Savojana proposal to the UN trust Fund

“Community responses to address violence on women”

Terms of reference of the Constellation

Background

Savojanaand the Constellation share a vision: that of communities where peace, joy and justice prevail. They act on the premise that communities have within themselves the essential resources to develop their own vision for their future and to act to realize that vision. Communities however tend to underestimate their potential and to expect external help to solve their own problems. However, once communities perceive their own strengths, they readily use those strengths to address their concerns. Hence, the common ethos of Savojana and of the Constellation is the appreciation the strengths of individuals, families and communities. It embraces victims and perpetrators in the same appreciation, rooted in the experience of the fundamental goodness of human beings: there are no bad people, there are only bad actions.

Irrespective of the local nuances communities will bring to their dream, violence on women represents a clear and widespread threat to those dreams. However, the perception of violence on women is often limited to widely publicized cases of physical violence such as (gang) rape and assassination. That extreme violence merely reflectsa much deeper and pervasive ill-being rooted in the traditional, economic, psychological dimensions of gender relations, which may be compounded by a sense of powerlessness shared by both genders. The unseen but major part of violence is harbored in the privacy of people’s homes.

However deep and widespread individual concerns may be, as long as they are not discussed they do not exist for communities and families. Hence, the first impact of this project consists in increasing community awareness about all aspects of violence through the facilitation of community discussion and of community reflection about the various facets and the deeper roots of violence on women. The community dream will serve as backdrop of the discussion, as communities dreaming about the future understand the need to develop harmonious relations that enable every person to contribute to the fullest of his/her ability.

The second impact of this project consists in the meaningful actions communities take towards the development of harmonious gender relations.Such actions will be decided by communities through a process that enable the less powerful (including, but not limited to women) to be heard and to fully participate in the action. Action plans will address violence in a holistic fashion that will include primary prevention through addressing the locally relevant facets of gender inequality, address the immediate causes of physical violence, local processes for healing of victims and for the prevention of relapses by perpetrators, referral of cases in need of professional assistance. The community discussion and reflection about action will avoid the oversimplification of solutions, where the powerless aspire and act to replace the powerful without proper focus by all on the development of harmonious relations.

The systematic learning from action constitutes the third impact of this project. Communities will include in their plans the specific actions they will take to check on progress, through both quantitative and qualitative indicators. Those monitoring and evaluation plans will be available for external audit. Action and the systematic checking on progress will enhance community understanding of both strengths and challenges, and thereby offer the opportunity to adapt their actions. Eventually there will be no learning without action and no action without learning.

The horizontal transfer of inspiration and of experience represents a forth project impact.As communities make progress towards more harmonious gender relations, the realization of their own potential not only inspires them to do more and to do better, but that inspiration stimulates them to share their experience with other communities.

Finally, with proper facilitationof face to face meetings called knowledge festivals, various communities can build common principles for action from the lessons they learn from their experience builtin different contexts. These common principles are then available to all communities addressing gender violence and to those policy makers who intend to create a favorable environment for communities to take action.

Project activities

In order to obtain the specified community outcomes, Savojana will:

1. Develop a corps of facilitators ( “community accompagnators”) originating in or intimately linked to communities who step alongside communities through specific awareness training on the issue of violence and apprenticeship of the various steps involved in the community response to violence on women.
2. Develop a set or support teams who will implement the apprenticeship of the “community accompagnators”, keep an eye on the quality of the accompaniment and take measures for its enhancement, monitor and support horizontalsharing with other communities and vertical sharing with people who can influence the context in which communities operate.
3. Connect local communities with other communities outside their immediate environment through face to face and virtual encounters for learning and sharing, and for the distillation of common principles for action stemming for lessons learned in different contexts.
4. Support the communities in the channeling toward policy makers of the energy and the information for change originated in their experience of progress

Terms of Reference

In collaboration with the Sarojana team, the Constellation team will participate in the development and the enhancement of the quality of the processes described above and specifically:

1. Facilitate the development of a common process whereby *communityaccompagnators* will stimulate and connect local responses to violence on women. This process will build on members’ collective experience, while leaving ample freedom for adaptation by each member organization in the context of its own mission and activities.
2. Through the incorporation of the collective experience of Savojana members, adapt to the issue of violence on women in the context of South India a generic community action learning process developed and implemented in more than 60 countries.
3. Offer its global experience in the development of local support teams.
4. Offer its virtual platform for learning and sharing and facilitate knowledge festivals that will update process and synthesize results.
5. Offer its communication channels for the experience of South Indian communities to be shared worldwide.