

POSITION PAPER

GENDER

What is gender all about and why is it important? How to work with gender equality? If you are asking yourself these questions, this toolkit paper is for you. It presents DUFs definition of gender – as well as lessons learnt, ideas and tools for working towards gender equality in your project and partnership.

WHY WORK WITH GENDER AWARENESS AND GENDER EQUALITY?

Women and men have the same universal human rights. Nonetheless, young men and women experience different opportunities based on their gender. There are different expectations to young men and young women that influence their participation and influence – in their organization and society. In some contexts women and girls are marginalized and deprived of their rights on the grounds of cultural norms and tradition. And boys and men can experience pressures and barriers based on their gender. Gender roles and gender based power relations are found in organizations, on the job market, in politics and in the family.

DUF asks you to consider gender issues in your project, because we want young men and women to experience equal opportunities in their personal lives, organizations and societies.

Gender equality is not only a women’s issue. It is the responsibility of both men and women to make sure that everybody experience equal rights, opportunities and respect – regardless of their gender.

HOW TO WORK WITH GENDER?

The concepts biological sex and gender help to understand how your project affects men, women, girls and boys.

»» What do we mean by **sex** and **gender**?

The term “gender” differs from the closely related term “biological sex”.

Biological sex refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women.

- Women menstruate and are child-bearing.
- Men have testicles, women do not.

Gender describes the characteristics of men and women which are **socially determined**.

- In many countries, women earn significantly less money than men for similar work.
- In some societies it is not seen as appropriate for men to express their feelings. Women on the other hand are often expected to be caring, sensitive and emotional.
- In Saudi Arabia men are allowed to drive cars or ride bicycles, while women are not.
- In most of the world, women do more housework than men – and this work is less recognized than paid work.

The social expectations to men and women may vary greatly in different societies, depending on culture as well as social and political structures. And because gender expectations are socially negotiated, they can change over time.



The socially determined roles and relationships between men and women are often taken for granted and seen as natural. We need to analyze the understandings and practices that keep women and men in certain roles and relationships – otherwise, they will often just be reproduced.

When you plan and do your project it is a good idea to get perspectives of both genders and encourage people to explore power dynamics in their society, organizations and everyday work. DUF recommends that you look at the following themes:

Practical needs

Practical needs are the immediate needs in your present situation and have to do with what is expected of

» The Danish Social Democrat Youth work together with Akbayan Youth. In one of the projects the partnership had decided to address issues of low participation of women in the Akbayan Youth activities.

Therefore the youth leaders planned a seminar, only for women. Nobody showed up for the afternoon seminar. The youth leaders were puzzled. When the women were asked, why they didn't come, it became clear that the women had no possibility to attend the activity. There were no locks on the houses, and in order to prevent theft, the women were expected to stay home in the afternoons. The activity was then scheduled for another time, when the women could participate.

you in daily life. These needs can be taken into consideration, when planning activities in your organization to ensure that men and women can participate on an equal basis. Practical needs can often be met by practical solutions.

- What are the practical needs and limitations – of men and women in your project? In your organization?
- How can you take into account peoples practical needs when planning your activities?

Gender division of labor

Men and women are often engaged in different kind of activities – also in youth organizations and projects. When we look at the division of labor through a gender lens, we look at the roles, responsibilities and activities assigned to men and women according to what society and people around us think is appropriate.

In some societies, women are more engaged in household chores and childrearing than men and may have less time for community engagement and organizational work. In some organizations, men tend to take up leadership positions, while women are mainly employed in positions at a lower level.

- How is the labor division between men and women in your organization?
- How does that effect the participation and influence of men and women in your organization?

Access to and control of resources

Resources can be understood as time, status and financial means. You can also look at access to project activities.

A person has **access** to resources when he or she is able to use and benefit from resources.

A person **controls** resources when she or he is able to decide over or take part in decision making over the use of resources. Control over resources therefore implies both 1) access to a resource or an activity and 2) taking part in decision making about the use of the resource or activity.

- Who takes part in which activities in your organization?
- Who takes part in making agendas and decisions in your organization or project? Do both genders participate equally in decision making?
- Who benefits from the work done in your organization/project?

» CAPACITY BUILDING FOR GENDER AWARENESS

DUF recommends that you build an understanding of gender roles and relations in your organization and project. In DUFs experience gender awareness training is most effective, when it touches on people's personal lives and experiences of being a man and a woman. Unless peoples' own lives are brought into discussion, there is a risk that gender awareness will only be an intellectual exercise without concrete impact.

» This paper presents DUFs definition of gender – as well as ideas and tools for working with gender issues.

Our most important advice is to tailor your approach to your own organizational setup, the work of your organization and the context you are working in. That is why the paper doesn't give prescriptions or specific answers to what you should do. Instead we encourage you to think through themes, that we have found to be important to DUF supported partnerships.

We have included the tools used in DUFs learning activities – and we refer you on to other toolkits that we find inspiring. In doing so, we hope to stimulate your own thinking and ideas on how the methods and tools we present may be useful in your own work to create positive change.

There are many other ideas, approaches and tools that are used by young people in civil society organizations that are not included in this paper. Please share your own experiences, ideas and stories with us in order to make the toolbox more practically relevant for others. There are no deadlines and new pages and tools can be added at any time.

When you want to change unequal relations between men and women, be aware that people have different **strategic interests**. Depending on the position, relationship and resources in an organization or in society, people may have different interests in either changing or maintaining unequal relationships. An old man with a leadership role may have different interests than a young woman or man who are eager to have a say in an organization.

It is important to consider the relations between men and women with different economic, political and social status.

The better your understanding of interests and motivations, the better the chance for changing unequal structures



» PUT ON YOUR GENDER GLASSES!

Depending on the eyes that behold, we see different things in our daily lives and organizations. In order to change a gender related inequality or discriminatory practice in your organization, encourage others to take an interest in and be aware of gender issues.

TOOLS RECOMMENDED BY DUF

There are a wide range of tools to support you in understanding gender issues and working towards gender equality in your project and partnership.

The tool Gender boxes can help you to get a conversation started about your understanding of the concepts biological sex and gender and the roles, expectations to and responsibilities of young men and women. The Gender matrix provides a framework for analyzing the roles and opportunities that men and women have in your organization and society.

For an extensive toolkit, we recommend the **the OXFAM gender Training Manual** and the **ACT Alliance gender inclusive rights-based manual**.

Meet up with DUFs consultants

DUF can provide inspiration on how to design capacity building workshops on gender and give advice on how to integrate gender awareness and work towards gender equality in your project.

Consider to make use of local consultants to do workshops and support processes to strengthen the work with gender issues in the partnership and project.