



# GENDER & TRAINING

Mainstreaming gender equality  
and the planning, realisation  
and evaluation  
of training programmes





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## Introduction and background

The paper *Mainstreaming gender equality and the planning, realisation and evaluation of training programmes* provides detailed information and practical incentives for mainstreaming gender equality in the planning, realisation and evaluating of training programmes.

This is in keeping with SDC's Gender Equality Policy, which promotes interventions that help to improve the ability of women and men to act. One of the foundations of this gender policy target is the 1999 Beijing Plan of Action and the strategy of Gender Mainstreaming that it lays out. For SDC staff and partner organisations, the toolkit *Gender in practice: a toolkit for SDC and its partners* is an instrument that defines key terms, clarifies the gender aspect of central issues and offers support in implementing them in everyday working life.

The present paper is applicable to all SDC employees and consultants whose everyday professional responsibility it is to organise training programmes, seminars, workshops and courses. It is based on the concept of didactics that promotes gender equality, the five levels of which are described and explained in the second part of this paper. Part three contains practical tips and suggestions for dealing with this issue.



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<sup>1</sup> For an explanation of the concept Gender Mainstreaming see *Gender in Practice, a Toolkit for SDC & its partners*, sheet 1: Definitions.

## Two factors to keep in mind

### Roles

In the past, education was very much oriented to what is regarded as «role-conformity» for men and women; to some extent it still is. In the case of women, this meant focussing their activities on home and family, and for men earning enough money outside the home to support their families. Vocational training was also limited in the same way. Women long had access only to careers that merely professionalized their private role in the home, while for men the career path was broader and more upwardly mobile. Even though the division of roles no longer follows these boundaries quite so rigidly, and the perception of roles has become more flexible, some remains of that division are still highly influential.

### Doing Gender

People always act as sexual beings and they are perceived as such. This is something that happens intuitively for long periods, and we become aware of it only when gender allocation is ambiguous, giving rise to irritation. In the perception of gender, physical shape, clothing, voice and movement all play a part, but so do communication, interaction and behaviour.

Because people are perceived as women and men, and behave as such, or fail to behave in a «gender-standard» way, they help to construe, or misconstrue, gender. This process is known as «Doing Gender».



## **Sustainable training programmes**

Reflecting on gender roles and on the fact that people are perceived, and act – willingly or unwillingly – as sexual beings is crucial in training programmes. Indeed, increasing awareness of this factor of social interaction impacts on the learning processes and makes changes possible. A reflection on gender roles and relationships may be oriented towards different objectives in training. It can be useful in strengthening the roles and positions of women and men in a given direction and creating the conditions that will enable them to fulfil those roles and positions more efficiently. But it can also lead to the loosening or even to the breaking down of the roles intended for each of the sexes.

Learning is not something that happens in a vacuum, but rather it is something that picks up on the prior knowledge and experience that women and men bring with them when they take part in training programmes. Didactics that promotes gender equality is oriented to the question of how, and on what terms women and men learn best.



## Five levels of didactics that promotes gender equality

Dealing with gender in the planning, realisation and evaluation of training programmes means reflecting on

- content
- work forms and methods
- language and communication
- framework conditions
- the gender competence of trainers

in terms of gender. These five levels constitute a whole, however, for they are interconnected and in some respects overlapping.





### Content

The thematic scope of training programmes in the context of development cooperation is virtually unlimited. It is essential to clarify whether the content in question is presented in the same or in different ways to women and men, whether it is oriented towards the life experience and actual interrelations between women and men, and how the newly acquired knowledge can be transferred to their future living and working situations. Women's and men's interests may be different.

In a learning group on the subject of «paid and unpaid work», statistical materials help to show the high proportion of unpaid work in the total work volume, and the fact that the majority of unpaid work is done by women. Expectations are that past and present ways of dividing labour will no longer be accepted unquestioningly.

Women learn to read and write. They are able to form their own opinions on political or social issues. The power divide between them and their husbands, partners or fathers narrows.



A trade union training programme offers information on rights at the workplace. All of the examples used by the trainers are taken from the construction industry. They are based on a 100% employment level and a lifelong, uninterrupted career path. The reality of those women present, most of whom work in an office, in sales or in nursing and some of whom work part-time, is ignored.

**Encouragement by example:**

The year after the Iranian human rights campaigner Shirin Ebadi was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, the Kenyan environmental activist Wangari Maathai received it in 2004. She is an inspiration for many in the fight for democratic rights, and has given women, in particular, the encouragement to commit themselves to improving their situation.

Interests can get in the way or if handled without thinking these interests can put one of the sexes at a disadvantage.

It is therefore important to carefully assess the starting situation and objectives from the point of view of all participant groups. From the very start, the gender perspective should be an integral part of the concept in terms of content. Simply adding «the woman's view» to an existing concept is usually inappropriate.

Materials often lump people together, establishing certain stereotypes and role standards for women and men, and limiting them to those – e.g. women as mothers, men as authority figures, or those belonging to certain social groups (e.g. ethnic groups) as traditionally-minded. Materials used in teaching (documents, pictures, illustrative examples, etc.) must always be checked to see whether they include such elements, whether they adequately present the social realities of both sexes and work towards changes.

**It is quite possible that existing course materials or textbooks do not meet these requirements. In this case, it is important to talk explicitly about this in the course and to have a discussion on the issue.**



### Forms and methods

The empirical basis for gender-specific learning behaviour is meagre. There seem to be no methods or didactic instruments that are suited particularly to women or particularly to men. Nevertheless, the question of how people learn best is not obsolete, and there are certainly work forms that are more oriented towards one sex or the other, or which under certain circumstances may be preferred or rejected by one sex or the other. Men, for instance, find it difficult to talk about personal matters with other men, or are sceptical about creative methods such as painting or role-play. Women, on the other hand often shy away from taking part in open debates, or avoid taking on leadership duties or presentations. These, however, are acquired behaviour patterns that have nothing to do with the «nature of woman» or the «nature of man».

Diversity of method, a mixture of informative, creative and personality-building work forms, as well as the utilisation of visual elements, ensure that all those who take part in an training programme will get their money's worth and at the same time will be able to try something new or unusual. But that is not to say that any haphazard mix of methods is appropriate. Work forms should be based on the goal to be achieved, and there should be transparency about the rationale behind the choice of methods and when they are used. Diversity of method also depends on the time available. Certain work forms, e.g. exercises

with a partner or biographical methods, call for trust among the participants, something that cannot be achieved during a short programme.

Great importance is attached to the composition and use of small groups. Sex-homogeneous groups, for example, are ideal for practising and trying out unaccustomed roles. In mixed-sex units, common interests and differences can be discussed. It should be noted that in mixed groups, each sex should if possible have a minimum representation of 30%. Experience has shown that to be a ratio which will ensure that even a minority can be heard.

## Language and communication

Language makes it possible to convey educational content, but also ideas, thoughts and feelings. People who lead courses and people who take part in them communicate mainly, albeit not exclusively, by language. In an intercultural context, it may well be that many of those taking part will not be using their mother tongue to communicate. Whatever the specific situation, it is essential for women and men to be included in the verbal and written interchange, and to feel that they are being addressed directly. Gender-neutral language is a must, especially for course leaders.

Empirical investigations, for instance, show the following gender-specific behaviour patterns: men tend to speak for longer, interrupt course participants and leaders, and support their male colleagues. They talk big and make sexist allusions. They emphasise their abilities.

Women work by discussion, i.e. they make frequent but small contributions which help to keep the discussion going. They support men, often taking a critical view of their female colleagues. They emphasise their weaknesses, and are often rather casual when talking about their strengths.

In order to break such ingrained stereotypical behaviour patterns, they have to be taken up as a central theme, «brought up in discussion» in the true sense. Observation exercises, for instance, help to sensitise women and men to the way they themselves and other people communicate, and in turn direct their attention to differences between the sexes.

Rules established at the beginning of the learning programme and agreed upon between those leading the programme and those taking part increase everyone's personal responsibility and have a self-regulating effect.

### What might be included as rules for seminars?

- Gender-neutral language
  - Restrictions on length of speeches
  - Allow people to finish speaking
  - No sexist or disparaging remarks about seminar participants and leaders
  - I-messages
  - Allow time for feedback/criticism
  - No generalising gender-related attributions
- Agree no more than five or six points.



<sup>2</sup> Cf. for example Derichs-Kunstmann, Karin, Susanne Auszra und Brigitte Mühling: Von der Inszenierung des Geschlechterverhältnisses zur geschlechtergerechten Didaktik. Konstitution und Reproduktion des Geschlechterverhältnisses in der Erwachsenenbildung, Bielefeld 1999.



### **Framework conditions**

Very few countries today impose formal limitations on women's access to education. Informal exclusion mechanisms however are still widespread. These may, for example, be linked to gender, social level or religion. It is in any case essential to clarify the local conditions precisely when organising a training programme.

Attention should be paid to the following factors:

- Information channels, language and form of advertising for the course;
- Place and time of training courses;
- Security (routes, access, public transport, etc.);
- Compatibility with gainful employment and family duties;
- Spatial organisation (seating plan, lighting, sanitary facilities, etc.);
- Cost for those taking part in the training.

Framework conditions play an important part in putting participants in training programmes at their ease, enabling them to learn without pressure and develop their ideas and questions.

### Gender competence of trainers

People who run training programmes are the central actors in organising the programmes in a gender perspective. A participatory teaching style that is geared to the requirements of the participants creates a beneficial learning environment for women and men, although it does require a high degree of flexibility on the part of trainers.

Trainers should have acquired gender skills at both practical and theoretical levels. They should be aware of their own «Doing Gender», as well as that of the participants. They will know the areas of conflict that can arise between and within homogeneous- or mixed-sex trainers' teams and participant groups, and they will be able to intervene in a gender-neutral way in problematic group processes.

They are aware of their example-setting role.

They deal subtly with the different context-specific role concepts of women and men, while avoiding gender-related references, generalisations and culturalisation. In general, they are aware of the ambivalence between the perception of gender-specific behaviour and the attribution of such behaviour patterns to one of the sexes, and draw participants' attention to that.

In response to a question from the (female) course leader about what sort of critical points the participants have experienced in their careers so far, one man talks at length and in detail about his successful career change. A number of participants become fidgety and are obviously offended by the way their colleague is showing off but are unable to voice their opinions. After the man has finished, the course leader explains to the participants as neutrally as possible what she has observed. She encourages a brief discussion on the subject.

The course leader chairs the discussion, recording the votes of the participants on the flipchart.

The course leader explicitly ignores requests to speak from any participant who is inclined to deviate or digress, or restricts the speaking time. He or she merely comments that everyone should have a fair and equal chance to have their say.

If a course participant comments that the course organisers cannot be serious in saying that the proceedings have to be recorded in gender-impartial language, the course leader says that in the spirit of equality, they can exceptionally be expressed exclusively in the feminine form.



## **Didactic references for training programmes that promote gender equality**

The didactic references relate to the training programme in its entirety, namely to:

- Planning
- Concept
- Preparation
- Realisation
- Evaluation



### Planning

- What **experiences** or prior knowledge are the potential participants contributing? Are there differences between women and men?
- What **tasks** do women and men carry out on an everyday basis? Are there any differences?
- What **scope for decision making** do they have on an everyday basis? Are there any differences between women and men?
- What **interests** and targets do men and women pursue when they attend an educational programme?





**Concept**

- **Does the educational concept include gender themes and verifiable gender targets?**
  - Does the training unit take in the specific perspectives of women and men?
  - Are there plans for an explicit discussion of gender roles (e.g. in connection with conflicts of interest)?
  - Does the training concept include generalising allusions to one sex?
- **Do the teaching materials describe or depict women and men in varied or even gender-atypical roles?**
  - Are the portrayals and pictures of women and men equally represented in terms of number?
  - Are teaching materials, course documentation, illustrative examples, task allocations, etc. expressed in gender-impartial language?
- **Can a female or male gender expert be recruited if required at the planning stage of a training programme?**



### Quantitative targets

*For example:*

- An equal number of women and men attend the course, which means that there is a balanced gender ratio among the participants.
- The number of unjustified absences from the course is low (set target size). There are no verifiable absences on gender grounds (e.g. absence of childcare facilities).
- Enumeration of requests to speak during one or more course sequences: the differences between women and men are small or negligible.
- Timing of speeches during one or more course sequences: the differences between women and men are small or negligible.
- The course participants are satisfied with the course: the differences between women and men are small or negligible.

Quantitative targets can be allocated ratios:

e.g. 80% of participants are satisfied with the course.

The number of speaking contributions from women and men corresponds to the participant ratio.

### Qualitative targets

*For example:*

- The course advertising and materials used for the course are produced in gender-neutral language.
- The issue of gender is taken up as a central theme in the course advertising and in one or more course units.
- Is there verifiable provision for discussions on gender issues (roles, different interests and/or experiences of women and men, etc.)?
- Certain topics are dealt within sex-homogeneous groups.
- The opinions/attitudes of women and men to a defined (gender) issue have demonstrably changed during the course.

**It is quite possible that existing course documentation or course books do not meet these requirements. In this case it is important to talk explicitly about this in the course and to have a discussion about it.**





One possibility is to allow the participants themselves to discuss and decide on the location and time.

### Preparation

- **Are the course descriptions always expressed in gender-neutral language? Are women and men addressed directly?**
  - Are training programmes/courses described in such a way that women and men can see some benefit for themselves?
  - Are women (e.g. for a craftwork course) explicitly encouraged, or are men (e.g. for a course on raising children) explicitly invited to attend training courses?
  - Are training programmes/courses communicated in such a way that women's attention can be drawn to them (formal and informal channels; in writing, verbally, on radio, in the press, through [women's] organisations, etc.)?
  - Is it necessary for women to be addressed through their husbands, fathers or other male contact?



■ **Are training courses organised in such a way that people with family or care commitments are able to attend them without difficulties?**

- Are training programmes/courses scheduled so as to be compatible with the life and work patterns of women and men?
- Are the locations of the training programmes fixed so that women and men are able to attend them safely (public transport, organised transport)?
- Are the buildings where the courses are held equipped so as to ensure that women and men feel at ease?

■ **Are the costs (course fees, teaching materials, transport, suitable clothing, etc.) kept at a level that enables all envisaged target groups to attend the course?**

- Can compensation be paid if necessary, especially if self-employed people or volunteer workers, for example, have no possibility of being reimbursed for the course fees?
- Are there grants, and are they equally available to everyone?

## Realisation

### ■ Do the trainers use language that is in every respect gender-neutral?

- Do the trainers monitor the use of gender-neutral language by the participants?
- If necessary, is there a discussion on why gender-neutral language is important from a gender point of view?
- Do the course leaders monitor the participants' body language, e.g. as a sign of involvement, interest or rejection and defence?

### ■ Do course leaders establish a means of intervention, for interrupting or for anti-pating forms of communication that discriminate against women or men?

#### Examples of leaders' powers of intervention

- Talk to silent participants, referring to their skills and functions
- Establish behaviour that breaks with gender-specific patterns of behaviour, such as
  - distribution of roles
  - dealing with criticism
  - dealing with strengths/weaknesses
  - interruptions
  - working by discussion, etc.
- Draw attention away from disruptive elements and participants who talk too much
- Deliberately allow roles to be negotiated
- Create sex-homogeneous groups
- Confront participants with gender-stereotypical behaviour patterns

- Is it made clear to all participants that there is no place in the course for sexist innuendo, degrading remarks, etc. made to other participants and course leaders?
- If there is a need for one, is there a discussion on meta-level communication: how do we talk to each other? How do we deal with each other?
- Is there provision for, or is consideration given to, formulating certain rules of behaviour with participants at the beginning of the educational programme? (See also box «What might be included as rules for seminars»)

### ■ Are there provisions for different work forms (open debate/lecture, working groups, individual working, role play, creative methods, physical exercises, etc.)?

- Is there a meaningful connection between diversity of method and duration of the programme?
- Is there provision for separate single-sex units for certain educational content or for certain sequences?
- When the working groups are being set up, is consideration given to gender-impartial composition (e.g. proportion of women/men at least 30%), or is the composition of working groups discussed (e.g. with regard to style of communication)?

### ■ Do participants have an opportunity to give feedback?

- Do conditions allow for all to be able to give feedback?
- Are there means of giving feedback in writing?

## Evaluation

- **Are the questions for the evaluation tools formulated in a gender-neutral way?**
- **Have all data been obtained and evaluated separately for each sex?**
  - Did any participants drop out of the educational offering? Why? Are there differences between women and men?
  - Are the participants satisfied with the course? Are there differences between women and men?
- **Have the gender targets been attained?**
  - Were gender issues verifiably part of the training programme?
  - Did the participants have an opportunity to give their views on gender-specific issues?
  - Were the participants satisfied with the training programme? Are there differences between women and men?
  - Have the participants changed their opinions on/approach to a defined (gender) issue?



The evaluation questions should be coordinated with the gender targets.



**A course leader who works part time and is responsible for bringing up children is a credible mediator for questions on the compatibility of family and career.**

### **Selection criteria for course leaders**

In selecting internal or external trainers, one should consider the following points:

#### *Professionalism in dealing with gender issues*

- Conscious dealing with one's own gender role, one's own «Doing Gender»
- Conscious dealing with language and knowledge of gender-specific communication behaviour
- Gender knowledge and gender skills with regard to the content of the educational programmes

Where necessary, one should enable trainers to acquire these skills, or provide experts whom trainers can consult on gender issues.

#### *Composition of leadership teams*

- In general, ensure that there is a balanced ratio of women and men among the course instructors
- As far as possible, set up mixed-sex teams
- Take the «role-model» function of course leaders as a central theme

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Marie-Louise Barben, Bern  
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