

“Gender the Key to Successful Development Programming”

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in Southern Africa undertook the following study to understand how gender dynamics in the communities it serves relates to our programming. The study will inform CRS how to address gender in its programming to achieve not only the specific objectives of each program but also those of the wider agency mission.

CRS and Gender

The IHD Framework is the conceptual foundation for CRS programming. It helps staff and partners to understand the communities we serve from a holistic perspective, and is based on the premise that all individuals, households and communities have the right to realize their full human potential. The framework recognizes that their ability to do so is determined by the assets available to them, as well as the systems and structures that control the environment in which those assets can be used. It also acknowledges that any number of cycles, trends or shocks in the environment can have an impact on how people manage and benefit from their assets.

The framework thus serves as a reminder that people are at the center of development efforts – they are the drivers and should be the benefactors. However, because of their gender, men, women, boys, and girls do not experience their surroundings in the same way. They are expected to fulfill a different set of roles but also conform to a different set of rules, norms and practices. Therefore, it is impossible to remove the significance of gender from the equation in developing strategies for individuals and communities to achieve integral human development.

Like the social categories of race, ethnicity and class, gender helps to determine an individual’s options and experiences in life. A person can be advantaged or disadvantaged, constrained or strengthened, by virtue of being male or female in any given circumstance. This is because males and females are very rarely equal. Differences and disparities among genders exist to some degree and in various forms in all societies. However, the dynamics between males and females are not static: they either can change over long periods or can change rapidly in response to socio-economic events or policy change.

One of the reasons gender has been viewed historically as related primarily to women and women’s empowerment is gender inequality itself. The Gender Gap report, published every year since 2006 by the World Economic Forum, demonstrates that men and women are not equal in any country in the world. However, the misconception of gender as only related to women has real consequences on efforts to study gendered aspects of programming. One of the results is that much less attention is paid to the role of men, boys and masculinity in key areas of development. Yet norms of masculinity and femininity are critical to understanding and addressing inequalities. **Gender programming must not become monopolized by a focus on women, but understand the role of men and masculinity, and the impact that gender norms and relations has on men and women as well as boys and girls.**

Applying the IHD framework can assist in analyzing the various components and continuum of gender equality because it assesses individuals, households and communities based on what assets they have or have access to. The World Bank divides aspects of gender equality into three categories: equality before the law, equality of opportunity and equality of voice.

Yet identifying equality gaps in the assets does not reveal the full picture of gender inequality. This is because the inequality apparent at the asset level is driven and dominated by a number of different factors within the structures and systems that govern that community, household or individual. Structures and systems constrain or enable equality among assets. By analyzing the systems and structures that affect gender roles and relations, it will be possible to better address inequalities and achieve critical transformations in the way men and women, boys and girls relate to each other.

It is widely recognized that institutions such as the family, the community, the market, and the state are the structures and systems that provide the basis for gender inequality. These institutions not only determine the power-holders and “what is right and wrong” within society, but they are the holders of what it actually means to be a man or a woman. It is within these institutions that the constructions of masculinity and femininity are manifested, thereby reinforcing and perpetuating gender inequalities and differences. Dialogue and exploration of these concepts with the power-holders and members of institutions can foster social and institutional change.

Outcomes are also a feature of the IHD framework. It is difficult to imagine what gender equality should look like as an outcome but there are a number of global efforts and indices to measure gender equality as outcomes. These include the Gender Development Index, Gender Empowerment Measure, Relative Status of Women, and the Gender Gap Report. These demonstrate that gender equality plays an instrumental role in improving economic development. Gender equality not only improves the well-being of men and women but also has a direct affect on children’s well-being.

The ultimate goal of the IHD framework is to provide the level of analysis needed to develop appropriate strategies for improved outcomes. Different approaches to address disparities are referred to as gender justice, gender equity or women’s empowerment. These include measures for transformative action that redress historical exclusion and bias within institutions and balance the inequalities along the spectrum of gender inequality. Key components of the approaches include accountability of institutions for gender equality and the importance of women’s participation and leadership within institutions.

Improving gender equality is a long-term endeavor that requires substantial and continual analysis and engagement on a number of levels with both men and women. Strategies require both short-term measures and long-term strategies in program design that will facilitate access to resources and opportunities but ensure that institutional reform is simultaneously taking place. The IHD framework provides an exceptional tool to conduct analysis of gender inequality in terms of both assets and structures and systems. It can help staff to design programs that respond to and accommodate gender differences as well as improve gender equality while considering relevant outcomes and revising strategies as necessary.

Gender-based Violence

One of the extreme manifestations of gender inequality is gender-based violence. Although men and women, girls and boys can experience this type of violence, women and girls are more affected than men and boys. The United Nations reports that at least one in three women has been beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused on the basis of gender in her lifetime. In identifying gender-based violence, there are some key elements to look for. These include power and abuse of power, the use of force and the lack of consent. Furthermore, for every act of gender-based violence, there is a survivor and a perpetrator. It is critical that all actions in prevention and response to gender-based violence consider both the survivor and the perpetrator.

Gender-based violence occurs across a multi-institutional environment and includes any physical, sexual and psychological violence that takes place in the public and/or private spheres on the basis of gender. Both individuals and institutions can be responsible for acts of gender-based violence within the home, the workplace, the community and the government.

The scope of gender-based violence is wide, and therefore has many different causes and consequences. The root causes lie in social and cultural gender norms – the roles, responsibilities, limitations, privileges and opportunities assigned to a person based on their gender. Such norms often involve power relations that legitimize gender-based violence, making it acceptable within society by both men and women. These attitudes require long-term engagement for sustainable change. The risk of violence is also increased by macro societal factors like war, civil unrest, displacement or poverty, a micro factors such as substance abuse, lack of communication skills, and previous exposure to violence, that increase the risk of violence.

There are many health and social consequences that result from gender-based violence: the immediate effects are the impacts on a survivor's physical and mental health, while the most significant social outcome is stigma and societies' tendency to blame the victim, especially in cases of rape and other sexual abuses. Critical to understanding the drivers of gender-based violence is a deeper exploration of the construction of masculinity, the cycle of violence and the response of women survivors. Both domestic violence and a low reporting of violence are linked to the unequal status of women. Thus, improving women's legal and socioeconomic status is a key intervention in reducing women's vulnerability to gender-based violence.

Recommended Responses and Good Practices for Gender-based Violence Programming

Design Programs to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence

Promote State Reform in Health, Justice and Education Sectors

Engage and Enlist Civil Society and Local Leaders

Design Community-based Interventions Specific to Key Target Groups

Gender, livelihoods and agriculture

Most populations in Southern Africa face vast food insecurity and unsustainable livelihoods, both of which are exacerbated by the high prevalence of HIV throughout the region. Most people are rural smallholder farmers that depend on fragile rain-fed agriculture. Within this context, there are gender differences in agricultural production, food security, household work burdens, access to education, water, land, credit, income and other assets.

Not only do gender and gender dynamics determine the condition of household income and security but they also determine the type of livelihood activities undertaken. The division of household labor falls into different categories with important distinctions: agricultural and non-agricultural, formal and non-formal, and productive and re-productive. Within each of these spheres, men and women may undertake different tasks, have different forms of authority or control and above all else are able to participate and affect outcomes differently.

The livelihood options and strategies developed by households both impact and are impacted by gender relations. These relations consist of the control of labor and profit in a gendered structure of authority that not only affects the management, but also the potential, for secure livelihoods. Decisions taken by those in control may limit the ability of other family members to engage in productive activities. Moreover, with vast inequalities in income and economic opportunity often combined with the impact of HIV on households, women and girls as well as boys often resort to hazardous livelihoods and coping strategies. Just some of the examples of these include prostitution and transactional sex (sex for food or other items), child labor, and forms or circumstances of domestic work.

In order to engage in agricultural activity, these critical assets and inputs are required: land, credit, information, technology, marketing and processing. However, because women and men have unequal access and control of these critical assets and inputs, they will have unequal opportunity to engage and succeed in agricultural activity.

Governments often adjust policies and programs aimed to support and strengthen smallholder farmers and especially adjust for the particular constraints that women face in benefiting from this support. However, women need a seat and a voice at the table where the decisions are being made about policies and the implementation of programs. There are often a large number of women members in national unions, commodity associations, cooperatives or trusts but the leadership and influence of these groups is mostly dominated by men. Membership and participation are not enough to ensure that policies meet the gender-specific needs of farmers but it is the quality of participation – and the attainment of leadership – that is important.

Overall, unsustainable livelihoods and low agricultural productivity mean less availability of food higher levels of malnutrition. Women farmers, because of their “sphere” of agriculture in traditional varieties and home gardening, have an important role to play in informing the practices that improve crop diversity and productivity of crops that improve food security in the home.

Recommended Responses and Good Practices for Livelihoods and Agriculture Programming

Conduct Analysis of Gender and Livelihoods

Balance Household Resource Allocation for Overall Wellbeing

Promote and Link to Social Protection – State and Communal

Promote Broad-based State Policies and Programs to Assist Women

Improve Access to Extension Messages and Gender Responsive Agriculture Technologies

Build Collaborative Support for Improving Productivity for Women's Crops and Activities

Enable Women Farmers to Reach National and International Markets

Engage Institutions to Secure Women's Access to and Ownership of Land

Build Collaborative Gender-balanced Decision-making in Farmer Organizations

Support and Strengthen Women's Farmer Groups

Gender, Health and HIV

Gender inequality within households is one of the driving factors of poor health. Although women are in charge of providing their families with the nutrition they need through food production and meal preparation, most decisions are taken by the head male. Women don't control how and with what means they perform their roles. Malnutrition is the most common result of this lack of power.

Inequality between women and men also affects the health of women and children indirectly through its relationship to gender-based violence and HIV. Lack of decision-making authority gives women less input in decisions made about sexual and reproductive activity and can reduce their health-seeking behavior. Education and promotion of better practices need to target both women and men to ensure that households and their communities share an understanding of required behavior changes.

It is equally important to note that men often have better access to health services because they have more education, resources and decision-making power than women. However, they often utilize those services less, fearing that regular health-seeking may reflect negatively on their personal strength and manhood.

According to UNAIDS, gender inequality and the low status of women remain the two principal drivers of the HIV epidemic in Africa. Not only do gender norms and gender inequality drive the spread of the illness, but the extent of infection and the resulting loss of life further exacerbate gender inequalities in its various manifestations.

Seventy-five percent of HIV infections result from sexual intercourse, as stated in the 2006 UNAIDS report on the global epidemic. While females are more biologically vulnerable to HIV transmission, other social, economic and political disadvantages faced by women and girls further increase their vulnerability to transmission.

The gender norms of masculinity and femininity are very relevant to the discussion of HIV because they inform patterns of sexual behavior. Anytime people are subjected to sexual relations without their consent or as a result of a power imbalance, they are at high risk for contracting HIV. Gender norms and dynamics also differentiate how women and men know and disclose their HIV status, access quality care and treatment, and prevent further spread of the disease.

HIV further entrenches gender inequalities because the coping strategies chosen by household members and the wider community often reinforce gender norms and roles. The socio-economic impacts of HIV on women increase their vulnerability to poverty and infection. The most significant factor is the burden of care that is shouldered by mostly women. This has a direct result on the levels of income and food security within the household which, can then lead to risky sexual activities in exchange for money, food, goods or services.

The increase in numbers of children orphaned, often by AIDS, not only impacts the livelihoods and households of the family members who take on the responsibility of caring for them, but propels gender inequalities and vulnerabilities to more extreme levels. Without protection, the added exposure makes boys and girls internalize harmful stereotypes at a more rapid pace, exposes them to gender-based violence due to their lack of power and access to resources, and deprives them of the important entitlements they require to build sustainable livelihoods. These impacts not only have adverse effects for the development and stability of society, but also increase the risk of further HIV transmission.

Recommended Responses and Good Practices for Health and HIV Programming

Ensure that HIV programs respond to Practical Gender Needs and Strategic Interests

Foster Understanding of Masculinity and Femininity and Engage on Gender Norms

Address Key Factors - Economic Opportunities, Food Security, Education and Health

Integrate Gender Messages into Education

Ensure that Health Programs Meet the Comprehensive Needs of Women and Men

Global Health Initiatives Should Improve Policies and Funding to Improve Gender Equity

Key Findings for CRS

In 2009, CRS developed a process in Southern Africa to complement the literature with findings from within its own programs and from the perspective of staff, partners and project participants.

The following eight key findings are to be considered for CRS programming in Southern Africa:

- Gender is contextual but not static – gender analysis is crucial
- The family is the center of change and progress in gender equality
- Communities require space for sensitization and reflection on gender norms

- Ensuring the equitable participation of men and women, and the leadership of women, are still critical challenges in programming
- Understanding the role of men and boys is an imperative in achieving gender equality
- Children and youth can develop new approaches to gender roles and relations
- Vulnerable women and children require protection to prevent recurring cycles of poverty and violence
- Integration and coordination of services in all programs can collectively respond and transform gender relations towards development objectives