



## GENDER EQUALITY GUIDANCE FOR GREEN ACTION WEEK

### What is a gender perspective?

Gender equality means that people have equal rights, conditions, responsibilities, opportunities, and power to shape their own lives and influence society. To SSNC, gender equality is both a goal in itself and a prerequisite for fair, inclusive and sustainable development. Our starting point is that people's roles and relationship to the environment are not naturally given but can be explained through several social factors, of which gender is one.

Gender is not biological, but socially, culturally, and historically constructed ideas and beliefs about masculinity and femininity. These beliefs forms stereotypes, expectations, and norms about gender roles and how women and men are expected to behave. It contributes to a power structure where women and men have different positions, power and influence. Gender is not static, it varies between different contexts and over time, and is constantly created and recreated in relation to the surrounding society. It can be stigmatizing for both women and men to fail to live up to the dominating gender norms.

When conducting a gender analysis, it is important to acknowledge that women, men, girls, and boys do not constitute homogenous groups. For example, not all women share the same life experiences, living conditions or struggles. Intersectionality is a useful analytical perspective to understand how relationships of superiority and subordination are created and maintained in interaction between different social variables. This includes gender, but also ethnicity, age, functional variation, class, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression. Due to our many intersecting identities, we have different opportunities, privileges, and positions in society. When applying a gender perspective to environmental issues, aim to have an intersectional approach to better understand and influence the power structures within and between different groups.

### A gender perspective on environmental issues

Gender is linked to power and affects people's access to, sustainable use of, and control over natural resources. As a result of unequal power structures and gender discrimination, women and men interact with the environment, as well as suffer from and can deal with environmental degradation, climate change and poverty, in different ways and to different extents.

Climate change disproportionately affects women due to a generally poorer socio-economic position and lack of access to resources. Women also face more barriers than men in accessing land, markets, capital, financial services, training, information and technologies. Projects and policies for environment, poverty reduction and sustainable resource use that are gender blind and do not take these inequalities into account risk preserving or reinforcing them. To avoid this, it is important to integrate a gender perspective in projects and to analyse how efforts affect the relationship between women, men, and other groups.

## **A gender perspective on consumer issues**

Consumer advocates have a vital role to play in striving for change on issues that affect all different types of consumers, including gender equality. And as a movement we should be collectively focused on making substantial improvements to the lives of women and men everywhere. Consumers International focuses its gender strategy at the intersection between gender rights and consumer rights.

For example, women are a vital consumer audience, driving 70-80% of all consumer purchasing, through a combination of their buying power and influence. They are active and influential change-makers: producing, reviewing, campaigning, selling and legislating, they are involved in all areas of the consumption process. But they are often overlooked when it comes to product design; for example, cars are often designed around a male body, meaning women in car accidents are 50% more likely to be seriously injured. When applying a gender perspective, it is important to consider the intersection between gender rights and consumer rights.

## **Integrating a gender perspective in projects**

A gender analysis highlights the differences between groups in terms of their relative distribution of resources, opportunities and choice, power and voice and human security. Efforts to increase gender equality may focus on making visible the roles of women, men and other groups. It may also aim to strengthen women and other marginalized groups' ability to participate in and influence decision-making processes and/or increase their access to and control over various resources. Such resources can be natural resources, but also paid work, markets, land, capital, financial services, training, information, and technology.

While designing and implementing your GAW project, you should think about:

- **Context:**
  - Are women generally responsible for managing household budgets in the local community?
  - What is the balance of power between men and women in the local community? Do men hold the majority of positions of power?
- **Access:**
  - Do activities within the project take place at a time and place that will allow women and other marginalized groups to participate (e.g., considering women's unpaid care and domestic work)?
  - What is required to promote women's participation?
- **Benefit:**
  - How will women and men respectively benefit from the project?
  - Does the project centre around consumer goods / services important to the lives of women/men?
- **Risks:**
  - Is there a risk that the project may reinforce negative gender stereotypes/norms or inequality between women and men or other marginalized groups?
  - How can the project reduce potential negative effects?
- **Staff and budget:**

- Do resources from the budget need to be allocated to enable activities directed towards women, girls and/or other marginalized groups?
- Do the staff or target group require training to address gender issues in a meaningful way?

In the past, members have adopted two broad strategies to include women in their GAW campaigns:

1. **Teaching practical skills.** Ask women about the skills they need to consume more sustainably when designing projects. If workshops are seen to be genuinely helpful to women's everyday lives, more people will be willing to participate. Provide free childcare for during workshops to ensure there are no barriers for mothers to participate.
2. **Creating a platform for gender equality.** Many members have successfully given women a platform to share ideas, interact with key stakeholders, and influence the design of 'sharing community' initiatives. Are there any women's civil society organisations that you could invite to your platform? Would a digital platform reach more women?

Although these strategies have worked in the past, there are many more possibilities that are worth testing. New strategies should be designed according to the criteria above, tested, and shared in the narrative reporting for the benefit of the rest of our global network.