

# GENDER APPROACHES



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“Peace is inextricably linked to equality between women and men in development. Armed and other types of conflicts, wars of aggression, foreign occupation, colonial or other alien domination, as well as terrorism, continue to cause serious obstacles to the advancement of women.”

(Report of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the Twenty-third Special Session of the General Assembly)

The purpose of this Armadilla’s Guidelines (proposed by UNDP) is to increase the effectiveness of humanitarian and recovery interventions through the integration of a gender perspective.

We believe it will help readers to:

- appreciate the concept and scope of gender;
- appreciate the evolution of approaches to gender equality issues over the years;
- recognize that interventions can be more effective if they integrate a gender perspective;
- identify the underlying principles and corresponding international instruments which establish the human rights of people involved in emergency, conflict and post-conflict situations, and give particular attention to those issues that directly address women’s rights;
- ensure that the legal rights of women are understood and that adequate measures are taken to respond;
- identify the particular elements that characterize a gender approach at all levels of humanitarian and recovery assistance;
- use specific tools and frameworks to conduct a gender analysis and data collection in order to have a more accurate representation of the context in which women are operating;
- develop mechanisms to ensure that the resources and needs of both women and men are addressed in all stages of programme (protection and assistance) planning, management and evaluation systems;
- develop strategies to protect and assist women, recognizing that most of them are facing new situations (single household, single motherhood, widow);
- incorporate a gender perspective in all programming phases;
- improve the efficiency and effectiveness of protection and assistance programmes by ensuring that adequate attention is given to the needs and resources of all members of the target population;
- encourage each staff member of each team to ensure that the integration of a gender dimension takes place in their area of competence.

Gender roles:

- Define what is considered appropriate for men and women within the society, social roles and division of labour;
- Involve the relation to power (how it is used, by whom and how it is shared);
- Vary greatly from one culture to another and change over time;
- Vary from one social group to another within the same culture;
- Race, class, religion, ethnicity, economic circumstances and age influence gender roles;
- Sudden crisis, like war or famine, can radically and apidly change gender roles.

For example, understanding gender differentiation and gender discrimination helps us to understand gender on various grounds. After a crisis, women ex-combatants who have engaged in liberation struggles have discovered old attitudes may return and the changes that occurred during the crisis, such as loss of property or death of a spouse, may also have a permanent impact.

## Gender and Culture

Culture is part of the fabric of every society. It shapes the way things are done and our understanding of why this should be.

Gender identities and gender relations are essential facets of culture as they determine the way daily life is lived not only within the family, but also in society as a whole. Gender influences economics, politics, social interactions and individual needs. It undergoes variations over time and across culture. It is an active force in the formation of the family, the community and the nation.

### Gender-blind policies

Recognize no distinction between the sexes. Assumptions incorporate biases in favour of existing gender relations and so tend to exclude women.

### Gender-aware policies

Recognize that within a society, actors are women as well as men, that they are constrained in different, and often unequal ways, and they may consequently have differing and sometimes conflicting needs, interests and priorities.

### Gender neutral policy approaches

Use the knowledge of gender differences in a given context to overcome biases in delivery, to ensure that they target and benefit both genders effectively in terms of their practical gender needs, and that they work within the existing gender division of resources and responsibilities.

### Gender redistribution policies

Are interventions that intend to transform existing distributions to create a more balanced relationship of gender. These policies may target both genders, or one gender specifically; touch on strategic gender interests; and may work with women's practical gender needs, but do so in ways which have transformatory potential to help build up the supportive conditions for women to empower themselves. These different approaches are not mutually exclusive. For instance, in situations where gender-blind planning has been the norm, moving towards gender-neutral policies would be a significant step forward. In some situations, it may be counter-productive to start with gender-redistribution policies, and a better approach could focus more on needs specific to women.

There has been a gradual shift in the way women are perceived within development thinking from that of victims and passive objects to independent actors.

### Welfare approach

During the 1950s and 60s, the emphasis on women was on their reproductive roles as mothers and homemakers. This approach was based on Western stereotypes of the nuclear family in which women are economically dependent on the male breadwinners.

## Women in Development (WID)

In the early 1970s, researchers began to focus on the division of labour based on sex, and the impact of development and modernization strategies on women. The WID concept came into use in this period. The philosophy underlying this approach is that women are lagging behind in society and the gap between men and women can be bridged by remedial measures within the existing structures. The WID approach started to recognize women as direct actors of social, political, cultural and working life. Criticism to the WID approach emerged later,

underlying that women's issues tended to be increasingly relegated to marginalized programmes and isolated projects. The WID approach did not implicitly have a direct impact on development. The problem of WID was that it provided women with additional resources but no power to manage these resources. The WID concept led to increased workloads and heavy schedules for women and prevented their empowerment.

### The Impact of Armed Conflicts on Women

Men, women, boys and girls experience conflicts in different ways. Women often take over non-traditional roles brought on by the changes and transformations during the conflicts that render them both victims and actors. On the one hand, war is a burden for women and girls including gender-based and sexual violence (rape as a weapon of war), the spread of HIV/AIDS, increased vulnerability, lack of mobility and the use of women as sexual slaves by soldiers. On the other hand, women also get involved in the conflict as combatants, by taking care of extended families in extremely adverse circumstances and by developing coping mechanisms to take over non-traditional occupations which enables them to gain exposure outside the private sphere.

Gender analysis contributes to meeting objectives of humanitarian and recovery interventions.

It tells us:

- Who (women, men, boys, girls, elderly women and men) suffers and how;
- Who (women, men, boys, girls, elderly women and men) needs protection and why;
- How they (women, men, boys, girls, elderly women and men) cope;
- How they (women, men, boys, girls, elderly women and men) are or are not able to recover.

Gender analysis helps us to:

- Identify areas for action;
- Design interventions;
- Understand implications of interventions;
- Identify processes and structures that perpetuate disadvantages (e.g. legislative, political, sociocultural, economic);
- Identify potential processes.

Elements emphasizing the need for gender analysis in transition situations:

- Disruption and destruction of social networks;
- Population balance between women and men can change in war time;
- The gender division of labour is often in flux (including new skills for women);
- Gender relations are often contested;
- Women are often excluded from political and diplomatic efforts and negotiations to end the conflict;
- Demobilization of military forces often focuses donor attention to men;
- Abundance of weapons may create urban and rural violence;
- Gender equality may be considered a secondary issue;
- Demographic pressures on women (to increase nationality);
- Reintegration of former combatants and their dependents into local communities (female combatants, war widows, handicapped men and women, girls sexual slaves, child soldiers etc.);
- Impact of mine accidents on men and women and rehabilitation problems;
- Post-conflict violence (domestic violence);
- Return of refugees and internally displaced persons (with special concern for female heads of household);
- Post-traumatic stress disorders (how to assist victims and survivors of gender-based violence).