

EQUALITY BENEFITS ALL

METHOD MANUAL ON GENDER EQUALITY AND LGBT RIGHTS

This handbook gives guidance to organisations conducting projects with funds from the Palme Center.

The handbook is a complement to the Palme Center's project handbook.

Contact the Palme Center or visit our website for methodology support in other subjects.

www.palmecenter.org

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Method manuals

PROJECT HANDBOOK

The Olof Palme International Center has prepared a project handbook designed to assist partners in the planning, execution and conclusion of development projects. The project handbook contains detailed information and hints and examples from ongoing projects.

The Palme Center has also prepared the following supplementary method manuals in English:

CORRUPTION – An obstacle to development, The Palme Center’s methodology support for anti-corruption, 2011.

HOW TO RUN A TRADE UNION – A handbook for workers who want to form a new local union as well as for those who are already organised but who want to progress and get the most out of their trade union activities, 2015.

HOW TO RUN AND REPRESENT A PARTY – A capacity building handbook for Social Democrats, 2010 (www.howtorunaparty.org).

THE ENVIRONMENT, DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS – A method manual for work on environmental issues and sustainable development, 2015.

TOGETHER WE ARE STRONGER – A method manual about trade union-political cooperation, 2011.

You can order the manuals from the Olof Palme International Center or download them from www.palmecenter.org.

EDITOR:

Victor Åström

AUTHORS:

Annica Holmberg, Anna-Lena Lodenius (interviews)

TEXT EDITING:

Gerd Johnsson Latham, Berith Andersson Alphonse

TRANSLATION:

Neil Betteridge

GRAPHIC DESIGN:

Ingiberg Olafsson & Migra grafiska

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Photo: Ylva Säfvellin

Foreword: Jens Orback, Secretary General of the Olof Palme International Center

Women do the greater part of all the work but have access to only a small proportion of the total income. Men overwhelmingly dominate the political and economic power spectrum around the world.

Equal opportunities for all, regardless of gender, is and always will be a prerequisite for development and compliance with rights. Women tend to reinvest income and benefits in future generations more than men do. Hence it is a fact that equality prepares the ground for better living conditions for everyone and thus is in itself an effective tool for fighting oppression and injustice.

During my term as minister for gender equality we introduced a new, overarching goal for gender equality policy: “Men and women shall have equal power to shape society and thereby their own lives.” I have brought this goal to the Olof Palme International Center where, by channelling the experiences of the labour movement, we provide people with tools to influence and form the society they live in. Through training and method manuals, we strive to ensure that our work is based on the different needs, conditions and capacities of women and men. The project manual is designed to support our member organisations and their

counterparts in the planning, implementation and evaluation of development projects. And the booklet that you are now holding in your hand – Equality benefits all – is the first in a series of method manuals written to provide additional support to our partner organisations in their work with the development projects. Part one is a general description of (in)equality and the situation for LGBT persons around the world, and part two proposes practical ways of integrating equality as a natural element of development projects.

Good luck, and feel free to contact us and share your views!

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Equality Begins with Knowledge





Photo: Carolyn Drake/Bildbyrå Silver

1. Introduction

The world is not a fair place. Two of the most important factors determining an individual's living conditions are who they are and where they were born. People are discriminated against on grounds of ethnicity, sexual orientation, belief and disability.

In general women have less control over their bodies, lower incomes, less property and less influence over their own lives than their male counterparts, although some women have more resources and power over their lives than some men.

Equality benefits not only women, but society as a whole. When discriminatory structures are dismantled – for example, by giving women access to education – women's capacity and economic opportunities increase.

Women with higher levels of education tend to have fewer and healthier babies, and women usually reinvest their income in future generations more than men do. Hence equality is not only necessary for increasing women's financial security, but also

essential for combating poverty and achieving sustainable development.

Poverty has different effects and consequences for women and men. Despite the fact that women make up a large share of the labour force and account for 60-80 per cent of food production in many developing countries, an estimated 70 percent of the world's poor population are women. As a consequence of the prevailing power structures, women and men are assigned different roles and rights in their families and societies. Men participate in the public sphere and get to share the country's resources. Women are often limited to the roles of giving birth, taking care of children, and doing domestic and unpaid work.

A global gender power structure, derived from a simplistic view of men and women that emphasises differences over similarities, dominates the world today.

As a consequence, individual qualities and desires are often disregarded and hence people's right to freely shape their own lives is limited. Women are not given the same legal rights or opportunities as men, they have more difficulty in finding employment and work under worse conditions and for lower wages than men. Women also work longer days, mostly doing unpaid labour. Furthermore, women are often denied education because of their gender, making it more difficult for them to attain influential positions in society.

Gender stereotypes are often established at an early age, assigning girls and boys different rights and roles which will follow them into adulthood. The list of gender differences below provides some examples of how this manifests itself for women and men around the world.

People have become more aware of the importance

of equality during recent decades, not least since the UN's Women's Conference in Beijing in 1995, when delegates from 189 countries adopted a plan of action for equality. Since then a number of countries have improved conditions for women by, for example, strengthening their legal rights in areas such as education, healthcare and non-discrimination.

At the same time, there are worrying signs that equality is declining of late. As far as many religious fundamentalists are concerned, the West's "democratic zeal" has merely served to legitimise and reinforce patriarchal structures and traditions. As for the West itself, after the 9-11 attacks equality issues have been set aside to make way for what is considered "real" politics under the shadow of the terrorism threat.

Thus the need to actively fight for equality has perhaps never been more pertinent than today. Knowledge of global injustice and methods to promote equality exists; what is needed now is the will and commitment to follow it through.

Girls/Women	Boys/Men
Many female foetuses are aborted and it is not uncommon for baby girls to be murdered.	Male births are celebrated.
Female genital mutilation. Incest and sexual abuse are mainly perpetrated on girls. Receive less health care and of worse quality. Constitute 2/3 of all HIV and AIDS cases.	Priority is given to the care of boys, both within the family and by the healthcare services.
Long working days doing work that is often unpaid.	Generally shorter working days, giving them more leisure time/time to socialise with other men, and the opportunity and right to take part in "democratic" decision making.
Receive less food and of lower quality.	Often eat first, and receive a larger portion of food.
Fewer girls attend school. Girls are not considered an economic or financial priority.	Priority is given to boys' education.
Often lack sexual rights and are sometimes subject to requirements relating to "honour". Sexually active women are stigmatised.	Often regarded as being "entitled" to sex. Glorification of men with many sexual partners.
Have duties in the home and restricted freedom of movement.	Encouraged to play, take part in sport and social activities. Self-confidence.
Primarily unpaid work and financial and social dependency on men.	Primarily paid work, access to and control over wages/salary.
Subject to trafficking (victims of violence).	Gang violence, crime (perpetrators of violence).
Child marriage (from age of nine, early pregnancies).	Rarely victims of coerced sex, do not fall pregnant.
Subjected to violence in the home, oppression and restricted freedom.	Subjected to violence in the public sphere.



Photo: Katherine Kiviat/Bildbyrån Silver

2. What is equality?

The word “equality” means that all women and men have the same opportunities, rights and obligations in every area of life. Working for equality entails breaking millennia of traditions, policies and customs that have systematically overvalued the work, ideas and will of men.

Equality is a goal that serves to give all individuals the same rights, obligations and opportunities, regardless of biological sex; it is also a means and a method for improving the living conditions of all groups and combating oppression and injustice in all their forms. Actively striving to bring about greater equality is a prerequisite and a condition for democracy and change, and for international development cooperation to achieve its objectives.

The promotion of equality is about more than just empowering women; it is also about dealing with the social position and status of men. Fighting for

equal participation is a step in the right direction, but equality is not limited to counting how many men and women are taking part in an activity. It is important to look beyond representation and focus our attention on power. What does it matter if half the members of an organisation or a board are women, if men occupy all the powerful posts? To make a real difference, equality must embrace the will to eradicate discrimination based on the gender roles assigned by society. Men and women should have the same rights simply because they are of equal value. For the purpose of this manual we have consciously decided to include LGBT (lesbian, gay,

homosexual and transgender) issues and rights in the concept of equality. Our position is that LGBT issues are related to equality since gender roles are linked to sexual orientation. For instance, it is universally common for gay men to be “accused” in a derogatory way of acting like women. LGBT persons are often considered a “threat” to heterosexual gender roles and therefore are often discriminated.

As a result, equality and the rights of LGBT people can only be achieved if we challenge and succeed in changing our gender roles. The gender roles form the framework for our private and public lives and lay the basis for discrimination on grounds of gender and sexual orientation. An equal society requires a revolution, and the change must begin in the consciousness of every woman and man – at home as well as in development projects.

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Discussion points

- What is our organisation doing to promote equality? Do we in our project group share the same views on equality?
- How important does each of us think it is to focus on equality within the project?
- What are our attitudes towards LGBT people? Why are they subjected to discrimination and abuse?



Photo: Palmeccentret

3. Gender and gender power structures

All societies have their own constructs of male and female, a collection of attributes and qualities ascribed to people on the basis of their biological sex. Throughout history, differences in sex have been used to justify the privileges that have been granted to men as a group.

The roles of men and women vary over time and space. In 19th century Persia, for example, the ideal of female beauty was thick facial hair, while the perfect man was delicate and boyish. In Sweden not so long ago, a robust woman was considered to have the ideal body, but today the ideal is considered to be a skinny body, sometimes to the point of being undernourished.

The word “sex” denotes the physical and biological characteristics that distinguish males and females and, according to most scholars, has nothing to do with the different roles and rights they possess. The fact that women give birth does not necessarily

mean that they have to take care of the children at home, much less that they are to do more unpaid work. Hence it is not the biological sex but power relations and social constructs that lead to women and men having different gender-specific roles and rights. To describe these socially constructed differences that contribute to inequality between men and women, the concept “gender power structure” is used.

Throughout history, gender differences have been used to justify the privileges that have been granted to men as a group. Accordingly, women’s subordination has been rationalised as “natural” and

therefore irreversible. Similarly, LGBT people have been defined by heterosexual men as deviant and in the name of nature and religion have been not only excluded from public debate but also persecuted and harassed. In many countries it is not illegal to be homosexual, only to be actively so – a crime that sometimes carries a death sentence. Even in Sweden people are beaten and murdered every year because of whom they choose to have a romantic relationship with.

assigned because of their gender are based on power imbalances. To be successful in promoting equality it is necessary to shed light on the norms, traditions and customs that make heterosexual men the superior group. These structures can be changed through active effort. By challenging socially constructed ideas about male and female, we can lay the ground for real, radical change – change that benefits all.

The use of the term “gender power structure” is a way to highlight the fact that the roles people are

Discussion points



- What ideas and perceptions do we ourselves have of gender? What attributes do we think characterise women and men respectively?
- Why do some gender-specific “qualities” give certain people more rights and influence than others?
- Describe the gender hierarchies in the area where the project is being implemented – what powers and what rights and opportunities do men have that women do not?
- Does your project challenge the prevailing gender power structure? If so, how?



Photo: Ingiberg Olafsson

4. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people

People across the globe are killed, persecuted and discriminated against because of their sexuality. LGBT persons are found everywhere in the world, even though they are not always “visible”. Research shows that at least five per cent of the global population is homosexual or bisexual, independently of where in the world they were born.

Within the labour movement LGBT issues, like equality issues, are sometimes dismissed as politics of identity and thus considered less important to the collective struggle for justice and liberty. This is misguided. In Sweden as well as in the countries where we cooperate, LGBT issues are very much about democracy and human rights. They are also important from a working environment perspective.

Equality work means giving all people the same opportunities to realise their human freedoms and rights regardless of sexuality. Despite this, organisations frequently give all types of excuses for

not running projects that include LGBT rights in their equality work:

- It’s difficult.
- There aren’t any “visible” LGBT people in the country where the partner organisation is based.
- People don’t know what LGBT means.
- It’s “arrogant” for people to come and “force” such a progressive and liberal approach towards sexuality on people.

And yet the world is a place where LGBT people are persecuted, openly discriminated against and

sometimes even murdered because of their sexuality and for not fitting into traditional gender-based roles. In many countries, homosexuality is punishable by law and can result in imprisonment or even death.

Because LGBT people are persecuted, discriminated against and murdered because of their sexual orientation and because they deviate from traditional gender roles, it is extremely important from a rights-based perspective that LGBT issues are linked to equality. Society loses out by not working to promote universal human rights and not taking advantage of everyone’s knowledge and experience simply because of whom a person loves or chooses to have sex with.

An LGBT perspective is also important from a public health point of view. If same-sex sex does not officially exist, HIV/AIDS prevention programmes do not reach those who are most vulnerable to infection.

LGBT people in developing countries often suffer stigmatisation and marginalisation, and it is not uncommon for people to be banished from their homes and abandoned by their families. Those who risk legal or violent consequences are also in a situation where it is very difficult and risky to be open and stand up for your rights and demand political change.

Discussion points



- What knowledge of LGBT issues do we have in our organisation?
- How can we learn more?
- What is the situation like for LGBT people in the country in general? In the organisation?
- What can we do to highlight and improve the living conditions of LGBT people?

A long way to go before homosexuals are accepted in Kosovo

Homosexuals in Kosovo are virtually invisible, particularly lesbians and transgender people. But the situation is slowly changing, says Arber Nihiu, head of “Advocacy for sexual minorities in Kosovo”, one of the Olof Palme International Center’s projects in the country.

“The government now admits that there are persons who are gay and that they need protection. We have to create structures to make sure that this protection works and we must see that the law is applied. Discrimination is illegal and human rights are written into the constitution.

“But we live in a macho society, as everyone does in the Balkans. Homo, bi and transsexual people live under enormous pressure, and society does nothing to protect them from having their rights violated. There’s a minimal degree of support for people from ethnic minorities, but for women and LGBT people such protection is virtually non-existent.”

Information at all levels is important and Arber Nihiu is to spend the coming evening taking part in a TV panel debate with politicians and other decision makers. Arber Nihiu tells me that they

have lot of lobbyists out, urging politicians and decision makers to change their attitudes. They have also embarked on a partnership with the police. Kosovo is a closed society, and the only way to get anywhere is to nurture your contacts.

“Many people are too scared to go to the police, but if we find out that someone has been the victim of a crime we promise to accompany them. We have two contacts in every police unit who are knowledgeable about the kind of conditions that gay people live under and we demand that one of them handles the case.”

There is still a general reluctance to file a report, as most people are afraid of the stigma. What does get reported are mostly really serious crimes rather than verbal and physical violence. The Centre for Social Group Development serves as both a meeting place and a sanctuary for victims (and if necessary, other forms of safe housing can be arranged). Here the local LGBT community meets and it is through this network that Arber and his colleagues can discover if someone has been the victim of a criminal act. This is also where information is spread about HIV and other issues.

The centre works almost exclusively with men, and only a few lesbians are in the network. Arber talks about their “double discrimination”, generally as women in society and specifically as lesbians in the male-dominated LGBT world. The group also has contact with a handful of transsexual men, who are arguably the most stigmatised of all. Some of them do not even have the courage to visit the centre, and confine contact to the website or email.



Photo: Palmeacentret



Photo: LO/TCO Bistandsnämnn

5. Poverty and gender

For many, many years the world’s resources have been very unevenly distributed. It is often said that 20 per cent of the world’s population own 80 per cent of the world’s resources. Another, less commonly cited statistic is that 99 per cent of the world’s total wealth is owned by men, while women account for over 60 per cent of all labour.

Poverty is more than just the lack of material resources such as money, food and a home; it is also about having less immaterial resources through disempowerment, lack of influence over body and sexuality, and denial of choice and voice. Hence, poverty means lack of access to resources and assets as well as a lack of opportunities.

While poverty affects both men and women, there are also gender-related differences that need to be considered. Many papers have been written on the subject of poverty and gender, and some of the general conclusions are:

- In every country of the world, women as a group earn less than men as a group.
- The majority of the world’s poor are women, even though they are economically highly active,

although often within sectors that generate little or no income (including domestic and low-paid work).

- Poor women own or control only a very small proportion of the world’s resources (economic and material) and technology.
- Women make up only a small proportion of the world’s decision makers. This applies in the private sphere as well as in village councils, parliaments, corporate leadership groups and boards.
- The differences between the sexes tend to be greatest in the poorest families.

Poverty is thus not a gender-neutral phenomenon. The discrimination of women both creates and reinforces poverty.

Women's poverty is structural and directly linked to the lack of economic opportunities and independence, access to economic resources (e.g. credit, ownership and inheritance), education and support. A majority of the world's women are excluded from decision making at virtually all levels, both within the family and in society, simply because of their sex.

In very poor families, girls and women have to stand back for the male family members. Even in

relatively well-off households, inequality keeps women in a state of poverty by denying them access to family resources. Studies from Asia and Latin America show that poor men often keep between one-third and two-thirds of what they earn for their own use rather than sharing it with their families. The lack of physical security, lack of time and the uneven distribution of already scant resources hits women harder than men.

Discussion points



- What form does gender-related poverty take locally where the project is implemented?
- Do we know what poor women in the project area define as their priorities?
- What kind of dialogue should we engage in with the target group and how should we plan the project to ensure that it contributes to improving their conditions?



Photo: Shawn Baldwin/Bildbyrå Silver

6. The role of civil society

Radical and lasting change is easier to achieve if it comes from below. This makes civil society a key arena for the organisation and mobilisation of women.

Civil society consists of voluntary citizens' associations (e.g. trade unions, women's groups, sports clubs, local community associations or other types of social movement organisations) that work for political change within a country, region or globally.

Studies show that civil society activism strengthens the efforts of female politicians and has an extremely important part to play in the drafting of more equal laws. Without an equal, just civil society, action for greater justice is likely to merely result in new privileges and rights for men as a group.

In some places, civil society exerts considerable influence over public opinion and decision makers and can push for fairer legislation. However, civil society is itself affected by the gender hierarchies that prevail in society at large. Take, for example, Zambia at the beginning of the 21st century, when civil society representatives were asked to formulate their own proposal for a national poverty strategy and did so without addressing inequality or consulting groups representing poor women. This omission shows that we must not take women's influence and participation in decision making for granted, and that it is important to constantly focus

attention on these issues and keep striving to guarantee them in all our work, internally as well as externally.

In other words, we must aim for greater equality everywhere and at all times in our international development cooperation activities as well as within

our own organisations. Simply because an organisation works for a “good cause” does not mean that it is free of gender hierarchies; in fact, these hierarchies often blindfold us to the need for equality and make us “forget” and fail to prioritise it in our work.

Discussion points

- In what ways do women and LGBT people participate in local civil society in the area where the project is being implemented? How can we reach out to women’s groups, initiate a dialogue with them and include them as partners in our activities?
- How can women’s/LGBT people’s influence over and involvement in democracy organisations and movements be improved?
- What influential organisations are working actively for equality or LGBT issues in the project area? Is it possible to create alliances or cooperate with them?



Photo: Robin Hammond/Bildbyrå Silver

7. Democracy for all

Democracy comes from the Greek and means “rule of the people”. For a society to be democratic, women – who make up over half of the world’s population – must have the same opportunities for participation and influence as men and be able to exercise them on the same terms.

As mentioned earlier, women are under-represented in formal decision making bodies: in only 16 per cent of the world’s countries do women have more than 25 per cent of the seats in the national parliament, and a total of 85 per cent of the world’s members of parliament are men.

Obstacles to women’s political participation include:

- Their double burden of family responsibility and work; lack of time.
- Traditions that make it difficult for them to be outside the home and engage in politics.
- Their social and economic status; the fact that men do not listen to them.

- That it is considered more acceptable for men to represent women than vice versa.
- Men selecting other men for important posts.
- Unequal access to education.
- The way that internal party power structures and party agendas are based on the priorities of men.

The underrepresentation of women can therefore be linked directly to their place in the gender power structure, which has valued maleness and masculinity and discriminated against women for millennia. It is mainly up to the political parties to make sure that women are elected into politics. One country which has done this is South Africa, where after pressure from women within the party the

ANC presented a “zebra” list of alternate male and female party members.

Political parties are important arenas for discussing and promoting issues of equality. However, while we might presume that clear party rules, transparent selection procedures, an open organisational culture and strong discipline promote women’s participation in politics, the statistics speak for themselves: even many established parties oppose

equality issues and often lack internal democracy and genuine commitment.

In addition, political parties are not isolated units and they reflect the attitudes to equality and the gender hierarchies found in society. The struggle for democracy must therefore seek to increase women’s participation in public life and enable change in society at large.

Discussion points



- How do women participate in the public sphere in the project area?
- If the cooperation is with a political party: what kind of positions do women occupy in the party? Is there an internal women’s association that you can work with?
- What obstacles are there to women’s involvement in politics? What can we do to promote women’s participation in politics?

Equality cannot wait

Before a delegation of women from the Social Democrat party in Östergötland in Sweden visited Moldova, the Moldovan women taking part in the project had never had contact with other parts of Europe. Their first meeting took place in a remote rural village in one of Europe’s poorest countries. Moldova was once the Soviet Union’s breadbasket, but now the irrigation pipes are rusting away, unemployment is sky high and men and women are being forced to seek their livelihoods abroad, leaving their children to look after themselves and thus vulnerable to risks such as drugs, crime or prostitution.

It is difficult for women to prioritise equality when there are no jobs, proper schools or even running water. How can we support them?

“Our goal, naturally, is to strengthen women’s political involvement in Moldova and eventually to improve their lives,” says Swedish parliamentarian Anne Ludvigsson from the Östergötland Social Democratic women’s group. “Equality cannot wait until all other problems have been resolved.”

This goal requires involvement in local and national elections, and to a certain extent role models. The Moldovan women taking part in the project visited Sweden during the run-up to the 2006 general election there. Other important contacts are the women who were involved in an earlier project that the Social Democratic women ran in Latvia.

“This is a small project costing only SEK 100,000. But we’ve been working with it for a few years now and I think we’re achieving a great deal. Also women in countries at this level must be given the opportunity and tools to work with equality,” says Anne Ludvigsson.

Much of the project is about raising awareness of

women’s rights, which is done through seminars based on discussions and exercises. The insights gained from these seminars are taken back to the villages, where the participants create networks and forge links with new groups of women.

Women’s representation is low in every aspect of Moldovan politics and the concept of gender quotas is almost a utopia. The political scene is fragmented into many small parties and women’s rights do not feature strongly on the political agenda. And although recent discussions have included the issue of violence against women - something that is normally not talked about - if issues such as this and equality in general are to gain greater priority, women first need to gain more self-confidence.

“We’re learning a great deal,” says Anne Ludvigsson, “and although women’s issues are pretty much the same around the world, the solutions depend on the phase of development we find ourselves in. The appointment of a woman to a political post means the removal of a man, and that’s difficult to achieve. This is why a quota system is so important.”



Photo: Per Arvidsson



Photo: Fernandes Molerés/Bildbyrån Silver

8. The gender-divided labour market

All over the world women are paid less than men for doing identical work, and sexual harassment and abuse in the workplace is a daily occurrence.

A significant proportion of the world's women work in extremely vulnerable areas and under difficult conditions, be it doing traditional low-wage industrial and agricultural labour or working in the informal service sector. A case in point is the millions of female migrants who work as domestic labour or child carers in other countries and who often have to support entire families with their earnings, yet who have no opportunity to become organised and join a trade union.

Female migrant workers in the informal service sector are doubly at risk. They work in strangers' homes, where they have no colleagues or opportunities to become organised. And since they are also often illegal migrants and thus do not officially "exist", they have no legal protection under

labour law. Women make up the majority of the labour force in the informal sector in all regions of the world, with the exception of north Africa. They are often young and poorly educated, and bear a huge burden of responsibility towards their families. They not only lack social and economic rights but also run a serious risk of sexual abuse at the hands of both their superiors and their colleagues. There are also many examples of women being kept under lock and key by their employers.

Around the world, women earn less than men for the same work and are subject to daily harassment and sexual abuse in the workplace. The struggle for human rights is therefore very much about acknowledging and exposing the differences in vulnerability that exist between men and women.

The rights of women, girls and LGBT people are fundamental, indispensable and necessary aspects of basic human rights and freedoms, and must not be put off until "later" when all other rights have been fulfilled, since many human rights violations involve the deprivation and vulnerability of women, girls and LGBT people.

In the global economy, the trade union movement is well placed to promote women's rights both in the workplace and in society in general, as broad-based equality campaigns entail changing gender-based power structures. However, even though the number of organised women has increased in recent years, the union movement is still male-dominated and many unions, even those with good female

representation, turn a blind eye to the structural discrimination of women and the denial of their human rights and freedoms. Far too often, for instance, commentators treat migrant labour as synonymous with men's labour, and far too often the concept of "worker" is gendered as male.

The union movement has everything to gain by joining the struggle for equality and LGBT rights and against racism, since discrimination, violence and harassment on grounds of sexuality or ethnicity are very much work environment problems. It is only when the union struggle includes all workers, and not just men, that it can make a credible claim to be a legitimate force for human rights – not just men's rights.

Discussion points

- What kinds of jobs do women have in the area where the project is being implemented? What is the situation like for these women?
- How can women working in the informal sector be empowered and guaranteed their human, social and economic rights?
- What characterises an equal union movement and what issues should it focus on?



9. The right to one's own body

Women are often denied the right to decide over their own bodies. This is not a phenomenon confined to fundamentalist societies; it is also the case in many democratic countries, including EU countries such as Poland and Malta, where abortion is only permitted in cases of incest or when the woman's life is in danger.

In many countries, access to contraceptives has been stopped after pressure from religious groups or foreign donors, such as in the USA, and the belief that a husband is entitled to have sex with "his" woman whenever he wants remains highly prevalent.

Denying people the right to plan when or if they want children adds yet another burden to those living in poverty. Not only does it create more mouths to feed, it also endangers women, given the physical risks associated with multiple childbirths.

However, many women are threatened with sexual violence or abuse if they refuse to have sex with their husbands. This is important in regard to the fight against HIV/AIDS, in which enabling women to say no to unwanted sex is a key aspect. In many countries, India and China amongst them, modern scanning techniques in combination with ancient values of boys being more valued than girls have created an alarming deficit of girls and women.

Women in general, and poor women in particular, are more likely than men to end up being victims

of human traffickers. Some are lured away with false promises of waitressing or housekeeping work, while others are aware that they will have to sell their bodies to pay for their ticket to a hopefully better life in another, richer country. Whatever their way in, once there the women are ruthlessly exploited by traffickers and the men who exploit their bodies. In addition, the women are often beaten as a means of breaking them down.

While the commercialisation of women's bodies is not a new phenomenon, there is nothing innately

human or natural about prostitution. Nor is it true that men's sexual urges are so powerful that they have no choice but to give vent to them by purchasing sex. It is just that patriarchal traditions and norms have viewed women as passive objects and men as active, powerful subjects. The conviction held by certain men – the belief that they are entitled to buy sex and make money by exploiting the vulnerability of women through prostitution – is closely tied to the position of women in the gender power structure. Women are considered not to have the same right to their own bodies as men.

Discussion points



- Do women have the right to choose marriage partners for themselves and decide over their own bodies?
- Why is it mainly women and children who are sexually abused? Why do men buy sex and what can be done about it?



Photo: Tim A Hetherington/Bildbyrån Silver

10. War and peace

The majority of the victims in armed conflicts are non-combatant civilians. Often these victims are women and children, who according to Amnesty International make up an estimated 80 per cent of refugees worldwide. Rape, kidnapping and mutilation of women is often an integral part of war and of the strategies used.

In times of war the prevailing social structures and gender relations change, and while men generally get involved in the fighting, women take on new responsibilities as primary breadwinners and caregivers. Thus they have a heavy task to perform in a situation where the economic and social protection systems and the rule of law have partially or totally collapsed.

It is very common for women who have been raped or mutilated during a conflict to be heavily

stigmatised by their communities once peace has returned. Women who have become pregnant after being raped by the enemy can find themselves ostracised from their societies, which of course also has a negative impact on their children.

And the violence usually does not end with the conflict. It can be further exacerbated when husbands and sons return home without jobs and often with some form of drug addiction. Returning and traumatised soldiers can find it hard to adapt

to the lives they had before war broke out, and their frustration and insecurity is often manifested in violence towards women and children. War and violence thus reinforce the power structure that exists between the sexes.

However, focusing solely on women as victims can diminish their role in the reconstruction effort, a fact recognised by the UN in a 2001 resolution establishing that women must be more involved in peacebuilding and conflict prevention activities. Bringing women and equality issues into

peacebuilding has also proved crucial in creating an inclusive and participatory democracy, which can in turn lead to lasting peace and sustainable development.

Women must be included in each step of a peace process and at all levels. By distributing information directly to women, arranging meetings specifically for women and making sure that meetings are held at times and places suitable for all, women can be given an opportunity to influence the terms of peace.

Discussion points



- How are men who are trained to be soldiers and who have to participate in war affected by this?
- How can we encourage women to become more involved in ongoing peace processes?
- How can violence against women in times of conflict be more clearly brought onto the political agenda?
- How can women's participation help to counter the spiral of violence that so often afflicts a society recovering from armed conflict?

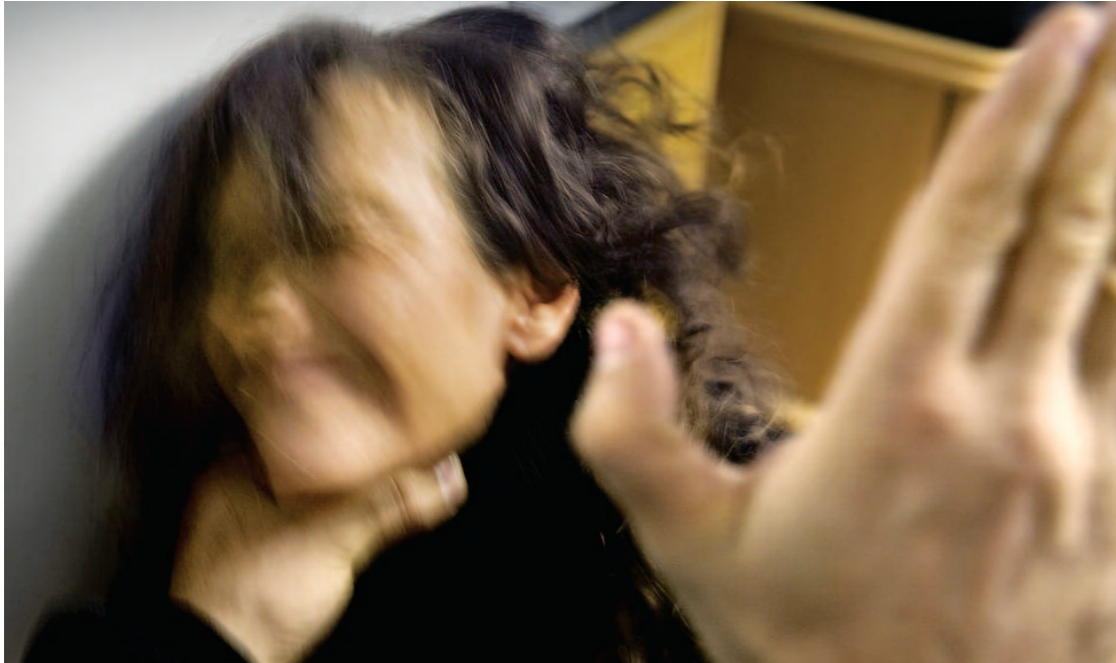


Photo: Claudio Bresciani/SCANPIX

11. Violence, security and gender

When we think of security and security policy, we normally assume they relate to territorial armed conflict. Yet gender-related violence against women is one of the most common human rights violations, both in times of peace and in times of conflict.

In recent years, the debate on war and conflict has started to question the general notion of security and violence from a gender perspective.

Gender-related violence against women is one of the most common violations of human rights, both in times of peace as well as in times of conflict. According to the World Health Organisation, one in three women around the world suffers violence at some time in their lives, and in 19 cases out of 20 at the hands of a man. A World Bank study estimates that 3.5 million women die every year from violence perpetrated by a close relative. This means that women of childbearing age run just as

high a risk of dying at the hands of someone else as they do of dying from cancer, and that violence creates more health problems than malaria and traffic accidents combined.

Violence against women both reinforces and reflects the prevailing gender power structure and poses a very real threat to the health, security and independence of the victim. In some societies, harmful and violent customs such as female genital mutilation or “honour” killings have been practiced for centuries and will continue to be practiced for as long as they are considered an accepted and “natural” part of the social order.

LGBT people are also commonly the victims of gender-related violence. They are regarded as deviants from the heterosexual norm and are subjected to everything from open discrimination and hate crimes to execution. The fact that LGBT issues are considered taboo and are criminalised and severely punished by imprisonment or even the death penalty in many countries makes it almost impossible for LGBT people to seek help when they are the victims of violence. Since the cause of the discrimination or physical abuse at best does not officially exist and at worst carries severe penalties,

the possibility for these people to stand up for their rights is very limited.

Gender-related violence is a problem that extends far beyond the conventional perceptions of security insofar as these are linked to a state or its citizens. It is a global problem that affects all nations and all social classes at all times. Acts of violence against men are usually perpetrated in more or less public places; for women, the most dangerous place is the very one that usually represents security and peace of mind: the home.

Discussion points



- Why is it important to see men's violence against women as a security problem? Why is it that some men think they are entitled to decide over their wives'/partners'/ girlfriends' bodies?
- What can we do to bring an end to men's violence against women? What mechanisms in society contribute to men using violence?
- What can we do to strengthen the rights of LGBT people and to fight hate crimes?



Photo: Eric Roxfelt/SCANPIX

12. The Olof Palme International Center and equality

The Olof Palme International Center is part of the labour and international solidarity movement. Therefore we are working on behalf of all people, regardless of gender, ethnicity, sexuality and class, to enable them to exercise their political, social, cultural and economic rights.

All women and men should have the same right and possibility to exercise active citizenship and shape the conditions for decision making. They should have the same opportunities for paid work that provides economic independence, while unpaid housework should be shared equally. In addition, men and women should both be able to give and receive care without being subordinated. Both women and men should be entitled to bodily

integrity, and men's violence against women must cease.

Equality, with a dismantled gender power structure, is part of the Olof Palme International Center's vision. According to Sweden's Policy for Global Development this is essential to sustainable development and shall therefore form an integral part of all development cooperation activities at

both national and international level. Everyone involved in development cooperation must be aware that all projects affect men and women differently, and that the strength of the effect also depends on sexuality, class and ethnicity.

For people to be able to shape their own lives, they must be given the opportunity and ability to participate and express their opinions. Equal involvement is not just a matter of having an equal number of women and men participating in a project; rather, it is a matter of power. Men – primarily heterosexual white men – cannot be the only norm. Women and LGBT people have the same right to influence change and express their needs and interests. All development cooperation must be based on the specific needs of each and every person.

Equality can only be achieved through the involvement of both sexes. Activities referred to as “gender neutral” are usually blind to sex

discrimination and to the varying needs and experiences of people occupying different positions in the gender power structure. Rather than being equal, such work usually only benefits heterosexual men.

For equality campaigns to be successful in international development cooperation, the people involved need to have good theoretical and practical knowledge and skills (see Part II: Methods for strengthening equality campaigns). The Olof Palme International Center arranges annual courses in project management in which theories of equality and perspectives on gender are combined with practical illustrations.

Understanding the gender perspective and being willing to include it in projects is a condition for all project work supported by the Olof Palme International Center. It is everyone's responsibility to work for an equal and just world.

Discussion points



- What goals for the promotion of equality have been defined in the Olof Palme International Center's operational policy?
- What are the equality goals of your own organisations? How can we achieve these goals?



Photo: iStockphoto

1. Equality in practice

Working for equality is working for change. It takes time and often causes conflicts along the way. On the positive side, it is very much a practical, down-to-earth struggle that can be fought on a daily basis and at all levels of society. Equality is as much a democratic means as it is a democratic goal.

There is often a tendency for equality work to focus on women. Either an explicit equality project is created for women, or an equality element is added to a “normal” project, again with a focus on women. One of the first steps to take is to discard the idea that equality is primarily something that only affects and benefits women, and to regard it instead as a matter of concern to both women and men and the relationship between them.

Equality and LGBT work entails giving everyone, irrespective of gender and sexual orientation, the opportunity to influence their own lives, the political agenda and the distribution of societal

resources. Studies have shown that greater equality benefits all members of society. When more women are allowed access to politics, we often find a shift in political priorities towards, for example, increased resources for prevention of men’s violence against women or a stronger focus on education. The involvement of women in peace processes has also been shown to redirect the focus from military solutions to political dialogue and networking.

Participation and opportunities for participation are central components of equality work. Broad-based women’s participation requires solutions at many levels, since the social conditions and the space

available for action are linked to women’s roles in the family as much as in the wider society. The project group should therefore always make sure that they have knowledge of the situation in the area where the project is being carried out, especially in terms of the opportunities women have to participate, and identify the groups that are already active and can contribute with their knowledge and experience. Progressive women’s groups and organisations with which to collaborate or seek information from can be found almost everywhere. Working in a spirit of equality does not mean that

your Swedish counterparts can come and “tell you how things should be”, even if positive examples from Sweden can, of course, be an inspiration. It means enabling women and LGBT people locally to be as involved in decisions on, for instance, which problems to prioritise, what the goals of collaboration should be and where to channel resources. The Swedish partners have an obligation to make sure that once a project plan with an explicit gender perspective has been drawn up, it is properly complied with.

Knowledge challenges traditions

“We learn as school children that teachers must be obeyed and when we get older we’re too timid to speak up, too,” says Yin Yin Mon, a member of an equality project for young Burmese in Thailand funded by Social Democratic Students of Sweden.

The teacher is part of a divine power structure and embodies an authority that may not be defied. Certain monks and parents must also be shown due respect. The power structure has a total of five levels, with the Buddha at the summit. Burmese children are brought up with the notion that it is inconceivable for a young girl to contradict an older man.

“But after the course, at least some girls started to challenge the structure,” says Yin Yin on a visit to Sweden.

Hordes of young people are fleeing from oppression and poverty in Burma and settling in other countries, such as Thailand and India. The equality project is part of a larger democracy and education programme launched in 1996 for Burmese students and other young exiles. It is led by the Student and Youth Congress of Burma (SYCB), an umbrella organisation for sixteen student and youth organisations.

Each of the sixteen organisations was invited to nominate a woman. The six-month course covers basic information on human rights and equality, as well as English, history, international relations, economics, computer science and leadership, and concludes with three-months’ training at the SYCB office.

“Women need a lot of training and knowledge to have the courage to step forward and speak out. Most women aren’t even aware of their rights and lack self-confidence. But since the course started, we’ve seen more women taking charge and becoming visible in the organisation,” says Yin Yin.



Photo: Anna-Lena Lodenius



Photo: Palmecentret

2. It begins with us

A central part of equality work starts in our own organisation. If we ourselves lack the tools to see gender power structure based injustices, it will be difficult for us to work against them elsewhere.

Equality is an approach to life that defies thousands of years of tradition in which masculinity and heterosexuality have not only been rewarded with power and influence but also been considered as the ideal. Consequently, working with a gender perspective often requires people to change their attitudes and challenge authority, in much the same way as 19th century workers did when they refused to leave decision making and social priorities to the wealthy and began to assert their right to co-determination.

Individuals wishing to push equality higher up the political agenda often encounter opposition from the project group or workplaces. It is a difficult and demanding task to question habits, values and interpersonal relations, as our efforts reflect back to us on a personal level.

A good point of departure can be to find out what your colleagues know about gender and equality by dividing them into small groups to hold informal, non-judgemental discussions about what they know

and understand about the concepts. There are also some value exercises that can be carried out to clarify people's attitudes towards equality. You might also try starting a small study circle for people to discuss equality literature together. It is also a good idea to seek outside help, as there are many people who have competence and expertise about the subject and who can help you to get started.

It is crucial to get support from higher up in the organisation when working with radical change, partly because it takes time and can lead to conflict

and partly because money should generally be earmarked for training and education. Equality work must also be concrete and therefore structured with defined objectives and a clearly formulated plan of action. This should be expressed in an equality plan, which as far as possible should be elaborated collectively. We will return to the equality plan later.

A simple first step could be to look at the positions and responsibilities of people in your organisation. In other words: Who has the power?

Begin by considering the following questions about the gender aspects of organisational structure:

- Who holds which positions in your organisation?
- Who does what in your organisation and in the project group?
- Who has a position of trust within the organisation?
- Who holds the informal and formal power in the organisation/project group?
- Who takes the formal decisions and who does the group listen to? Men or women?
- Do the people with power in your organisation support or perform some kind of internal equality work?
- Discuss the above analysis, your conclusions and possible ways of promoting gender equality.



Photo: iStockphoto

3. Putting together a project group

When assembling a project group, start by thinking about who to involve, what the gender balance is like and who is to be responsible for what.

Running an international development cooperation project can be quite demanding. It takes time and a lot of work. You should always try to have more than one person in charge of the project and to build a project group with equally delegated responsibilities. Sharing the burden of work amongst many people improves your chances of success.

When assembling your project group, you should

start by thinking about who to involve, what the gender balance is like and who is to be in charge of what. Often it is men who manage the project and women who manage the accounts. However, this setup quickly creates a situation in which internally the men are the ones who set the agenda and take charge of the most important priorities and the women are the ones who look after the administration. Already at this point a power imbalance has been established.

Think about how you can structure things so that responsibilities are shared equally in your own project group, not least between the sexes. Here are some simple advice you can follow:

- Aim for an even gender distribution in your project group.
- Give women the opportunity to lead the project. If you currently have a man in that position, is shared leadership possible?
- Rotate responsibilities in the project group.
- Appoint an equality supervisor to monitor implementation of and compliance with the equality plan.

4. Whose reality applies?

It is important not only to keep yourself updated about the project locality, but also to process the information with a critical mind. On whose reality is the information that we are getting based?

All projects are based on a plan developed jointly by the Swedish and local organisations after information has been gathered on how the society is organised and the problems that exist there. (See the *Project Manual* about contextual analyses and fact-finding trips.)

At this stage it is important to reflect on what knowledge you have about the project area and its most pressing problems. Consider, for example, the fact that most reporters and journalists, political writers, media debaters and foreign correspondents reporting for TV and newspapers are men; open any newspaper and a quick head count will tell you who delivers the messages and formulates the problems.

This is particularly true in countries where women lack genuine opportunities to influence or join the public debate. Men often get the chance to speak for women; the reverse is rarely the case.

It is important not just to keep yourself updated about the project context, but also to process the information with a critical mind. Make sure that you meet women and listen as much to their accounts and daily experiences and problems as you do to men's. If you can, contact and visit local women's organisations to build up a clearer picture of the problems faced by women. There is a list of suggested websites for international women's organisations in the appendix.

Key questions to think about in the initial phases of your project planning:

- Whose reality defines the problems that need to be addressed in the project?
- What possibility do women have to voice opinions and be listened to in public contexts?
- How can/did you gather information about the situation for women in the area? What is the purpose of the intended project? Does it mainly help women or men?

5. Who formulates the problems?

When planning a project, you must pay close attention to who gets to formulate the problems to be addressed.

When planning the project, which is usually done by holding an LFA workshop (see the Project Manual), you must ensure an equal gender balance in the project planning group, since the goal is for both men and women to have equal access to participation and influence. It is also important to take social class differences into account. Resource-weak people generally have less scope for interpretation than those richer in assets and cultural capital, with poor women ending up at the bottom of the ladder. This does not mean, of course, that their voices and interests are less important to listen to – quite the contrary, especially from a poverty perspective.

In the same way as your project must not be based on the ideas and interpretations of the Swedish

projectgroup, neither must it be informed solely by the realities and needs of men. Since the project will be affecting the daily lives of both sexes, it is the women and the men in the target group who are the real experts when it comes to defining the problems they face.

When planning a project, you must pay close attention to who gets to formulate the problems to be addressed. Be aware that women and men may have different views, and make sure that all perspectives are taken into account when the project is being planned. Considering that women are generally in more vulnerable positions than men and find it harder to be heard, it is often necessary to put even more emphasis on their needs and interests when planning the project.

As you prepare for this discussion, think about the following:

- Who will be involved in planning the project? What is their situation like and (if the majority are men) how much understanding do they have of women's specific problems?
- Will the meeting be held at a place and time that is convenient for women?
- How can you set up the meeting so that you can make sure that women's interests and needs are included in the formulation of the problem and design of the project?



Photo: LO/TCO Biståndsnämnd

6. Questions to guide your project planning

Working for equality requires knowledge about the situation of women and men respectively in terms of power relations, rights and opportunities. Such an analysis can be conducted at both micro and macro level.

Conducting an equality analysis entails reviewing everything from the official power bases to the relationships and power structures that exist in people's everyday lives, including within the organisation and the target group. The analysis should also consider the different effects that the project may have on the everyday lives and values of men and women.

The equality analysis can form part of the problem analysis that is conducted at the project planning stage, and it is usually a good idea to do it together with the partner organisation to ensure that all involved have the opportunity to participate. It is important to always give extra attention to issues of equality and make sure that they are integrated into your project.

Below are some questions commonly used in project planning, which we have developed and specifically related to equality.

For further information about how to carry out a more thorough equality analysis, various studies and reports are available to help you, including Forum South's *Make Gender a Question of Power* (see Appendix). The first rule is to listen to the participants in the project group and learn from their knowledge and experience and make sure that equality issues are given adequate time and space in the discussion.

If your project has already started, it is equally useful to discuss the following questions when conducting your annual planning session.

The questions can also be used to analyse the situation of LGTB persons.

- Project planning questions
- Project planning questions from an equality perspective

1. Contextual analysis

What is the political, economic and social environment like in the project area?

How does the situation between men and women differ? To what extent do women have access to public power? Do men and women have the same rights, or are some rights more limited for women?

2. Problem analysis

What is the main problem that the project aims to solve?

Do men and women share the opinion that this is a major problem?

3. Objectives

What are the objectives of the project, i.e. how should the situation be once the project has been concluded?

How will the project goal strengthen equality and empower women in relation to men?

4. The target group

What is your target group?

Break down the target group by gender and age. Why is it important to work with this target group?

5. What activities are required to

To achieve the project objective

What will you do in terms of concrete measures and activities to increase women's participation and influence in the project and in the development of their society? What can we do to make sure women take part in and influence the project on equal terms?

6. What indicators are required?

How will we know if we have achieved our objectives once the project has been concluded? What indicators can verify that we have achieved our objectives?

What changes need to take place in order for us to be able to consider the project a success from an equality perspective? What can we do to determine whether or not the women in the target group feel that the project has improved their lives from an equality perspective?

7. Risk analysis

What might hinder or obstruct the project in its implementation?

Are there different risks for men and women respectively? Is there a risk that the project's equality activities will endanger women? If so, how can this be avoided or managed?

8. Organisational sustainability

Organisational sustainability

Are men and women affected differently by it? If so, why? What will be done to ensure that women's position in the partner organisation will remain in a strong position as regards participation and equality?



Photo: iStockphoto

7. Plan!

A project without a concrete equality plan is doomed to fail.

When project groups meet to plan activities, time should be set aside to formulate a separate equality plan for the project. This may seem like "extra work", but should rather be regarded as a natural part of project design that will help to ensure, amongst other things, that the project is able to achieve the results aimed for in terms of equality.

Also remember that what may seem like minor steps, such as insisting that women are given as much space in a discussion as men, can eventually lead to major, radical changes that influence the power balance in your organisation or the project area in general. No one can change everything, but everyone can change something.

Drawing up an equality plan simply means putting on paper the equality objectives that you want to achieve and how you are going to achieve them. This involves listing concrete activities to be done under the aegis of the project, and ideas for how you intend to make the relevant issues more visible and legitimate within your organisation, the partner organisation and the target group. Remember that it is more than simply a matter of empowering women; you must also, and to an equal degree, encourage men to analyse the equality situation and perhaps change their roles and relationships.

There are no universal guidelines for which equality issues to focus on. Each specific situation will determine which priorities should be focused on. The Olof Palme International Center applies a rights-based perspective in all its work. This implies the empowerment of vulnerable and marginalised

people so that they can become key players in development rather than merely passive “recipients” of aid. The following page contains examples of areas that illustrate the approaches that can be taken to achieve equality in different projects.

The following questions can be useful when drawing up an equality action plan:

- What concrete equality objectives do we want to achieve in the project? For example, greater female participation in public life, measures to help women earn a livelihood, a reduction in men’s violence, men having more responsibility for child-rearing, or something else? What do we need to do to achieve these goals?
- What can we do to ensure that all people, regardless of gender and sexual identity, are properly involved in the project?
- What obstacles hampering the possibility to achieve these objectives can be found in your organisation and what can we do to remove them?
- What can we do to make sure that women are not ignored or overlooked, but are given as much space as men during the project?
- How can we make sure that equality issues are considered as equally important as other issues in the project?



Adult education. The popular adult education system developed and used in Sweden for a long time is a democratic form of awareness raising and training. It is a useful forum for raising and promoting issues and themes to strengthen equality work. Examples from the Olof Palme International Center’s own activities include training for women in English, computer literacy and other subjects that facilitate the earning of a livelihood. Study groups also provide an effective vehicle for changing attitudes and are useful for addressing such issues as men’s violence against women and men’s child-raising responsibilities.

Party work. The strengthening of equality in the world of politics includes many areas. The Olof Palme International Center’s own party-oriented democracy support often involves working alongside the party’s women’s association, strengthening women’s political involvement in the mother party, advocating statutes and legislation to include a minimum number of places reserved for women and so forth. An important part of the work involves advocating that equality be prioritised and given a higher profile in party programmes.

Activities for young people. Involving young people in development is important in terms of democracy. The Olof Palme International Center’s projects involving young people are often designed to establish youth centres offering activities and courses, or to inspire young people by organising camps or study trips. Remember that girls and boys often have different interests and needs, and in particular that boys are often more assertive and listened to. It is often a good idea to gather the girls together separately and ask them which problems feel most relevant to them. Be attentive to the voices that are hardest to hear.

Trade union activities. Trade union rights are not gender neutral and women seldom occupy leading trade union posts. There are many ways to work with equality through the trade unions, such as strengthening and increasing the relative number of female union representatives or focusing on specific trade union issues that have an important bearing on equality (e.g. parental insurance, parental leave, health and sexual harassment in the workplace). Trade unions can also put pressure on and support employers when drawing up and implementing equality plans.



8. During the project

Without good collaboration between you and your partner organisation during the implementation of a project, it is unlikely that the project as a whole will succeed. Setting a good example is necessary for change to take place.

The shape that the collaboration takes will differ from case to case. Sometimes a close relationship develops; sometimes you work together under more formal terms. The collaboration and its forms are also important to analyse from a gender perspective. If, for example, the spokespersons for the organisations are normally men, it will inevitably send signals to the local society. If issues of equality end up far down the agenda in your discussions, the subject will soon be considered irrelevant. If study trips you carry out consist of meetings with men,

women's involvement will probably not be taken that seriously. If you schedule meetings for the evenings, many women will probably not be able to find the time to attend.

Setting a good example is necessary for change, so we also have to be extra attentive to the signals we send as they often influence the general collaboration and the types of issues that are prioritised.

The Swedish organisation may find the following advice and questions worth bearing in mind:

- Make sure that both men and women are involved in all communication you have with your partner organisation
- Always ensure that priority is given to issues of equality in your discussions with your partner organisation.
- If you make use of external experts in your project, make sure that their gender distribution is balanced; it is also a good idea to invite in experts specialising in equality issues.
- Focus on financial issues during your discussions; not only is this important in itself, it also gives the accountant responsible for the project (who is often a woman) a higher status in the project.
- Always schedule meetings at times that are convenient for women.
- After a meeting with your partner organisation, analyse the meeting from an equality perspective. Who spoke and what subjects were discussed? What kind of equality problems does your organisation seem to have?



Photo: iStockphoto

9. Evaluation – from inconvenient to self-evident

Once the project is underway and activities are being implemented, you will need to follow up on what has been done and analyse whether the methods being used are actually working. It is particularly useful to know if things can be done differently in the future in preparation for forthcoming projects and within the international activities of the labour movement in general.

A project can be evaluated either by an external evaluator or internally with the project and target group. While the former is often arranged by the Olof Palme International Center for larger projects, smaller evaluations should be carried out within each project, preferably annually. An appropriate time is at the end of the year, when you can gather the main stakeholders such as the Swedish project group, local organisations and representatives of the target group to discuss successes and setbacks.

It is tempting to pat ourselves on the back about our achievements after having worked hard on a particular task for a long time, and it can be difficult and disheartening to be self-critical and admit to failings. This usually applies especially to equality issues, as they very much concern how we relate to each other, not only professionally but on an individual and personal level too.

Nevertheless, you must always evaluate the

achievements of your equality work. Such an evaluation must involve a deeper analysis of the project than simply counting the number of women and men who have taken part, and should include discussions on the project's focus and on whether it is dealing with the problems that women face and if women have a satisfactory role in the project's implementation. The more detailed the project description, the easier it is to evaluate.

Experience tells us that these discussions can become quite lively, so make sure to treat the issue

seriously by including it on the agenda and having one or more facilitators give everyone who wishes to speak the chance to do so. Do not avoid the subject for fear of conflict; on the contrary, the existence of conflicts is a sign of the importance of the matter under debate. If the participants see that equality continues to appear on the agenda despite the intensity of previous discussions, it will gradually be regarded as a natural part of the project.

Examples of questions to guide your project evaluation:

- What role have women and men had in the project?
- What work has been done in the project to promote equality? Has the work for equality met the expectations and needs of the female participants?
- Have women become more involved as the project has progressed? Has the project challenged men's power and resources?
- Has the project challenged prevailing gender roles (e.g. by running activities in a different way)? If so, has this entailed women and men taking on "unaccustomed" roles?
- Do the women in the target group feel that they have been given sufficient space, more control and more power over their own lives?
- Do the local partner organisation, the Swedish partner organisation and the target group feel that they have changed their views on equality?
- Are there more women in leading positions than before?
- Has the organisation, either alone or with others, campaigned for women's rights? What examples are there to show that the project has helped to improve the public or private lives of women?
- Do the women feel that they have changed their views of men and what they can and must do?
- Do the men in the target group feel that they have changed their views of women and what women can and should do?

(Some of the above questions have been taken from Forum South's booklet, Genusperspektiv på utvecklingssamarbete – Gender perspectives on development cooperation)

10. Knowledge is power!

Equality takes time. It is not only about achieving certain objectives, it also entails making people aware of the different roles assigned to men and women – and of the fact that these roles are linked to power.

Equality is not as simple as merely pointing out the equal value of men and women. It is more about being aware of all the ways that the gender power structure manifests itself and the best rights-based methods for dismantling it.

Those who know little or nothing about equality generally have no interest in it, as they rarely occupy a disadvantageous position in the power chain. A good start is to remember that the world is bigger than one might at first think. Just because there are no "visible" LGBT people in the partner organisation or target group, for instance, one cannot conclude that all persons involved are heterosexual; rather, it is often the case that they are forced to hide their sexual orientation, which in turn leads to LGTB persons as a group being "rendered invisible". Similarly, it is easy to forget women if the organisation itself does not express a need for initiatives to empower them or otherwise improve their situation – perhaps because the women are afraid to be perceived as difficult or demanding.

Working with equality is both easy and difficult. It is easy because it is something we can all take part in and influence; and it is difficult because it requires unfamiliar methods and perspectives and because injustices cut through all strata of every society.

Admitting to having insufficient knowledge of equality issues or LGBT rights is good if it means

we can work actively to raise our level of competence; however, if we acknowledge our ignorance but do nothing about it, it can be devastating. Help and support are widely available, and it is a good idea to turn first to your own organisation for advice and information on concrete equality action.

It is recommended to keep in regular contact with the Olof Palme International Center's programme manager for advice, information and knowledge-sharing on practical matters, as well as to maintain a constant dialogue about equality work and related issues. It is important to check with them that the project is on the right track, especially when working with equality. Another possible step is to contact other organisations or researchers who can be consulted as experts.

Making yourself and the project group aware of the gender power structure and how it operates is the first fundamental step towards real, genuine change. Take part in the Olof Palme International Center's courses. Read books. Discuss with others. The campaign for greater equality begins with you and the people around you. It is demanding, time-consuming work – but worth it. Equality benefits everyone!

