

# FORUT Policy Document

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Board of FORUT

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## FORUT's policy for making a difference

### Background

FORUT originates from the temperance movement (IOGT) in Norway, which together with other social movements, was an important part of building democracy and people power in Norway from the middle of the 19th century. With the heavy increase in consumption of alcohol in Norway from the early 1800s, the burdens and harms from alcohol became more visible. The most affected group was women and children from the lower social classes living in very poor conditions. The main problems were the men's behaviour when they were drunk (violence, accidents) and the severe consequences for the family economy as well as it hindered economic and social development of the local communities. This resulted in the establishment of the first temperance movement in 1860, and very often women were pioneers in this work. Many women were also given high positions in the organisations, and they even organised their own women's groups. These groups were also often fighting for women's right to vote, with one reason being that they wanted to influence the laws and policies regulating the sale of alcohol. As a positive consequence, many women acquired good organisational skills which has been important for the development of a more democratic and equal society.

The tradition of believing in people's power and will to change their situation and society as well as seeing alcohol and drugs as a hindrance to individual, social and economic development is the bedrock which FORUT stands on today. As we see it, working to prevent harm from alcohol (and other drugs) is a natural step in the process of liberation of people to live up to their full potential.

### Vision and Mission

**FORUT's vision** is a peaceful, democratic and just world where everyone is secured human rights and a dignified life, and where alcohol and drugs do not jeopardise people's safety and human potential.

**FORUT's mission** is to mobilise, organise and empower people, especially women and children, to develop their potential. They shall be able to understand and demand their rights and combat poverty, injustice and oppression with democratic and peaceful means.

**FORUT's goal** is that people have the power to change their lives.

**FORUT main target** groups are women, children and youth.

### FORUT-model for Making a Difference

FORUT's work is based on three important pillars which all interact with each other. In short, our **values** reflect who we choose to work with and how we collaborate with our partners (**partner model**) as well as using an **integrated approach** to remove the hindrances to social and economic development caused by alcohol and drugs, both locally, nationally, and globally. Together they form our model for making a difference in the world (Theory of change), and we believe that our model will lead to more sustainable development.

## 1. FORUT's values and beliefs; democracy, empowerment and solidarity

FORUT is a democratic, rights-based solidarity organisation and we believe that communities are resilient, and that ordinary people are agents of change, capable of improving their lives.

**Participatory democracy**, where people are actively involved in all important decisions concerning them, is, for us, a basic condition for the economic and social development of the nation. People power is expressed and channelled through civil society, which at its best mobilises ordinary people and channels their aspirations through democratic and peaceful action. Strengthening civil society is therefore the foundation on which we build sustainable change.

However, sustainable change can only happen when people are **empowered to challenge the power structures** that perpetuate and reinforce poverty, injustice and oppression.

Empowerment is thus the backbone of a rights-based approach and enabling every human being (“right-holders”) to hold governments and others (“duty-bearers”) responsible for ensuring that their rights are respected and fulfilled. This means that we are working in partnership with local NGOs so that marginalised groups are able to demand improvements for themselves and their communities. Strengthening civil society is a crucial element in holding governments accountable to its citizens and achieving changes that are sustained and reinforced over time.

FORUT stands in **solidarity** with the oppressed in their struggle for dignity, justice and human rights. In addition to working with the people in our partner countries, we also want to enhance the Norwegian public's understanding of relevant global issues; how unfair the global structures are, how a world with increasing differences between the rich and the poor also contributes to a more brutal and undemocratic world, as well as how alcohol and drugs are a contributing factor to the violation of women's and children's basic human rights. To make a difference and change the world, we believe we must start with children and the youth, while at the same time influencing Norwegian politicians. We are using this combination of bottom-up/top-down approaches in both our partner countries and global institutions such as the WHO and the UN.

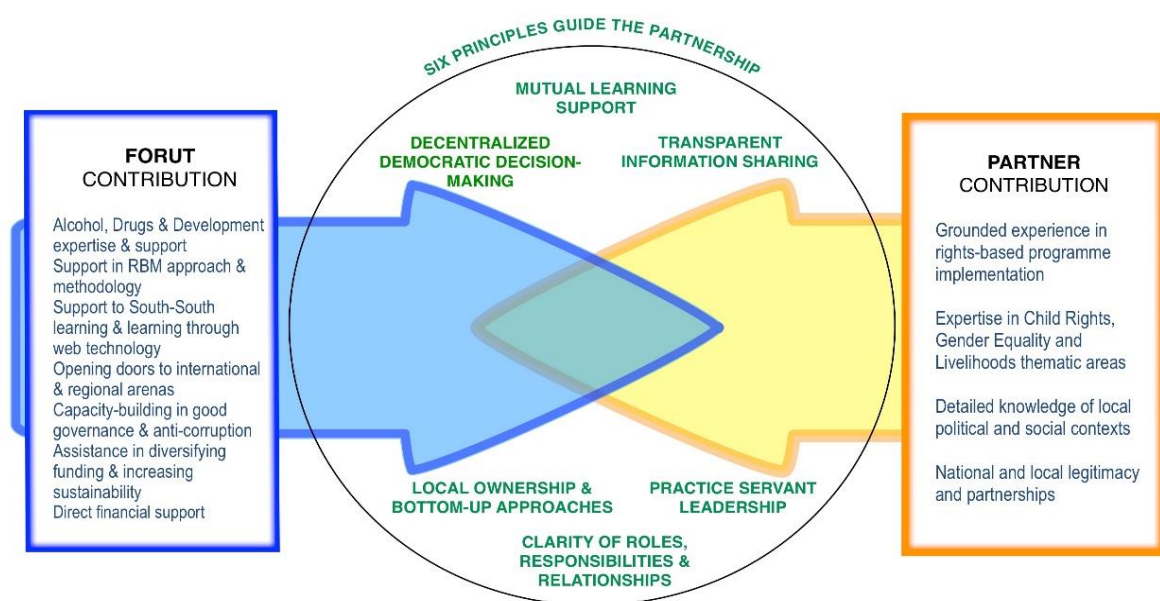
FORUT is not normally a humanitarian organisation, but whenever a FORUT partner organisation is in a position to provide **disaster relief** and recovery to disaster-struck communities in which they work, FORUT will support these efforts to its fullest capabilities (see more in the crosscutting issues document) as we know our partners can quickly reach the populations in need, and that they stay behind when other actors leave.

## 2. FORUT's partnership model – six principles

Local ownership of processes and products is the key to sustainable change. Community ownership is distinctly different from charity, prevents dependency of aid, and ensures greater relevance and adaptation to the cultural context. It goes hand in hand with participatory democracy, good governance, a rights-based approach, social accountability and equitable partnerships. Bottom-up approaches ensure that communities are mobilised based on indigenous knowledge priorities, rather than priorities set by elites or by the global north. Changes achieved in this way may be sustained over time, because empowered individuals and communities continue to claim their rights after external support has been withdrawn.

FORUT is working together with local partners, and together we are committed to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By supporting civil society initiatives that are encouraging democratic participation, defending and promoting human rights, mitigating violent conflict, contributing to the eradication of poverty, injustice and oppression, and preventing alcohol, drug and mental health problems, we believe we can make a difference in people’s lives and little, by little change the world.

FORUT’s strength lies in partnerships that have been established with partner organisations in South Asia and Africa. The model below illustrates the symbiotic relationships and the six principles that guide our work with our partners.



Firstly, FORUT and our partners have **different roles and responsibilities**, but we are both equal and practice a **bottom-up approach combined with servant leadership**. In this way we will achieve the most sustainable results and ensure that we meet the local needs and leave no-one-behind.

Secondly, we practice **mutual learning and support** as well as **transparent information sharing**, since each partnership and every organisation provides complementary contributions and expertise. The partners are experts in Child Rights (CR), Gender Equality (GE), Mental Health (MH) and Livelihoods (LH) and have direct links with rights-holders. FORUT provides expertise in Alcohol, Drugs & Development (ADD). We consider it to be a privilege to be able to work with partners in the spirit of mutual respect, partnership and learning.

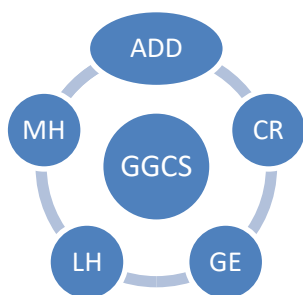
Collectively we work towards strengthening Good Governance & Civil Society (GGCS) by ensuring **decentralised and democratic decision making**. This requires political decentralisation, economic justice, access to information and a culture of inclusiveness

Therefore all our programmes and projects are designed with a view to broadening and deepening democracy by promoting public participation in political processes and ensuring that marginalised groups are given a voice and heard. FORUT will always work to create and strengthen mechanisms of government responsiveness to concerned citizens and empower citizens to struggle for their interests and work against marginalisation based on sex, age, nationality, religion, language, caste, disability, sexual orientation, or any other personal or collective trait used as an excuse for excluding people from the political process and social and cultural life.

FORUT works with local and national authorities to increase their capacity for good governance and willingness to be transparent and accountable, as well as with civil society and the media to enable them to expose corruption and take action against it.

### 3. FORUT's integrated approach

FORUT has six thematic areas, and we have different ambitions for the level of competence internally and in the FORUT partner network. Most importantly we strive for an integrated approach which has its roots from the early establishment of the temperance movement in the 1880s, especially how alcohol/drugs have negative effects on the social and economic development of communities as well as how intoxication has severe consequences for the individuals' own health and for the fulfilment of women and children's rights.



This figure symbolises that good governance (GG) is the key to sustainable development and social justice, and that informed and empowered citizens will hold politicians and civil servants accountable (CS). GGCS is therefore the basis for achieving sustainable change in the five other areas. In addition, ADD is FORUT's main identity and where we have our expertise. Furthermore, the circles indicate that every thematic area is interrelated and has mutual influence over each other.

Some of the causalities between ADD, GE, CR and MH are well known. In particular, this is the case with regard to how alcohol and drug problems (and mental illness) directly have a negative impact on GE, CR and MH. Alcohol is closely associated with Gender Based Violence (GBV) and sexual risk behaviour. Furthermore, when a large part of a poor family's income (LH) is spent on alcohol and drugs, less money is available for education, health and nutrition for women and children.

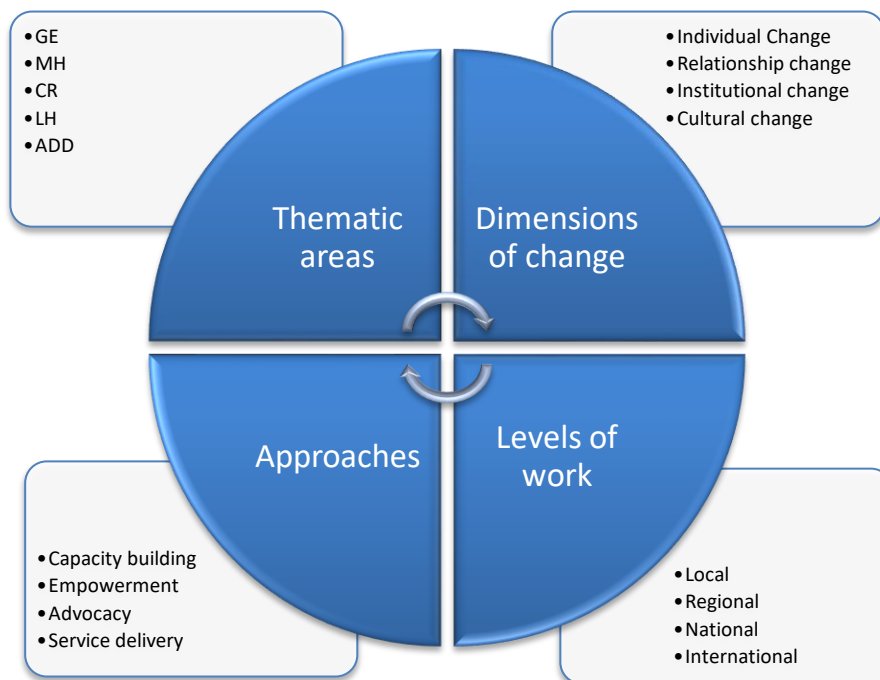
It is also well-known that when child rights are being violated, it can affect a child's mental health and children at risk will often indulge in substance use. FORUT partners have documented high levels of substance-use problems among such children, in particular, but not only, in urban slums. This again may lead to violence and sexual exploitation of children, in a vicious circle.

Similarly, we see that when women's rights are being violated, this can increase their risk of developing mental illness and also reduces their ability to care for their children, leading to child rights violations. It is also seen that in households where women's rights are violated, child

rights are often violated, too – for example, where corporal punishment is socially accepted, or Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is perpetuated through generations. Both harmful traditional practices and being witness to violence in their home, affects children’s mental health and physical and mental development. Last, but not least, girl children are especially vulnerable due to the accumulated effect of ageism and sexism, and an integrated approach is required to secure their rights.

We therefore see that the areas of CR, GE, MH and ADD are intimately interconnected, where shortcomings in one area affect the other areas, in vicious circles. FORUT believes that when the problems are interconnected, we need an integrated approach to solving the problems as well. The vicious interconnected circles of the five areas would have to be replaced by positive effects that mutually reinforce each other, as more respect for children’s rights and women’s rights would go hand-in-hand with a reduction in alcohol and drug problems and better mental health – at individual, family and community level.

This integrated and comprehensive approach entails significant advocacy at local, national and international levels for passing and implementing policies and legislation. It also entails capacity-building of public institutions and civil society at all these levels to ensure that changes are sustainable. Empowerment of rights-holders enables them to hold duty-bearers accountable. Finally, service delivery is used strategically to aid and secure the rights of the most vulnerable while at the same time promoting partnerships with the public and private sector. This comprehensive approach requires a commitment to long-term partnerships.



The example below illustrates why FORUT and partners integrate five different thematic areas in our programmes and why our deeply integrated approach is appropriate:



When a girl-child in India is raped (CR violation), among the contributing factors one will find: the male perpetrators' idea of sexual entitlement (GE), his mental health conditions (MH) and his eventual influence of alcohol or drugs (ADD) combined with her vulnerability and inability to pursue justice due to poverty (LH) and her status as a girl child (GE and CR). Combating rape therefore requires working with masculinities, empowering children, improving livelihoods, and controlling alcohol & drugs - simultaneously.

In this particular case, the girl-child who was raped will be given a safe place and psychosocial help by FORUT partners to help her deal with the mental consequences of the violation. However, the partners are also advocating for legislative reforms, building the capacity of police and courts to deal with child rape cases in a more sensitive way, and strengthening local networks which can support survivors of violence. Additionally, they would reduce the risk of future violations by combating alcohol and drug use, toxic ideas of masculinities which condone sexual and gender-based violence, and traditional values which shame and stigmatise the victim.

## Summary

FORUT's model for making a difference is committed to the following values and beliefs:

- Poverty, injustice and oppression are interrelated barriers to living in dignity and fulfilling one's potential. Human rights are universal, inalienable and indivisible and social justice and fundamental freedoms must go hand in hand.
- Diversity is a source of strength and makes our lives richer. It is to be promoted, protected and celebrated. Racism, ageism, sexism, tribalism, sectarianism or any other form of discrimination is anathema to FORUT.
- Participatory democracy and people power are mutually reinforcing and include much more than just the right to vote. In a participatory democracy with **good governance**, authorities are accountable, transparent and responsive to the needs and rights of all.
- **Civil society** is the most important contributor to participatory democracy and is a much broader concept than NGOs. A vibrant civil society is both a goal in itself and a means to ensure human rights and good governance, through being a watchdog and a partner for governments as well as the private sector.
- Peace is more than the absence of war and violence. True peace requires just, inclusive and equitable structures to replace unjust, exploitative and oppressive structures. Civil society can only strive for peace with nonviolent means.
- **Alcohol and drugs** are often barriers to individual and societal development and a cause of ill health, violence, **poverty** and human rights violations, particularly against **women and children**. FORUT works to minimise harm from alcohol and drugs.
- **Good mental health** is a prerequisite to be able to fulfil one's highest potential and to utilise effectively other interventions such as education and livelihood support.