

A Little Gender  
Handbook  
for Emergencies

or

Just Plain  
Common Sense





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# **1. Why We Care About Gender**

- Well-balanced relations between men and women are essential for human and economic development.
- Failure to improve the social and economic situation of women, who make up a hugely disproportionate majority of the poor around the world, makes sustainable development impossible.
- Oxfam believes that equality is most effectively approached by changing the unequal relations of men and women to one another, rather than by changing the situation of women in isolation.
- Emergency response is always conducted with the long term goal of gender equality in mind.

## **2. Cautionary Notes and Assumptions**

- Individual men are not personally responsible for systemic inequality; blame and defensiveness are unnecessary and unhelpful.
- The conditioning of centuries will not be undone by reading a book or attending a workshop. It's going to be a long haul.
- Most intelligent men are as frustrated and baffled as women that decades of work and activism have not yet brought about equality for women.
- Gender stereotypes and inequality also cause problems for men, but because these are less obvious than women's, they are easily overlooked by both sexes.

### **3. Using A Gender Approach Means:**

**Differentiating target groups.** Gender-differentiated approaches are essential in ALL interventions with target-group related objectives. Whenever a response is associated with or directed to a particular target group, it will have different impacts on men and women. These must be separately addressed.

Use of generic terms like ‘urban households’ and ‘displaced population’ can obscure the needs of women and other marginalised groups. ‘People’ and ‘population’ should always read ‘women and men’, as a reminder that distinct information is required. Effort should also be made to reveal the differences within these (social class, age, ethnicity, etc.), as gender is a variable that has different relevance for different groups.

**Using a participatory approach throughout the response cycle.** From initial response through long term programming, beneficiary participation in needs identification and project design is important. Participatory approaches are often more successful at recognizing and dealing with differences among the population concerned, creating sustainable benefits for various groups. Inadequate involvement and support for women and other disadvantaged groups has tended to worsen their relative economic situation and social status.

**Linking short and long term interventions and goals.** Emergency relief and poverty reduction programmes must also influence the levels of society that determine social structures and contribute to continuing inequality. All interventions must consider the long term impact on overall access to resources and benefits by the poorest groups.



**Working with men to advance the goals of women.** Continue to sensitise and involve men (co-workers as well as beneficiaries!) in supporting increased involvement and decision-making for women, to understand the benefits of gender equality approaches and balanced human development.

#### **4. Situation Assessment**, gathering information in the field

**Always** gather information from both women and men; their opinions and priorities **will** differ.

**Always** interview women separately from men; responses are significantly more accurate and meaningful in single sex groups.

Whenever possible, women should be interviewed by other women; again, it has a major impact on the quality of response.

Ensure you obtain the opinions of recognized women's representatives, whose views may not be the same as those of the (predominantly male) official local leaders.

## Simple gender-sensitive assessment guidelines<sup>1</sup>:

1. Even if there is little time to carry out full-scale research, avoid making the assumption that everybody's needs are the same.
2. Recognise that women may be relatively more 'invisible' and that in times of crisis may be more confined to their homes than normal. A determined effort may be needed to seek out their views and opinions separately from men.
3. Seek information from a variety of people: women as well as men, ordinary people as well as community leaders, individuals as well as organised groups.
4. Use simple, flexible methods of research that don't require advanced skills or special

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<sup>1</sup> G. Templer, Gender and Emergencies, <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/guytempler,overview,p.5/5>

equipment; identify a small but manageable number of key indicators, bearing in mind that gender-specific indicators may need to be included.

5. Identify how men and women are surviving through their own efforts and try to support these, rather than imposing an outsider's view on what is happening.

6. Identify a small number of particularly vulnerable families to monitor through regular in-depth interviews.

7. However unusual, explore the priorities that affected people themselves identify. Recognise that psychological, social and cultural needs and information may be just as important in ensuring survival as meeting the physical requirements of food and shelter.

A thorough situation analysis forms the basis for all subsequent analyses and planning steps. If no distinction is made at this stage between relevant target groups, it will be much more difficult and costly for future steps to be conducted along gender specific lines.

Considerations and questions described in rapid assessment checklists must be as gender specific as possible; always identify **who** you are talking about. If necessary, further divide men and women into sub-groups to take account of other variables and more accurately describe the situational impacts.

Details of social, cultural, and personal practices like those required in public health assessment tools and checklists, may best be obtained using participatory appraisal methods.

## **5. Participatory Methods**

The primary aim of participatory assessment and planning tools (PRA, POP, etc.) is to strengthen the decision making ability of socially disadvantaged groups.

Even the most urgent assessments require talking to affected people. The little extra time and methodological care taken to ensure that women, men, and relevant sub-groups have the opportunity to take part has a big impact on accuracy and response benefits.

Oral participatory methods give illiterate people (a larger proportion of whom are women) the opportunity to be meaningfully involved in setting priorities and designing interventions.

The limited time and geographical mobility available to women must always be taken into account when asking for women's participation. Their workload, domestic and childcare responsibilities make women generally less able to attend and participate in meetings; ways must be found to make inclusion possible.

Participatory methods require:

- A positive personal attitude in external consultants;
- Extremely good communication skills;
- Willingness to take those affected seriously, treat them as competent, responsible partners;
- Willingness to learn from them;
- Inclusion of women as facilitators, since they will find it much easier to establish contact with women;
- As a prerequisite, a thorough understanding of current social and economic conditions\*.

\* Prevailing social conditions must be taken into account along gender specific lines, recognizing differences in:

- Division of labour and workload;
- Sources of income;
- Commitment to participation and contribution;
- Access to/control over physical resources (land, cash, loans, manpower, etc);
- Access to other resources (education, information, advisory services);
- Mobility;
- Forms of organization and participation in formal and informal institutions and bodies.

These differences form the basis for men's and women's differing perceptions of short and long term needs and priorities.



Each stage of analysis and planning should be conducted separately with men and women, and in some cases with various age groups, to identify various ways a problem is perceived.

When working with separate groups, it is essential to present the results from each group to the others to discuss various views and reach consensus on conceptions and priorities.

Participatory assessment and planning tools should not be seen as a rigid framework, but as guidance and steering aids. Good planning is part of an adaptive process, possibly taking a bit longer, but ensuring genuine active participation and flexibly in response to new information, understanding and constant learning.

## **6. Planning**

In assessment and programme design, it is not OK to have one member of a team deal with the 'aspect of women' in isolated fashion. This results in unsustainable women's components being tacked onto a larger intervention.

'Target group orientation' and 'gender' must be included in the terms of reference for planners, integrated and binding in a systematic way. Target group (gender) analysis cannot be drafted independently of those responsible for more technical aspects of project strategy. Questions to elaborate and clarify purpose and objectives must be gender specific.

From the beginning, advisors must ensure staff and local partners understand why examination of gender specific aspects, indicators and impacts is essential.

When an objective is established, there must be indicators by which its progress, success or failure will be measured.

**Differentiating objectives and indicators by gender is the only way to ensure there is a binding provision to record the gender specific impacts of the project, and thus facilitate project steering.**

Objectives and their indicators are drawn up for results, project purpose and overall goals, and individual project activities. They should be:

**Precise**, in relation to:

- target groups (who?)
- location
- quality (what? how well?)
- time frame
- quantity

**Realistic:** the situation to be achieved that is probably feasible.

**Verifiable** with resources available, and as little work as possible.

**Expressive:** specifying major objectives at the various levels of planning independent of one another. Indicators at one planning level can pertain to objectives at that level only.

Qualitative indicators are as important as quantitative ones: not just how many women members of the water management committee, but which posts they occupy and whether they have the same decision making authority as their male counterparts.

## Key Questions

On the basis of the following key questions you can determine how well you have managed to anchor a gender approach within project strategy.

- Do men and women benefit to the same extent?
- Are women and men actively involved in designing the project and in decision-making? What are their respective roles?
- Are the indicators formulated along gender-specific lines, so that the various impacts of the project on men and women can be determined?
- Are the results and activities formulated along gender-specific lines where relevant?
- Are activities planned so as to overcome existing constraints to women participating?

- Are women and men satisfied that security and protection issues are adequately addressed?
- Does the project make an explicit contribution to improving the economic and social situation of women?
- Have steps been taken to ensure that an appropriate number of female project staff take part and benefit?
- Where female members of the target group cannot be directly addressed by male staff, are there plans to employ female experts?
- If existing staff are not adequately trained to advise and support female target groups, has training been planned to address this?

## **7. Watsan in Particular**

The following gender issues should be accounted for in project design:<sup>2</sup>

**1. The user group:** normally water facilities will be used primarily by women. Women's domestic and childcare responsibilities will make it difficult for them to walk long distances. Ideally women should be consulted and involved in decisions about siting water points and sanitation facilities, and establishing maintenance regimes for them.

**2. Security and privacy issues:** sexual harassment often increases in the confines of camp, and the location of water, sanitation and laundry facilities should ensure that risks to women using them are not increased. Where water facilities are time restricted, efforts should be made to keep these to

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<sup>2</sup> G. Templer, Gender and Emergencies, [http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/guytempler\\_health/p.2/2](http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/guytempler_health/p.2/2)

daylight hours, unless women request otherwise.

**3. Women's practical needs:** don't overlook menstruation needs in planning sanitation; this needs to be discussed sensitively with women themselves, and their requests taken into account in designing provision. This may entail ensuring privacy, extra cloth, paper or towels.

**4. Maintenance of facilities:** when facilities are built in a hurry, little thought may be given to long-term maintenance. Especially where donor resources will likely diminish over time, maintenance plans should be established in consultation with women. If cost-recovery is considered, investigate impact of various pricing options on poorer and female-headed families, by involving them in decisions.



## **8. Implementation**

Gender issues in programme implementation are primarily about who does what and how they do it.

- Is the number of women in the response team proportional to the numbers of women in the affected population?
- Are women seen to be working in non-traditional roles? If not, are efforts being made to train women into these jobs?
- What efforts are being made to maximize employment and training of disaster-affected women and local women not directly affected by disaster?
- Do individuals recognize and understand the effects of gendered behaviour patterns?
- Is women's competence recognized?
- Are safety and protection issues being taken into account?
- Are men and women (beneficiaries and staff) being kept informed of progress and decisions?

## **9. Monitoring**

Monitoring means the systematic observation and documentation of project implementation on the basis of the predetermined plan.

Monitoring and Evaluation are often conducted as one step to steer the response plan, ensuring continual improvement and ongoing learning. Participation of target groups is crucial.

In reviewing programmes, always differentiate results and impacts by gender. (This will not be possible if careful wording was not used in programme design.) Generic terms for results, like ‘increased food supplies for farmers and their families’, will tell us little about who benefits from the increase, and whether it will actually enhance the situation and quality of life for all family members.

## Key questions for checking gender orientation during a project progress review:

- Was project planning and implementation based on a situation analysis where men and women of various social backgrounds and ages were able to have a say and present their own views?
- What accommodations were made to ensure women's participation?
- Was gender differentiation specifically anchored in the project strategy?
- To what extent was the project examined for gender-specific impacts and designed along these lines (e.g. in the log frame analysis)?
- To what extent were gender specific impacts (intentional or unintentional) observed during implementation, and what steps if any were/will be taken to correct or compensate for these?

## **10. Evaluation**

Evaluation means the internal assessment of information gathered during monitoring, to determine whether or not the actual course of the project complies with the plan and its objectives.

Useful evaluation comments on the quality and extent to which women and men have influenced the design of the project. Target groups should not only have been a source of information, but their feedback should have demonstrably influenced direction and shaping of the response.

Evaluation should describe how much the process has helped men and women beneficiaries to assess and steer their own activities.

Planned and unplanned gender specific impacts should be noted. Consider how gender issues in the response may have affected:

- The food situation;
- Employment;
- Income;
- Workload;
- Health;
- Access to and control of resources;
- Organizational capacity;
- Participation in decision making;
- Self-assurance;
- Mobility;
- Social status.

In evaluation, like other phases, it is important for women to be able to speak with women; it is necessary to have a sufficient number of women on project staff. Like other consultations, evaluations need extra planning to fit in with women's schedules.

## **11. Assessing Project Proposals**

An initial proposal screening should be for compliance with policies, including gender. Only if positive, should it then be followed by assessment of the project concept.

Key questions the proposal must answer and clarify include:

### **Goals and Objectives**

- Is gender balance stated?
- If outcomes include terms like 'empowerment' or 'sustainability', how are they defined?

### **Planning**

- Which situation is the proposal intended to improve? Who will this benefit?
- Who is affected by this situation? Only men? Women and men? Women only? Are young people particularly affected?

- What homogenous sub-groups exist (in terms of income, age, access to resources?)
- Were both men and women asked how they see the problem, and are their opinions apparent?
- What potential do the various sub-groups have to act?
- Is the target group described precisely and broken down in detail?
- Are women's multiple roles considered?
- What arrangements are made to accommodate them?
- Are the objectives, major results and activities planned in line with the interests and needs of the men and women?
- What evidence is there to show that both men and women will actively participate?
- Who will make decisions about access to the project and its benefits?
- How does the project foster men's and women's capacity to take action/make decisions on issues affecting them?

- How does it promote knowledge of and capacity to negotiate for their rights?
- How does it foster women's and men's capacity to sustain project results beyond the intervention?
- How are present opportunities for/barriers to change integrated into the plan?

## **Evaluation**

- Do indicators consider social/gender roles?
- How will gender specific impacts be measured?

Determine the likely gender specific impacts of the proposal. The following categories may be helpful:

- (a) The project addresses only women;
- (b) Women will clearly be involved in programme design and benefit from it;
- (c) The information about women is inadequate; There are risks for women as their interests and needs are insufficiently



considered in project design, and women may fail to benefit;

(d) Women do not benefit sufficiently.

Negative impacts on women are likely to outweigh any compensatory measures; the proposal should be stopped;

(e) Target groups and gender specific impacts in the immediate environment cannot be directly quantified.<sup>3</sup>

Proposals in category (c) can be improved by offering design advice, helping to conduct gender-differentiated target-group and situation analysis. Sufficient time and expertise will always be required to do this well, and the first phase of an emergency may not be the most appropriate time for such training.

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<sup>3</sup> J.Osterhaus, W.Salzer, Gender Differentiation throughout the Project Cycle, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit, 1995

Information about proposed partner agencies should answer:

- Is the agency able to implement the project as outlined?
- Is the agency able to adopt gender-specific procedures?
- What is the agency attitude toward gender approaches?
- Will there be resistance to actively involving women?
- Do they have the necessary skills in this field?

## **12. Food for Further Thought...**

Common areas of misunderstanding that have affected the success of technical interventions include:

- **Bread winning.** The assumption that women are primarily responsible for the home, and men for production and feeding the family. In most developing countries women have a major responsibility for meeting the material needs of the family, often contributing more than their husbands. This is especially true in poor social classes.
- **Heads of households.** In many countries, more than 30% of households are headed by women. In situations of displacement, often as much as 80% of the moving population are women and children.

- **Work.** Workload studies show that poor women especially work longer than men, and that their working hours are made up of physically hard, repetitive work, like fetching water, gathering wood, pounding grain or washing clothes. In addition to income generating work, women worldwide perform the bulk of housework, caring for children, looking after the sick and elderly. Their mobility and the amount of spare time available to them is significantly more limited than that of men.

- **Access to aid.** Men's and women's access to and control over important resources such as land, capital, training and information differs. The limited access - time, literacy, mobility - of women and poor groups actually excludes them from poverty relief programs, unless special attention is paid. Male-led and male biased initiatives have in many cases widened the gap between men and women.

## **13. Conclusion**

Many factors contribute to the persistence of gender inequality. Some of these are deeply ingrained and subtle, like the tendencies of men and women to communicate and act in certain ways, and the relative values society places on these behaviours. Of particular workplace importance are styles and mannerisms we interpret as indicative of 'competence', behaviours more often exhibited by men than by women.

Both in our work and workplaces, we do need to become more knowledgeable and aware of gender issues, in order to understand how social inequality is perpetuated.

Recognizing and responding to gender differences is an important step in improving the quality of emergency aid. Doing it demands only conscious exercise of a little plain common sense.

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