

# CONTRIBUTING TO GENDER EQUALITY AT MICRO-PROJECT LEVEL



Agence Micro Projets



FACTSHEET  
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In spite of the undeniable progress made in the field of women's rights, gender inequalities persist in all parts of the world. For example, 70% of people living on less than \$ 1 a day are women and girls (UN Women, 2012) – hence the reason gender equality has been set as a Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) by the United Nations as part of a global call for action to eradicate poverty.

Small international solidarity non-profit associations can help reduce these inequalities at their own level. The Agence des Micro Projets and the BATIK International non-profit have together examined the issues and ways to promote gender equality in the context of development micro-projects.

## INEQUALITIES BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN WORLDWIDE

Women and girls account for half of the world's population and, it follows, half of the world's potential. They are generally assigned a triple role that is largely unrecognised and undervalued: bearing children, bringing up children and economic production. In fact, inequalities between men and women persist all over the world in different fields:

- > **Professional and economic:** women are concentrated in certain business sectors and professions with less diverse opportunities. They are under-represented in positions of responsibility, and are more likely to hold precarious jobs that are less valued (part-time and informal work, low income).
- > **Social:** women are for the most part assigned to domestic tasks and caring for the family and home, responsibilities they assume on top of their professional workload. They encounter obstacles in terms of mobility and access to public spaces and services such as education and health.
- > **Policy:** women are under-represented on decision-making bodies and side-lined from policy-making, with the result that their voices and interests are rarely heard and defended.
- > **Individual integrity:** the violence suffered by women at any age – physical, sexual or psychological – is many and varied not just in the public space but also in the private sphere.

### WHAT IS THE GENDER APPROACH?

In our society, men and women lead and perform different activities and tasks. These roles are not linked to the biological characteristics of each sex: they are the result of a **social construction**.

In fact, from childhood we learn and incorporate the norms and values of our society and our local environments (family, school, media, work, etc.). These may, however, convey **stereotypes** about the sexes (e.g. "men have a natural authority" and "women are more sensitive") that influence the identity of every individual.

We then adopt behaviours, attitudes and roles that conform to these **stereotypes**, which helps to reproduce them in our circle.

**"Gender"** – which should be distinguished from **"sex"** – determines every role socially, culturally and politically assigned to men or women regardless of their biological characteristics. **"Gender relations"** refers to the power relations and inequalities between the sexes that result from these gender roles.

### WHY FOCUS ON THE GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT APPROACH?

The **gender and development** approach aims to reduce legal inequalities between men and women by ensuring there is an equal distribution of resources and responsibilities, and the same power in decision making. It is a tool for social transformation that guarantees sustainable local development, where an individual can become an actor in his or her life and community. This approach aims to:

- > Offer men and women the same **opportunities and resources** (employment, education, care, mobility, etc.) so they can carry out their personal or professional plans.
- > Claim and enforce **human rights for everyone** regarding international and national conventions and laws, and develop these texts through advocacy actions directed at politicians.

> Support the rebalancing of **decision making** and the exercise of power between men and women in the family, work and community spheres.

If a development project fails to take account of gender, there is a danger that it will only benefit the section of the population that is most able to make its voice heard. The risk is that it will then perpetuate or reinforce inequalities and discrimination.

## HOW CAN YOU ADOPT A GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT APPROACH?

### 1 – CARRY OUT A SITUATION ANALYSIS THAT FACTORS IN EXISTING INEQUALITIES BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

A development project must take inequalities between men and women into account. The situation analysis should be used to collect information that will then guide the way the project is designed.

- > **Review the state of local development** incorporating specific data on the status of men and women in the different areas of daily life (family, professional and community): activities / roles, needs, constraints (especially in terms of domestic work), and access to and control of resources (decision-making powers).
- > **Identify development problems** that are similar or specific to men and / or women and thus gender inequalities.
- > **Analyse the causes of and solutions** to the development problems observed by involving the local population and relevant actors (men and women) in order to encourage them to take part in the project.

### 2 – DESIGN PROJECTS THAT MEET THE CONCRETE NEEDS AND STRATEGIC INTERESTS OF WOMEN

After identifying these inequalities, it is important to design projects that meet not just the **practical needs** of men and women (i.e. resource accessibility) but also their **strategic interests** (i.e. resource control). **Access to resources** relates to the ability to **use and take advantage** of certain means and goods, while **resource control** involves the ability to **make decisions about how to use them**. A project that integrates a gender and development approach should not only ensure that everyone has access to the use of a resource (housing, food, education, basic services, etc.) but also to the means of managing it (the right to property, management of an economic activity, use of income, participation in local political bodies, etc.).

In the context of a project, the **practical needs** may be met through **short-term activities** (infrastructure, equipment, training, etc.). By contrast, the **strategic interests** must be backed up by **longer-term dynamics**. These are a prerequisite for making a lasting contribution to gender equality.

#### EXAMPLES OF GENDER-EQUALITY ACTIVITIES DELIVERED IN THE CONTEXT OF A PROJECT

##### Project for accessing drinking water

The initial situation analysis identified that women have unequal power when it comes to making decisions about community life. Installing a water point in the community – a short-term activity – allows access to the resource. Support for setting up a joint water management committee and training men and women in water management – a lon-

ger-term approach – aims for equal capacity in managing its use.

##### Economic inclusion project

The initial situation analysis highlights the fact that women have unequal access to education and an economic activity compared to men, as well as unequal power in managing family income and income from the economic activ-

ity. Literacy classes for women and courses on managing a micro-enterprise are short-term activities that meet their concrete needs. In the longer term, organising an awareness-raising campaign about the education of women and girls; setting up support for women on the idea of leadership; and educating family units about balanced decision-making all respond to the strategic interests.

### 3 – INVOLVE THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT, MEN AND WOMEN, THROUGHOUT THE PROJECT

Gender equality means supporting the rebalancing of roles and power relations between men and women. Preparing for these changes involves the **target audience** in every stage of the project cycle, from the situation analysis to its evaluation via budgeting. It is also a question of mobilising more broadly and **educating all the stakeholders** in the local environment (families, economic actors, local authorities, partner non-profits, etc.) about these issues in order to create a climate that is conducive to changing attitudes and practices on a sustainable basis.

#### ACCESS INFORMATION AND TRAINING!

This factsheet is a **first step in examining** your role as an international solidarity actor in the fight against gender inequality. **To take things a stage further**, it is essential to **access information** and **training** on the subject in order to develop practices, i.e. to incorporate the gender approach not only into actions but also into the management and governance of non-profits!

## FURTHER READING

- > Agence Française de Développement – The essential facts about gender and development issues – Gender break: <https://www.afd.fr/fr/essentiel-issues-genre-et-developpement-pause-genre>
- > Batik International – Acting for Gender Equality – Benchmarks for deconstructing prejudices: <http://batik-international.org/data/batik/media/site/pdf/Livret-egalite-FR-final.pdf>
- > Le monde selon les femmes – The essential facts about gender: [http://www.mondefemmes.be/genre-developpement-outils\\_theories-analyse-essentiels-genre.htm](http://www.mondefemmes.be/genre-developpement-outils_theories-analyse-essentiels-genre.htm)
- > Genre en action – French-speaking international network for gender equality in development: <http://www.genreenaction.net>
- > Guide for integrating gender into development projects – Association Tanmia: [http://www.genreenaction.net/IMG/pdf/FAITguide\\_genre\\_pratique.pdf](http://www.genreenaction.net/IMG/pdf/FAITguide_genre_pratique.pdf)
- > Association Adéquation – Training programmes and tools: <http://www.adequations.org/spip.php?rubrique111>

As the national resource centre for small and medium-sized French international solidarity non-profit associations, the Agence des Micro Projets is a programme run by La Guilde (a recognised public-interest non-profit association) supported by the Agence Française de Développement. [contact@agencemicroprojets.org](mailto:contact@agencemicroprojets.org) – 01 45 49 03 65

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