



This Thematic Brief provides quick guidance on the most important issues relating to gender and culture.

This Brief is addressed to staff from development cooperation agencies who are involved in the different phases of programmes and projects.

Here they will find information on the most important gender issues at stake in relation to culture and how to address them, indicators that can be used to monitor whether a programme is integrating gender dimensions, examples of gender-sensitive development actions and references to further information and tools related to the relation between gender and culture.

Contents

Introduction	2
Gender issues in relation to culture	3
A roadmap for gender mainstreaming in development programmes and being sensitive to the role of 'culture'	8
Questions for gender analysis	11
Macro level	13
Meso level	15
Micro level	17
Gender sensitive indicators, including women's cultural empowerment	19
Examples of gender-sensitive projects in relation to gender and culture	20
Further References	23



Introduction

In 1982, the World Conference on Cultural Policies defined culture as *'the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or a social group. It includes not only arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs'*. As a product of history, geographical context, politics and people, culture is never fixed or homogenous, but rather continually reshaped by internal and external factors, of social, economic, political, or environmental nature. Culture can be diverse, as people living in the same society might have different understanding of what their culture is. In all societies, the definition of what constitutes 'culture' is usually of strategic value and different actors might compete to promote their definition of culture and to institutionalise and legitimise a particular set of norms and traditions to which other members of the society are required to conform. Thus, culture is not neutral, but influenced by social representations and power relations (BRIDGE, 2002). Culture, as a set of norms and values, also shapes what attributes and behaviours are considered appropriate for women and men and contributes to organising the relations between them (ACDI/CIDA, n-d).

The symbolic division between two homogenous 'north' and 'south' cultures is not real, as a multitude of cultures exists and every culture interacts, influences and is influenced by others. However, due to power imbalances prevailing at global level, some cultures might receive more influence than others (BRIDGE, 2002). Cultural representations can circulate in different ways (media, language, migrations, etc.). Cooperation policies and development programmes are also vehicles for transmitting cultural values and the representations of those who initiated them (usually located in the 'North'), as well as impacting upon cultures and traditions in the countries of intervention (usually located in the South). In particular, cooperation policies and development programmes have relevance to the traditional gender relations prevailing in the countries of intervention (ACDI/CIDA, n-d).

There have generally been two prevailing attitudes towards culture amongst development programmes officers: the first one (denunciated by post-colonialism studies) consists in disregarding existing social institutions and structures due to their differences from those in the western hemisphere. This approach actively tries to promote new norms and cultural practices, responding to the patterns of gender relations prevailing in the North. The other norm emerged in opposition to this trend, known as 'cultural relativism'. As its most extreme, this considers that all cultures, practices, and traditions should be respected (even if they might collide with other set of rights) and that development programmes should not interfere with the cultural representation and social norms prevailing in a society.

Both trends are based upon a limited understanding of culture, failing to see it as a moving concept, embodied in power relations. No development initiative is free from gender representation and can be gender-neutral. While the first trend was not able to look beyond western standards and recognise the faults that might exist in those standards, the second assumed that some cultures were characterised by inequalities between women and men and that there was no internal will or resistance to challenge those inequalities (Sardenberg, 2012).

Development programmes can deal with culture in different ways. They can be directly targeting a cultural practice considered as a violation of women's and girls' rights (e.g. female genital mutilation/cutting) or they can impact on culture in a more indirect way



(e.g. by introducing new infrastructures that will impact on the prevailing gender-based division of labour). This Thematic brief addresses gender equality issues in development programmes and projects in relation to culture. It is recommended that development agents also consult other thematic briefs addressing similar issues (e.g. Thematic Brief on Violence against women or on access to justice).

Gender issues in relation to culture

Potential gender inequalities within culture

- **Traditional practices linked to a certain understanding of culture might directly collide with women's human rights.** For instance, harmful practices such as FGM directly oppose women's sexual rights and can violate their health and integrity, as well as undermining the rights of the girl child. Discriminatory social institutions limit the achievement of the BPfA (which was agreed by all governments) and the Millennium Development Goals. For instance, early marriage has been associated with higher rates of maternal mortality.
- **Traditional practices might also go against women's (and men's) personal aspirations.** For instance, a qualitative study covering 20 countries in all regions of the world interviewed more than 4,000 women and men living in both rural and urban areas to discuss the effect of gender differences and inequalities on their everyday life. The study demonstrated that both young women and men wished to attain a higher level of education than what was offered to them in their community, and that a large majority wanted to marry and have children later than the traditional norms dictated by the community. They also wanted more autonomy in choosing their partners (World Bank, 2012).
- **Some cultural practices might exert a 'domino effect' on women's life cycle** (OECD, 2014). The OECD Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) shows that there is a link between what are called 'discriminatory social institutions' (such as early marriage) and key development outcomes, including education, employment and empowerment. Looking at the impact of practices such as early marriage, the SIGI shows that early marriage has a stronger negative impact on girls' education than on boys'. In countries where girls are twice as likely as boys to marry before reaching 19 years old, only 60 girls for every 100 boys complete secondary education. Rates of adolescent pregnancy are also higher in countries where early marriage is a prevailing cultural practice, associated with higher rates of HIV exposure, domestic violence and reduced decision-making power in the family (OECD, 2014).
- **Culture normally assigns different roles and responsibilities to women and men.** Women are traditionally assigned the responsibility to provide care and continue to bear the costs of the unequal distribution of unpaid care work in the family and in society in general. The unequal amount of time that women and men spend on unpaid care activities is associated with low female labour force participation, or low-quality employment for women. For instance, due to care responsibilities, women are more likely to work part-time or in informal employment and to experience the negative effects of higher gender wage gaps (OECD, 2014).
- **When traditional representations of gender roles limit women's ability to participate in decision-making processes, there are potentially negative consequences**



for a country's development. For instance, lower life expectancy and higher mortality rates are observed in countries where women cannot participate in decision-making processes that affect their own health or their own body, independently of the country's income per capita; government expenditures on health; the number of medical doctors per inhabitants; the prevalence of certain diseases such as HIV; drug use or situation of conflict (OECD, 2014). In countries such as Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and Senegal, fewer than a third of women reported having joint or sole say in decisions regarding their own health (OECD, 2014). Studies conducted in Botswana and Swaziland showed a relation between women's lack of control over sexual decision-making and greater vulnerability to HIV (ACDI/CIDA, n-d).

- **Specific groups of women whose behaviour does not correspond to appropriate cultural norms can suffer from specific stigmatisation and double discrimination.** For instance, lesbians, bisexual and transgender women experience specific form of discrimination, including sex-based discrimination (because of their condition of women); discrimination based on sexual orientation (due to their sexuality) or their gender identity (OECD, 2014). Besides, they experience increased risk of violations of their human rights, such as 'corrective' rape by policemen or other men (BRIDGE, 2002; OECD, 2014).
- **Women who defend alternative conceptions of culture and who try to occupy a different role in society are often stigmatised,** accused of going against their culture or being unpatriotic and influenced by 'western' ideas (ACDI/CIDA, n-d). They might face rejections and violence.
- **The culture of a society is shaped by the people who live and evolve in it. However, some people are more powerful to determine, influence and fix culture and its associated practices** (including religious leaders, artists, intellectuals, media personalities, etc.). These people can act as guardians, interpreters and transmitters of cultural practices. Research has shown that religious leaders and faith-based networks in general currently constitute some of the most influential cultural gatekeepers and actors (UNFPA, 2008).

In developing countries, between 30% and 60% of healthcare and education services are provided by faith-based organisations (FBO). Those organisations provide valuable resources to reach and provide services to populations (UNFPA, 2008). However, they might not be in favour of greater gender equality.

- **Many cultural traditions attribute to women the responsibility for transmitting cultural knowledge and practices.** Women's reproductive role situates them as both creators and gatekeepers of the group's identity. Women's roles as 'gate keepers' of culture impacts upon their rights and freedom to enjoy a live free from violence. Religious and political movements have often considered that due to their (supposed) identity and role, women should 'protect' the group identity. To ensure that culture will be 'preserved', women's sexual rights (sexuality, marriage and childbearing) and civil rights (religion, citizenship) are limited (ACDI/CIDA, n-d; United Nations, 2010). In other context, 'gender equality' has been presented as contrary to the local culture. For instance, during the transition to market-oriented economy in post-soviet countries; 'gender equality' was presented as part of the propaganda of the soviet period. This rhetoric was used to justify discrimination against women in employment, which increased during the transition.



- In developing countries, formal justice systems coexist alongside informal justice systems (sometimes referred as ‘traditional’, ‘customary’ or ‘non-state’ justice systems). However, informal justice systems may not reflect gender equality concerns in their rulings. Using informal systems is still the main way to seek justice, used in 80% of legal cases in developing countries (UN Women, 2012a; IDLO, 2013).

Several factors can cause, reflect and exacerbate gender inequalities, including – but not limited to – culture

- **Culture is not the sole source of gender inequalities, nor the justification for them.** Research has shown that other factors might impact more directly on determining women’s and men’s opportunities and roles, such as economic or political conditions of their community (World Bank, 2012). Other key factors that affect the relationship between gender equality and culture are discussed in turn below.
- **In both formal and informal legal systems, discriminatory family codes can reflect and reinforce fixed cultural practices and social norms that limit women’s power in the household and society in general.** For instance, in many developing countries, customary and formal laws on marriage, parental authority and inheritance discriminate against women. The OECD Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) showed that in 2014, in only 55 of the 160 countries analysed in the SIGI women were legally and in practice given the same inheritance rights as men. With regards to land rights, 102 of those countries were still denying women the same rights to access land as men (OECD, 2014). The family code of a few countries (e.g. Turkmenistan) still allows early marriage (OECD, 2014).
- **There may be a lack of public infrastructure and institutional mechanisms to ensure the implementation of the human rights framework.** Women’s rights are still a low priority in many political agendas (OECD, 2014). The autonomy of women to make life choices might be limited by the context in which those choices are offered and previous (limited) life choices (Kabeer, 2001 – quoted in World Bank, 2010). Normative changes are insufficient to guarantee women’s capacity to make choices, if they are not accompanied by structural changes that challenge other barriers and constraints. Context affects the impact of development initiatives on women’s capacity to choose. For instance, women living in rural and isolated communities might value the development of a road, as it may symbolise increased freedom and new opportunities outside the domestic sphere, whereas women living in urban areas with more public transportation works might appreciate the reduction of time and cost of their commuting travels.
- **Lack of women’s representation in cultural and religious institutions** undermines their capacity to challenge discriminatory social norms and to promote a different definition of culture.
- **The impacts of globalisation can hinder progress made by women in challenging discriminatory social norms and harmful traditional practices.** Globalisation has produced social changes which have had a strong impact on women’s enjoyment of their rights (e.g. education). However, some changes have had more negative effects. For instance, economic dislocation, migration, loss of livelihoods and armed conflict have often been used to reaffirm traditional power relations and hierarchies, with specific and negative consequences for women (United Nations, 2010).



- **The cultural bias of development agents can undermine gender equality; assumptions about the adequate patterns of gender relation and appropriate women's behaviour are spread by different actors, including development and cooperation agents** (BRIDGE, 2002). These assumptions on women's and men's roles might have negative impacts. For instance, when development workers assume that men are the only decision-makers and therefore discuss implementation issues with them only, they directly contribute to strengthening women's lack and not to address their specific needs. Many development agents have also defended the notion that gender equality is a "western" importation. This ignores internal contestation and activities of the local women's movement as well as commitments to gender equality by partner governments. It also indirectly contributes to institutionalising discriminatory social norms (ACDI/CIDA, n-d).
- **Development initiatives thought as gender-neutral impact on the interpretation of culture, the representations of gender relations and the distribution of power between women and men** (as seen above). For instance, a community-based water-supply initiative that does not make specific effort to include both women and men in problem identification, planning and management might reinforce the unequal distribution of power between women and men and the exclusion of women from decision-making processes (ACDI/CIDA, n-d). Development processes involve a mix of social, economic and political changes, and impact strongly on culture and on the prevailing gender relations in a given society. For instance, in Bangladesh, the cultural norms that prevented women from leaving the domestic space (purdah) were deeply reinterpreted following changes in the trade policies and the need to recruit a cheap labour force to allow for the rapid growth of the urban garment industry. Following those changes, women entered labour force and became more visible in the urban spaces, with some impacts on social perceptions of women's role in the family and the workplace (ACDI/CIDA, n-d).

How to respond to gender inequalities in relation to culture

For human rights to be enjoyed universally, gender disparities must be addressed and effectively reduced. Development and cooperation programmes need to be **gender-sensitive**, as well as taking into account the cultural context in which they occur, by taking the steps described below.

- **Make use and create demand for sex-disaggregated data** in all areas of intervention, in order to gain an insight into actual norms and behaviours.
- **Ensure that women's needs and priorities are voiced, understood and addressed.** For instance, make sure that cultural norms limiting women's participation in public sphere are taken into account at the consultation stage of a programme and alternative fora are made available to women.
- **Avoid reinforcing gender inequalities**, by ignoring the existing gender relations and power disparities between women and men. For instance, an infrastructure initiative to modernise a commercial area should first look at the potential impacts of those changes on women and men. If cultural norms prevent women from travelling to a certain distance from their home, the location of the new market is integral to its likely impact on women's economic activity.
- **Plan gender-specific actions**, to address problems relating more particularly to one or the other gender, either as separate initiatives or as part of larger programmes. For instance, men could be specifically targeted by programmes ad-

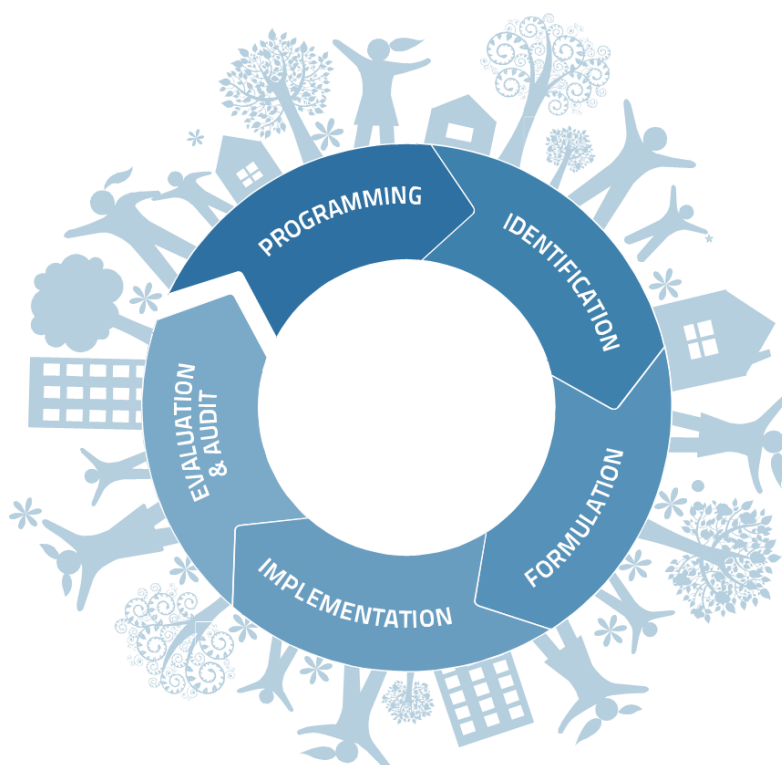


addressing the issue of violence against women through activities aiming at promoting different masculinities. Specific actions could aim at improving women's legal literacy to increase their awareness of their rights and of the existing tools and remedies to right violations (OECD, 2014).

- **Adopt longer term “transformative” perspectives**, supporting women's participation in decision-making and changing prevalent negative attitudes on women's leadership capacities and social roles. Involving women in cultural and religious decision-making bodies is an important factor to promote long-term change. For instance, women's interest groups could be involved in the traditional mediation procedures to ensure that the rights of women who resort to those bodies are taken into account.
- **Engage men**, creating awareness on gender disparities and proving the benefits of gender equality for communities. For instance, programmes targeting FGM should implement specific actions targeting men and boys, as one of the main issues justifying this harmful practice is marriageability of girls. Activities should be organised to raise awareness of fathers and future husbands and to ensure that girls who refuse the practice will not be stigmatised by their community.
- **Recognise that no development initiative can be gender-neutral**. Even if gender equality is not a direct or indirect objective, the initiative will impact on gender relations in a way or another. In the absence of gender analysis, this impact will be mostly negative for women.
- **Recognise that the ‘outsider’ position does not give development workers the authority to take decisions affecting the gender relations without relying on ‘insider’ opinions and work undertaken to promote gender equality**. Development workers should make space for discussion around ‘culture’ and traditions by ‘insiders’. People affected by the development initiative should be the ones who identify and take action against practices they find oppressive, in order for the change in traditions to be acceptable to community members and sustainable in the long term.
- **Support local women's organisations** and consult with them on how they define the issues at stake and what they see as potential ways forward, in order to gain a better understanding of the context and of possible steps to support gender equality (ACDI/CIDA, n-d).
- **Enable the participation in the whole programme cycle of groups or people who resist oppressive cultural norms**, such as women's organisations, and men opposed to harmful traditional practices.
- **Enable participation and leadership of previously excluded groups** (e.g. women, ethnic minorities or indigenous people), by creating spaces for participation and implementing participatory approaches.
- **Communicate with ‘cultural agents’ who might be opposed to change** to involve them in the discussion and look for way to gain their support. These agents could include religious or community leaders; elders; and representatives from faith-based organisations.



A roadmap for gender mainstreaming in development programmes and being sensitive to the role of 'culture'



Gender equality considerations should be integrated throughout the whole cycle of development planning.

This Section proposes a roadmap for gender mainstreaming in the various phases of a programme – or project – lifecycle, as well as ways of remaining sensitive to the cultural context in which the intervention occurs.

1. Analysis, programming and identification of country strategies

Programming and identification are strategic moments of programmes which serve to redress gender inequalities and promote human rights and justice for all. The most essential steps are:

- To keep gender equality in the policy dialogue agenda;
- To carry out gender-sensitive analysis for the diagnostic stage.

Dialogue and negotiations related to culture should:

- Be grounded in the shared objectives of the global agenda for women's human rights and gender equality, and in the common respect of the human rights framework, including gender equality, including the CEDAW and its protocols; the Beijing Platform for Action; the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), etc.
- Align with the country commitments (laws, policies, strategies) to promote gender equality and promote human rights and justice for all.



- Analyse the different roles and take-off positions of women and men in society in relation to power and cultural representation, and use sex-disaggregated data in diagnostic studies. Gender country profiles or other sectoral studies should be used or commissioned.
- Systematically involve and support “gender stakeholders”, from Government, donors and civil society, at all stages. This can include gender coordination groups, gender focal points in ministries, gender experts and representatives of women’s rights organisations, lawyers and legal experts on women’s rights, women’s local associations, representatives from discriminated groups (e.g. indigenous people); representatives from faith-based organisations who showed commitment to women’s rights and gender equality; representatives from associations of men against violence against women.
- Build on previous and current initiatives to promote gender equality in the relevant sector[s], map existing needs and financing gaps, and avoid duplication of efforts. For instance, through the identification of past or current local programmes or projects aiming towards similar objectives (e.g. eradicating violence against women or harmful practices), one can identify potential allies and provide valuable insights on potential challenges.
- Assess whether the institutions that will be responsible for programme management and service delivery have resources and capacities to promote gender equality and plan for competence development initiatives, including at service delivery level. For instance, in programme aiming to develop women’s access to family planning structures and services, it is fundamental to identify gender stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes of the staff in charge of service provision and to plan adequate gender competence development initiatives to challenge and transform their attitudes.
- Integrate gender issues as part of the main discussion about the sector or initiative. Gender equality should be considered as a development objective, not as a secondary issue.
- Use gender-sensitive language in the programming documentation, so that it is clear that both women and men are included in the objectives.

2. Formulation and budgeting

The results of gender analysis should be used to tailor the formulation of programmes and projects. The formulation phase is particularly important, as it affects all subsequent phases of the programme (implementation, monitoring and evaluation). To do so, one must follow the steps described below.

- Design objectives and activities to address gender gaps identified and include them in programme documents, plans, logical frameworks, financing agreements and budgets.
- Include and budget for initiatives to address specific needs and constraints faced by women or men, including long-term capacity building of women in legal literacy to enable to claim their human rights. Initiatives aiming at reducing constraints and barriers in access to services should also be planned, such as awareness raising activities for representatives of faith-based organisations.
- Allocate resources for gender mainstreaming, capacity building and awareness raising at all levels and in ways that are adapted to the needs of different target groups. For example, gender equality training for programme staff, staff from



relevant local institutions and service delivery institutions has the potential to address knowledge and capacity gaps and gender stereotypes that can impede implementation of the programme. Likewise, awareness raising activities for women and men beneficiaries can present the benefit of the services, adopting both culture and gender lenses; capacity building and leadership training for women from marginalised communities and indigenous women can enable them to voice their concerns and interests.

- Commit to pursue a strategy for continued gender mainstreaming in the programme (donor and country led processes). This may be formalized in an action plan which should then clearly assign responsibilities, resources and results to be achieved, as part of the broader programme's result chain.
- Establish formal mechanisms of consultation with gender stakeholders (e.g. gender coordination groups, gender focal points in ministries, gender experts and representatives of women's rights organisations, lawyers and legal experts on women's rights, women's local associations, representatives from discriminated groups (e.g. indigenous people); representatives from faith-based organisations) and ensure that the format of those consultation processes is adapted to the specific needs and constraints that those different groups might face. For instance, in cultural settings where women and men cannot be sited together, it can be necessary to plan for separate consultations to enable women to participate.
- Design and budget for participatory and gender-sensitive monitoring processes, particularly at service delivery level e.g. in assessments of new services or technologies introduced, including indicators to capture changes in power relations or in the distribution of labour in the household.
- Define performance monitoring frameworks and processes which can capture progress in gender-related objectives.
- In direct budget support initiatives, include gender indicators in financing agreements between donor and recipient countries (e.g. Existence of specific anti-discrimination and / or equal opportunities legislation).
- Respect equal opportunity principles in management arrangements and establish accountability structures for gender mainstreaming at programme level. For instance, when implementing new structures in cultural settings where women's participation in decision-making is not encouraged, some decision-making positions could be targeted directly at women (e.g. through quotas or reserved seats).

3. Implementation and monitoring

At this stage what is planned in relation to gender equality should be maintained, monitored and corrected as needed. The most important points to consider are:

- Continued coordination, dialogue and consultation on gender equality within working groups in each relevant sector, with institutional stakeholders (such as the gender units of the relevant ministries), as well as with a broader range of actors from civil society. For instance, it is important to maintain regular dialogue and consultation with groups or people that might not support the programme and who can represent a threat to its implementation. For instance, regular dialogues and consultations with religious and community leaders ena-



ble them to voice concerns and represent an arena through which to soften their opposition.

- Effective monitoring of the progress of the various gender dimensions of the programme and sub-programmes, including at service delivery level, collecting opinions and experiences of women and men and the challenges and obstacles they might face in accessing to the service; they evaluation of the benefits offered by the provision of the service. For instance, the implementation of a family planning programme can be valued differently by women and men. Women might appreciate the control that contraceptives give them over their sexuality and family size, but men might see this as a loss of power and thus be reluctant to accept changes. It is important to monitor the use (or non-use) of the service in order to understand the best response to bring forward.
- Integration of gender in joint sector reviews and policy dialogues (particularly at the level of the SWAP committee).
- Monitoring if resources planned for gender equality are spent, and if not, why.

4. Evaluation

- Terms of Reference of (mid-term) evaluations should require gender expertise in the evaluation team and give account of the differential impacts of a programme on women and men; the division of labour; existing social norms and rules; identify potential negative impacts on women or men and offer recommendations and lessons learned useful to further pursue gender equality in the sector.
- Evaluators and monitors should be able to use participatory evaluation techniques and sex-disaggregated beneficiary assessments of service delivery.
- Evaluations should also build on past gender evaluations of programmes in the sector.

GENDER TOOLS FOR THE DIFFERENT AID MODALITIES

An ample selection of analytical and planning tools useful at each phase of the development cooperation cycle, according to the different aid modalities, is available in the “Aid Modalities” Section of the EU Resource Package on Gender Mainstreaming in Development Cooperation.

The following Section offers a list of gender-analysis questions that can be used in Programmes, whilst taking into account the socio-cultural context in which they occur.

Questions for gender analysis¹

Gender analysis helps acquire a different perspective on the complexity of a development context, and understand how to better address other forms of social inequalities. It looks at how economic and social structures at multiple levels can reinforce, or help to

¹ More on gender analysis is available in the EU Resource Package, Section “Building Blocks”.



overcome, gender inequalities and imbalances in power relations between women and men. Cultural representations, beliefs, traditions and social norms or institutions are reproduced in the 'private' and 'public' spheres and can exert direct and indirect influence on initiatives aimed at improving women's access to their human rights. They have influence at micro, meso and macro levels.

Gender analysis is required for all initiatives as it ensures that planning is based on facts and analysis rather than assumptions – A gender analysis is therefore a means of increasing the quality and effectiveness of initiatives as well as supporting gender equality.

DIFFERENT LEVELS OF GENDER ANALYSIS

Macro analysis looks at national level law, policy and decision making, including trade and finance policies and national development plans. It helps identify how cultural representations, beliefs or traditions can contribute, or hamper, broader development strategies. It assesses whether legislation or policies related to traditional representations of women's and men's roles contribute to gender inequalities, or to their elimination. It is particularly useful when programming or identifying development cooperation strategies, programmes and projects.

For example:

A gender analysis at macro level should aim at identifying discriminatory social norms and look at legislation and policies regarding women's status in the family, the community and society in general (for example, is there a discriminatory family code, which prevents women from accessing to property or inheritance, does not recognise women's parental authority and allows marriage to be celebrated without women's direct consent?). This analysis enables one to see if discrimination against women is institutionalised by law. The implementation of the programme might be hindered by the lack of law or policies guaranteeing women's access to their human rights.

Meso level analysis looks at markets, institutions, services, infrastructures which serve as a link between laws/policies and people, enabling them to benefit (or be excluded) from policy effects: health services, education, decentralized public services, communication and transportation systems, credit institutions, markets, etc.

This is particularly useful at programme formulation, as it also assesses the extent to which gender roles relationships and cultural issues can influence the effectiveness of service delivery and other policy and programme implementation mechanisms.

For example:

A meso level gender analysis could enable identify which cultural beliefs might prevent women from accessing to a resource or a service. It can also assess what (social and legal) sanctions might face women who do not abide by this cultural norm. For instance, in some forest-dependent communities, women are forbidden from entering forests, as cultural and religious beliefs deem this 'improper'. In practice, many women depend upon non-timber forest products (NTFPs) as a means of fulfilling household needs and potentially of generating additional income. This means that in reality many women do enter the forest, but – due to the restrictive environment – they do not have access to the supporting mechanisms available to men in the community if they encounter dangers (e.g. wild animal attacks).



DIFFERENT LEVELS OF GENDER ANALYSIS

Micro level analysis studies people: women and men as individuals, and the **socio-economic differences** between households and communities. It considers women and men's roles, activities and power relations within the household and the community, and how these influence their respective capacities to participate and benefit from development programmes. It is particularly useful at formulation, implementation and monitoring levels.

For example:

A micro level gender analysis of the impact of cultural beliefs and representations of women's and men's roles in the community should identify potential constraints and obstacles to equal participation in the decision-making process and identify adequate solutions. For instance, in Pakistan, women could not be part of the consultation process in a local initiative supported by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) due to the presence of men in the room. As it was important for both women and men to discuss the issues at stake at the same time, the issue was overcome by providing facilities to connect via speaker and microphone two separate meeting rooms (one for women, the other one for men).

The following section proposes guiding questions for gender analysis in relation to culture, at macro, meso and micro levels.

Macro level

Macro level. Policies and laws

- What gender equality commitments have been made by the government, for instance in the framework of the Beijing Platform for Action, CEDAW, the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the SDGs? Is there a law and/or a policy on gender equality in the country?
- Are those international commitments integrated into the national laws, at both normative and procedural levels (e.g. integration of the CEDAW recommendations on the rights of women in issues related to marriage and divorce)?
- Do national policies and legislations reflect these commitments through awareness of inequalities between men and women, and do they outline the means to address them?
- Are national gender equality commitments and policies able to impact upon informal justice systems, such as customary law and operators?
- Does current law protect the rights of the girl child (e.g. prohibition of FGM and child marriage)?
- Are there gender policies and action plans to address violations of women's rights based on traditions or cultural interpretations? For instance, is there a policy or an action plan against FGM? Do national programmes and sub-programmes related to health, education or justice align to and support this gender plan?



- Is there a national gender equality machinery, with allocated budget and clear mandate?
- Do current policies, laws and regulations have discriminatory provisions? For example, does the family code discriminate against women in family matters (e.g. are women able to give their nationality to their child?)? Does the civil code allow women to vote and participate in elections?
- Are there discriminatory laws or policies targeting specific groups of people (e.g. LGBT)?
- Do current policies, laws and regulations have measures for equal opportunities and women's rights? For instance, are there some affirmative actions in place to enable women to access decision-making positions in political bodies (e.g. quotas or reserved seats)?
- Is the social and health protection system inclusive of women (e.g. right to maternity care)? Are certain groups excluded (e.g. women belonging to a religious minority; indigenous women)?

Macro level. How are decisions made in national-level institutions?

- Are there decision makers (in Government, Parliament) who are ready to champion gender equality and women's empowerment in society in general, and specific areas such as decision-making; violence; religion?
- Are governmental institutions responsible for women's and gender issues, involved in decision-making at national policy and planning levels?
- Are there gender thematic groups that could be involved in sector level consultations?
- Which actors are involved in the formulation and decision-making process of policies targeting gender issues? For instance, what is the role given to religious or traditional institutions?
- Are women's rights advocate groups involved in the decision-making process around the implementation and monitoring of policies aiming at improving women's rights?

Macro level. Data and information

- Are there policy documents or agreed gender assessments to ensure that information and statistics are regularly collected on the gender gaps and priorities in relation to the concrete implementation of human rights?
- Are sex-disaggregated data available on violations of women's human rights (political, social, economic and sexual rights) and their consequences (e.g. number of girls at risk of FGM; number of girls married before the age of 19; number and age of women who died during or due to childbirth, etc.)?
- Have similar programmes/projects been implemented in the country? Were gender-sensitive evaluations carried out? For instance, if initiatives to increase the scope of family planning services have already been implemented, was a gender-sensitive evaluation carried out in the aim of identifying structural and cultural barriers to the proper implementation of the programme?
- Are there good examples of women's empowerment in the study area? To what extent and how did these examples take into account culture and traditions?



- Which attempts to transform discriminatory social norms and to achieve gender equality were failures due to backlash? For example, women's human rights defenders are increasingly stigmatised as 'western' after the implementation of programmes to abandon harmful traditional practices.

Macro level. Monitoring frameworks

- How is the country faring on gender equality targets established at international level?
- Has the government developed indicators that allow for monitoring progress in compliance with human rights from a gender equality perspective? Which data exists to show the impacts of the programme/project for women and men?
- Is the monitoring process conducted by independent institutions?
- Has there been a gender analysis of government spending in this sector and in the sub-sectors? Does the government have a system to track the gender sensitivity of development programmes?
- Is it possible to have a benefit incidence analysis by sex of beneficiaries? (Method of computing the distribution of public expenditure across different demographic groups, such as women and men.)
- In sector budget support modality, can payments be linked to progress made on the gender objectives and gender indicators? Is part of the budget earmarked for specific gender equality objectives?
- Has the government developed clear timelines and benchmarks for implementing recommendations of internal conventions on women's human rights?

Meso level

Meso level . Service provision

- What are the services to whom women and men have access?
- Who is providing those services? For example, are faith-based organisations the main providers of health care services? Is it international NGOs?
- What are the impacts of cultural representations on service provisions at community level? For example, is use of the family planning service restricted due to religious beliefs?
- Are certain groups of people excluded from access to certain services, due to traditions and cultural representations (e.g. are girls allowed to go to school)?
- Are there plans to improve the outreach capacity of local-level service delivery institutions to poor communities and in particular to women (E.g. family planning services for teenage girls; women belonging to religious minorities or indigenous women)?
- Are community-based organisations or NGOs able to promote the rights of women?
- Is there a gender balance in programme and project implementation units? At which levels?



- Are local duty-bearers (e.g. council members) and service providers (e.g. healthcare professionals) familiar with women's human rights corpus and their obligations with regards to gender equality commitments adopted by their country?
- Are gender competence development initiatives implemented to address knowledge and capacity gaps of the service providers?
- Are there measures to provide 'cultural agents' (e.g. politics, religious leaders, traditional authorities) with gender equality training?

Meso level. Decision making and consultation

- Who is involved in deciding the services needed by the community (participatory or elite-based systems of consultation)? Are there women involved in this process? Which women?
- If the programme envisages support to community-based organisations (e.g. faith-based organisations), are women represented and at which levels? Which women?
- Are gender equality institutions and structures at local level being involved?
- Are other stakeholders involved in decision-making and consultation, such as faith-based organisations; traditional authorities?
- Are there mechanisms to enable women to voice their concerns and interests linked to the programme, such as their specific needs in relation to family planning initiatives or to access economic rights?
- What are the social institutions preventing women from participating in decision-making and consultation?

Meso level. Data collection and monitoring processes

- Are sex-disaggregated data collected on access to services and on obstacles and barriers to access these services?
- Which data can be collected throughout the programme to monitor the impacts for women and men? Who will be responsible for collecting this data, and how frequently? Will they be trained in participatory, gender-sensitive data collection techniques?
- How will consultation processes be organised at various levels? Will both women and men be involved in community level consultation processes? How are women's interests going to be represented? Is there a need to set up new fora?
- Are adequate resources allocated for participatory consultation, monitoring and sex-disaggregated beneficiary assessments of services?
- What is the capacity of the national statistical office, and of enumerators, to collect sex disaggregated data and produce gender sensitive statistics on issues related to women's human rights violations?



Micro level

Micro level. Gender division of tasks and labour

- What are women and men's traditional roles and activities?
- Are women able to carry out extra-domestic activities?
- Are both girls and boys able to access to education?
- What are women's and men's opportunity to engage in paid work?
- What is the impact of women's (and girls') unpaid work on their opportunity to engage in paid work (or education)?
- Are children involved in household work? Which different tasks are allocated to girls and boys?

Micro level. Gender relations: Access and control over resources

- What are the general economic and demographic conditions of the household? Of the community? What are men and women's main sources of income?
- Which factors influence access to and control over services and resources (for example, age, sex, wealth, ethnicity, peri-urban versus rural locations, education level)?
- At the household level, who takes decisions about resources, activities and access to services?
- Can women decide themselves on issues related to their rights and those of their children (e.g. access to health care services)?
- At the community level, how are decisions made about resources and activities?
- At the community level, how are decisions made about rights and responsibilities of women and men?
- At community level, how are decision made about women's access to specific services (e.g. health services)? What is the impact of women's sexual and reproductive rights and land rights?
- Are women able to seek redress for violations of their human rights by their own initiative?
- If services are provided in the framework of the implementation of a development programme, are both women and men able to access to those services (e.g. training on a new tool)?



Micro level. Perceptions about gender equality

- What are women and men's perceptions of the appropriate behaviours of women and men? What are women and men's perceptions of their behaviour and the behaviour of the other gender?
- What are women and men's perceptions on gender-based violence (domestic and at work) and harmful traditional practices?
- Are women aware of their rights? Are they able to voice them in the community or with service providers?
- Are men openly resistant to gender equality? Are there groups of men who are more supportive/resistant than others? Who can influence them?
- What are the reactions of community members to individuals who fail to conform to gendered norms of behaviour?



Gender sensitive indicators, including women's cultural empowerment

Gender-sensitive indicators aim at ‘creating awareness of the different impacts of a development intervention on men and women, taking into consideration their socio-economic and cultural differences.’ (FAO, n.d. – Gender sensitive indicators for Natural Resources Management). Gender sensitive indicators reveal valuable information to identify the specific problems faced by women and men; to assess the extent of gender inequalities in access to and use of resources and services, and provide the basis for evidence-based policy-making processes (FAO, n.d.).

The table below provides some examples of gender sensitive indicators.

Area/Sub-sector	Indicator
Legal framework for women's human right	Ratification of CEDAW and optional protocols Constitutional provision for gender equality and women's rights Law prohibiting domestic violence against women Existence of law prohibiting female genital mutilations Existence of law prohibiting child marriage Law providing right to abortion Existence of national commission on human rights/women's rights Percentage of complaints received by national human rights institution that deal with gender discrimination Existence of specific anti-discrimination and/or equal opportunities legislation
Women's political participation	Share of women members of the Parliament Number of women in government Share of local government leaders who are women Ratio of women to men in local decision-making structures Share of women candidate in elections at local and national level Share of women candidates to elections at local and national level
Violence against women	Share of girls under 19 who are married, divorced or widowed Share of women experiencing domestic violence against women Share of girls who experienced FGM
Sexual and reproductive rights	Share of women and girls who have access to contraception Share of women and girls who are able to make independent choice regarding their sexual and reproductive rights Share of service providers who received training on gender equality Share of unintended pregnancies among adolescent girls (15-19) Number of abortion-related deaths



Area/Sub-sector	Indicator
Women's economic rights	Share of land titles owned or co-owned by women Share and type of properties owned by women Number of cases related to the right to inherit reported, tried and awarded to women
Women's participation in cultural institutions	Share of women in the Ministry of Culture Share of women among decision-making staff of cultural institutions (e.g. ministries, faith-based institutions) Number and type of women's organisations devoted to cultural issues Number and type of print and electronic media owned or managed by women devoted to cultural issues.

Sources of indicators:

SIDA (2010), *Tool: Indicators for Measuring Results on Gender Equality*

DANIDA (2006), *Gender- sensitive monitoring and indicators*

Moghadam Valentine M. and Bagheritari Manilee (2005), *Cultures, conventions, and the human rights of women: Examining the convention for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, and the declaration on cultural diversity*

Examples of gender-sensitive projects in relation to gender and culture

Several development and cooperation programmes have successfully addressed the issue of gender inequalities in relation to culture. Some examples are provided in the table below, and additional documents gathering good practices are listed in the following page.

Programme/project	Challenges	Gender Strategy	Source
“Circumcision with words”: Fighting from Kenya	<p>In Kenya, it is estimated that between 50 to 60% of women have been submitted to FGM. FGM is linked to an increase risk of death during childbirth (women who have undergone FGM are twice likely to die giving birth).</p> <p>Female genital mutilation (FGM) is a practice difficult to eradicate as it is often regarded as an integral part of the initiation ceremony aiming to integrate girls and women’s into their communities.</p> <p>Women who do not experience FGM might be stigmatised and rejected from the society. Efforts coming from international organisations have failed to tackle this issues, due to a lack of cultural sensitivity.</p>	<p>In 1998, Maendeleo Ya Wanawake (MYWO), an Kenyan organisation working on FGM, worked together with the Programme for Appropriate Technology and Health (PATH) Kenya office, an international NGO, to test a programme that substituted training on empowerment, health and human rights for the FGM ritual.</p> <p>The programme involved the following activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Training of the village elders to teach them to become trainers and explain the objectives of the projects to men, in order to ensure buy-in from local leaders; -Awareness-raising activities in school targeting boys, as they need to support the abandon of the practice to ensure that girls who have not been submitted to FGM will not be stigmatised later on; -Symbolic activities to offer substitutes to cultural traditions (such a pact made with the girls, their parents, religious leaders and elderly agreeing on the absence of FGM during the initiation ceremony); peer support groups for girls and their families stigmatised for having refused FGM. <p>The programme was successful in reducing the prevalence of FGM and reproduced in other localities.</p>	BRIDGE (2002), <i>Gender and Cultural Change. Overview Report</i>
Partnering with men to transform discriminatory Attitudes in Brazil	<p>The gendered division of labour enjoin men to act as the ‘breadwinner’ and not to be involved in child rearing activities.</p> <p>Traditional norms of masculinity also tend justify men’s violence and to characterise men as the ones in charge of initiating sexual and intimate relations. Those norms affect both women and men, by reducing</p>	<p>In Brazil, a programme targeting young men was developed by the Instituto Promundo and other partners: ‘Program H’. This addressed the issue of violence against women and promoted active fatherhood as a tool for gender equality.</p> <p>The programme informed young men on issues related to sexual health and women’s sexuality, and aimed to help</p>	Men Engage – UNFPA (n/d), <i>Engaging Men, Changing Gender Norms: Directions for Gender-Transformative Action</i>

Programme/project	Challenges	Gender Strategy	Source
	their rights and opportunities.	<p>them understand what could be their role in a more equal relationship. Part of the programme also aimed to support young men to take better care of themselves and each other (and avoid life threatening behaviour).</p> <p>The programme was found to have impulsed positive changes in attitudes with regard to women and gender roles and was replicated in other areas (the Balkans, Ethiopia, Namibia, the United Republic of Tanzania and the United States).</p>	
Involving faith-based organisations on issues related to sexual and reproductive rights and health in Kyrgyzstan	In many developing countries, faith-based organisations are the main providers of health care services. Religious leaders are often the most trusted sources at local level for people seeking more knowledge on reproductive health and family planning issues. However, representatives from those institutions are not always the strongest defendants of women's rights, especially of their sexual and reproductive rights.	<p>In Kyrgyzstan, UNFPA partnered with Muslim religious leaders, the Clerical Department of Muslims of Kyrgyzstan, the women's faith-based organisation Mutakalim, and the State Commission on Religious Affairs to raise awareness on issues related to reproductive health, family planning, gender equality, and HIV prevention and AIDS treatment.</p> <p>The programme consisted in several activities, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The organisation of several national conferences and roundtables for religious leaders and other stakeholders on the promotion of reproductive health and rights and family planning -The dissemination of information brochures and booklets on gender equality -The organisation of seminars for religious leaders on reproductive health and family planning issues focusing on changing attitudes towards women and to promote reproductive health and family planning issues among men and adolescents, whose involvement is necessary to reduce the number of unwanted pregnancies, abortion, and the prevalence and incidence of HIV and AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections. 	UNFPA (2008), <i>Culture Matters - Lessons from a Legacy of Engaging Faith-based Organizations</i>



Further References

About gender and culture

BRIDGE (2002), *Gender and Cultural Change. Overview Report*

<http://www.bridge.ids.ac.uk/sites/bridge.ids.ac.uk/files/reports/CEP-culture-report.pdf>

OECD (2014), *Social Institutions and Gender Index 2014 - Synthesis Report*

<http://www.oecd.org/dev/development-gender/BrochureSIGI2015-web.pdf>

OECD/ DAC (n-d), *Culture, gender equality and development cooperation - Gendernet Practice Note*

<http://www.oecd.org/social/gender-development/1896320.pdf>

Sardenberg C., 'Negotiating Culture in the Promotion of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Latin America', *IDS Working paper*, Volume 2012 No 407

<http://www.ids.ac.uk/publication/negotiating-culture-in-the-promotion-of-gender-equality-and-women-s-empowerment-in-latin-america>

The World Bank (2012), *On Norms and Agency Conversations about Gender Equality with Women and Men in 20 Countries*, Washington DC

<http://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/abs/10.1596/978-0-8213-9862-3>

UNFPA (2008), *Culture Matters Lessons from a Legacy of Engaging Faith-based Organizations*

http://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Culture_Matter_II.pdf

United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Secretariat of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (2010), *Gender and Indigenous Peoples' Culture – Briefing Note 4*

http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/BriefingNote4_GREY.pdf

On the planning cycle for programmes dealing with gender and culture

Men Engage – UNFPA (n/d), *Engaging Men, Changing Gender Norms: Directions for Gender-Transformative Action*

<http://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/Advocacy%20Brief-%20Gender%20Norms-1.pdf>

OECD (2014), *Social Institutions and Gender Index 2014 - Synthesis Report*

<http://www.oecd.org/dev/development-gender/BrochureSIGI2015-web.pdf>

OECD/ DAC (n-d), *Culture, gender equality and development cooperation - Gendernet Practice Note*

<http://www.oecd.org/social/gender-development/1896320.pdf>

UNFPA (2009), *Guidelines for engaging faith-based organisations (FBOs) as agents of change*

https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/fbo_engagement.pdf

UN Women (2014), *Guide for the evaluation of programmes and projects with a gender, human rights and intercultural perspective*

<http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2014/7/guide-for-the-evaluation-of-programmes-and-projects-with-a-gender-perspective>



On gender-sensitive indicators in relation to gender and culture

SIDA (2010), *Tool: Indicators for Measuring Results on Gender Equality*

<http://www.indevel.se/publications/indicators-for-measuring-results-on-gender-equality/>

DANIDA (2006), *Gender- sensitive monitoring and indicators*

http://amg.um.dk/en/~media/amg/Documents/Technical%20Guidelines/Monitoring%20and%20Indicators/Indicators%20in%20sectors/Gender_Sensitive.pdf

Moghadam Valentine M. and Bagheritari Manilee (2005), *Cultures, conventions, and the human rights of women: Examining the convention for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, and the declaration on cultural diversity*, SHS Papers in Women's Studies/Gender Research n.1, UNESCO

http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/SHS/pdf/Cultures_Conventions_HR_Women.pdf