

Support and Empowerment

-Swedish and Georgian-Abkhazian experiences of building successful women's and girl's support and empowerment organizations (WGOs)

Stjärnjouren

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Preface

Representatives from Stjärnjouren met with representatives from Avangard in Stockholm, in autumn 2008. The meeting was initiated by Kvinna till Kvinna, and Stjärnjouren was invited to share experiences on working with issues concerning women's rights and support to survivors of gender based violence, as a NGO in Sweden. Stjärnjouren had by that time, recently published a comprehensive book on methods for outreaching work for empowering young women and girls (Stjärnjouren, 2008). A short while after this inspiring meeting, we decided to plan for a cooperation project.

The Swedish National Board of Youth Affairs granted funds to cover a one year project. Together with former president of Stjärnjouren, Emma Söderström, I came up with and developed the idea of the project, and was employed as project manager from September 2009. The aim and the goals of the project *Young Women Crossing Borders* were drawn up in dialogue with the president of Avangard, Maia Kvaratskhelia, involving other members of our organizations as well. In the project team were Sofia Lundkvist, Sandra Åslund and Cecilia Chavez-Sanchez, who from March 2010, also was employed in YWCB. Madlena Kvaratskhelia has been our main contact of Avangard during the year the project was carried through.

The overall aim of YWCB was to develop and strengthen Avangard and Stjärnjouren as organizations and to improve our work to enhance the position of women and girls in society in our respective countries. Our exchange of experiences is intended to benefit both organizations and, hopefully, to be extended to other similar organizations.

The purpose of all our preventive activities, as well as those of Avangard, is to make girls and young women aware of their rights and opportunities to take an active part in society, to encourage

them to look after their own interests and pursue their demands. Both Stjärnjouren and Avangard see a link between having control over your own body (in the sense that it is you and no one else that decides over your body) and the opportunity to take an active part in society. Together with two volunteers, I visited Avangard in Gali, Abkhazia, Georgia, for a week in October 2009. On our road to Gali, we made a quick stop in Kiev, to meet up with representatives of the Ukrainian WGO Femen. In March 2010, three members of Avangard visited Stjärnjouren in Stockholm, also during a week. In July 2010, a summer camp with participants from both countries was held outside Stockholm.

Grateful acknowledgement for careful and close proofreading goes to Martin Krantz. We want to thank Kvinna till Kvinna, and especially Christine Bender and Cecilia Rosing, for essential information, encouragement and practical help. We also want to express our appreciation for a lecture, held by the well known expert on Caucasia, Torgny Hinnemo. To the funder of this project, The Swedish Board of Youth Affairs, we are of course very grateful for making YWCB possible. The major funder of the summer camp was SKR, to whom we further are very grateful. Finally, but not least, we thank Avangard and all the warm people we met during our stay in Abkhazia and Georgia, for sharing their experiences with us and making us feel most welcomed. Especially, we want to thank Maia Kvaratskhelia, who invited us to her wedding. For us who had the opportunity to visit Avangard in Gali, the journey was a life-time experience.

Linnéa Bruno
Stockholm, August 2010

Chapter 1: A Brief History

Why have we written this book? What is a WGO? What are our roots and our social and ideological context? In this first chapter we try to give some short answers to these questions, and introduce the reader to our work and experiences.

Introduction – our point of departure

In Sweden, women's shelters were first established on voluntary basis alone, in the early 1970s. Voluntary work is still of decisive importance among most shelters, although the shelters have become more professionalised in different aspects and, also, finally given more financial and thus human resources. This movement - which is part of a broader movement for gender equality - emerged as a response to society's inability to acknowledge domestic violence as a serious problem concerning the society as a whole, and the lack of support to the survivors of this violence.

In the middle of the 1990s, similar associations, but now with young women and girls as a primary target group (often in close cooperation with the shelters) came into existence. Stjärnjouren is an independent organization (not belonging to, or in close cooperation with any shelter), but part of the Nordic women's shelter movement. This social movement has moved from a radical and explicitly left-wing position in the 1970s, to a position from where it is today more inclined to also recognize the importance of power structures related to other categories than those of class and gender, and further, has moved towards what some would label as a more "queer position". The latter implies that ideological concepts such as *sisterhood* as well as *separatism* as the inevitable method or condition for empowerment and emancipation are debated within the movement. Please see the last chapter of this book, Femipedia, for further comments on key concepts, concerning women's rights and feminism.

What is a WGO?

In this book, we use the concept *women's and girls' support and empowerment organizations* to describe the movement we are engaged in. WGOs can look very different, both in defined goals and the defined means to remedy them. Some WGOs offer a minimum of activities, such as direct crisis management for sexually abused women and girls, while others can offer a wide range of activities from health care to courses on driving. For some, influencing the public opinion is the overall purpose, while for others this is not even on the agenda. These kinds of organizations are not just any women's or girls' groups. A WGO acknowledges the struggles and great efforts of former generations of women demanding the same civil rights as men; the right to vote, to education, and later, to day care for their children, for equal salaries, for the right to bodily integrity and an ending of men's violence against women, children and other men, etc - thus defining itself as a part of the global movement for gender equality.

Some of us embrace the notion of feminism and has a more explicit way of discussing gender issues as rooted in a conflict of power, primarily between the sexes. Others prefer to talk about the vision of gender equality and stress the possibilities of mutual understanding, cooperation and consensus, through education, and speak of more moderate changes. For many, these two different points of view can both be held, but vary depending on the situation.

The two sister organizations of *Young Women Crossing Borders*

Avangard is a NGO working for women's rights and health issues, situated in Gali, in the disputed territory Abkhazia. The organization was founded in the year 2000 and has been supported by Kvinna till Kvinna since 2003. Avangard is engaged in a wide range of activities – providing professional medical and psychological help, giving talks at schools, giving workshops and arranging summer camps. Moreover, the organization gives courses

in English and computer skills and is actively working on conflict solving. Avangard, being one of the most active NGOs in the region, has drawn attention to the problem with domestic violence in a local report (Avangard, 2006), and contributes greatly, by communicating women's rights and giving all this support, to the improvement of the situation of all the people in their local society. Young women and girls are, however, the primary focus of the organization.

The Swedish NGO Stjärnjouren is a women's and girls' support and empowerment organization, or WGO, founded in 2003. The aim is to support and empower teenage girls and to create positive environments for them. The activities have been designed to strengthen the self-esteem of teenage girls and to give them a forum of their own. We do this by holding discussion groups, giving talks and workshops in schools and other places, arranging summer camps, and more. Further, Stjärnjouren provides an opportunity for contact by telephone, chat and email for teenage girls seeking support or looking for someone to talk to. The WGO is a member of SKR, a Swedish umbrella organization for women's shelter organizations and young women support and empowerment organizations, and is deeply involved in networking and the influencing of public opinion.

About the book

In addition to study trips, summer camp and joint workshops, the production of this book is another of the main objectives of the cooperation project YWCB. The authors are Sofia Lundkvist, Cecilia Chavez-Sanchez, Sandra Åslund, and Linnéa Bruno, who is also the editor of the book (and co-author of Stjärnjouren's previous publication). Our book should be seen as a result of the joint efforts of the participants of YWCB, but a point of departure is the previous Stjärnjouren publication of 2008, which was produced within the framework of the project *Att stärka (To Empower)* and edited by project manager Sara Bäckström. The 2008 publication

was a result of the gathered experiences from a range of individuals and WGOs in Sweden.

This new publication, however, has a wider scope, and takes into account young women's experiences from Sweden, Abkhazia/Georgia, and also some from Ukraine. Some parts are selected from the previous publication, but rewritten and adapted by the authors. The book is written in English and in addition translated into Russian, to be utilized in several post-Soviet countries. On behalf of Avangard, Madlena Kvaratskhelia has provided comments. We hope it is possible for organizations and individuals working for the same goals that we do, but in a variety of political, economical, social and cultural circumstances, to find use in the thoughts and recommendations below, despite all the differences between our respective countries. Our book is a first draft, hopefully to be updated and improved after evaluation.

Disposition

After a short introductory chapter, chapter 2 focuses on organizational aspects, such as how to define and delegate tasks, education for the volunteers, funding, and more. A basic understanding of gender based violence and how to support survivors of this violence, is the theme of chapter 3 and 4. Chapter 5 discusses the goals and methods of WGOs more broadly, primarily with examples from the Swedish context. Issues concerning leadership are outlined in chapter 6, and chapter 7 focuses on how to communicate sexuality with adolescent girls from a women's rights perspective. In chapter 8 are presented a few examples of activities that both Avangard and Stjärnjouren carry through on a regular basis. Issues on networking, marketing and influencing the public opinion are brought up in chapter 9. A limited sample of our favourite exercises is presented in chapter 10, and finally, chapter 11 is a "Femipedia" – a collection of essential feminist concepts with explanations and comments.

Chapter 2: Building a WGO

To be engaged in the world wide movement for gender equality and for a society free from violence, can be one of the most inspiring things you do in your life. Struggling against sexism and providing support for survivors of gender based violence is often rewarding work, but it is also very demanding. Initially, in this chapter on building a WGO, we would like to remind you – volunteer or employee – to beware of too high expectations and demands, towards one another, but not least towards yourself. This chapter is about the organizational aspect - on how to build and maintain a WGO. In these following pages we try to list the most essential alternatives that could be useful in your work. Please note that the alternatives listed are mere suggestions and in no way exhaustive.

Perhaps the problems you identify seem overwhelming - so much seems necessary to do and you do not know where to begin or how to limit the area of your activities. Begin with yourselves. What knowledge, skills or other kind of resources do you have in the group, which can be useful in your WGO? Let yourselves be inspired by each other. Be positive, but realistic, and be aware of the risk of setting goals that are too high in the beginning. We strongly advise you to cooperate with similar organizations. If there is some kind of network of WGOs in your geographical area – do contact them to see if you can fit in and how they can support.

The ideological foundation of the WGO

There is no exhaustive check list on how to build a WGO and there is no specific order to come about when doing so, except for one thing; to clearly state the ideological foundations of the WGO. It can also be called aim description, purpose of the WGO, fundamental values, the soul of the WGO, amongst other things. The ideological foundation should be clearly stated in a document to be presented and used by the WGO when in contact with other organizations, with authorities, with the media, and when first

meeting with a future employee or volunteer. It should be clear to everybody working in and for the WGO what the ideological foundation is, and that everybody needs to adhere to it. To change it, is of course possible, but this should not happen often and or taken lightly upon. The process of formulating the ideological foundation should involve everybody affected, i.e. the whole WGO. It could be very short and not so detailed.

***Example of an
ideological foundation:***

"We are a politically independent, non-religious, non-profit feminist organization. Our aim is to support and empower women and girls and to create positive environments for them. Our vision is a society free from violence, based on gender equality – the same rights and possibilities for all humans, regardless of sex. We welcome pro-feminist men to certain areas of our activities and we strive to cooperate with other organizations that are working for the same vision as we are."

Policies

You could also add to the ideological foundation over time, when the needs arise, by specifying certain policies for certain situations. For example, how to come about if there is an internal conflict between two volunteers. Should the WGO offer mediation? Is it okay to exclude a certain member of the WGO from some activities just because another member cannot work with this person? What is expected and accepted from the volunteers, what responsibilities do they have? How are the members of the board nominated and elected? These things are mere examples of what the WGO decisive body needs to think of and be

prepared to handle if problematic situations arise. Policies for how to go about when recruiting new volunteers and new staff can also be useful.

Organizational structure and delegating tasks

Identify and delegate the tasks – one person should not do it all. The leading body can vary and also change over time. Some WGOs choose to have a board, where all the board members are nominated and elected by all the members on a yearly basis. Others chose to have a flat structure, with no hierarchy what so ever, where every decision is taken unanimously by the whole participating collective. Others have chosen to have the staff run the organization. A structure with one or very few non-elected persons that have all the power and the whole duty of the WGOs execution on their shoulders may not be recommended, though. An elected board and working groups with certain responsibilities can be a good way to delegate tasks and to make it easier for members to participate.

Examples of tasks are: to recruit new volunteers, to arrange outreaching activities, to give support to support seeking survivors of violence or abuse, to coordinate this work, to supervise volunteers, to arrange introduction and further education, to network with authorities and other organizations, to handle marketing, administration, funding, and more.

Education for the volunteers

What is reasonable to expect from our volunteers and what could we give them in order to do so? A compulsory introduction and voluntary further education on a regular basis is recommended. The purpose of education is to secure that all members possesses the knowledge they need to be able to engage in this kind of work. Education is fun and can also serve as a reward for the volunteers. The content of the introduction, as well as of further education, therefore vary with the fields of activities of the WGO. For giving support to survivors of violence, there should definitely be special training offered. It is also highly recommended for the task of leading workshops or discussion groups. Subjects can be gender and feminism, leadership, conflict-solving, aim and tasks of the organization. There should be elements of self-reflection. Joint

further education is a good way to cooperate with similar organizations and learn from each others' experiences.

Internal communication

Effective, clear and immediate internal communication is crucial. Information-sharing is about making everyone know what they need to know in order to do what they have to do. There should be a build-up over time of, for example, contact-information of all WGO members, co-operation partners, media etc., and it needs to be clear to everybody (who needs that information) where to find it. Here, the alternatives are many. Contact-information could be written down on a sheet of paper stored in the office or in a document on the internet; it could be posted on a blog, stored in a mobile phone etc.

In Stjärnjouren, we use one large list of e-mail addresses for all our members, and several smaller lists for the different working groups and one for the board. The board is obligated to read the messages in the infomail-inbox, answer it, or forward it to the right person. On our homepage, we have an internal part that you need a keyword to get access to. Here we gather documents on policies, annual reports, notes from our meetings etc. Choose whatever option that suits you best. The only thing that should be avoided is for essential information to be stored in someone's private phone, papers or computer.

Continuity

Many WGOs are lead by young people, on a voluntary basis. When the most committed members find full-time employment, have babies, move to another region to work or study, and leave the organization because of this, it can be hard to keep up the spirit and the good work. It takes time and a lots of hard work to build a stable ground for the WGO, so it is a shame if the organization suddenly dies just because of the absence of a couple of colorful and strong leaders. In order to keep valuable knowledge and experience

in the organization when a key person leaves, you need to write down and in other ways substantiate your work, i.e. what you have learned through the years and the progress the WGO continuously make. This book in which we offer a collection of experiences that we want to share with others working for the same goals that we do, can serve as an example. It may not be necessary to write a whole book, of course.

When a person does not fit your WGO

It is important that anyone working with giving support to others is not in deep crisis very unstable, or in great need of support herself. Some personal characteristics may further be more suitable than others, for working with these issues, but we should of course strive to be open-minded and inclusive when people want to contribute. If, however, it is obvious that a member of your WGO is not ready to give support or to lead, the board or those responsible need to discuss what to do. Problems may be visible already during the interview or during the introduction course.

If someone is very unstable, constantly seeking conflict, or if she is unable to put the participants interests before her own and is using the group to process her own problems – do not hesitate to ask her to take a pause, naturally doing so in a respectful way. If a member is seriously in breach of the agreed ideological foundation, and acts in ways that hurt people and ruin the good reputation of the WGO, it is not acceptable. To initiate joint manifestations with political parties if the WGO has decided to be politically independent can, for example, harm the organization. See chapter 6 on leadership for more thoughts on conflicts and group interaction.

Funding

The resources at the WGOs disposal vary, both as to geographical spread, and over time. In some areas, the WGOs are supported by local authorities, organizations and politicians, while other WGOs struggle because these agencies are opposed to their work. The staff

at the WGOs can also differ; sometimes everybody are paid workers, but more often the WGO is run on voluntary work alone, and in many cases there is a mix of both. We cannot give you exact information on the best ways to get funds for your WGO, as the kind of support that is available differs so much from country to country. Some advises on how to write a successful application, you find however, listed below:

Give a short background to the problem that your project is intended to address. If you have access to some statistics or other kind of research to add weight to your definition of the situation – use it. Decision-makers love concrete figures.

Try to be as clear as possible when describing the aim and the goals of your project. The *aim* is more comprehensive than the goals and can be, for example, to give young people tools to strengthen the bodily integrity and to interact with each other with greater respect. The *concrete goals* can be to give fifteen workshops on gender equality, bodily integrity and mutuality, to adolescent people of both sexes, during a period of six months. Explain how you intend to evaluate the project (by a survey addressed the experiences of the participants for example).

Discuss your ideas with each other, and do not hesitate to give the administrator a call. Be friendly, positive and convincing. Do not be modest – explain why your organization is the right one to target this problem. Ask the administrator for feedback – what would make this project even better?

Read the application form carefully. Make sure you do not miss any important details. Some funders only finance projects that are innovative. If this is the case, make sure to explain in a clear and convincing way your unique method to target the problem presented.

Add to your application any kind of enclosures that you might have. This can be a recommendation letter from a cooperation-partner, the local authorities, teachers or others. Add the WGO's annual report and other suitable documents to show your reliability and the good work you do.

Try to think of obstacles that may occur and possible risks. Explain in detail how you will overcome these problems, so that the administrator understands that you have thought of everything and are well prepared to carry the project through.

Suggest a budget that is not too detailed – this will save you some trouble later. “Administration” can be anything, for example, so mind that you have some margins. Also when it comes to budget, you should not be too modest. It is the best ideas that get support, not the cheapest ones.

Interview with Madlena Kvaratskhelia, project manager, Avangard

What impelled you to start the organization?

– During the war between Abkhazia and Georgia in 1992-1993, when Abkhazia broke out from Georgia, me and my family and over 200 000 other people fled over to the Georgian side of the border. In 2003, after 10 years, me and my sister, moved back to Gali. Those first few years were very difficult. We had to start from scratch. Everything was ruined and destroyed; there were no jobs, the economy was bad even though many people had returned and decided to live there. We saw so many stressful faces and people without hope in their eyes, especially our mates, young girls, women and children who were in need of support. My sister and I already had experience from working as volunteers in the women NGOs in the town Zugdidi, and also had some contacts with international organizations. Together with several other young women, we decided to start Avangard. The first project was a ten days summer camp for Abkhaz and Georgian young girls.

What is the main problem among the young girls you meet?

– Their freedom of movement is extremely restricted, as well as their opportunity to make their own decisions, to have a free choice and live independently. Women in general are in a difficult situation, not least within their own marriage. Women's problems are not given much attention in an area with so many other social and economic difficulties. Violence against women exists in almost all families. It is quite common that the men are unemployed, that they drink alcohol and take drugs, and then often get violent towards women and children.

– We also have problems with *Bride kidnappings*. Bride kidnapping means that a girl is kidnapped by a man who rapes her, often to force her into marriage. It is common that the girl "chooses" to remain with the man who has kidnapped her. It is difficult to change deep traditions of a woman's virtue. When the girl once has moved into a new home, it is shameful for

her to return to her family. Her family and relatives often do not want her to come back either. We try to inform the girls about the absurdity of these old traditional values and in this way contribute to a change in attitudes towards the problem.

In the breakaway republic of Abkhazia there is no legislation on men's violence against women. Our laws are from Soviet times. Our organization has a crisis centre with a hotline where you can go, we have medical assistance and psychological support, but we have no legal representation. There is no law and therefore it is extremely difficult for a woman who has been subjected to violence to do anything.

What makes Avangard so important?

– Besides the crisis centre, Avangard has for more than eight years been implementing educational, health and informational consulting programs, seminars, trainings and summer camps, in which we are involving women and young girls.

– These programs and activities are aimed at helping overcome stresses, fears of various kinds, making them more active and independent, improving their living conditions and raising awareness of their own human rights. Avangard also works on conflict prevention. Different ethnic groups work together in our organization and we arrange training courses in conflict management for girls from different ethnic groups. So, for women and young girls, we are clearly important in many ways.

What was it like in the beginning when you first founded the organization?

– It was difficult since authorities, as well as the local society, were sceptical to our initiatives. It was not easy to attract international organizations and donors to help us overcome the existing problems. So, for a long time we worked exclusively on a voluntary basis; organizing charitable concerts, distributing leaflets and booklets about women's and children's rights, and so on. It took some time for us to become recognized and accepted as an important and necessary organization in the region. But slowly and with patience we made our way forward.

How do you recruit and attract new volunteers?

– It has been positively easy for us to attract new volunteers, especially young girls. This, above all, since we have managed to create programs and activities that appeal to them: possibilities to use computer services, participate in international and local trainings and seminars organised by other interesting organizations.

What is the best thing about the work you do?

– To have a chance and an opportunity to improve women's and young girls' conditions and life in a very unique and difficult region.

What is the hardest part of the work you do? And how do you try to deal with these difficulties?

– Protection of women's rights, especially survivors of violence, is indeed challenging work in the absence of any kind of protection mechanisms and laws. We try to use our own contacts, to appeal to other local and international organizations to get them to provide the assistance they can so that we can minimize the abuse of women's rights as much as possible.

Is there something that could ease the work that you do?

– More attention from international organizations, society and government, the establishment of safe environments, protection mechanisms, and stability in the region would clearly benefit the working situation for all of us.

What role does Avangard play in your own life?

– I devote most of my time, energy and everything else to my work with Avangard – it is a vital part of my life. And it has given me a lot of experience, knowledge and skills, especially from working in emergency situations. It has also given me a lot of contacts, the opportunity of networking and meeting with other women's organizations. Furthermore, it has given me the opportunity to travel abroad and participate in interesting and fruitful programs and seminars. All this I get from my work in Avangard.

What are your future plans and dreams – what would your organization be like in a few years?

– I hope and believe that Avangard will have developed in many ways: organizationally, financially and structurally. This, so that we can offer even more women and young girls the possibility to strengthen themselves economically and in that way make them more independent and able to protect their rights.

Chapter 3: Understanding Gender Based Violence

To be able to live free from violence is one of the basic human rights. Sadly though, violence is a common part of the life of many women, men and children. No-one ever categorically states that women are never violent towards men, children and other women. The overwhelming majority of sexual and physical violence, however, is committed by men against women, children and other men. Thus, in this brief introduction to the subject, we focus on men's violence against women in heterosexual relations.

Men are not more aggressive than women by nature. Nor is their "need of sex" greater. As our conceptions of masculinity and femininity are socially and culturally constructed - as well as our ideas on what constitutes human nature and a good society - we can change them. A world without gender based violence is possible. Men's violence against women is an expression of the unequal power structures between men and women. Activists of both sexes all over the world struggle for gender equality, strive to uncover male violence and are campaigning to end it. As WGOs, we are a part of that worldwide movement for human rights.

Different forms of gender based violence

The violence can be emotional, physical or sexual. Sometimes a woman has only been subjected to one of these forms, while in other cases she has experienced all three on the same occasion. Regardless of this, the consequences of the different forms of violence are similar: the woman loses control over her own life and feels degraded as a human being.

Emotional abuse is a means of control. It is more commonly described as abuse rather than violence, as it reflects on the control used to maintain power over the woman/child. Perpetrators use many ways to maintain power and control, such as keeping the woman isolated by not giving her money, not letting her go outside

the house, not allowing her to use the phone, preventing her to meet family and friends etc. The perpetrator also degrade the woman, for example by making her feel stupid, dirty, ugly, humiliating her in front of her children. Emotional abuse can also include threats of killing her, her children, family or friends, committing suicide, leaving her without money, etc.

Physical violence is when someone causes harm to someone else's body, such as beating, cutting, punching or kicking. Statistically, one third of all women in the world are at least once in their lifetime victims of serious violence from a man they are (or used to be) in a relation with.

Sexual violence. Throughout the world, one out of three women has experienced

Avangard's report on domestic violence

Avangard and another WGOs in Abkhazia, Alashara, conducted the initial assessment of the understanding of women's rights over their bodies (with focus on domestic violence and reproductive health) among women and the general population in Abkhazia in 2006. This initiative, supported by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), was the first of its kind in Abkhazia and made an effort to develop baseline data to be used in raising awareness in society, and in particular among youth, about women's rights over their bodies. Twelve focus group discussions were carried out, fifteen interviews with experts, and three in-depth interviews concerning domestic violence and reproductive health. In addition, 300 questionnaires were handed out to the visitors of women's consultations. One of the results of the study showed, that only 2 percent of all the women interviewed had never been subjected to violence of any kind.

sexual violence. In some countries, like South Africa, the figures are even worse. Rape and sexual abuse is not about lust. For example; rape is used in wars as a form of weapon and control, heterosexual men rape other men in prison as a means of control and punishment. When a man forces himself on a woman against her will, it is

violence. Furthermore, when men take advantage of women who are not able to give consent due to being ill, too drunk or drugged, it is also violence. No one has the right over someone else's body, a husband does not have "the right" to have sex with his wife, and if he does have sex with her without her consent, it is rape.

If one gets the question: what would you do if you were in an unsafe situation and about to get raped? Most people might answer: I would scream, kick, run and call the police. In reality, this kind of defence is rather rare. Most victims of sexual abuse become petrified, unable to move, speak and defend themselves.

Specifics of child abuse

The main difference between women and child survivors is that the children may not know what is right or wrong. For example, a girl or a boy who have been sexually abused may not understand that they are being abused and not realise this until they are adults. In fact, a child may even feel sexually aroused by being touched on their genitals. Nonetheless, as the child is not able to give their informed consent, it is abuse. In support work you may meet women who seek support to deal with abuse which happened to them when they were children.

Children who are exposed to domestic (and gender based) violence have in Sweden, in recent years, been acknowledged as victims of crime, and some important policy changes have recently been made in the Nordic countries on the basis of this redefinition. The knowledge of how "witnessing" violence – we from now on say "to be subjected to" – can traumatize and in different ways affect children, is increasing and have opened up for new understandings among scholars, social workers and the police. There is still, however, a long way to go before all survivors get the support they need.

Who commits gender based violence?

On the contrary of what many people might think, the common rapist is not a madman who attacks women in dark allies. Although this occurs, most of gender related violence is committed by men in close relation to the woman. It can, for example, be her husband, former husband, boyfriend, ex-boyfriend, brother, father, colleague, boss. etcetera. It occurs among all social groups and classes of society and in most cases the rapist and the victim know each other. When someone you trust does this to you, it can make it even harder to understand it as a crime. To blame oneself is thus a common reaction.

Normalization and justifying of abuse

Perpetrators might justify their behaviour by saying “it is your fault”, “this is what men normally do”, “it’s because I love you”, or “it’s good for you”. Perpetrators might use occasional apologies such as buying her gifts, being affectionate and kind, letting her see friends, doing housework. This behaviour may give the woman hope that things will get better and that he will stop abusing her. However, even if he would stop and behave nicely, the mistrust and the threat that it could happen again (hence the emotional abuse) remains. The process, in which a woman gradually accepts the perpetrator’s definitions of her and the situation, and in which the violence becomes a “normal” part of her everyday life, is known as the *normalization process*. Isolation plays an important role in this process.

Victim or survivor?

Those who are in abusive situations or have experienced abuse are often referred to as “victims”. The definition of a victim is a person who is trapped, harmed, injured, someone who accepts that the failure is one’s own, (when it is not). However, the definition of a survivor is someone who is living or lasting longer than others, someone who has succeeded, got by and developed. As such, the definition of a survivor seems more powerful than the definition of a

victim. The victim feels helpless and accept blame, but the survivor stands up for her rights and demonstrates her strength in spite of her fears, one could say.

Women and girls who contact the organization are survivors rather than victims, since they have already taken one step closer to a life free from abuse by asking for support. Additionally, there are more possibilities to empower a survivor than a victim, since it already implies that a survivor has some power that can be strengthen. Your role as a support worker is to enable women to empower themselves.

Reactions on violence and different coping strategies

When a woman or child has experienced gender based violence she or he will, sooner or later, react on this, mentally and/or physically. She will most likely adopt coping strategies to enable her to survive. Sometimes these coping strategies can be unhealthy or even dangerous in themselves. However, remember that these strategies enable the woman or child to survive and you should respect them, although not necessarily encourage them. Below is a list (however not complete) of different reactions and coping strategies to gender based violence.

- *Posttraumatic stress disorder* – is the overall term for the psychological state of a person who have experienced severe trauma, such as experiencing or witnessing childhood or adult physical, emotional or sexual abuse.
- *Black outs, memory loss*
- *Alcohol and drugs* – the survivor uses drugs and alcohol to ease the pain.

- *Promiscuity* – the survivor have multiple and different sexual contacts that she may not enjoy in the belief that she will forget about the assault.
- *Sexual problems* – the survivor have problems getting sexually aroused or having an orgasm.
- *Physical problems* – the survivor can be impaired due to violence
- *Low self-esteem* – the survivor feels degraded and has lost all trust in herself and feels as if she cannot accomplish anything or be independent.
- *Eating disorders* – the survivor might practice self-starvation and/or binge eating. Women suffering from eating disorders may also use forced vomiting and abuse of laxatives.
- *Isolation* – the survivor does not leave her home other than on rare occasions. She might also stop seeing friends and family, going to work or school, or engaging in social activities.
- *Depression* – feeling down and hopeless.
- *Paranoia* – the survivor has severe anxiety and fear of people wanting to harm her.
- *Anxiety* – feeling worried over things that may/may not be a reason to worry about.
- *Ignorance* – the survivor tries to ignore and forget what has happened to her.

- *Guilt* – the survivor is blaming herself of the abuse that has happened to her.
- *Anger* – immense anger directed towards herself, her perpetrator, or the whole society.
- *Sorrow* – feelings of sorrow for what has happened to her.
- *Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)* - a mental disorder characterized by intrusive thoughts that produce anxiety, by repetitive behaviours aimed at reducing anxiety, or by combinations of such thoughts (obsessions) and behaviours (compulsions). The symptoms of this anxiety disorder can be repetitive showering. These symptoms can be alienating and time-consuming, and often cause severe emotional and economic loss.
- *Self-harm* – deliberate, self-inflicted harm without suicidal intent. Self harming can be self poisoning, cutting, burning and eating disorders.
- *Flashbacks* - reliving the trauma over and over, including physical symptoms like a racing heart or sweating. Different factors can trigger flashbacks such as people, music, smells, places, situations, etc

Chapter 4: How to Support

Giving support can be challenging, but also most rewarding. If a woman discloses to you that she has experienced violence or sexual abuse, it means that she feels safe with you and trusts you. Your support can make a difference and enable her to move on with her life. Every case of abuse differs and so do the needs of support. In this chapter we explore the different techniques of giving support.

Violence often removes the sense of choice and control from victims and undermines their power. When supporting a woman or child who has survived gender based violence, it is important that we do not take any more power away from her or him. When giving support, we must not forget that we are in a position of greater power than the support seeking woman. We should try not to reinforce this unequal relation, but treat her most respectfully and make her feel welcomed.

Preparations

You do not need to be a therapist or psychologist, to be able to give support. The difference between support and a therapy session, is that focus in the first case, is on giving the woman seeking support in the present situation. The purpose is to let her be heard and seen and to share what has happened without being diagnosed. Therapy, on the other hand, has a higher ambition of changing ways of thinking and behaviour. If you regard her problems as so psychologically complex, that she is in need of more support than you can give, see if you can refer her to more professional help.

Before you have a support session with a survivor, it is crucial to be prepared and have some prior knowledge about gender based violence and how to give support. It is recommended that you have completed workshops to feel secure and prepared prior to taking on the first support session. If possible, let your first support session be co-supported with a more experienced worker.

Remember not to take on the sole responsibility of the woman's life. She is the one to make decisions and not you. For example, if she chooses to go back to her abusive husband, it is her decision and not yours. Also remember that even if her situation seems hopeless there are most often also positive and good aspects of her life. And further, changes can take time. Perhaps she is not ready to take the great steps today, but some things you said might have planted a seed that will grow, and be decisive later.

Different forms of support

There are different forms of support and the members of the organization have to agree on what forms you are able to offer survivors of gender based violence.

- *By phone.* You can have a support line to be open at specific times. If possible, it is beneficial to have a specific phone number for support calls, as the person who answers should be prepared to give support.
- *By email or chat.* The woman or girl contacts the organization by chat or email.
- *Face to face support.* The woman or girl meet with the support worker.
- *Group support.* Women or girls who all have experienced gender based violence meet together to share their experiences and support each other together with two support workers.

The support model in practice

Keep four things in mind:

1. Listen –not only with your ears

It is very hard for a woman or a girl to disclose that she has experienced violence. It is therefore very important for the support

worker to listen. There are many techniques to improve your listening skills. Show that you are listening. Always try to have eye contact to show that you are there for her and that are prepared to listen. Sit opposite the woman to enable eye contact. Try to have a neutral body language, i.e. do not sit with your arms crossed which may signal a rather defensive approach or lean forward which might signal the opposite. Reflect upon what she is saying by paraphrasing and summarizing.

2. Believe

Women who have experienced violence often meet people who do not believe them. Many atrocious stories are sometimes hard to grasp. Your role as a support worker is not to judge whether a woman's/girl's story is true or not. Remember: if you, as a support worker, do not believe her, who will?

3. Reassure

"It is not your fault." Many women and girls blame themselves for being abused. The support worker plays an important role in reassuring the woman/girl that no one deserves to be abused, and no action can justify violence and abuse.

4. Empower

"You are always the expert of your own life". As a support worker there are always many things you don't know about the women who seek support. You can therefore never give advice or present options on what she should do with her life. Furthermore, to tell someone what she should do, can be disempowering rather than empowering and it can lead to dependency rather than to growth and self-sufficiency. By explaining and "demystifying" the support process and encouraging the woman to see that she is the expert of her own life, she is less likely to regard the support worker as an expert with all the answers who will tell her what to do.

However, you can give her information when it is appropriate in order to assist her in exploring her options and encourage her in making her own choices and taking control over whatever aspects of her life she can. On the other hand, if it is a young girl who is seeking support, you should consider any child protection laws that may apply. If the child's health and well-being is in danger you should consult your colleagues at the organization in order to take measures to protect the girl.

Structure of the support

Starting. If it is the first session, set out rules of the support, elucidate what the support seeking woman can expect from the organization and set a time limit. Be patient and do not force the woman/girl to disclose something that she is not ready to share. It may take many support sessions (if ever) before she is able to disclose in detail what has happened to her. Besides, it is how she feels which is important and not the details of what has happened to her. Support workers are not the police and do not need to know every detail of the abuse and how and when it happened. What is essential is how the violence affects the woman and her life and how she can be able to live and move on with her life. You can start by asking how she learned about the organization.

Supporting.

The ground rule is to listen and to make the woman/girl feel safe in a way that enables her to talk. You can ask her questions, but make sure they are not leading or intrusive questions. Avoid why-questions but rather use open-ended questions.

Show her that you are listening by reflecting, summarizing, paraphrasing upon what she is telling you. Reuse key words that she is using, if she said she is petrified, use the same term saying "You said you are petrified, are you able to tell me more about this?" Also summarise and paraphrase, in your own words, on what she has been telling you. This is to make sure that you understand, it

also allows her to correct you if you misunderstood. It also helps the survivor to understand her own situation better by hearing her own story from somebody else.

Try not to talk too much. You are there to listen and to give support. Also, talking too much can signal that you are nervous.

Furthermore, you should never talk about yourself and your personal experiences. If the woman, for example, asks you if you have ever been raped or abused you should be careful of disclosing this and instead reply that you are there to listen to her and that it is her time, not yours. In a support session there might be uncomfortable

silence, i.e the survivor sits silent for longer periods of time. In these situations, please be patient. The survivor will speak when she feels ready to, and you must not break the silence just because you feel uncomfortable. If the silence seems to become too painful for the survivor, you may ask an open-ended question based on what you discussed before the silence. Also, please note that non-verbal communication can be just as effective as verbal.

Respect and recognize (but do not necessarily encourage) her survival techniques and how these have helped her survive. These survival techniques, however, may not now be helpful in her life. Focus on her as an individual and not as a mother, sister, wife, caregiver etc, to enable her to focus on herself and not her obligations and responsibilities.

Ending. Mind to leave a few minutes before the support session is over to talk about something else, something the woman/girl enjoy,

Examples of useful questions:

*How did you find out about
our organization?*

Are you able to tell me more about...?

How did that make you feel?

What options do you have?

What other support do you have?

How do you feel about him?

How does this affect you?

What do you need?

etc. This is to make the women/girl feel grounded and able to leave without feeling too distressed.

Rules, boundaries and guidelines

Before starting offering support to survivors of gender-based violence the boundaries should be clear. This is to assure the quality of the support offered and to keep the support workers safe. Rules, boundaries and guidelines are the corner stones of the support. They are for you to lean on and to feel safe with when giving support to survivors.

At the woman's or girl's first support session, see to that she understands what the organization can and cannot do for her and what she can and cannot expect from the support and the organization. Also set out the rules, as for example: How long is one support session? How many support sessions is she allowed having? Are men and boys welcomed to seek support? Are men/boys allowed to visit? An organization that offers support to survivors of gender based violence is responsible for ensuring a women-only safe place. This is because you can never be sure of whom the perpetrator is. Perhaps the brother is the perpetrator and he comes to the organization saying that he wants to talk to his sister and it turns out after you have let him inside that he wants to hurt and punish her for seeking contact with you.

Your organization should consider what would happen if a woman brings for example her male friend or her brother to the WGO. Is it safe for the woman? Is it safe for other women visiting the organization? Potential problems with a women-only organization, is if for example a biological man who defines himself as a woman seeks support? Should you welcome him/her? What determines who is a man and who is a woman? Another problem is if a woman seeks shelter at the organization and brings her son. Is she then welcomed? How old is the boy? Can he be a threat to other women/girls?

Confidentiality

The support seeking woman or girl must be confident in that the information she discloses will be kept within the organization. Every support worker should give a statement where she promises to keep the principal of confidentiality of the women who contact the WGO and that of the women who work there. You must never discuss names of the support seeking women, past or present, outside the organization. Ensure that any written sensitive information is kept safe in case of burglary. Also, keep the address of the WGO confidential, it should be given out on a known basis only. In addition, never disclose personal information about workers (such as phone numbers, her marital status, spare time interests, relations, address, etc) to service users unless the support worker asks you to. This is to ensure the safety of the women/girls as well as that of the worker. In some rare circumstances, as for example when a woman discloses that she is abusing a child, the confidentiality can be waved. However, this should be a decision made by the organization and not by the individual worker.

Where and how

The support sessions should take place in a safe, anonymous, non-judgemental, and preferably women-only space, for example at the organization. The session should not be interrupted. No one should be able to eavesdrop on what you are talking about. Turn off mobile phones, TV, radio or anything else that may be a distraction. Set up a time limit. This is for the advantage of both the woman or girl who is seeking support and the support worker. 45 minutes up to an hour is recommended.

Support yourself

Giving support to women and girls who are disclosing violence can be exhausting and disheartening. Do you have the ability to get support yourself, in order to ventilate and talk about what you have heard and get guidance if needed?

Group support

As support workers, you should have a safe place where you can share your experiences and get advice and encouragement from colleagues. These meetings can serve as forum to share the highs and lows of your personal life. Moreover, this is an opportunity to identify any issues arising and provide everyone with important information. Support meetings are very helpful in facilitating a good and healthy team spirit.

Individual support

Every support worker can have one person within the WGO who she can call or meet when needed. Like in other support sessions - set up a time-limit. As colleagues, you can take turns and for example give each other 20 minutes each just to brief what is on your mind. The organization should actively encourage support workers to take the opportunity to seek individual support when needed.

To discuss in the organization:

What form of support shall we offer victims of gender based violence?

Who in the organization should be authorized to give support?

What training or education should the support worker have completed before giving support?

What measures should the organization take if a girl's life is in danger?

Are men and boys welcomed to seek support?

Are men and boys allowed to visit the organization?

If a survivor needs shelter, can the organization provide for this?

Chapter 5: Goals and Methods

In this chapter, we focus on the all-embracing goals we have set up in our WGO Stjärnjouren, and the methods that we use to reach these goals. Use this as an example of how you can define your own goals that are suitable for your organization. If we do not have a clear idea of what the organization is doing and why, our activities can become counterproductive. Not that we have to analyse each moment, but it can be really useful to ask ourselves now and then if we are on the right track.

The three goals that Stjärnjouren (and 60 similar organizations in Sweden) strive to reach in our outreaching, preventive work are:

Raise awareness of structures of power,

Bring up norm-critical attitudes,

Empower each individual.

In some activities, we emphasize on raising awareness, and in others, empowerment is more important, but the three goals are connected, and serve as guidance for all our work.

Structures of power

Women and girls are discriminated against and abused all around the world, in all areas of the society, even in so called “gender equal societies”. Men own 99 percent of all what is possible to own (money, land, companies, resources and so on) and are responsible for 98 percent of all the violence in the world. To claim this is not an ideological standpoint, it is just stating the obvious. To say that this is wrong and should be changed is, however, an ideological and political standpoint, known as *feminism*. There are other structures of power in the world, based upon wealth, race, social background

and more. But the structures of power based on gender, are virtually the most dominant, on a global level. Naturally, this does not mean that all men have more power than all women in all contexts and situations.

Many of us who are working with these issues avoid the concept of feminism, mainly out of fear that nobody will listen to you if you use it. What words you as individuals and organizations choose to describe your society with is your own choice. More important - girls and women need to be educated in human rights. We need to be reminded of the fact that it is not our fault if we get assaulted, no matter how we dress or behave. On the contrary, it is notions of masculinity (among other things) that make some men think that they have the right to your body. We need

to know that we have the right to choose if, when and with whom we have sex, marry or have children, and also that we have the right to choose education, profession, how to dress, with whom we socialise and what leisure activities to engage in. Women and girls need to come together and share experiences with each other, to make the structures of power visible and to find the strength to fight them.

Example of a norm:

Anna, 18 years old, lives in a small town in Georgia together with her mother and two younger brothers. After school she helps her mum with the housework and looks after her brothers. According to the norm her brothers are not expected to help out with the housework. Anna has very little time to socialise with friends. Also, it is not considered appropriate for her to leave the house by herself in the evenings, especially not to meet boys. Anna is expected to get married in a couple of years. According to the norm, she should stay virgin until the wedding and preferable have a child in a year or two after marriage.

Norm-critical attitudes

Where there are humans interacting with each other, there are norms. They are cultural

products and as such often hard to recognize, as they appear as the one and only natural way of doing things. Some norms are beneficial to us in our everyday life, but some restrict us and keep us from doing what would make us happier. To have a norm-critical attitude means to make the norms that limit our lives visible. In this context it is especially the norms concerning relations, ideas of female and male behaviour and so on, that we should be careful not to reinforce. A concrete example is that we should not take for granted, that everyone is heterosexual. When talking about sexuality and relationships, therefore, never presume that all women are attracted to men. Use sex-neutral words and describe sexuality as something that involves humans, not primarily men and women.

Example of another norm:

Karin, 17 years old, lives in a middle-sized town in Sweden, together with her mother, father and elder sister. Karin is considered to be a bit strange, as she has never had a boyfriend, or even been kissed. She spends her free time doing sports and reading books, and she has a few friends, both boys and girls that she goes to the cinema or to a café with. Unlike her friends, she does not spend a lot of time on her looks. Karin's sister Lotta, who is 19 years old, is considered to be the prettiest girl in school. She loves going to parties and she has already had several boyfriends. It is regarded normal that Lotta is not a virgin, but it would seem a bit strange and against the norm if she does not "settle down"- moved together with a man and had children - before she is 30.

Empowerment

The concept stands for a sense of control of your own life and becoming empowered means making yourself the most important person in your life, becoming aware of your own possibilities and strength and allowing yourself to grow.

In order to empower girls and women, we cannot only talk about oppression and abuse, which might raise awareness of structures of power, but perhaps not give inspiration. We need to have fun too. To explore new things, to be creative, to share the spirit of community, to laugh and to overcome challenges together - that, we believe, is empowering. In chapter 7, you can read more about different kinds of activities that can be inspiring and empowering (see also Femipedia). To be isolated, on the contrary, or controlled by someone else, can in the long run be devastating to your self-esteem.

Methods

In Swedish WGOs, an important part of our work is to encourage women and girls to develop a critical mind and to formulate and express their own opinion. Girls are often thought to either not to have, or not to express, their own opinion, but to be nice, quiet and pretty, and stand aside for the boys. In our workshops we practice to express our values and opinions, and we have a diverse set of exercises for doing this. In chapter 9 we give detailed instructions for some of these exercises. It is crucial to remember and to tell the participants that the purpose of these exercises is not to make anyone feel stupid or ignorant. Everyone has the right to his or hers own opinion. In these exercises we bring up questions that have no clear answers, and we do not correct each other, but allow each other to change our minds, if we want to.

We combine discussions, talks and different exercises with *play* – team-building games to get to know each other, name games, physical activities and drama. The purpose of play and physical activities is to develop a spirit of community, trust and self-esteem. We laugh together and can forget our everyday problems for a little while. To move and use our whole bodies is also beneficial for our well-being.

Drama means to use theatre and creation, but without the performance. In drama, the purpose is never to produce something to perform for others. Instead, it is a method for exploring new things about ourselves and society. "On stage" we feel and experience. Instead of only having discussions on different problematic situations, we can also try them in role play in a safe environment. The participants in the group can support us in giving suggestions on how to act differently, how to handle a problem in a given situation.

Chapter 6: Leadership

Taking leadership is fun, exciting and it makes you grow as a person. For many people, gender sensitive activists included, leadership is something that is associated with men and masculinity. It is often the case, that we, as girls and women, have not been encouraged to take charge, but rather to be quiet listeners. Both men and women tend to be more critical towards female leaders and judge them harder for not being perfect. If a woman is a successful leader, there is always someone who will question whether she is a good mother, “real woman”, or not. Furthermore, we see so many bad examples of corrupted or selfish leaders around the world, that we sometimes forget that *it is not taking leadership in itself that is bad*, but to use this position for your own purposes and to exploit the trust that others has put in you. *What kind of leader do you wish to be?* What is your current role in your organization and what are your visions for the future?

Strategies and approaches

When working with the empowerment of young girls, it is crucial to embrace the notion of active leadership. In a group there will always be someone who sets the rules and takes charge. If we, for example in a discussion group with young girls, as leaders steer away from our task, if we are unfocused or confused, a participant in the group will sooner or later unofficially take the role as a leader. That is, for several reasons, not an ideal situation. She is there to develop and to be empowered, like the rest of the participants, and it is therefore unjust to let her do your job. In this context, *leadership is a function (not a person) that is necessary so that everybody in the group can participate on equal terms, a function that secures the positive development of the group as a whole, and that every individual in it finds her place.*

An important basic understanding is that the group, in which you are the leader, is not a forum for you to bring up your own private

problems and thoughts. Be careful with what you tell the group about yourself. Of course, there is room for spontaneous expressions – to laugh together with the group when something is fun, or to admit that some things make you sad or upset. You are human. But do not use the group for your own need of someone to listen to you. Share private information if you deem it useful for the group, but make sure it does not go too far, so that you will regret it.

Another important aspect to keep in mind is that everyone is different. We differ from one another with regards to social background, family situation, economical and other resources, age, health, and so on. We have different needs and potentials to develop, as well as our own pace in which to do it. *Your role is to encourage the participants in the group and make them conscious of their rights*, without pushing them too hard, telling them what they should think or forcing them to be something they do not want to be.

How to prepare

First of all, you need to *understand the task and the purpose* of the activity (workshop/lecture/discussion). Have you been invited, for example, to a class to talk about a certain topic, or is it for yourself to decide what to go into? What do you want to accomplish with the activity? Get as much information you can about how many participants the group consists of, if there is someone with special needs, if it is a mixed group (girls and boys), if there are any expectations or restrictions you need to know about and so on. This will facilitate your planning. Next thing is to plan more in detail, together with your colleague. See to that you have alternatives, a “plan B”, if things do not work out the way you have expected, or if the group becomes so interested in a specific matter that you do not have time to do everything as planned.

Discuss your fears and expectations with your colleague. To prepare for leadership in this context also involves self-reflection. You need to think about what kind of behaviour or comments that make you upset. Let your colleague know about them in order for you both to be prepared to support each other to handle such things – if they come up – in a calm and professional way.

***Some questions to
discuss as leaders***

*What is the worst thing (I fear)
that might occur during my
workshop or lecture?
How will I deal with it, if it happens?
What can I learn from it?*

***Suggestions of
follow-up questions***

*What do you mean by that?
How do you put that in
relation to....?
Is that an opinion or a fact?
Should it be like that? Why?
If this happened to somebody you
love, would you still feel the same?*

Contemplate for a while, on your own youth. What kind of prejudices did you have as a teenager? How have you changed? Young people can indeed have a drastic way of expressing their opinions. Girls, like everyone, have prejudices and can - because of lack of experience – think narrow-minded and say things that might sound worse than they are. Try to be laid-back and not to react too strongly

with blame or condemn in these situations. Ask follow-up questions. Encourage the participants to express and develop their values, even when you do not fully agree. In certain limits of course – it should not be accepted to call each other bad names or in other ways be disrespectful towards one and other. Remind them kindly of that, if needed. Be in time, be prepared and be focused.

Practical advises

Do not be alone. If possible, be two leaders. You contribute in different ways, and supplement each other. You notice different things and have the opportunity to give each other feedback after the workshop. In addition, it is often more fun to share the leadership.

Let everyone be heard and seen and find their place. Do not assume that the most silent participant is the one with the lowest self-esteem. Give everyone the chance to share their thoughts, but do not force anyone to speak. Some people are very talkative, others prefer to express themselves in physical activities, plays or arts, yet others use a wide range of expressions. In chapter 8 there are examples of how you can vary the ways you bring up issues.

Compliment the group as a whole, and if critical comments are needed – do not tell them in front of the group. Avoid compliments that tend to objectify, like comments on how someone looks, dresses, or how nice and cute she is. Encourage braveness, engagement and creativity.

Give room for the group to give feedback to the leader. This will improve your leadership. A recommended way to evaluate the workshop is to let the participants anonymously write down their point of views on your leadership and the content of the workshop/lecture. If there are any critical comments that you react upon, this will give you time to deal with it in a professional way. Important also, is for you to be acknowledged for the qualified work you do.

Interactional processes and conflicts

Human interaction is a never ending process. On an abstract level, it is through a flow of interpretations of each other, our reality and of our identities, that we continuously redefine and construct ourselves and our reality. In short – *groups, as well as individuals, are not static.* A group, furthermore, is something more than just the sum of its participants. Be open for changes and new interpretations.

One thing you can be convinced of is that the roles in the group, and the atmosphere, will not be the same every time you gather. The way things are the first time, they will not stay like in the end of the process. If someone leaves or someone enters, it will further have an impact, and the process to form a group starts all over again.

When conflict arises – do not understand it as if you as a leader have failed. There are good and bad conflicts. The bad are the conflicts that never are solved, and the unequal ones, that result in that a vulnerable part comes out even more exposed than before, while the dominant part reinforces its position. The good conflicts are solved without too much pain or struggle, make all participants grow and take the group to a higher level of understanding. In the WGO, all members and staff have individual responsibility to communicate their wishes, expectations and interpretations as clear as possible, in order to avoid misunderstandings that might lead to needless conflicts.

Common mistakes by people in conflict are to either ignore the conflict, hoping it just will disappear, or to face each other but aggressively and without respect. The alternative to these actions is to confront your opponent, but in an honest and respectful way. Use expressions like “I understood it as...”, “You have a point there”, “What I need is...” and so on. Avoid the words *never* and *always*. Your role as a leader in a group involved in conflict is to moderate the discussion, to ask follow-up questions and to try to help them find a solution that implies that everyone wins. Ask the opponents how they understand their own responsibility for the problem, as well as of their idea of how to solve it. Stress the fact that every situation can be understood from several various perspectives, be positive and supportive.

Interview with

Karin Robertsson, president of Stjärnjouren

Why is the work Stjärnjouren do important?

– Because we try to make the unequal structures of power in society visible. The lack of equality is demonstrated in girls being sidelined and overshadowed and that there always seem to be more room for boys and men. Girls are not listened to as often as boys, there are far more resources being spent on, for example, boys' sports than on girls' sports. And in the case of bodily integrity, the conditions for girls and boys are totally different. Saying no to sex and the vulnerability of sexual abuse, are circumstances girls encounter more often than boys, and also must consider and manage more often than boys. Boys and men, of course, must change and take responsibility for their behaviour, but Stjärnjouren's target group is girls. We want to provide girls with tools and strategies to take up more space to act in, that is - to broaden girls' space to live and to act in. It is a question of human rights.

– Moreover, we want to be a discussion forum for young girls. Together we discuss and try to puncture the myths and norms, which many young women live under today, that is, those which tells you to be thin, pretty and "successful". Our work is partly centred on scrutinising these norms - what they are and what impact they could have on our lives. We want to offer girls and young women a place where they can be themselves.

What is your motivation and driving force at work as president of Stjärnjouren?

– To have the chance to make a difference. Being president of an organization that is as good, strong and special as Stjärnjouren is a privilege and so is working with the issues I am so passionate about. These issues are always getting too little attention and too little public space, as young girls oftentimes get too little space – this I want to change!

How is it that you are so involved in these issues?

– My upbringing. As a young girl I often felt that one had to struggle to be heard, to be taken seriously and to be accepted as I am. It was never

something one could take for granted. For example, if I wanted to play football instead of dancing, I had to explain myself. At that time, I did not understand what this struggle was all about. As I became older I came to realise what I previously had not been able to pinpoint. Slowly I began to discover that it was related to the gender power structures that permeate our society.

What is the best thing about being a president of Stjärnjouren?

– That you have a voice, a channel, through which you can make a difference. The fact that you are part of this organization and that you live in a society in which you are able to exercise your democratic rights and freedom - that is grand indeed. These rights are not self-evident worldwide, especially not for women. Therefore it is important to me, living in a society that allows me (as a result of a long struggle, not least women's struggle) to make use of my rights. Additionally, being a role model for young girls involves a lot of fun.

What is the hardest part of the work you do?

– Being the president of an organization is a great responsibility and it takes much more time than you imagine. What I consider a bit tricky is the role of the non-profit employer. I have an employer's liability but that I chair voluntary. That is, I do not get paid for my work. This puts on a somewhat different requirement on me and the Board as an employer and on those employed in our organization. It may sometimes be difficult to make demands on other volunteers in our organization, because they, like us in the Board, work for free. My experience is that both employees and volunteers of a non-profit organization are easy to assume too much work. One should keep in length – it is important bearing that in mind as not to burn oneself out. It is a risk when you are passionate about something.

How do you deal with these difficulties?

– I ask for help. I have my colleagues in the Board with whom I discuss back and forth. Without them I would be a much worse President. I also take help from more experienced people such as former board members. My strategy for coping with the mission is to turn to the collective. It also helps

if one does not blame oneself for doing too little. It is better to think that you are doing the best you can with what you have - no one can do more.

What does Stjärnjouren mean for you in your life?

– It has meant a lot to me on various levels. One of the most decisive reasons for engaging in Stjärnjouren was that I lacked the practical work with young girls in my ongoing education in Social Work. Since I wanted to work with young girls, gender issues and feminism, Stjärnjouren was an obvious choice. As for my own knowledge, it gives me a lot to frequently discuss gender issues, feminism, politics and society. It has expanded my skills of interacting and meeting people of different kind and of various views. To have and to take the responsibility that I do as president has developed me as a person.

How do you see the future of Stjärnjouren?

– One problem that I think many non-profit organizations encounter is that they do not have time to be visionary, at least not to the extent they would like. But we are such a stable organization with a good reputation, so we can only move things forward. The only thing I think of is that we can improve; to bring about more public opinion, increase the number of members and to reach out to more girls. I have great hopes for our new WGO-training, which will help us in the Swedish WGO movement to become even more influential and through this project, strengthen the entire WGO movement from within.

What advice would you give to a newly founded WGO?

– Try to find the power of the joint commitment of the cause, even though the members may have different views on things. Work forward with that common strength. Further, it is important to ascertain each other's resources and strengths; what knowledge and experience, what social networks, et cetera, that are available within the organization. Identify it and then make use of it! Learn from your mistakes, because mistakes you will make. Do not be afraid to fail.

Chapter 7: Communicating Sexuality - from a Women's Rights Perspective

Sexuality is something that all humans have. Most people are able to get sexually aroused and to feel the desire to do something sexual with oneself or with others. Sexuality can bring joy, pleasure and closeness to our lives, but it can also be used as a tool for power and control. Even small children experience sexual feelings, and these feelings and interest in sex tend to grow as children become teenagers. It is, however, important to never compromise about it always being wrong for adults to do something sexual with children or young people under age. Such actions are harmful to children, even if no force or physical violence is being used. See the last chapter of this book, Femipedia, for a brief introduction on sexuality as a socially and culturally constructed phenomenon. In this chapter, we focus on how to communicate issues concerning sexuality and women's rights with adolescent girls (it may work in other groups as well). The themes that could be suitable for a WGO to bring up and that are presented below are: *Knowledge is power*, *The right to say no* and *the right to say yes*, and *History of sexuality*.

How to prepare

Even though we advise you - for several reasons - from not talking about your own experiences, it is still your own choice what you want to share. It can be pedagogical, for example, to mention ideas and questions that you had during your teens and how this has now changed. However, we strongly advise from sharing personal sexual desires, or experiences of sexual abuse. In order to prepare yourself for handling these issues with girls seeking support, or before giving a workshop, it is useful to reflect upon your own experiences and what sexuality means for you on a personal level. Keep these thoughts to yourself or discuss them with a friend, partner or other adult person in whom you trust.

Girls can have all kinds of questions, and it may not be possible to be prepared for all of them, but do think about what to answer if they ask personal questions. Moreover, try to educate yourself and find information, instead of basing your knowledge on your own experiences. Do not be afraid of being embarrassed, that you might blush or start to giggle. It is no catastrophe if it happens. Surely, the audience will listen regardless of the colour of your face. In fact, using humour in a moderate way can often be quite suitable.

Knowledge is power

The female womb is the strongest muscle in the human body. Clitoris has one single purpose, and that is to give pleasure to women. These and other facts, we are accurate never to let the girls forget. By doing this we promote a healthy sense of pride and an insight that the female body – in contrast to more traditional ideas – is in fact not essentially weaker or inferior in comparison to the male body. Neither are female bodies by nature thin, mysterious, guided by erratic hormones, defective or sickly. The muscles of the female body are in general less explosive in their strength than those of men. On the other hand, the strength of the female muscles is more persistent.

Start the anatomy-theme, or your workshop, by drawing a picture of the female genitals, or use a picture. You could also ask the participants to draw pictures of the female genitals themselves. This might promote lots of giggles and be used as an icebreaker. Encourage the group to give examples of names for the female sex. If they are shy, help them with some examples. Initiate a discussion on why it seems to be so difficult to find a suitable name, and why some of these names are used as terms of insult.

Explain what happens in our bodies when we are sexually aroused. Mind to say that having sex should never be painful – not even the first time. If it hurts, feels uncomfortable, or if you have just changed your mind, you are in your full right to end it, or try

something else. Take the opportunity to kill some myths about the female body, such as the hymen. Many girls and young women are taught that it will hurt and bleed the first time they have sexual intercourse. This is a myth; there is no such thing as a hymen. If it hurts the first time, or bleeds, it is because the woman is tense and not sexually aroused enough, and this can happen even if the woman has had sex many times before.

Also, there are ideas of what sex is. For example, it is often defined as penetrative heterosexual vaginal sex. However, this is not the only way of having sex and what one likes is highly individual and depends on whom with you are having sex. Sexuality is situational, that is, what you feel sexual desire for right this minute can change the next. Some women want to have sex with men, some want to have sex with other women, and some want both and maybe at the same time. Nevertheless, sexuality is surrounded by norms which can hinder us from expressing ourselves sexually. In some societies, homosexuality is criminalised which prohibits women and men to openly express feelings for the same sex, in fear of being punished. When speaking to young women and girls about these issues, it is important to emphasize that there is no right or wrong, as long as the people involved in the sexual act has given their informed consent, i.e. that no one feels forced to do something or does not know what they have agreed upon.

Be safe and feel great

Sexuality is about feeling good and doing things that give pleasure to oneself and to others. When talking to young women and girls about sexuality they may ask about reproductive health. Many young women are frightened of getting pregnant and may lack information about how a baby is conceived. This is a topic in itself, however an important one. In a workshop you could teach about different contraceptives and how they work. In Sweden, for example, pupils are taught this in school, whereas in other countries, this is not talked about at all. Take the opportunity also to speak about

condoms and different sexually transmitted diseases. Inaccurate information about how sexually diseases are transmitted and concerns of unwanted pregnancies can hinder people to fully enjoy their sexuality. However, when commuting sexuality, try to balance so it does not become to be more about diseases and babies than lust and pleasure.

The right to say no and the right to say yes

Bodily integrity is a key concept in discussions on sexuality and rights. It stands for power over your own body, for the non-negotiable right to choose if, when and with whom to be intimate. This issue seem to be the hardest right to communicate when talking about gender equality. Many can agree on the rights for women and men to participate in the public sphere and in employment on equal terms. But a woman's right to bodily integrity – to say no to sex to a husband, boyfriend, or some random guy who just paid her drink (or not even that) – is constantly denied or questioned by some, even in a so-called gender equal society as Sweden.

However, as important it is to teach girls about their right to say no, it is nevertheless not least essential to make them aware of their right to say yes. There is nothing dirty or wrong with a woman who takes initiative to sexual activities with other adult people, and there is no reason for a girl to feel ashamed of a curiosity, or strong interest in sex. Moreover, even if she said yes today, she is in her full right to say no tomorrow. Some men can feel insecure in the company of a sexually confident and expressive woman, but it should be their problem to admit and deal with this lack of self-confidence, not hers.

History of sexuality

We use historical examples to illustrate how notions of sexuality, as well as of femininity and masculinity, have changed over time, and vary with cultural context. By bringing history of sexuality up, you

give the girls the opportunity to reflect upon and to question norms and notions of their own society. You do not need to go very deep into this theme, but give at least some examples of how the understandings of the normal or natural have changed.

In nineteenth-century Europe, Women's liberation movement emerged from the ideas of the French revolution: freedom, equality and brotherhood. Many women, and some men, claimed the rights for women to be included and acknowledged as citizens with the same rights as men. The major argument was the idea of human reason and intelligence as independent of sex. Science became, however, yet a tool in the suppression of women. For more than a century, enormous energy and resources have been invested in projects with the aim to find proof for significant differences between the sexes, with no noteworthy result at all. When women first began to claim the right to study at the university, for example, scientists asserted that too much reading would make women infertile. The same kind of research was conducted to prove the alleged inferiority of non-European people, especially Africans. Promote a sceptical attitude among the girls towards any kind of "truths" about the "normal" femininity and sexuality. The history and the age in which we live, show a manifold of expressions.

Interview with Aneta Tsvateva, gynaecologist, Avangard

What does a typical working day for you look like?

– Every morning I get up at six o'clock, to prepare breakfast for my daughter, and make her ready for school, she is in first grade. After that I go to work at the town hospital. Three times a week I work at Avangard. I meet women in my work every day. Women and women's health are not given much attention, so once they come to me I try to listen to them very carefully. As I am also a woman, experiencing similar problems, feelings and emotions, I oftentimes feel it is not that difficult for me to grasp what they are going through.

What is the best thing about the work you do?

– To have been given the opportunity to help and support many women, but also to be the one to help them give birth to their children. That is very rewarding work, and to help people in need, especially women, is a satisfaction to me.

What is the hardest part of the work you do?

– Unfortunately, access to adequate reproductive health services is still an immense problem in the whole region; poor hospital conditions, lack of necessary equipment of gynaecological cabinets and specialists, make our work complicated. It is very difficult to provide women with adequate assistance (safe abortions, pre and post pregnancy, surgery et cetera). This is also why going through with a pregnancy and giving birth oftentimes is less risky than having an abortion. But despite these problems we do everything we can to help women to maintain their health.

In what way do you believe Avangard is important?

– Avangard is the only women organization in the Gali region, with its nearby villages and other isolated small towns of Abkhazia (Ochamchire and Tkuarchal). They have been working with women issues actively for more than eight years. Avangard is a pioneer in conducting reproductive health seminars in schools with young girls, something that is crucial to

them. Avangard can also offer something which the public health system cannot, that is, privacy for women, for example affected by STDs. The stationary ultrasound machine in Avangard's office has until recently been the only one in the Gali region, and during six years this has facilitated for women and young girls to have a diagnostic examination.

Avangard has a team consisting of a psychologist, a gynaecologist, a cardiologist and a paediatrician, that goes out to distant villages for consultation a few times per month. Those living in remote villages often have transportation problems. In some villages there are no cars, so the only available means of transport are horses, which is very risky during pregnancy. Because of this, some women have to give birth at home. I have long wished for a portable ultrasound machine, one that we could use when doing home visits in inaccessible areas. And a little while ago that wish became true, thanks to the organization Kvinna till Kvinna! But still I miss the adequate equipment to remove lesions in the cervix, lesions that if untreated can lead to cancer. We can do nothing about it. The women have to go to Tbilisi or abroad - if they can afford it.

Is there something that could ease the work you do?

– If we had all the above-mentioned preconditions, our work would be much easier. And, generally speaking, of course the stability and a sustainable peace and security in the whole region is very important in order to be able to work without stress and also to be able to do more work - that is, helping more women.

What role does Avangard play in your own life?

–Avangard is everything to me. First of all, I am given the possibility to do my favourite work; helping and consulting women to maintain their health. And their trust and belief in Avangard and me makes me especially happy. The staff we have here is very friendly and everybody is motivated, which makes working here interesting and easy. The wage from Avangard is good compared to what I earn at the town hospital. This is also important for me since my husband died three years ago, and I now take care of my daughter on my own. The leaders of Avangard always do everything to

create a good working environment. They care about their staff. They make excursions and picnics, especially in the summer, which is a big psychological relief for me and helps me to overcome the stress after hard work. So one could say that Avangard is my “second family”.

Chapter 8: Activities

For a WGO that does not want to limit its' work to support only, but also engage in more outreaching activities, there are a lot to choose from. In this chapter, we give examples of activities that Stjärnjouren and Avangard have carried through, and we share our experiences and knowledge of how to empower adolescent girls and young women. Try to get your target group involved in the process

To discuss in the WGO:

What goals do we have and how do we reach them?

How much resources and money do we need for the activity?

How do we reach our target group and make the activity attractive? (See also chapter 9)

What are the risks and how can we avoid mistakes?

Who is the contact person responsible for the activity?

Should boys or men be welcomed to participate?

of deciding what activities to offer. Use the knowledge, skills and other resources that you have in your organizations. When we set up goals for our activities, we do not have to be too pretentious. For example, a dance course can give the participants positive experiences of using their bodies in active, expressive ways and to sense their strength (the goal that would be).

Talk in the classroom

The main advantage with giving talks in schools is the possibility of reaching large groups of young people. As they are already there, you do not have to sit around and wait for people to show up, risking that no one comes and that all your preparations was for nothing. The environment and conditions may not always be the best, though. This activity is perfect for introducing you as organization, to people who may not even have known that you existed. If your organization provides any kind of support, make sure the young people know about it. In the classroom, you can give

lectures or workshops on human rights, gender equality and sexual and reproductive health, etc. Just be aware of the fact that the classroom may not be an ideal place for neither boys nor girls to bring up their own personal experiences. When introducing the subject, do mention that no one has to talk about anything personal. After the lecture or workshop, try to find the time to stay for a while, if anyone might want to ask or tell you something.

When boys or men are involved

The strategy to have women-only activities is known as separatism, and the idea is to give girls and women a better opportunity to be heard and seen. In mixed groups, girls and women tend to step aside for boys and men, as we are often taught that they are more important. But this may not always be the case. Additionally, boys and men also need to hear about human rights, gender equality, etc. If we never co-operate with men, we will never see a world without violence and oppression. Discuss the risks and possibilities of gender mixed activities in your organization.

Role model encounter

There are so many great women to be inspired by. We seldom see them on television or read about them in the newspapers, but we all know they exist. Invite one of them to your organization and let them speak about their work, their lives and the challenges they have conquered. It could be activists, someone's grandmother – a known or an unknown person. Use her as a role model for the girls and for yourself. If the role model is a writer, for example, perhaps she can give a workshop on how to

write, if she is a designer she can give a workshop on design.

Regular discussion group

In Sweden, we have a concept called “girls’ group”, which is a regular discussion group that gathers once a week for one or two hours, for a period of ten weeks. Usually, these sessions take place

during the school day. Especially for girls who are not allowed to take part in any activities during evenings or weekends, this is a unique possibility to learn more about their rights, explore their own values and get in contact with their own and their dreams. The group should have two, or at least one, adult leader who can moderate discussions and take responsibility for the activities. Please see chapter 6 on leadership, chapter 3 on methods, and 9 on exercises, for suggestions on how to carry through, and what to do in a regular discussion group.

Summer camp

This can be one of the most popular activities among the young girls. During a week or so, a group of teenage girls (10-20 participants), and two or more leaders, spend a great time together, on a beautiful place in the countryside. The focus of this activity can be on having fun and to relax. The peace and retirement, however, offers a great opportunity to develop. Vary between fun summer activities such as swimming, cycling, riding and your ordinary workshops. If you want the camp to be free of charge for all participants, this activity could be quite expensive, though. See if you can get financial support from the municipality, or any other organization.

Sports and creative activities

According to traditional notions of femininity, girls are supposed to be passive and like to talk, but not use their bodies too much. Boys, on the contrary, are traditionally regarded as in need of sports and competition, in order to develop a healthy masculinity. In Sweden, for many years public funds have been spent on leisure activities in order to prevent mainly boys from “getting into trouble”. We challenge these norms by offering fun activities to girls, through which they can sense their physical strength, be creative and develop. Depressed girls are not as expensive for society as the boys who become criminals and drug addicts, but they need and deserve attention all the same. These activities do not have to cost too much.

Use the resources and skills that you already have, and share them with the girls.

How to plan a workshop

Beginning

You should present yourself, your colleagues and the organization that you represent. You should also give a brief introduction to the theme of the day. It is also useful to have a short discussion/presentation of the common rules (not to interrupt or comment each other, to switch off mobile phones, etc). A go-round (i.e. when all the participants can present themselves with names and something more) is nice way to start. This could be followed by name games, if the participants do not know each other, and you could also add a game or physical activity.

The main theme

Right after the warm-up, the group is more focused than later during the workshop, so now is time to bring up the main theme. In order to keep up the interest, vary between your presentation of the subject and discussions or exercises. Use pictures, films, and refer to research. Vary between small group discussions and discussions in the whole group. Mind to distinguish between facts and open questions. Make sure the participants understand the difference.

How to round off

Before you leave, it is preferable that you all have time for relaxation and to reflect upon what you have learned or experienced, and to give feedback to the leaders. For example, put on some cosy music and let the participants do free writing or draw a picture. Let the girls anonymously write down questions for you to answer next time (if it is a group with regular workshops), or themes they would like you to bring up.

Evaluate the workshop. Have a round where everyone can choose if they want to share something with the rest of the group. Hand out information, folders, etc. Stay for a while if anyone wants to discuss something with you in private.

Chapter 9: How to reach out

How do we reach survivors of gender based violence with the information that we exist? How do we encourage the ones that need us the most to seek support? One of the most exciting things about working in a WGO is the actual face-to-face meetings with the girls and women. There are lots of girls out there who need to meet you and want to participate in all sorts of fun and exciting activities that your organization is offering. However, for this meeting to take place sophisticated marketing strategies are usually needed. Therefore, take as many chances as possible to create attention and to make your selves visible. Information is disseminated in all kinds of ways and through the strangest channels. Do not be modest – remember that you are role models. Modesty does not become a WGO. In this chapter we explore how to market your WGO and how to reach out to your target groups.

Target groups

A WGO often has two target groups, one primary and one secondary. The primary group contains the women and girls and the secondary target group serves as channels through which you reach the women and girls, such as schools, other organizations, parents, work placements et cetera. The secondary target group may also be politicians, decision makers like for examples key people of the municipality, media and donors.

Begin to define your primary target group. If your target group is for example girls between 12 and 19 years old, remember no group is homogenous and you will need a variety of different strategies and channels in order to reach as many individuals possible. Communicate the message to the target group on their own terms, in their way and in their reality. To clarify, you might not reach 12 year olds by putting an ad in the national newspaper; you will perhaps reach their parents, but if you want to communicate

directly with the primary target group you might want to choose a different strategy.

Take into consideration how to market and provide information about your work in a way that does not provoke people with more conservative and traditional values. That does not mean that you as a WGO agrees with and share these values or opinions, rather this is a strategy to reach your secondary target group. Remember that the girls and women and their empowerment and development are your WGO's main focus. If you want to talk to your primary target group about sexuality and oppressive gender norms, sometimes, depending on the context, you may have a lot to gain if you present your case in a way that parents will let their daughters come to the workshop, for example as a workshop on women's health, or the like.

Your primary target group are experts

Never forget for whom you are working. Turn to your target group for ideas, advice, inspiration and motivation. It often happens that NGOs forget

Explain the purpose of your activities

Sometimes it can be difficult to get parents or school staff to understand why their daughter or pupil should participate in the trainings and workshops you offer. Initiatives to give young people sexual education may for some people (parents, teachers) be challenging. This was the case in Gali, when Avangard first offered workshops on this subject in a school, a few years ago. Parents were clearly against the initiative, but Avangard invited them to a round table meeting and presented the aim and the content of the workshop. The result of this meeting was a great success – parents agreed on the need of this education, and Avangard's work gained respect among them. This story illustrates how effective dialogue and personal meetings can be, in order to reach your target groups.

or not care to ask their target group of what they want and what they need. Always remember that they are the experts of their life, situation and needs, use that knowledge to create something great!

Obstacles

Regardless if you are giving a workshop or offering support for survivors of gender-based violence, you might want to think about what could hinder your target group attend or to make contact with you. To exemplify, if the workshop takes place after school hours, are girls in your area allowed attending extra circular activities? Are there buses for the girls to get home in time before dark? Can you offer transport for those who need it? For various reasons it could be risky for women/girls to be seen at or affiliated with your WGO and hence it is advisable to have a phone number which will not be registered on phone bills and an anonymous address. If you are unsure of what obstacles there may be, again, turn to your most important source of information - your primary target group.

Defining your message

Why is your WGO important? What do you have to offer? What do you want to say, what is your message and how can you reach out? Have a brainstorming session where you try to answer these questions.

Presenting your message

To increase your visibility in the (local) society, it may be helpful to have a logotype to symbolise and to recognise your WGO by. If there is no artistic, creative person in your organization, you might want to ask for help, for example people working with public relations or art students. Put the logotype on your material that you print, letters you send, on your website and so forth. Create a folder with brief information and contact details of your WGO. This is good to have in cases when you meet people that are interested in the work that you do. Give it to them! It may also be useful to put up your folder in places where your target group hangs out. Set up

a website and if possible do it in your local language and other languages. The latter makes it easier to gain contact with potential foreign donors and partners. Even if your specific target group have limited access to the Internet, it is a mean to reach secondary target groups and make your WGO known abroad.

Marketing plan

Plan when to market your organization. There is no use in having a big campaign at the same time as there is another big event going on in your local area. Make a six months or a year plan of different events, visits, and campaigns that you want to carry out and make sure they do not clash with other crucial happenings. Are there any other WGOs in your area? You might want to discuss with them about their plans and in that way you can cooperate instead of compete.

Meet people!

To make handouts and to appear in the media are usually not enough. You, as a member of the WGO, are the most important marketing tool. It is when you meet people and talk about your organization that people will get an impression and get interested. Nothing beats the personal meeting. Go to schools, talk to students, teachers and staff. Knock on politicians' doors, have a coffee with the nurses at the local hospital and gatecrash the annual beauty competition!

Demonstration and manifestations

Organise a manifestation to draw attention to why your WGO needs to exist. One good examples of this is the WGO Femen in Ukraine, which by colourful theatrical protesting against trafficking in women and prostitution receives a lot of attention in the media and thereby also recruits new volunteers who want to fight for their cause. Another inspiring example is the many right to abortion manifestations around the world. So, let yourself be inspired and create your own manifestations for the causes you are fighting for.

Remember it does not have to be a big thing or for a “big” cause – just start with the things you feel are the most important and closest to you and your target group.

Activities

In the marketing process it is vital to have something to invite people to. If you want girls to come to your organization, they need a reason. Organize activities (for inspiring examples please see chapter 8), promote them and invite your target group to come.

Politicians, donors and decision makers

When you meet politicians, decision makers and donors, be prepared to make a good impression. Present a problem (for example that girls and women are being discriminated against and that they are getting sexually abused) and how your WGO is a part of the solution to this problem and give some examples of what you have accomplished so far. Furthermore, suggest how they can assist and support you. Donors and politicians often have their own agenda – therefore, be careful when agreeing on their preconditions for eventual support and funding.

Take in to consideration: if you accept funding from a donor, will it then harm your organization’s reputation in any way? In Sweden for example, a WGO would most likely not accept money from a right-wing racist party, as they do not want to be seen as allies. In fact, it could be to the WGO’s advantage to be independent of political parties, political affiliations or religious institutions to focus on their own message and not be carriers of others’ agendas. Moreover, to be affiliated with certain organizations and institutions may prevent your target group from contact you.

Media

Contact the local or national media and have them write about you. Before meeting the media, ask yourself what you want to convey, i.e. what message do you want to come across with? When a journalist

is interviewing you, try to answer in a way that will make your message come through. Be diplomatic and choose your words with care. If a journalist contacts you, always ask why she or he wants to interview you, what kind of newspaper or journal it is and in what context the interview will be printed. To avoid misunderstandings and misquotations always ask the journalist to let you read the article after the interview, or at least your quotes, before it is printed. You can also write press releases and small articles about your activities and send them to your local media. Depending on the news flow, they might very well print what you have written.

Interview with Anna Gutsol and Tatiana Kozak, FEMEN

Femen is an action oriented and visual WGO based in Kiev, Ukraine. Three members of Stjärnjouren met with them in Kiev (on our way to Georgia) for an interview and to learn more about alternative strategies for reaching out. Anna Gutsol and Tatiana Kozak are two of the organization's front figures.

What main issues do you work with?

– We are working against prostitution, sex tourism and for the criminalization of purchasing sex. Regarding the latter, we want to make the demand a moral issue.

What strategies do you use to reach your objectives?

– The first step is to get people to listen to what we have to say. Old strategies used by whom we call classical feminists need some rethinking. We organize outreaching actions where we play on sexuality and eroticism in order to get attention in media and bring these issues upon the political agenda.

How and what type of people do you want to influence and attract to the movement?

– We want to present our message in a way that attracts young Ukrainian women. Many Ukrainian women dress sexy and provocative. And we want women to be able to dress in whatever way they like without being treated like a prostitute. We demand respect, especially from prejudiced foreign men, who come here with preconceptions about each Ukrainian woman being a whore. These attitudes need to change. Here women dress sexy to get a man, because they are dependent on men for almost everything. But it is also about raising awareness. Many girls do not know that they have the right to report to the police if they have been sexually harassed or raped. Women must be educated about their rights and that is one of the things that FEMEN does. We do it in this provocative way partly because

we did not have a "sexual revolution" like in for example Sweden – you know, in the Soviet days, we were all repressed in many ways.

– We also want to engage more women and men in the issues we are fighting for and in the work we do. This is one of the reasons why we are not labelling the organization as a feminist one. It is important for us to be an inclusive organization and not exclude the women who need us the most. There is also a general resistance among people in Ukraine - and among people in many other post-soviet societies – to be a member of something or to label yourself. We need to engage people on other grounds.

How was it in the beginning when you first founded the organization?

– The first attempt to form our organization was a few years ago in a small town outside of Kiev and it was not so successful. It was a very theory-oriented local non-international group of separatist radical feminists. This is not the case anymore.

– In 2008 we made a second attempt that went well. Now we are working with both men and women and you don't need to be a feminist to be part of the organization. Men are members, but unfortunately, what we are doing is still mainly seen as "women's issues". However, FEMEN is based on the idea that girls should be active participants in society. In our society women are very dependent on men, not least financially. So, to say that a woman should care for herself is radical feminism in this context. Classical feminists are looked upon as non-sexy and men-like. Our strategy is to move away from that image to include more women and men to work for the issues we are fighting for.

How do you finance and organize your work?

–At the moment we do not have an office. We have one head officer, one action planner, one public relations officer and one person who work as a mentor for the volunteers.

We finance our work through membership fees and we do not get any support from the municipality. Luckily, two private donors have given some money to the organization.

–When it comes to state grants, it is given only for research. Social organizations may receive contributions from political parties, but it is conditional. Then you have to support them and automatically become a conduit to the political party and that is not an option for us.

How do you recruit volunteers?

–We have about 300 volunteers in our organization. We get in contact with most of our volunteers through Internet, where social media such as MySpace and Facebook play an important role. We also recruit volunteers during the many actions that we perform. When organising these actions we often cooperate with young female designers who arrange clothes on the specific theme that we have chosen for the event. We also work with young female DJs, dancers and choreographers and all this also attracts new volunteers. It is important for us not to judge anyone and to say that this is right and this is wrong, we want to gather as many people as possible for our cause to put an end to prostitution and sex tourism. The necessary thing is to participate - you evolve through participation.

What other types of activities do you arrange, besides the public actions?

– For those who enjoy feminism as an idea and want to deepen their knowledge and learn more, we organize discussion clubs and we also have our own cinema club. The ideas for all our actions and activities originate from the girls themselves.

What are your future plans and dreams – what would your organization be like in a few years?

– Well, many people compare us to People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, PETA, or Greenpeace. They perceive us as something like a feminist Greenpeace. That is flattering, though this is not really the case - yet. But perhaps in the future we could become a worldwide action-based feminist organization and network – there is no doubt that it is needed.

Chapter 10: Exercises

In this chapter, we share some of Stjärnjouren's and Avangard's favourite exercises, when working with the empowerment of young women and girls. See also chapter 8, Activities, for inspiration on how you can plan a workshop, and chapter 6, Leadership, for advice on how to improve the communication and to feel confident as a leader. Remember that these examples are mere suggestions. Further, we want to encourage you to invent your own exercises, and develop a concept or style that suits you and that serves the purposes of your organization.

Brainstorming

Especially when the group is new to you, and you do not know what knowledge and understanding they have of the theme you have planned to discuss, a good way to start the workshop (after presentation) can be with brainstorming. Write the subject of the day on a whiteboard or large piece of paper, for example "gender equality", "love", "norms" or "self-esteem". Then ask the participants to just express whatever associations they get. Be positive and encouraging – everyone has the right to her own associations to the concept presented. If they are very shy, add some own examples. After a while, you can give an introduction to the subject, using their own examples as a point of departure. When you know their understanding of the subject, it is easier for you to set the appropriate level for the discussion, and understand which subthemes that is of certain concern to them. Moreover, brainstorming serves the purpose to make the group feel included and that their thoughts are of interest.

Small group discussions

If the group is larger than eight-ten participants, it may be necessary to divide it into smaller groups when we want to go deeper into certain issues. The smaller groups could include two to four participants, to facilitate a more equal participation. Give the

groups a couple of questions to deal with. How many depends on how much time you have. For example, Avangard during a workshop on leadership, gave the girls three questions to discuss in smaller groups: 1) What is a successful woman? 2) What characteristics are needed to be a successful woman/what circumstances are needed in order to succeed? And 3) What can be the obstacles, for a woman to succeed? The groups were given fifteen minutes to discuss and to prepare a short presentation of their conclusions. For the presentation they used a large piece of paper with their own drawings, to explain what the idea of a successful woman etcetera, meant to them. The presentations after the discussions in smaller groups should be held in the larger group, as it is interesting for everyone to hear what the others think. To present your ideas in front of a larger group is additionally empowering - if you get the attention and the appreciation that we as leaders of course do our best to promote.

Public interview

This exercise serves two purposes: 1) Make the participants get to know each other better. 2) Give everyone the opportunity to, as individuals; be at the centre of the group's positive attention for a while. Divide the group into pairs of two and two. Give them a couple of questions that they should interview each other about, it can be three to six questions depending on how much time you have. Let them also make up and add at least one question themselves.. After the interview, you gather

Suggested questions for the Public interview

What makes you laugh?
What are you proud of?
How do you imagine your life
in ten years?
What person – known or
unknown – would you like
to meet and why?
Share a secret that most people
do not know about you!
What would you like to learn?

the large group again, and instruct them to give all the attention to each person who is presented. This person sits comfortable in a chair, while the other is standing and presenting her in a positive, sensational way – like she is some kind of celebrity. The audience give their applause.

Exercises to express our values

Important rules for these kinds of exercises, that you may need to remind the participants of several times, are that there is no right or wrong answers to the questions we ask. Everyone has the right to her own opinion, and it is therefore not allowed to express negative comments. If the participants feel unsecure, they may try just to give the “correct” answers, to be popular in the group, or to meet your expectations. Encourage them to make their individual choice. Make sure you do not ask things that there in your mind is a clear right or wrong answer to, for example “Is homosexual behaviour sinful?”, or “Should women be subordinated men?”

Stand in line

This is the easiest one of these kinds of exercises, and therefore a good one to start with. See that you have a room with some space, move furniture if needed. Point out one corner of the room that stands for “I agree” and the opposite corner of the room that stands for “I do not agree”. Read statements, one at the time, and instruct the participants to place themselves wherever they want – closer to or more distant from the two corners. When everyone have found their spot, ask follow up questions or arguments of why they agree/not agree/stand somewhere in the middle. After a short sharing of opinions, go for the next statement. About ten is suitable, depending on the size of the group and how talkative they are. One advantage with this exercise is that it works well in large groups. All participants may not orally express their opinions, but at least they all have the opportunity to place their stands on a scale from agree to do not agree. You can vary this exercise with different

themes. In Stjärnjouren, we often use the two variations “Stand in line – self esteem” and “Stand in line – friendship”.

The hot chair

This exercise is a bit more challenging, as it demands of the participants that they make a clear stand for “yes” or “no”. Place chairs in a circle and ask the participants to take a seat. The leader then reads statements, and the participants that agree with the statement change seat, and the ones that do not agree sit still. Ask a few of them to argument for their choice. After a short discussion, some may have changed their minds and want to make a new stand – this is also allowed. *The hot chair* is suitable for middle sized groups, and when the participants are not too new to these kinds of activities.

My favourite human rights

Lectures on the human rights tend to be on an abstract level. It can be difficult to enhance an engagement for the subject, sometimes, to make these rights real and concrete for a group of young girls. After a short introduction to the subject, list some of the rights that may be of importance to the participants.

Suggestions of rights to discuss and to rank

The right to choose man/wife
The right to education
The right of free speech
The right to one's opinion
The right to choose religion
(or to be non-religious)
The right to dress as you want
The right to live free from violence

If the group is large, divide them into smaller discussion groups. Ask them to rank these rights, and to discuss why some of them seem more essential to them than others. When you have discussed in the large group for a while, ask the participants if anyone wants to change her ranking. Encourage them to give examples from their everyday lives.

Energizers

When you and the group are tired, have difficulties to focus, or you just feel in need of a break from the serious discussions - do a fun play, or an energizer, to put some more energy in the room. It can be anything funny or silly that makes you laugh, or some physical activity that let your brains rest for a while.

Say my name

A popular energizer among Swedish WGOs this is. All participants stand in a circle, and before start everyone needs to be still and quiet. One by one then, the participants take a step towards the centre of the circle, while shouting her name out loud and making some kind of movement (a jump, raising hands or anything). First position in feministic self-defence is common, but anything except violence is allowed. After the shouting and the movement, she takes the step back again, to her former position, and the rest of the group answers by shouting her name and doing the same movement. Then it is the next person, and so on until at least everyone has shouted her name. This one further serves the purpose of learning each other's names, if the participants do not already know each other.

Social fruit salad

This play seemed very popular among the young girls in Gali, when Stjärnjouren visited Avangard in October 2009, and is now well used in Stockholm as well. Place chairs in a circle, one chair less than the number of participants. Everyone except for one person gets seated. The one standing starts by giving each one the name of a fruit (banana, apple etcetera). When she then says "banana!" all bananas quickly have to change seats, and the one standing now can try to take a seat as well, and someone else will be standing. If the one standing says "fruit salad!" all participants have to get up and find a new seat. Continue as long as it is fun, or you have time.

In order to make this exercise more empowering and interesting: instead of fruit - say something you are good at. Everybody have to

change seats if they also think they are good at the same theme. For example: “I am an excellent dancer!!”, makes all the self-proclaimed excellent dancers to stand up and find another available seat.

Action plan

This exercise is suitable in the end of the workshop, after discussions and different kind of exercises on a certain theme. Let them work one by one or in pairs, divide a paper in three parts and to quietly write down what to do to overcome or handle a specific problem. They should give at least one example each on 1) I will begin.... 2) I will stop... 3) I will continue.... Give the participants about five to ten minutes for this, and then ask them to one by one share their answers with the rest of the group. Give a lot of appreciation.

Femipedia

A brief introduction to important notions of feminist thought

In this chapter we have collected some of the most important, and in many ways fundamental, feminist concepts.

Empowerment The concept originally comes from the work for human rights throughout the world, but perhaps first and foremost from the Women's Movement and the African-American Civil Rights Movement in the United States during the 1960s and the 1970s.

The method aims at giving people the strength to become actors in their own lives and thereby change society. This means making individuals and groups aware of structures in society, thus enhancing their own self-image by shifting problems from an individual level to a societal level. It means that one can feel community with a group who then work together to change the existing situation.

The basic idea is that all human beings can grow, develop and improve their lives. More specifically, within this generation of the Women's Movement in the

United States and Europe, often called the second wave, a form of awareness-raising groups were formed where women shared their experiences and strengthened each other in their efforts to claim their rights. Contemporary discussion groups and young women's organizations and shelters draw inspiration from this tradition.

Equality is a broader concept than gender equality, as it relates to equal relations and equal rights for all individuals and groups, regardless of ethnicity, religion, social background, sexuality, gender, age and more.

Feminism An ideology and a movement that highlight the socially and culturally constructed subordination which women are subjugated to in relation to men. Feminism strives to change this social system, a system sometimes referred to as *patriarchy*.

There are many different feminist approaches, since different feminists stress different aspects or venues of female subordination, and thus have different views on how the consequences of female subordination and male superiority are to be solved. The gender order also takes different forms in different societal contexts and therefore feminist struggle does

not necessarily look the same in all societies. It is customary, however, to speak of three major traditions within feminism. Liberal feminists have fought to give women the same civil and formal rights as men; such as voting rights and the right to education. Socialist feminists see capitalism and patriarchy as two structures mutually reinforcing each other. Accordingly, socialist feminists believe it is the capitalist system that is the root to economic injustices as well as the oppression of women. Radical feminists pay special attention to the sexual exploitation of women and children, which manifests itself in ways such as prostitution, pornography and violence.

In recent years, other approaches to feminism, for example those forwarded by queer and post-colonial feminists, have become increasingly influential and have challenged and developed feminist thinking and the feminist struggle. Further on queer and post-colonialism, see below.

Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women. Gender is thus the socially

constructed sex, as distinct from the biological sex.

Instead of talking about patriarchy, we nowadays more often talk about gender power structures, gender systems and gender contracts in order to understand how different notions on sex and gender are structuring communities and restricting both women and men, girls and boys.

However, since gender is socially constructed it is also possible for it to be reconstructed, and so are gender power structures. It has thus become easier to talk about change. Both men and women are involved as participants in these processes of maintaining, reproducing and recreating gender and gender orders, albeit often with differences in resources and often unconsciously.

Male superiority and female subordination and vulnerability should therefore not be seen as something static, normal, or something that will always be. Some use the terms sex and gender synonymously. Many concerned with gender issues today see the social sex (gender) as merely one of several categories that structure our world (cf. intersectionality).

Gender equality stands for equality between women and men, girls and boys. Swedish gender equality policy is striving towards the goal that men and women should enjoy the same rights and responsibilities – the power to shape society and their own lives. The four cornerstones of the Swedish gender equality policy are:

1) An equal distribution of power and influence. Women and men shall have the same right and opportunity to be active citizens and to shape the conditions for decision-making.

2) Economic equality. Women and men shall have the same opportunities and conditions in relation to education and paid work that provide lifelong economic independence.

3) An equal distribution of unpaid care and household work. Women and men shall have the same responsibility for household work and have the opportunity to give and receive care on equal terms.

4) Men's violence against women must stop. Women and men, girls and boys must have equal rights to and opportunities for bodily integrity.

Gender system is also referred to as *gender power structure*, which describes the social relations between the sexes. Two logics or principles govern our current gender system according to the Swedish historian Yvonne Hirdman:

1) The *dichotomy* or the apart-keeping logic between the sexes. Male and female should not be mixed, which is reflected in for example sex-segregated labour markets, where many occupations are considered to be distinctly male or female.

2) The *hierarchy* between the sexes, in which that which is considered masculine is the norm in society and therefore attributed a greater value than that what is considered to be feminine. Thus, in areas where mostly women work, women are discriminated against in terms of the value of the work they do. This results in lower pay and status (often despite the long training required for these jobs).

Intersectionality To see something from an intersectional perspective means to have an awareness of power structures and to realize that differences in the abilities to act are depending on where people come from, their gender, age, what culture they belong to, what their parents are

working with and what they earn, if they are heterosexual, bisexual or homosexual, if they have a disability, and other things. Intersectionality is a focus on these structures, and it poses the questions what they might mean in different contexts and how they sometimes can be in contradiction to each other, or be mutually reinforcing one another.

Heteronormativity Our culture is characterized by a dualistic way of thinking, i.e. we tend to always think in opposites: warm – cold, nature – culture, man – woman, etc. This is particularly evident in the way we look upon gender. Not all cultures and societies have divided people into men and women in the way that is prevalent in the world order today. In this order, these two categories of are perceived as different from each other and attracted to each other. The view that this is natural and as it should be is called heteronormativity. Gender dualism and thus heterosexuality is the norm.

Homosociality means to identify with, listen to, support and seek contact with representatives of one's own biological sex (exclusively or primarily). For example, a heterosexual male who prefers to socialise with men may be

considered a homosocial heterosexual. Feminists who emphasize aspects of solidarity between males often use the term. Feminist scholars have also drawn attention to the fact that men, more than women, display homosocial patterns. It appears to be harder for men to listen to women and to recognize women's skills, than vice versa.

Honour-related violence Patriarchal violence can be defined as a collective term for the violence found throughout the world that is rooted in the patriarchal power structures it defends. While men usually are exposed to violence outside the family, women and girls are the primary victims of violence in the home and within the family. This has not only made the violence invisible and placed victim groups at risk, but it has also made it more difficult to provide protection against systematic violence and oppression. Characteristic of families in which honour-related repression is exercised, is the referring to a collectivist moral system in which the individual interests, will and life are completely subordinated to the collective. These kinds of family systems are patriarchal, with clear hierarchies of power in which the oldest men dominate and where

the youngest daughters and the daughters-in-law have the lowest status and the least say.

A central issue is the control over the sexuality of women and girls, with particular focus on the unmarried virgin, where the myth of the hymen has a special symbolism. The man and the honour of the group are directly linked to the actual or alleged sexual behaviour and relationships of the women and girls.

Honour-related oppression may manifest itself in girls not being allowed to move freely and on their own in public places, to participate in sex education, to dress as they want to or to have a love affair, and in the subjection of such women to psychological and physical violence. In order to preserve the "honour" of the man or the group, some men can go so far as to murder their own daughters - the public preservation of "honour" legitimizes the act. Genital mutilation can also be seen as a form of honour-related violence. Boys may too suffer from this oppression, for example by being forced to marry someone chosen by their parents or in being expected to control their sisters.

LGBTQ Homosexual, bisexual, transgender and queer - that is all people who are not sure that they are not entirely heterosexual. In all known societies sexual intercourse between individuals of the same sex has been more or less common and is so even among the majority of animals. Cultures and societies, however, show a wide variation in views on same-sex sex.

In Europe in the late 1800s a vision of homosexuals as deviants and perverts emerged. The emergence and the strong impact of the psychoanalysis also contributed to the stigmatization of the non heterosexual. Many feminist historians have seen the oppression and the pathologizing of lesbians as a weapon against the emerging Women's Movement.

In Sweden, homosexuality was criminalized in 1864 and this law was not repealed until 1944. In many countries in the world, homosexual behaviour is still a legal offence, in some places even punishable by death penalty. Although issues related to the rights of LGBTQ persons have been widely debated in recent years having a significant influence on the public opinion, homophobic hate crimes and heteronormativity is still prevalent.

Queer Theory was established as a multi-disciplinary research area in the 1990s with its roots in post-structuralism, post-colonialism and feminist theory. Its main focus point is to challenge heteronormativity. How it can be that a sexual relationship and identity - the heterosexual - appears to be the one and only goal and meaning in life, while all other preferences are regarded as unnatural and incomprehensible, is perhaps one of the most important questions within queer theory.

Masculinity While conceptions of femininity have been questioned by philosophers like Mary Wollstonecraft in the eighteenth century, Simone de Beauvoir in the 1940s, and generations of feminists after them, conceptions of masculinity are yet in its beginnings to be deconstructed, called in to question and analyzed.

Man has been understood as human, the subject or agent in our history, while Woman has been understood as the Other, as a passive object. The term *hegemonic masculinity*, first formulated by Australian sociologist R. W. Connell, is often used to explain why men continue to dominate world politics, economy and other decisive spheres of power. Ukrainian researcher in cultural

studies, Tetyana Bureychak, defines hegemonic masculinity as “a set of ideas about masculinity, which are institutionally legitimized, culturally dominant and symbolically reproduced as a desirable way to be and act as a man”.

Some men embrace these ideas and strive to embody them, some men are excluded, marginalised or oppressed, some negotiate with the ideals and some find themselves in an opposite position towards dominant ideas of masculinity, but we all have to relate to these images and their huge impact on our world.

Master suppression techniques refers to when an individual or a group of individuals use social manipulation to dominate another individual or group. Master suppression techniques are an established term, especially within the Nordic women's movement. Learning to recognize when someone uses these techniques means that you have the tools to make male superiority and female subordination visible.

Women can, however, also use them. The five master suppression techniques were first formulated by the Norwegian social psychologist and politician Berit Ås who

was fed up with not being respected by her male politician colleagues. Later the five techniques were expanded to eight.

1) *Making invisible* – an effective way of silencing people is to simply ignore their existence.

2) *Ridiculing* – to use manipulative ways to depict somebody's arguments or personality as ridiculous and unimportant. This is done by, for example, using striking but irrelevant images. Another way is to comment on a person's appearance in front of a group.

3) *Withholding of information* – to exclude somebody or marginalise her role by withholding essential information from her.

4) *Double binding* – to put somebody in a situation where she is belittled and punished regardless of which alternative she chooses.

5) *Blaming and shaming* – to get somebody to be ashamed of their characteristics, or to suggest that something they have been the victim of is their own fault.

6) *Objectification* – when someone's appearance and body are in focus, although they are irrelevant in the context.

7) *Violence or threats of violence* – to use physical force to get one's own way. A master suppression technique many experience daily in a direct way, but it also results in a constant fear of rape in many women who never have been exposed to violence.

8) *Fragmentation* – for example, to, in various ways, cast suspicion on women's community and organizing through the prejudices that women cannot keep on good terms, insinuate that all feminist are lesbians, etcetera.

Postcolonialism / postcolonial feminism According to postcolonialist thinkers, many of the assumptions which underlay the "logic" of colonialism are still active forces today. The ultimate goal of postcolonialism is to combat the still remaining effects of colonialism. Recognizing that colonialism still has widespread material consequences for the nature and scale of global inequality makes this project all the more urgent.

A key goal of postcolonial theorists is clearing space for multiple voices. This is especially needed for those voices that have been previously silenced by dominant ideologies. It is therefore important to accept the plural nature of

the word postcolonialism, as it thus does not simply refer to the period after the colonial era. By some definitions, postcolonialism can also be seen as a continuation of colonialism, albeit through different or new relationships concerning power and the control and production of knowledge.

Postcolonial feminism is a form of feminist philosophy which centers around the idea that racism, colonialism, and the long lasting effects (economic, political, and cultural) of colonialism in the postcolonial setting, not only involve non-white, non-Western women. Postcolonial feminists criticize Western feminists because they have a history of universalizing women's issues, and their discourses are often misunderstood to represent women globally. Postcolonial feminists are primarily preoccupied with the analysis of how male supremacy is maintained by racist and post-colonial structures in today's society.

With the recognition that various power structures can interact and affect women's positions most differently, anti-racist and post-colonial feminists take their point of departure from different women's experiences of subordination in a patriarchal society, and

deal with the structural discrimination that prevent people from participating on equal terms.

Rape There are various perceptions of what constitutes a rape. For example, it may be what the law says, how the law is actually applied, or even what we as an organization takes as the position of what a rape is. According to Swedish law, anyone who by force or by threat of a criminal act compels a person to sexual intercourse, or sexual activity comparable to sexual intercourse, shall be sentenced for rape.

There are also regulations that provide that a person who is asleep or is in a helpless state, for example due to alcohol, may also qualify for protection by these regulations. Any sexual intercourse, or similar sexual act, with a person under 15 years is a rape because of the fact that a child can never consent to sexual intercourse. Sexual intercourse, in this context, includes vaginal intercourse, anal intercourse, but also oral sex, or if, for example, one inserts objects or fingers into another person's vagina or anus.

What does it mean? "Violence", as described in the Swedish law, is physical violence, but need not be severe violence. It is sufficient

enough if someone uses his or her body to press down or push another person's legs apart. The threat does not need to be explicit; a situation in which someone feels intimidated is enough. To be in a "helpless state" means, for example, that you are very drunk, drugged, or that you are asleep or unconscious. Mental impairment, illness or injury can also make you unable to protect yourself. Laws, however, are created by people and they change when the values in a society are changing. One can feel raped and feel bad even if the act does not count as a rape under the law. There are other definitions of rape, which are not directly related to the law:

Everything after a 'no' Many define rape as "everything that happens after that someone has said no to sex". There are many situations when you cannot, dare not or feel that there is no sense in saying no, but they might still be perceived as rape.

Everything before a 'yes' Another definition of rape is that everything before someone has said yes, or expressed the desire to have sex, is rape. This means that you have never the right to have sex with someone without an okay from that person. Sometimes you might say yes because you feel that you

have no choice, or you do not dare to do otherwise or because someone is in a superior position and exploits it.

How common is it? No one can say for sure how common rape is. One reason for this is because the vast majority of rapes never get reported to the police. Sexual abuse is more common than many people think it is, and most of us know someone who has been exposed, even if you may not be aware of it.

Is it possible to get raped by the person you are in a relationship with? Being in a relationship with someone does not mean that you have to say yes to sex. Rape mostly occurs indoors and often you know the person who is exposing you to rape.. About half of the rapes reported in Sweden are committed in the home of the one who rapes or the one being raped.

What position can a WGO take on this issue? Many organizations choose to have their own opinion and views on the matter. For a WGO it can be difficult to say whether a young girl has been exposed to rape (under the legal definition) or not, because we often get too little information. However, what the law says is not the most important. Rather the

focus always has to be the girl's experience of what has happened. In any context, a 'no' should, as a matter of course, always be regarded as a 'no'.

Sexuality can be understood as practices and processes of human interaction, where pleasure can be shared and new life created. Sexuality is a socially constructed phenomenon with cultural, emotional, biological and political dimensions. Sexuality can be used as a tool to manifest unequal power relations, for example by using other people's bodies for pleasure without their informed consent.

Within Christianity, and many other religious traditions, sexuality is a function limited to reproduction. It is justified only within marriage, which is meant for man and woman. Generally within the major religious traditions, controlling women's sexuality has been considered particularly important. In societies such as the ancient Greek, women were considered to be closer to animals than to men, and hence more dominated by sexual instincts, which during this time was perceived as a weakness.

It was only towards the end of the 1800s that the concept of sexuality

was first used and sexology shortly thereafter to be introduced as a scientific field. With Darwinism and biology's status as the fashion science during this time, masculinity became all about biology. The male sex drive was upgraded and linked to initiative and competitive instincts, while ideal femininity increasingly began to be associated with chastity, maternal care and the absence of sexual feelings and needs.

The first sexologist Havelock Ellis has been praised as a pioneer of the sexual revolution and has exerted an enormous influence on the understanding of sexuality in the West. Ellis major theme is the idea of male domination and feminine submission as something biologically determined and necessary for sexual pleasure. Sexuality is determined, according to Ellis' successors, by a power relationship where the male is hunting for the female, and his defeat of her resistance is what sexuality is all about.

Other theorists, who during the last century have exercised great influence over theories on this field, include Sigmund Freud and Michel Foucault. From a historical point of view, it is not until recently that only men have

defined sexuality and gender relations.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), was adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly to stop discrimination on the basis of gender. It consists of 30 articles and is often described as an international bill of rights for women. The Convention defines discrimination against women as "...any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field."

By accepting the Convention, states commit themselves to undertake a series of measures to end discrimination against women in all forms, including:

- to incorporate the principle of equality of men and women in their legal system, abolish all discriminatory laws and adopt appropriate ones prohibiting discrimination against women;

- to establish tribunals and other public institutions to ensure the effective protection of women against discrimination; and

- to ensure elimination of all acts of discrimination against women by persons, organizations or enterprises.

The Convention provides the basis for realizing equality between the sexes through ensuring women's equal access to, and equal opportunities in, political and public life – including the right to vote and to stand for election – as well as education, health and employment. CEDAW is the only human rights treaty, which affirms the reproductive rights of women and targets culture and tradition as influential forces shaping gender roles and family relations. States parties also agree to take appropriate measures against all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of women.

Today 186 of 192 of the UN member countries have signed the Convention. The number of states that have made reservations on many points is however large. Both the Women's Commission and the CEDAW Committee, who monitor the implementation of the Convention, have drawn the

attention of the international community to the fact that the many reservations conflict with the object and purpose of the Convention. They also call on states to review and withdraw their reservations.

Although insufficiently enforced, this is a legal instrument to lean on when fighting for girls' and women's rights. Countries that have ratified or acceded to the Convention are legally bound to it. Moreover, they are committed to submit national reports, at least every four years, on measures they have taken to comply with their treaty obligations.

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Appendix

Useful links with information in English available:

A UN sponsored webb tool for NGOs and others working for peace, conflict solving and with gender issues (information on Avangard, among many other organizations): www.peacebuildingportal.org

For the full text of Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) see: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm>:

Kvinna till Kvinna's homepage: www.kvinнатillkvinna.se

ROKS:s homepage: www.roks.se

SKR:s homepage: www.kvinnojour.com

Information on FEMEN:
www.go2kiev.com/view/femen.htm

Joint homepages of WGOs in Sweden: www.tjejjouren.se

United Nations Development Fund For Women, UNIFEM's homepage: www.unifem.org



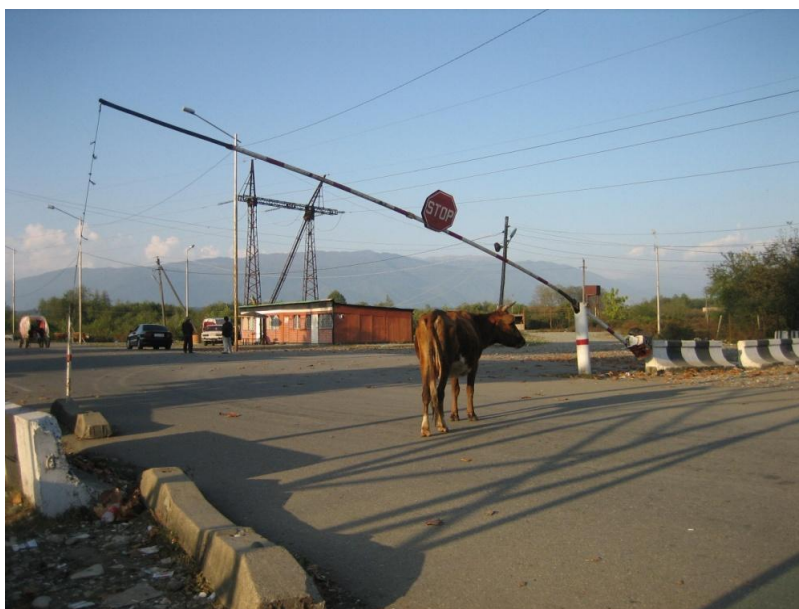
Sofia at the Abkhazian border.

Madlena and Sofia at a workshop in Gali.





Sofia at a workshop in Gali, Linnéa in the background.
Waiting at the border of Abkhazia.





Avangard and Stjärnjouren in Stockholm (pictured with Linnéa's sons).
Linnéa and Madlena presenting YWCB at Kvinna till Kvinna's office.





Avangard's and Stjärnjouren's summer camp in Stockholm 2010.





Avangard and Stjärnjouren at the summer camp's dance workshop.

Below, Linnéa and Karin Robertsson with two participants.





Avangard's and Stjärnjouren's summer camp in Stockholm 2010.





Avangard's and Stjärnjouren's summer camp in Stockholm 2010.





Avangard's and Stjärnjouren's summer camp in Stockholm 2010.

We made this book:



Linnéa Bruno was the project manager of YWCB and currently holds the position as research assistant in Departement of Sociology, Uppsala University. She has a master's degree in social sciences and her main scientific interests are gender, youth studies and social movements. Bruno has two beautiful boys and a part-time husband. She dreams of more music and time in nature in her life and of a global feminist revolution.



Cecilia Chavez Sanchez is a member of the board of Stjärnjouren and was during the spring and summer 2010 also employed in YWCB as project coordinator. She holds a Bachelor in political science, worked for several years in the European Parliament in Brussels, had a change of heart, and decided to devote all her paid and un-paid time to teenagers instead. Cecilia loves hip hop, red meat, languages, and endless talks of life, love and politics.



Sofia Lundkvist is a freelance journalist. She has an M.A. in Political Science with a focus on development issues and gender politics from Stockholm University. At the moment she works for the Swedish Work Environment Authority on matters relating to threats and violence in the workplace from a gender perspective. Her favorite writing topics are: women and gender in literature, development and politics. She is a trained dancer, and a master of irony, and only a very small group of selected people have seen her with her hair down.



Sandra Åslund holds an MSc in International and European Politics. She works as a project manager at Stjärnjouren and is developing a programme for communicating sexuality and equality among youth. Previously, she has worked internationally with human rights issues and HIV prevention. She also has a background in research in how to prevent male violence against women. Sandra's main mode of transport is her bicycle on which she spends hours per day, although she frequently uses her credit card to buy tickets to go further south. She is the first to enter the dance floor and the last one to leave. Her roaring laughter can be heard for miles.

www.stjarnjouren.nu

Support and Empowerment

This book is a method book for WGOs – Women's and girls' support and empowerment organizations. It was produced within the framework of the cooperation project *Young Women Crossing Borders*. The two sister organizations of YWCB were Avangard, situated in the disputed area Abkhazia, Georgia, and Stjärnjouren, situated in Sundbyberg, Sweden.

The overall aim of YWCB was to develop and strengthen Avangard and Stjärnjouren as organizations and to improve our work to enhance the position of women and girls in society in our respective countries. Our exchange of experiences is intended to benefit both organizations and, hopefully, to be extended to other similar organizations.

Organizations and individuals working for the same goals that we do, but in a variety of political, economical, social and cultural circumstances, can hopefully find use of the thoughts and recommendations in this book, despite all the differences between our respective countries.

Young Women Crossing Borders was financed by The Swedish National Board of Youth Affairs and carried out from September 2009 until September 2010.