

MICROCON Gender Framework



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Gender equality – EU guidelines

As an EU funded project, we are obliged to meet the EU guidelines in relation to gender equality. This means bringing in women researchers at all levels, addressing women's specific needs rather than working in a gender neutral fashion in all aspects of the work and ensuring that everything we do 'contribute[s] to an enhanced understanding of gender issues'.

We are obliged under our contract to ensure that we hire at least as many women as men and that we design their employment in such a way as to allow flexibility. We are also obliged to see that all project activities, including all kinds of training activities and workshops are open to as many women as men. Gender issues *must* be included in all project outputs and must be integrated into our conceptual framework. All survey instruments must be gender sensitive.

You should know that MICROCON is obliged to present evidence of how the different elements of the project are doing in regard to numbers of men and women, work done on raising gender awareness and promoting women in research. All action plans will also be monitored for gender sensitivity and all research will be monitored to ensure it is taking gender issues into consideration. Remember here that we want to move beyond the EU's guidelines to include women to include men as masculinised beings, not as some kind of gender neutral human being as has often been the way they have been treated in the past. Therefore, we expect you to bring out in your work the specific relations of masculinity to your research and not just women's issues. Below we have included guidelines for doing this.

Gender and Research

In many project proposals, gender is said to be a cross-cutting issue. In fact, gender is not so much cross cutting as all pervasive. What I mean by this is that gender

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permeates all aspects of society. I am not trying to say that it is more or less important than other elements of identity. The point is that each one of us is a gendered being who experiences everything in life through this. There is no such person as a gender-neutral one - males and females in all socio-cultural groupings have differing experiences because of it. Therefore, there is no policy or issue that is gender neutral either. Men's and women's, girls' and boys' experiences and needs are different in some ways, similar in others but these need to be acknowledged and not just brushed under the carpet or ignored.

Science and scholarship have systematically excluded gender as perhaps being too controversial, since close attention to it very often makes things explicit that once in the open can be seen to be extremely negative. One such issue is the fact that the vast majority of violence in the world is perpetrated by men, either on other men, or more often on women (Pearce 2006). A systematically gendered approach to social science would have made this clear long ago and in so doing have forced both scholars and policy makers to take it into consideration. As it is, while we are aware of this experientially, few studies of violence, war, or conflict actually address it or its implications.

In MICROCON, we will be looking at the deeper implications of masculinity and violence in several of the projects in the gender workpackage, as well as on particular aspects of how women are affected by violence. However, the all-pervasiveness of gender means that those in the other workpackages also need to take it into consideration.

There are two main issues here. One is the need to desegregate all groups of human beings by sex in order to explore the different ideas, needs, and experiences of males and females. Men and women are present in almost all institutional as well as personal situations. Even when institutions appear to be single-sex, such as are many militaries, analysis has shown how deeply the other sex is also implicated. Cynthia Enloe, for instance, has shown how femininity has been militarised in the US in multiple ways besides in women soldiers - in soldiers' wives, mothers, factory workers producing goods for military use, and so on (Enloe 1983, 1989, 1993, 2000).

In all current and recent wars and other kinds of community conflicts, women and girls are intrinsically involved in a multiplicity of ways. For instance, they may be members of street gangs themselves, or they may be partners/mothers/sisters of male members. A discussion with male gang members on the subject of women and their relationships with them is likely to show the important part that they play in the identity and behaviour of the males concerned. To ignore this is to leave out crucial aspects of what is actually happening and is likely to obfuscate rather than clarify the situation. Women fight in armies as well as servicing male soldiers in a multiplicity of ways. They are also implicated in wars when they remain behind to look after their homes while their menfolk fight, when they indicate support for wars started by their governments or local warlords, or even when they hide their sons so they cannot be forced into the army. Women also have very particular issues in relation to post conflict situations that often differ markedly from those of men. One that is especially relevant to this project is that of the escalation of domestic violence and the rape of women and girls that is so common after wars.

For each research project there are many questions that could be asked in relation to gender. In the appendix, I have included a list of questions on women's and girls' roles in conflict that are related to different kinds of research. These can serve as examples but obviously will not cover every situation. I am available to help all of you unsure how to include women and girls in your data collection.

However, making a gendered analysis is not simply a matter of including women. Gender does not mean women, as many seem to think. Gender is something that applies equally to both sexes. There are two ways that the term tends to be used – gender roles (the things men are supposed to do, such as support their families financially, and those women are supposed to do, such as housework) and gender norms – the social norms that men and women are expected to live up to as gendered beings. However, in regard to our present research there is a third way of using the term and that is as gender identities. These are the sets of male and female characteristics that families/communities attempt to inculcate in their members from birth, and which make them intelligible in and acceptable to their communities (Harris 2004). They are thus community/social group specific, even though there are many characteristics that have become generalised over large parts of the globe.

Gender identities are not immutable and are constantly changing as people strive to present themselves in ways they deem positive to different audiences. They also change in different environments, such as school and peer groups. Today's peripatetic life, where increasing numbers of people migrate temporarily or permanently to work in mines, from rural to urban areas or abroad, and where employment opportunities are rapidly changing too, has deeply affected the way people express their identities. These are further influenced by the media in multiple forms, including not only television and films but also computer games, the internet, and so on.

It should also be said that gender identities are not reality. That is to say, they are ideals that we can never live up to (Butler 1995: 31-2) and which in many cases we do not even wish to live up to. At times we disguise this fact by putting on notional 'masks' that make it look as if we conform when in fact we experience ourselves very differently. Thus, women can make themselves look subordinate without actually feeling it, while men try to look powerful when they feel most helpless (Harris 2004). These 'masks' are not material but simply ways of presenting oneself. However, in some cultural groups, such as among Muslims, they do take on material form. In other words, the fact that a woman wears *hijab* or even *niqab* (face veil), does not mean she experiences herself as downtrodden or powerless. When men use violence this also does not mean they feel strong (Pearce 2006).

In our Uganda project, we will be looking at how gender identities have been implicated in the war in the north. How these have been manipulated not only by the government and the oppositional forces (Dolan 2002) but also by the colonial powers and others before them. We intend to look at the different ways this has been done and the reactions. We will also look at the effects of different kinds of experiences on gender identities.

We will concentrate on masculinities more than on femininities. However, it is impossible to separate the two since masculinities demand complementary femininities in order to make sense (Connell 1991). For example, if aggression is a male characteristic, as it is in so many societies, then submission or meekness or the equivalent will be found as the corresponding female characteristic, the implications

being that men should fight to protect (vulnerable) womenfolk who are clearly unable to protect themselves. This is one way in which gender is made use of in wartime.

Gender relations imply power relations in multiple ways that go far beyond a simple binary – male power over females. Many southern societies are gerontocratic, which means that age may be a stronger indication of power positionality than sex. In such societies gender identities change markedly with age, so that, for instance, a recently married woman and man and their parents will have significantly different characteristics, mothers being more powerful in many ways than their sons. But gender is also made use of in the construction of power relations in the wider sense – even nationally and internationally. For instance, governments and the international community manipulate gender identities to suit particular political aims. There are many clear examples of gender identities being used by western governments (eg. return to family values = women resuming a subservient domestic identity, attacks on abortion rights = women's bodies at the service of the state, men as breadwinners = trying to hide the fact that sufficient jobs do not exist for both men and women or that the infrastructure for women to work is absent (lack of day-care centres, etc.). Enloe's analyses referred to above, show clearly how the US government has manipulated gender identities for the purposes of militarising not only the US population but also populations surrounding US army bases all over the world. This is another way in which gender is implicated in relation to war.

In the MICROCON project proposal, we talk about war occurring on the 'collapse of peaceful normativity' (p. 14). As far as women go, it is difficult to say what this last might consist of. Does peaceful normativity include constant exposure to battering, rape, and other kinds of domestic and community-level violence that women and children are exposed to on an everyday basis? Is this the peaceful normativity we are looking for people to return to after the war? How has the war affected the rates of such violence (Pankhurst 2003)? These are important questions not only for domestic violence issues, but also for the question of war itself. It is increasingly being postulated that there are intimate connections between domestic violence and war (Pearce 2006) and research has shown that disturbed and troubled communities experience high levels of multiple gendered forms of violence (Moser & McIlwaine 2001).

Again, when we focus on identity issues, we need to realise that no identity exists in a non-gendered form. Ethnicity, race, religious affiliation, skin colour, etc. are gendered attributes – that is to say, they are differentially experienced by males and females and the nature of these experiences shapes how we act in regard to them. The issue of tensions between Muslim and non-Muslim communities illustrates this point particularly clearly since gender identities have been made central to these on both sides, Muslim femininities having been highlighted in regard to controversies over veiling, and so on, something that implicitly draws in masculinities owing to the complementary nature of gender identities. Understanding that Muslim males feel their masculinity to be under attack here can help us grasp why they are so reluctant to allow their womenfolk to change.

In all our workpackage themes, gender plays a significant role. Poverty, land tenure, the refugee state, risk management, security, inequality and social exclusion, health problems and others are all experienced differentially by women and men, as they are by girls and boys. Even governance, that masculinised terrain, has significant gender issues, as Enloe and other feminist political scientists have shown.

Finally, it is important to realise that experiences are not only gendered but aged. Children's experiences are as important to take into account as those of adults. The elderly are as important as the young. The experiences of each sex within the different age groups are vastly different. Issues of violence are strongly related to age, as children and the aged of both sexes are particularly vulnerable and as they may be left to cope in the absence of the middle generation of one or even both sexes. This may be exacerbated in cases where migration and/or AIDS have reduced the numbers of this generation living in the local context.

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APPENDIX – Women’s roles

We need to consider what women’s roles are in relation to war – for example?

- how much do women encourage sons/brothers/friends/husbands to participate in violence/war/conflict and support them once they have joined in?
- How much are women complicit in wars in their supporting of the overall situation – such as political support of various kinds?
- What kinds of supporting roles to the army do women carry out?
- How much are women forced into situations of complicity by being forced into the army, to serve soldiers as cooks, sex slaves, etc.?
- How much do women who work in weapons factories support wars?
- What is the role of women soldiers?
- Are women soldiers as violent as men and do they kill on the same scale?

How do women survive in the post-conflict situation?

- Do they receive the same level of attention and support as men – for instance, those who fought in the war in relation to the DDR or other similar process? Are women who provided services for soldiers (including sexual ones) given the same kinds of support and respect as soldiers?
- Are they exposed to particular kinds of suffering during and after war (for instance, mass rapes) at the hands of unknown as well as known men, at the hands of husbands, fathers, sons, and brothers shamed by their rapes, at the hands of violent husbands? Did domestic violence escalate after the war, thus exposing women to as much or perhaps even more violence in the ‘post-conflict’ situation as during the war?
- What about women’s economic survival after war?
- What about any gains that women may have managed to achieve during the war – such as more jobs, conceptualization as economic and not only domestic actors, political freedoms, etc.? Are governments and those in charge of rehabilitation taking these kinds of things into consideration or are they just interested in pushing women out in order to provide jobs for men?
- How much are women’s interests damaged by the peacekeeping etc. forces, who often start a sex industry around them, encourage violence against women and their maltreatment if not actively then by their easy acceptance that women do not matter and have no role to play in the peacekeeping processes?

Refugee/IDP situations have particular issues for women – such as:

- Women may find themselves coerced into having sex and/or otherwise serving men in exchange for food, shelter, documents, economic resources, or protection from other men
- Lay-outs of camps need to be made with women’s issues in mind – for instance, is it safe for them to use the latrines? Are they exposed to violence when they go to collect water or firewood? Are their living quarters safe or are they exposed to threats from enemy forces within the camp?
- Are the camp guards properly trained and disciplined to safeguard women and girls and not to harass, rape, or otherwise molest them?
- Do the men in the camp make their own women’s lives difficult by
 - insisting that their religion does not allow them to leave their quarters to pick up food,

- selling the food apportioned to their family when they are the ones nominated to receive it
- taking the food to eat themselves and not giving any to their wives and children
- refusing to allow them to attend group sessions, study, or use medical services

Women also need to be included in gang-related research – for instance,

- Are all the gangs only male, or are some women only and some mixed?
- In the first and last of these, what support roles are played by women?
- Do women encourage their boyfriends/partners to participate?
- Do women serve male gang members sexually?
- Do they provide other kinds of support, even logistical kinds?
- Do they hide them from the police or other gangs?
- What about the mothers and sisters of gang members?
- In what ways do gangs target women that is different from how they target men – through rape, threats, beatings, women-specific kinds of murders, making the streets too violent for them, etc.?

We also should not forget about children – for example:

- How much do boy and/or girl children participate in wars in all the same ways as adults of their sex?
- What are special problems that children of both sexes have in relation to war?
- What kinds of problems might children have in the post-conflict situation?
- How might children of various different age groups be affected – eg. PTSD?, lack of schooling, inability to adapt to non-conflict situation, etc.
- How do children get involved with gangs?
- What does it do to children if parents or older siblings are involved?