

## Improving gender inclusion in SEI's capacity building work

Environmental groups are increasingly seeking to include greater diversity among stakeholders in projects that focus on climate change adaptation, management and mitigation (Park 2006; Agarwal 2001; Figueiredo and Perkins 2013). The hope is that including more voices produces policies and ideas that are more just, inclusive and sustainable, and which better reflect the diversity of people they govern.

Broadening the audience for this work can shape and expand its impact, while fostering equity between different groups. By encouraging the active participation of typically under-represented groups in capacity-building activities, the U.S. Center for the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI-US) is in a position to inform, promote and instill the values of inclusion that can change how adaptation decisions are made.

Effective participation is defined as “people’s rights to shape decisions which affect their lives” (Eade 1997). The type of participation matters. Nominal participation denotes being counted within a community while active participation occurs when the powerless or marginalized social groups have a voice in decision-making that leads to equality and empowerment (Agarwal 2001). Generally, women’s participation in various parts of the world is nominal as opposed to active (Agarwal 2001; Ahmed 2001; Mohanty 2004; Tyler 2006; 2004).

SEI-US can support more active participation through conscientious inclusion of women and other under-represented groups in capacity building activities. Inclusion empowers individuals from under-represented groups to actively and meaningfully engage in generating knowledge, in exploring information, and in decision-making. Empowerment is defined as “gaining the strength, confidence and vision to work for positive change in [one’s own] life” (Eade 1997). Greater diversity and meaningful participation in analytical and decision-making processes can help people to better themselves and wider society, because it means that there is more knowledge and experience available for those processes to draw on (Resurrección, 2016).

This discussion brief outlines how trainers in SEI-US capacity-building activities can use inclusive practices that support empowerment and participation and at the same time broaden the audience and the pool of people that can use the capacities we are building.

Although this document examines inclusion through the lens of gender, lessons from gender inclusion can be broadly applied to subordinated groups in different contexts.

### Prioritizing action, not intention

Gender mainstreaming creates awareness of gender issues in policy analysis, research, technical assistance, and data analysis and dissemination with the aim of increasing gender equity (King 2002). The World Health Organization’s Report on Gender Mainstreaming for Health Managers highlights the need to more actively promote gender-equal participation



SEI’s Manon von Kaenel (standing) and Angélica Moncada, a Colombian on the technical expert team, give a presentation in Chiclayo, Peru.

by identifying five categories of action [or inaction] towards gender (World Health Organization 2011):

**Gender unequal:** Actively reinforces unbalanced norms and privileges.

**Gender blind:** Ignores gender norms, and inadvertently reinforces gender-based discrimination.

**Gender-sensitive:** Considers gender differences, but does not advocate change, often no remedial action is taken.

**Gender-specific:** Considers gendered impacts on access to and control over resources, might intentionally target specific groups to benefit.

**Gender transformative:** Considers gendered impacts in many sectors and includes ways to transform harmful gender norms and strategies to foster progressive changes in power relationships.

The first three categories can have similar outcomes despite different intentions. This supports a common theme that *intention* does not have a linear relationship with *impact*. Proclaiming good intentions is not sufficient to produce positive change. Gender blind processes, the second option above, assumes the playing field is level, but ignoring existing disparities further entrenches inequities when the playing field is actually not level (Park 2014). Actions, rather than intentions, should be prioritized.

‘Targeted universalism’ actively tries to correct imbalances (Park 2014). The alternative – business as usual – implicitly supports, condones and enables continuing male dominance (UNFCCC 2013). Maintaining the status quo can mean privileging men’s discomfort over women’s, and this is not a neutral action.

We recognize that cultural norms and expectations may contribute or inhibit the success of our inclusion efforts. In some countries, cultural norms prevent women from attending or actively engaging in discussions in public arenas, hindering their participation in the development and implementation of adaptation initiatives (UNFCCC, 2013). While it would be inappropriate to force anyone to change their culture, we can



A training workshop on the Water Evaluation and Planning System (WEAP) included research teams and Moroccan and Tunisian stakeholders.

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leverage our role as experts within capacity-building activities to demonstrate inclusion and its advantages.

This platform can also ‘work with existing cultures’ to find opportunities for inclusiveness that are socially acceptable. Gender inequality is culturally deep-seated, and gender transformative approaches can start small, recognizing that transformation is a process.

With this motivation established, this document provides literature-based guidelines for creating an enabling environment for learning and participation within capacity-building activities to support gender empowerment efforts.

### Guidelines for gender inclusion in capacity-building activities

National-level gender assessments have documented that gender equality and gender awareness are highly context-specific in time and space, and influenced by interrelated social, economic and cultural factors (UNFCCC, 2013). Therefore, it is important to emphasize that the following guidelines do not constitute a checklist of necessary actions, but instead are a toolbox from which trainers can pick and choose as they deem appropriate. We have divided the actions into three categories: Starting the conversation, creating an inclusive

learning environment, and monitoring and evaluation. While it is not necessary to use each of the tools in each of the categories, these three respective categories should be considered within all capacity-building activities.

#### *Before: Starting the Conversation*

**Diversity of trainers:** Encourage both male and female trainers to lead capacity building workshops. Female participants may feel more comfortable to speak up and meaningfully participate when they see a woman in a position of power. This is an opportunity to demonstrate the trainers’ values regarding inclusion (Channell 2016).

**Introduce diversity aims:** Discuss gender inclusion with project partners, and any goals associated with it. For example, if the trainers will be tracking gender participation, volunteer this information beforehand. Use this as an opportunity to open a discussion about the growing emphasis on gender and the benefits of inclusion within development projects worldwide.

#### **Take cues from the project partners’ existing goals:**

Diversity is context specific. Ask your collaborators if their organization has initiatives aiming to support diversity. This may include identifying an existing “champion” within the organization and asking for his/her help in supporting the organization’s goals within the capacity-building activity (Resurrección 2016).

#### *During: Creating an Inclusive Learning Environment*

**Pick an accessible location:** Since women tend to be responsible for household activities in addition to work, the accessibility of the training venue is essential to women’s inclusion. While there are some advantages to a retreat location, it may prevent women with family obligations from attending (CAP-NET, GWA 2014). Spaces can also be tied to associations and meanings around power, and trainers should strive to select a space as neutral as possible.

**Prioritize adequate sanitation:** Women tend to have stricter requirements for private and clean bathroom facilities. Consider not just the training venue, but also any field



SEI’s Bart Wickle presents at a 2017 WEAP workshop on calculating a national water balance in Bolivia.

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## BEFORE: Starting the conversation

### Diversity of trainers

Encourage both male and female trainers to lead capacity building workshops.

### Take cues from project partners

Diversity is context specific. Ask your collaborators if their organization has initiatives aiming to support diversity.

### Introduce diversity aims

Discuss gender inclusion with project partners and any goals associated with it.

## DURING: Creating an Inclusive Learning Environment

### Pick accessible location

Since women tend to be responsible for household activities in addition to work, the accessibility of the training venue is essential to women's inclusion.

### Prioritize adequate sanitation

Women tend to have stricter requirements for private and clean bathroom facilities. Consider this not just at the training venue, but also for any field trip activities.

### Share our credibility

We are invited into situations due to our expertise and our scientific credibility.

### Ensure activities are inclusive

Recognize that women's responsibilities at home may preclude them from attending events outside of work hours or far from their homes.

### Control the conversation tenor

Women may be socialized to avoid interrupting or shouting out answers.

### Facilitate open communication

There may be some topics that women do not feel comfortable discussing in front of men, or cultural reasons for why they hesitate to speak up.

## AFTER: Monitoring and Evaluation

### Measure participation quantity and quality

While the number of women participants is easy to measure, the quality of participation is in many ways more important.

### Collect Data

Continued data collection of quality and quantity measurements is very important for gender mainstreaming efforts.

**Figure 1: These literature-based guidelines can help create an enabling environment for learning and participation within capacity-building activities. They should be considered a toolbox, not a checklist.**

Laura Forni / SEI

trip activities. Information about the field trip should include information about bathroom access to assure women that they are not at risk of being in an uncomfortable or shameful situation. Ask your partners for help obtaining this information (CAP-NET, GWA 2014).

**Share our credibility:** We are invited into situations due to our expertise and our scientific credibility. When we “share this credibility” by using our position to amplify the voices of women, we can provide opportunities not only for women to speak, but for men to listen. When cultural norms cater to specific groups, they need the message that subordinate groups also have meaningful knowledge to contribute (Channell 2016).

**Ensure activities are inclusive:** Recognize that women's responsibilities at home may preclude them from attending events outside of work hours or far from their homes. Social activities outside of the training (such as dinners) may be opportunities that benefit men more than women. To mitigate this, consider holding socializing events during work hours, or minimizing such events. Alternatively, any events held after hours should be announced well beforehand to allow ample time for participants with responsibilities at home to make alternate arrangements. When such events are held, be mindful of who decides not to attend, as this can inform decisions about similar events in the future (CAP-NET, GWA 2014).

**Control the conversation tenor:** What behavior determines who speaks? Women may be socialized to avoid interrupting or shouting out answers. Encourage hand raising, round robins and moments of silence for further thoughts before moving on to new topics (CAP-NET, GWA 2014).

**Facilitate open communication:** There may be some topics that women do not feel comfortable discussing in front of men, or cultural reasons for why they hesitate to speak up. When possible, specify another method of communication that provides women with an alternate forum to speak (CAP-NET, GWA 2014).

Examples include:

- A women's group that meets at some point during the training
- Smaller discussion groups where women might feel more comfortable speaking up
- Direct communication with trainer
  - Individual meetings with training participants throughout the training (e.g. during lunch)
  - A chat that everyone logs into during the training and where they can send private messages to the training in real time – akin to the “private message” option in GoToTraining.

Capacity building also provides opportunities to amplify women's voices in existing forums and help them gain confidence in public speaking (UNFCCC 2013). The style of the facilitator can play a key role in encouraging and welcoming participation, particularly of shy people, while toning down overly dominant people.

### *After: Monitoring and Evaluation*

#### **Measure both quality and quantity of participation:**

While the number of women participants is easy to measure, the quality of participation is in many ways more important. As trainers, look for indicators of quality participation, and

encourage it in the arenas where it exists (Resurrección 2016). Measuring the quality of participation may depend on the specific organization or task at hand.

**Collect Data:** Continued data collection of quality and quantity measurements is very important for gender mainstreaming efforts (CAP-NET, GWA 2014). This data should be periodically reviewed to identify trends, patterns and opportunities.

### Opportunities for future research

The topic of gender mainstreaming is burgeoning, and the resources available include not only documents, but also short courses such as ‘Gender Mainstreaming and Integrated Water Resources Management’ (GMI08), a course offered by Cap-Net UNDP, GWA, REDICA and UNDP GEF (see [campus.cap-net.org](http://campus.cap-net.org)), and the Human Rights Education Associates’ course on ‘Gender Mainstreaming’ ([www.hrea.org/learn/elearning/gendermainstreaming](http://www.hrea.org/learn/elearning/gendermainstreaming)). In addition, as more programs publish monitoring and evaluation results, those will become available. SEI-US can participate in these activities internally, while discussing them with all of SEI, or possibly more broadly.

### Conclusions

Decision-making related to major projects, plans and policies benefit from diverse perspectives and knowledge, and individuals benefit from the empowerment that comes through inclusive processes. This research has emphasized the importance of conscientious action, not only because the goals are so influential for both society and individuals, but because anything short of conscientious action risks inadvertently reinforcing existing unequal systems. SEI occupies an important position as a leader and a mentor in capacity-building workshops and trainings, with stakeholders near and far. It can demonstrate the methods for inclusion and its positive impacts within SEI’s work around the world and for our partners. Promoting gender inclusion in the various trainings and workshops ultimately will disseminate knowledge more broadly and increase the chances for uptake, and positive action regarding both gender norms and the environmental issues that are the foundation of our work.

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