Gender Empowerment Approach to promote gender equality

Empowerment is a process of change, enabling people to make choices and convert these into desired actions and results. In doing so, people - not just women - take control of their own lives, improve their own position, set their own agenda, gain skills, develop self-confidence, solve problems, and develop self-sufficiency. Empowerment leads to genuine participation of all actors as it is a process of gaining self-confidence for individual development as well as to contribute towards development of others. The ultimate objective of empowerment is to achieve gender equality by promoting gender equity measures. Equity and Equality are sometimes wrongly used interchangeably, although they mean different, they are also complementary. A good definition of both concepts can be found in the IUCN and GGCA (2015) training manual on Gender and Climate Change[1]:

Gender equality is the concept that all human beings, both men and women, are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles, or prejudices. Gender equality means that the different behaviours, aspirations and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favoured equally. It does not mean that women and men have to become the same, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female.

Gender equity means fairness of treatment for women and men, according to their respective and differentiated needs. This may include equal treatment or treatment that is different but considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities. In the development context, a gender equity goal often requires built-in measures to compensate for the historical and social disadvantages of women. Hence, both gender *equity* and gender *equality* must be pursued in a complementary manner where **gender equality is the ultimate goal**. In other words, in order to achieve gender equality, it is often necessary to pursue gender equity measures. This is, we need to address the different needs and requirements of different people. For that we need to treat people differently and not the same (equal), but equitable; addressing their specific needs. The achievement of gender equality is not a one-off goal. Because progress can all too easily be eroded, gender equity needs to be constantly promoted and actively sustained.

In short, empowerment approach take into account the differentiated needs of women and men by increasing the economic, social, cultural, political, and physical strength of any individual or disadvantages groups (indigenous, poor farmers, displaced, HIV, etc.). Therefore, when we assess the level of empowerment of an individual or a group, we look at the following interrelated gender dimensions:

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[1] IUCN, UNDP, & GGCA. (2009). *Training manual on gender and climate change* (L. Aguilar, Author). Retrieved from https://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/eng_version_web_final_1.pdf

1. *Physical empowerment:*
   The right to decide about one's sexuality, to decide about the number of children and spacing between them, the right to family planning methods and information to choose contraceptives are all aspects of physical empowerment. Also the right to proper healthcare, to clean water, sanitation facilities and dignity, access to proper menstrual management contribute to this element of empowerment. Furthermore, the ability to resist violence, the right to safety and security, and the power to get one's rights are very important aspects.

2. *Economic empowerment:*
   This is the right to access to and control over relevant resources of production, the right to safe and sufficient water, same income for same work for men and women, the right to decide about the use of one's own income, the right to choose one's education, and the right to get decent work out of it. Often women have access to income but have no control over it, they have to hand over their salaries to husband, son, brother or mother in law. It is also commonly known that millions of women and girls lose out on income and education due to the time they spend in provisioning of drinking water for their families.

3. *Political empowerment:*
   This is the right to organize one self and others, the right to take part in democratic processes: to be allowed to vote and to be voted for. It means to participate at the decision making levels not only at national level, but also to take active part, for instance, in Water User Associations (WUA), Small Farmers Groups (SFG), credit groups, and their Executive Committees or boards. In means to participate in society and to be able to make one's voice heard. For example to be confident in getting extension services from the local level Agricultural Extension office, or to be a member of the Union Parishad and effectively participate in decision-making to influence development efforts.

4. *Socio-cultural empowerment:*
   This is the right to one's own independent identity and is about your perception of yourself and how society perceives you. It means to have a positive self-image, and is about your social status as an individual and as a group. For example as a woman, and as a member of a particular ethnic group or caste. Furthermore, it is about the right and ability to speak out, getting your voice heard, and making your opinion matter.

All four elements of empowerment are interrelated and together they indicate the degree of empowerment of an individual or group. It is important to realize that any single one of these four elements should not be seen as empowering in isolation, as the four elements interact and influence each other. So, for example, having a job (economic empowerment) in itself does not mean a woman is empowered if she has no say in who she would like to marry or the number of children she would like to have (physical empowerment). Therefore is important to do a pre- and post-programme gender analysis to see both, the state of gender inequalities at the starting of a programme and measure/evaluate the impact of the intervention after, at different domains of gender relations, such as the household, community, market, etc.

It is important to take into account that nobody can empower another person. One can only empower oneself to make decisions, express views, and change behaviour and practices. Groups and individuals (not only women) who are on the lower side of the hierarchy, empower themselves if they are convinced, and if they are able to do so. Outsiders (like project staff) can be catalysts and create enabling opportunities for women and men from different cultures and socio-economic groups to empower themselves following their own needs, values and strategy. They can do this by raising awareness of groups and individuals about their rights, building their capacity for change through

appropriate education and skills training; as well as through advocacy for improved laws, policies and regulations on access to resources.

Empowerment as a Method for Gender Analysis

As empowerment is essential to equitable and sustainable development, the approach can be used as a method of analysis and a tool for tracking change at different level: policies, planning, monitoring and evaluation, and for measuring impacts. The matrix 1 provides the intersection among the dimensions and domains of empowerment. You can use this matrix for developing gender analysis, as well as for establishing indicators to track changes.

Empowerment approach matrix[2]

Empowerment dimensions	Domains of empowerment					
	Individual (woman, man, girl, boy)	Household	Resource-based organizations (WUO, FMO, Women org.)	Market	Community (village, ethnic group, etc.)	Country (outside society)
Socio-cultural: (*who I am and how does the society see me?*) - Identity - Self esteem - Agency - Mobility						
Economic: (*Who has access to/control over? How? And who benefits?*) - Access to assets (land, water, forest) - Income - Decent work						
Political (*Who exerts power and how?*) - Membership - citizenship - Decision making - Leadership position						

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[2] Based on GWA's document: 'Empowerment. Four Interacting Elements for Analysis and as an Objective for Development (2016)'.

- Right to vote and to be voted						
Physical *(Who has access to and control over? Who decides?)* - Sexuality - Number of children - Food - Health care - Sanitation - Drinking water						

Data collection tools for gender analysis

There is a myriad of ways to collect both quantitative as well as qualitative gender disaggregated data, which all have their advantages and disadvantages. To mention some of them:

- In (Participatory) Observation, data are collected by observation of activities and in case of participatory observation, taking part in them. You keep notes and make photographs on specific activities and special attention is paid to gender differences such as access or control over resources.
- In-depth interviews/key informant interviews take place one-on-one and can have structured or semi-structured questions, but also open questions. As timing and place can affect the dynamics and information you get from interview, choose suitable place and time for the one you interview. Ask the interviewed if they want to be interviewed and ensure that information cannot be traced back to the interviewed in case it is agreed that the identity of the interviewed will not be revealed. Ensure that if you ask a question to somebody, that it is their answer that is noted down, and not that of a different person also attending the interview (e.g. a husband answering for his wife)
  In case of key informant interviews you look for certain people with a big network or of high importance in the community to interview e.g. a school teacher, a village leader, or a religious leader. In this case it will be more difficult to keep the identity hidden.
- In a Focus group discussion (FGD) people from similar backgrounds or experiences gather to discuss a specific topic of interest together. The group of participants is guided by a moderator (or group facilitator) who introduces topics for discussion and helps the group to participate in a lively and natural discussion amongst themselves.
  The strength of FGD relies on allowing the participants to agree or disagree with each other so that it provides an insight into how a group thinks about an issue, about the range of opinion and ideas, and the inconsistencies and variation that exists in a particular community in terms of beliefs and their experiences and practices.
- A transect walk is a walking tour through areas of interest along a pre-drawn line on the map to observe, to listen, to identify different zones or conditions, and to ask questions to identify problems and possible solutions. With this method, the outsider can quickly learn about soils, land and water points and local assets, as well as places of open defecation and pollution.
- Ranking priorities or problems helps villagers to set priorities (i.e. problems, needs, actions, etc.). Ranking can be undertaken with key informants or groups of villagers that represents a good

mixture of interests. It can also be conducted based on gender to determine different preferences between men and women for simple issues.

- Social mapping helps to map vulnerabilities, capacities, needs, knowledge and activities of different groups of people, resource mapping gives insight in access, use and control over resources. They are quick surveys of society and resources, making use of local available materials. In both mapping exercises local people are asked to jointly make a map of their village and indicate either social issues (who are the rich people, and who are the poor, where do they live, how many people live in every house, who pertains to which religion, etc.) or resources (where are the water points, who can use them, who decides about their use, where are the agricultural fields, who works on those fields, who decides what to do with the harvest, etc.)
  In these exercises it is important to choose a proper location and time and to include all stakeholder groups including women. Sometimes it is interesting to let men and women make different maps

- Historical timelines are used to analyse the evolution of particular issues, their context, the pattern and the relationship over time. It covers several events that have occurred in the village and traces the dynamics of the natural or social changes over time. It reconstructs the important events within the village that have had an impact on the community's way of life. The history profile can help to identify factors influencing current problems within the village and its inhabitants. It puts into perspective the causes of problems. It is important to collect data across different generations, and let all members participate. Since the activity depends on memory recall, it is important that elderly people are actively involved to assist with historical events. It is also important to include gender and poverty issues in the historical timeline. The use of oral history can be very helpful in this exercise

- In stakeholder analysis you assess who will win and who will lose from a policy or programme. When doing this from a gender-perspective it is important to get a complete overview of all those affected, so to also differentiate between men and women, as well as for different socio-economic groups, age, ethnicity, etc.

- Consultations can be organised to get the opinions of different people on a proposed programme or policy. It is important to get a wide variety of stakeholders, both men and women, to discuss the proposal to get a picture as complete as possible. Here ideas can be brought forward and discussed, and adaptations can be made.

- In a case study qualitative data can be gathered on specific gender issues. It often includes a field visit to discuss with local people and get their opinion on the matter being studied. It can be used to monitor progress of a project, or for identifying problems. It can also be used to document approaches that worked successfully and assess if they could be scaled up.

- In participatory action research, the researcher does not research the topic from "outside", but ensures participation of the people under study in formulation of the research question, data-collection and formulation of conclusions. The aim of the research is that action can be taken on the basis of the conclusions of the study. It is a useful tool to identify the problems felt by women or vulnerable groups and give them tools for empowerment and to change their situation.

- Literature research helps to unlock scattered or hidden data. Often data are available but hidden or scattered in (project) reports, proposals, research documents, statistical surveys, etc. A literature research can bring these together in a useful document for planning projects and policies. Also here it is important to disaggregated data so gender differences become clear and can be addressed.

Related Sources:

The "Tutorial for Water Managers: Why Gender Matters" a useful "quick-guide" to strategies and approaches for gender mainstreaming in Integrated Water Management. It is available at GWA website: http://genderandwater.org/en/gwa-products/capacity-building/tutorial-for-water-managers-why-gender-matters

What Works for Women. Proven approaches for empowering women smallholders and achieving food security. Act!onaid, Care, Concern Worlwide, OXfan, Practical Action and Self Help Africa. http://www.care.org/sites/default/files/documents/CC-2012-What_Works_for_Women.pdf

Gender and Climate Change Research in Agriculture and Food Security for rural Development. Training Guide. CGIAR, FAO (2012). file:///C:/Users/Juana%20Vera%20Delgado/Downloads/guide%20on%20climate%20and%20agriculture%20fao.pdf

Gender and Empowerment: definitions, approaches and implications for policy. Report No 40, Sida. http://www.bridge.ids.ac.uk/sites/bridge.ids.ac.uk/files/reports/re40c.pdf