

Case Study: Women for Change (WFC)

Background of WFC

Since 2016, Women for Change (WFC) is a women-led organization (WLO) that has been undertaking work in protection, education (formal and informal), reproductive health, food security and livelihoods, peace building, organizational capacity strengthening, and advocacy in Central Equatoria, Warrap and Western Bahr El Ghazel States, South Sudan. Prior to this project, WFC had never assumed leadership of a GBV working group. The opportunity to assume co-leadership of the GBV working group in Warrap State emerged through this project in February 2022. When WFC's Executive Director came across the call for expressions of interest shared by the South Sudan NGO Forum's information desk, they decided to apply. Out of the ten organizations that applied, WFC was the successful applicant.

They joined the GBV Working Group as a second co-chair, providing leadership alongside the group's chair (the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare) and co-chair (The Organization of Children in Harmony – TOCH), a male-led organization.

A due diligence process was conducted by CAFOD and Trócaire in Partnership (CTP) South Sudan. Once the award was offered, the WFC team travelled to Warrap (Kuajok) to be officially introduced to the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare and other GBV actors. WFC also conducted the official opening of their coordination office in Warrap State.

WFC'S experience in the project

"The coordination role is giving me the confidence to do something... a woman leader from Trócaire has supported me with different opportunities. Sometimes they are stressful but good for visibility outside, to build confidence to understand the global context. I get to engage with the National GBV AoR Coordinator one-to-one and discussing things, and they now call me for information. This did not used to happen. We have even gotten connected to National GBV AoR Coordinator. When we used to call, he would ask for the agency's profile, but now he knows me he asks for strategic information and gives information about what is happening nation-wide. We get this information easily now."

Anna Tazita Samuel - Executive Director, WFC

WFC reported feeling welcomed by other partners in the coordination structure. They linked up with the GBV Area of Responsibility (AoR) at national level, which provided constant support to the WFC Protection Officer. This helped build the confidence of WFC's staff.

A two-day engagement between the WFC Executive Director and Protection Officer and Trócaire on the details of the project helped develop a stronger understanding of the capacity strengthening support project and the leadership role in GBV coordination.

Since assuming the co-chair role, WFC have presented at national GBV AoR coordination meetings, which demonstrates how a prominent platform has been opened to a local WLO for the first time.



Some challenges during project implementation included negotiating equal roles for the two co-chairs, so that WFC was not only doing the administrative work (for example, communications and taking minutes). Steps taken to address this included setting a timetable with the co-lead to share the responsibilities and alternate key tasks such as co-chairing, minute taking, and sharing outcomes with working group members and the national GBV AoR.

Impact of WFC as co-chair

For GBV Survivors and community members:

With WFC serving in the role of co-chair, the organization mobilized GBV actors for the International Day of the Girl Child, 16 Days of Activism, and International Women's Day, thus ensuring that more community members were reached through these campaigns. WFC, on behalf of the Warrap GBV working group, shared a press release on GBV issues affecting communities, including forced marriage, intimate partner violence, and non-prioritization of girls' education. WFC also contributed to raising awareness on GBV through Kuajok FM Radio talk shows.

WFC's heightened visibility as co-chair has increased community requests for WFC to carry out more programming activities in Warrap state. For example, WFC was given 1000 dignity kits by the national GBV AoR coordination team. WFC distributed these to the flood-affected women and girls in Gogrial.

For other GBV actors:

As a result of this project, the working relationships between WFC and other GBV actors (local/national, international and UN Agencies) in Warrap State have grown stronger. For example, in Warrap/Kuajok, WFC is seen as a source of information and connection between different actors in the community and at the State level. Government institutions such as the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC) and State Ministries now support local WLOs to take up leadership positions in humanitarian response.

The project has improved the trust between WLOs and the GBV AoR. It has brought WLOs and the GBV AoR closer together, and local organizations feel that their experience and contributions are valued.



The project has also made the local community and the government institutions understand that WLOs can lead in coordination. There is now increased visibility of WFC as well as other WLOs in the humanitarian sector.

For WFC:

WFC as a co-chair benefited from the capacity strengthening sessions on fostering collaborative leadership, managing meetings and effective communication, GBV in Emergencies Minimum Standards, GBV coordination, and an induction on the GBV AoR provided through joint monthly learning sessions. These sessions were facilitated by Trócaire's Programme Lead and Senior Humanitarian Protection Advisor as part of this project.

WFC has gained different leadership experienced since taking up the coordination role that range from conducting a mapping exercise in Kuajok to leading on the GBV assessment during the Gogrial Inter-Agency Flood Assessment. As a result of its coordination role, WFC has been involved in a South Sudan donor round-table meeting and high-level engagements to share their experience and the importance of having WLOs assume leadership roles in coordination structures.

Building on the confidence acquired in the GBV working group coordination in Warrap State, WFC's Executive Director has profiled her agency's work at various levels. In September 2022, WFC was invited to a meeting by the Swiss Embassy in South Sudan after a Swiss delegation visited Warrap State. WFC shared their experience in GBV coordination and recommended that the embassy and other donors work directly with local WLOs. WFC also participated in the International Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) Conference in London from 28 to 29 November convened by the UK government, the START Network Conference in Istanbul, and the Stabilization Workshop, hosted by the German Federal Government in Berlin, on empowering the feminist movement, and working with WLOs in conflict related countries.

WFC has leveraged its coordination role to hold strategic meetings with donors and agencies, resulting in funding opportunities from DanChurchAid, the US Embassy, and CAFOD and Trócaire in Partnership. This project has enabled WFC to receive endorsement for Rapid Response Fund (RRF) resources twice from the national GBV AoR coordination.

Key Lessons

WLOs face added pressures when assuming coordination roles in South Sudan. There is an expectation from communities that the organization has the resources to support GBV survivors, when in reality the WLO may not have the resources available to respond to vast needs. To complement their leadership in GBV coordination, WLOs should also be supported with sufficient funding to enable them to engage in GBV programming initiatives.

Due to patriarchal social norms, WLOs continue to face resistance when taking up leadership roles. WLOs need to be fully supported (with financial and technical support) by the GBV AoR, INGOs, donors, and other actors to navigate social and cultural complexities.

"Taking the coordination role has been one of the most interesting projects that WFC has ever implemented. From the day we were informed that WFC was selected, it was exciting for the whole team and particularly for me. It was so interesting and inspiring because it was a proposal that I wrote myself and seeing it coming to reality was dream come true."

Anna Tazita Samuel - Executive Director, WFC

For further information, visit [WFC's website](#), the [Resource Package on WLOs Leadership in GBV Coordination](#), and the [video testimony](#) from WFC's experience in GBV coordination.