

Gender Integration Continuum

Time: 1 hour

Activity Objective:

Understand the IGWG Gender Integration Continuum as a lens for assessing project approaches.

Materials:

- Printed Flipcharts:
 - IGWG Gender Integration Continuum Graphic
 - Gender Integration Continuum Group Task
- Continuum Case Studies, color-coded
- Handout: Gender Integration Continuum

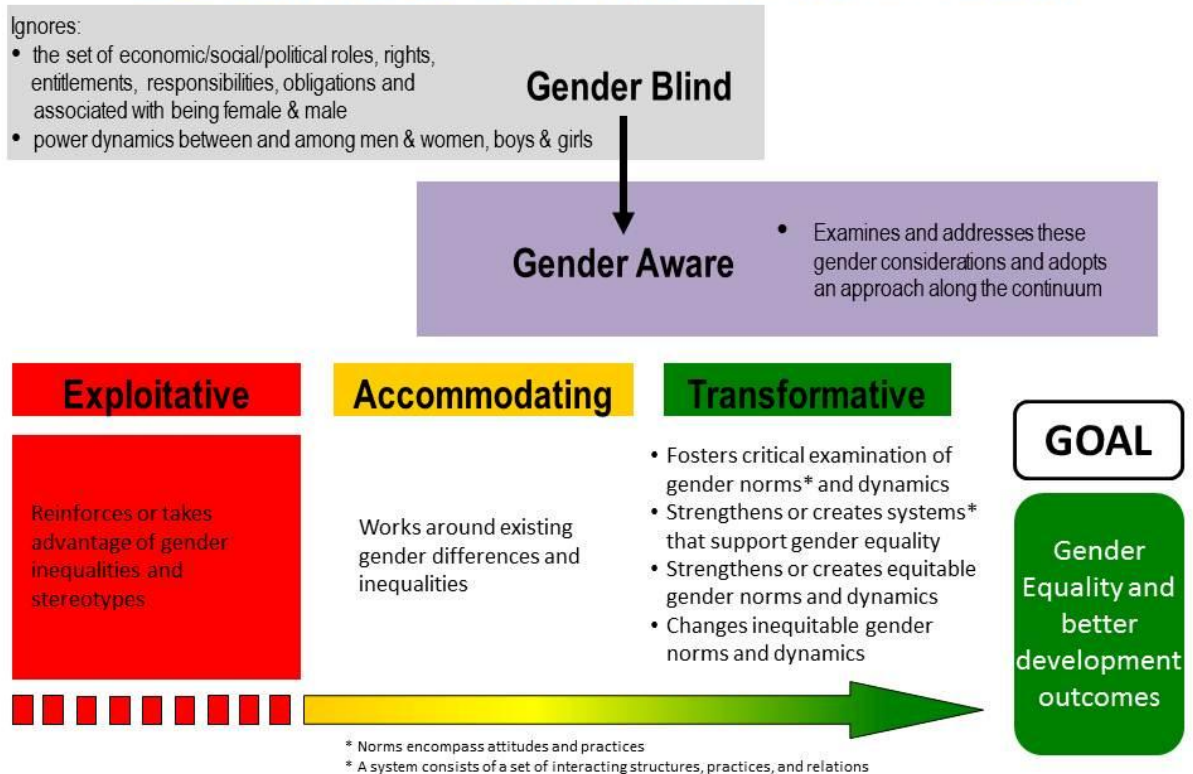
Activity:

1. Explain that we have been exploring the importance of understanding how gender can affect our project outcomes. To guide various projects on how to integrate gender, the IGWG has developed a conceptual framework known as the Gender Integration Continuum. This framework categorizes approaches by how they treat gender norms and inequities in the design, implementation, and evaluation of program/policy.¹

The term “gender blind” refers to policies and programs which are designed without prior analysis of the culturally-defined set of economic, social, and political roles, responsibilities, rights, entitlements, obligations, and power relations associated with being female and male and the dynamics between and among men and women, boys and girls. Gender blind programs/policies ignore gender considerations altogether. In contrast, “gender aware” programs/policies deliberately examine and address the anticipated gender-related outcomes during both design and implementation. An important prerequisite for all gender-integrated interventions is to be gender aware.

¹ This framework draws from a range of efforts that have used a continuum of approaches to understanding gender, especially as they relate to HIV/AIDS. See Geeta Rao Gupta, “Gender, Sexuality and HIV/AIDS: The What, The Why and The How” (Plenary Address at the XIII International AIDS Conference), Durban, South Africa: 2000; Geeta Rao Gupta, Daniel Whelan, and Keera Allendorf, “Integrating Gender into HIV/AIDS Programs: Review Paper for Expert Consultation, 3–5 June 2002,” Geneva: World Health Organization 2002; and WHO/ICRW, “Guidelines for Integrating Gender into HIV/AIDS Programmes,” forthcoming.

GENDER EQUALITY CONTINUUM TOOL



Talking points to introduce the gender integration continuum

The Gender Equality Continuum Tool takes users from gender blind to gender aware programs, towards the goal of equality and better development outcomes. Awareness of the gender context is often a result of a pre-program/policy gender analysis. "Gender aware" contexts allow program staff to consciously address gender constraints and opportunities, and plan their gender objectives.

The gender integration continuum is a tool for designers and implementers to use in planning how to integrate gender into their programs/policies. Under no circumstances should programs take advantage of existing gender inequalities in pursuit of health outcomes ("do no harm!"), which is why, when printed in color, the area surrounding "gender exploitative" is red, and the arrow is dotted.

Gender Aware policies and programs examine and address the set of economic, social, and political roles, responsibilities, rights, entitlements, obligations and power relations associated with being female and male and the dynamics between and among men and women, boys and girls.

This training module was adapted from materials created by the Interagency Gender Working Group (IGWG) and funded by USAID. These materials may have been edited; to see the original training materials you may download this training module in its pdf format).

Exploitative Gender Programs/Policies are programs/policies which intentionally or unintentionally reinforce or take advantage of gender inequalities and stereotypes in pursuit of project outcome, or whose approach exacerbates inequalities. This approach is harmful and can undermine the objectives of the program in the long run.

Accommodating Gender Programs/Policies acknowledge but work around gender differences and inequalities to achieve project objectives. Although this approach may result in short term benefits and realization of outcomes, it does not attempt to reduce gender inequality or address the gender systems that contribute to the differences and inequalities.

Transformative Gender Programming includes policies and programs that seek to transform gender relations to promote equality and achieve program objectives. This approach attempts to promote gender equality by: 1) fostering critical examination of inequalities and gender roles, norms and dynamics, 2) recognizing and strengthening positive norms that support equality and an enabling environment, 3) promoting the relative position of women, girls and marginalized groups, and transforming the underlying social structures, policies and broadly held social norms that perpetuate gender inequalities.

Most importantly, program/policy planners and managers should follow two gender integration principles:

First, **under no circumstances should programs/policies adopt an exploitative approach** since one of the fundamental principles of development is to “do no harm.”

Second, **the overall objective of gender integration is to move toward gender transformative programs/policies**, thus gradually challenging existing gender inequalities and promoting positive changes in gender roles, norms, and power dynamics.

2. Ask the group to count off by five to create five small groups of three people. The ideal size for the small groups is three people each to enable in-depth discussion.

3. Explain that you will distribute two project examples to each small group and ask them to complete the following task (printed on flipchart). Give them 15 minutes to work on the task.

Continuum Group Task:

- Read your assigned project/activity examples and determine as a group where you would locate the project approach along the gender continuum: exploitative, accommodating, or transformative. Paste the project example accordingly on the wall under the category titles.
- If you feel that the project was designed without taking gender into account whatsoever, place the example near “gender blind.”

- Focus on the intention or design of the project rather than outcomes, as outcomes are influenced by many factors outside the control of the project team.

Facilitator's Note: *You will need to provide at least one project description for each of the three categories—exploitative, accommodating and transformative. When distributing examples to small groups, ensure that each group works with examples of two different categories.*

Facilitation Alternative: *Some trainers prefer to give a common project example to two groups and find that sometimes the groups classify the examples differently. This can result in an interesting debate.*

After the small groups have placed their project description cards along the continuum, ask a representative from each group to come forward, read the project description, and explain the group's reasoning. Entertain reactions or questions from the other groups.

IGWG trainers note that the richness of this exercise comes in the processing. The IGWG has classified the various project examples according to continuum category. That category appears on the project description template as a reference for the facilitator. The IGWG's advice to the facilitator is to foster an in-depth debate and provide the "IGWG answer" *only if* it's helpful to the group.

In most cases, there is no "correct" answer for these examples, as participants will have alternate contexts or scenarios that influence their interpretation of the project's intention or design and therefore place the example in different locations on the continuum. Encourage diversity in this exercise, letting people explain their placements and any assumptions they made to arrive at their decision.

4. Debrief the activity by highlighting the following points:

For the examples categorized as **gender blind, exploitative**, and/or **accommodating**, ask participants what steps can be taken to move those project designs toward the **transformative** end of the continuum.

At a minimum, health and development projects should strive to "do no harm" in terms of gender norms and relations. From the IGWG's perspective, there is no viable rationale for designing a project that deliberately exploits gender inequality (gender exploitative projects). All USAID-supported projects are required to avoid doing harm from a gender standpoint.

When a project team fails to look at gender issues in a project design, they are missing an opportunity. In the case of some gender **accommodating** examples, project managers have opted to conform to existing gender norms in order to enhance programmatic/health outcomes. Other times, a project may accommodate gender norms as an interim step in response to an identified gender issue. Gender accommodating strategies can be a reasonable way to "buy time" while the project figures out how to best address a

gender issue in a way that transforms gender relations and promotes gender equity. The IGWG's position is that transforming gender relations in favor of equity provides a win-win situation in terms of health outcomes, addressing both short-term project objectives and long-term sustainability.

The IGWG's goal is to challenge project managers to promote projects/activities that transform gender relations. In some cases, a project will be based on a transformative intention, but the outcomes fall short. Usually, this calls for re-design work.

5. Ask the group to consider their existing projects and activities and how they would classify them along the gender continuum. (In an extended workshop, participants will have the chance to apply the gender continuum directly to their own projects.)