



Praxis Note No. 58

Reflections on Building CSO Capacity to Integrate Gender and Diversity Equality

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1. Introduction

Civil society organisations (CSOs) throughout the world are making efforts to enhance organisational and staff capacity with regard to gender and diversity equality, as part of the overall effort to raise levels of effectiveness of development and humanitarian interventions. Such efforts have been concerned with how to secure the greatest long-term sustainability of their impact, but are also based in organisational objectives to promote women's human rights. This Praxis Note provides an overview of current thinking about capacity building of CSOs in this area. It explores practice to date and identifies key areas for further exploration based on the author's experience of over 20 years working on the issue, particularly with the UK development sector.

This paper highlights gender capacity building as that is where most effort has taken place up to now, but other strands of diversity are covered where work has been carried out. It also includes much information about donor aid agencies, about which we have currently the most information. However, INTRAC intends to develop a new Praxis learning theme on this issue, bringing together civil society practitioners from around the world.

Attention to gender and diversity equality is now widely agreed as essential to professional development practice. CSOs are typically based on mandates, whether explicit or implicit, which commit them to alleviating poverty, and achieving development, the fulfilment of human rights and social justice.¹ These goals cannot be achieved without addressing gender and diversity inequality. Unless disadvantaged groups (e.g. women, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities) can attain equality both within organisations and as a result of programmes implemented by CSOs, then social development and justice for all cannot be realised.

The importance of such policies and practice is confirmed by research carried out by the Overseas Development Institute, which concludes that equality is crucial to the development process and tackling poverty, as: "unequal distribution of income, power and resources:

- Undermines both growth and its poverty reducing potential. Unequal access to markets means that poor people may struggle to participate in or benefit from growth, and inequality in the distribution of assets increases their vulnerability to shocks
- Weakens the social contract that underpins social cohesion and stability

¹ INTRAC's own organisational goal is to enhance the effectiveness of CSOs which are committed to 'international human development, including gender equity, participation of the socially excluded, social justice, security and peace in all parts of the world'. For this reason, the capacity to reflect and respond to equality and diversity principles are key priorities for INTRAC in the development of CSO effectiveness. A similar perspective can be seen in many other CSOs, expressed in various ways.

- Perpetuates lack of accountability in government institutions, reducing the likelihood that economic and social policies will deliver inclusive growth and human development.”²

This is known as the ‘**efficiency**’ argument for mainstreaming equality. However, for many CSOs the ‘**human rights**’ argument may be a more important motivation, i.e. that all diverse sections of society have a **right** to equality.

Inspired by whichever argument carries the most weight for them, the majority of CSOs have, during recent decades, expressed an explicit commitment to equality issues, particularly in relation to gender, and also to other areas, such as ethnicity, nationality, religion, age and disability. As part of this commitment, there has been considerable capacity building of CSOs on gender, equality and diversity in the form of training, development of tools, resources, mentoring and coaching. But what have the results of this work been? What has been achieved, and what has contributed most to successful development of capacity building?

There are also organisations which have been founded to specifically promote each of these areas, such as feminist CSOs and women’s movements, disabled people’s and indigenous organisations. These exist to defend, and lobby for, the interests of their particular interest group within the global development process, and tend to base their work in a commitment to promoting the rights of such groups, using the relevant international rights instruments.

The paper begins by clarifying the key concepts involved in enhancing the capacity of CSOs to effectively integrate diversity equality, and with a description of the different ways in which gender, equality and diversity have been nurtured in CSOs. It goes on to describe some successes achieved, and concludes with some major issues requiring resolution in order to take forward the work.

The contents of this paper are based on a survey of a number of staff from development organisations, and specialists in diversity capacity building of staff from such agencies from around the world. I wish to express my grateful thanks to them for taking the time to respond. A full list of those interviewed is attached in Annex 1.

2. The concepts

Diversity

“Respecting, valuing and harnessing differences so that all individuals can make their full contribution” in order to make development work better for excluded groups” thereby increasing their effectiveness in poverty reduction by addressing imbalances, challenging injustice and tackling prejudice. (DFID 2009)

Respondents commented:

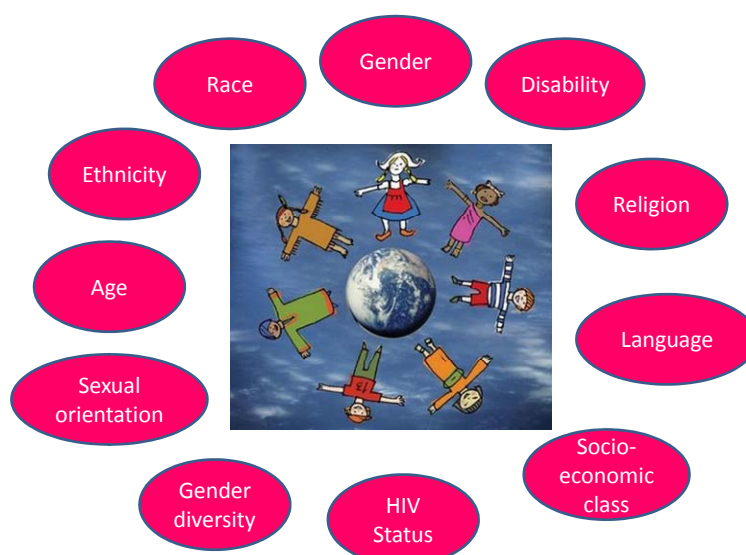
- It is the “spread or range of variability in a population”, sometimes meaning “different from the majority, e.g. an ethnic minority” or the “dominant group, e.g. women”
- In itself it does not necessarily mean a disadvantaged group, although it is often loosely used in that sense

² From ODI website on inequality (www.odi.org.uk/work/themes/details.asp?id=14&title=inequality)

- There can be both biological and cultural elements in the differences we refer to when using the term
- Different types of diversity can be identified, for example, some respondents see diversities in terms of those that are intrinsic (gender, race, age etc.) and those that are more a matter of a person's orientation (religion, sexuality)
- Being part of a diverse group can be a transitory state, as for example in the case of youth, or a geographically based group which then migrates. Differences may occur in terms of how these are viewed and treated.

CSOs apply the concept of diversity to internal organisational matters, particularly staffing, and also to external activities, to ensure that these address the needs of all groups, and not merely the majority or dominant group. Project Empower in South Africa discusses diversity throughout its work, and Cordaid strives to attain diversity in its partner portfolio, by working with different types of partners, e.g. "CBOs, NGO networks, grassroots movements, women's associations, church affiliated organisations".

Respondents mentioned the following strands of diversity as being important to their work:



It has been observed that the concepts used in relation to diversity are poorly understood and open to interpretation and debate. There is some confusion about how these terms are used, their exact meaning and how they fit together. The term 'diversity' is being "used as a catchall phrase to refer to differences among people such as gender, age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and disability". "Definitions of diversity differ greatly from organization to organization according to how such differences are perceived, which are prioritized and how they are 'managed', and to "the extent to which they address power relations and discrimination". (Miller, 2004; Csáky and Hyder, 2004)

Intersectionality

This refers to the interrelationship between different aspects or strands of diversity. The term helps to identify the structural and dynamic dimensions of the interplay between different aspects of discrimination, and the results of the interaction between two or more aspects. For example, how "racism, patriarchy, class oppression and other discriminatory systems create inequalities that structure the relative positions of women, races, ethnicities, class" (UN,

2001, quoted in Riley, 2004: 1-2.). Where multiple layers of diversity lead to discrimination, the need to focus attention on such groups becomes even more urgent. The Beijing Platform for Action emphasised that factors such as age, disability, socio-economic position or belonging to a particular ethnic or racial group, could compound discrimination on the basis of sex and create multiple barriers for women's empowerment and advancement.³

‘Interculturalidad’

In Latin America, this term, literally ‘interculturalism’, is used to denote work which is inclusive of, or responsive to, indigenous populations and recognises all groups as being of equal value. The term encompasses more than racial diversity in that it implies a creative interaction between groups with differing cultural identities, seeing this as fundamental to the development of societies. The Peruvian Development School defines it as ‘taking advantage of diversity to establish a permanent dialogue between cultures in order to build a just and satisfactory way of living together, while respecting differences.’⁴ ‘Intercultural’ can mean slightly different things to white and indigenous organisations, for example, for AIDSEP, one of the Peruvian Amazonian people's organisations, it means the right to an education from a teacher from your ethnic group and in your own mother tongue.

Gender

The Oxford Online Dictionary defines gender as: “the fact of being male or female.”

However, in development programmes, gender is commonly defined as being different from sex, i.e. the biological difference between women and men, and being about the socially determined characteristics of being a woman or a man. It was first used in this way by Ann Oakley and others in the 1970s⁵, and is currently widely used to focus on the power imbalances between women and men in given societies.

Disability

Persons living with disability are those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”
(UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006)

The terms used for disabled people vary, for example, whereas the UK disability movement tend to prefer the phrase ‘disabled people’, most African and some Asian CSOs prefer ‘people with disabilities’.⁶ In Peru, the term ‘personas con habilidades diferentes’ is used, literally ‘persons with differing abilities’, which has the advantage of avoiding the negative connotations of ‘**disability**’. Who is actually defined as disabled may also differ according to different geographical and socio-economic contexts.

³ UN, 2000

⁴ Website, Escuela de Desarrollo

⁵ Oxfam GB, 1994.p 4

⁶ Jan Knight, INTRAC.

3. What has been done in CSOs to integrate diversity equality?

Gender issues

To date, **gender** has been the diversity strand that has received the most attention academically and practically in terms of capacity building for CSOs. Efforts to integrate sensitivity to gender issues into development programmes date back to the 1970s when awareness arose that those which ignored the differing situation and needs of women were limited in their effectiveness. This realisation led to the introduction of attention to the specific needs of, and also potential of, women, an approach which became known as “Women in Development”. During the 1980s, it was realised that this approach was achieving little to address the unequal power relations between women and men, which were still negatively affecting outcomes achieved in terms of sustainable benefits for all. Consequently, ‘gender and development’ thinking was introduced, which emphasised the need to redress such power imbalance. This approach also brought in the idea that the specific needs of both sexes should be considered when planning and implementing development and humanitarian programmes.

Current capacity building work

By now, most aid organisations have provided their staff with some gender training consisting of dedicated short courses, and coaching, mentoring, or other forms of ‘accompaniment’. Around the world, organisations and independent gender specialists have been offering services in aid agency staff gender training, such as the Escuela de Desarrollo in Peru, the Gender Management Institute in Sweden, the Royal Tropical Institute in the Netherlands and INTRAC in the UK. Some organisations, such as Oxfam GB, have developed their own in-house gender units to provide gender coaching and training to its staff and partners. Oxfam GB have also published an off the shelf gender course containing a facilitator’s

Forms of gender capacity building of CSOs

1. Training courses
2. Tool development
3. Individual one-to-one accompaniment, eg coaching, mentoring
4. Internal lobbying of CSO leaders by committed feminists on their staff
5. Gender mainstreaming, ie systematic efforts to integrate gender concerns into all aspects of programme development and management, and also organisational systems and procedures.
6. Organisational gender audits

toolkit for running a gender equality course.⁷ Such gender training has provided conceptual understanding and analytical tools, aimed at enabling participants to practically integrate gender equality concerns into their development interventions. Many university development departments around the world have developed gender modules as part of development study degrees, and also specialised masters’ degrees in gender and development.

At the same time, feminists have engaged in internal lobbying to try to persuade leaders to incorporate gender equality values and concerns throughout CSOs. These were either based

⁷ Oxfam GB: Pick up and Go Training Pack: Gender Equality and Sexual Exploitation, Oxford, 2006.

in specific gender units, had gender in their job titles, or were just concerned staff members. A UK-based faith-based organisation has been conducting upward effective mentoring of its senior leadership team on gender issues, the Gender Adviser herself working with the male CEO.

Gender Mainstreaming

A major form of capacity building of CSOs in relation to gender equality has been the widespread emphasis on **gender mainstreaming** resulting from the UN Beijing gender conference of 1995. It was hoped that this strategy would be more effective than previous attempts to promote gender equality within aid interventions. What was new was the idea that working towards gender equality should not just be the concern of a few specialists, whether internal staff or external consultants, but an essential part of the work of all staff members and integrated into all organisational systems and procedures. While some consider gender mainstreaming to be essentially about internalising a commitment to challenging inequality between women and men, i.e. a GAD approach, for example Pialek, 2004, others see work aimed specifically at addressing women's issues i.e. Women in Development as included in the concept (Standing, 2004).

Definitions of Gender Mainstreaming

The Beijing Platform stated the commitment of the governments participating in the conference to "Ensure the full implementation of the human rights of women and of the girl child as an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of all human rights and fundamental freedoms". However, different development actors conceptualised as:

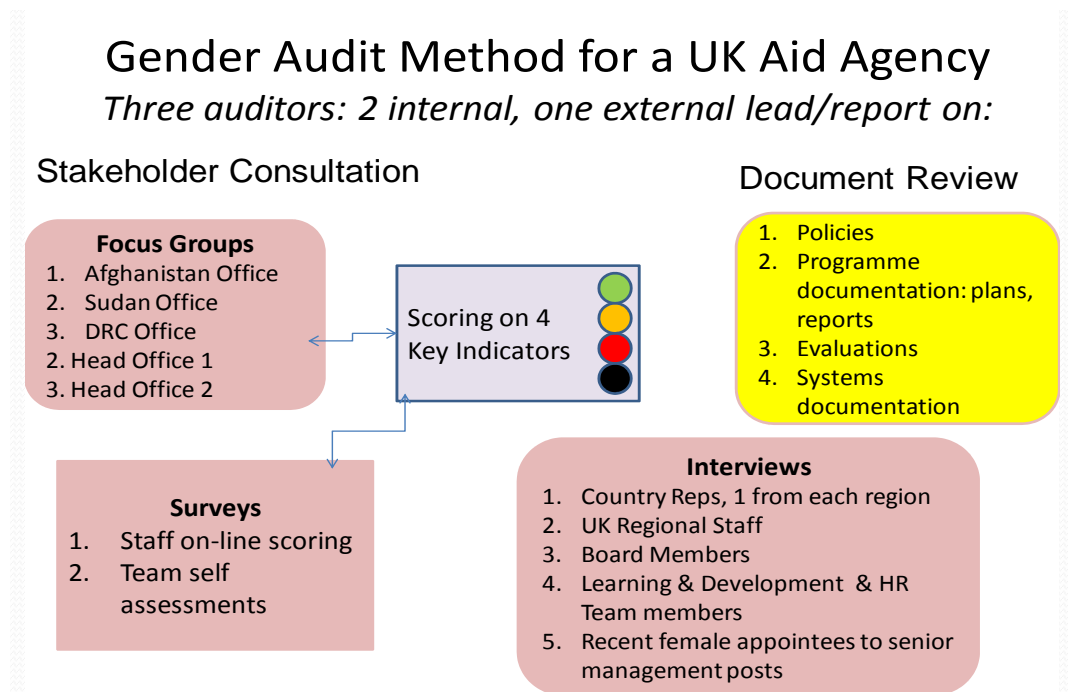
"taking account of gender equality concerns in all policy, programme, administrative and financial activities, and in organisational procedures, thereby contributing to a profound organisational transformation. Specifically, gender mainstreaming means ensuring that staff fully understand the relevant policy and its context, and have the capacity to implement it, in order that they can bring the outcomes of gender sensitive policy analysis, including socio-economic analysis, into the core decision-making processes of the organisation." (UNDP)

"A process of ensuring that all its work, and the way it is done, contributes to gender equality by transforming the balance of power between women and men." (Oxfam GB)

CSOs around the world have widely adopted this strategy, often encouraged by their donor organisations. However, there has been considerable debate as to its effectiveness. In many cases, it is perceived ironically to have become an excuse for not actually working towards gender equality. It is also seen as having caused much confusion amongst the communities it is supposed to help. For example, Wendoh and Wallace found considerable insensitivity to local contexts and cultures in the way it had been rolled out at the community level in several African countries (2006). Oxfam's review of gender mainstreaming in 2005 concluded that the strategy had had limited success as 'integrationist approaches' had not succeeded completely in their comparatively modest aim of addressing 'women's issues'. Whether it is seen as successful or not depends on whether you consider that the strategy includes challenging inequality or not, and whether you consider it actually does so in practice. In that sense, the Oxfam GB definition is clearer than that of the UNDP (see box).

Most recently, gender audits and organisational reviews have become a method by which CSOs are attempting to improve their integration of gender equality into their programmes. Methodology developed by bilateral and international organisations has been successfully adapted by gender specialists to help aid agencies to systematically review both external

action and internal processes to examine how these treat the subject of gender equality. Conclusions and recommendations have been reached for how leaders of such organisations could clarify conceptually the importance of gender equality to their overall missions and strategic visions, in order to more thoroughly and effectively fulfil their statutory mandates and address gender inequality within their organisations internally and the delivery of their external action.



Apart from gender, little systematic effort has been made to build the capacity of CSOs to integrate **diversity** concerns throughout organisations and their external programmes. Some organisations have applied the concept more consciously internally, developing human resources (HR) diversity equality policies, such as CAFOD, which has recently developed a 'dignity, diversity and equality policy' as a component of their HR policy document. Action on Development and Disability and Handicap International support the strengthening of disabled people's organisations in different ways, and some ad hoc lobbying initiatives to promote disability awareness within mainstream aid agencies. Oxfam GB and Save the Children UK have employed diversity officers to integrate diversity concerns into internal processes, and, in the case of the latter, also into external programmes.

4. Successes worth celebrating

It is of course impossible to say what exactly has been achieved by all these efforts, given the absence of a comprehensive evaluation. This brief survey of the current perceptions of some of those involved, however, and my own experience as a gender and development consultant, provide anecdotal evidence of achievements reached.

Increased awareness of gender equality amongst CSOs

Respondents to the survey from different parts of the world generally agree that gender-related capacity building conducted since the 1970s has achieved a widespread awareness amongst CSO staff of the importance of gender equality to their core businesses, to ensuring

their programmes are effective, and to the essential values to which their organisations should aspire. All in all there has been considerable progress since the 1960s. Many more projects and programmes are now being designed to take women's issues into account, although this is often to a limited extent and with limited results. Also, modest support has been provided for women's NGOs and women's movements. A respondent from Latin America commented that the assimilation of some basic gender-related concepts has led to women becoming visible as a part of the population which development initiatives set out to benefit.

CSO gender policies

Most organisations now have gender policies. Although these are rarely known, or referred, to by staff in detail, they do represent an official commitment to integrating gender equality on which efforts to surface and operationalise such a commitment can be substantiated.

Women-led CSOs

There are also now an increasing number of CSOs which are led by women, many of whom have benefited from gender training and from associated capacity building, such as leadership, public speaking, accounting skills. In many cases, support from men (both in the workplace and at home) has been an important element in such achievements.

Strategic focussing on women's rights

Some aid agencies have made explicit their concerns for gender equality and women's rights within their overall organisational strategic intent. For example, a major British aid agency has made an unequivocal focus on women's rights the second of its organisational goals, following on from its rights based vision of: "A world without poverty and injustice in which every person enjoys the right to a life with dignity."

They have a women's rights team, and women's rights officers. The decision to focus on women's rights was to clarify that they are definitely on the side of women, and that they intend to focus on the power dynamics which perpetuate injustice faced by women, and on increasing their capacity to make changes for themselves, and that they do not work on men's issues. This is a helpful strategic decision, as it clarifies to staff what precisely they are supposed to be working on in terms of gender equality. A recent audit showed their staff were generally highly committed to working on promoting women's rights. However, problems are still experienced with respect to staff capacity to operationalise this goal, in terms of time, analytical capacity and information resources they require.

Similarly CAFOD, inspired by the conclusions from a gender review which the author facilitated, moved “gender up the corporate agenda to feature prominently in the new organisational strategic framework for the organisation, and become acknowledged as one of the overall strategic directions.”⁸ It will now be addressed in each of the corporate aims and outcomes. This was achieved thanks to working closely with senior managers on the review, and to their support and commitment. This is no mean achievement in a Catholic faith-based organisation, dealing on a daily basis with the patriarchal worldview of the Vatican, and could have far-reaching implications given the extent of the Catholic movement.

Mainstreaming gender in programme management systems

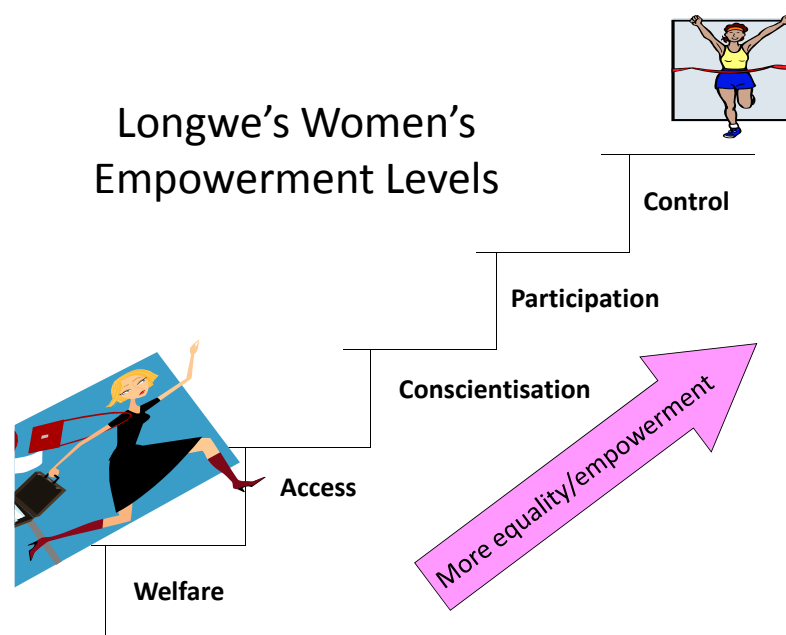
Many CSOs have also embedded gender concerns in their programme management systems and related guidance for staff. A particular effort has been made with regard to the incorporation of gender concerns into logframes, ensuring outcomes, outputs and impact, and indicators, are gender sensitive and will reflect changes in gender relationships. Although many such attempts have been treated as boxes to be completed without thorough reflection on what was actually required, the overall effect has been to convince staff of the importance to the organisations concerned of their commitment to working towards gender equality.

In Oxfam GB, mandatory fields for indicating how a programme will address gender issues are part of its electronic programme information system. CAFOD for many years asked staff to indicate which level of women’s empowerment would be furthered by all projects and programmes, using Sara Longwe’s five steps for this (Welfare, Access, Conscientisation, Participation, Control). It has now replaced this with asking whether a project will further women’s strategic needs or just their immediate practical needs.

Experience from practice: The Uganda Reach the Aged Association and Community Development Resource Network (CDRN)

- Staff feel gender is now prominent in the sector. It has taken centre stage and most organisations have tried their level best. Most are trying to recruit women.
- However, this is less so at the community level – CSOs in remote areas are less likely to have embraced the issue.
- Even CDRN has challenges and some staff have not appreciated the issue. They speak it (because they know they should), but they are not fully convinced.
- Progress on the issue has been helped by the Government pushing it (since 1986) and the policies they have put in place like maternity leave for women.
- The greatest changes have been pushed by donors. If they do not emphasise gender, project proposals tend not to emphasise it, indicating gender equality is still seen as a ‘by the way’. Some consider “this is for the gender desk to deal with”, and not an issue for the rest of an organisation.
- It is a surprise for people when a man leads on the issue: ‘Who brought you? You are now a woman!’. But it is more effective to have a man talking about gender to other men.

⁸ Tanja Haque, Gender Adviser, CAFOD.



Another strategic achievement is that of a Christian faith-based organisation, which conducted a gender audit in 2009. Despite a 70% male leadership team, the Gender Adviser had successfully integrated a gender equality concern into the organisational vision. In this organisation's view, what was wrong with the world consisted of broken relationships, specifically between man and God and between man and the environment. The Gender Adviser proposed that concerns regarding gender equality should be interpreted in the organisation as being about rectifying broken relationships between men and women, and about constructing equal, mutually respectful and appreciative relationships which would enable them to cope better with life's challenges. This idea is already enshrined in some organisational vision statements, although there is still some way to go for all staff to feel they understood what is meant by it in practice, and what the organisation should be doing to promote restored relationships.

The approach was particularly welcomed by the organisation's South American partners who had long felt there were difficult contradictions between what they saw as Western feminism, imposed on them as gender concerns by donors, and the traditional Andean views regarding the importance of complementarity between the sexes.



Figure 1: Complementarity: women and men farming in the South American Andes

With regard to diversity mainstreaming as such, WaterAid has set a useful example by developing an inclusion policy and framework, providing staff with minimum standards for the inclusion of diversity for each of their four organisational strategic aims. The strands they

cover are gender, HIV and AIDS, disability, ethnicity and age. Staff will be provided with specific indicators for what the organisation means in practice should be done in relation to each strategic aim and diversity.

5. Challenges experienced in integrating diversity equality

Sensitivity to local contexts and cultural contradictions

The major challenge in integrating diversity equality is how this and related concepts are perceived in recipient countries when they are introduced by donor organisations, who are frequently criticised for being insensitive to local contexts and cultures. Respondents from South Africa and Peru commented on the need for more work to understand and consider intercultural, race and ethnic issues, and how to ensure programmes worked effectively from the perspectives of marginalised groups. INTRAC's Praxis Learning Programme aspires to enrich our understanding of these perspectives, and what they might mean for effective development practice.

Some cultures and religious practices may be in direct contradiction with diversity equality, and others may exhibit subtle nuances in the way different groups in society relate to one another which are not immediately visible to external observers, and therefore ignored by them. Such practices could well form the basis for the way the society in question organises itself for maintaining and enhancing economic and social wellbeing. For example, early marriage in Ethiopia, while disrespecting the right of a young girl to choose a partner, is actually the way that families make useful economic and social links. Amongst the Peruvian Amazonian people, the Shipibos, women have in many ways greater powers than men, thanks to the spiritual role which they traditionally exercise.⁹ Even the burka can be seen as an advantage by the Islamic women who use it, in that it allows them to look out onto the world without being ogled by unwelcome onlookers or strangers.



Figure 2: Shipibo pottery from the Peruvian Amazonian

In Uganda, a respondent found challenging gender issues within Catholic Church structures to be difficult, whereas Anglicans could be more open. Ideas about gender equality were often classed as “American ideas”, a term denoting anything foreign wherever it was actually from. Such ideas were seen as “spoiling our women”, and there was fear that women would try to take power and cease to be obedient.

In South America, it is felt by many that the way gender is interpreted by international donor agencies is inappropriate to a context which values the roles of both sexes, and that it is

⁹ Carolyn Heath, Lecture at 2nd World Congress on Matriarchal Studies, 2005

important to develop complementarity between them, in accordance with the Andean worldview ('Cosmovision').

These views relate to the perceived African values of community and social kinship which Wendoh and Wallace (2006, 104) found to be in contradiction with gender mainstreaming attempts by donor-led initiatives insensitive to local culture. Both these worldviews are intrinsic to the way low income societies organise for survival, and the respective roles of women and men within these coping strategies. Gender equality messages are often felt to disrupt these strategies. This is possibly what Andrea Cornwall has in mind when she observes that "a relational approach to gender, which includes a focus on the productive lives of men as gendered subjects, as well as on those of women, is fundamental to the success of any development effort in promoting long-term gender equality and equity".¹⁰ This is not to deny the importance of equality and of addressing gender injustice when it occurs in communities, but ways of resolving inequality must be sought which strengthen family and community capacity to cope rather than weaken it.

Villainisation of men

A related issue is that some models of gender awareness and equality tend to stereotype men as unredeemable villains, and expect women to carry on without them, no matter how many children and how few resources they have, or to what extent they are vulnerable to external shocks. Such approaches too often leave women struggling with the double burden of looking after young children at the same time as earning sufficient to feed and shelter them. This could be attributable to projection by female aid agency staff who have the economic wherewithal to cope with life without a male partner, and are less likely to have large numbers of dependents to care for than most of the women they hope to assist.

Prioritising strands of diversity

Another major issue has been to which strand of diversity a given organisation should lend priority. Which groups should be prioritised and why? What is it about them which makes them deserving of specific attention? In Uganda, it was noted that CSOs typically paid attention to 1) gender, 2) disability and 3) age. However, age tended to be about youth, omitting the elderly.

Oxfam GB leadership's response to staff wishing to work on disability has frequently been that as it had not yet completed work on thoroughly mainstreaming gender, it was not yet ready to work on other strands. Disability and ethnicity were key ones which staff thought should be considered, with their obvious implications for vulnerability to poverty and suffering in the countries where the organisation operates. Nevertheless, a much smaller UK-based organisation, International Service, employed this author to write guidelines for staff on how to mainstream gender and disability into its work in 2005. It all depends on what an organisation feels is expected of it in order to lay claim to having integrated diversity as a policy matter into its practice.

Some point out that gender is the attribute of all human groups, that women represent 50% of the population, and that therefore gender should take precedence over other strands.¹¹ However, it can be argued that in certain circumstances, able-bodiedness, ethnicity, age,

¹⁰ Cornwall (2007)

¹¹ By Anne Coles for example.

may have more to do with whether you are poor or suffering than gender. The extent to which this is true depends on the degree of exclusion experienced by a given group. In most societies, it is far more difficult for a disabled person to obtain employment than an able-bodied woman. It also depends on the number of multiple layers of diversity strands which are behind the exclusion of a given group.

The fragmentation of collective projects

A Latin American consultant pointed out that it is important to be aware of the risk that it can be divisive to promote identity groups in the name of diversity, in that promoting group identities can fragment collective projects and the delegation of representatives. However, it is important to recognise the existence of groups with specific needs which require specific responses, such as women and indigenous groups who are being excluded from the central stream of policies, but always remembering to bring these together where there are common battles to be fought, for example, against the overarching power of patriarchy.

The failure to radically transform CSOs

Much of the effort to build the capacity of CSOs in gender is seen as broadly having failed to radically transform these organisations. They have not succeeded in integrating a concern for gender equality into their deeper structures.¹² Instead staff are expected to add in such concerns to their existing work, without the benefit of overall organisational strategic frameworks to do so. Hence, gender has been largely seen by CSO staff as an add-on, willingly done so by those with a personal commitment to gender equality as an intrinsic value underlying their work, and unwillingly so by those with other priorities. The motivation of staff has been largely conditioned by their capacity to perceive the gender-related issues in the context in which they work, and their ability to see how such issues play a key role in perpetuating poverty and in the undermining of human wellbeing.

CSOs are still largely run by men

Clearly, a major challenge has been the vast numbers of CSOs run by men within societies where men form the dominant group, still the case in most countries, as figures on political participation clearly show. Gender equality requires the redistribution of power, and of roles, some of which are based in early childhood experience and learning of what being a man or a woman consists of in their respective societies. It is also as such a deeply personal matter, and therefore constitutes what many feel to be a space which should not be invaded by training which occurs in their professional lives. These two dimensions of the political and the personal,¹³ are felt to have given rise to much resistance to the idea of integrating gender equality thoroughly into development and humanitarian thinking and programming.

Male domination in faith-based aid agencies

Additional challenges are faced by faith-based organisations, where the male dominated hierarchies of the churches to which they are connected make for a context in which women as leaders are not easily accepted. CAFOD report that: "The organisation's faith identity and

¹² As noted by Fenella Porter in an International Gender Studies Seminar at Oxford University's Department of International Development on 19 November 2009

¹³ As identified by Maruja Barrig

the male dominated hierarchy within church structures bring further challenges, particularly when it comes to taking it to the next stage, the partner level.” They are developing a ‘Gender and Faith Position Paper’ to address some of these challenges.

The gender word

The word ‘**gender**’ has itself led to considerable confusion, and is arguably behind much apparent “resistance” to attempts to integrate gender equality. Wendoh and Wallace’s research found that some villagers in the Gambia were confusing the word gender with ‘agenda’, reflecting the fact that the term was not meaningful to villagers and its translation was confusing (2006, p94). It is certainly not clear to the non-development professional, or even non-gender specialist, what it is supposed to signify.

In many organisations where **vague and undefined references** are made to working on gender equality, staff seem to be in an endless quandary about what that actually means for their everyday work. There is confusion regarding whether working on gender equality necessarily means specific work with men on the particular issues they face. Little thought has been given to how gender equality relates to the overall strategy staff are supposed to follow. This gap leads to endless calls for “tools and guidance” to operationalise organisational gender policy, but much of this felt need might be obviated by more organisational clarity regarding in what way exactly gender equality should be worked towards. It is not possible to provide staff with precise recipes for tools which will suit every context they happen to be working on. General concepts and analytical frameworks which can be creatively adapted to different circumstances rarely seem to satisfy the demand of gender course participants for “tools” and help with “how we actually do this in our jobs”, despite attempts to make courses participative, action-oriented and empowering.

A tendency to treat **gender as a subject in itself**, rather than a perspective with which others such as health, education, economic development, HIV/AIDS should be approached, has led to the idea that only certain experts can know about gender, rather than empowering all CSO members to understand the gender issues which relate to their particular area of work, and develop effective responses to these.

The **concept of gender mainstreaming** itself has represented a major challenge, as mentioned above. It is widely seen as having detracted from the effort to promote gender equality and as having failed to radically transform power relations and deep organisational structures. However, it can also be seen as not having been taken far enough yet, in that gender equality has still to be thoroughly integrated, made explicit within, or made relevant to, the overall values, visions and strategies of most CSOs. Critics of gender mainstreaming are not clear about how they would replace this strategy which has been so widely adopted, at least in rhetorical terms, and led to so much greater sensitivity to gender issues in CSOs.

Quality of gender capacity building

Many difficulties have been experienced in terms of developing the quality and adequacy of capacity building attempts themselves. Just to obtain consistent funding for ongoing staff gender equality training has been a challenge, there having been long periods when the promotion of gender equality amongst CSOs lapsed. The capacity of such attempts to obtain radical transformation of CSOs’ overall vision and strategy has been limited, especially since training courses tend to be attended by staff at lower levels of organisational hierarchies. Similarly, training has often been inappropriate to the recipients and their contexts, focusing

on simplistic messages regarding the difference between sex and gender, when participants really needed more sophisticated guidance, tailored to their actual work needs.

Ways of providing organisation gender expertise

A variety of ways of providing and developing gender expertise in CSOs and motivating staff have been tried, such as:

- gender advisers
- gender units
- gender focal points
- gender networks
- gender informative bulletins and websites

Which of these mechanisms has been most successful is widely debated. Widespread confusion has arisen around whether all work associated with gender should be the prerogative of staff with gender in their job titles, or to view such staff as facilitators of the integration of gender into the work of all their colleagues.

Practicing what you preach

It is hard to conduct effective gender equality projects **externally** if an organisation is insufficiently sympathetic to, or knowledgeable about, gender equality issues **internally**, i.e. within the organisation concerned. Furthermore, to be effective each individual professional needs to both believe in and take equality concerns into account in their daily lives, the private and the community in which they live, as well as the professional. This is a key aspect of reflective practice. How staff treat each other and even the attitudes of drivers and receptionists, who often represent the face of an organisation, can be crucial in terms of the capacity of an organisation to promote gender equality.

The importance of leadership

Equally while gender equality enthusiasts may achieve great things, a CSO is unlikely to substantially address equality issues unless its leadership is convinced of the need for them. They need to be able to clearly articulate the relevance of gender equality issues to the work of their organisation and thereby inspire and motivate staff to work on these issues.

People of considerable authority, who can locally command respect, may also need to be involved in dialogue with leaders. In a patriarchal society, for example, male leaders may respond to senior men in the organisation where enthusiastic feminists are having only limited or even negative effects.¹⁴

Mainstreaming disability

In the case of disability, a similar debate occurs as with gender, with regard to the tension between women's issue focusing and gender mainstreaming. For many organisations, working on disability means discrete projects aimed at alleviating the immediate circumstances of people living with disability. One respondent defined diversity as meaning "implementing programmes for different groups of people: disabled, elderly, class, etc." Few see the issue as one of mainstreaming, i.e. how those living with disability can be integrated

¹⁴ Comments from Anne Coles.

into mainstream development work. The same principle applies to other areas of difference.

6. How can these challenges be addressed?

This will be the main subject to be addressed under INTRAC's learning programme on equality and diversity, which will focus on how CSOs have successfully resolved them. However, some initial ideas emerge from the survey and the author's own experience:

Considering varying cultural, ethnic and religious contexts

Extensive and ongoing research is required to understand and consider cultural, race and ethnic issues associated with gender roles and power relations in differing cultural and geographic contexts, and how to ensure programmes work effectively from the perspectives of the people concerned and enhance their capacity to develop their wellbeing.

Respondents in Africa had found it effective to use the Bible in discussions with participants in Christian communities, referring to passages involving women and changes in culture. Intermediaries, such as sympathetic priests, had been effectively used as allies. In dealing with a perceived tendency within Islam to reinforce existing gender roles, it had been found helpful to focus on modern and feminist interpretations of the Koran. It can be pointed out, for example, that the Koran encourages all people to improve their education, and does not exclude girls, and that while it says women should respect men, it does not say women should be oppressed. Some imams have been found to be receptive to such messages, and have even allowed their own wives to acquire education and participate in other activities outside the home.

The following tool has been developed to evaluate women's positioning in Amazonian ethnic groups, and could be easily adapted to other contexts and criteria: (Heise et al, 1999).

Criteria	Group 1		Group 2	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Mobility				
Matriarchal or patriarchal society				
Fluency in Spanish (in addition to indigenous language)				
Access to market				
Management of money				
Liberty to choose partner				

Prioritising diversity strands

When deciding how to prioritise different diversity strands within a given organisation or programme, central factors to consider are the ultimate goal of the particular intervention concerned, the sector and context in which work is being implemented, and the nature of the issues and problems to be addressed. The nature of an organisation's ideology, identity and priorities, and the scope of action proposed are also important. For example, the South African respondent working on strengthening and supporting civil society responses to HIV/AIDS, sexual diversity was the main strand they were concerned with. A respondent working in India and Bangladesh prioritised class and caste first and foremost.

Support for mutually respectful relationships

The idea described above of supporting mutually respectful relationships represents a way of promoting gender equality while addressing concerns around the disruptive nature of gender equality messages which focus narrowly or exclusively on women. The concept moves on from a model of gender awareness raising which vilifies men and expects women to carry on without them. Instead it looks at how both men and women can learn to develop joint capacity for coping with, for example, the devastating effects of HIV/AIDS on their socio-economic status.

Enhancing gender equality capacity building

It was generally felt that CSO staff needed assistance particularly with operationalising a gender equality goal or policy, such as accompaniment and tools.

There was still felt to be a need for **basic gender training** for general staff and more advanced training for programme staff including key concepts (assuming some basic knowledge such as regarding the difference between sex and gender), challenging misinterpretations, gender sensitive indicators, and ways of carrying out gender analysis, monitoring and evaluation. Tailor-made gender training courses for a given organisation were suggested, with variations for different audiences, such as organisational gender reference groups, who could be trained as trainers of others, and for directors and senior managers. It was also seen as crucial, whatever basic programme was used, to tailor content and methodology carefully to the actual participants, so that it starts

Tips for effective capacity building from our survey

- **Role plays:** These work well in terms of changing attitudes, e.g. getting men or boys to play women or girls and vice versa to see things from different perspectives. "Women in the position of men worked amazingly!" Some role played a woman as Chairperson, with the men are uncooperative to look at how she could get things done. Others role played a discussion at home between husband and wife, discussing a woman's activities outside the home, e.g. being on councils. After the role play, discussions relating the play to real life were found to be helpful.
- **Using local proverbs** to demonstrate traditional, positive images of women. The following examples are from Uganda:
 - "You are as strong as a woman giving birth" (Lusoga).
 - "If you are going to eat meat, then the teeth must work together" (Luganda).
- **Quoting examples of how things have changed over time** in other spheres. For example, "our ancestors used to walk to the town, now we have tarmac roads to get to town and buses we can use."
- **Telling stories** about things that had happened, and then discussing them.
- **Discussing men's sisters'** experiences (who they would meet and get to know in a different way to their wives), proved effective in raising awareness of gender issues.

from people's own analysis and understanding. Wendoh and Wallace conclude that gender can be made meaningful by starting training by, for example, referring to times when women were more respected, highlighting damage done to families by current gender relations, and communities and anti-poverty work. Anne Coles found that by asking course participants to explain how gender roles and responsibilities in their families or communities have changed since their grandparents' time, much could be learnt and participants' motivation developed.

The need for all training to be **empowering and build participants' self-confidence** by involving a methodology of learning by doing was reiterated by various respondents. In fact especially in the case of diversity and gender equality, where the empowerment of those receiving training is particularly urgent, it is crucial to move on from the concept of 'training'. Those responsible for such capacity building efforts should see themselves as **organisational learning facilitators**, endowed with the opportunity to enthuse and motivate participants to generate their own ideas about the integration of equality into their work.

In 1983, Donald Schoen wrote about the need for developing **"Reflective Practitioners"** as opposed to the kind of technical professionalism which is implied in the call for tools and simplistic recipes for integrating gender. In the vastly different contexts in which aid workers implement their programmes, usually distant from managers and advisers, they need the capacity building which enables them to create their own tools. He called for a new paradigm moving beyond the idea of training, focusing on reflection *in* action and reflection *on* action. There is a need to apply this thinking to diversity and gender equality capacity building, and develop appropriate capacity building methodologies so we can fully develop the creative and critical potential of aid agency staff in this area.

Consultations in person with each participant before courses enable the learning facilitator to begin where they are at, and incorporate sessions tailored to their specific interests and work requirements. INTRAC course participants appreciate the opportunity to apply learning immediately in working groups to their own case studies, for which they are invited to bring materials from their own current work. A respondent found that asking participants to research certain topics under discussion worked well (e.g. did men or women most benefit from this project?).

The mentoring relationships built up by a UK-based faith organisation described above are another effective way of facilitating learning by doing.

Participative organisational gender audits

These have proved effective in moving organisations on in terms of integrating a concern for gender equality throughout its operations. An external or internal facilitator can support staff in developing their own capacity to review their own organisational procedures and practice, in terms of how their commitments to gender equality have been carried out. Internal members of staff are assigned as gender auditors, and provided with sufficient time and resources to carry out the audit mentored by the facilitator. Through focus groups and interviews conducted by the audit team, staff are enabled to honestly think through the relevance of gender equality to their own strategies and programmes, and how this has been operationalised in practice, in a way which enhances their sense of ownership of their organisational gender commitment.

Redressing male dominance in leadership

Women can be encouraged to apply for managerial positions for which they have the requisite knowledge and experience, but for which they may have lacked the confidence to

apply. Female members of staff can be supported to take on leadership roles wherever possible, such as acting up while managers are temporarily absent. Where female and male applicants for a job and where they demonstrate equal levels of relevant skills, a policy decision can be made to appoint a woman rather than a man. Quieter members of staff of both sexes can be actively encouraged to express their opinions and make contributions at staff meetings.

Learning from the gender experience

The diversity imperative and the movements for the different strands which make it up can learn much from the gender and development experience. Particularly, they can use the learning about moving from providing responses to women's specific issues to mainstreaming a gender perspective throughout programming. For example, having a disability perspective means understanding how any programme impacts on and can better benefit people living with a disability amongst its constituency, and not just promoting specific activities for the benefit of such people. The disability movement have rightly moved from a medical perspective to a social perspective, by which is meant that disability is no longer seen as a medical problem but a social one of unwillingness to accept difference, resulting in exclusion. For example, any income generation project should consider how it can better include people living with disability as a priority, as they are among the most likely to be suffering hardship.

Within organisations, gender champions have worked well to promote integration of gender equality. In Uganda it was noted that committed women tended to be automatic champions of gender equality, whereas for disability and elderly issues there was a relative lack of obvious spokespersons. Ways of compensating for this lack are therefore needed, e.g. employing more people with disabilities and elderly staff to provide increased cohorts of potential champions.

7. Key issues for further exploration

This paper has covered much information regarding what is happening to organisations in donor countries, as that is where most of the literature to date is focused. It is important now to uncover more about the way organisations in developing and transitional countries are working on diversity and gender relations and issues, and their opinions regarding the manner in which this should be done. What is happening where international NGOs are providing gender and diversity capacity building to local NGOs and CSOs?

The many ways in which organisations and gender specialists are already attempting to address the challenges involved in diversity and gender equality promotion have been described. More exploration and thinking are required to compare the results of different methods, further develop them, and test out their effectiveness. INTRAC intends to take this forward as a specific theme under its Praxis Learning Programme.

Key questions emerging from this paper are:

1. What methods have worked well to promote the impact of CSOs on sustainable diversity equality? How have two or more strands been addressed simultaneously, and with what effect? What is the relative efficacy of different modes of providing diversity and gender equality related expertise within CSOs?
2. How to prioritise the strands of diversity a given CSO should focus on.

3. Is gender mainstreaming good for gender equality? And is “mainstreaming” good for other strands of diversity?
4. How can faith-based organisations working out of male dominated religious structures successfully integrate gender and diversity equality objectives into their work?

Ideally, groups of people who make up organisations should develop collective capacities which are more than the sum of their individual parts. For Peter Senge, see his inspiring “The Fifth Discipline” (1990), real learning gets to the heart of what it is to be human, enabling us to constantly recreate ourselves. Learning organisations need to promote generative learning, i.e. that which enhances our capacity to create, rather than encouraging a slavish concern with recipe like tools.

Ways will be sought to nurture the development of such capacities around diversity equality integration. Practical ways of developing **creative practitioners** in relation to diversity and equality will be explored by the Programme, in collaboration with interested partners. How can we inspire staff to develop motivating visions for a world or for organisations where diversity equality reigns? How can we conduct capacity building which is firmly based in the cultural, religious and social worldviews of participants? How can we best enable practitioners to create their own methods and tools, suited to their own organisational aims and contexts?

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Annex 1: List of interviewees

- ADD: Emilienne Samon, Regional Coordinator for Francophone West Africa – Burkina Faso, Mali and Ivory Coast
- Anne Coles, International Gender Studies Centre, University of Oxford
- CDRN (Community Development Research Network): Susanne Possing, Development Researcher
- Centre for Citizens with Disabilities, Nigeria: David Anyaele
- Civil Society Support Team, Cyprus: Juliette Remy Sartin, Team Leader
- Cordaid, The Hague, The Netherlands
- DanChurchAid, Copenhagen, Denmark
- Development Network of Indigenous Voluntary Associations (DENIVA) Uganda: Sarah Nankebe, Membership Assistant
- Doreen Kwarimpa-Atim, Independent Consultant, Uganda
- Escuela de Desarrollo: Marcia Roeder
- Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE), PO Uganda: Agripinner Nandhego, Programme Officer
- Galmira Jamanova – Capacity Building Trainer, Almaty, Kazakhstan
- Gender Management, Sweden: Bam Bjorling
- Interbilim International Centre, Kyrgyzstan
- Maruja Barrig, Independent Consultant, Peru
- Project Empower, Durban, South Africa
- Save Children Sweden
- Swallows, Denmark: Louise Nolle
- Tanzania Home Economics Association: Asia K Kapande, Coordinator
- The Uganda Reach the Aged Association: Joseph Mugisha Bitature, Chief Executive Officer
- WaterAid: Adam Furse, Operations Director