

WPP - Africa Initiates Gender Mainstreaming Process for 20 African Peace Organisations

Gender is an important factor in conflict and peacebuilding. While conflict continues to be seen as a male phenomena, with men predominantly viewed as the perpetrators of violence, the role of women both as perpetrators and victims has received far less attention. If sustainable peace is to be established and fostered, gender must be incorporated into the policies of organisations working in the field of peacebuilding. In particular, gender mainstreaming should be part of peacebuilding interventions from the very start to ensure that they address the different needs of women and men.



In a bid to strengthen understanding of gender in active nonviolence peacebuilding, and to help African peacebuilding organisations to mainstream gender within their organisations, WPP-Africa held a Gender Mainstreaming Training from 23rd to 25th August, 2010. The training introduced twenty heads of organisations from fifteen African countries to the issue of gender mainstreaming and took them through exercises that would equip them to implement the relevant changes in their organisations.

Participants included men and women from Anglophone and Francophone countries. To facilitate, WPP-Africa called on two experts, Mrs. Joana Opare and Mrs. Rosaline Obeng-Ofori, both Ghanaian gender consultants with a wide range of experiences in gender and peace work at national and international levels.

Across the three days, participants were given presentations on 'The Link Between Gender, Active Non-Violence, and Peacebuilding in Africa'; 'The Six Principles of Non-Violence' derived from Dr. Martin Luther King's teachings; 'Gender Mainstreaming' in which participants assessed the process of incorporating gender into organisational policies; and 'Masculinities', wherein male socialisation



was identified as a key reason for violence in society. Also, there were numerous exercises in which participants evaluated the statement 'Life is easier for men than for women' by either agreeing or disagreeing with it; drew up post-conflict demobilisation/reintegration plans based on a case study; and investigated the different forms of violence, such as political and social and emotional violence.

The training produced numerous positive results both for the individuals involved and the African cause for gender sensitive active nonviolence in general. First, it reintroduced participants to the concept of gender, eliminating misconceptions and reinforcing their understanding of how gender mainstreaming strengthened the process of peacebuilding. In particular, it changed attitudes in male participants, who

stated that the training had helped them reinterpret women as equal partners in the peacebuilding effort. Furthermore, it established in the minds of participants that active nonviolence was a more powerful tool than violence in resolving conflict and establishing peace. Apart from this, the training gave participants a space in which to develop pan-African and interdisciplinary networks to support their future endeavours. Most



importantly, each participant came away from the training with a new commitment to and detailed action plan to mainstream gender in his or her respective organisation.

Feedback was especially encouraging. Many said they felt enlightened about the role of masculinities and gendered discrimination and felt the training had pointed out to them the importance of looking at perpetrators of violence while carrying out gender analysis. For improvement, participants generally recommended there should be more time allotted to group discussions in further trainings.

At the end of the training, the Chair of the Board for WPP-Africa, Mrs. Naomi Akpan-Ita, took the opportunity to thank all for their attendance and reminded them that without gender equality there would be no justice and indeed no peace. She said that the programme had sown in the participants something worthwhile that they could use in their fight for gender-based active nonviolence: 'As you go back into Africa, let Africa know that you are here. Let them know that you have gone for three days and you have returned to make a difference.' She said.



Overall, the training was a resounding success and WPP-Africa wishes to thank all who took part and supported it.