



2.1 What is gender training?

What the GMS Handbook says

"Gender training is a systematic approach to sharing information and experiences on gender issues and gender analysis, aimed at increasing understanding of the structures of inequality and the relative position of men and women in society. This goes beyond awareness building to actually providing people with the knowledge and skills that they need in order to change personal behaviour and societal structures." (Glossary, p 62)

"Many of the stakeholders in a GMS will require training in such areas as:

- basic gender-awareness
- sensitisation
- gender analysis
- gender planning
- the use of gender-sensitive indicators
- monitoring and evaluation

"Since the GMS aims at the gradual transformation of organisations and a realignment of the belief systems, power structures and policy and planning processes within them, training may also be required in conflict prevention and resolution, and the management of change." (p 15)

"A number of measures should be taken to improve the quality and scope of gender training:

- capacity-building in gender awareness and gender analysis should be undertaken throughout government structures, not only in the social sectors;
- gender training should include both more general gender-sensitisation exercises and substantive, sector-specific training exercises directly related to knowledge gaps identified by policy makers themselves;
- gender training should be regular and ongoing; and
- gender training should include briefing on the GMS, explaining its mainstreaming aims and its component parts.

"Since the promotion of gender awareness is a cumulative process, gender training should not be seen as a 'one-off' exercise but should be provided at regular intervals in an ongoing programme. (p 38)

Key points

- 'Gender training' covers a wide range of educational and training activities. This manual deals with in-service training for people involved in mainstreaming gender in the areas covered by the GMS.
- Gender training is most effective when it is part of a broader strategy, in this context a strategy to create the other elements of a GMS.
- It does not provide a 'one-size-fits all' solution, but needs to offer 'tailored' initiatives such as:
 - sector specific courses and discussion workshops
 - country/programme/project specific courses and discussion workshops
 - gender policy workshops
 - training to recognise and address gender issues within the workplace
 - training of gender staff and women's groups in advocacy, lobbying and influencing techniques
 - training of gender trainers

2.2 Best practice

Gender training works most effectively when:

- it is learner centred
- it uses participatory methods
- it introduces skills as well as awareness
- the trainer has credibility with the participants
- training is followed up

Each of these points is looked at below.

● **It is learner centred**

Gender training should be based on an analysis of the participants and their learning needs. The more it can be tailored to specific needs, the more effective it will be.

Above all it should be based on sound principles of adult learning, recognising that adults learn best when:

- their own knowledge and experience is recognised
- new learning is built on this knowledge and experience
- the training is directly relevant to their lives and their current tasks
- the learning style is experiential, participatory, creative and active
- the approach is problem-posing, democratic and committed to arriving at solutions through joint reflection
- the training is action-oriented and offers the opportunity for immediate benefits
- their motivation – adults are usually voluntary learners – is acknowledged

These principles of adult learning owe much to the Brazilian educationalist Paulo Freire. Freire questioned the 'vertical' relationship of teachers and learners. He advocated a democratic approach of exchange and dialogue. This puts the learners at the centre, taking into account not only their needs but also their existing skills and experience.

Freire made a classic distinction between 'banking' education and 'problem-posing' education: "In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing. Projecting an absolute ignorance onto others, a characteristic of the ideology of oppression, negates education and knowledge as processes of enquiry." (Freire 1972) The problem-posing approach on the other hand, "bases itself upon creativity and stimulates true reflection and action upon reality" (ibid).

In this approach, learners are active in understanding their own reality and defining ways to resolve the problems they face. Education becomes the 'practice of freedom' in which people constantly examine and reflect on their situation and how to change it.

● **It uses participatory methods**

Participatory training is a dialogue between learners and trainer. Learners and trainer bring information and analytical tools, apply these to the learners' own experience and knowledge, and create something new from the mix. Further reflection and new information reinforce this. Learners learn from the trainer and from each other.

Key elements:

- opportunities for participants to express their ideas, use their knowledge and reveal their uncertainties
- opportunities to work together in different-sized groups and combinations and learn from each other
- group work that enables everyone – especially the quiet ones, who are often women – to participate actively (e.g. single sex groups, smaller groups with good facilitation)



- a range of activities involving different kinds of thinking and action
- a balance between new information from the trainer and information from the participants
- a balance between inputs of new information and group work to process the information
- problem-posing and problem-solving shared in the group
- trust in the group built up from the beginning and reinforced through the training

- **It introduces skills as well as awareness**

Gender training needs to address both skills and awareness, if changes in behaviour and attitudes are to take place.

In terms of skills, effective training is based on an understanding of the participants' own job responsibilities, and of the organisational structure and systems. It should help participants identify their own opportunities and constraints.

In terms of awareness, the level and extent of gender awareness training will depend on the political will and culture of the organisation, as well as the individual learners.

- **The trainer has credibility with the participants**

Trainers need to have credibility and authority in the group, to maintain overall control but not dominate. They need knowledge, understanding and status appropriate to the group.

- External consultants can work with internal gender staff to ensure the relevance of the training to the organisation.
- Use a team of trainers rather than an individual trainer; it is unlikely that one trainer will have all the knowledge and skills required, and co-training is a way of building capacity.
- It is important for at least one trainer to come from the same area and ethnic group as the majority of participants.
- Using male gender trainers can stop gender being seen as a 'women's issue'.

- **Training is followed up**

There need to be activities to help transfer learning to working practice, such as:

- follow-up discussion and feedback workshops
- ensuring staff have back-up access to gender expertise and support
- including gender equality issues in personnel appraisals
- forming internal gender networks and committees
- working with external advisory/consultative groups
- establishing earmarked funds for pilot initiatives
- activities to promote management support
- participatory gender policy development with clear, achievable objectives
- active monitoring of gender policy implementation

2.3 Planning gender training

Seven steps

- 1 **Why?** is the course/event being held? What are the aims of the training? Whose aims are they – the learners', their institution's or both?
- 2 **Who?** are the learner group? What do you know about their age, seniority, gender, jobs, specialisms, prior learning and current understanding/motivation? Who are the trainers? What are their skills?
- 3 **When?** What fits in with the learners? Do they have different timetables? A block of time, or a series of individual activities? How much time is available?
- 4 **Where?** What kind of venue best suits the learners, the kind of training? Where can you afford? What about access?
- 5 **What for?** What are the objectives/learning outcomes of the course/event? What can realistically be done in the time available? What do you hope will change as a result of the training?
- 6 **What?** will the content be? Will it cover knowledge, awareness, skills, behaviour? What issues and kinds of learning will the course cover?
- 7 **How?** will the training be delivered? What kinds of methods will be used? How will you select the most appropriate? How will you follow up?

(Based on 'Seven Steps of Planning' in Williams et al, 1994, pp 18-29.)