



Participation in NGOs: The Gender Gap in Participation

A report prepared for the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies
as a follow-up to the CIVICUS survey

Table of Contents

<i>Summary of Findings</i> _____	4
<i>Introduction</i> _____	8
<i>Methods</i> _____	9
Quantitative Survey _____	9
Qualitative Survey _____	11
<i>Results</i> _____	13
Year of Establishment _____	13
Overall Participation _____	13
Full-time members _____	15
Volunteers _____	17
Activities NGOs are involved in _____	20
Gender Participation _____	23
Gender participation at an organization level _____	23
Gender participation in terms of the number of people involved _____	24
Type of activities by gender _____	25
Gender Gap in Participation- Input from the Qualitative Survey _____	27
Extent of involvement _____	30
Leadership _____	36
Differences in leadership capabilities between women and men _____	41
Taking initiative and decision making _____	42
Empowerment _____	43
Barriers to participation _____	46
Reasons that drive and could enhance the participation of women _____	48
Gender Quota Policy _____	50
<i>Conclusion</i> _____	53

Table of Figures

Figures

Figure 1 : Number of years the NGO has been in operation	13
Figure 2: Total Number of people involved in NGOs	13
Figure 3: Total Participation by NGO field of activity	14
Figure 4: Overall participation	14
Figure 5: Number of Full-time members	15
Figure 6: Average Age of Full-time Staff	15
Figure 8: Age of Female vs. Male Volunteers	18
Figure 9: Active Volunteers	18
Figure 10: Key parameters that make a volunteer active	19
Figure 11 : Overall Marital Status of People involved in NGOs	19
Figure 12a : Overall Marital Status of Women	20
Figure 12b: Overall Marital Status of Men	20
Figure 13 : Activities handled equally by staff and volunteers	21
Figure 14: Differences in activities handled by staff and volunteers	22
Figure 15: Actual gender participation at an organization level	23
Figure 16: Overall Gender Participation	24
Figure 17: Gender Participation of Full-time staff	24
Figure 18: Gender Participation of Volunteers	25
Figure 19: The more 'female' tasks	25
Figure 20: The more 'male' tasks	26
Figure 21: Activities handled more or less equally by women and men	27
Figure 22: Perception on Depth of Participation	31
Figure 23: Person in charge of the organization	36
Figure 24: Gender split in Board of Directors	36
Figure 25: Working groups organized by females or males	37

Tables

Table 1: Sample Breakdown by region	10
Table 2: Sample Breakdown by field of activity	10
Table 3: Reasons for contribution of men being higher than women	32
Table 4: Reasons for contribution of women being higher than men	33
Table 5 :Barriers to participation of women	46
Table 6 : Parameters that drive a greater participation of women	48

Summary of Findings

The field of Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) appears to be a well-established field in Cyprus with the NGOs interviewed having been in operation for an average of 30 years. Nevertheless, participation still remains at relatively low levels, often not exceeding 50 members at an overall level for the majority of NGOs.

Voluntary contribution is the most extensive form of involvement, with 64% of the total number of people involved in NGOs being volunteers. Notably, a considerable share of NGOs (specifically 15%) solely depends on voluntary contribution alone.

Gender differences are apparent across various aspects of participation. As the findings of this survey suggest, gender participation does not depend on absolute numbers alone, but parameters related to field of activity, quality, breadth and depth of participation are of great significance and cannot be overlooked.

Women enjoy a good breadth of participation, having infiltrated to a large number of NGOs. More specifically, just more than half the organizations interviewed claim a greater number of women involved. Conversely, in terms of the actual number of people involved, gender participation stands at equal levels between women and men, indicating that men enjoy a stronger of 'numeric' presence. Moreover, in line with the findings of the Civicus Survey, 'depth' of participation (extent of involvement) is perceived to be higher among males.

A distinct gender polarity is also apparent in terms of involvement per field of activity, with more women being involved in Social Service and Welfare Organizations, while Trade Unions, Professional Associations, Youth and Sports Organizations are more male-dominated.

In terms of involvement in specific activities, even though gender is not considered to be an important parameter when NGOs allocate responsibilities to their members, division of labor follows a distinct gender split: Administrative and secretarial duties are virtually the key responsibility of women, while men favor strategic positions or positions of leadership.

The gender polarity observed in NGOs tends to be quite diverse and multifaceted as indicated by the many different opinions expressed by the organizations interviewed. The fact that responses, especially in the case of the qualitative survey, are varied suggests that the NGO field in Cyprus is quite segmented, with different issues being of significance across the various fields of activity.

At first, 'voluntary contribution' (which for most NGO translates as 'charity' or 'taking care of people in need') seems to be strongly intertwined with the female nature, thus women are more expected to be involved in Welfare and Social Service Organizations. Bound by social norms and expectations women and men often predispose themselves for particular positions. Since women are considered to be more sensitive, more caring and more nurturing than men, they would often limit themselves to positions that have to do with 'taking care of people in need', as in the case of Welfare Associations. Conversely,

men, who are perceived to be more practical, more targeted, more effective, more focused and more succinct, are drawn to managerial and leadership positions.

Moreover, the participation in different activities may also arise from the fact that women and men express different interests, preferences, skills and qualifications. Some NGOs consider women to be more artistic and more creative than men and thus having a greater tendency to participate in such activities. On the other hand, men are utterly thought to be involved in positions of leadership for self-promotion since they will be provided with an opportunity to utilize their connections and their networking.

Quite importantly, it is often the case that NGOs would not place a high importance on gender differences within their organization. It appears that the focus and priorities in most NGOs concentrate on carrying out their activities and getting the 'work done'. An even representation of gender seems to be more of a 'luxury' rather than a priority. Consequently, some NGOs have a tendency to accept the division of labor and the different roles that women and men assume, in lieu of acknowledgment of the 'normality of things' and acceptance that 'this is how things are'.

Barriers to participation

Despite the fact that involvement of women and men stands at equal levels numerically, the overall extent of involvement ('depth of participation') is greatly skewed towards men. This finding is in line with the results of the CIVICUS survey, suggesting that participation of women in NGOs indeed needs to be strengthened and the barriers to a greater involvement need to be alleviated.

Barriers to a greater participation of women utterly concentrate on lack of time and the burden of family responsibilities (taking care of the children, the home and the family). Other prohibiting aspects mentioned (each by a small share of NGOs), include:

- The nature of the field of activity of an NGO as in the case of Trade Unions and Professional organizations where the mode of operation (the frenzied and haphazard hours of operation, male-dominant professions) discourages the participation of women
- Various forms of discrimination (women not been given equal opportunities because of their gender, not equal pay, not equal reward as men)
- Less awareness on behalf of women on how they can participate because the information disseminated by NGOs is predominantly male-targeted
- Lack of expertise in particular fields of activity (Professional Associations, Sports Organizations, Trade Unions); women may be less trained and less educated than men and thus are often not being trusted as equal members
- Lack of acknowledgement of their contribution and lack of appreciation and reward
- Lack of empowerment and lack of confidence that they will be accepted as equal members, especially in leadership positions
- Lack of the right motivations and the right mechanisms on behalf of the organizations to attract women

Leadership

Leadership positions within NGOs appear to be predominantly a male territory. The prevalence of men is very dominant in Executive positions (i.e. positions of the general manager, executive director, president etc) as also in the Board of Directors, where the ratio of men to women involved stands at 73% to 27% respectively.

Qualitative findings highlight a wide spectrum of parameters that contribute to the low representation of women in decision-making bodies.

Firstly, de facto situations and a passive attitude on behalf of NGOs (acceptance of the current situation and resistance to change) appear to be greatly limiting. A high share of NGOs claim that they are often driven to invite men for participation in their Board of Directors in view of the fact that there is not a large enough pool of women in high-rank positions. Moreover, some organizations may indirectly and unintentionally exclude women from their coordinating bodies, adhering to the habit of traditionally and historically having male Board Members and exhibiting a resistance to change.

Social norms also play a key role, since burdened by family responsibilities women would often not advance within NGOs.

Empowerment issues are also of importance as women may be prevented or discouraged by men. On their behalf, women themselves may not claim or contend for an executive position, feeling that the responsibility is too great for them to cope.

Encouraging participation

Qualitative findings highlight many different perspectives on the factors that could enhance the participation of women. Quite importantly, the majority of the reasons mentioned indicate that a higher participation of women greatly depends on the internal procedures of the NGOs themselves and thus it would not be a difficult task to implement, provided a predilection towards this direction.

Acknowledgement and appreciation of contribution have overwhelmingly been mentioned by all NGOs as the key parameters that could enhance participation of women. NGOs recognize that giving meaning and value to the involvement of their members encourages their active participation.

Education and awareness are also considered to be important factors in driving higher involvement, especially taking into account that women may be at a disadvantage when it comes to information. Education and information are strongly related to personal growth and empowerment; the more empowered the members, the higher their participation will be.

Furthermore involvement in targeted projects that are more suited to the interests of women could act as motivations to a higher involvement. Last, but not least, participation in key strategic and a leadership positions is recognized as an important aspect in encouraging more women to participate.

Gender Quota Policy

NGOs exhibit a strong and negative attitude towards the implementation of a gender quota policy. Instead, they consider that a gender quota policy is more applicable to governmental bodies rather than non-governmental organizations.

Almost all but one of the NGOs interviewed perceive that the implementation of quotas is a discriminatory practice as organizations may be encouraged to overlook the actual qualifications of their members in lieu of fulfilling their quotas. For NGOs, participation is strongly considered to be a qualitative concept rather than a quantitative one and thus quotas would not necessarily connote equality or contribute any benefit to the organization.

Moreover, quotas are thought to have a negative impact on the organization: the security attached to the quota implementation would discourage active participation as some of the members would take their advancement for granted and would not actively strive towards it.

Aims of the research

The aspect of gender participation in NGOs is definitely a complex and multi-dimensional one. The findings of this research have attempted to highlight all aspects that are of significance in terms of participation (i.e. numeric representation, quality, depth and breadth of participation) and also provide greater insights about the barriers and the factors that can enhance a greater participation of women.

Introduction

Aiming to encourage a strong civil society in Cyprus, the MC-Med, in collaboration with Intercollege, conducted the CIVICUS: Civil Society Index (CSI). The CSI survey revealed that gender differences were apparent with regards to the active involvement of women and men in Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's). In particular, more than 40% of the CSOs interviewed (from both sides of the island) felt that participation of women in CSOs was somewhat under-represented. Moreover, an equal percentage believed that women were severely under-represented or even completely absent when it comes to leadership or executive positions.

This study stems from the findings of the CSI survey, initiated under the assumption that involvement of women takes place at a lesser extent than men.

The study was carried out from October to November 2006. The principal objective of the study was to investigate the extent to which women participate in NGOs. More specifically, the study aimed at:

- (i) Quantifying the extent of involvement of women in NGOs (both in terms of numbers and frequency, i.e. how many and how often)
- (ii) Identifying the barriers and constraints potentially excluding women from participation.

Methods

To address the two-fold objectives of the survey, both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed.

Quantitative Survey

The quantitative survey aimed at providing all necessary 'numeric' measurements, in terms of:

- (i) the percentage of women and men involved at an overall participation level
- (ii) the percentage of women vis-à-vis men involved at different participation levels (full-time and part-time staff, volunteers, Board of Directors)
- (iii) the share of women participating in leadership positions and strategic activities
- (iv) the type of involvement (in terms of different activities)
- (v) the barriers to women's' participation
- (vi) the factors that drive the participation of women in certain organizations.

The sample

A short quantitative questionnaire was implemented through the method of telephonic interviews to 101 NGOs. The NGOs were randomly selected from a list of non-governmental organizations, classified by field of activity as defined in the CSI Index. Once an NGO was selected from the list, the interview was conducted with the person responsible for the day-to-day activities of the organization (this person mainly being the Executive Director, the president of the Board, a Board Member, a program officer or the executive secretary)

Even though no quotas were placed in terms of activity and region, the sample followed a random natural fall-out that yielded representativeness to the universe in terms of these parameters.

In view of the fact that the majority (87%) of the NGOs in Cyprus are established in Nicosia (NGOs that are located in other regions are usually branches of these), it was estimated that regional differences would not be apparent, thus region was not a key parameter for recruitment. The sample breakdown reflected the high concentration of NGOs in Nicosia, with 90 out of the 101 interviews been conducted with NGOS located in Nicosia

More particularly, the sample breakdown by region was as follows:

Table 1: Sample Breakdown by region

<i>Sample Breakdown by Region</i>	<i>Number</i>
Nicosia	90
Limassol	5
Larnaca	5
Paphos	1
Total	101

Moreover, the sample followed a natural fall-out in terms of field activity, with the Welfare CSOs, Business and Professional Associations, Trade Unions and Sports Associations constituting more than 60% :

Table 2: Sample Breakdown by field of activity

<i>Field of activity</i>	<i>Number</i>
Welfare CSOs	21
Professional and Business Associations	21
Trade Unions	11
Sports Associations	10
Social Service Organizations	6
CSOs active in Education, Training and Research	5
Associations for marginalized groups	5
Youth Associations	4
Environmental CSOs	4
Advocacy CSOs	3
Ethnic organizations	3
Culture and Arts CSOs	2
Faith-Based / Church Organization	1
Community-level group/ association	1
Social Activity and Recreation CSO	1
CSO active in Social movements	1
Other	1
Total	101

The interviewing guide

A fully structured questionnaire was implemented, constituting of both closed and open-ended questions. Since telephonic interviews were used, the maximum duration of the interview was kept at 15 minutes, so as to ensure the maximum possible concentration of respondents over the phone. None of the pre-codes were read-out so as to allow for the spontaneous response of the respondents and ensure that all barriers/reasons/differences were fully captured.

Guarantees of confidentiality and anonymity were also provided : all respondents were informed that results would be analyzed at a total level, with no mentions being made individually by organization.

Upon completion of the interviews, all questionnaires were edited to ensure that the proper skips were followed. In addition, specific questions from the questionnaires were back-checked to confirm the quality of the data. Any outliers were double-checked with follow-up calls.

The questionnaires were punched using the rPunch software and then analyzed in Quantum and SPSS, after all data was validated. Cross –tabulations were also produced to provide further insights for specific segments (i.e. fields of activity, involvement of females, involvement of married females, female vs. male participants etc)

Qualitative Survey

The main aim of the qualitative phase was to provide an in-depth and detailed exploration of the reasons hindering a greater involvement of women.

NGOs were selected at random from a comprehensive list of the majority of NGOs in the South part of Cyprus. The list was compiled from a variety of sources, namely the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, the NGO Resource Center and the listing of NGOs published in the Yellow Pages.

During the selection process, care was taken so as to ensure an even representation of NGOs in terms of field of activity. Once an NGO was selected, an appointment was arranged beforehand with the eligible person (usually a person involved in an executive position within the organization) and the interview was then conducted face to face at the premises of the organization.

The number of interviews selected was such so as to provide a good breadth in terms of the field of activity, always according to prevalence of each field in the overall universe of NGOs. In particular, 11 NGOs were interviewed from the fields of Welfare, Trade Unions, Environment, Youth, Education and Research, Advocacy and Culture and Arts. The following sample breakdown was implemented: 3 Welfare NGOs , 2 Trade Unions, 2 Youth Organizations, 1 Environmental Association, 1 Advocacy Organization, 1 Culture and Arts Institution and 1 Education and Research NGO.

A semi-structured discussion guide was implemented with an approximate duration of one hour. The duration of the interview was such so as to ensure that the interest of the participants remained intact and that the respondents were actively engaged in the discussion.

At the start of each interview, the participants were informed about the overall purpose of the study. Attention was paid to the level of detail to be disclosed so as to ensure that the research process would not be affected in any way. Participants were also informed that although the session would be recorded, they had the option of remaining anonymous in the analysis. Quite importantly, all of the participants interviewed requested that no mention was made to themselves or their organizations by name.

Clearly, guarantees of confidentiality and anonymity were provided. Moreover, participants were encouraged not to mention their names during the interview, while the moderator also refrained from making any mention of the name of the respondent and the organization.

The sessions began with warm-up questions to help build a relaxed and comfortable environment between the respondent and the moderator. During the session, probing and clarification questions were used in order to maintain the respondents' interest and engage them in the discussion. At the end of the session, the moderator clarified any questions, concerns or points of confusion.

All in-depth interviews were taped and the most substantial and important responses were transcribed by hand (transcription excluded only any irrelevant comments that the participants made when they side-tracked). To maintain confidentiality, transcripts did not include the names of the participants, but were instead coded by field of activity.

Upon conclusion of each interview, notes were taken to record the main points and to capture the overall 'feeling' during the interview. The analysis was conducted by first listening to the tapes and then reading through the notes and the transcribed responses, in an attempt to obtain a comprehensive overview of all the data.

The information collected by the in-depth interviews was analyzed in a thematic format, with responses being grouped under the major questions so as to highlight more clearly the most important aspects and the meaning of the responses. Any additional aspects or ideas that arose from the collected material were classified into new thematic categories, which were further explored during the analysis.

Interestingly, it appeared that NGOs had different perceptions and presented their own unique perspective for many of the issues explored in the discussion. This finding suggests that different issues are of significance across the different fields of activity of NGOs. It is often the case that even within the same field of activity, NGOs would exhibit a different outlook on certain issues, indicating a high segmentation among the universe of non-governmental organizations. In view of this, in many cases in the results section the responses of each individual organization were mentioned separately, following the broad assumption that these responses may represent similar perceptions of other NGOs within the same field of activity.

It is noted that the quoted verbatims represent the perception of the individual respondents interviewed and there is a possibility that these perceptions may not represent the entire outlook or environment that is present in the organization as a whole.

Results

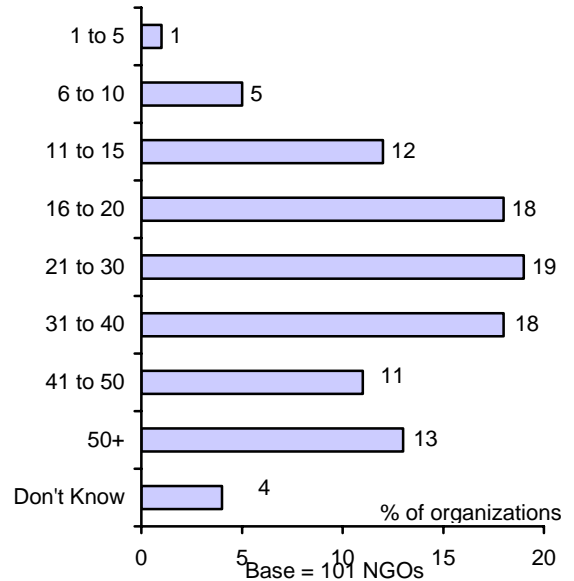
Year of Establishment

The field of Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) appears to be a well-established field in Cyprus with the NGOs interviewed having been in operation for an average of 30 years.

Interestingly, about 1 in 4 of the NGOs claimed to have been in operation for more than 40 years. Trade Unions and Professional Associations are the longest established, with years of operation exceeding 50.

In terms of registration, the overwhelming majority of the NGOs, specifically 99%, are registered bodies.

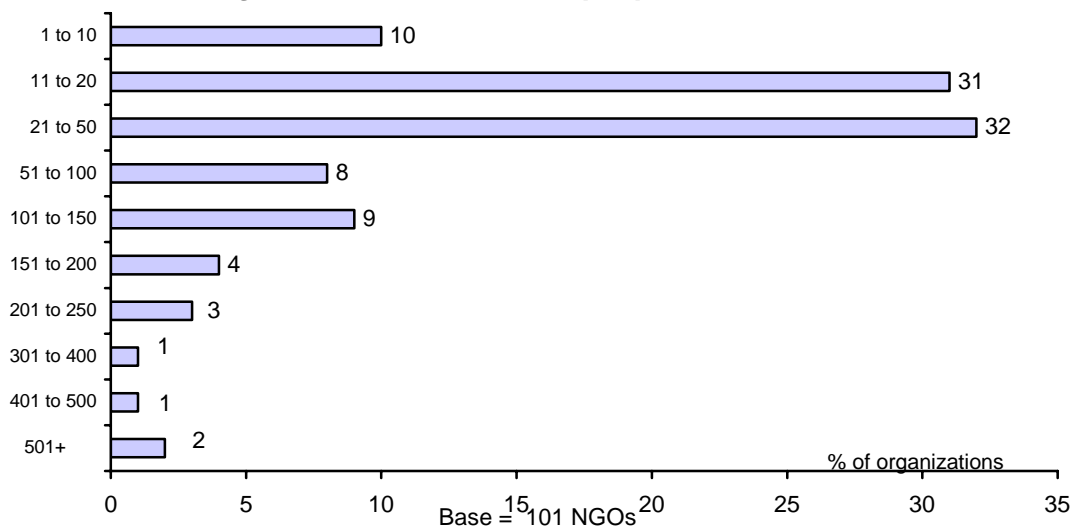
Figure 1 : Number of years the NGO has been in operation



Overall Participation

Despite the long and well-established presence of NGOs in the country, participation remains at relatively low levels. For the majority (73%) of the organizations participation does not exceed 50 members overall.

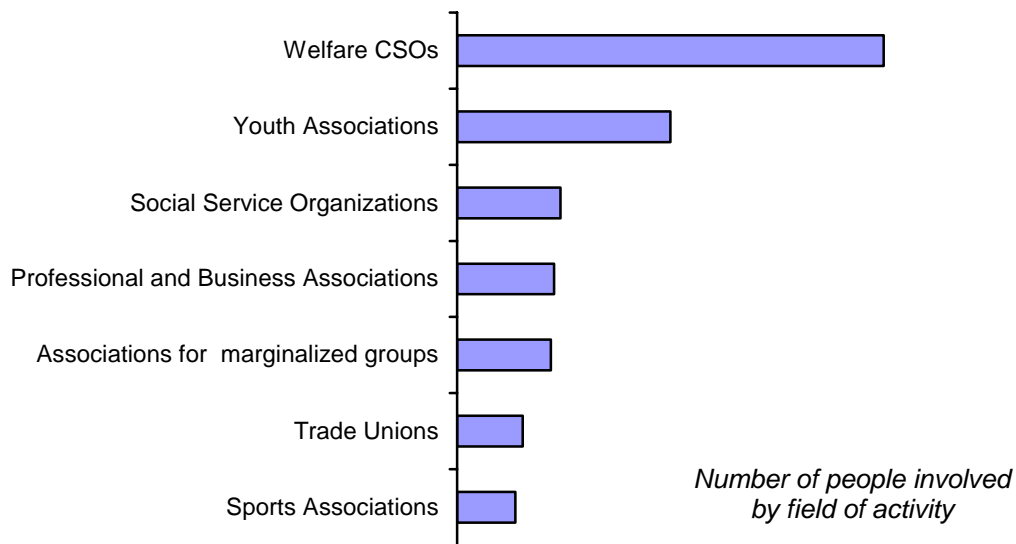
Figure 2: Total Number of people involved in NGOs



In terms of the actual number of people involved, Welfare CSOs strongly prevail, enjoying the highest involvement of members and volunteers. Youth Associations are also well preferred, ranking second in terms of their total number of participants. Social Service Organizations, Professional Associations and Trade Unions are among the top five fields with the highest participation.

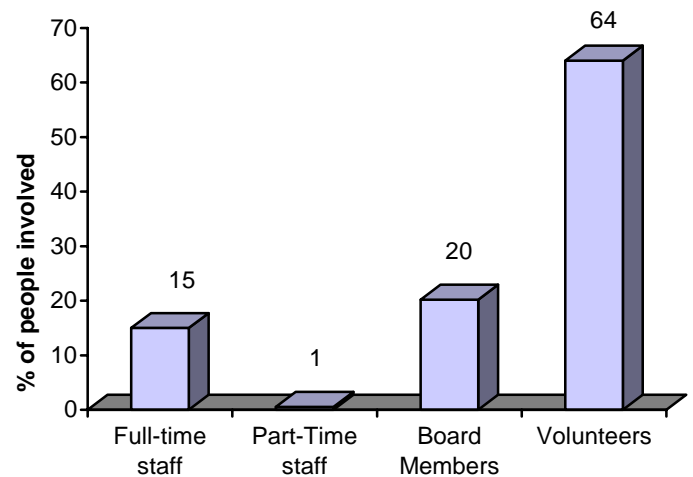
Conversely, participation is lower in fields related to Culture and Arts, Ethnic or Faith - based organizations and Social Activity/recreation CSOs

Figure 3: Total Participation by NGO field of activity



Voluntary contribution is the most extensive with the majority of the people who are involved in NGOs (namely 64%) being volunteers. Participation is also high in Board of Directors (reaching 20% among the total number of members), which is also voluntary. The Board is often perceived to be the most active body within the organization. On average, Boards usually consist of 15 members, the majority being men.

Figure 4: Overall participation

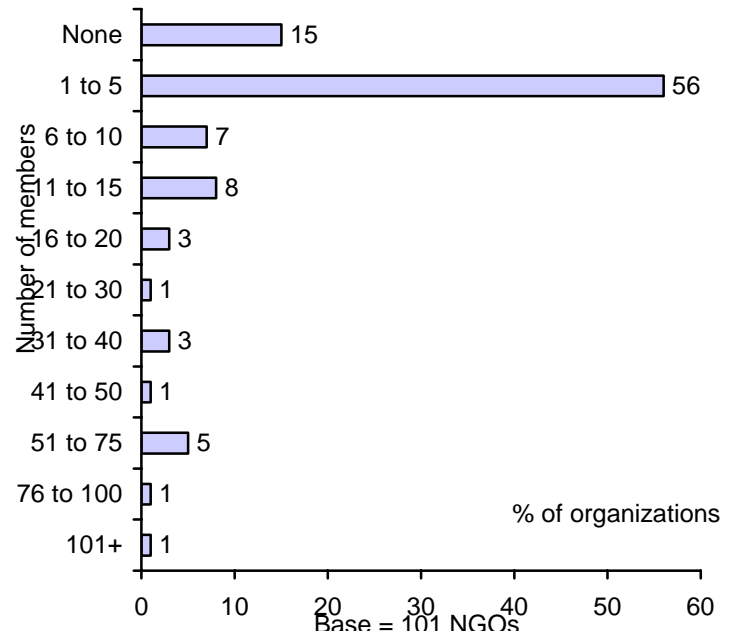


Full-time members

Evidently, NGOs employ a small number of full-time members: While 15% of NGOs solely depend on voluntary contribution and have no full-time staff, 56% of them claim that their full-time members do not exceed 5.

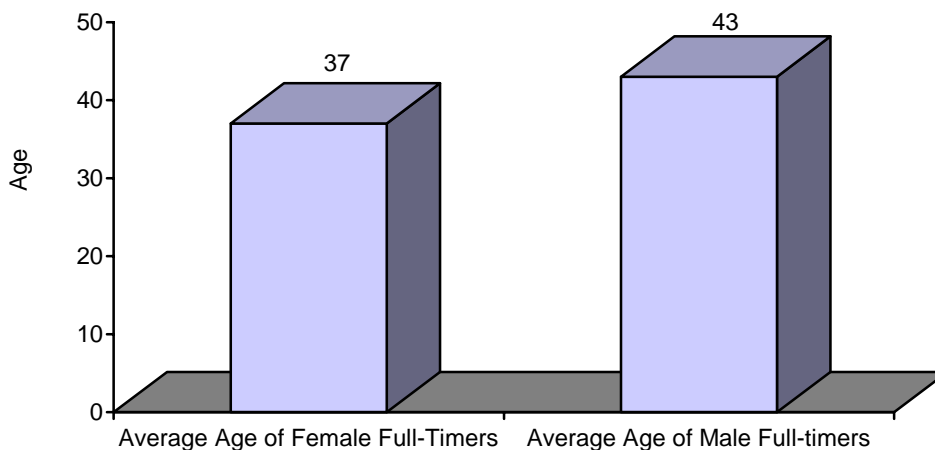
This is probably attributed to the fact that most NGOs need to operate within tight financial resources, and thus need to heavily rely on voluntary contribution. Only some of the Trade Unions and Professional Associations claim that their full-time members exceed 50.

Figure 5: Number of Full-time members



The full-time staff of NGOs is usually middle-aged (late-thirties or early forties), probably due to the fact that many of the full-timers have been with the organization for quite a long time, perhaps even since the first years of its operation. Moreover, taking into account the tight financial constraints NGOs may experience; it is not customary procedure that organizations will recruit new (and younger) employees.

Figure 6: Average Age of Full-time Staff



Part-time employment in NGOs is negligible with only 16% of the NGOs interviewed employing part-timers. The number of part-timers is very low, usually around 1 to 2. The ratio of women to men part-timers stands at 49%: 51%

Volunteers

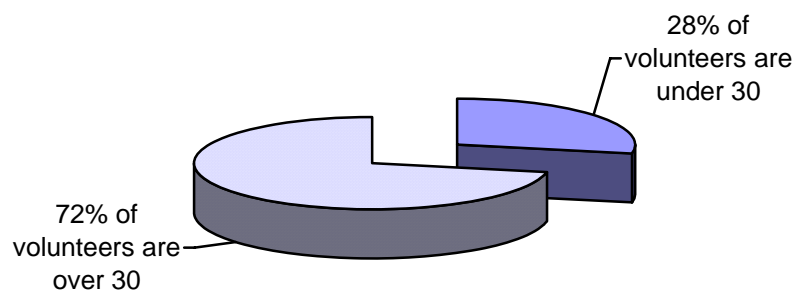
Just slightly more than half (52%) of the NGOs interviewed employ volunteers. Notably, 26% of these operate on a purely voluntary basis, with no full-time or part-time staff.

Youth and Welfare organizations utilize the highest number of volunteers, while Trade Unions and Professional Organizations do not depend so much on voluntary contribution, since the majority of these NGOs operate mostly through paid-staff.

In terms of age, volunteer work seems to attract people over 30, this trend being the same among both males and females. Findings from the qualitative interviews suggest that volunteers are often pensioners who seem to have enough free time in their hands. Women in particular have a greater tendency to join an NGO at an older age, when they have completed their obligations with raising the children.

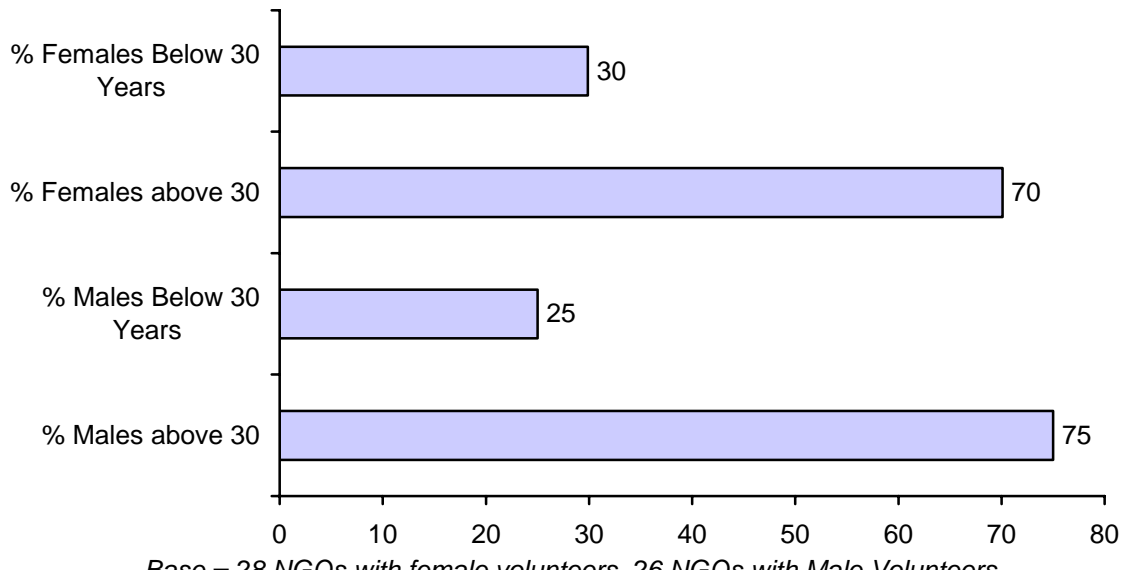
With regards to encouraging the participation of younger members, two of the organizations perceive that volunteer work is an alienated concept for the younger generation and highlighted the need for the educational system to help educate and encourage the youth to be involved in volunteerism.

Figure 7: Age of Volunteers



Base = 51 NGOs that involve volunteers

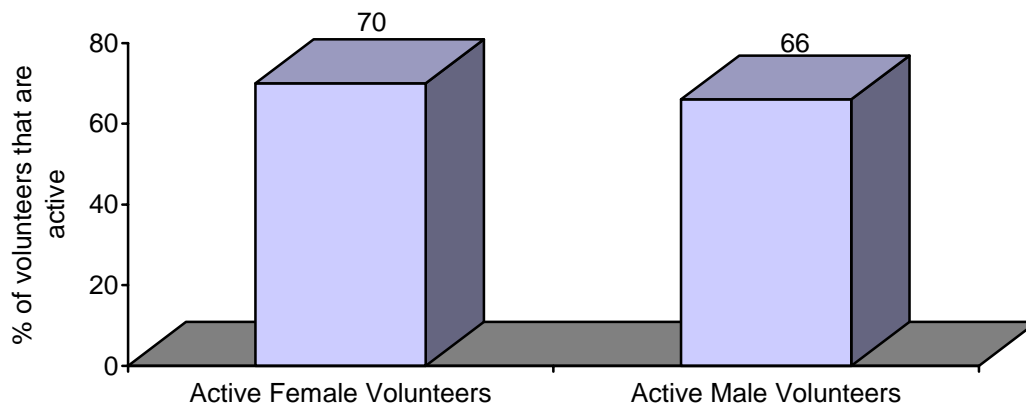
Figure 8: Age of Female vs. Male Volunteers



Quite importantly, about half of the organizations interviewed, and especially those with the highest numbers of volunteers, could not specify the age of their volunteers. This is probably attributed to the fact that NGOs either (i) do not have frequent contact with their volunteers or (ii) it is virtually impossible for them to personally know all their volunteers well, since they have quite a large number of them.

NGOs claim that the majority of their volunteers are actively involved. About 70% of the female volunteers are perceived to be active as are 66% of the male volunteers.

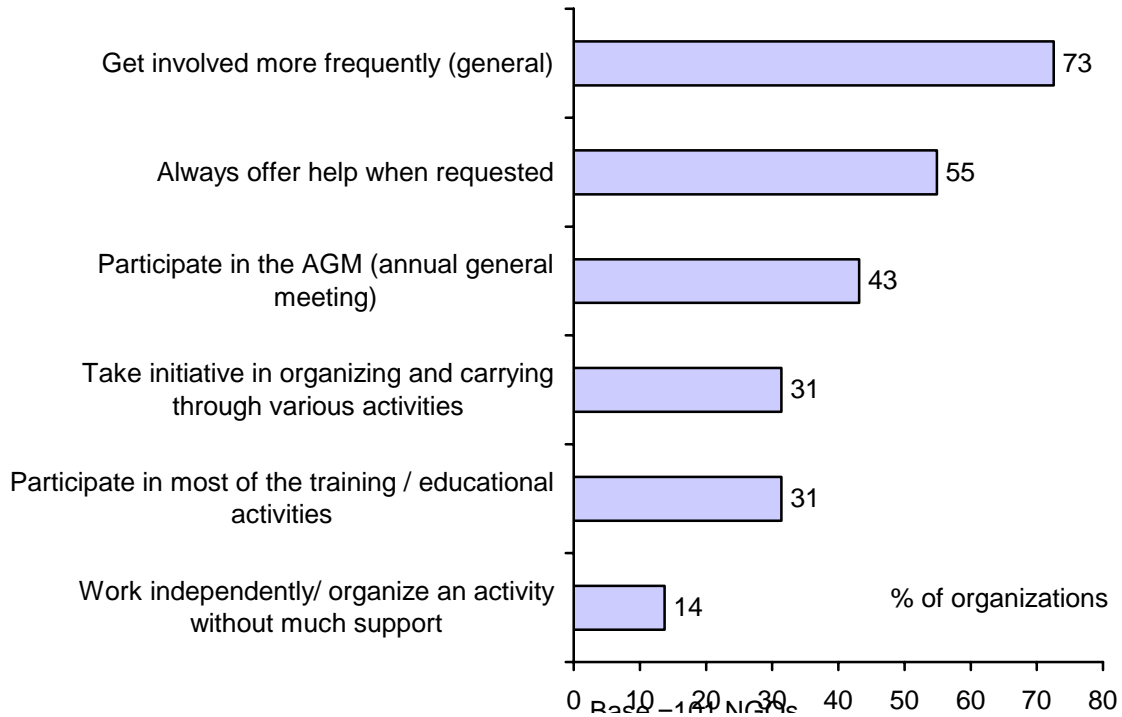
Figure 9: Active Volunteers



High frequency of involvement is the key criterion for active participation. Reliability in terms of the volunteer offering help when the organization requests it is also an important parameter. Moreover, participation in the annual general meeting, participation

in training seminars and taking initiative in organizing various activities are also well-valued by organizations

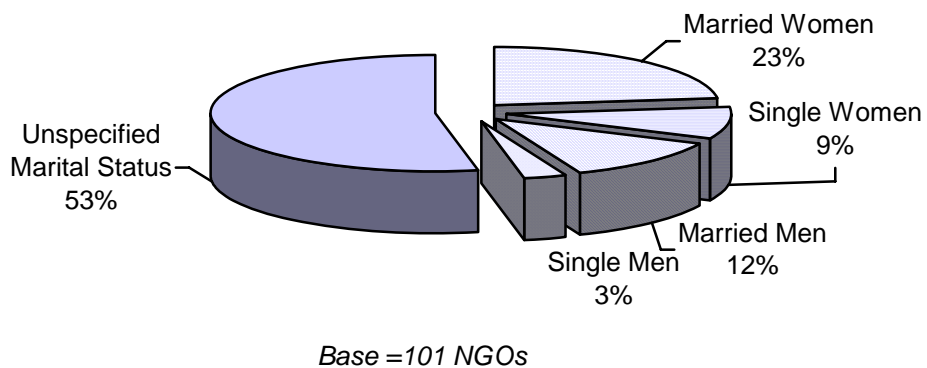
Figure 10: Key parameters that make a volunteer active



Marital Status of people involved in NGOs

Organizations found it particularly difficult to specify the marital status of their members and especially their volunteers. This trend was particularly prominent among all the organizations with a large number of members, suggesting that these organizations find it difficult to know all their volunteers well and personally considering the high number of people involved.

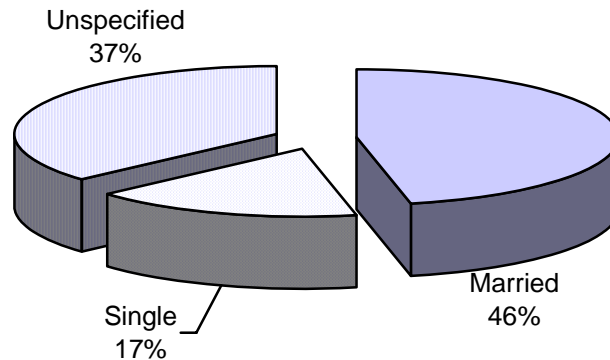
Figure 11 : Overall Marital Status of People involved in NGOs



Taking into account the answers provided, it appears that the majority of people that participate in NGOs are married. This holds for both women and men and it is quite expected considering that most of the people involved in NGOs are over 30.

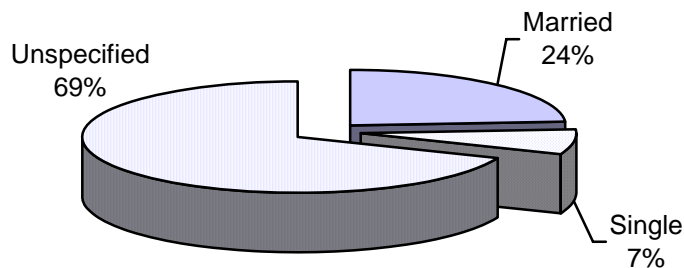
However, some slight differences across genders are apparent, with the number of married women outweighing the married men.

Figure 12a : Overall Marital Status of Women



Base= 3502 women who participate in NGOs

Figure 12b: Overall Marital Status of Men

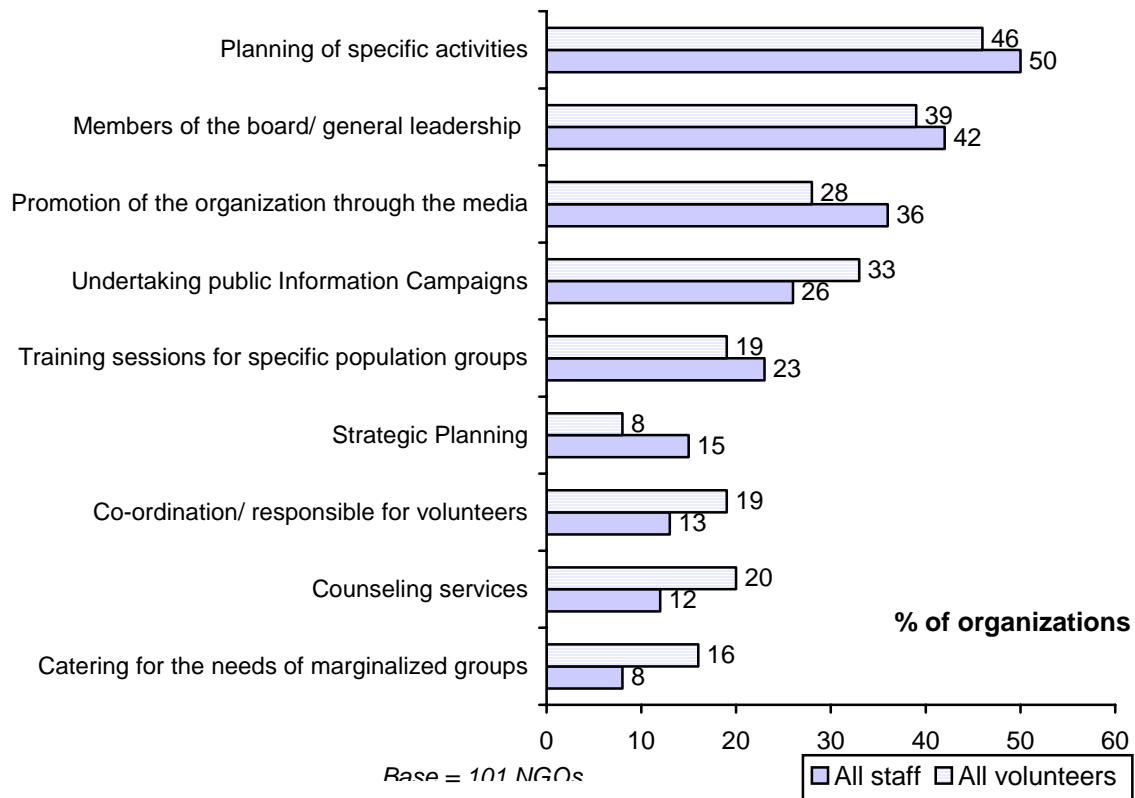


Base = 3459 men who are involved in NGOs

Activities NGOs are involved in

The primary activities of NGOs concentrate on informing the public about their objectives. Information is disseminated through promotion of the organization through the media, through public information campaigns and the implementation of training sessions, discussions and conferences.

Figure 13 : Activities handled equally by staff and volunteers

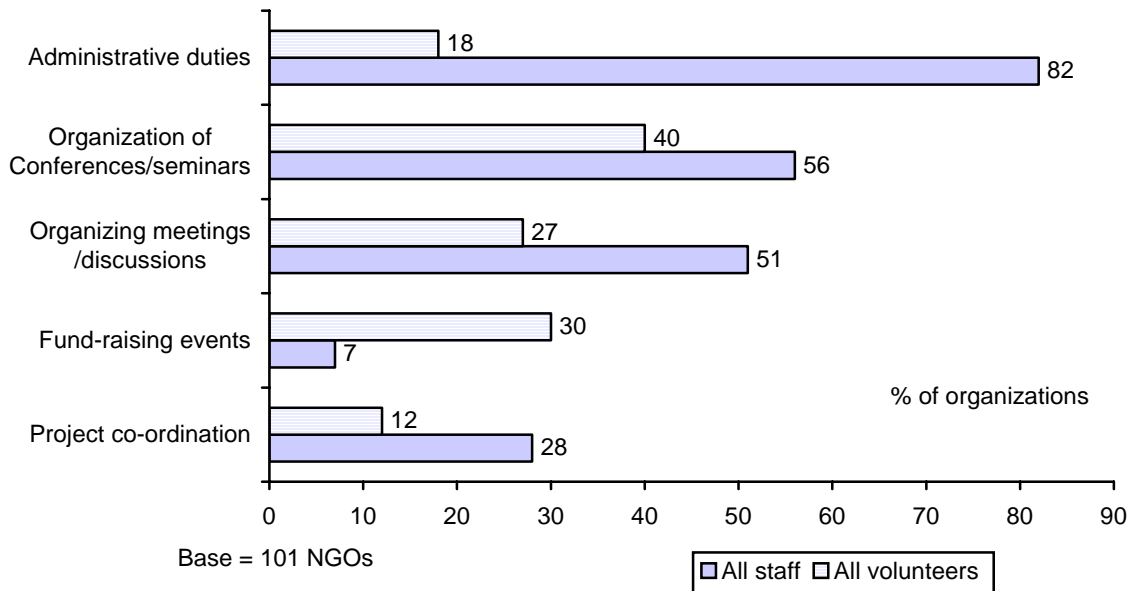


Staff and volunteers appear to equally handle most activities, namely the planning of activities, the promotion/outreach of the organization, dissemination of information to the public and counseling services.

Notably, strategic or leadership positions are not limited to the staff alone, as both the staff and the volunteers are equally involved in Executive Boards, both coordinate other volunteers and also carry out strategic planning.

Differences are observed in the case of administrative duties as well as the organization of conferences, seminars and meetings, all of which are primarily handled by the staff. On the contrary, fund-raising activities are almost exclusively the responsibility of volunteers.

Figure 14: Differences in activities handled by staff and volunteers



Parameters taken into consideration when NGOs allocate responsibilities

Academic qualifications, experience and expertise appear to be the key parameters that NGOs take into consideration when allocating responsibilities to their members or staff. Moreover, enthusiasm and willingness to work, combined with their members' particular talents and skills are also well-valued.

However, for some of the organizations there appear to be no pre-defined expectations on required qualifications when they allocate tasks. These organizations believe that since they strongly rely on voluntary contribution, they should not have particular expectations from their volunteers. As expressed by a large Welfare Organization:

We are in such a need of contribution that we need to be open to it regardless of who (gender, age, background) has to offer it. - Welfare Organization

Gender and age do not seem to play a key role in allocating responsibilities. A high share of the NGOs interviewed (5 out of 11) claim that they try to promote an equal and balanced participation because they consider that women and men can execute the same tasks and responsibilities equally as well.

What we try to do as an organization is not to split activities according to gender. There is not such thing as a woman's job or a man's job. There is no segregation of duties or responsibilities according to gender. We have even been innovative enough to employ a woman to oversee the trade union of the workers in the ports, people that have a certain reputation (uncouth behavior). The results have been amazing! – Trade Union

No importance was placed on gender when it comes to an activity. It comes down to which people are willing to work and carry out an activity. There is no real difference across gender. Depends on the occasion. – Culture and Arts

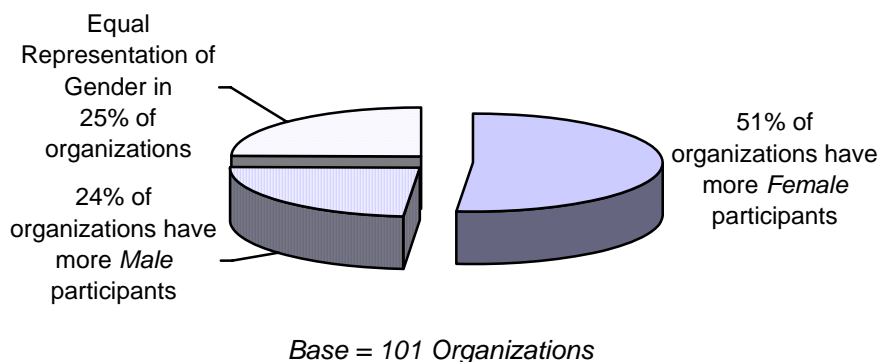
In addition, no gender differences are apparent in terms of the person who takes charge/ leads a specific activity, since the organization of activities is considered to be mainly a matter of expertise, knowledge and experience. Only in the case of Welfare organizations would the coordination of activities be handled by women due to the fact that women constitute the largest pool of volunteers involved in this particular field.

Gender Participation

Gender participation at an organization level

Women’s participation appears to be quite widespread, having infiltrated across a large number of NGOs. More specifically, at an organization level participation of women is significantly greater than men, with half the organizations interviewed (51%) claiming a greater number of women involved. Only in 24% of the NGOs participation of men is greater, while the remaining 25% enjoy an equal representation of both genders.

Figure 15: Actual gender participation at an organization level



Evidently, a distinct gender polarity is apparent in terms of the field of the organization’s activity, with more women being involved in social service and welfare organizations, while Trade Unions, Professional Associations, Youth and Sports Organizations are more male-dominated.

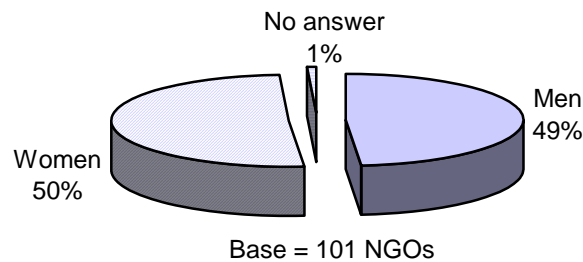
Nevertheless, *in terms of the actual number of people involved, gender participation stands at equal levels between women and men.* This is attributed to the fact that the more male-dominant organizations (i.e. the Youth Organizations, Trade Unions and Professional Associations) are NGOs with a very large number of participants, and thus participation in terms of the actual numbers involved evenly balances across both genders at a total level.

This would suggest that even though women exhibit a good breadth of participation (i.e. across a large number of NGOs), men enjoy a stronger ‘numeric’ presence. Moreover, ‘depth’ of participation (extent of involvement) is perceived to be higher among males. Consequently, gender participation cannot be examined in terms of absolute numbers

alone, but parameters related to field of activity, breadth and depth of participation should not be overlooked.

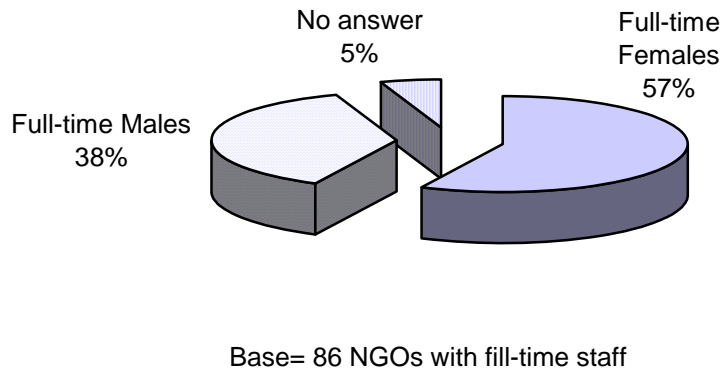
Gender participation in terms of the number of people involved

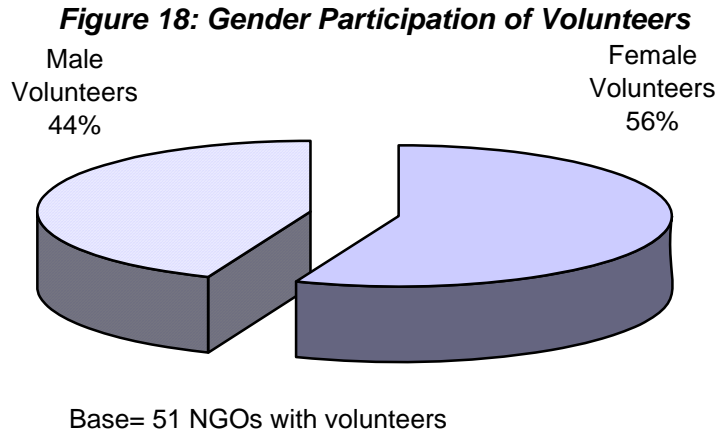
Figure 16: Overall Gender Participation



A closer look at the different levels of involvement (i.e. staff, volunteers and Board of Directors) underlines some important differences in participation across the two genders: Among volunteers, gender participation appears to be slightly skewed towards females (with the ratio of women to men volunteers being 5:4). Female full-timers are also significantly higher in numbers, about 20% higher than their male counterparts.

Figure 17: Gender Participation of Full-time staff



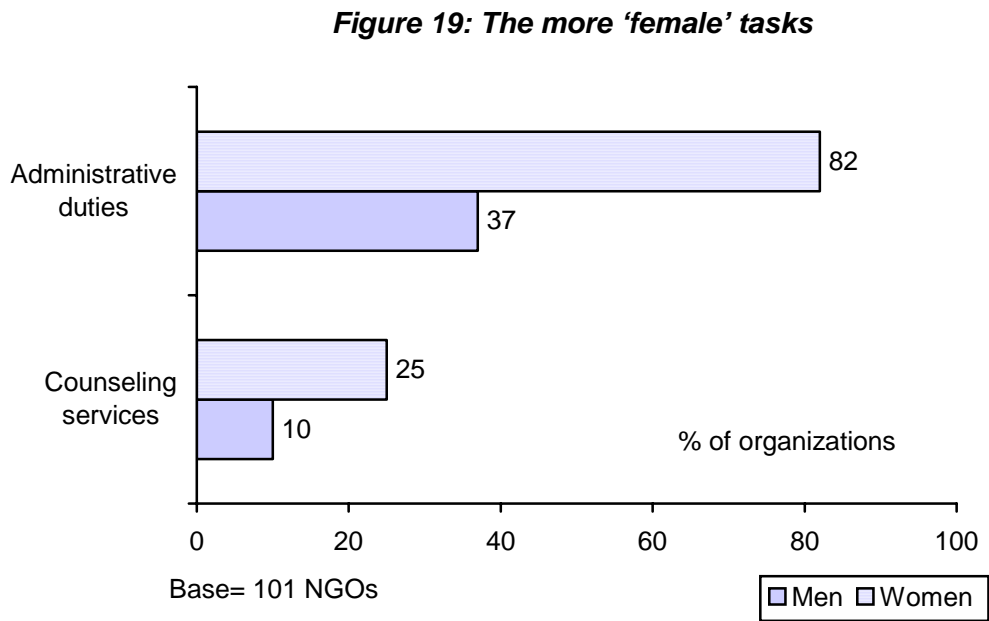


Conversely, when it comes to positions of leadership i.e. participation in the Board of Directors, the number of men involved significantly outweighs the number of women.

Type of activities by gender

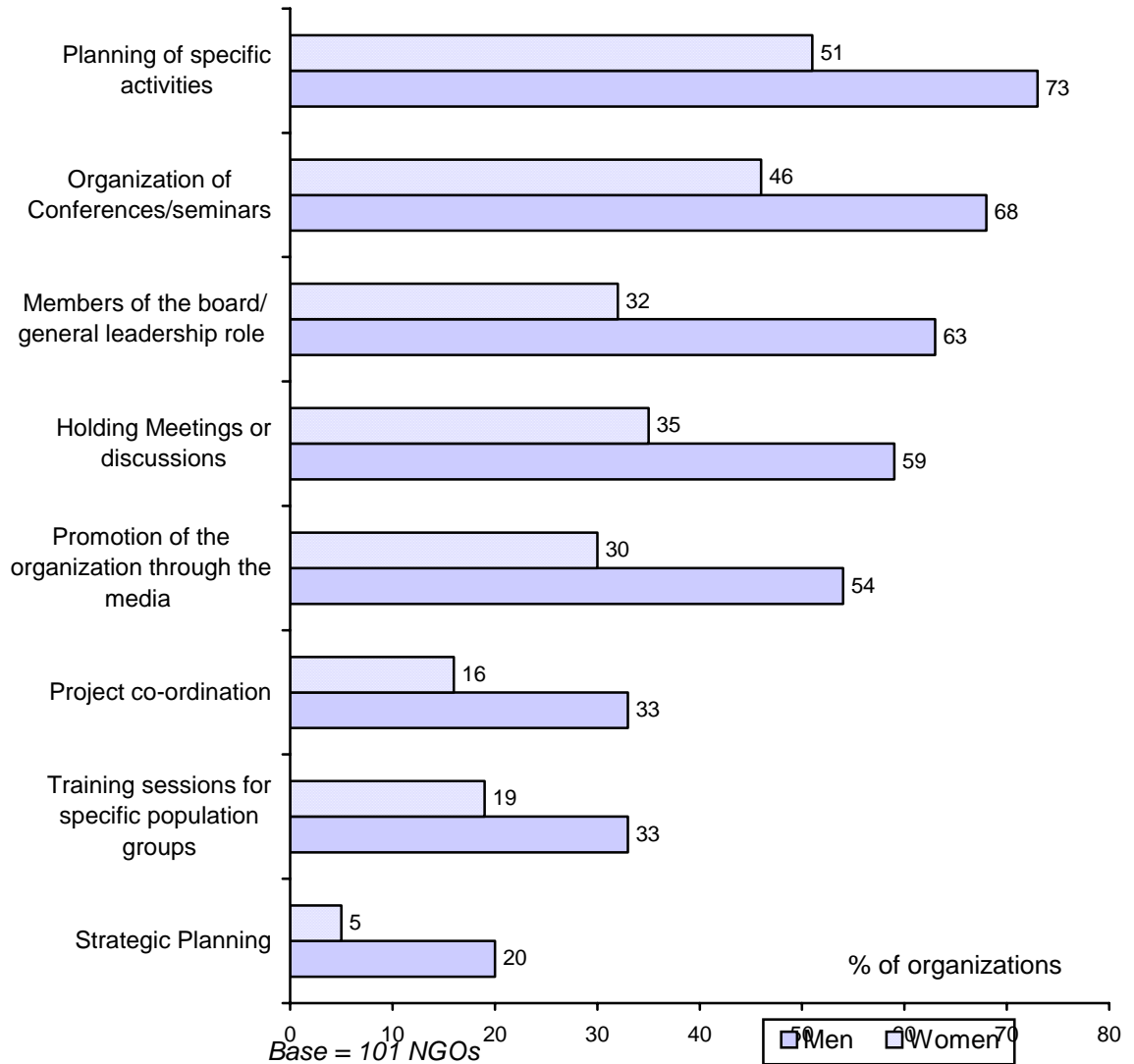
Division of labor in terms of the implementation of specific activities follows a distinct gender split.

Predominantly, administrative and secretarial duties are virtually the key responsibility of women; the reason claimed to be the fact that the pool of male secretaries in the country is non-existent, combined with the fact that men show very little interest in secretarial / administrative duties.



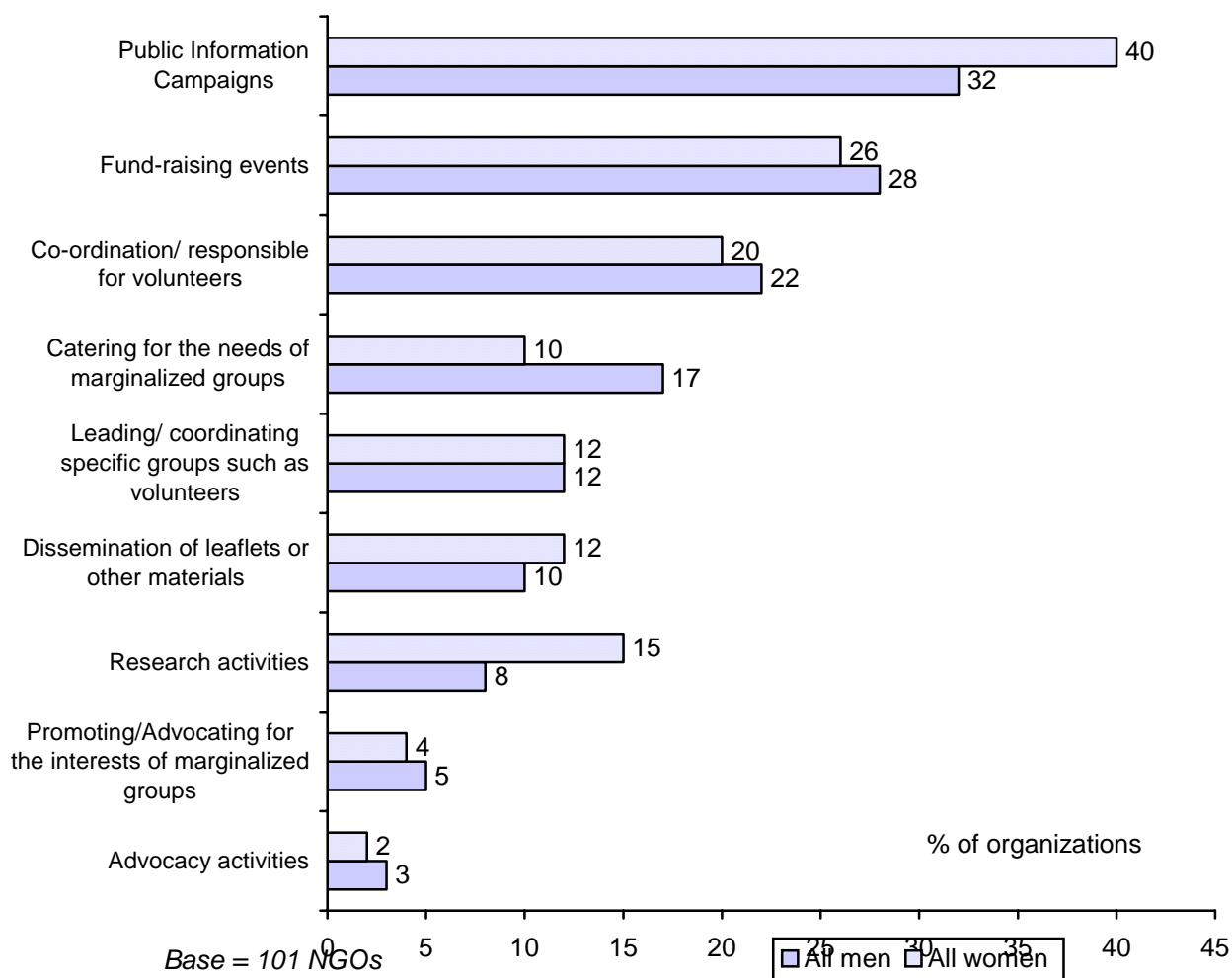
On the contrary, men favor strategic positions or positions of leadership; strategic planning, organization of conferences, participation in the Board of Directors, holding meetings and promotion of the organization through the media or outreach activities are clearly more male-oriented.

Figure 20: The more 'male' tasks



Activities equally handled by women and men include the dissemination of information to the public and fundraising events. Moreover, coordination of volunteers, catering /advocating for the needs of the marginalized groups and research programs are also equally handled by both genders.

Figure 21: Activities handled more or less equally by women and men



Gender Gap in Participation- Input from the Qualitative Survey

Despite the fact that virtually all NGOs do not consider gender as an important parameter when allocating responsibilities to their members, they all recognize that there exists a distinct gender segregation in terms of division of labor. This gender polarity appears to be quite diverse and complex and is attributed to a variety of situations, as for instance social norms, gender roles, individual preferences, preconceptions and biases, beliefs and expectations.

Evidently, 'voluntary contribution' appears to be synonymous to 'charity' or 'taking care of people in need', concepts that are strongly intertwined with the female nature.

We all remember older women baking cakes for charities -Youth Organization

Without doubt, social norms and expectations play a key role. Women cannot escape the social norms that consider them to be more sensitive, more caring and more creative by their nature than men. It is almost expected that women will be involved in organizations that strive for the welfare of their community, the welfare of their families (education, environment, health etc) and also of the welfare of people in need (marginalized groups, terminally ill patients etc). About half the NGOs interviewed believe that because the society is structured in such a way, women have assumed the responsibility of taking care of the home, the children and their family, and thus it is easier for them to take care of other people in need.

Women will volunteer at organizations dealing with children or children with special needs; it's like they have it in them to help because they are mothers. Women will also volunteer to take care of older people; they already take care of older people in their homes (parents, grandparents), they are already accustomed to it. – Welfare Organization

The fact that women carry the responsibility of taking care of the home and the children often acts as a barrier towards their participation in specific organizations or activities. Women abstain from participating in Trade Unions and Professional Organizations because it is almost impossible for them to cope with the late hour meetings, the haphazard schedules and the long hours. Some NGOs claim that the burden of other responsibilities discourage women from getting involved in more leadership or executive positions (e.g. as in the Board of Directors), where the late hour meetings are very common.

Prevented by preconceived expectations or prejudices, men are likely to be considered as not highly capable or skillful enough and even intimidated to be involved in welfare organizations (since it may be more difficult for them to cope with the emotional burden). In their majority, men prefer to be involved in Trade Unions, Professional or Business Associations, Sports and Youth Organizations, where their contribution can be more practical and more structured. The men that do get involved in welfare organizations usually abstain from day-to-day activities and either assume more strategic and leadership roles or they carry out the more 'male' tasks (as for instance financial responsibilities, carrying heavy staff, working as messengers or drivers).

The line of our work (taking care of cancer patients) may intimidate men. It is easier for women because they are more expressive; they discuss things that are difficult for them, which helps them overcome certain situations. Men are not so expressive. Men would usually prefer to help through a financial contribution instead of actual volunteer work. – Welfare Organization

In some cases, as mentioned by a high share of NGOs (4 out of 11), the participation in different activities arises from the fact that men and women may express different interests; their preferences, skills and qualifications may be utterly different. An Organization in the field of Information and Research on EU topics mentioned that when they advertised for the position of 'Outreach Coordinator on Information about European Projects' they received 149 applications from women and only 1 from a man. The opposite was true when they advertised for an IT position; 90% of the applications were from men. Similarly, welfare organizations employ more women nurses because the

pool of male nurses is limited. The same is true for secretaries and drivers: the former being an exclusively 'female' profession and the latter being predominantly a male one.

Consequently, women may often contain themselves in more supporting or executional roles (i.e. secretaries, administrative assistants, nurses or simply being the ones that 'will get the work done'). Some of the organizations seem to recognize their contribution and understand that without the support of women none of their activities would materialize.

Despite the fact that men are involved in the high-rank executive positions (Board of Directors etc) it is the women that keep the organization alive because it is them who do most of the day-day work. – Welfare Organization

Conversely, a small share of NGOs believes that the value of the contribution of women is not revealed right away.

*It takes time for their contribution to be appreciated, till results are more tangible. Their contribution is more qualitative than quantitative. However if it takes a lot of time, there is the risk for looking only at the result and not at the source of this contribution, which is the woman– **Advocacy NGO***

Differences in gender participation also seem to be driven by the fact that women and men are drawn to voluntary contribution for different reasons. All the NGOs interviewed agreed that men usually participate in NGOs in positions of leadership where they can utilize their connections, their networking and also their professional capabilities. One NGO (a Youth Organization) supported that men are more individualistic in the way they participate, aiming for self-promotion. On the contrary, an Advocacy Organization claims that women participate in NGOs because they (NGOs) provide them with a sense of belonging and the feeling of satisfaction that their contribution is worthwhile and valued.

Furthermore, NGOs recognize that the differences in participation across the two genders is not only restricted to the different types of activities women and men are involved with, but also takes another dimension which related to the nature of participation.

Men are perceived by the majority of NGOs as being more practical, more targeted, more effective, more focused, and more concise and can also easily implement ideas. Having limited time to invest (being largely immersed in their carriers and their personal advancement), men prefer to contribute in activities that do not entail a high timely contribution. Instead, they are very efficient with the way they manage the time they invest; their contribution is usually 'short, targeted, focused and to the point'. This is why the majority of them prefer to be involved in managerial positions or the Board of Directors.

*Men usually are more reluctant to get involved in activities that entail a lot of effort, a lot of running around and a considerable time investment. Women have developed certain mechanisms to be able to cope with handling a lot of things at once. They can multi-task and are used to the pressure– **Welfare Organization***

On the other hand, women are perceived to be more open, more enthusiastic and more willing to participate. They are thought as being more spontaneous, more passionate,

more vivacious, more energetic, and they are more open to listen and accept new ideas. It is easier and faster to explore an idea creatively with women.

When women do get involved with an organization they give with their soul; they get very passionate and are very involved. They are more patient. They know what they want. They are more flexible and more open. - **Ecological Organization**

However, as claimed by a very small share of NGOs (2 out of 11) women cannot easily implement an idea into action. They would often have a variety of creative ideas but they cannot practically see them through. They appear to be less focused and more scattered, which, combined with the fact that women like to multi-task and get involved in a variety of activities at the same time, makes them less reliable and less trusted to execute a task to its completion.

Quite importantly, it is often the case that NGOs would accept the division of labor and the different roles that women and men assume, in lieu of acknowledgment of the 'normality of things' and resistance to change (i.e. projecting the 'this is how things are and it is better to keep them that way' attitude). More than half of the NGOs interviewed mentioned that it is easier (and more convenient) for them to continue in the habitual mode of operation, even though this mode of operation has been established many years ago as their members have learned to operate in a certain way and any changes will be chaotic.

On a positive note, as pointed out by two NGOs, the participation of women has gradually increased in the past years; women have become more educated, more empowered and are claiming a stronger presence in NGOs to promote their rights. Women have now realized that they can equally carry out the same tasks as men and ask for greater responsibilities.

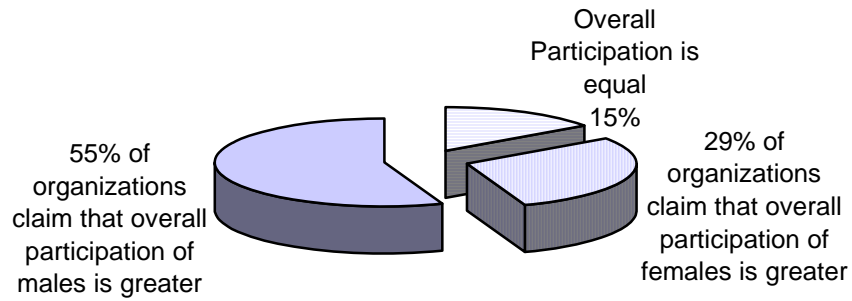
I think women are gradually overcoming any taboos, presumptions and concerns about gender and participation and are more willing to participate. Women nowadays claim more, they demand their rights more, they ask for greater responsibilities. - **NGO in Education, Culture and Advocacy**

Extent of involvement

Despite the fact that involvement of women and men stands at equal levels numerically, NGOs perception on the overall extent of involvement ('how much the people involved actually contribute') follows a distinct gender split, with the majority of the NGOs claiming that the participation of men is greater. This perception is in line with the results of the CIVICUS survey, whereby 40% of the organizations felt that the presence of women in NGOs was under-represented.

Notably, as expected, the claim for the higher participation stems from Trade Unions, Youth and Sports Organizations, Professional Associations, CSOs active in Education, Training and Research and Ethnic Associations, all of which are associations involving a higher number of men.

Figure 22: Perception on Depth of Participation



Base= 101 NGOs

Reasons for the overall extent of contribution of men being higher than women

NGOs claim that the extent of contribution of men is greater than that of women, due to the fact that women are often discouraged or not interested to participate in NGOs since they perceive NGOs to be 'male-dominated'. This is actually the case for Trade Unions and Professional Associations, which have historically and traditionally attracted more men than women and therefore women are somewhat shutout from these types of organizations.

About 1 in 10 NGOs, believe that women do not have enough time to get involved, in lieu of other commitments and responsibilities. Notably, 7% of NGOs recognize that women lack in expertise and are less trained than men, this perception arising mainly from the Trade Unions, where advocating for worker's rights has been a predominantly male field. Similarly, a small share of Trade Unions and Professional Associations (7% at a total level) consider that their line of work is too demanding for women, since they (the women) are burdened by other responsibilities.

To a small extent (7% of NGOs claiming so), discrimination against women was mentioned as factor encouraging a greater participation of men. The discrimination was understood in terms of discrimination against women in general (4%), women not being elected in the Board of Directors (7%) and women being provided with fewer opportunities than men to participate (2%).

Notably, 2 of the organizations mentioned that they consider that 'Women are not very committed and often would not carry through a task to its completion'. Input from the qualitative interviews suggests that women are more keen to be involved in many organizations and participate in many different activities, while men are considered to be more targeted; they will focus on only one organization and invest their time and energy to that. Since women tend to devote their time and contribution to a variety of activities, this may cultivate a perception that they are more 'scattered', 'less present' and thus 'less committed'.

Table 3: Reasons for contribution of men being higher than women

<i>Reason</i>	<i>% of organizations claiming so</i>
Male-dominated field / men are more interested	35
Women do not have enough time	9
Women are not interested to participate	7
Our line of work is too demanding for women to cope due to the fact that they have other commitments/responsibilities	7
Men have more expertise /are more trained	7
We provide equal opportunities; women are not elected as Board Members	7
For no particular reason/ it just happened	4
Discrimination against women has been happening for many years	4
Women are not very committed and often would not carry through a task to its completion	2
Men usually have more time and are given more opportunities than women to participate in NGOs	2

Base = 55 NGOs with a greater participation of men

Reasons for the overall extent of contribution of women being higher than men

Specifically, a very high share of about 40% of the organizations where participation of women is greater, were unable to provide a concrete reason for the differences observed across gender. This could suggest that perhaps little attention is paid to gender issues and gender mainstreaming within these types of NGOs. The qualitative interviews highlighted an attitude of acceptance i.e. ‘this is how things are’ and probably not much can be done about it.

The organizations that did express an opinion on this difference, seem to perceive women as more sensitized than men to social issues and consider them more capable to handle people in need. A small share of organizations also perceives that women are involved in social service and welfare organizations because they are by their nature more altruistic than men.

Table 4: Reasons for contribution of women being higher than men

<i>Reason</i>	<i>% of organizations claiming so</i>
Women are more sensitized to the issues of the organization and are also more sensitized in general	28
They can provide better support to people in need	7
Men do not have enough time	3
For no particular reason, maybe men aren't so interested in this field	3
Women express more interest in our field of activity	3
Women are more keen to participate in volunteer/ welfare organizations	3
Women are better than men because they are more altruistic and more sensitive	3
Unable to provide a reason	37

Base = 29 NGOs where participation of women is greater

Interestingly, the qualitative evaluation of the *depth of participation* in NGOs yielded dichotomous opinions.

Half the organizations claimed that both genders are equally involved since responsibilities and duties are evenly split across both genders. Quite importantly, different reasons were mentioned to contribute to this, indicating that the parameters that influence gender participation differ across organizations and are closely linked to their field of activity.

For instance, for an Association working in the field of Information and Research on EU Topics, the equal contribution of both genders is perceived to arise from the fact that their organization has cultivated a strong team spirit in an environment where there is mutual respect and meritocracy.

For a Culture and Arts association, the equal participation of both genders was driven by the fact that their members are more liberated and open and not trapped in stereotypical gender roles

Art liberates. They feel more individuals and liberated. They are not trapped in gender roles. – Culture and Arts

For a Trade Union, equal participation has been the result of many targeted efforts towards that direction. Gender equality has been one of their key objectives and they made sure that it would definitely be implemented within their organization (i.e. that they 'would practice what they preach'). For this Trade Union what has greatly assisted in maintaining an environment of equal participation was respect to each opinion, collectiveness, internal democracy, acknowledgement of their members' contribution, and providing their members with a role so that they can feel that their contribution is creative and is valued.

Other organizations recognize that it is to their benefit to equally involve both genders. The benefit of an equal participation often translates as an environment that is more flexible and more open, an environment that allows for opinions to be expressed freely, where women and men can see the 'other side of things' and be more open minded, a place where all members (regardless of gender) can feel that their needs and 'sensitivities' are accounted for and thus feel more equal.

An equal participation of both men and women gives to the people involved the chance to have access to a different way of mentality, it gives you the opportunity to be exposed to different ways of thinking and see other possibilities. Not everything is black and white. It allows you to see the plurality of things –
Advocacy NGO

Moreover, the more organizations strive for equal representation of both genders, the more they can help change innate beliefs and attitudes, which would in turn encourage more women to participate

Our organization has greatly benefited from the equal participation of women. Women themselves have benefited because with their participation they have helped to change beliefs and shape attitudes, change mentalities –
Trade Union

An equal participation may also be driven by the nature of the specific field of activity of the organization. It is observed that for certain fields of activity, as for instance the arts and the environment, women and men exhibit an equal interest. Organizations involved in these two fields of activity claim that women have moved away from the anachronistic perception that encouraged more men to become artists or environmentalists and are now strongly claiming their space in these fields as well.

Organizations that claim an equal participation of women and men also claim that there are no differences in the amount of time and frequency of involvement across the two genders. They claim that the amount of time or the frequency of involvement does not have to do with gender. Instead it is related to the qualities of the particular person, with how dynamic, how conscientious and enthusiastic that person is.

We can all contribute with own way; it is just that people hardly make the decision to be involved in welfare organizations –
Welfare Organization

Conversely to the above, the remaining half of the organizations perceive that women exhibit a higher extent (depth) of involvement compared to men. Again, different reasons were expressed, intertwined by the field of activity

Two welfare organizations attribute the difference in what is accepted to be the 'social norm'. They attribute the fact that women are more active in their organizations to the sensitive feminine nature; women appear to be more sensitive and have been raised to be 'better equipped' to take care of people in need.

Women have historically been taking care of ill relatives or old people in their families for years. It is easier for them to take care of people in need. –
Welfare Organization

For these two organizations, gender roles, culture norms and social prejudices are strongly apparent. They believe that it is more socially accepted for women to be involved in welfare organizations while men would be discouraged to do so.

Women are more involved because due to our culture and the prejudices that exist, the men are not usually involved in volunteer organizations. – Welfare Organization

Women are more involved because this is how the social norms are. It is according to the way they grow up, with what their parents carry with them and what messages they pass on to them. -Youth Organization

One of the Youth Organizations clarified that women tend to get involved in voluntary organizations not because they are more sensitive than men, but because they more easily and openly express their sensitivity. The generous, unselfish, nurturing nature of women was contrasted to the more individualistic nature of men, the latter perceived to get involved in a voluntary organization driven by a personal gain (as for instance a position of power or self-promotion). Moreover, the Youth Organization perceives that more women get involved in their organization because they are in search of a place to belong and socialize, a place where they can feel that their contribution is important and valued.

Notably, contrary to the quantitative survey, none of the organizations that participated in the qualitative survey mentioned that the extent of participation of men is higher. This is probably due to the fact that respondents were guided by the moderator to view the depth of participation in a more qualitative rather than quantitative manner. As indicated by the reasons provided in the quantitative survey for the greater participation of men, respondents could not escape thinking of the extent of participation in numeric terms.

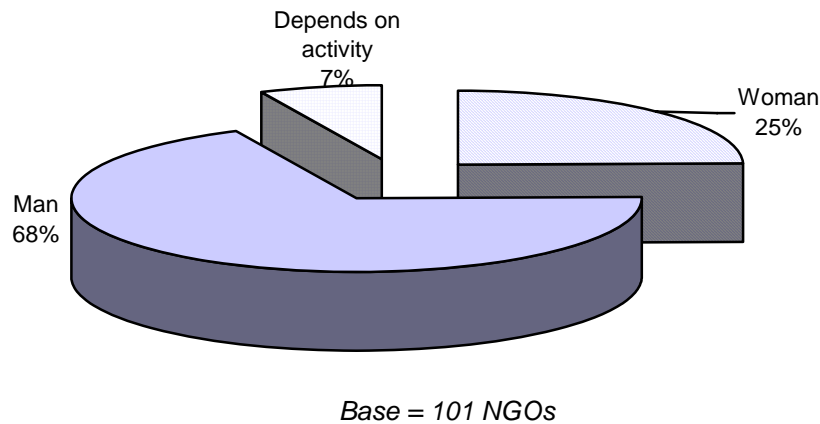
The higher extent of involvement also translates as the devotion of more time and a higher frequency of involvement. The more timely and frequent involvement of women is perceived to arise from that fact that:

- (i) Women have the ability to juggle many and different things at the same time and thus can easily manage voluntary contribution and other responsibilities (**Welfare Organization**)
- (ii) A high number of the women involved are pensioners and thus they have a lot of free time in their hands (**Welfare Organization**)
- (iii) Women are mostly involved in the regional committees which are very active bodies and require a high degree of commitment (**Education and Culture Organization**)
- (iv) The men involved are predominantly involved in strategic activities and thus women are left to adopt a more 'executorial role', i.e. 'getting the work done' (**Environmental Organization**)
- (v) The men involved are too busy with their careers and can not devote as much time as women, thus women again need to be the ones that will 'get the work done' (**Welfare Organization**)

Leadership

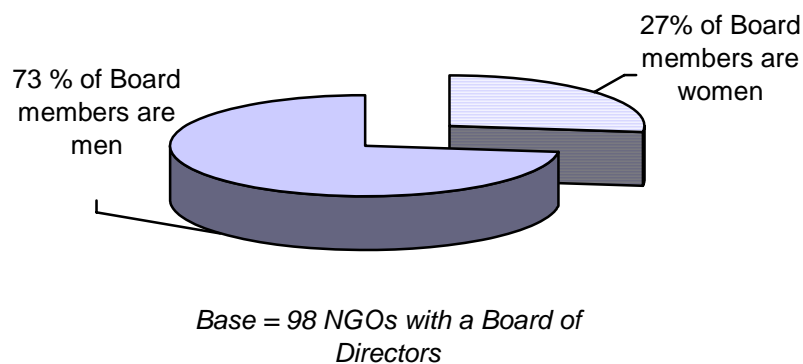
The prevalence of men in positions of authority is very dominant. In terms of the person who runs the organization, only in 25% of the organizations the general managers /executive directors are women, compared to 68% who are run by men.

Figure 23: Person in charge of the organization



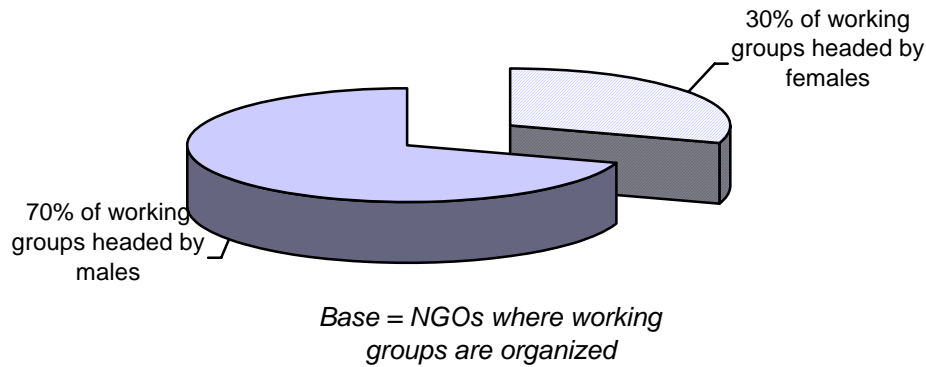
The gender split in terms of participation in the Board of Directors follows the same trend; only 27% of the Board members are women, suggesting that the absence of women from decision-making bodies is a relatively well-established pattern.

Figure 24: Gender split in Board of Directors



The same thing holds for other coordinating activities, as for instance the coordination of sub-groups or subcommittees. Women coordinate less than 1 in 3 of the subgroups or committees present within an NGO.

Figure 25: Working groups organized by females or males



Qualitative findings highlight a wide spectrum of parameters that contribute to the fact that fewer women than men are involved in strategic or leadership positions in NGOs.

These parameters mainly concentrate on:

- i *De facto situations and NGOs to adhere to predefined modes of operation and exhibiting resistance to change*
- ii *Social norms*
- iii *Empowerment issues*

Notably, each organization provided their own distinct perspective, suggesting once again that the field of NGOs is quite segmented in terms of activity, with different parameters and aspects being of significance.

Most NGOs prefer to involve highly influential people in their Board of Directors, aiming to use the connections, the prestige and the authority of these people to promote the aims and objectives of the organization. It is not rare that Government or ex-Government Officials as well as Presidents of Large Business Institutions are also Presidents or Board members in NGOs.

However, as pointed out by 3 out of the 11 NGOs interviewed, there appears to be a 'shortage' of women in high-rank positions in Governmental or Professional Organizations who could consequently run for the Boards of Non-Governmental Organizations.

*There are many capable women but they are usually not given the chance to advance. Think of the government, the executive committees of semi-government organizations. There are very few women. The government needs to start showing more 'trust' to women and help them advance at a central level first— **NGO involved in Education, Culture & Advocacy***

The high-rank positions have been strongly safeguarded by men for many years, leaving very little available room for women to climb up the ladder. Furthermore, while some women have managed to reach high-rank positions in various Institutions (and could be

potential Board Members in NGOs), are not appreciated and their contribution appears not to be acknowledged.

Taking the Ombudsman for instance... she is doing a remarkable job, but nobody acknowledges it. It is like she is invisible....- Advocacy NGO

In their large majority however, women would not advance as easily as men. Burdened by the social norms that pressure them to get married and have a family early on ('while their biological clock is ticking'), women end up not actively pursuing their careers and personal enhancement (further education). In turn, the burden of family responsibilities negatively affects women's advancement and promotion within the NGO.

A woman may have the desire to advance but she also has to satisfy a husband and children and also support her relatives - NGO involved in Information and Research about EU issues

In turn, women would often limit themselves to administrative and secretarial responsibilities and do not advance further than that.

Women are also more keen to get involved in specific professions (nurses, secretaries) and also have children at a young age which prevents them from getting involved in high-rank positions; they fall-back in their careers because of the children and don't reach as high-up as men – Welfare Organization

All organizations feverishly agree that even though women are considered to be equally as capable as men to handle managerial and executive positions, they would not as often get the chance.

'Imagine you have two athletes, both the same age, both equally trained, with the same capabilities and strength, and ask them to run 200 meters. One of them however carries a sack of watermelons on her back. By default the one with the load on her back will come second, no matter what. Women carry this sack of watermelons with them for many years. Society expects them to; this is what they were brought up to do- NGO involved in Information and Research about EU issues

This 'sack of watermelons' translates to taking care of the children, taking care of the husbands and the home and providing support to all members of their nuclear and even extended family (e.g. grandparents, aunts and cousins). And in most cases women have to do this alone, without much support from their environment

Moreover, a significant share of NGOs (4 out of 11), recognize that the way NGOs operate restricts women from positions of leadership. Firstly, women seem to have limited access to information on how they could participate in the Coordinating Committees since NGOs would first turn to men for participation in their Boards. As claimed by a small share of NGOs, the information that is disseminated to the public is predominantly male-oriented, clearly targeting a male audience.

Male dominance in the Board of Directors has been a traditionally and historically strong trend; some NGOs still continue to invite more men than women to their Boards as a result of an 'inherent habit'. Sometimes this inherent habit is too strong to allow room for

change, considering that a significant share of NGOs (4 out of 11) believes that things should be left as they are; any changes are perceived to disturb the 'balance' that currently exists and would bring chaos. The resistance to change and the need to adhere to the more traditional and historically established modes of operation shadows any gender differences that may be apparent and need to be addressed. NGOs would often tend to not consider gender participation as an important issue, placing their focus in the implementation of their objectives and the execution of their activities.

*We are here to do work. Too much stirring of the broth is not in line with our Organization – **Youth Organization***

Secondly, it is also the case that women themselves would often feel discouraged to participate in leadership positions being daunted by the male-dominance in the field. Male Board members may not provide enough room for women to advance and actively discourage them. A small minority of the NGOs interviewed (2 out of 11) perceives that men would be reluctant to accept a woman in a leadership role because they have been accustomed to the male dominance in positions of upper management.

*It is not easy to convince a man that has been working for 40 years and has reached a high-rank position that he will be succeeded by a woman, when all he knew all these years was that women work mainly as secretaries or hold positions in administration support - **NGO involved in Information and Research on EU topics***

Thirdly, women appear to have been excluded from certain fields of activity, Trade Unions for instance, where advocating for workers' rights has been predominantly, if not exclusively, a male dominated field of activity. In addition, the two Trade Unions interviewed claimed that women themselves do not express an interest to participate in the Board of Directors because they could not cope with the demanding mode of operation (i.e. the late hour meetings and the haphazard hours of participation) since they have a family and children to take care of.

The difference in gender participation in leadership positions also appears to be driven by the different perceptions men and women have about how the opposite gender operates; in a way it appears that men and women would try to avoid getting in each other's way. While women are discouraged to participate in executive positions because they are being thwarted by men, equally men would be reluctant to participate in an organization where the majority are women. As claimed by one NGO, women will tend to form a strong group, a clique that is difficult for men to penetrate. In addition, men and women are perceived to act and communicate differently: men are more focused, more to the point, more brief and more targeted while women are more analytical, more communicative, more expressive and less focused. Thus, some men would not have the patience or the time to participate in a predominantly female group, where an issue is talked about to exhaustion, in great analytic detail.

Interestingly, the only organizations where women outweigh men in the Board of Directors are organizations that have originally been set up by women and are more of a 'philanthropic' or 'charity' nature. This would suggest that the progression of women in these NGOs was only the natural transition.

The organization is associated with 'charity', philanthropy' 'volunteerism', 'contribution', issues that are more embedded in the 'female' personality. It is definitely an issue of culture-Youth Organization

Issues of empowerment were also mentioned. An Ecological Organization claimed that women are often reluctant to join positions of leadership because they are not confident enough and do not feel empowered.

Historically men were more involved in civil society, are less intimidated. Men are more empowered, more confident. Many women are still afraid to speak their mind in front of many people. - Ecological Organization

Another reason that drives women not to contend for participation in positions of leadership is the fact that they often feel that the weight of the responsibility in a leadership position is too great for them because they are more conscientious by nature.

Women are more conscientious than men. Men would claim a position in the Board without giving it too much thought. They would have the confidence and even boast about it. Women on the other hand would really weigh the responsibility; they will not take it lightly and give it a lot of thought – Culture and Arts Association

On a positive note, more than half of NGOs believe that the situation is gradually changing and slowly but steadily the number of women in leadership positions is increasing. Women are becoming more empowered, are more dynamic and are claiming more positions in leadership. Notably, all the largest NGOs interviewed claim that high local involvement of women is prominent in their organizations. It is often the case that women presidents would lead regional committees rather than pan-cyprian bodies. This is due to the fact that women find it easier to participate in the regional committees because the responsibilities there are more 'executorial' rather than 'strategic'. In addition, women appear keener to be involved locally because they feel insecure to handle something bigger. The local environment is more familiar to them: women are quite collective in the way they operate and thus are particularly sensitive to the issues that affect them, their community and their families (i.e. they are more sensitized to day-to-day things such as issues related to education, the environment, their welfare).

Women would more likely be involved locally, in local organizations and local councils as it is easier for them. Since most of them are pensioners it is more convenient for them to be involved locally. They live close by, are more sensitized and they will go provide their help. – Welfare Organization

Moreover, being involved locally makes them feel they are in better control and since the responsibilities locally are not so frenzied, it is easier and more practical for them to tackle local responsibilities. Anything bigger than local involvement is perceived to be a 'man's field'; women's participation in pan-cyprian bodies would be interfering in the a dominant male territory.

Nonetheless, local involvement could serve as an important milestone as it can be the first step, the 'training ground', the beginning for involvement of women at a larger scale.

Differences in leadership capabilities between women and men

Quite importantly, the majority of the NGOs interviewed agree that women and men can equally be leaders since leadership capabilities are associated with personality and character traits and are manifested regardless of gender.

Leadership has to do with the way you act, it has to do with how you are as a person and not related to gender. You are either a leader or a follower. – NGO involved in Information and Research on EU topics

Women are regarded to be good leaders when they recognize and appreciate their self-worth, when they project respect for themselves and respect for others and when they are open to listen and allow room for a variety of ideas and opinions to be expressed. Moreover good leaders are not aggressive or provocative, since aggression shuts people out and negatively affects their participation.

Their personality, the way they carry themselves, their demeanor, without becoming belligerent or aggressive. When you are aggressive, provocative, demanding or disrespectful nobody would listen to you. People need to be convinced through conversations and discussions. You need to be open. – Welfare Organization

Interestingly, the women participants perceive that to be good leaders women do not need to incorporate more male-oriented characteristics. Conversely, one male participant thinks the opposite:

A woman can be a good leader if she is as close to a man as she can be. Act more like a man. Being serious, not smiling very much. She needs to be open and know what men expect from her and meet them on those grounds. – Advocacy

In view of the fact that women are thought to be good leaders, a large share of NGOs appreciates that women could serve the organization well from a position of leadership (as for instance participation in the Board of Directors). This perception is also strengthened by the fact that women have already started to make a strong presence in leadership positions in the business world and have 'proved' that they are well equipped to handle such responsibilities.

Even though NGOs perceive that leadership is a matter of personality traits, qualifications and experience, the share of women in leadership positions within NGOs remains at very low levels, as outlined in the leadership section above.

There are many women who could serve our organization well in managerial positions; we just have not found them yet. – Welfare Organization

Notably, one of the Welfare NGOs that participated in the survey believes that it is better for NGOs to be run by men. This perception is based on the fact that men are expected to bring a balance and help smooth out the various dynamics that arise when a large

pool of women is involved. These dynamics are thought to be difficult and prohibiting since they often hold the team back from making decisions, agreeing on a strategy and planning the various activities, as a lot of time is wasted in friction and discussions among the members.

It is easier to communicate with a man and arrive at a resolution faster. Where there are many women the dynamics are more difficult; there are more discussions, a lot more friction; it is good to have men in managerial positions because they bring balance and help quiet things out. – Welfare Organization

Moreover, this particular NGO perceived that men would make better leaders driven by their more rational, simple and less complicated way of thinking, which allows them to be more effective in their communication to subordinate members. Alternatively, women are thought to over-complicate things since they are extremely analytic; as managers they often act superior and domineering to their women subordinates, a behavior which brings about a lot of friction.

Taking initiative and decision making

The majority of the NGOs do not recognize any gender differences in the process of decision-making in their organization. For most NGOs, decisions are taken collectively by both women and men, following the policies and guidelines set by the Board of Directors. Quite importantly, almost all NGOs appreciate that a collective decision-making process greatly benefits the organization, since it entails better brainstorming, the exploration and implementation of different opinions and gears complementary traits between women and men to work in balance, creating a comfortable and pleasant environment.

(When collective decisions are taken)... there is better brainstorming. Women can be more creative while men more practical, which brings about a more balanced and pleasant environment– NGO involved in Information and Research on EU topics

Taking initiative appears to be predominantly driven by personality characteristics and character traits; there are no gender differences in this respect either. Some NGOs (3 out of 11) perceive that no gender differences are apparent in taking initiative due to the fact that there is either not much room in their organization to take initiative or members are discouraged to do so. This may occur for a variety of reasons, as for instance:

- i In the case of small organizations, limited initiative is taken because small NGOs usually sub-function or do not operate to their full potential.
- ii On the other hand, in large NGOs, members are discouraged to take initiative by the large and complex structure of the organization that makes the implementation of ideas a long, complicated and bureaucratic process.
- iii For other NGOs, taking initiative seems to depend on the training and education of their members. If their members are not well trained or informed about the goals and objectives of the organization, they would hardly feel confident enough to take initiative. This appears to be intertwined with the perception expressed on empowerment (as seen in the next section), where more training and information

translates to greater empowerment, and thus greater encouragement of the members to take initiative

*Because they are not trained they do not feel confident enough to take the initiative to organize activities. If people are trained they will all participate more, regardless of gender – **Welfare Organization***

The NGOs that are satisfied with the extent that their members take initiative attribute it to the fact that the organization itself actively provides room for their members to openly express their ideas and talents and also acknowledges their contribution (through reward, appreciation and respect).

*Usually most of the members take initiative. The reason has to do with the fact that many talented people are involved in education and the organization, through its many different activities actively gives room/ provides outlets for its members to utilize their talents (theater, writing of books, journalism, music concerts). - **NGO in Education, Culture & Advocacy***

Empowerment

Even though all NGOs presented their own different perspective to what is considered to be empowerment, the majority of them agree that empowerment translates to education and training. Information and education are particularly important considering that dissemination of information to the public constitutes one of the primary activities of NGOs. Thus, it is imperative that all members are well trained, well educated and skillful enough to carry out the training and information campaigns run by NGOs

*Empowerment is a way of information. The more informed your members are the more empowered they are. -**Youth Organization***

For a relatively high share of NGOs (4 out of 11) empowerment takes a quantitative notion: it is translated in terms of the actual number of people involved in the organization. However, NGOs recognize that numeric representation is meaningless if not accompanied by quality of participation. Members that are empowered are very active, are more productive and definitely more involved.

*Empowerment has two meanings: quantitative in terms of the numbers involved and qualitative. It is best to have both. Qualitative empowerment means to have your staff have a meaningful and active contribution – **Trade Union***

For some NGOs (2 out of 11) empowerment takes the form of personal growth, strength and confidence. Empowered members have strengthened their skills and qualifications, they are more confident to carry out the activities of the organization and are not intimidated to represent the organization and promote its goals and objectives.

Notably, 2 NGOs mentioned an association between empowerment and acknowledgement. In their perception, the more an NGO appreciates and values the contribution of its members, the more empowered the members feel. Being appreciated

and having their contribution acknowledged creates a feeling of belonging and makes the members feel that they are part of larger whole, which is empowering.

When asked to compare the empowerment of men and women, the overwhelming majority of NGOs claim that women and men are equally empowered. However, it is important to note that the comparison was based on how each NGO perceives empowerment, which, as mentioned above, predominantly translates as the education and training of their members. Only the 2 NGOs that related empowerment to strength and confidence perceive that women are less empowered.

Some NGOs believe that there are no differences in empowerment between women and men due to the fact that they are small organizations and thus the dynamics are less; members are close to each other, they have a strong sense of belonging, are part of the same team and work towards a common goal.

*Small communities sustain balance between the genders-**Youth Organization***

Some NGOs clarified that women and men are equally empowered because they are equally trained since they attend the same workshops and information seminars. Additionally, the contribution of women and men is equally acknowledged and appreciated.

Other NGOs believe that there are no specific reasons that attributed to this; they believe that the balance across genders exists because 'it just happened'; it was a natural transition of the changes that took place in society.

*The society is gradually changing because women have slowly started to realize that they are dynamic enough and have the capabilities to claim any position they want in an organization. Women seem to respect themselves more and claim their rights. They no longer believe that their position is in the home -**Culture and Arts***

The two NGOs that claim that women are still not empowered enough attribute the lack of empowerment to lack of education, skills and information. They believe that because women do not feel knowledgeable and well-trained, they are discouraged from actively participating since it would be difficult for them to find ways to materialize their ideas. Consequently, they place particular importance to educating their staff:

*Workshops can help women become more involved. Women would be more comfortable and more willing to participate because they will be better equipped. This way they can translate a lot of their good ideas into action. - **Ecological Organization***

Moreover, education and advancement of skills and qualifications can enhance women's confidence and strengthen their self-esteem, encouraging them to standing up for themselves; this is particularly useful when women need to claim their rights and defend themselves within the organization.

*Women need to be educated to learn to stand up for themselves. Women need to learn how to stand their ground when they are attacked, to stand by their position when they know their positions are correct. - **Ecological Organization***

In terms of the way their members express their opinions, half the NGOs claim that there are no differences in the openness and the comfort in which women and men express themselves within the organization. This can be attributed to:

- The NGOs open and friendly environment, where there is equal respect, acknowledgement and meritocracy for all.
- The NGOs being run by a good leader. As claimed by one NGO, there are no blinkers, no discrimination when it comes to the role of women and men.
- A good team spirit, a feeling of togetherness and the notion that they all work towards a common goal
- The long co-existence of both men and women in the organization, which helps to create a feeling of comfort among them and encourages free and open expression
- The structure of the organization (the presence of many different committees, subcommittees and regional councils) which provides room for all members to express themselves and discuss their ideas or complains

Among the organizations that acknowledge differences in the way women and men express themselves, opinions vary.

Few of them support that the difference is attributed to personality differences and character traits. Men seem to be more laconic and economical in their communication while women are more expressive because they are more analytical and more talkative by nature. The differences in communication may sometimes drive both women and men to withhold their opinions in order to avoid conflict.

A small number of NGOs support that men appear more confident, more adamant, more demanding and more aggressive in the way they express themselves. This however creates a negative environment, which discourages, and often restricts, women from expressing their opinions or ideas. Indeed, this would suggest that women often feel disempowered and hold back.

*Unfortunately there are not enough women who could fight back and retaliate; the ones who would make men 'embarrassed of their behavior. Most of them pull back and keep quiet even though they know the others are unfair. - **Ecological Organization***

Social norms and the different ways women and men are brought up also play a key role. Two of the NGOs interviewed claim that traditional and patriarchal mentalities are still present in the Cypriot society: the woman is expected to stay at home and take care of the children, she has to be more reserved, more conservative and is more restricted. Women are not encouraged to speak their mind while on the other hand men are brought up to be more free, more confident, more out-spoken; they are taught that they should always have an opinion and express it.

This is due the way we grew up, a complex passed down from past patriarchal generations. Women were not taught that it is healthy to express themselves. : 'Who are you to speak your mind' - Ecological Organization

The two NGOs above also claim that women would express themselves only when they feel very strongly about an issue or when they have been with the organization for a considerable amount of time and feel comfortable to do so.

Barriers to participation

Lack of time and the burden of too many responsibilities in the home are perceived as the most dominant factors prohibiting women from participating in NGOs. Reasons of discrimination (women not given equal opportunities because of their gender, not equal pay, not equal reward than men) were also mentioned, but to a lesser extent. Notably, around 10% of the NGOs perceive that women are less trained and less educated than men and are sometimes not trusted enough as equal members.

Interestingly, about 1 in 4 of the NGOs believe that there are no specific reasons that prohibit women's participation, this perception being stronger among welfare and professional associations and also among male participants. This is not surprising considering that this perception stems from organizations that either experience a high participation of women and thus do not recognize any barriers (e.g. welfare organizations) or from organizations where the participation of women has been 'de-facto' limited (as in the case of Trade Unions or Professional Organizations with more male-dominated fields : associations for the army, the pilots and civil engineers).

Table 5 :Barriers to participation of women

<i>Reason</i>	<i>% of organizations claiming so</i>
Lack of time	48
Too many responsibilities in the home	41
No particular reason	24
Are discriminated against	16
Restricted by their husbands / partners	13
Not trained / educated enough	12
Are generally less aware of our activities / how they can participate	10
Not taken seriously / not trusted	7
Belief that their contribution has only a small / moderate influence on society	7
Not part of the wider network / connections	6
Do not feel empowered enough / confident enough	5
Not belonging to political parties / are not politically involved	4

Qualitative interviews also highlight the barriers of lack of time and the burden of family responsibilities. All NGOs recognize that the weight of responsibility of taking care of the home and the children is too restricting for women, since they often do so with minimal, or even no support from their environment.

The woman will take care of the husband, take care of the children: take them to school and private lessons, bathe them, feed them, put them to bed, wake up at night to give them their water; the man will 'play fool', he will just 'turn on the other side' and remain asleep. And then she has to wake up in the morning and put on her nice-clothes, put-on her make-up and look beautiful and smiling and fresh. -NGO involved in Information and Research on EU topics

The woman is first a mother and she would never deny her role as a mother for a higher participation in an NGO – NGO in Education, Culture and Advocacy

Lack of acknowledgement of their contribution also acts as a barrier, highlighting the importance that NGOs need to place on appreciation and reward of their members and volunteers.

They do not believe that they really contribute. They do not believe that their contribution is important. That the little pebble they put down is of importance. They are used to different roles: they are mothers, wives. Also their contribution is not valued or acknowledged and this breaks them. - Ecological Organization

Moreover, lack of confidence, intertwined with lack of empowerment on women's behalf are important prohibiting factors. Some organizations claim that women refrain from participating the Board of Directors (which is the most active body of the organization) because they do not trust that they will be accepted as leaders or because they do not feel capable or well equipped to measure up to the responsibilities of participation. This often takes place when they, wrongly, compare themselves with men:

The problem women have is when they try to perceive themselves vis-à-vis a man. But men and women are dissimilar. When you try to find your identity though a man, then the game is lost. There is no such an identity. –Advocacy NGO

Factors related to the environment that the NGOs operate in are also highlighted. One NGO believes that participation of women is equally as low as men's, because the extremely busy and demanding lives we all live leave no time or room for voluntary contribution. It seems that the 'culture of volunteerism' has weakened, it is no longer cultivated or promoted by schools or the society and thus the majority of people would be reluctant to sacrifice their limited free time for an NGO.

Lack of the right motivations and the right mechanisms to attract women are also thought to contribute to the lower participation of women. Women often do not understand the role and significance of their participation in NGOs and are often not aware of how they can participate.

Volunteerism is this 'unknown concept'; you know that it is there but you are not aware of what exactly is going on. Thus a woman may not be aware of what exactly an organization is involved with and may not express an interest. – Welfare Organization

In addition, the fact that the Civil Society is not legitimized is perceived to act as a barrier, among both women and men alike. One NGO claims that since NGOs are not legitimized bodies, people tend to look down upon them.

There is no 'culture' for 'Civil Society'; there is no clear vision for the future of NGOs. If NGOs were legitimized they would have greater gravity in the perception of Cypriots since NGOs would be the bodies they would turn to have their problems solved. – Advocacy NGO

The nature of activity of an NGO could also act as barrier. This is more common in the case of Trade Unions and Professional organizations where the mode of operation (random and chaotic hours, male-dominant professions) discourages the participation of women.

Reasons that drive and could enhance the participation of women

Table 6 : Parameters that drive a greater participation of women

<i>Reason</i>	<i>% of organizations claiming so</i>
Are more altruistic / have greater empathy than men	40
To promote specifically the interests of women	38
Are better equipped than men to handle people in need	35
To have / to be given a personal goal	33
More sensitive to the issues of our organization	27
Belief that they can have a large influence / impact on society	23
Charitable motivations / empathy for the poor / to help marginalized groups	22
Participation in decision-making	19
It is more socially accepted for women to participate as volunteers in welfare / CSO organizations	18
The scope and objectives of our organization need more of a 'female' touch	17
Greater interest in domestic violence issues	14
Feeling that they have more influence / are more influential	11

Women's participation in NGOs is perceived to be driven by altruistic and nurturing motives. A considerable number of NGOs believe that women are more empathic than men (40% of NGOs claiming so), are more capable than men to take care of people in need (35%), are driven by charitable motivations (22%) and are more sensitized to the issues of NGOs (27%).

Quite importantly, about 40% recognize that women join NGOs to promote the issues of women while about 1 in 4 believe that women have the need to make an impact on society. Conversely, participation in decision-making is not considered to be a key driver for women's participation.

Qualitative findings highlight many different perspectives on the factors that could enhance the participation of women. Quite importantly, the majority of the reasons mentioned are directly related to the internal functions of NGOs, suggesting that higher participation of women should not be a difficult task to implement (provided a predilection towards this direction).

Acknowledgement and appreciation have overwhelmingly been mentioned by all NGOs as the key parameters that could enhance participation of women, even though they recognize that these two parameters equally apply to both women and men.

*The appeal, the need for acknowledgment and the ambition for contribution do not differ between men and women. They are an integral part of the personality of a person and as long as a person has these characteristics, he/she will continue to be involved in an NGO. .– **NGO involved in Education, Culture & Advocacy***

Interconnected with acknowledgement and appreciation, NGOs place a lot of significance in giving meaning and value to the involvement of their members; making them feel important and that their contribution is valued. This would in turn promote a sense of empowerment and will encourage women to be more active.

*Respect their opinion and uniqueness. Make their opinion count. Empower them to be more dynamic, be doers-**Youth Organization***

*Creative participation- make them feel useful, make them feel valuable, feel that their opinions are respected, freedom to express their opinion –**Trade Union***

Education and awareness are also considered to be important factors in driving higher involvement, especially considering that women are often at a disadvantage when it comes to information since the information that is disseminated by NGOs is often male-targeted. Two of the NGOs interviewed perceive that the more educated and aware their women members are, the more they will participate and the higher their contribution will be.

Involvement in projects that are more suited to their interests, skills and capabilities or even involvement in projects that are directly targeting women could also act as motivations to a higher involvement of women. The activities women would get involved with need to be more fun, pleasant and creative, so as to sustain their interest and participation.

Participation in key strategic positions or in decision-making bodies is thought to increase overall participation. At first, it is more likely that women will be attracted to organizations that are run by women. Secondly, the higher participation of women in leadership positions will act as leverage in promoting new mechanisms into action that could help highlight the significance of the contribution of women and thus enhance their involvement.

Also the media can help promote an image of women in leadership positions and indicate that there are no differences in gender when it comes to leadership.

Advocacy

Lack of discrimination, equal salaries and equal benefits can also help alleviate some of the barriers of a higher participation. Men and women need to be provided with equal motivations to participate so as to maintain a balance of gender across all different activities.

Aspects related to the organizations' external environment have also been mentioned with respect to further enhancing the participation of women. Since the greater barrier to a higher participation rests on the burden of family responsibilities, all NGOs recognize that strengthening the involvement of women in their organization cannot be achieved unless the family environment becomes more conducive and more supportive towards women (i.e. support from other family members in taking care of the children, equal sharing of responsibilities). Support from the state or the community is also necessary, as for instance state-owned day-care centers for children.

Moreover, better education and awareness about volunteerism and contribution to NGOs can prove beneficial in encouraging participation of both women and men. The concept and benefits of volunteerism need to be cultivated from a young age, at school, so as young people will grow up and be interested in getting involved.

Volunteerism needs to be taught at school. We need to try to cultivate the idea of volunteerism from a young age— **Welfare Organization**

Gender Quota Policy

The majority of NGOs are strongly against a gender quota policy, holding on to traditional ideas and appearing very doubtful, if not intimidated by such a concept.

Almost all but one of the NGOs perceive that the implementation of quotas is a discriminatory practice. They fear that organizations may overlook the qualifications, skills, talents and even the personality of their members, geared towards finding the 'right' gender to fulfill their quotas. This may often mean that the right (most qualified) person will be disregarded in view of the fact that she or he may be the 'wrong' gender.

It means that you no longer choose your people; importance is not placed on the people's qualifications and abilities but on gender because you have quotas to fill. -NGO involved in Information and Research on EU topics

Moreover, participation is strongly perceived as a qualitative concept rather than a quantitative one. It translates as the willingness, the spirit, the energy, the interest, the enthusiasm and the 'soul' members invest in an NGO. Organizations understand the extent of participation in terms of the productivity, the active involvement, the frequency of participation and the effectiveness with which their members implement the various tasks and activities. Quotas and numeric representation do not seem to fit in this picture;

quotas do not necessarily connote equality and they are not thought to contribute any benefit to the organization.

Quotas do not necessarily connote equality. It is the qualifications and the enthusiasm of a person that count, not the person's gender. – Welfare Association

I am very against to a gender quota policy. It will be a crime if it happens. Volunteerism is a very personal thing. Quotas will take away from what is important and just make volunteerism cliché. Contribution has to do with 'depositing' your soul'. We can't play with people's souls like that.-Youth Organization

NGOs fear that a quota policy would have a negative impact on their organization. At first, negative feelings would be created among the staff that may feel an absence of meritocracy if less qualified people are recruited to fill certain quotas. Feelings of injustice and unfairness could also be present, having a demotivating effect. Secondly, quotas may provide a sense that advancement within the organization is ensured and both women and men may take it for granted without actively performing to the best of their abilities. It appears that the security attached to the quota implementation would discourage active participation.

The quota system may also discourage women to develop and perform highly well because they will rest assure that the quota system would promote them to high positions. –NGO involved in Education, Culture & Advocacy

Conversely, most NGOs believe that advancement needs to come through their members' hard work and reflect the value of their contribution.

Quotas just provide an equal numeric representation but they do not necessarily connote equal participation. For us it is important that women have the support from the organization to advance and that their advancement comes through their personality and their hard work. - Trade Union

Furthermore, it appears that the focus and priorities in NGOs concentrate on carrying out their activities and getting the 'work done'. An even representation of gender seems to be more of a 'luxury' rather than a priority.

Our participation does not depend on gender but on people. We are a small organization and we need to focus on getting the work done – Youth Organization

In addition, taking into account their small size (i.e. the small number of people involved) and their strong dependency to any help that is available to them, NGOs often have to consider all people that express an interest to participate. Consequently, a quota policy is perceived be limiting, should NGOs need to turn down people who are interested because they do not coincide with their needs on quotas.

Since it is a volunteer organization and you need all the help you can get, you can't really be sending people away because they are not the right gender.

Everybody who expresses an interest needs to be welcome. We do not have enough volunteers to spare. – **Welfare Organization**

A large share of the NGOs (4 out of 11) perceive that a gender quota policy is more applicable to governmental bodies and institutions (as for instance the parliament, the ministries and other governmental services). They believe that equality of gender in the high rank governmental positions would indirectly provide guidelines for non-governmental organizations to do the same, encouraging a higher participation of women in leadership positions.

An equal participation will have a domino effect; if it happens in the government, the parliament, the ministries, it will 'spill over' to the NGOs as well. – **Youth Organization**

Notably, only two NGOs considered that a gender quota policy would be beneficial for their organization, however they only accept it as a temporary and transitional measure. These two NGOs appreciate that the equal involvement of both genders would encourage a more balanced, open-minded and comfortable environment for all, since different viewpoints and ideas will not only be expressed but also implemented. Additionally, the perception that the involvement of a higher number of women would bring about greater results (in terms of the implementation of a greater number of activities) was also expressed, arising from the fact that women are:

Women can be useful because women are willing to work, they work very hard and are very dynamic – **Culture and Arts**

Conclusion

The aspect of gender participation in NGOs is definitely a complex and multi-dimensional one. A purely numeric examination of the differences across genders would be myopic and incomplete as parameters related to field of activity, quality, breadth and depth of participation are also of great significance and cannot be overlooked.

Even though women enjoy a good breadth of participation, having infiltrated to a large number of NGOs they still lag behind men in terms of a strong 'numeric' presence. Moreover, their 'depth' of participation (extent of involvement) is perceived to be lower than males, suggesting that at an overall level participation of women is limited and needs to be further enhanced.

Participation of women in leadership positions is extremely weak, highlighting an area where particular importance and focus needs to be placed. The right mechanisms need to be put in place to help women advance, not only in NGOs but also in governmental and privately –owned organizations.

Barriers related to family responsibilities, social norms and expectations, discrimination, lack of awareness and lack of acknowledgement and reward need to be addressed. Attention also needs to be paid to empowerment issues; considering the correlation between empowerment and information, NGOs need to invest in educating and training their members.

Quite importantly, the majority of the factors that are perceived to encourage a higher participation of women appear to be predominantly internal rather than external (i.e. they are related to the internal processes and the mode of operation of the NGOs). This would suggest that strengthening the involvement of women could be an attainable goal, provided a disposition towards this direction.