

Tips for asking gender-responsive questions

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Gender analysis examines how women's and men's roles, rights and responsibilities interact and affect the outcomes under study, such as agroecological and forest resource management processes.

Recognizing that women and men have different roles and responsibilities in small scale family farming and forest enterprises will affect the types of questions you ask to elicit information on the realities of both men and women. To carry out gender analyses, you will need to expand your areas of investigation beyond the visible activities that are often under men's control to bring women's often 'invisible' activities to light.

Doing so means being aware of, and **explicitly** enquiring about issues such as:

Gendered division of labour

1 Multiple roles

A focus on agricultural production tends to prioritize field activities related to staple and marketable crops, obscuring the multiple labour and knowledge-intensive activities women and/or men carry out in forests and home gardens, seed selection and conservation, marketing, healing, food processing, and so on.

2 The reproductive sphere

The reproductive sphere refers to all activities required to maintain the household and its members, such as cooking, cleaning, raising children, and so on. In addition to contributing to agricultural production and natural resource management, women's particularly heavy responsibilities in the reproductive sphere limits their opportunity to pursue other activities.

3 Crop production

Women and men may cultivate different crops or assume different tasks in the cultivation of the same crops. For instance, men may prepare the land for cultivation, while women sow and weed, and both men and women may harvest crops together, performing distinct tasks in the process. Women may contribute a significant amount of labour in the cultivation of 'male' crops (crops controlled by men), but this contribution often lacks recognition.

4 Seasonality

Women and men's activities vary throughout the year; no snapshot can capture the range of activities pursued annually. Exploring these seasonal variations is important for understanding the labour constraints women and men experience at specific times of the year, among other considerations. Gendered seasonal calendars—a tool for gender analysis—are an effective way of making these visible.

Gendered livelihoods

5 Informal activities

Women generally have less access than men to formal institutions and forms of employment, but participate intensely in informal institutions and organizations and in the informal economy.

6 Various sources of income

Income from multiple sources may be small but nonetheless significant to women and men, and must be included in livelihood analyses. Income can be monetary or non-monetary. For example, one product may be bartered for another without money exchanging hands.

7 Non-staple crops

Women tend to grow many crops in small quantities that are nonetheless important to their livelihoods and to their family. These are found not only in women's fields, but also often on the borders of men's fields and in home gardens.

8 Non-timber forest products (NTFPs)

Women and men use various forest resources beyond timber, which tends to be controlled by men or by community organizations. NTFPs can be used for both consumption and sale, and the timing at which they become available can correspond with lean periods (before the harvest, when food is in short supply), making them especially important for food security. Women's ability to access many NTFPs and the income from them makes these forest products highly prized by women.

9 Non-market activities

Rural women are often involved in the collection of NTFPs and the production of crops for household consumption rather than for sale. This important contribution to household food security is overlooked when studies focus exclusively on income generating activities.



10 Animal rearing

Animal husbandry is not exclusively the domain of men. In fact, in some regions women are the main animal managers. Women typically raise fewer large stock than men and focus instead on raising poultry and small stock. Women may also assume complete responsibility for animals kept at the homestead, and may procure fodder for animals as well as processing and marketing livestock products. Yet, their contribution to these activities is often ignored.

Gendered access to and control over resources

11 Informal access to resources

Consider not only land tenure, which is often tenuous for women, but also other important forms of access to resources, such as access rights to trees and their products, that may differ from rights to the land on which the trees grow.

12 Gendered spaces

Women and men frequently exploit different spaces. For instance, women tend to collect products (NTFPs, firewood) from commons and uncultivated lands, such as the bush and interstices between fields. These spaces, which are crucial for women's livelihoods, are often ignored in analyses that focus on 'productive' lands.

13 Control over resources

While women may have access to certain resources, they may not have the ability to decide the fate of these resources (how to use them, dispose of their products, transfer them, and so on). Knowing who **controls** resources is important for understanding resource management processes.

Gendered Decision-making Processes

14 Decision-making within the household

While men may officially make or be thought to make many decisions related to resource management (among other issues), this should not be taken for granted. Moreover, even when men are recognized as the decision-makers, women most often contribute valuable knowledge and input into this process. Identifying how decisions are made and negotiated is key to understanding gender relations and household resource management strategies.

15 Decision-making within the community

Participation in community groups may be mixed or limited to men or women. Community groups that control key resources, such as community forestry committees, are often dominated by men. Although women may be represented within mixed-gender associations, committees, and decision-making structures, their actual ability to influence decisions made within these organizations is not a given.

Other differentiating factors

Aside from gender, other age, education level, wealth status, and other identity features affect livelihood activities and the use and management of resources. We must consider how these factors combined with gender produce different opportunities and constraints for men and women.

To gather information on these issues:

Ask pointed questions: Since women's knowledge and work are often undervalued by local communities, including by women themselves, it is useful to work with groups and to follow-up general questions with more pointed ones to encourage women to discuss topics they may feel are unworthy of mention. For example, when asked about what crops they cultivate, women may not cite crops they grow in very small quantities for household use as these may not be seen as having a high value to society. You can prompt fuller responses by asking specific questions, such as: 'are there any crops you cultivate in small quantities for seasoning, medicine or for cultural purposes?'

Going one step further...

Examine gender norms, ask 'why': It is useful to examine not only how the phenomena we study are gendered (how women and men do things differently or in similar ways), but also **why** they are gendered. Understanding the underlying causes (rather than only the symptoms) of gender differences and inequalities leads to a better understanding of gender-based constraints, and is crucial to create possibilities for social change and interventions that will deliver more equitable benefits to women and men. This can be done by asking why things are as they are, what norms structure the ways men and women relate to each other (power relations) and to the resources we study, who enforces these norms and how, and what challenges exist to overcome the norms that cause inequalities and hinder effective and equitable resource management. The focus group is an ideal arena for this type of discussion since it allows women and men to think collectively, and identify the changes required to generate more gender equitable outcomes to the benefit of all.

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