

# IS YOUR PROJECT ADEQUATELY ADDRESSING GENDER ISSUES?

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This paper presents questions to assess whether gender issues are being adequately addressed in terms of the design, monitoring, and implementation of natural resource management projects.

## WHAT IS GENDER?

Technically, gender is not synonymous with women. It encompasses the learned behavioural differences between men and women in a given community or household, and the roles which are expressed according to sex in women's and men's actions, tasks, and responsibilities. Dealing with gender issues does not mean simply providing a loan or management training to a women's cooperative, but rather understanding and working with the **social construction** of gender and the assignment of specific roles, responsibilities, and expectations to women and men.

It means working together with both men and women, first to understand, then to reflect on traditional stereotypes, and even taboos. Achieving gender equity is a delicate process, which can easily backfire, especially in the hands of an over-eager extension worker who has put on her heavy boots in the hope of getting quick results. It is a process that requires **skill, sensitivity, and patience**.

## WHAT IS EMPOWERMENT?

Power is the ability to negotiate and influence outcomes in a particular environment. Empowerment is gaining this ability. First of all, people must have the knowledge and skills to make their own informed decisions.

It is a contradiction in terms to say that a project empowers people. People empower themselves. Projects can facilitate empowerment by making available information and skills that people want, and by helping communities to break through traditional stereotypes that prevent women from enjoying equity in decision-making and access to resources. Wonderful examples do exist, from ICDPs where even in highly traditional communities with severe gender inequity, men and women together have come to realize the benefits of extending the same human rights to all members of the community. Harmful gender taboos can be broken, but it helps to have skilled and dedicated project facilitators.

## EXAMPLES OF REVIEW QUESTIONS TO ASSESS GENDER ISSUES

### A. Project Design:

1. How does the project team define gender issues?
2. What hypotheses were formulated regarding gender?
3. How were gender issues analysed during the project identification and design phases?
4. What gender differences exist with regard to access to natural resources, and tenure / use rights?
5. What were the existing gender roles in local communities regarding natural resource management before the start of the project?
6. What were the existing gender roles in national management bodies before the start of the project?
7. What were the implications of these for the project strategies (women's needs, opportunities and constraints for increasing women's involvement)?

8. What were the findings of the identification phase regarding the risk that increasing the involvement of women in natural resource management (NRM) activities could unduly aggravate their already heavy daily work loads? If local women were to become more involved in NRM, would the benefits to them outweigh their costs, in both the short term and the long term?
9. What constraints were identified to women's involvement in NRM?
10. Did women from local communities and national bodies participate in the project design and in setting the objectives?
11. Are project objectives explicitly related to women's participation / needs?
12. Do these objectives adequately reflect women's needs?
13. What specific interventions were planned to build the skills of women in local communities in sustainable natural resource management?
14. What specific interventions were planned to build the skills of women in national bodies in sustainable natural resource management?
15. What indicators were designed to measure progress in enhancing women's involvement?
16. What assumptions were identified with respect to building women's skills in sustainable natural resource management?
17. Could the project design be adjusted to increase positive effects on women?
18. Does the project specify awareness of gender issues as a criterion for recruiting staff?

**B. Project Monitoring:**

19. How has the project monitoring been designed to ensure the reliability of feedback mechanisms with respect to differences in gender?
20. Are the data collected gender-disaggregated?
21. How participatory is the project M&E system? What role to women from local communities and national bodies have in monitoring project progress?
22. Has a system for self-monitoring of resource use by the communities been developed? What role do women have in this?
23. Have the assumptions in the logframe related to involving women been monitored?
24. Are gender issues being effectively tracked by the project monitoring system?

**C. Project Implementation:**

25. Has the project recruited women to key positions?
26. Does the project have good contacts with both men and women natural resource users?
27. Have the consultations with both men and women that began in the design phase been followed through during implementation?
28. Do local and national institutions have good contacts with both men and women natural resource users?

29. Are the messages used in project outreach and institutional outreach appropriate for both men and women?
30. What process has been put in place for negotiations and agreements with and among stakeholders, including women?
31. During negotiations, what has emerged in the way of women's interests, expectations, needs, priorities, strengths, and weaknesses?
32. What trade-offs and compromises have women and men made during the negotiation process?
33. Are the technical packages used in project and institutional extension services appropriate for both men and women?
34. How has the project built on women's existing knowledge and natural resource management skills?
35. What new knowledge and skills in sustainable natural resource management have been transmitted to women in local communities?
36. What new knowledge and skills in sustainable natural resource management have been transmitted to women in national bodies?
37. How have the project, and its various components, affected women's access to and control of natural resource resources and benefits?
38. How has the project affected women's productivity / production / income?
39. What is the ratio of women to men on the various oversight, management, and advisory committees for the project and/or the protected area?
40. What is the ratio of women to men who have received training in NRM? in programme and financial management in general?
41. How has the project affected women's participation in decision-making in regard to natural resource management?
42. What effects has the project had on women's and on men's income, status, food security, household cash flow, and family health?
43. What actions have been taken to overcome the constraints determined during the identification phase to building women's skills in sustainable natural resource management?
44. What problems/obstacles in involving women been encountered during implementation?
45. What corrective actions have been taken?
46. How has the project changed women's involvement in sustainable natural resource management?
47. Have the natural resource management and monitoring initiatives increased women's knowledge, skills, confidence, and empowerment?