, further training on the subject of gender issues for female social workers, or even literacy courses. In cases of violence, the organisation does not offer counselling itself but, when necessary, refers victims of violence to recognised advisory centres. As an innovation, Kayan plans to develop a concept for economic empowerment groups. Kayan networks closely with other organisations and centres in Israel, the occupied territories and abroad. The organisation disposes of the necessary information and know-how to offer effec-

tive support to women's groups. Since being founded in 1998, Kayan has become an important player in Palestinian civilian society.

This organisation understands **empowerment** as the strengthening of women and creating awareness of the kind of discrimination that influences their scope of action. In the view of Kayan, empowerment is a term that is both comprehensive and complementary: individual and social empowerment are closely linked – one cannot function without the other. Activities that help to strengthen women and their status must also become established in political, social, educational and economic contexts. For Kayan, the main point is that women's empowerment is only possible if the local population is included too, i.e. the projects must be conceived "bottom up". The aim is to give women hope and security, and to encourage them to believe in their abilities: "I'm not alone. There is someone who believes in my abilities as a woman, which gives me self confidence and empowers me not only as a nursery employee, but also as someone who can work, produce and decide" (Project participant Kayan, AbdulHadi 2004a: 18). It is essential that women control their resources themselves, build up networks and organise things amongst themselves. Ultimately, it is hoped that social structures will change in favour of a better position for women. The "Childminders" project supported by Kayan is a show model for the surrounding region (see below for further information).

6.2.2 Sidreh in Negev

In contrast to Kayan, Sidreh concentrates on promoting education and income as ways of increasing the scope of action of Bedouin women. Sidreh offers advanced training for teachers of literacy and languages, as well as literacy courses in Arabic and Hebrew for older women. Great importance is attached to sensitising young women to women's issues, so that they will propagate their ideas in their communities. Moreover, Sidreh has to support young women so that they can attend these courses at all. Given the unreliable or nonexistent transport services in the widely scattered Bedouin villages in the Negev, women have been encouraged to learn to drive and thus obtain the necessary mobility. Sidreh also hopes to improve the situation of the women and their families by providing sexual education and discussing the dangers of violence against girls and women.

Sidreh's principal undertaking is a weaving project, deliberately designed to activate and preserve the cultural heritage of the Bedouin women. By selling their woven products the women become financially independent. This project not only promotes skills in handcraft: the women are also taught production and marketing tactics, as well as English and computer skills.

For Sidreh, **empowerment** means promoting women's capabilities. Through learning, the women become able to tackle obstacles, seek solutions and if possible overcome those obstacles. If women can control financial resources they become independent and can make their own decisions. They are also helped by the awareness that they are able to assume a central and important role in the family. However, for Sidreh too, individual empowerment is closely linked to family, social and political structures, which is why the organisation also tries to bring about a change in the status of women. Thanks to the multiplication concept (propagation of the idea of empowerment), Sidreh hopes to have an influence on the communities. The weaving project, too, promotes empowerment at communal level. The awareness of the community will increase if the women are seen in public and exhibit their woven products.

6.3 Discussion of the transversal thematic fields

The following section will describe context-related examples of the kind of discrimination that excludes and marginalises women, as well as strategies that can be applied against such discrimination, drawing on the experience of the organisations and their understanding of the transversal thematic fields.

Both organisations have the priority of increasing women's **awareness** in order to widen their scope of action and change their position in society.

Empowerment is perceived by both organisations as an interdependent process, taking place at several different levels and helping to improve the status of women in society. A positive change in the roles of men and women implies empowerment at the individual, **collective and socio-structural level**. However, the organisations apparently adopt different approaches: Kayan prefers to concentrate on collective and socio-structural empowerment, as the following example illustrates. A group of childminders contacted Kayan because

their local commune constantly paid them belatedly and only in part. A study carried out by Kayan revealed that this was a frequent problem in the region. The funds to pay these wages had been correctly transferred by the Department of Social Security to the local Arab authorities, but the money had then disappeared, due to corruption and lack of resources. Thanks to the public relations campaign that followed (contacting the media, sensitising and networking with the authorities concerned), this problem became a publicly-discussed political issue, culminating in a motion for a law reform by an Arab member of the Knesset. The motion foresaw that the state contribution from the Israeli Department of Social Security to the Arab communes for the payment of childminders should no longer be part of the global budget, but a separate budget item. Unfortunately, this law reform was refused, because the Knesset was unwilling to create a precedent. However, the childminders achieved so much publicity that the authorities changed the system, and now childminders are paid directly by the Department of Social Security. Meanwhile, the project has become a show model for the region.

Sidreh, on the other hand, concentrates on **individual and collective empowerment** for women. Through the weaving project, women become independent and learn to control their finances themselves. This positively influences their self-confidence. At the same time, they are making a significant financial contribution to the upkeep of their families. Through this work and by networking with other women, they find it easier to break out of their social isolation. "They formed an image of themselves within the project. (...) There used to be fears of husbands and of leaving home, but now there are no such fears." (Sidreh employee, AbdulHadi 2004a: 20). It is expected that, by becoming financially independent, these women will acquire sufficient powers of decision within the family to define their own role to a greater extent.

Both organisations also run special **educational courses** with the target of changing the roles of the sexes in society and promoting women's self-confidence, e.g. Sidreh's courses in the Arabic and Hebrew languages. After attending such a course, women are able to go to the doctor, the post office or the bank on their own. "After being able to read and write, women enjoyed independence; they stopped fully depending on a son or a husband to accompany them to the clinic or to read them the papers and explain the news. Women also gained their place as mothers who can help their children study and work. Old women became able to read the Qur'an, a matter considered extremely important among the area's religious society, and financial empowerment gave them independence in decisions, such as pilgrimage without the dependence on the son's or husband's financial resources." (AbdulHadi 2004a: 27). By imparting knowledge, the organisations hope to sensitise and encourage women to actively question their role and perhaps thus be able to break through the patriarchal structures of their community. The experience of Mariam (AbdulHadi 2004a: 27) shows the possible effects of education on the family and society in general: "Mariam is a girl from Lakeyyeh who learned 12th grade along with her family in a program for adult literacy. She initiated a group and started gaining income from the association. Soon, her parents accepted her education and she applied to Bir El Sabe' college. She is now a teacher at Lakeyyeh, and about 10 girls were educated after her. The fear of education started to disappear."

The promotion of **networking** and the exchange of opinions amongst women is also an important factor in increasing women's self-estimation. Meeting each other, exchanging news and views or celebrating birthdays helps them to build up relationships and solidarity within the women's groups: "We help each other, help the newcomers and teach them, and organize group trips" (Sidreh employee, AbdulHadi 2004a: 32). Such networking experiences and the mere existence of the organisations also seem to positively influence the women's **sense of security**. "We know that Kayan is our support and refuge, and we know that it works and cares for us, which gives us hope, confidence, and security. We were like someone lost in the sea with no hope and Kayan saved us" (Project participant at Kayan, AbdulHadi 2004a: 12). Due to the policies of Israel and the tough economic situation, people's sense of security is being constantly eroded. For this reason, it is important that women be able to seek support from these organisations, but at the same time be able to support each other and try to create a sense of security at the individual level. Such forms of mutual support enable women to talk about their **experiences of violence**. Violence exists at all levels of society, whereby women are particularly affected by domestic violence: "Violence involves banning women from education, not taking their opinions seriously (or making fun of their opinions), banning them from leaving the house or going to work, having no confidence in their abilities or trust in their actions, forcing them to marriage, poly-

gamy, banning them and their kids from financial support especially in case of polygamy, in addition to physical violence" (AbdulHadi 2004a: 22). Project participants at Kayan say that women are not only afraid to talk about violence, but they believe that they have deserved it. This conviction has been prescribed by society and inwardly accepted by the women but, with the support of the organisations, it can be broken through. Sidreh's program "No to violence" also tries to reach **men**, so that the subject of violence against women gets discussed in wider circles. Apart from involving the men in the discussions, Sidreh recognises that local conditions (e.g. specific cultural traditions, as well as Israeli politics) must also be taken into account if women's position is to be changed successfully and in the long term: "Ways of life of the considered people are also considered; girls are advised not to run away, shelters are not considered, but instead the Sheikh's job is rebuilt to suite feminist purposes; certain families or sheikhs being alternatives to runaway shelters, for example. Traditions are also considered in suggesting suitable hours of work for women, and cooperation with local councils and the social worker." (AbdulHadi 2004a: 22)

Freedom of movement, which means free access to transport, is another important factor in the empowerment of women. For Kayan, an efficient and safe transport system is essential, so that women can visit a doctor or a post office whenever they need. This freedom gives women mobility, and they gain self-confidence and feel more secure. Moreover, such a transport system would mean increased mobility and security for the entire community.

Our report seldom mentions the problems confronting the projects. It can be assumed that one major difficulty is financing. For example, Kayan had to cease supporting one group for lack of funds. It is, however, not clear from the report whether this was because no financial source was forthcoming or because support had to be withdrawn due to the rather short-term financing policies of the investors. Long-term financing policies are essential to the work of the organisations in Israel and their aim of achieving social reforms, because they recognise that social reform can only be brought about with patience and long-term projects. The organisations go about their work realistically and do not promise participants quick solutions – rather, they encourage them to approach their target in small steps and with steadfast courage.

7 Bosnia-Herzegovina

The partial study carried out by Martina Belić and Suzana Kunac on the Balkan regions (Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo) was the most comprehensive of all the regional reports received. Apart from their own analyses, the authors presented a table showing the opinions of participants in the projects, which provided an extremely detailed picture of the particularities of these regions. However, owing to the volume of the text, I was not able to include all the details in my final report. Anyone interested in further details can consult the original report with the corresponding tables. I hope, nevertheless, to have succeeded in presenting their findings in the following summarised version.¹¹

7.1 The Situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina

Bosnia-Herzegovina is still suffering from many problems as a result of the war, even though it is 10 years since the Dayton Peace Agreement was signed. The country still consists of two separate entities: The Republika Srpska (RS), mainly inhabited and dominated by Serbs, and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH), which is divided into Croatian and Bosniak areas. Government and daily political business is handled by High Representatives of the international community.

For years, the process of **repatriating** refugees and internally displaced persons (IDP) to their home communities has been the most important issue. Administrative stumbling-blocks and political resistance by the RS and other regions, where an ethnic group forms the majority, coupled with social exclusion of the population wishing to be repatriated, is hampering the return of the people to their homes. The internally displaced per-

¹¹ These precisions also apply to the report on Kosovo (page 25 onwards).

sons are still living in "temporary" places in the most precarious circumstances and without any form of social security. This problem is illustrated by the **social security and health care systems** which are currently being established: despite the agreement in place, the lack of co-operation between the insurance systems of the two entities RS and FBiH means that many internally displaced persons are living in one entity but are registered in the other, where they would be entitled to benefits. The lack of collaboration between the segments makes it more difficult, if not impossible, for these people to receive health care and social benefits such as old-age and invalid pensions.

The **unemployment rate** in Bosnia-Herzegovina is as high as 80% in some areas. Since many women have to look after their children on their own, but have very limited opportunities to find a job, they are particularly affected by the situation. The percentage of women in the work force is 34%, the lowest in South-Eastern Europe.

The ethnic-dominated war had a massive impact on the **demographic structures** of the towns and villages and on the network of inter-ethnic **relationships**. It destroyed the communications and support network with neighbours and relatives which had been so important – particularly in the women's daily lives – before the war. Building up new social networks involves a tedious process of reconciliation and is a priority for lasting stability in Bosnia.

The **equality of the sexes** has been an important topic in the last few years. Thanks to quota regulations, women are represented in legislative areas, but hardly ever have access to decision-making boards. In education, too, even young women who have been to university are usually excluded from a career in a traditionally male and well-paid profession. The patriarchal structures remain, despite the fact that equality is widely established as a central theme in society. "Our women are raised in a patriarchal society, they are ashamed to admit that they have a problem, they are afraid that the community will not understand them" (Head of Zena BiH, Belić and Kunac 2004: 37). The moral code of "Honour and Shame"¹² and the resulting social supervision appear to hamper the empowerment of women.

The main focus and areas of interest of the innumerable women's non-government organisations (NGO) formed after the end of the war cover all central areas of civilian society. The major problem nowadays for these NGOs lies in their **dependence on foreign donors**. The slow, but steady withdrawal of the international community is beginning to threaten many NGOs, resulting in competition for financial support.

7.2 The regional organisations and their understanding of empowerment

7.2.1 Krajiska Suza in Sanski Most

The Krajiska Suza organisation was founded during the war as a psycho-social self-help group for women on their own. The objective at the time was to help the women to cope with acute crises and traumatic war experiences through mutual support, psychological counselling and medical examination. Since most of the women had to leave their surroundings in the RS during the war and have since been living as internally displaced people in the FBiH, after the war they settled in the little town of Sanski Most, so as to live as near as possible to where they came from. That way they hoped their return home would be simpler.

Irrespective of their origin and their religious and ethnic affiliation, young women who had lost their relatives in the war were trained by Krajiska Suza in geriatric care. After their training, these single mothers and single earners visit their elderly neighbours and support them in coping with everyday activities. This project has a twofold effect: on the one hand, the old people become involved again in the social network so important in Bosnia and, on the other hand, the young women receive an income and achieve financial independence. The prime objective of the organisation is to improve the quality of life of the women and older people by promoting good health and covering social, psychological and material needs.

In the Krajiska Suza meeting place, women of all ages can meet to talk to each other and if necessary receive medical attention. Through active public relations, Krajiska Suza tries to alert the local authorities to the plight of the internally displaced and single women, as well as to the importance of integrating older people (and other marginalised groups).

¹² Cf. Chapter on Situation in Palestine, pp. 12 and 13 of this Report.

The meaning of **empowerment** to this organisation and its members is respect for women's rights and solidarity amongst women. Women must be involved in political and public life. It is only through changes at a socio-structural level that individual empowerment and deconstruction of the traditional role of women will take place. Through training and recognition of their skills, women will be encouraged to respect themselves. Education, good health and paid work are central aspects which must be guaranteed in order that women can take decisions about their own lives and be financially responsible for themselves.

7.2.2 Zena BiH in Mostar

Mostar is still a town of ethnic divisions. The political situation is unresolved and economic recovery has stagnated, causing the unemployment rate to grow. Due to this desolate post-war situation, poverty is increasing and the future looks grim, especially for young people. This results in the exodus of more and more youngsters, leaving behind many old people without the indispensable integration in social networks.

Like Krajiska Suza, Zena BiH started its activities as a self-help group in order to support women in dire straits. Due to the increased demand, however, Zena BiH soon evolved into an institutionalised organisation serving a variety of functions. It offers an SOS telephone service for women and children who have suffered violence, a women's refuge, legal advice for women, supporting and speeding up of the reconciliation process, income-generating activities, support of older people and networking at a local and national level, to name just a few areas. The prime objective of the organisation is to achieve financial independence for the women, to improve their self-esteem and to integrate them in all aspects of daily life in Bosnia. "Zena BiH", too, addresses its programs to all women, irrespective of their nationality or social and economic status.

By **empowerment** Zena BiH understands economic independence and equality, as well as support of women by the family, by their place of employment and by society in general. But solidarity amongst women and informing them of their rights are also mentioned as part of empowerment. At a personal level, Empowerment is defined as "woman does what she wants to do with no concerns about public opinion, she has the freedom to live in the way she wants, her needs and wishes are respected in the context of her abilities [and that] she is empowered when there are no ill effects because of her way of living and when she completely manages her life with complete responsibility without any prejudice." (Head of Zena BiH, Belić and Kunac 2004: 40)

7.3 Discussion of the transversal thematic fields

Discriminations against women are addressed below by means of the transversal thematic fields. Additional subjects of discussion are project strategies to confront stumbling-blocks, and the impact and weaknesses of the organisations. The two NGOs that were studied showed certain differences, but they definitely had some important points in common.

Common to the situation in both Mostar and Sanski Most is the fact that access to central **resources** is made more difficult for women, at all levels: access to health care, places to live, social security, and also to education and further training, employment and income. Both organisations provide training and vocational programs to enable women to earn a living and give them the potential to lead independent lives. Economic independence and acquiring knowledge are the key to **individual empowerment**. The awareness of the project participants is strengthened, they become autonomous and therefore more independent of social and family restrictions. Both organisations emphasise the importance of networking for women, in order to re-establish their social circle and their support and communications relationships. Their efforts in this direction are particularly evident in the program of geriatric care at Krajiska Suza.

As a priority, "Zena BiH" tackles the subject of **collective empowerment** by publicly addressing the problems of domestic violence and people trafficking. Sensitisation programs and campaigns to intensify the awareness of society are aimed at changing the position of women in society and in the family in the longer term. Zena BiH shows by example how important it is to network with other organisations and institutions for the implementation of this objective. What applies to the women as individuals – the (re-)establishment of the broken network – is also applicable to the organisation as a whole. One result of their networking, but also of their persistence, is the fact that nowadays the police react immediately to reports of domestic violence. The Krajiska Suza organisation is different, its efforts are not focused on the collective level to the same extent. This

can be explained by the fact that the organisation is not embedded in a local context, but also because the staff and participants – as internally displaced people – are still waiting to return home and are planning their future there.

Both organisations apply the **extended meaning of violence**, which manifests itself at various levels. At a personal level, conditions are discussed that can be put down to the patriarchal structure of society: "Women do not have a choice. If you want to get a divorce, and the children stay in the custody of the father, there is a very slim chance that you will manage to see your kids" (Staff member at Krajiska Suza, Belić and Kunac 2004: 23). Violence is also expressed very directly: "Violence is when your husband feels that he is stronger so he can harass you physically or psychologically" (Head of Zena BiH, Belić and Kunac 2004: 37). At the structural level the denial of access to resources and thus exclusion from central areas of influence has a negative effect on the situation of women: "A woman can hardly get out of the circle of violence because she has no idea to whom to speak or ask for help. She is not educated and basically the money is the main reason why women victims of violence are returning to violent husbands" (Head of Zena BiH, Belić and Kunac 2004: 37). Both these organisations can tackle this vicious circle with training and encouragement of financial independence for women. But social repression in society and the unemployment situation of the men also leads to violence. Here – just as in Palestine – the restrictive consequences of the moral code of honour and shame and the importance of including men in the work of the project are evident,

As with their understanding of violence, both the organisations questioned assume an **extended meaning of security**. The most important element for a feeling of security is the achievement of financial independence, as well as guaranteed access to state benefits. On a personal level, the feeling of security is expressed thus: "to have a plan about my life, trust in myself, to have support" (Belić and Kunac 2004: 37: 38) but also by resolving the matter of a place to live¹³. In one case cited, the ethnic affiliation – especially for children – is mentioned as a problem with regard to security: "The children will start school next autumn. We have to move to the house of my parents in RS because we cannot pay rent any more. My kids will be the only Bosniak children in school. (...) I do not want that my children are humiliated because of their ethnic origin" (Project user at Krajiska Suza, Belić and Kunac 2004: 23).

Certain difficulties **within the organisation**, particularly at Krajiska Suza, can lead to disempowerment of all those involved. Internal hierarchies are in evidence which disrupt the relationship of trust between the participants and management. The project participants believe that the work they do in looking after the elderly is not fully accepted and appreciated by the management. They feel that they are underpaid and that they are always treated a little unfairly. This leads to a loss of confidence in the management of Krajiska Suza.

Zena BiH also has a very specific problem relating to the internal **disempowerment** of the organisation. Many of the women trained by them leave the organisation at the first possible opportunity because they can find better-paid positions elsewhere. This loss of well-trained personnel weakens the organisation, but may produce a "spill-over" effect with the achievements of their project to other organisations. In any case, the individual women can certainly gain job experience and augment their knowledge. A positive note is that the staff at Krajiska Suza, as well as at Zena BiH, receive compulsory social benefits, such as health insurance and social security. This is crucial for the credibility of the organisations vis-à-vis their staff and the public.

For both organisations, it is clear that **extensive financial dependence** on donors investors is important for the achievement of their goals. The financing politics and conditions of the foreign organisations often do not correspond to the actual needs of the organisations on the spot and hamper long-term planning of projects. As already mentioned above, the links with other organisations and institutions in present-day Bosnia are crucial to achieving empowerment. Unfortunately, as a result of the financial dependence on foreign capital and the steady withdrawal of the international community and its financial support from the region, this networking and collaboration is being sorely tried. The NGOs often have to compete for financial support, meaning that significant partnerships are very difficult, or even break down.

One of Zena BiH's employees summarises what, in my opinion, are the most important points for the empowerment of women in Bosnia, as follows: "From the moment I start to work and start to be paid for my work

¹³ This applies mainly to Internal Displaced Persons.

so I can pay my bills, I can eat – I feel my life changed 100%. I have security to survive, I have company where one woman is helping another, we feel much more self-confident because of education and workshops that we passed through, we relaxed from war traumas and learned a lot. Even if we stop working for Zena BiH – the knowledge that we gained here is going to be useful for some other job, and women from here are still going to be our friends and colleagues" (Belić 2004: 44)

Further development of the project encompasses the following:

- Supervision and active encouragement of staff, so that well-trained employees are not lost to other organisations.
- Improvement of internal organisation structures to help reduce hierarchies and encourage confidence.
- Improved recognition of the work of people benefiting from the project.
- Share contacts, co-operation and synergies with other NGOs instead of competing with each other > make people aware of the competitive situations and break them down.
- Increase the prominence of topics relating to women and gender, and the position of marginal political groups: Extend lobbying and increasingly address the socio-structural level.
- Find ways to break out of financial dependence.

8 Kosovo

8.1 The situation in Kosovo

In this **politically unstable** former province of Yugoslavia, the effects of many years of inter-ethnic tension and the war at the end of the 90's can still be felt. The Albanian majority is striving for independence, whereas the Serbian minority hopes for inclusion in the confederation of Serbia-Montenegro. Kosovo is one of the most densely populated areas of South-Eastern Europe, with the majority of the population living in rural areas. Islam is the most widespread religious orientation, even though it is secularised.

Nowadays, from a political point of view, the region is administered entirely by the **international community**, whose work is based on four cornerstones: humanitarian support, civil administration, democratisation and the establishment of institutions, as well as post-war reconstruction and economic development. The regional political authorities and the local police work closely with the international institutions UNMIK and KFOR. The **unemployment rate** is as high as 57%, the **illiteracy rate** lies at 6.1% and child mortality affects 35 out of 1000 births. Half the population is between 16 and 24 years of age, and it is this half that is affected by an unemployment rate of more than 70%! Unemployment amongst women is also very high. The basic needs of the majority of people in this region cannot be covered by the ailing 'state' social security and international financial aid: Families with more than five children receive 60 Euros, and people who need special care receive only 35 Euros a month.

The **status of women** in the strictly patriarchal society of Kosovo is complex and is not enlarged upon here¹⁴. The social life of Albanian women and their gender relationships through gender segregation (separation of working and living areas of women and men) as well as seclusion (restricting women to the home) are determined by patriarchal structures and conservative norms. One of the most significant social features is represented by the extended family (also called Zadruga) where parents, parents-in-law, but also siblings and their families, share the same household. After marriage the young women move to be with their husbands' families (patrilocation), thus losing the important social links with their blood and milk relations. For the young married women, this move usually entails clashes and (violent) conflict with their mothers-in-law. The new members of the family are monitored in their attitude and behaviour and have to prove themselves in their role as women, particularly where housework and looking after guests are concerned (Bringa 1995). The

¹⁴ Literature dealing with the social position of Albanian women emphasises as a first priority their status of subordination and lack of rights (Whitaker 1981). It is only recently that discussions have got underway concerning Albanian women being involved in politics, with specific resources at their disposal and consciously following strategies to achieve their objectives., (Shryock 1998).

mothers-in-law stop at nothing to maintain their position of power within the family and to deny the young women access and control over family resources. Due to the rules governing patrilocal residence and ancestry, the new wife will never count as a fully-fledged member of her husband's clan. "First you are too young to speak, then you are married and your mother-in-law controls you, at the end when you are old and you can speak, you have forgotten how to do it" (Belić and Kunac 2004: 59). These structures and rules make it harder for the women to develop feelings of loyalty to the new household, and this in turn causes problems for the moral code of honour and shame.¹⁵ The negative significance of the birth of a girl, "the garbage has come into the house" (Belić and Kunac 2004: 51), leads to Europe's most extreme inequality of the sexes in educational establishments. An additional factor which contributes to keeping girls away from school is the desolate transport system, since the routes to and from school are too long and too unsafe. Despite their supposedly oppressed situation, though, women have an important social significance and various opportunities to apply strategies and/or scope to improve their position and situation.

For some women, the **war situation** has had positive repercussions on their role and position in society: since the men were in serious danger of being abducted and killed if they left the house, the women had to take over the duties of the men. As a result, and with the increased engagement in non-governmental organisations after the war, the women discovered what it meant to earn money and to be, to some extent at least, financially independent (cf. Meintjes, et al. 2001). Now the women are not keen to give up this experience, even though a return to traditional gender roles has been apparent since the end of the war.¹⁶

8.2 The regional organisations and their understanding of empowerment

8.2.1 Aureola in Kastriot and Drenas

Aureola is a classic base organisation. Established in 1995, the organisation first focused on activities which would improve the skills of women and girls: sewing courses, reading and writing courses, health care and health examinations of children. When security deteriorated and conflict escalated in 1998/99, Aureola expanded its activities to include emergency aid and availability of housing for internally displaced persons. Since the end of the war, Aureola has assisted women living in rural areas which are especially disadvantaged economically and who are particularly affected by the patriarchal structure and the consequences of traumatic war experiences. Aureola has initiated income-generating projects such as growing vegetables in greenhouses and bee-keeping, as well as leisure activities such as the establishment of a volleyball team for girls and women. They also provide support to women and their innovative ideas by passing on information and knowledge on how to set up non-governmental organisations and how they function. The opening of centres for women, offering training courses and education in health care, still represents part of their program.

In order to achieve the **empowerment** of women and improve their status in society and the family, Aureola focuses on all members of the community. The key element is for women to be independent, and this refers both to the financial aspects and to the traditional definition of the role of women. "That women think and decide on their own future life, to break traditional ways of men behaving towards women" (Belić and Kunac 2004: 60). Education is also mentioned as a central element of empowerment. Awareness concerning women's rights, breaking out of isolation, strengthening self-confidence, equality between men and women in making family and political decisions - but also assumption of mutual responsibility for bringing up children - are cited as elements of empowerment. Lastly, solidarity amongst women and their feeling of unity are associated with empowerment.

¹⁵ See also the remarks under "Situation in Palestine" pp. 12 and 13 of this Report.

¹⁶ It would be very stimulating to review in more depth this process of change, the reactions to it and the strategies of those affected!

8.2.2 Qendra per Trajnime dhe Studime Gjinore – Gender Training and Research Centre (GTRC) in Pristina

Founded in the year 2000, this organisation concentrates on the development of a civilian society¹⁷ and a change of attitude regarding gender-related themes. Their objectives lie in three different areas: on the one hand they offer training and courses on topics such as "capacity building", gender, communication, organisational development and lobbying. They assist women's non-governmental organisations, they organise round table discussions and participate in nationwide campaigns. In addition, GTRC concentrates on researching gender-related themes. They are currently conducting a study into the question of "Women and Men in Kosovo". Their third, and currently most prominent focus is the circulation of information and documentation. GTRC maintains a database in which other organisations can look up gender-related subjects by means of various newspaper articles, journals and electronic media and which also lists a catalogue of gender experts. They publish articles, translate significant works and are engaged in the area of networking. Apart from promoting the exchange of views, information, etc. between politically active women and NGO activists, their objective is networking on a local, as well as national level, and collaboration with international organisations. The Gender Training and Research Centre is striving for social reform on an individual and communal level, as well as nationally.

In the opinion of the organisation, **empowerment** can be achieved by the development of a civilian society and by strengthening the position of women. Their work is mainly geared towards the collective political level of empowerment: "Strengthening of women in politics is a precondition for strengthening women in all fields of life" (Belić and Kunac 2004: 70). Women are supported and strengthened in their desired careers through economic independence and education. The patriarchal structures of society must be changed, the public transport system expanded and the economic powerlessness of women overcome. Women experience empowerment through taking on an active role: "Actually there was not a chance to empower those women, they were already empowered, and we just bring them courage to go into action." (Staff member at GTRC, Belić and Kunac 2004: 77). Only women who are emancipated, trained and strengthened can institute changes and pass on empowerment.

8.2.3 Qendra per Mireqeniem e Gruas – Women's Wellness Centre (WWC) in the Peja/Pec Region

The objective of the Women's Wellness Centre is to improve the health and status of women in society. It focuses particularly on women who have experienced violence. By maintaining an advisory centre and a women's refuge for victims of domestic violence, they guarantee a safe haven for the people affected and provide legal advice and medical care. In a further step, the women are prepared for reintegration into society and by means of courses are helped to change their understanding of violence and to question the traditional patriarchal system. After the woman has returned to the family, whenever possible a monthly visit takes place for monitoring purposes and, if necessary, mediation within the family. It is of fundamental importance to include the male relatives of the women, as well as the mothers-in-law, in this process. In order to enhance the awareness of the public to the subject of gender equality, WWC uses cultural activities such as theatre, music and photography. Various campaigns in the mass media or in public forums, the distribution of leaflets, marches and demonstrations contribute to public awareness of the issue of "Woman and Man". Through training courses on the subject of "domestic violence" and "equality of the genders" WWC focuses on raising the awareness of schoolchildren, students, police forces, social workers and teachers. Co-operation with local police forces and the Social Work Centre are further strategies used in dealing with violence against women. **Empowerment** is seen by the organisation as a state of being independent. This independence can, for example, be financial and economic: it may also be freedom of movement for women without being controlled by men. It is important to strengthen the self-confidence of the women and to prepare them during their stay at the refuge for a life without violence once they leave. This is the only way a longer-term breakthrough in the stigmatisation of the role of women can be achieved. Last but not least, for WWC empowerment also means being educated and living one's life as one wishes.

¹⁷ "... A civil society exists when individuals and groups are free to form organizations that function independently of the state and that can mediate between citizens and the state." (Hann 1996: 1)

8.2.4 Motrat Qiriazhi (MQ) – Rural Women's Group in Mitrovica, Has and Krushë e Vogel

Founded as early as 1989, Motrat Qiriazhi is the oldest of the women's organisations in Kosovo supported by cfd. The primary aim was to tackle illiteracy. Due to the political situation, the organisation repeatedly had to interrupt its work – in 1995 activities were resumed with a new objective: concentration on development projects for women in rural areas, particularly in the regions of Mitrovica, Has and Krushë e Vogel. They established centres for women, with the purpose of encouraging local groups to take a critical look at the role and situation of women in their villages and families. Women's rights must be safeguarded and respected on a long-term basis. The aim is to strengthen the women in achieving equality with men and playing an active role in rural society. MQ organises meetings for the girls and women affected, at which the subjects of health education, the political situation and elections, violence, education, gender equality, etc. are discussed. They also direct their meetings to young men and women who tackle these subjects together. In a wide range of courses, women can augment their skills, acquire knowledge and receive information. MQ provides support to single mothers and single earners with home visits. MQ promotes networking with non-governmental organisations and local community representatives, as well as with various women's organisations with similar concerns. The organisation is a founder member of the "Kosovo Women's Network". Public relations work is handled in collaboration with the media, round tables are convened, schools visited, and cultural events organised, such as a folklore festival. MQ is also involved in setting up income-generating projects; examples are the pepper factory or the dairy in Krushë e Vogel.

According to MQ, **empowerment** involves improving the skills and raising the awareness of women. The women learn to cope with their traumatic war experiences and to feel that they are a valuable part of society. By altering their awareness the women learn to become independent, to express an opinion and to decide for themselves how they want to live their lives. The courses facilitate economic independence from the men, because in future they can finance their own lives using the skills they have acquired (such as driving a tractor, using a computer, etc.).

8.3 Discussion of the transversal thematic fields

The transversal thematic fields are discussed in connection with the discriminations specific to the context. The strategies and strengths of the organisations, as well as their weaknesses, similarities and differences are illustrated.

Common to all four organisations is the awareness that the four thematic fields – including local incidents – must complement the project work in order to bring about a change in the role of women. In addition, all the organisations emphasise that such a change represents a **long-term process** which must be effective at all levels of society: at an individual, collective and socio-structural level.

Individual empowerment is described as a strengthening of the awareness of women. During this process, the women need to practise using their critical faculties towards their own society and its internalised patterns of behaviour. "...These are the things that should start from within. (...) Women should be getting something that they could tackle. Throw something at them so they can think. And here comes the training for capacity building. At one training at least they should start to question their way of thinking. If they start to think a bit differently after the training it is a total success." (Project user at GTRC, Belić and Kunac 2004: 82). At the same time the skills of the women are augmented, thus improving their political, economic and social positions. Based on the experiences at Aureola it can be seen that, as their economic independence increases, the women have more freedom of movement and can expand their scope of action. In addition, a change in perception of the status of women has resulted in an increasing number of girls attending further education courses. WWC also observes that their work has brought about an improvement in relations between those affected and the members of their families, achieved for example by mediation and monitoring; some family relationships have even returned to normal. In order to promote individual empowerment, the women are also encouraged to view their own future optimistically and to learn to integrate their war traumas into their lives.

One of the greatest hindrances to the individual empowerment of women mentioned by all four organisations is the **patriarchal structure** which is deeply rooted in society. "It is in the mentality of Kosovan people to believe that men are better than women" (Staff member at WWC, Belić and Kunac 2004: 90). All the organisations

questioned stressed the difficult and lengthy process involved in changing these deeply entrenched ideas. The patrilocal residence and ancestry rules, therefore, show very clearly how complicated the situation is for women: the husbands and other male relatives, as well as mothers-in-law, adopt attitudes that have a negative effect on the women's **sense of security**. This results in situations of violence amongst the female members of the household, caused by the need to defend female positions of power. The mother-in-law is higher up in the hierarchy than the woman who has married into the family and this allows the older women to control the young wives. This prevents equality amongst the women themselves in their access to resources and it is not difficult to see that this can have a certain **disempowering** effect on the women. The patriarchal structures are duplicated by the behaviour of the mothers-in-law. There is no apparent solidarity between the female members of the household, even though the older women obviously suffered the same humiliation and discrimination at the same stage in *their* lives. The younger women are therefore exposed to multiple discrimination, from the patriarchal order and through the strained relationships with their mothers-in-law.

Socio-structural empowerment is strongly influenced by individual empowerment and vice versa: "What is missing so I could achieve my dream model of empowered women is education for the community in general. After the fifth grade of elementary school most of the young girls are quitting education, because their parents are not going to let them go further. (...)" (Staff member at MQ, Belić and Kunac 2004: 105). MQ therefore believes that the focus should be on, for example, the following three areas: a) that the women themselves actively expand their role in the community, b) that the activities of the organisations contribute to a national structure which consciously promotes and supports women's activities c) that access to economic and political resources for women is increased and facilitated. Through participatory and communal development processes all members of society are encouraged to become active and be a part of the process of change. It is interesting to note that all four organisations take for granted the inclusion of **men** in their considerations and their work. The desired changes do not appear to be possible unless men are explicitly included. A participant in a workshop at Aureola made this comment: "There are many changes. We learnt how to show respect to women staying home either because they are not educated or because they cannot find a job. We learnt how to support them in housekeeping work. Women have equal rights to men." (Workshop participant at Aureola, Belić and Kunac 2004: 65). GTRC emphasises that even the fact that men are willing to work for one of the "Women's NGOs" represents a significant milestone for the extremely patriarchal society. But also the fact that men in higher professional positions recognise domestic violence as a potential problem is viewed by WWC as a positive achievement. Usually men deny the existence of this problem on principle. The successful "White Ribbon" campaign conducted by WWC is viewed, therefore, as a good example of a strategy to increase awareness at a societal level: men were urged to wear white badges as a symbol against violence and as a declaration of their rejection of violence.

Violence is mentioned by MQ only in connection with war experiences and the traumas suffered. For the other organisations, as already mentioned, elements of violence are found in the personal, family area and are conditioned by cultural structures. Both physical and psychological violence is referred to here: "...a psychological one can be as devastating as a physical one because it goes against your self-esteem. If somebody tells you a hundred times that you are incapable you will come to believe that" (Staff member at WWC, Belić and Kunac 2004: 89). As explained above, women also practise a form of violence amongst themselves. In my opinion this aspect merits special attention!

Lack of **security** is mentioned by the organisations questioned, not only in connection with the patriarchal structures, but also related to the ongoing instability in the political and legal status of Kosovo. After years of suppression and military conflict, it is first necessary to create confidence in the political system, a task which seems impossible in the present state of insecurity. Kosovo's status should, of course, be regularised so that foreign investments are made and the people are given the prospect of earning an income. In addition, the fact that the instability leads to continued ethnic tensions¹⁸ is seen as a hindrance to a feeling of security. Further, security means equality for women and men, and amongst women, by law, but also equal rights in

¹⁸ Here priority was given to the events of March 17, 2004, which were fresh in the memories of the interview partners: "The events of March 17 started when a few boys were chased into the river by the dog of a

political participation, education, job possibilities and the freedom generally to live their lives according to their own ideas. Irregular income or none at all is cited as a stumbling-block to the development of a feeling of security: "I feel secure, when I have a job" (Belić and Kunac 2004).

With regard to **access to resources**, there are only minimal differences in the opinions of the organisations. They all agree that access to education and further training, income and jobs must be safeguarded, irrespective of gender. The organisations do, however, employ different strategies to achieve this objective – from networking amongst women politicians and NGO activists (GTRC) through distribution of information to set the changes in motion on a socio-structural level (Aureola, GTRC) to imparting knowledge directly through training courses (Aureola, WWC) – strategies which are also evident in the organisations of other regions. MQ emphasises that **education** of women is the key starting point for empowerment: young girls approaching marriage are forbidden to continue attending school. Consequently they do not have any opportunity to take up an income-generating job later on, leading to economic dependence on the family and/or the husband. The same restrictions can be found in the use of health care facilities: "...it is not culturally accepted that unmarried women or widows should go for a gynaecological examination" (Belić and Kunac 2004: 106). Despite cultural barriers, the women must be guaranteed access to these institutions.

GTRC and MQ both manifest **internal difficulties in the organisation** which indicates a certain level of disempowerment. At GTRC, collaboration with the Serb women after the events of March 17, 2004¹⁹ came practically to a standstill and communication was no longer possible. This setback contains an enormous potential for frustration, which is symptomatic for the work of all the organisations: usually the NGO takes a couple of small steps in the right direction and then something happens and they are pushed five steps backwards. **Networking** with other NGOs (e.g. in the Kosovan Women's Network) may help to cushion such problems with mutual support and exchange of experiences.

MQ shows a different picture with regard to internal difficulties in the organisation: the organisation is active in (too) many different fields in a geographical territory that is too extensive. This magnitude puts the quality of their work in jeopardy.

A further hindrance to the implementation of their project objectives – as in the cases of Palestine and Bosnia – is the **dependence on external finance** and the withdrawal of international donors. This withdrawal encourages the growth of a competitive situation and triggers feelings of uncertainty and insecurity in the organisations. The networking of the organisations, however, is essential for them to function efficiently and effectively and should not be made more difficult by an unresolved financial position

In conclusion, the following quotation clearly shows the importance of the work of the organisations operating in Kosovo and emphasises the potential long-term effects on society: "Besides helping us to survive war traumas and other consequences, they build meaningful life capacity sustainable skills for us. I say sustainable because they provided us with useful skills that we can use for the rest of our lives. We can think, express our opinions and decide independently about anything related to our lives. We can drive cars, tractors, multi-cultivators, trucks, we can work as dressmakers, and it enables us to keep our jobs because of the computer skills that we learned." (Ex-project user at MQ, Belić and Kunac 2004: 111)

The following points should, in my opinion, be taken into consideration for the further development of, and changes to, the projects:

- Supervision for the staff, particularly for the people working at the WWC women's refuge
- More active confrontation with the patriarchal structures and/or changing the relationship between daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law with instructional work in the family > solidarity amongst women as the objective for socio-structural empowerment

Serbian owner, and two of them drowned. The accident triggered a general upheaval of Albanians in Kosovo that resulted in violent demonstrations with persons killed among the demonstrators and local police forces. Serbian Orthodox churches were put on fire, as well as houses of Serbs still living in Kosovo. The vehicles of international organisations were stoned and put on fire as well as their premises." (Belić and Kunac 2004: 74).

¹⁹ See previous footnote.

- Increase the involvement of male members of society
- On the part of cfd (and/or the international investors) realising and tackling the relationship of dependence and power caused by the financing > supporting the organisations (e.g. paying the salaries) and not providing financial resources tied to certain conditions for individual projects.

9 Morocco

Due to the volume of the material received, I cannot go into the history of the organisations in Morocco, but anyone interested can consult the more detailed report of Jamila Bargach (2004). In presenting the different topics, J. Bargach differentiated between the views of employees and project participants, and sometimes even between men and women. I will not be able to take this into account here either, due to the volume of the report. I found it a challenge to compress J. Bargach's very full report into a clearly-structured summary. I hope to have succeeded in this presentation of her findings.

9.1 The Situation in Morocco

Under the institutional monarchy of Morocco, half the country's inhabitants live in urban centres. More than half the population is female, with young people making up 30%. Young people in particular suffer from wretched working conditions without any opportunities, and this leads to a total **loss of perspectives**. **Poverty** and **unemployment** are rife, and the outlook is unstable, resulting in a "culture of emptiness and poverty" (Bargach 2004: 3). This is considered the main reason for violence - usually committed against women and children. In Morocco, there are enormous differences between the social classes: you will find a very small, but rich elite, and a huge lower class living in poverty. **Child labour** continues to be widespread, as is unofficial employment, which drains the resources of the state and allows rich people to become even richer. Due to recent global developments, the **Moroccan economy** finds itself in a precarious state: because most Moroccan companies are family-owned and -managed, the world market does not take them seriously as competitors. The problem is further complicated by rumours of corruption in state institutions. For these reasons, **civilian society**, which has continually developed over the past few years, becomes a major partner when working with Morocco. The political situation is similar: the system is outdated and cannot satisfy the needs of the young majority of the population. The most active political party is the official Islam Party. In Morocco, too, one can observe the worldwide trend towards fundamentalism that preaches the "Islamic way of life" (which requires definition). Clearly, there is a trend towards polarisation, which deepens animosity between different ideological groups.

Extreme **urbanisation** has resulted in the development of poor districts and slums in the peripheral areas of towns and cities. Most people living in these shantytowns are rural migrants of the first and second generations, and it is in these ghettos that the "culture of emptiness and poverty" predominates, bringing with it every kind of illegal activity. The traditional neighbourly structure of a village cannot be revived in these slums. In particular, women and young people lack vital social support, as well as the necessary orientation and perspectives to shape their lives. While violence against women exists at all social levels, it is above all in these neighbourhoods that such violence can be found in all its forms. Most of the project participants originated from these districts.

Since he succeeded to the throne in 1999, the new King Mohammed VI has introduced several bold **reforms** as part of a democratisation process and a social dialogue has been launched on subjects that used to be social taboos. Subjects like paedophilia and homosexuality can now be discussed, and the dictatorship of King Hassan II is being critically reviewed. However, this report sees the most important reforms in **Family law** (Moudawana). At the beginning of October 2003, the king surprisingly announced a comprehensive reform of the Moudawana, and in February of this year the new law officially came into force. This development is akin to a revolutionary coup: the old family law, based on a conservative interpretation of the Sharia, was vehemently defended by the Islamists because the proposed reforms encroached upon the idealised, "sacred" unit of the family at its very roots. Now, however, responsibility for the family lies not only with the husband, but is shared by both spouses. The wifely duty of submission has been replaced by equal sharing of rights and duties, and women no longer need the official approval of their fathers and brothers in order to marry. The

new law has introduced other radical reforms, such as raising the minimum age for marriage for girls from 15 to 18, drastic restrictions on polygamy and men's rights of repudiation, and new rights of custody of children under 15 in cases of divorce, whereby the mother is given priority. For women's organisations, these developments are a big victory that is the reward for their long and controversial struggle for reforms. However, women's situation in life will not change from one day to the next, even with these law reforms. Society must first become acquainted with the new laws, and the legal practice and implementation of these laws must be monitored. The women's organisations will thus still have plenty of challenges to face! (Serehane 2004)

9.2 The regional organisations and their understanding of empowerment

9.2.1 Bayti in Casablanca and Essaouira

Bayti is a non-profit organisation (NPO). Founded in 1994, it aims to give a constructive outlook to children from families prone to violence, i.e. by preparing them for a "normal" way of life, away from the streets. The number of street children, particularly in big cities, was a growing concern, largely due to the urbanisation already mentioned and the resulting development of slums. The lack of adequate schooling or alternative urban structures, together with the repressive behaviour of the police, resulted in the massive marginalisation of street children.

Alongside integration, the fundamental objectives of the organisation are rehabilitation and prevention. The programs are structured both vertically (contacting the street children, rehabilitation, social integration) and horizontally (education, training courses, increasing the competence of the educators). The focus is on the children themselves, as well as their community (family, schools, teachers etc.). Bayti provides a chance of education and helps young people to find work. The organisation counsels children and young people psychologically and supports them according to their needs and personal circumstances. One of the outstanding features of Bayti is that children are treated as people with individual experience and preferences, and are not just a "social problem" that needs to be resolved. Bayti appears to be one of the most democratic institutions in Morocco: not only are the experience and further training of the educators vital to the project, but also the points of view and experience of the participants. Bayti has extended its activities to networking with other organisations, with a view to accumulating more influence for political lobbying.

The organisation understands **empowerment** as a sine qua non: Bayti employees must experience empowerment themselves, so that they can pass it onto the participants in the projects. Empowerment is considered a mechanism for releasing and making full use of the potential of children and young people. Empowerment is not absolute, but relative, depending very much on the individual players and the environment. Part of the concept of empowerment takes into account the various experiences of children and their talent for invention. Two approaches are adopted to achieve empowerment: first, an objective, material approach which consists of learning a trade, acquiring experience, learning how to behave in public, equipping oneself to survive and integrate, etc. The second approach is subjective, focusing more on individual awareness and competences: building up self-confidence and trustworthy relationships, discovering one's own potential or awareness, learning to communicate etc. Project participants also understand empowerment at an objective, material level as well as a subjective level. At an objective level, they learn to create and maintain a daily structure (consistency and regularity), find a family to look after them (protection and a place in life) and receive food and clothing. At the subjective level should be mentioned: making use of spare capacity, regaining self-confidence, finding emotional support, healing wounds, rediscovering the joys of living, and hygiene. One boy describes empowerment through his association with the organisation as a "bridge on which one walks towards one's aim, and if someone doesn't want to, that is his problem" (Project participant, Bayti, Bargach 2004: 21).

9.2.2 Ligue Démocratique des Droits de la Femme (LDDF)

The LDDF defends women's rights in Morocco. It has offices in 14 different regions of Morocco and a broad basis of volunteers - its 7,000 members. It is one of the most active and well-known organisations in the socio-political context. The LDDF consists of four sub-organisations: the "Centre for Observation and Information of Moroccan Women", the "Centre for the Future", "Solidarity Action" and the "LDDF Network for Help". These sub-organisations make it possible to tackle women's issues in a way that reaches both the base and

the macro level of society. Through lobbying and national campaigns, women's rights and the equality of men and women are defended, civilian society and NGOs are supported in their activities, and room is made for a culture of tolerance, respect and peace. The LDDF possesses the necessary instruments to keep society aware of the rights of women through its participation at international symposia and its studies of the situation of Moroccan women. At the micro level LDDF offers educational courses (e.g. in literacy and civil rights) and runs information campaigns (the most successful being the "Caravans for Women's Rights", which travel through rural regions and city slums), as well as providing members with legal advice or representing women in court, if necessary.

For LDDF **empowerment** means being in an advantageous position and possessing self-confidence, knowledge and financial security. The scope of action of project participants should be widened through counselling and the opening up of new perspectives. Women should be given the means and instruments to take action and shape their lives themselves. In acquiring knowledge, women learn about their rights and this sharpens their awareness. This should prevent project participants from reproducing the same patterns of behaviour in future, i.e. whereby they themselves were victims of discrimination and had to submit to men. At the same time, LDDF recognises that it can only pass on empowerment if the organisation itself exercises power and influence through its networking and lobbying activities.

9.2.3 Solidarité Féminine (SolFem) in Casablanca

As with other patriarchal societies, the code of honour and shame also applies in Morocco. This code dictates, first and foremost, how women are to behave. If a woman gives birth to a child outside this cultural norm and without social recognition, she pays an enormous price. She will be repudiated by her family, criminalised by society and thus relegated to a kind of social limbo. The children, too, suffer throughout their lives on account of their origins. They are not recognised, receive no name, and are despised as bastards. Many unmarried mothers come from deprived environments and broken families in poor neighbourhoods, and they have little or no education. SolFem looks after these repudiated women, enables them to keep their children with them and promotes their dignity and self-confidence. By staying at SolFem, they can map out their own future. Under the auspices of the SolFem program, participants can help to run restaurants, kiosks or a bakery, become seamstresses or be trained in cosmetics and massage. Learning a trade increases the women's skills and guarantees them an income. The newly-opened Hammam (steam bath) with fitness centre has created additional jobs and income.

Aicha Echenna, the founder of the organisation, is chiefly responsible for public relations. She talks to the media and participates in various forums on the status of unmarried mothers and the cycle of violence that is upheld by society. SolFem also runs information campaigns and played a major part in the campaign "Printemps d'Égalité" initiated by LDDF, when the organisation was invited to present SolFem's opinion on the new family laws.

For SolFem, **empowerment** means giving back to marginalised women their life and their dignity. Already the knowledge that there is somewhere they can go is an initial form of empowerment. At the second stage, the women concerned receive support, with the aim of giving them and their children an outlook and an identity. Learning a trade and receiving an opportunity to earn money gives them a certain autonomy, which can be considered the final important step in the empowerment process. SolFem's empowerment objectives are for the women to achieve financial independence, look after their children and organise their own lives. The women need to be made aware that it is not the unwanted children that are the cause of their mothers' marginalisation but society, which upholds the mechanism of repudiation. Another aim of empowerment is to break through patterns that will otherwise be repeated due to the women's own reaction to this mechanism.

9.3 Discussion of the transversal thematic fields

The biggest common factor shared by the three organisations is their commitment to solving social problems connected with **taboos** that are deeply rooted in Moroccan society. Subjects like the status of women, the female body and sexuality are particularly sensitive topics in Moroccan society and are thus taboo. LDDF looks after women who have been physically and psychologically abused, Bayti works with children and young people who have been repudiated by their families and by society, and SolFem works with unmarried mothers

and their children, who are generally treated as pariahs. The work of the three organisations can be described as complementary, because they tackle social problems from different perspectives. However, they need to network more efficiently if they want to gain sufficient influence to bring about legal and social reforms. The wide circulation of information to the general public about these organisations and their programs is a sign of their overall **impact**. To influence public opinion, it is vital that the organisations not only offer counselling to individuals, but also actively arouse people's awareness of the problems of marginalised people, e.g. by means of campaigns. However, creating a "Gender Democracy" where all people are treated as equals in a context where 70% of women are illiterate and stubborn resistance prevails in the name of religion and cultural authenticity appears to be a very distant Utopia. Nevertheless, the new family law reform demonstrates a political will to improve the status of women. On the basis of the new legislation the work of the women's organisations has acquired new legitimisation and influence. Women's issues are nowadays mentioned more often in the media.

Empowerment is seen as a dual process with, on the one hand, **individual empowerment** through boosting women's and children's self-confidence and self-respect, as well as enabling them to recognise their own potential. On the other hand, it is also a process that influences existing social structures, with the long-term aim of bringing about changes at the **socio-structural level**: e.g. learning a trade so that women become financially independent, or applying know-how and running campaigns to arouse and increase public awareness of gender issues. Also worth mentioning are the activities of the caravans propagating women's rights, denoting a sensitisation strategy at a social level. These are all effective means of changing the social status of women. However, the greatest problem faced by the organisations is the sorely needed **institutionalisation of women's issues**. The organisations demand various law reforms but, hardly has one victory been won, than new obstacles arise. One such obstacle is certainly the fact that the state has other priorities, e.g. the consequences of the "culture of emptiness and poverty". In the name of religion and cultural authenticity there is constant resistance to changes that would help women. This resistance has recently received support due to the worldwide trend towards Islam fundamentalism.

Violence has many forms and is recognised by all three organisations as *the* structural reality in the lives of women and children. Violence is normal. It is something all project participants know about, and it is what pervades their lives and leads to their repudiation by society. Violence can be described as cultural or structural, and it is produced and upheld by society. This point is particularly important. The national culture in general and the existing legal structures allow violence against women and street children to become inwardly accepted and thus maintained. The project participants are victims of the social system, but violence can also originate from lack of perspectives for the future, poverty and unemployment, i.e. in the "culture of emptiness and poverty".

For participants in the projects the problem is often that breaking out of one violent relationship means entering another, equally violent environment. For example, for women, a divorce usually means poverty, unemployment and/or no future. It is understandable that such a cycle makes it difficult to break out of violent relationships.

Violence is also constantly present inside the organisations themselves. This is a challenge that has to be overcome before empowerment can be achieved. For street children, violence is normal and they have long since inwardly accepted the language of violence. When they are taken in by the organisations their violent behaviour does not just stop – they bring it with them. The children thus have to be "re-educated" and they must learn other rules, a new moral attitude and other ways of expressing themselves. The cycle of violence must not be reproduced by the behaviour of the children, but broken through. This is a delicate balancing act, in which Bayti succeeds by convincing the children over and over again that violent behaviour is not the way to get what they want. The process also applies to SolFem because the awareness and moral principles of the unmarried mothers need to be radically changed, which is quite against the cultural norms. Many participants in the SolFem projects judge according to the criteria of their own culture. This leads to many of them using violence against their children, because they hold them responsible for their difficult living circumstances. They particularly feel the loss of contact with their own family and project this onto the children, as culprits. The women must learn to accept their own "social demise", overcome their feelings of betrayal and loss, and adopt new moral principles that will enable them to build up awareness. With this new awareness, partici-

pants will realise that they are victims of society and culture, and they themselves are not to blame for their wretched circumstances. SolFem has made it possible for unmarried mothers to have themselves and their children officially registered. This is a valuable contribution and an important step towards influencing public awareness!

All three organisations recognise that the struggle against deeply rooted violence cannot be won on their own. Other institutions, including the media and above all the government, must engage in **networking** and actively participate in the process of change. The successful lobbying by the network initiated by LDDF "Le printemps de l'égalité", which demanded the reform of family law, illustrates how organisations can carry more political weight if they pool their resources. The problem of violence, too, must be solved at the socio-structural level (e.g. through law reforms), as well as the individual level. Violence against women must no longer be encouraged, allowed and justified by cultural and religious arguments. The women themselves and the organisations are making an important contribution to this process: through education they are sensitised so that they question the deeply-rooted values of society and try to bring about changes in their environment. The best strategy is found at LDDF: when discussing the subject of marriage, the women begin to understand the effects of violence.

In the report on Morocco it is important to differentiate between **security** and **safety**. Safety describes the psychological implementation of security. Freedom from any kind of threat, both in the private sphere (marriage, family, relatives) and in public (street, police stations, employment relationships), leads to a sense of security and safety. "(...) to wake up in the morning without the feeling of fear stifling you". (Project participant, SolFem, Bargach 2004: 44). Here, the government has a very important role to play: if security is guaranteed by the state, a feeling of safety could be created in the private sphere. With regard to the private sphere, various measures need to be taken to guarantee security and safety in a marriage: long-term security, even without the help of the organisations, must be guaranteed. For younger women, it is easier to find security than it is for older women, because younger women find it easier to remake their lives, while older women lack the necessary supporting networks. However, the crucial element is **financial independence**. Since it is mainly the husband who guarantees financial security, yet many marriages are marked by violence, it is only through earning their own income that women will find financial independence and security. "What security can there be when the man who beat you in front of your own child and raped you in the night is the man you have to wait for to wake up so that you can buy milk for your kid?" (Project participant, LDDF, Bargach 2004: 35). The high unemployment level in Morocco hinders progress and calls for particularly creative solutions on the part of the organisations. By opening the Hammam, SolFem has taken an admirable step in the right direction.

All the organisations share the advantage of being places where project participants feel secure, describing the centres as islands of safety: "Association is a tiny island of safety, the participants feel protected from the outside violence and feel they have reached a point of 'peace'." (Project participant, SolFem, Bargach 2004: 43). Such islands of safety are the first important step towards the empowerment of women.

With regard to **resources**, all three organisations underline the importance of free access to (vocational) training, schooling and information. It is vital and undisputed that project participants need to learn a trade in order to find access to work that will bring in money. If people are given access to education, they become self-confident, start to believe in their own abilities and learn about their rights and duties. They then feel in a position to try to change their situation. Already the access to these organisations with their counselling centres represents an important resource, which then opens up further resources to these people.

SolFem and Bayti see a need for **internal changes in their organisation**: in order to empower project participants, it is essential first to empower the personnel and the organisation itself through constant further training and increased professionalism of the personnel. In this respect, Bayti underlines its sine qua non, based on the principle that only after the empowerment of the personnel can a genuine empowerment of the project participants be achieved. However, the achievement of financial autonomy is also essential for the organisation to become strong internally. In this way the organisation can increase its external influence and be in a position to talk about established social taboos. Furthermore, internal hierarchies need to be dismantled and the dependence on superiors should be reconsidered and changed where necessary, so that the empowerment of the organisation is complete.

I find the following extract from J. Bargach's report not only makes clear the impact of LDDF, but is representative of the important and successful work of all three organisations: "I believe that 90% of the participants I interviewed did learn a great deal from their being in the LDDF. A space that restored their humanity and that gave them the possibility to learn, to feel safe and be one of many other women, a type of communal body. The women come to the association with a heavy cultural baggage, stereotypes, easy judgments, and very limited norms. The courses (...) widened their understanding, opened their eyes, created a sense of tolerance and especially showed them the mechanisms that reproduce their own subjugation" (Bargach 2004: 36).

10 Switzerland

10.1 The migration context in Switzerland

The following text describes those aspects of Switzerland's migration policies that have a direct bearing on the activities of the cfd women migrants' workshop *wisdonna*. In view of the heterogeneity of the women migrants and their way of life it is difficult to make generalised statements. I can therefore only provide a rough outline of the situation, rather than a detailed discussion.²⁰

In Switzerland, it is the politics of migration that largely determine the scope of action of migrants. The political policies are marked by restrictive legislation on foreigners and asylum-seekers, a tendency to put the blame on foreign cultures, and various mechanisms of exclusion. One very negative aspect of these policies is migrants' dependence on being granted official **residence status**²¹. Women migrants' scope of action and social outlook is severely limited by the need for an official right of residence, and *wisdonna* strives to expand the scope of action of these women in Switzerland.

Female migrants also suffer additional, specifically gender-related disadvantages. Entry into Switzerland is subject to strict rules and legal barriers. Often, the needs of women who enter Switzerland are overlooked. Long stays are not permitted, and new arrivals are usually only given official resident status if they are family members of people already living in Switzerland or if they come **for the purpose of marriage**. Basically, the right to stay in Switzerland ceases if the marriage ends in divorce (assuming that the person entered Switzerland for the purpose of marriage). Through this legislation, women migrants become totally dependent on their husbands, with the disastrous consequence that they cannot defend themselves against violent husbands without risking the loss of their residence permit. The relationship of power and dependence is thus indirectly encouraged.

For women migrants, access to the **labour market** is also extremely limited. Despite the fact that some of the women are highly qualified, they are forced to occupy non-competitive gaps in the labour market. Alternatively, they take on work that Swiss women consider unattractive, with the result that they experience a devaluation of their professional qualifications, together with employment in insecure jobs with poor working conditions.

However, **sweeping judgements, a tendency to put the blame on the migrants and the creation of ethnic barriers** also have negative repercussions for the women migrants. Often, they are deemed incompetent to act on their own initiative and consequently they are denied any opportunity of doing so, or of determining their own course of action.

To sum up: The constant insecurity regarding residence status, combined with the situation on the labour market and the high level of dependence on husbands and employers, determines the situation of women migrants in Switzerland. These structural conditions are at odds with the women's individual abilities and productivity. *wisdonna* acts as an interface between these two conflicting areas.

²⁰ For a detailed discussion, please consult the report of M. LeBreton and the sources which she uses, such as (Hoffmann-Nowotny 2001, Prodolliet 1998, Prodolliet 1999, Verein zur Förderung der Sozialen Arbeit 2003 etc.).

²¹ Details of the different residence statuses can be found in (Le Breton 2004: 14,15).

10.2 The cfd women migrants' workshop *wisdonna* and its understanding of empowerment

wisdonna was launched by cfd in cooperation with a group of female migrants, the aim being to allow well-educated, qualified women migrants easier access to work and schooling in Switzerland. The project focuses on the richness of the perspectives and resources of these women. *wisdonna* provides them with a venue in which they can improve and pass on their know-how in the form of courses and events. The cfd women migrants' workshop trains so-called "multipliers" by sensitising the women to the subject of domestic violence. Here, they learn how to recognise their own abilities, or they can meet in order to organise new events. In its courses, *wisdonna* adopts a participative approach. The "etwas andere Deutschkurs" ("Different kind of German Course") is a good example of this. The course is conceived to cater for the women's everyday needs, e.g. what are women's expectations and needs when learning a language? What knowledge and experience do they possess already? Where are the gaps? Course participants communicate their knowledge, needs and expectations and the conversation course is adapted accordingly.

Apart from running courses and projects, *wisdonna* is also an important source of information for organisations and institutions working in the fields of migration and equal rights. Thanks to *wisdonna*'s critical public relations work, its participation in all kinds of discussions, and its own publications, the widespread reservations of society against women migrants can be broken down and examined. The general public needs to be made aware of the actual living conditions of women migrants. To this end, *wisdonna* works closely with cfd's migration experts, and incorporates into its program their basic principles, political activities and networking methods.

wisdonna understands **empowerment** as a complex entity. It is a multilayered process that increases women's individual and collective capabilities – and ultimately their social and political scope of action – by providing information, know-how and an exchange of opinions. Empowerment means encouragement, hope and self-confidence, with which women can reflect on their situation, see things clearly and go about changing them. It is an awareness-raising process that makes it possible for a woman to shape her life independently. "... I take "empowerment" to mean giving women courage to look forwards and rediscover skills that they believed they no longer possessed" (Staff member of *wisdonna*, Le Breton 2004: 26) "It is the change from 'I cannot do anything' to 'I can do something' (Staff member of *wisdonna*, Le Breton 2004: 25). All this means giving women the strength to free themselves from positions of dependence and disadvantage and to grow out of them.

10.3 Discussion of the transversal thematic fields

wisdonna takes as its starting point the actual **resources** of women migrants. This means social, personal and professional competences that can be activated with a view to the women's social and professional integration in Switzerland. *wisdonna*'s policy of increasing and expanding the women's resources has top priority. By adopting a resource-oriented approach, *wisdonna* enables the migrants to help shape the project by inputting their own personal experience and life stories. This participative concept enables *wisdonna* to meet the actual needs of women migrants, which is vital to their individual empowerment. *wisdonna*'s work can be described as "a genuine concept of reciprocity, exchange of opinions, solidarity, equality and mutual respect" (Project participant, Le Breton 2004: 29) The inclusion of the needs of the women migrants creates a realistic foundation for changes in the awareness and long-term outlook of these people. Project participants find that the opportunity to make social contacts and simultaneously build up networks is equally important, both for individual and collective **empowerment**.

The report shows clearly that it is not sufficient simply to put women migrants' resources to good use and strengthen the women's awareness, so that they will achieve individual powers of decision. **Networking** should be sought **with the institutions involved**, in order to include the perspectives of women migrants in discussions on the politics of migration and integration. Apart from close cooperation with these institutions, it is also essential to carry out critical public relations work and information campaigns, as well as sensitising institutions, organisations and government authorities engaged in social work, education, health, migration, equal rights etc.

Networking is also the main purpose of the project "flying *wisniña*", which was launched because (amongst girls) far more migrant school-leavers are unable to find apprenticeships than Swiss school-leavers. In co-

operation with experts in the field, young women migrants who had been educated in Switzerland were trained to become multipliers (so-called flying wisniñas), with the aim of spreading information on "Migration and Vocational Training" in schools and youth centres, as well as talking about their own experiences. Today, the project has become a model that has been transferred from Bern to other cities in Switzerland. Another outcome of the project is that the Vocational Information Centre ("BIZ") in Bern now has a migrants' department. The present-day synergies and cooperation with educational institutions are proof of the recognition and relevance of this issue and show that a first step has been taken towards possible structural changes. However, the example of "flying wisniñas" also shows that bringing about structural changes is a lengthy process, and that success can only be achieved with a combination of individual, collective and structural empowerment.

wisdonna has a comprehensive understanding of **violence** that includes direct (e.g. domestic) violence, as well as structural violence (e.g. in the legal conditions for residence status and in Swiss society's encouragement of sexual discrimination and oppression). "...for example, when a female victim of violence is told by the authorities that such happenings are normal where she comes from, that in her country corporal punishment is the norm, so she knows all about that anyway and should just go home and tomorrow everything will be all right. That is something that would never happen to a Swiss woman." (Staff member of wisdonna, Le Breton 2004: 30) Structural violence is also discussed in courses designed to provide information to women migrants who have been subjected to violence, as well as to partner institutions, so that they too can deal with the problem. Wisdonna's work can lead to gradual public awareness of the problem of violence against women migrants. Here too, there is a vital link between individual and collective empowerment.

Although the subject of **security** receives little attention in the report, I can see an interrelation between legal regulations in Switzerland and the violence and sense of insecurity suffered by women migrants. Security seems, above all, to be compromised at the structural level when it comes to legal rights of residence. The status of residence can prove an obstacle to women migrants, making them afraid to take action against domestic violence. If a marriage breaks up, the woman automatically loses her right of residence and the certainty that she can stay in Switzerland. When orders are made by the aliens' office to leave the country, this threatens people's sense of security. In this case, limited rights of residence may be described as disempowerment. In connection with security, it is important that wisdonna can provide venues for events and courses and, by spreading information, create a secure place for the women affected. The "etwas andere Deutschkurs" ("Different kind of German course") is a vital component of this strategy, because its participative approach gives women security and an awareness of language.

Despite cooperation with cfd's migration specialists and the fact that cfd supports wisdonna's public relations work, it can be seen that – as in other countries – wisdonna needs to combat a **lack of internal empowerment**. One criticism raised is that the organisation is not fully integrated into cfd as a whole, and there is a demand for increased cooperation, particularly with the country project managers. "I would like to learn more about the other projects [of cfd]. My colleague in Bosnia, together with cfd, established a women's refuge. I have been working for several years on the project 'Halt Gewalt gegen Frauen' ('Stop Violence against Women'), yet we do not communicate with each other. (...) I believe we should communicate much more and learn from each other's projects". (Staff member of wisdonna, Le Breton 2004: 28) Internal cooperation and communication should ensure mutual support and promote internal empowerment, i.e. we need to expand, consolidate and network our activities and discussions. Empowerment processes ought to be an important part of our organisation culture and the individual empowerment of employees should be supported. As described in detail in some of the other reports, if those responsible for the projects are empowered, they will be in a much better position to support the participants.

Part C: Conclusion

11 Summary and conclusion

In this last chapter of the final report I wish to focus on the one hand on the things that the organisations have in common, their understanding of empowerment and the three correlated thematic fields. On the other hand, I would also like to present an outlook for further project stages. Personally, I found it a great challenge to summarise the specific activities of the organisations in their very different contexts. Regional particularities determine the activities of the organisations to a great extent, and the resulting special situations cannot be ignored when analysing the understanding of empowerment and the impact of the projects. The heterogeneity and variety within the environments from which the project participants come also make it difficult to generalise. I will therefore provide an account of the most striking features of the local reports. This should serve as a basis for discussion, rather than a theoretical analysis of empowerment and the thematic fields of violence, security and resources. An analysis can be found in each chapter of Part B under the heading "Discussion of the transversal thematic fields".

The researchers and the cfd working party agreed on the following definition of **empowerment**: a complex and dynamic process that increases women's collective and individual capabilities, as well as their scope of action. This empowerment process takes place in the conflict area between regional structures and individual women's scope of impact. The projects arouse women's awareness and give them confidence in their own skills. This causes them to question their social status and try to bring about changes. According to Kabeer²², it is the "power within" that helps women to control resources and consciously adopt strategies that will change their lives. It is vital that they make their own decisions on matters affecting their lives and obtain independence, especially financial independence.

The results of the research support this definition. They also underline the fact that empowerment should be seen as an interrelated process that takes place at different levels, namely: **individual** (men and women), **collective** (women's groups and organisations) and **socio-structural** (macro-political and legal). It is important that the organisations should complement each other, because they constantly have to act between different levels. Most of the NGOs in this study concentrate on a core competence at one of the three levels mentioned, *without*, however, losing sight of the other two levels. Nevertheless, many of the organisations still tend to deal with "one corner of the social question" (Bargach 2004: 48) and concentrate on one level only, which is why it is essential for these NGOs to network. Through networking, important synergies can be used and the influence on social structures will increase. Examples of efficient networking can be found between the organisations in Morocco and in the relationship of the women migrants' workshop *wisdomna* in Switzerland with various institutions. In my opinion, such networking would also be particularly valuable in the Balkans and Palestine. In view of the withdrawal of foreign investors, a kind of financial competition has grown up between individual NGOs, which does not serve the empowerment of women or efforts to bring about social reform. Increased networking between the organisations should be integrated into project development and financing policies.

It is the deliberately chosen **holistic approach of the organisations and the constant alternation between different levels, using different strategies**, that leads to successful empowerment and social reform. For this reason, the organisations studied recognise that focusing solely on the individual level of women will not result in empowerment, and that small changes (e.g. achieving individual powers of action) will, at best, support or help to bring about reforms in social relationships and socio-cultural norms. This means that, when planning new projects, the organisations need to focus not only on women and their needs, but also the social environment (family, relatives, neighbourhood, community etc.) and sometimes even the macro-political level. In the long run, it is not much use empowering women if they find that their newly-found empowerment is not

²² See Part A, Chapter 1.

accepted, or is even actively prevented by their social environment. In regions where state structures have little influence or in a highly militarized environment, for example, conservative values and norms are currently enjoying a renaissance. Outside influences can lead to a return to traditionalism, with a high value placed on patriarchal family structures and the defence of family honour. As can be seen from the reports on Palestine and Kosovo, such developments have a very negative influence on women's status in the family. Perhaps women have acquired wider powers of decision by participating in the projects, only to see them once again restricted, and their individual empowerment neutralised or destroyed by outside influences.

However, this study shows that empowerment at the individual level is easier to achieve than at the social, macro-political level. But why does the successful individual empowerment of women have only a marginal impact on society? Is it because obstacles in the regional environment tend to prevail, as can be seen in Palestine? Or is it because – as in Morocco – the government puts other social problems before women's rights? Or is it because the problems handled by the organisations concern structures of domination and firmly established views that are hard to change and are thus not at the top of the political agenda?

These questions touch upon important points that can be drawn into discussions on successful and sustainable empowerment at the macro-political level. These points concern local, and sometimes global developments and can evolve into a complex, dynamic issue. For this reason, it is important for the activities of the organisations to be backed by political willpower, so that there is a better chance of changing firmly entrenched values and norms. As Jamila Bargach puts it in her report on Morocco: "In effect (...) the deep structure remains resistant to change. Although important clauses in the Moudawana were changed, as well as juvenile justice procedural law, the acceptance and respect of women, all women, can only pass through a change in mentality" (Bargach 2004: 47). The fact that a significant reform has occurred at the socio-structural level in Morocco is largely thanks to the campaign organised by LDDF "Le Printemps de l'Egalité", as well as the king's political willpower to introduce reforms. Other regions have shown progress, too: the WWC "White Ribbon" campaign in Kosovo is a good example of a broad strategy of sensitisation to women's issues at the social level. Another example is the "flying wisniña" project in Switzerland, which shows that the process is lengthy and calls for efficiently networked organisations or institutions that know how to use their synergies, combined with the political willpower to support these demands. In other words, all social levels and groups concerned in the empowerment process must be integrated, so that a decisive step can be taken towards the achievement of equal rights for men and women.

The organisations also know that it is essential to identify and examine local dominant structures and power relationships, and to attempt to overcome them by taking context-specific measures. Common cultural, ethnic, religious, political or gender-specific attributions and stereotypes must be examined for their function in society and dealt with appropriately. The organisations are well-aware that even deeply rooted values need not be accepted as unchangeable facts of life, but as dynamic and changeable phenomena that must be re-examined through the projects and activities of the organisations. Lobbying and public relations or sensitisation need to pinpoint power structures and strive to gain equal rights, in order to receive the necessary political support.

One thing the organisations have in common is that their activities all concern social issues that are connected either with social **taboos** or with **norms and codes of behaviour** that are firmly established in people's minds and which need to be broken through. For example, the status of women, the (denial of) professional and social integration of women migrants, the female body and sexuality are all topics for discussion. Another subject that needs to be discussed is the inequality of the sexes and, consequently, the often sacrosanct socio-cultural norms. The organisations therefore try to reform social hierarchies in the interests of equal rights. Socio-political awareness and information campaigns about women's issues and interests are further goals.

In view of the above comments, I consider that, when shaping future projects and programs, the focus should be more on this holistic aspect, which includes involvement at an individual, collective and socio-structural level, the discussion of firmly established taboos and stereotypes, and optimum use of synergies. As can be seen from the country reports, possible further steps should include networking of the organisations, the increased involvement of **men and boys** in the projects (both as participants and employees) and a focus on the role of the **mother-in-law**. The reports from Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina illustrate the role of the mother-in-law quite clearly. From the information at my disposal, I cannot judge whether this situation also

applies in Israel, Palestine and Morocco, but I assume that power relationships between women also exist in these regions. Power relationships differ from region to region, so that different approaches must be adopted to achieve the sustainable empowerment of women and desirable social reforms.

The problems of violence, security and resources, which are closely linked with empowerment, greatly influence the activities of the local organisations. It is chiefly the extended meaning of violence that has a bearing on project concepts. The organisations studied have to deal with direct, indirect and cultural-symbolic **forms of violence**, which is committed at all levels of society. Violence is seen as a structural reality and, since external influences constantly influence and encourage relationships of violence, the project concepts have to be flexible.

It is remarkable that the project employees and participants interviewed often described violent relationships with the help of patriarchal structures, i.e. they very often mention cultural-symbolic violence. Particularly in times of economic depression, wars or insecure post-war periods, patriarchal structures become stricter and are reproduced, leading to an increase in violent relationships, which mostly affect women. The organisations recognise violence as a constructed concept, produced and upheld by society. If, then, violence is a constructed concept, it is logically a concept that can be changed. To change these socially constructed relationships of violence, more attention should be given to the role of women in constructing this concept. The findings could be integrated into the concept of the organisations and used in their work.

Security is closely linked with violence. In all the regions researched, the political, social and/or economic environment caused people to feel insecure. However, according to the reports, the mere existence of the organisations can give people a sense of security. The NGOs provide a secure venue where people can withdraw or receive counselling and therapy. In other words, empowerment is achieved simply through the existence of the organisations.

Another crucial factor in achieving a sense of security is financial independence. Financial independence enables women to free themselves from violent relationships, as well as helping to dismantle discriminating structures. However, financial independence can only be achieved with access to the **resources** of education, legal rights, work/income and health. Knowledge, or education in general, increases women's power to make decisions in a personal and social context and enables them to earn money, and thus autonomy.

However, financial dependence not only hinders the empowerment of women, but also the empowerment of the organisations themselves. **Internal empowerment within the organisations** and the job security of the staff are largely determined by dependence on national and foreign investors. This poses a challenge to all concerned to employ a large measure of creativity and willpower to dismantle such dependence and hierarchical structures. By opening a Hammam, SolFem has created a project that could serve as an example of how to overcome such dependence and become financial independent – both from the point of view of the organisation and that of its staff.

The national and international financing of individual projects under specified conditions should be reconsidered. Given the present circumstances, it seems far more sensible to finance the organisation itself, e.g. by paying salaries instead of supporting time-limited projects. This would, to some extent, guarantee the much-demanded continuity and long-term planning of the projects, while employees would have a secure job, and thus individual empowerment. Such a method of financing would also promote empowerment within the organisation, which could then offer its staff supervision and further training. This would create forums for open discussion, where employees and their superiors could examine the power relationships within the organisation. As a result, internal structures would be improved, i.e. hierarchies would be dismantled and fair gender relationships established.

It is necessary to look into the question of power structures, on the one hand, and relationships within the organisation, on the other hand. The ideal behind the concept of financing that is linked to such conditions is: only people who are themselves empowered can pass on the concept of empowerment on to others. That means, too, that only someone working in an organisation that is free from disempowerment can satisfy the demand for equality and justice and wield influence at the socio-structural level.

To conclude, it should be repeated that all organisations are concerned with the problems of violence, security and resources, which are seen as correlated fields. This concurs entirely with the principles formulated

by cfd and the researchers. The individual projects promote individual empowerment, the collective empowerment of specific groups and socio-structural empowerment, and the different forms of empowerment are considered to make up an integral whole. In order for the organisations to work efficiently, the main requirements seem to be increased networking between the organisations and a strengthening of internal structures. Employees should be able to make full use of existing possibilities of exercising political influence and participation, as well as creating new possibilities in this field. The strategic target of the projects should thus continue to be the training of staff and participants to become empowered political and legal personalities who are capable of expressing and satisfying their rights, interests and opportunities. In order to achieve successful empowerment - i.e. give women power - there are possibilities for action in all the regions researched. The organisations are aware that it is difficult to reform discriminating structures and that their work cannot bring about far-reaching reforms overnight. Nevertheless, by persisting in their efforts, they can continue to create awareness of discrimination and they will achieve significant reforms by taking small steps.

12 Literature

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