

GENDER AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

A PRACTICAL TOOL TO MAINSTREAM GENDER EQUALITY INTO SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS FOR BETTER EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

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1 Introduction

Poverty is directly linked to unequal access to resources, a lack of control over the means of production and limited participation in political and economic institutions. Economic growth alone is not enough to eradicate it. These inequalities are structurally informed by laws, cultural practices and government policies, all of which convey forms of social hierarchy such as gender, in which men have power over women. As a result, women in many countries must, for instance, overcome institutional obstacles in order to obtain control over land or the means of production.

In reach its general goal, the reduction of poverty, the SDC has defined key domains in its strategy, which include both promoting income-generation and employment and improving social equity. Incorporating the gender dimension into occupational training and access to employment is directly related to these two themes. If the SDC's occupational training projects do not improve women's real access to all types of employment and to income as much as – or more than – it does for men, then these projects will only replicate or, even worse, reinforce existing social inequalities.





1.1. Training, employment and income

The promotion of employment and income-generation, particularly through professional skills development, is crucial in the effort to reduce poverty. The SDC believes that training can generate employment opportunities for both women and men by enabling access to the existing labour market or creating new jobs.

Improved access to education and skills development that lead to a paying job enables both women and men to improve their situation. However, employment-targeted training has an effect on gender relations within a community. Women who gain independence through training represent a challenge to the established order, especially the advantageous position held by men on the labour market.

1.2. Occupational segregation

Occupational segregation is one of the most significant and deep-rooted aspects of the labour situation in the world today. The presence of segmentation and hierarchical structure in the employment world does not, however, begin with the labour market. These phenomena are already apparent in the extent of access to various types of education and training and in existing models of society, including the organization of roles within families, gender-related duties and rights, the distribution of resources, etc. Because the transformation of gender relations implies profound changes in any society, our purpose is to promote social relationships between men and women which are more just and thereby conducive to more equitable economic development.

Purpose of the document

This tool was designed to be a guide to facilitate context assessment in terms of gender inequalities and the differing needs between women and men. Our goal is to avoid the pitfalls resulting from the differentiated construction of gender in society, which often leads to methodological biases. It is also meant to be used to assess behavioural changes caused by skills-development projects and their impact in terms of access to employment.

Target groups

The tool provided here is intended for project managers and programme officers, as well as practitioners active in the area of professional training and skills development who wish to incorporate gender into their work.



2 Tool

This tool takes the form of key questions. These questions serve as a guide in a given situation when the context, processes, results and impact cannot be discerned by simple observation. The relevance of each question depends on the context. Sometimes key questions prove to be problematic and do not help us determine the extent to which objectives have been achieved. In such cases, indicators can be used to monitor the situation. The annex contains a list of key questions and possible related indicators.

2.1. The labour market analysis and gender-related skills

Before the planning stage of a skills development project aimed at promoting employment can be started, a labour market analysis must be conducted to determine training needs. With this knowledge, the skills on offer can be tailored to meet market demands. One of the greatest perils at this stage is the gap generally observed between the skills acquired by workers and the needs of the labour market.

We must strive to work with partners who are aware of the inequalities between social groups and who have the professional skills necessary to incorporate gender into their analysis so as to have a full understanding of the labour market. Without this preliminary step, the overall project may partially – or completely – overlook certain employment possibilities. With the following key questions, we can assess our partners' skills in terms of their approach to gender:

- Is the gender issue integrated into the labour market analysis that precedes the training project?
- Are our partners (governments, agencies, organizations, consultants, etc.) aware of the fact that promoting female education and training helps reduce poverty? Have they demonstrated a clear commitment in this area?
- What steps do our partners intend to take to improve their ability to plan and implement programmes that take gender into account?
- Has an action plan been devised to train and support female employees and further their career development?
- Do the vacancy announcements posted by our partners clearly indicate that positions are open to both female and male candidates (instructors, coordinators, etc.)?
- Do our partners know and understand the SDC's equality promotion policy and mechanisms?





2.2. Project planning

Once the skills to be taught have been identified, a number of points must be clarified to ensure that the project promotes access to employment and income in an equitable manner:

Target groups and goals

- Are training objectives explicitly set with both women and men in mind?
- Do the various training courses reflect the different training needs of women and men?
- How does the training respond to both the practical and immediate needs of women and men (access to income) and their strategic interests (more equitable social relationships)?

Participation and consultation

- Are there any training activities where women and men should be separated in order to ensure that both groups can attend the training courses and fully benefit from skills training?
- Are women and men equally involved in project planning and implementation?

Access and control of resources

- Is there anyone in the household who decides whether or not members of the household will attend training?
- Does distance make it more difficult for women and men to participate?
- Would reliable transport make it easier for women to attend training courses?

Organization of labour and gender-based occupational segregation

- Were female and male participants consulted to determine their responsibilities and workload during skills training?
- Are training courses scheduled (i.e. times, length) in such a way as to work around women's and men's other activities?
- Would childcare facilities make it easier for women and men to attend training courses?

Social, cultural, religious and economic factors («trends»)

- Are course content and materials gender-biased?
- Would the presence of female instructors encourage women to attend training courses?
- Have practical, culture-sensitive measures been taken?
- Should an information campaign be launched (in conjunction with women's associations or important community figures, for example) to raise men's awareness of the community-wide benefits derived from female education and training?





Social status

- How is a change in the status of women interpreted by their community?
- Could there be a backlash against female participants?
- Do the views expressed by female instructors carry the same weight as those expressed by their male colleagues?

Other possible questions

- Is there a gender breakdown of data on the educational level of those who will receive training?
- Will training courses directly help women and men to better manage their homes and production activities (financial management, micro-enterprise management, etc.)?
- Are there any constraints besides distance, transportation and cost that prevent women and men from participating in training?
- Are training courses taught in a language that the women and men can understand or in a language that can be translated/interpreted?
- Do women and men have access to the same communication channels informing them of training opportunities?
- Is the cost of training an obstacle for the women and men?
- Do both groups have the same access to scholarships, for instance?
- Have cultural, religious and social perceptions and attitudes towards the value of female education and training been taken into account?
- Do the families of female participants understand that skills training will increase women's employability, and that this is advantageous for everyone?
- Did both women and men (i.e. instructors, students and partners) take part in the decision-making process when project objectives were set?
- Were local women's and men's groups or networks consulted to determine training needs and priorities?
- Is there a strategy in place to increase the skills and participation of female instructors?
- Do the women and men present belong to particular social groups (such as a majority clan)?



2.3. Resources

Incorporating gender concerns sometimes requires specific and/or additional resources – both human and material – which should be planned for:

- Are there enough resources for both women and men to take part in and benefit from the training project?
- Will an internal or external gender assessment be conducted during the project?
- Is monitoring necessary to maximize or maintain training benefits?
- Are additional resources planned for this (e.g. consultant services, easier access to loans, job placement assistance)?

2.4. Project Monitoring

The purpose of the SDC's strategy is to promote gender equality. However, the ability to incorporate gender into the process of monitoring skills-development projects aimed at promoting employment varies widely by country, partner institution and individual. The monitoring process must support a strategy of equality promotion in training projects. A number of points are useful in this regard:

General aspects

- Is there a gender breakdown for all data gathered?
- Have gender-specific indicators been established?
- Have funds been earmarked for project assessment/monitoring?
- Is information available about male/female dropout and absenteeism rates (and the reasons)?
- Is there monitoring of the course content selection process (to determine possible gender bias)?
- Is there monitoring of whether women and men actually learn the skills and course content taught?
- Will there be any consultation with groups in the local community (including women's groups) during the project?



Outcomes

One of the greatest challenges is monitoring changes in terms of behaviour and impact. The difficulty lies mainly in identifying changes that are not highly visible and are subject to interpretation. There is also the question of the extent to which lessons learned are integrated into the development of best practices. Principles of project monitoring require it to be goal-oriented and limited in time. This, taken together with the complexity of changes in gender relations, complicates the process of selecting appropriate methods, approaches and indicators in the area of monitoring. As a result, changes in gender relations are rarely incorporated into project monitoring systems.

The use of key questions can, however, help us to assess the outcomes of skills-development projects aimed at promoting employment or increasing income:

- Did both women and men feel that female participation in training courses was beneficial and important?
- Were the examples and case studies used in the training courses drawn from the group's own experiences?
- Can the lessons derived from these examples and case studies be applied to the lives of the female and male participants?
- Can women use the new skills taught?
- Did skills training lead to greater sharing of responsibilities and chores in the household?

Impact

Similarly, the following questions may elicit indicators of the impact of training on women and men in terms of employment and income:

- Did the training project increase men's and women's employability (jobs, self-employment) to an equal extent?
- Do the training courses provided to women and men actually reinforce existing occupational segregation in the labour market?
- Were women and men equally successful at finding work in the formal and informal economy?
- Did women and men find the same types of jobs after having received the same skills training?
- Did the contribution of income from women change relationships within the couple/household?
- How sustainable is the transition towards greater gender equality?

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Your comments
to this tool are welcome.
This factsheet will be updated
on a regular basis.
We thank you in advance
for your collaboration.

Annex

Examples of indicators that can show how things are changing and how we are doing relative to our goals:

Key questions	Possible indicators
Is the gender issue incorporated into the labour market analysis that precedes the training project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ an analysis of the various economic sectors was conducted ■ occupational segregation by sector and job type has been taken into account (data broken down by gender) ■ ...
Are our partners clearly committed to promoting female education in order to reduce poverty through training and employment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ position papers and/or guidelines have been prepared by the organization ■ our partners possess skills and methodological tools to apply the gender-related perspective ■ the current proportion of women and men in various jobs within the organization. ■ ...
Were female and male participants consulted to determine their responsibilities and workload during skills training?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ discussions were held individually, in men-only groups, women-only groups and mixed-gender groups. ■ ...
Does distance make it more difficult for women to attend training courses?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ the time and money that women and men can devote to training courses ■ the cost of transportation to the training course ■ the time required to attend the course ■ women's mobility restricted by 3rd parties ■ ...
Have practical, culture-sensitive measures been taken?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ separate restrooms are provided for women and men ■ women attend training courses given by female instructors ■ ...
Are women and men equally involved in project planning and implementation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ the number of women and men involved ■ the status of these women and men ■ the points of view of both women and men are taken into account ■ speaking time given to and used by the women and men ■ ...
Is there a gender breakdown of data on the educational level of those who will receive training?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ the literacy level of both women and men ■ knowledge of a foreign language by the women and men ■ ...
Have gender-specific indicators been established?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ the project's contribution to increasing equality ■ the programme has identified and strengthened local dynamics that improve equality ■ the presence of a ripple effect; men and women serving as role models for others
How is a change in the status of women interpreted by their community? Could there be a backlash against women?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ the total workload on women has increased ■ domestic violence has increased ■ ...