EMPOWERMENT
RIGHTS
RESOURCES

Strategy 2017–2021
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Introduction

Forum for Women and Development (FOKUS) is an umbrella organisation that, as of January 1st 2017, comprises 64 member organisations. FOKUS was established more than 20 years ago and builds on a long tradition of North-South cooperation on social, economic and political development for women.

FOKUS works to advance women's empowerment, rights and access to resources; to increase the international involvement of its member organisations; and to promote the inclusion of women’s human rights and participation in Norwegian international development policies.

During the strategy period, FOKUS will work toward achieving:
- reduced violence against women
- strengthened sexual and reproductive health and rights
- protection of women’s economic rights and participation in legislation, working life and private sector business investments
- greater protection women in all phases of crisis and conflict

These objectives are to be achieved through a combination of development cooperation, knowledge-based advocacy and communication activities, to be carried out in collaboration with and through alliances with other stakeholders.

This strategy applies to the international activities of member organisations that are coordinated via or conducted as part of programmes administered by FOKUS. The strategy is adopted by the General Assembly and implemented by the FOKUS Board and secretariat.

Vision

FOKUS’ vision is societies based on gender equality and equity, where women’s human rights are respected and protected and with equal access to participation regardless of gender.

Mission

FOKUS is a member-based knowledge and resource centre. Through advocacy and international development cooperation, the organisation will strengthen the international commitment and endeavors to promote women's human rights and participation in society.

Overall objective

The overall objective of FOKUS is to strengthen women’s empowerment, rights and access to resources.

Outreach

We seek to reach women and girls unable to realise their rights and potential due to discrimination, oppression and poverty. Factors such as ethnicity, indigenous affiliation, disability, age, civil status, sexual orientation and gender identity can exacerbate discrimination and marginalisation and must be given special attention.

Rights and framework

Human rights are universal, yet many girls and women do not have the same rights as boys and men.

The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is the most important human rights document connected to the FOKUS strategy. Other key framework documents are the Platform for Action from the UN World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995), the Programme of Action from the UN International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo (1994) and the UN Security Council’s resolutions on women, peace and security.

In 2015, the UN adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals to be achieved by 2030. One of the goals is gender equality, which is also a prerequisite for achieving the other goals. All of FOKUS’ activities during the strategy period will support the Sustainable Development Goals.
The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly. The Convention defines what is considered as discrimination against women, and stipulates requirements for national measures that must be taken to end discrimination. The Convention has been ratified by almost all UN member states, but many of them have included reservations on important provisions, citing national legislation or religion.

The Platform for Action from the UN World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995) consists of 12 thematic areas, which remain equally relevant today. The Beijing Plan of Action is used as a basis for demands presented in national and international fora.

The Programme of Action from the UN International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo (1994) includes groundbreaking provisions on sexual and reproductive health and rights.

The UN Security Council’s resolutions on Women, Peace and Security (S/RES/1325, 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106, 2122 and 2242). Security Council resolution 1325 was adopted in 2000. This represented the first time for the UN's top organ for peace and security adopted a resolution recognising that women and men are affected differently by war and conflict; that women need to be protected against violence in conflict situations; and that women's participation and rights are essential to international peace and security. SRC 1325 and subsequent resolutions stipulate requirements for the inclusion of women in preventive efforts; in peace processes; to provide protection against sexual violence and abuse; state that violence and abuse against women in situations of conflict are war crimes; and affirm women's right to access the legal system and services. All Security Council resolutions are binding for UN member states.

The UN's Sustainable Development Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.

5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.

5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

5.4 Recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.

5.5 Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.

5.6 Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.

5.a Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws.

5.b Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.

5.c Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.
How to achieve lasting change?

Discrimination, oppression and poverty lead to a lack of respect for women's human rights. Compared to men, women are underrepresented in decision-making processes and have less access to resources such as capital, property and knowledge. Women are often particularly vulnerable in situations involving war and conflict.

FOKUS' theory of change is based on the understanding that women themselves are key actors to improve their rights and position in society. Combining international program cooperation with communications- and advocacy activities, creates a basis of practical realization of women’s human rights and bottom up change.

Women’s access to knowledge and information is critical to ensure their full participation in society. Women's organisations play a vital role in raising women’s awareness and increasing their access to knowledge. Establishing and strengthening women's organisations is the foundation for mobilisation and advocacy at local, national and international level. FOKUS also facilitates cooperation and mutual learning among partners.

Targeted measures for improving the situation of women provide a framework for organizing and mobilizing women and for promoting women's genuine participation in politics and society. Measures to reduce violence against women and provide greater safety and support for women victims of violence often play an essential role in enabling women to participate more actively in society. Measures to strengthen women's control over their own bodies and reproduction help to dismantle barriers to women's participation in working life as well as political life. Activities that improve the ability of women to earn their own income and expand their rights to capital, inheritance and property serve to strengthen women's economic autonomy. Measures addressing the special needs of women in situations of war, conflict or natural disaster promote more active participation by women in reconstruction efforts and social development.

Lasting changes depend on good legal frameworks and laws. By documenting and systematising their own experiences and solutions, women and women's organisations can increase their influence and achieve greater legitimacy in political advocacy efforts.

Thematic priorities

Political participation is both a goal in itself and a prerequisite for realising women’s human rights. Organising and mobilising women's interests is essential to achieve the objectives in each of the thematic priority areas during the strategy period. FOKUS will actively participate in efforts to protect women human rights defenders and others who put themselves at risk to advance women's human rights and participation.

Nordic countries can draw on their own experience and research-based results in the global effort to promote gender equality. As a Norwegian organisation, FOKUS is in a position to influence Norwegian foreign- and development policy. The Norwegian Government’s Action Plan for Women’s Rights and Gender Equality in Foreign and Development Policy 2016–2020, Freedom, empowerment and opportunities, represents an opportunity to put women's human rights and participation higher on the international development agenda.

FOKUS will prioritise the following thematic areas during the 2017–2021 strategy period:
**Women’s right to control their own bodies**

**Objective for the strategy period:** Reduce violence against women.

Violence against women is a structural problem that hinders gender equality and democracy. Violence can be physical, psychological, economic and/or sexual in nature. It may be rooted in tradition, culture or religion; it may be a strategic tool in conflict situations; or it may be part of the practice of a criminal network. FOKUS targets its efforts towards different expressions of violence against women such as domestic and intimate partner violence, female genital mutilation, prostitution, human trafficking, forced labour and sexual violence during conflict.

**Objective for the strategy period:** Strengthen women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights.

The lack of information and knowledge-based sexuality education has major consequences for girls and women worldwide. Poor access to contraception, healthcare services and legal and safe abortions increase the risk of sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancies and unsafe termination of pregnancy.

**FOKUS wants to:**
- Increase common knowledge about violence against women and its consequences
- Encourage the adoption and implementation of laws that safeguard women’s right to a life without violence and criminalize violent acts
- Mobilize for women’s shelters, rape crisis centres and other direct support measures for women who are victims of violence
- Ensure that Norway actively promotes and supports women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights in its development policy
- Eliminate discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression
- Ensure that women can undergo pregnancy and childbirth without unnecessary risk
- Introduce legislation safeguarding women’s right to decide when and if she wants to have children
- Promote safe pre- and postnatal healthcare services
- Promote universal knowledge-based and comprehensive sexuality education
- Ensure access to contraception as well as legal and safe abortions
- Decriminalise abortion

**FOKUS will achieve these objectives through:**
- Programme cooperation, supporting services for women who are victims of violence; mobilisation against gender-based violence; and women and girls’ access to sexual and reproductive health and rights
- Communication and advocacy activities to increase political support for women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights
- Building alliances to mobilise against gender-based violence and to support women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights

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**Women’s economic rights and participation**

**Objective for the strategy period:** Women’s economic rights and participation are protected in legislation, working life and private sector investments.

Globally, women are overrepresented in the poorest segments of the population; in the group of people with insecure and low-wage jobs. They have less access to land, property and economic resources. Equal rights to education, inheritance, property and financial services are necessary, but are not in themselves sufficient to change the constellation of economic power between the genders. Women’s salaries, working conditions and right to independent organizing are equally important.

Private sector development and investment in emerging markets comprise a larger part of Norwegian and international development policies than has previously been the case. The impact on women’s human rights have not been explored sufficiently as a part of corporate social responsibility. Nor have companies included these impacts when assessing due diligence (i.e. mapping the risk of human rights violations) even though the activities of many companies affect women’s lives, often in manners that are different from men’s.

**FOKUS wants to:**
- Promote equal rights for women to financial services, inheritance and property
- Ensure that women have decent working conditions and living wage
- Safeguard women’s right and ability to organise in trade unions
- Ensure that Norway actively advances women’s economic rights and participation in its foreign and development policies;
- Incorporate gender equality and women’s human rights as a key element of Norway’s international policies on business, investments and trade
- Include women’s human rights in due diligence assessments and in reports by Norwegian private and state-owned companies and financial institutions

**FOKUS will achieve these objectives through:**
- Programme cooperation aimed at strengthening women’s economic autonomy
- Communication and advocacy activities promoting women’s equal rights to inheritance, property and credit services
- Alliance-building to develop practical tools for companies’ due diligence assessments based on CEDAW
Women in conflict and crisis

Objective for the strategy period: That more consideration is devoted to women in all phases of conflict and crisis.

Conflict and crisis affect women and men in different ways. In light of their roles as caregivers for children, the elderly and the sick; as producers of food; and as managers of natural resources, women are affected to a greater extent than men. Violence and other types of discrimination against women escalate in conflict and refugee situations.

The transitional post-conflict period is critical in ensuring lasting and just peace. Crimes committed against women must be addressed, such as gender-based violence and abuse, as well as violations of economic rights including ownership rights to house, land and property.

Preventing conflict, crisis and its consequences can reduce destruction and human suffering. The depletion of nature and natural resources increase the risk of natural disasters and future conflicts connected to such resources. In many societies, women are the most important producers of food and managers of forestry resources. Women’s experience-based knowledge must be incorporated into preventive efforts at all levels, from international climate negotiations to local plans for climate change adaptation.

FOKUS wants to:
- Include women and incorporate their rights and needs in all phases of conflict and crisis (prevention, response and reconstruction)
- Ensure that acts of gender-based violence and sexual abuse in times of conflict and crisis are reported and prosecuted
- Safeguard women’s and girls’ sexual and reproductive health and rights in all phases of conflict and crisis
- Incorporate recognition of women’s access and right to land and natural resources into the reconstruction and reconciliation phases following conflict or crisis
- Promote women’s active inclusion and involvement in peace processes, peace negotiations and the implementation of peace agreements
- Ensure the implementation of all UN resolutions on women, peace and security
- Incorporate gender perspectives into national and international climate change-related processes and measures
- Enhance the resilience of women to the impacts of climate change

FOKUS will achieve these objectives through:
- Programme cooperation supporting legal and practical assistance to women victims of violence and abuse during conflicts, and efforts to ensure women’s participation in peace processes
- Communication and advocacy activities to ensure that women’s human rights are protected during all phases of conflict, including in humanitarian operations, and to encourage Norwegian authorities to continue to spearhead and show leadership in all work relating to the UN Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security
- Building alliances and participating in networks that follow up the Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security and promote the incorporation of gender perspectives into humanitarian efforts

FOKUS as a strong, professional and sustainable organisation

Objective for the strategy period: FOKUS is a sustainable organisation with highly dedicated members and a robust financial situation. FOKUS is recognised as a professional, reliable, innovative, high-performance organisation.

FOKUS as a member organisation

The member organisations provide expertise, experience and engagement in FOKUS. New spaces or arenas for involving member organisations will be developed during the strategy period, in order to strengthen the members’ involvement in and ownership to FOKUS’ activities.

FOKUS wants:
- More member organisations to participate actively in decision-making processes in FOKUS
- Increased participation at events and activities organized by FOKUS
- New spaces for involving member organisations
- Coordinated and effective advocacy for women’s rights and gender equality internationally

FOKUS will achieve these objectives through:
- Being a visible and solid knowledge and resource centre for the member organisations
- Establishing member-based working groups within the strategy’s three thematic priority areas
- Conducting a review of its internal organisation and governance, and follow up the resulting recommendations during the strategy period

Financial situation

FOKUS needs to expand its revenue base. This is important to secure existing activities, being able to launch new initiatives and to establish a broader financial base to reduce vulnerability in the wake of changing political priorities.

FOKUS wants to:
- Reduce the organisation’s dependence on a single source of income
- Increase non-earmarked income
- Increase the number of financial contributors

FOKUS will achieve these objectives through:
- Designing and implementing a plan to increase revenues and multiply funding sources
- Establishing and promoting a donation scheme for individuals and businesses
- Increasing the number of regular donors
FOKUS as a professional actor

FOKUS is considered the leading advocate for international women’s issues in Norway. As a knowledge and resource centre, FOKUS knows how to integrate women’s rights and gender equality in the broader development and humanitarian context.

FOKUS wants to:
- Enhance learning and exchange activities within the organisation: Between members, between members and partners, and between partners
- Set the political agenda on international women’s issues and gender equality vis-à-vis Norwegian authorities and other development actors
- Increase the understanding of ways in which civil society, women’s organisations and networks, and other organisations can make a difference in the efforts to realise women’s human rights

FOKUS will achieve these objectives through:
- Designing new programme guidelines for the next framework agreement period (from 2019)
- More knowledge-sharing and learning for the secretariat, the member organisations and FOKUS’ partners
- Continuous political advocacy activities
- A mid-term evaluation and revision process of the strategy