

Gender-Sensitivity

Definition

Gender sensitivity is the act of being aware of the ways people think about gender, so that individuals rely less on assumptions about traditional and outdated views on the roles of men and women. It is about understanding and consideration of socio-cultural factors underlying sex-based discrimination. The term also applies to attitudes that socialize girls and boys into certain behaviors or opportunities, for example, pushing boys to play sports or not expecting girls to do well at sports. (IPS, 1996 30). Gender-sensitive planning uses specific methods and tools to provide women and girls more opportunities for their participation in the development process and to measure the impact of planned activities on women and men.

Example

World Food Program Bolivia has prepared an Action Plan to promote and monitor the role of women in WFP's activities from 1997 to 2001. Work plans must include: a) design of a system for gender involvement by trimester; b) definition of indicators to monitor follow-up actions; c) creation of a gender analysis matrix to analyze activities undertaken; and d) revision of M&E forms to provide gender data and information on credit, training, food distribution and planning. Furthermore, the major part of the technical and administrative personnel will be women.

Following up on the Commitments to women made in Beijing in 1995, memoranda of understanding (MOU) on joint and individual responsibilities were signed with seven international partners in 1996. The MOUs define the following implementation and monitoring requirements: the application of a participatory mode of planning that considers the specific needs and potential of refugee and displaced women; the provision of appropriate and adequate food for women and children at risk; and measures taken to ensure that women hold key positions in the management of food aid. A gender-sensitive program addresses the differential losses of both women and men, and seeks to anticipate the balance of power in the interest of community survival.

What are Indicators?

Indicators are standards used to measure achievements of a project. They are pointers, numbers, facts, opinions or perceptions that look into and measure changes of specific conditions or situations. Indicators can be quantitative – measures of quantity such as the number of women users in a telecentres . And qualitative – people's judgment or perception about a subject, for instance, self

confidence developed by women users from skills learned in telecentres that may help them get better employment. In other words, indicators provide a close look at the results of initiatives and actions. For this reason, they are front-line instruments in monitoring and evaluating development work.

Bauer (1966) described social indicators as "statistical series, and all other forms of evidence....that enable us to assess where we stand and where we are going with respect to values and goals, and to evaluate specific programs and determine their impact." This definition is useful because it recognizes the normative nature of indicators, in that a change in a particular direction can be interpreted as "good" or "bad". For example, a rising birth rate may be interpreted as good in one country but bad in another. It also recognizes that indicators can come from "all... forms of evidence", both quantitative and qualitative; and that indicators must measure changes over time. Because of their normative nature, care must be taken in defining the norm or bench-mark implicit in any indicator and against which change is measured. For example, in examining the status of women, is the norm the situation of men in a particular country, or is it women in other countries?

Indicators also provide a closer look at results of initiatives and actions. They are useful tools to assess positions and directions with respect to values and goals, and in evaluating specific programs and determining the impact of such programs. In traditional planning and evaluation methodologies, indicators are "specific (explicit) and objectively verifiable measures of changes or results brought about by an activity." The generally accepted criteria for good indicators are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timebound (SMART). Normally, indicators are defined or set by the objectives of a project. However, in reality, projects can bring about changes in communities or changes in the environment may lead to adjustments of projects. Indicators may therefore be refined once a project starts.

What are Gender-sensitive Indicators?

Gender-sensitive indicators, as the term suggests, are indicators that track gender related changes over time. Their value lies in measuring whether gender equality/equity is achieved through a number of ways. Gender-sensitive indicators have the special function of pointing out gender-related changes in society over time. Their usefulness lies in their ability to point to changes in the status and roles of women and men over time, and therefore to measure whether gender equity is being achieved. Because use of indicators and other relevant evaluation techniques will lead to a better understanding of how results can be achieved, using gender-sensitive indicators will also feed into more effective future planning and program delivery.

Gender sensitive indicators support the development and evaluation of policies and programs designed to achieve greater gender equity in the context of gender sensitive analysis and gender mainstreaming initiatives of policy/programs and budgets.

Gender indicators 'enable us to assess where we stand and where we are going with respect to values and goals, and to evaluate specific programs and their goals'

The usefulness of gender indicators 'lies in their ability to point to changes in the status and roles of women and men over time, and therefore to measure whether gender equity is being achieved' (Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) 1997)

Gender indicators take into account that gender roles exist and point to changes in the status and roles of women and men over time. They help illustrate the ways a project affects gender roles and confirms or disregards gender discrimination. Gender indicators should be drawn from identifying gender issues within a specific context of a project or activity. Many indicators that look into gender such as measuring gender empowerment, human and development index, and gender development indices are useful tools in tracking gender equality/ equity. Many of these indicators are based on gender analytical models that have emanated from a feminist analysis of societies, relationships and development. On the other hand, a growing number of gender special lists believe that indicators by themselves are insufficient to reflect and express women's experiences especially in areas such as women's empowerment or participation. They argue that policy-makers need to pay more attention to women's experiences towards which indicators can serve as pointers. Despite their differences, however, the key question that these models and indicators attempts to answer in measuring the impact of any initiative is: "Is it life-changing?"

Why gender indicators are important

"Policies that do not recognize the different and unequal position of women in society tend to perpetuate and exacerbate gender inequalities. Gender statistics and indicators have an essential role in the elimination of gender blindness in the formulation of policies. Statistics and indicators on the situation of women and men in all spheres of society are an important tool in promoting equality.

Gender statistics 'raise consciousness and provide an impetus for change, to provide a foundation for policies, programmes and projects and to monitor and evaluate such policies and measures'." (Hedman, Perucci and Sundström 1996: 9).

"Governments that become aware of, and are publicly known for, a lack of gender equality in their countries, are more likely to carry out policies to reduce this inequality." (Dijkstra and Hanmer 2000: 62).

"The utilization of gender-sensitive indicators allows for effective monitoring and evaluation of project or program activities." (Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) 2001)

In the view of Dijkstra and Hanmer (2000:62), developing a measure of socio-economic gender inequality has three aims:

1. To identify the extent of inequality at a certain point in time;
2. To identify causes for inequality with a view to suggesting policies to reduce inequality; and
3. To monitor the impact of these policies over time.

Statistics Sweden (2002) have identified the purpose of gender disaggregated statistics/data as being to:

- Raise consciousness, persuade policy makers and promote changes
- Provide Ideas
- Provide an unbiased basis for policies and measures
- Monitor and evaluate policies and measures.

About gender sensitive indicators

Gender-sensitive indicators demonstrate changes in gender relations in a given society over a period of time. They are used to assess progress in achieving gender equality by measuring changes in the status of women and men over a period of time. Gender-sensitive indicators may be used as a tool to assess the progress of a particular development intervention towards achieving greater gender equality.

As a measure of social change and the performance/effectiveness of government policy, gender-sensitive indicators can be described in terms of:

- (1) The derived quality to be reached;
- (2) The quantity of something to be achieved;
- (3) The target group who is affected by or benefits from the program or project; and,

(4) the time frame envisaged for the achievement of the objectives (FAO 2001).