

SHEET 4

Taking gender into account

How does the need to focus on gender balance in projects affect their development and implementation?

COTA had proposed in its first analysis grid to treat gender as a separate entry. The partners subsequently preferred to integrate this issue into the area of socio-cultural factors, given that consideration of gender was highly conditioned and influenced by factors such as history, religion, social organization, etc. We respected this development brought about by the group, but in view of the awareness of certain questions related to gender, it seemed appropriate focus on this question.

What is gender?

This subject is viewed and experienced in various ways by the partners, in that the definition given to the concept of “gender” is often vague and sometimes confused with the notion of “biological sex” (male or female). Thus, in this study, we define gender as: *“The socio-cultural construction of male and female roles and the relationship between men and women. While ‘sex’ refers to biological characteristics, to be born male or female, gender describes social functions assimilated and culturally inculcated. Gender is thus the result of the power relations present in a society and its conception is then dynamic and differs according to the passing of time, the environment, the particular circumstances and the cultural differences in play”*⁹².

“Gender” is essentially addressed by the Foundation’s partners in terms of “integration” or the “place” of women in the mechanisms and content of the projects implemented. From there, many questions emerge about, in particular, the conditions and the limitations on the assertion of the place of women in certain activities much perceived to be “male” (place of the women in building innovation for example).

Key points to remember

- Reduce the vulnerabilities faced by residents, especially women;
- Address the gender issue, which is complex;
- Make the roles of women and men visible;
- Support change in how women perceive themselves.

Key points in detail

Tackling gender inequality means reducing the vulnerabilities faced by residents, especially women. Because of these inequalities, women are more exposed than men to vulnerabilities related to climate issues or migratory issues, not to mention gender-based and sexual violence. Moreover, for some partners who also work on child protection, reducing these vulnerabilities appears to be a fundamental lever.

Most organizations agree that gender is a complex issue in itself. In most contexts, the symbolic representation of women in the collective imagination influences the collective representations of individuals. Furthermore, donors and partners also encounter difficulties in addressing this issue across the board, whether in the design, implementation or evaluation of projects. It therefore appears necessary to make the roles of women and men visible from the auditing phase of the

92 / Definition proposed by the United Nations.

project. This can facilitate the identification of change dynamics to be driven by the project to reduce gender inequalities, and thus strengthen their impact. Several organisations stress the need to initiate these dynamics of change in a multi-stakeholder manner, in particular by analysing the family functioning model, and the way in which organisations manage or fail to shake up the relationships of power between women and men. This makes it possible to roll out dedicated actions for each type of target audience: training for women, raising awareness among men, etc.

Ultimately, the challenge is to support the change in perception that women have of themselves, by co-empowering women and men on this issue. It is in itself a process of social transformation.



What is a woman's place in building and housing culture?

In certain contexts, building trades are generally perceived as almost exclusively “male”. However, we see that women are often stakeholders and even managers of housing projects, since they occupy a central position in the home. For example, women are often in a position to direct, for example, the allocation of tasks and roles within the home, and to organize the share of funding going to the home.

“The house belongs to the man, but it is the woman who lives in it. She is the one who makes it live. She therefore has an essential viewpoint to contribute.”⁹³

CRATERRE and YAAM SOLIDARITÉ / Burkina Faso

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“Women often manage the project because they usually manage the finances of the home. In 80% of cases it is women who manage savings in the house.”⁹⁴

ENDA MADAGASCAR / Madagascar

Other organizations go further and include women in construction or renovation schemes, sometimes taking a militant stance on the subject.

“One of our local partners is focused on strengthening women's rights. We note a significant margin of progress on this issue. In 2017 and 2018, we included women in construction sites. For the 2019 and 2020, phases, we want to train other women builders and craftswomen. We are trying to support the emancipation of women, they are trained in construction, they are building houses themselves within the project, but they are also finding employment opportunities to build houses elsewhere. At first it was difficult because it was unusual to see women build, but we raised awareness among relatives and families.”⁹⁵

HABITAT-CITÉ / Haiti

Finally, for some organizations, the development of a gender approach to “ways of doing” is a novelty and an external demand; so there is an absence of an approach, methodology or tools. This is all the more complex in cultural contexts considered “specifically reticent”, due to their social, economic, religious, geographical (urban or rural areas for example) or historical characteristics. As a result, organizations sometimes struggle to embrace gender as a dynamic of social change.

“The City Hall of Paris requires us to work on gender issues in the public arena. We find it difficult to position ourselves clearly, because our interventions in the public space are not necessarily gendered when they are designed, which leads us to rethink them.”⁹⁶

QUATORZE / France

⁹³ / COTA, individual interviews with CRATERRE, 29-10-2018 and YAAM SOLIDARITÉ, 17-01-2019.

⁹⁴ / COTA, individual interview with ENDA MADAGASCAR, 30-10-2018.

⁹⁵ / COTA, individual interviews with HABITAT-CITÉ, Haiti 29-10-2018 and 06-02-2019.

⁹⁶ / COTA, individual interview with QUATORZE, 28-01-2019.

 **Citizen participation, a preferable modality for dealing with gender issues?**

The organizations first note that, in general, the mobilization of women, to partly support the construction or renovation project, is easier than that of men.

“On the social side, our contacts are women. For housing it is the same thing because it is women who are the most available during the day. There are no particular restrictions on women’s participation.”⁹⁷

PLANÈTE ENFANTS & DÉVELOPPEMENT / Cambodia

Some organizations note, however, that the increased participation of women is not without effects, to be taken into account in the development of projects. These effects can be of different kinds and be positive as well as negative for the families concerned.

“The empowerment of women can sometimes lead to an overload of activity for women, which becomes counter-productive. This observation leads us to propose different solutions, for example, the intervention of local associations working on the balance of power within families.”⁹⁸

HABITAT-CITÉ / Nicaragua

“We have women interested in training in building trades. They came for different reasons. We have very young women on construction sites. Some young mothers had to give up because they could not handle work and family life head-on.”⁹⁹

ENDA MADAGASCAR / Madagascar

We also note that women are sometimes the subject of specific activities mainly related to their own economic abilities. In this very specific context, women often include social categories qualified as “very vulnerable”, as are young people, for example. These actions often take the form of support for the development of Income-generating Activities, engines for the emancipation of women by giving them greater economic weight within their family and more broadly, the community. Several participants in the Antananarivo seminar believe that, indirectly, actions aimed at reducing gender inequalities have an influence on the place of women in public spaces.

“The project includes a support component for economic activities with women in the neighbourhoods, according to their needs and abilities. We develop income generating activities.”¹⁰⁰

YAAM SOLIDARITÉ / Burkina Faso

“GRDR has chosen to focus its economic support on micro-projects led by women and young people, because they are particularly vulnerable in Guinea-Bissau. We support the dynamics of local economic development by setting up a financing, incubation and monitoring system for project sponsors. GRDR was the first structure to set up a dedicated regional incubator.”¹⁰¹

GRDR / Guinea-Bissau

97 / COTA, individual interviews with PLANÈTE ENFANTS & DÉVELOPPEMENT, 06-11-2018 and 03-12-2018.

98 / COTA, individual interviews with HABITAT-CITÉ, 29-10-2018 and 06-02-2019.

99 / COTA, individual interview with ENDA MADAGASCAR, 30-10-2018.

100 / COTA, individual interview with YAAM SOLIDARITÉ, 17-01-2019.

101 / COTA, individual interview with GRDR, 21-11-2018.



Access to land and property, often a male privilege

The consideration of gender in this very specific area is essentially in terms of the right to property. Some organizations mention the fact that although the construction/renovation project is often run by women (in particular in its financial dimension), the final decision lies with the head of the family, who is most often a man.

Moreover, many organizations point out that access to property is even more unequal as it is the legal framework that often places women in last place in terms of succession. And this framework is quite often reflected in the facts. Women are therefore much more vulnerable, as they are often tenants, not owners, and therefore very dependent on men, particularly in the event of their death. There is therefore a challenge in raising awareness among women about the inequalities in access to land of which they are victims, especially as they generally contribute more to community savings than men.

“The Federation of Residents is 97% women, because the practice of saving is more of a female activity. On the other hand, women do not own the house. So, a discussion must take place with the family before any action relating to the house. The woman is the preferred point of contact for us, but decisions are made elsewhere. We try to reach out to the whole family, beyond the women members of the FSH, because we know that there is a real danger around non-ownership for women, who can lose their homes too easily.”¹⁰²

URBAMONDE, URBASEN and FSH / Senegal

Integrating gender into your projects: the main types of obstacles and drivers

All of the Foundation’s partners agree that gender inequalities are still not being taken into account in the projects carried out, especially in view of the challenges that this represents. And they believe they can all make progress. Several factors set out above explain these difficulties, in particular the complexity of gender issues.



Systemic analysis

While many practices and experiments have been carried out, it seems necessary to integrate the consideration of gender inequalities in a more systemic manner into the projects implemented. Since gender is an essential sociocultural factor to be taken into account in analysing the context, many levers identified in sheet 3 can be mobilised. Thus, it seems essential to work on representations and clichés related to the role of women in intervention contexts. This requires, on the one hand, a detailed understanding of these contexts (see sheet 3), and working with all the stakeholders concerned on changing perceptions and behaviour with regard to women, upstream, during and downstream from

projects. It is therefore indeed a collective mobilisation that must be initiated.

Savings management

In terms of relevant leverage, it appears to the participants of the Antananarivo seminar that the management and feeding of savings are relatively effective in co-empowering men and women. Men have a very significant share of responsibility for the inequalities suffered by women, whether through individual behaviour or through institutionalised patriarchal social structures to which they contribute more or less consciously. However, women generally contribute more to savings than men. This can be explained in several ways: more traditional role of women, inequalities in access to certain services and/or leisure activities limiting individual expenditure, family pressure, overload of tasks (family domestic), etc.

Building the management and funding of savings according to a gender approach makes it possible, on the one hand, to make the family unit aware of the inequalities suffered by women, by combining this component with actions to educate, raise awareness and/or train men and women. On the other hand, it strengthens the role of women as actors in the processes of rehabilitation or re-building of housing.

Support for collective dynamics

Supporting women's collective dynamics allows them to reclaim their power to act, both in the concrete implementation of actions around housing, but also in the structuring of influence or advocacy actions. This can take several forms, more or less formal: mutual aid network or family network or gathering women's associations in unison. In the medium term, this can facilitate changes in socio-cultural practices and the legal framework. Regarding this last point, it seems important to bring forward "female leaders" capable of speaking collectively.

Partnerships with specialised structures

It seems essential to strengthen links and partnerships within projects with organisations (associations, NGOs, research laboratories) specialised in gender issues. It is also desirable, as far as possible, that these partnerships be established with local players. They generally have a more detailed knowledge of gender inequalities and discrimination, particularly of women, and are therefore better able to propose appropriate solutions. This can

only strengthen the consideration of gender issues in the building of projects, and more specifically of approaches integrating the most vulnerable women.

Change-oriented approaches

All the Foundation's partners agree that they are not sufficiently equipped today to appreciate the changes brought about by the projects on the conditions of the women affected. Most of the indicators used are overly quantitative indicators that ultimately provide little information on the effects produced by the projects. Thus, it seems important to support organisations in the construction of change-oriented monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, which can assess their contribution to reducing gender inequalities. While some tools exist in France or internationally, it seems appropriate to develop specific tools adapted to the contexts of each organisation, thus making it possible to integrate more significant "gender" aspects into projects.

Taking gender into account in projects: talking with women and supporting them in their emancipation



HABITAT-CITÉ / Haiti Training women in the construction trades¹⁰³

Women were quickly integrated into construction activities by HABITAT-CITÉ and its local partners; the objective is to develop the training of women builders or craftswomen (women bosses). According to the organization, the social pressure on women's work is not very strong in Haiti, which has allowed it to work without difficulty on this subject. There were some biases about women's ability to build well, but they were quickly overcome. HABITAT-CITÉ noted that despite the pertinence of these questions, women are beginning to find opportunities in construction, within the project and also outside, which contributes to their emancipation and the affirmation of their social role, by other channels than the central role they play in the home. The reluctance of the community has been partially mitigated through awareness-raising actions (parents, families) and by highlighting the positive effects of women's work (consolidation of their material contribution to the education of children, for example).

However, it seems that in the lives of households, men do not participate more in domestic tasks than before, which leads to a form of overload for women active in construction (double day). HABITAT-CITÉ is working to raise awareness among families, while recognizing that it has a fairly weak influence on what happens inside homes.

This practice directly echoes that of ENDA in Madagascar¹⁰⁴: the project "Dignified housing for all!" in particular offers residents the opportunity to train as a labourer; while this activity mainly interests men, women are interested in and participate in this training. Some are now represented on construction sites; this integration of women into construction activities has generated positive effects (self-confidence, income source, men's awareness of gender balance), but also negative effects: some young mothers have had to abandon this activity because they could not simultaneously manage work and family life.

¹⁰³ / COTA, additional individual interview with HABITAT-CITÉ, 03-07-2019.

¹⁰⁴ / COTA, individual interview with ENDA MADAGASCAR, 30-10-2018 and project presentation sheet, Dakar seminar minutes March 2019.



CARE FRANCE and SERA ROMANIA / Romania
Considering every woman as a legitimate contact
despite some form of male domination¹⁰⁵

Regarding the gender balance and the place of women in the project, we observe that many women today have key positions in Romania, particularly in the social work environment which is the project's intervention field, and this despite the still rather macho orientation of Romanian society (which is reflected, according to SERA ROMANIA's findings, in recurring problems of violence within families). Specifically concerning the people targeted by the project, it is observed that the participation of women could be improved, and that in some families, although older women are legitimate and recognized interlocutors, the youngest women speak less. CARE FRANCE and SERA ROMANIA are committed to disregarding differences in status between the various women they work with, 'particularly since many single women are among the target groups of the project. The two organizations develop an approach centred on the concerns of children and, behind this, the family, which entails dialogue with all members, whatever the composition of the household or the persistent social pressures.



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