1. INTRODUCTION

Participatory work with communities can only be effective if it takes gender into account. This guide explains why, and offers a range of practical tools to explore community issues through the different experiences of men and women, boys and girls. It gives guidance on good practice on gender and participation, and outlines the stages of managing a gendered participatory appraisal. It also explains how to analyse and collate qualitative information with a gender perspective.

It will be of use to anyone who wants to build awareness of gender, carry out a community consultation, or plan a course of action using participatory tools to bring out the different responses of men and women. This toolkit describes how gendered participatory work has the potential to bring about lasting change. Participation is an ongoing process – get it right from the start and it can help shift power from the powerful to the powerless.

GENDER, SEX AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Sex is determined by whether we are born female or male; gender roles are the expected social roles attached to being women or men. Taking a gender perspective means looking separately at the different needs of men and boys and women and girls.

Gender analysis examines the roles and responsibilities of women and men and explores the relationships between them, known as gender relations. Having done a gender analysis, and discovered where there are differences, barriers and inequalities, positive action describes things that can be done to redress them.

Equal opportunities is a term that people are sometimes more familiar with than gender. It is used not just for women and men, but also for other ways of being disadvantaged such as race, age, disability. In terms of gender, equal opportunities provide concrete ways to take action on the inequality revealed by a gender analysis.

Gender is used in this guide to show how to bring out the differences between the experiences of women and men. For example, collecting information separately from women and men; using single-sex groups in applying the tools; and analysing the results of a discussion or survey to see the differences and similarities between men and women.

Why is gender important in participatory work?

The expected roles we take on as individuals vary according to the period of history in which we live, the society we live in, our economic status, our ethnic identity, religious belief, age and our sexual preference. All these contribute to men’s and women’s expectations and beliefs about how the sexes should behave and what they ‘usually’ do.
In participatory work, looking at the concerns of men and women separately makes it possible to deal appropriately with each sex’s experiences – and have a better chance of meeting their different needs. For example, if you have a good understanding of why men and boys find themselves in the position they are in in your area, why they make the choices they do and why they take the actions they take, you will be better able to make recommendations for change targeted at the source of a problem rather than the symptom.

Looking at gender is about questioning assumptions and looking beyond stereotypes about what is appropriate for men and women. It is more than just taking account of men and women’s views.

Gender analysis interprets stereotypes about, for example, unemployed people, men and women, lone parents and teenage mothers. It is important for individuals in giving women and men the space to think about their lives. How does being a man or a woman affect the choices they make or can’t make and how they want to live their lives? It is important for organisations because future plans and present services have to take into account men and women’s different needs and situations, or they will not be able to meet them in a way that gives both equal opportunities.

Who holds the power to do what within communities is not just influenced by gender, but also age, disability, race and language. The tools and processes here can be adapted to analyse power relationships in relation to these other diversities.

How the Guide began

This guide is based upon a gendered participatory needs assessment that Oxfam undertook with the Gellideg Foundation Group in South Wales¹. It takes the reader through the stages that the team took to carry out the assessment.

To show how the tools can be used in different settings, they were also piloted in three additional contexts:

- With practitioners at a conference workshop exploring gender in development.
- With a small community group in Cae Mawr, Llandudno, who wanted to use a gender perspective for their action plan and to timetable their activities.
- With project workers and researchers from a national voluntary organisation in a training day in Port Talbot.

The work in Gellideg and the three pilots are referenced in text boxes and provide examples of using the tools in practice. Although they were undertaken in Wales, the tools and PA techniques are applicable to other areas.

¹ See: Fifty Voices are better than one: Combating social exclusion and gender stereotyping in Gellideg¹, Oxfam 2003