Guidance Note on Gender Equality

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What is gender equality?

In biological and legal terms, humans may be classified as male, female and other/non-binary (i.e. neither male nor female, but something else). The term **gender** in turn, refers to the economic, social, political and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being male, female or of non-binary identity. Gender definitions and patterns of inequality vary among cultures and change over time. In most societies, men as a group have more access to resources, opportunities and decision-making than other genders. These inequalities are a constraint to development because they limit the ability of women and non-binary persons to develop and exercise their full capabilities for their own benefit and for that of society as a whole.

Gender equality requires equal enjoyment by women, men and non-binary persons of socially valued goods, opportunities, resources and rewards. Gender equality does not mean that genders become the same, but that their opportunities and life chances are equal. Neither does it presume a particular model of gender equality for all societies and cultures, but rather reflects a concern that all genders have equal opportunities to make choices about what gender equality means, and work in partnership to achieve it. Achieving gender equality will require changes in institutional practices and social relations in order to stop reinforcing disparities. It also requires a strong voice for women and non-binary persons in shaping their societies.

How to advance gender equality in a project?

When gender equality is set as a crosscutting objective, attention needs to be paid to gendered impacts of all actions in order for all people to equally contribute to, and benefit from development. At project level, this means that it is necessary to systematically address gender equality related risks, assess the impacts and implications of the project on women/men/non-binary persons, seek opportunities to promote gender equality, as well as include gender equality as an advocacy theme when approaching decision-makers and other stakeholders.

The minimum standard for gender equality as a crosscutting objective is to "do no harm", that is, to make sure the project will not contribute to gender discrimination or human rights violations. The "do no harm" standard of gender equality implies the following:
- Risks for the human rights of women, girls and non-binary persons are assessed, avoided and mitigated;
- Barriers for equal participation and inclusion by all genders are identified and addressed;
- Impacts on gender equality are continuously assessed and monitored;

● Data disaggregation according to sex (male/female/other) is systematically collected, analyzed and the gained understanding is made use of in the project implementation.

In order to make sure no harm is done, as well as to seek positive contribution towards gender equality, a **gender analysis** should be conducted, and the principles of equality, inclusion and participation should guide all action. Gender analysis forms part of project planning, monitoring and evaluation. It examines the differences in women's and men's roles and responsibilities, daily routines and activities, and access to and control over resources, services and decision-making, including those that lead to social and economic inequalities. The lessons learned through the analysis shall be applied in the project implementation. At best, the gender analysis leads to the inclusion of explicit measures in the project design to:

• avoid perpetuating or reinforcing gender inequalities;
• overcome barriers to women's full participation in the project;
• ensure that women and men, girls and boys, benefit equitably from the project's results;
• incorporate specific activities to address gender inequalities and constraints, and meet gender-specific needs and priorities;
• use gender specific and/or sex-disaggregated indicators, including impact indicators, to monitor and evaluate progress and results.

Each project context is unique; therefore, also the ways to advance gender equality are manifold.

Checklist for gender mainstreaming in a project
(Checklist edited from an original version by CIVICUS, see link below for the full version)

Identification phase
Identification of the general purpose and objectives of the project
• Who are the target beneficiaries?
• Are women's practical and/or strategic needs a specific focus of the project?
• What, if any, are the anticipated benefits for women (skill development, income opportunities, etc)?
• Can a gender-inclusive design be drawn up for the project, and the project still effectively target women?
• Have there been any earlier efforts with the same objectives? With what success?
Identify and assess gender needs and opportunities
• What is the gender division of labour in general in the region?
• What are the main sources of income for women and for men?
• What needs and opportunities exist for increasing women's livelihoods?
• To what degree are women visible in the target sector (farming, forests, livelihoods, energy)?
• Are women's needs in the sector the same as those of men?
• Have men, women and non-binary persons been consulted in identifying needs and opportunities related to the general purpose of the project?
• Do women and men have equal access to resources? If not, what opportunities exist for increasing women's access to and control of resources and/or benefits?
Identify possible negative effects
• Is the project likely to have same positive and negative effects on women, men and non-binary persons?
• Might the project reduce women's access to or control of some resources or benefits they currently have?
• Does the CSO implementing the project have the capacity and authority to deliver benefits to women or to involve women?
• What social, economic and political effects will the project have on different genders in the short and longer term?

Design and planning
Project Analysis and Design • Is information on household economic arrangements (such as roles; sex/age/time of labour; land ownership/control; sources/types/control of incomes) adequate for the planning and evaluation of the project? • Are there legal, cultural, religious or other constraints on women's and non-binary persons' participation in the project? Have strategies been formulated to address these factors? • How are men's and women's activities, access to and control of resources shaped by structural factors (legal, customary, institutional)? Is awareness-raising on these structural factors included in the project design? • Will women directly benefit from all project components? • Does the project design include strategies to facilitate women's active involvement in the project (for instance in terms of meeting and training arrangements)? **Define objectives in terms of outputs and deliverables** • Are project objectives clearly related to practical and strategic gender needs? • Have both men and women participated in setting those objectives? • Do women and men view the planned activities in the same way? • What positive or negative effects could there be on women and on men as a result of the changes the project aims to cause? • How will men and women participate in the project, and in what capacities? • Which CSOs with a focus on women might contribute to the project - financially or with expertise? Are male advocates of gender equality available? **Budgeting** • Will there be a separate budget (or line-item budget) for facilitating the participation of women? • Is it possible to track funds for women and men separately - from allocation to delivery - with a fair degree of accuracy?
Implementation
• Are there appropriate opportunities for both women and men to participate in project management and implementation positions? • Are there mechanisms to ensure that the project resources or benefits are not controlled or taken over by men? • How will disagreements and disputes be handled and by whom? • Are project staff and volunteers trained in gender-mainstreaming?
Monitoring and evaluation
• Are women involved in the monitoring and evaluation? • What indicators are there to measure progress in achieving gender equality?

Further reading:
- CIVICUS Guidelines for Gender mainstreaming in project stages
- Both ENDS: Embedding gender justice in environmental action: where to start? (pdf)
- Rights and Resources Initiative: Strengthening Indigenous and Rural Women's Rights to Govern Community Lands; Ten Factors Contributing to Successful Initiatives