



TOWARD EQUITY SERIES

# PRACTICING WHAT WE PREACH

Management and Decision-Making  
Processes with Equity

LARA BLANCO  
GUISELLE RODRÍGUEZ

WORLD CONSERVATION UNION  
ARIAS FUNDATION FOR PEACE AND HUMAN PROGRESS



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This logo reflects the basic principle that should be present in any vision of sustainable development: equilibrium between human beings and nature, irrespective of age, ethnic group, economic status or sex.

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# INTRODUCTION



The Social Program of the World Conservation Union Regional Office for Mesoamerica (IUCN-ORMA) and the Arias Foundation's Center for Human Progress began this project in March 1997, thanks to the special interest and financial support of The Netherlands. Our objective is to unify gender and environmental efforts by providing technical assistance for regional organizations and rural development projects interested in incorporating a gender equity perspective into their programs.

The challenge was to offer more than just conceptual support regarding the definitions and implications of gender. We sought to provide tools and instruments for integrating a gender equity perspective at every level of the work cycle. Our ultimate goal was to ensure that projects achieved greater equity in regard to participation by women and men in the decision-making process as well as in accessing services, goods and resources.

Our satisfaction in presenting this series is twofold. First, over the years we have concluded that even though many initiatives in the field have a positive attitude towards incorporating a gender equity perspective, they have not been able to find practical methodologies for doing so. In this series, called "**Toward Equity**," we have made an effort to offer concrete suggestions and recommendations for incorporating a gender equity perspective into every stage of the project cycle.

Second, the modules have been prepared and validated by countless numbers of project technicians in the field. These publications have been enriched by their invaluable contributions, and we send them our most profound thanks.

In some cases our recommendations were originally designed by a person or group of people in each country and then widely disseminated, discussed and validated in different parts of Central America (Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras.) This is the case of the modules on Proposal Design, Participatory Appraisals, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, Participation and Empowerment and Systematization.

The recommendations contained in the other components of this series were based on participatory research. This is also true with regard to the modules on indicators and on equitable project administration and management.

- MODULE 1** A GOOD START MAKES A BETTER ENDING  
Writing Proposals with a Gender Perspective
- MODULE 2** SEEK AND YE SHALL FIND  
Creating Participatory Appraisals with a Gender Perspective
- MODULE 3** IF WE ORGANIZE IT WE CAN DO IT  
Project Planning with a Gender Perspective
- MODULE 4** TAKING THE PULSE OF GENDER  
Gender-Sensitive Systems for Monitoring and Evaluation
- MODULE 5** IN UNITY THERE IS POWER  
Processes of Participation and Empowerment
- MODULE 6** EYES THAT SEE...HEARTS THAT FEEL  
Equity Indicators
- MODULE 7** PRACTICING WHAT WE PREACH  
Toward Administration and Management with Equity
- MODULE 8** SHARING SECRETS  
Systematization from a Gender Perspective
- MODULE 9** UNVEILING GENDER  
Basic Conceptual Elements for Understanding Equity

The ideal moment to use these modules is at the beginning of a work initiative or process. But they can also be applied whenever existing projects decide to introduce changes in processes that have already begun.

We hope that this series will be of value to all of those who are working in rural development projects and, like us, would like to make equity a lifelong commitment for the construction of a new society.

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*Arias Foundation*

# PURPOSE OF THE MODULE

## **I** **Conceptual clarification**

**Presentation of the topic and new definitions for management with a gender perspective**

## **II** **Gender equity policies**

**The strategic importance of defining guidelines or policies promoting the application of concrete measures toward gender equity in organizations**

## **III** **Organizational structures that promote equity**

**Reflections on different types of organization and how these can be adapted to apply a gender perspective**

## **III** **Human resources in equity**

**Primary considerations concerning the promotion and development of personnel from a gender perspective**



## FOREWORD

Local and national development practitioners are becoming increasingly aware of the need to apply a gender perspective in their management and decision-making processes. The reason is clear: rural development with equity must be rooted in the organization's own capacity to practice equity and equality within. If equitable relations are to be achieved, development initiatives must examine and modify their ways of working and their internal makeup and functions, and modify their ways of working.

Working on the "Toward Equity"<sup>1</sup> project afforded an opportunity to look at management processes within the organizations and projects involved in rural development, and this motivated a specific study<sup>2</sup> on new approaches to the internal management processes of organizations and projects working in rural development. The findings of this study served as the basic input for this module.

The need to adapt institutional policies and the internal structure of the organizations and projects has an **ethical** basis, first of all, to strive for more democratic and equitable spaces of work. It is also an **operational** necessity: without an internal process of change, the very structure of the organization will become a straitjacket dooming any effort toward equity to failure. This also relates to the organization's external work in **promoting and developing** local structures so that they too can provide opportunities for equity.

*These are the reasons that motivated us to write this module and promote the discussion and analysis needed for organizations to adopt a gender policy—not only concerning its work outside, but also as a quality that must be present within its very core.*

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1 \_\_\_\_ One of the "Achilles' heels" identified in an appraisal of 53 rural development projects was the prevalence of vertical and patriarchal relations within these projects. This issue is addressed in greater detail in the publication, *Nudos y Desnudos*.

2 \_\_\_\_ This study was entitled *Nuevas formas de abordar los procesos administrativos al interior de las organizaciones y proyectos de desarrollo rural*.

Debate on democratization and participation is enriched when the topic of gender is incorporated, because it makes these concepts real and human. This explains why discussion on how to promote or encourage equity in development work is only possible if the approach to this issue is serious and consistent.

In reality, it is impossible to know what lies at the end of the road, but we keep ourselves headed in that direction. The only way to find out what steps are needed to move away from where we are now is to get up and start walking.

## METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

The objective of this module is to propose new ways of looking at administrative and managerial processes from a perspective of gender equity. Specifically, we have tried to identify the institutional policies that can be applied within rural development organizations and projects and can have a positive impact on methods of work, interaction between the different disciplines, the existence of spaces for reflection, and equitable gender relations.

The process of preparing this module required several levels of work. These included a meticulous investigation of bibliography and theoretical references on this innovative topic, practical information provided by six case studies of organizations and projects in the Central American region, and discussion with groups of specialists and the leaders of rural development projects. Estela Alemán and Silvia Hernández, two Nicaraguan researchers for a women's development organization (Mujeres para Desarrollo) were in charge of collecting information in the field. This module would never have materialized without the contributions made by all these persons.

It was difficult to select case studies of successful experiences in management with gender equity, because we found very few organizations in which the internal construction of equity was explicitly stated as a goal. We identified a few cases of organizations and projects that have been able to make important modifications in some administrative areas, but not in others. This difficulty was compounded by institutional reticence or by the invisibility of such actions because they are not considered to be very important.

The following organizations were selected to gather inputs for this study on the practice and day-to-day efforts of people working for rural development in Central America:

**A rural development project:**

- *Proyecto de Desarrollo Rural Peninsular (DRIP). Paquera, Costa Rica*

**Four nongovernmental organizations:**

- *Servicios profesionales y técnicos en proyectos de desarrollo (El Productor S.R.L.), Costa Rica*
- *Organización para el Desarrollo Municipal (ODESAR), Nicaragua*
- *Proyecto de Desarrollo Santiago (PRODESSA), in Guatemala*
- *Ak - Tenamit, in Guatemala*

**A farmers' union:**

- *Consejo Coordinador de Organizaciones Campesinas de Honduras (COCOCH)*

The heterogeneity of the organizations and projects in this investigation provided opportunities for gaining a better understanding of the different types of organization involved in development efforts. No matter what their nature, organizations will be able to find answers in this guide to their questions about programmatic and operational aspects. However, this same heterogeneity made it impossible to perform a comparative analysis identifying "best practices" for similar organizations.

*Analysis  
of  
information*

Using the results of our fieldwork we prepared a series of basic questions in order to pinpoint equity-related aspects of management in organizations and projects with respect to the following questions:

- What role does promotion of equality play in institutional policies?
- What type of power structure exists in the organization?
- What position do women have in organizational structures?
- How do women view and analyze leadership problems?

- How is positive leadership of women built?
- Have there been any modifications in institutional powers?
- What is the extent of the changes institutions and development organizations propose to make in applying a gender perspective?
- How does the organization manage the relation between the personal goals of its staff and those of the institution?
- How strongly does the organization believe in personal development?
- How does the organization perceive personal development for women and men?

Here we are concerned with two, closely interwoven elements: How and why do we distribute work, and what role does power play in this division? Actions can be proposed to modify inequalities in each aspect of the organization. This module endeavors to identify these actions through an analysis of policies, organization and human resources management at different administrative levels:

### *Strategic level*

#### **Gender equity policies:**

The role of policies on gender equity and affirmative action for carrying out these policies

### *Programmatic level*

#### **Organization and forms of work:**

The organizational structure and its implications in terms of equity (types of internal organization, the role of management/ leadership, hierarchies, team work)

### *Operational level:*

#### **Human resources:**

Human resources administration with a gender equity perspective (hiring policies, incentives, wage policy, characteristics of a gender-sensitive organization)



# I

## CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

### Reconceptualizing Management

In recent years, there has been growing interest in efforts directed at building capacity and at management and decision-making in development organizations and projects<sup>3</sup> in the region.

Up to now most of the literature and experiences have emphasized strategic planning, self-management of organizations and leadership. New proposals have been made for administrative processes, such as "total quality" and "re-engineering," to name some of the most popular.

These developments, which come from the field of business administration, have been applied extensively within organizations of civil society to strengthen institutional administrative capacity. However, given the different natures of a business or government agency and development organizations or social projects, these concepts may not automatically apply. There is a long way to go in this area as a consequence.

Such proposals have ignored or dealt only timidly with gender relations in the administrative process of an organization. They offer ideas for strengthening organizations but without considering how their policies, form of work and interaction among personnel relate to overall distribution of power. This module will examine the relation between these aspects and gender equity.

Underlying the way we live is a whole range of cultural, social, economic and political relations. The definition of these relations centers on what we call a "patriarchal system,"<sup>4</sup> in which women's subordination is viewed as natural, accepted and socially legitimate.

---

3 \_\_\_ Many of these efforts are due to changes in the context of the Central American region and in the priorities of international cooperation.

4 \_\_\_ Social scientists have performed extensive analysis of women's subordinated position in society using the concept of patriarchy. This refers to a system of masculine control and domination over the productive and reproductive activities of women. The notion of system refers to the fact that patriarchy is a structural phenomenon, a form of social organization with deep material and ideological roots, and as such, operates outside of individual motivation. The patriarchal system has the implicit and explicit support of social, economic, political and legal institutions that establish a division of functions, roles and stereotypes between the sexes. Given this situation, patriarchal ideology is at the foundation of all social institutions.

The use of a gender perspective to analyze society makes it possible to identify how social structures, and particularly institutions, respond to and reinforce these principles. This in turn makes it possible to change and transform existing relations between the genders.

Gender relations are expressed concretely in social institutions such as the family, church, school, local development association or cooperative, none of which escape the domination of the prevailing patriarchal culture. As a result, no matter what type of organization is involved (nongovernmental organizations, government agencies or projects); it is necessary to reflect on how we can go about constructing relations based on gender equity and the empowerment of women within our organizations.

In this module, **organization** is understood as any established structure with a degree of internal coherence; a defined mission, policies or strategic principles; and work mechanisms for reaching its objectives. Organizations are actors in the community/society and thus hold a degree of social power. They possess information, goods, influence and other resources that are distributed and appropriated according to certain rules.

**Management** is understood as an institutional action permitting an optimal use of available resources in order to attain given development objectives. This action is carried out through a process of decision-making that receives constant feedback and accurate and timely information. Essentially, it is a corporate process for solving problems or addressing needs. Management is not a mechanical process of adding or withdrawing resources, but of detecting timely opportunities, developing alliances and agreements, working as a team and analyzing policy. It thus involves efforts oriented toward negotiation and dealing with uncertainty.

Taken as a whole, actions, procedures and measures for attaining a goal comprise another aspect of management or "management style." For example, management can be participatory or diplomatic. Management that is gender-sensitive seeks to eliminate inequalities between women and men regarding access to goods and other resources for power.

From this point of view, management and decision-making for development projects and organizations can be seen as the collection of actions taken to reach a given objective. They include both more strategic and global decision-making processes of the organization and concrete mechanisms for actually carrying out those decisions.

Only by analyzing each one of these concepts and re-reading them from the perspective of gender equity can we truly modify an organizational structure and promote a more comprehensive process of work, in a more rewarding and humane setting for every one of the men and women in the organization.

## Levels of Analysis

For the purposes of this document, it is useful to make the same distinction frequently made by specialized literature in the field concerning the three levels of managerial and administrative work: the strategic level, the programmatic level and the operational level.<sup>5</sup> Administration and management relate to these three levels.

The strategic level corresponds to the definition of the project's long-term objectives and its orientations and policies, including those on gender equity and structure. The second level pertains to programs, work organization and personnel distribution, resource allocation and teamwork. Finally, the operational level involves the development of day to day activities, such as information mechanisms, evaluation and follow-up, and external promotion.



5 — There are many ways of breaking down organizations for analytical purposes. For example, we could speak of the components of an organization having to do with strategy (the mission and how it will be carried out); structure (division and grouping of functions, authority, responsibilities and relations and how these are connected to information, communication and decision making); flows of cash and merchandise; and culture, which refers to shared values and the standards under which members of the organizations develop.

## What kind of power do women seek?

Here we are referring to power relations within our organizations which, like all social entities (social groups, institutions, families, etc.), have and use power in different forms.

In most cases, women's numerous attempts to have their rights expressed in documents of different types have not translated into substantive changes putting an end to thousands of years of discrimination. This situation forms part of a broader reality characterized, among other things, by the lack of opportunities for women in accessing positions, power and decision-making in a given structure.<sup>6</sup>

This explains why women are excluded from the exercise of power and why it is necessary to create mechanisms to change this. However, it is important to clarify here exactly what it is we are referring to in terms of power.

Our proposal is to construct *new types of power*. The power traditionally employed to subordinate can be used instead to strengthen women. It can be used to promote spaces for inter-gender equity and equality among people by fomenting more equitable relations and personal growth.<sup>7</sup>

Magdalena Leon (León, M. 1997) defines this new notion as being "based on more democratic social relations and driven by shared power...a power in which relations between men and women permit an integration of the micro and macro, of private and public, of productive and reproductive, of the local and the global...including a generational ethic implying that the use of power betters social relations of present generations and makes those of future generations possible and gratifying."

Very often the only reference we have of power is a vision that oppresses us. We are familiar with the power to subordinate that is established and justified by undervaluing the other. This is why one of the fears expressed most frequently during discussions on gender equity is that women will take power and use it in the same way it has been used so far.

**Building  
positive  
power**

6 \_\_\_\_ The use of power is one of the most significant difficulties of organizations and projects. The publication *Nudos y Desnudos* (Aguilar, L. et al. 1997) points out that projects are extremely vertical and eminently masculine and that masculine hierarchies respond to female leadership with fear and resistance.

7 \_\_\_\_ Module 5 of the "Toward Equity" series, entitled *In Unity There is Power*, examines the issue of power and offers concrete suggestions for discussion within rural development organizations and projects.

In many workshops and discussions local people and technicians declare their opposition to any situation in which "the shoe is on the other foot." This reflects their belief that there is only one way to exercise power, and their fear is that the only change will be in who plays certain roles.

Several paths have been proposed to promote equity and the construction of these new powers. In this module we will place special emphasis on affirmative action as a means of systematically opening up opportunities that have been closed to women.

## Affirmative Action

Because of the conditions in which the majority of women currently live all over the world, it has been necessary to create compensatory mechanisms as a concrete way of meeting demands for equality. One way of balancing power within the organization is to establish a gender policy that includes affirmative action measures.

*Making  
changes  
happen*

Affirmative action is defined as a **concrete measure** whose purpose is to compensate a certain social group for inequalities resulting from discriminatory practices or social systems.

Such action represents a "strategy for establishing equal opportunity through measures that make it possible to correct or compensate for discrimination resulting from social practices or systems. Their purpose is to implement concrete programs providing women with concrete advantages" (Camacho, R. 1996.)

While affirmative action is often identified with measures focused on increasing the political participation of women, they can be designed to eliminate or reduce discriminatory situations where they exist, and can be adapted to the reality of rural development organizations and projects.



## II GENDER EQUITY POLICY

In this module, by policy we are referring to the set of guiding principles of an ethical nature that orient and give meaning to the organization or project. In general, they integrate basic work fundamentals and their purpose so that short-term actions have long-term significance.

The definition of policies for a gender equity perspective starts with reflection on what the strategic guidelines of the organization or project should be. In practice, the moment for organizations to make this analysis is when they carry out institutional strategic planning.

*This section examines the importance of defining institutional guidelines for a gender equity perspective at the level of institutional policy. After some opening comments on this topic, we look at strategic planning exercises as the ideal vehicle for institutional discussion on how to carry out this process of change. A number of tips are provided on how to prepare for this discussion. Finally, this section emphasizes how important it is for affirmative action measures to be a part of institutional policy.*

### Gender and Institutional Policy

A gender equity policy consists of a set of principles, actions and measures structured in a logical, continuous and systematic way and aimed at establishing more equitable relations between women and men within the organization and in settings impacted by the organization's work. It is thus global, with implications for the organization as a whole and for its projects and work with participating groups, sectors or communities. It results from an explicit recognition of inequalities.

In the social transformation processes promoted by rural projects, the recognition of these inequalities is a fundamental step in carrying out the institutional mission.

In Central America it is more common for NGOs to use the term of "institutional policy." In small organizations or rural development projects, however, these guiding elements are often called the **mission or work principles**.

The mechanisms or measures for establishing a gender equity policy can vary from one organization to another. The adoption of this type of measure within a ministry of agriculture, for example, can be a formal process that in some cases requires legislative approval. In a grassroots organization or development program, other types of approval are required. The objective of this module is not to contribute elements for all of these cases, but to make general recommendations that can serve to motivate or orient individual processes.

## Gender and Strategic Planning for Development

In the world of development organizations there is an increasing awareness of the importance of investing in strategic planning. This entails a collective construction of the mission, the incorporation of aspects concerning institutional sustainability, the development of productive proposals for wise use of natural resources and the strengthening of local organizations, to cite some of the most common aspects of strategic planning.

Strategic planning is important because it allows the members of an organization to identify future scenarios based on an objective image. The exercise of strategic planning recognizes power as a central category of the analysis, looking at the different stakeholders and the interests they represent and potential alliances, and recognizing opponents and opportunities for negotiation in the organization.

The need to incorporate gender considerations has now become a key aspect of strategic planning, given the understanding that development policies and project administration should take the knowledge and experience of both women and men into account. Women's experience should be valued, and opportunities should be created so that their interests and needs can be taken into consideration as a means of advancing toward new ways for women and men to relate to one another.

In some organizations, strategic planning processes have become highly sophisticated, are carried out systematically over time and use methodologies encouraging full participation by personnel and by the population participating in programs and projects being implemented.

New paradigms and interpretations of development emphasize the need for incorporating a gender equity perspective to obtain changes aimed at equitable participation by women and men.

### *GENDER EQUITY AS A BASIC ELEMENT OF NEW DEVELOPMENT PARADIGMS*

*Agenda 21, resulting from the United Nation Conference on Environment and Development, advocates the elimination of all barriers that discriminate against women as an objective that integrates development and environment, since this makes it possible for women to participate fully and contribute their knowledge and experience in the management and preservation of natural resources. Likewise, Agenda 21 also establishes the need to encourage an increase in the proportion of women holding leadership and planning positions in the area of environment and development (Arias Foundation for Peace and Human Progress, 1995.)*

*The Copenhagen Declaration establishes that social development is a fundamental element of the needs and aspirations of people the world over, and that sustainable social and economic development is not possible without the full participation of women (Arias Foundation for Peace and Human Progress, 1995.)*

*The Beijing Summit Platform of Action stresses the need for association between men and women in order to attain the common objective of gender equality. It calls for the adoption of immediate and concerted measures by all in order to create a peaceful, just, humane and equitable world, based on human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the principles of equality among all persons, and to this purpose recognizes that sustainable economic growth is needed to support development and social justice (Arias Foundation for Peace and Human Progress, 1996.)*

## Construction of a Gender Equity Policy

When a project or organization faces the challenge of formulating a gender equity policy, the first task is to identify the **connection** between the organization's field of work and a gender perspective by recognizing that inequalities in the relationship between women and men affect achievement of the development objective and on the impact the organization can have on its field of action. In this sense, discussion will make it possible to incorporate the search for gender equity within the mission itself of the organization.

In the majority of cases, the organization's mission is directed at seeking better living conditions for the population by offering a technical, productive or financing service, to cite examples. One of the comments heard most frequently within organizations that have **not** initiated a formal process of institutional transformation based on a gender equity perspective is how unnecessary it is to establish an *explicit* gender policy, since this is a natural by-product of the mission itself.

In practice, this omission tends to have important repercussions. When a gender equity perspective is assumed to be contained in the mission, the organization's policies and operational guidelines do not make any express reference to demands for equity and potential for transformation is reduced.

Under this perspective, the decision to adopt a gender policy should be set within the framework of the organization's strategic guidelines— preferably with participation by the various levels of personnel making up the organization—and efforts should be made to include aspects directed at internal as well as external action.

The effort to define and implement a gender policy also has implications in terms of resources. Financial resources will have to be invested in the process itself, first of all, and secondly, the organization's resources will be allocated or distributed in new ways as an outcome of the policy.

It is useful to mention two situations we detected during our investigation. In certain organizations, although important actions had been carried out to promote equity these efforts had not achieved an institution-wide dimension or impacted as desired, because defining a policy for gender equity had never been considered important. This weakened the isolated efforts made, and the group became discouraged.

In another organization, the leaders were very aware of the need to adopt a gender policy and were able to formulate institutional policy in this area, but lacked sensitized personnel to put it into practice and move the construction process forward. When personnel have no awareness of gender equity issues, no progress can be made.

## The Preparation Process

Before a gender equity policy is announced and put into motion an institutional process must take place that involves lobbying<sup>8</sup>, discussion and the creation of an appropriate forum for internalizing the policy. This staff consciousness-raising phase can be implemented through readings, exchanges with women's organizations, gender-awareness training and other mechanisms.

*A collective appropriation is required*

Below we address important points about necessary characteristics of this process:

- The organization must be capable of identifying and understanding the internal gender dynamics at work and have the collective will to carry forward a sustained learning process.
- The problem and its scope must be identified from the outset. For example, why are relations between women and men unequal within the organization and to what degree are they unequal? What type of gender relations is shaping institutional values and the objectives and policies promoted by the organization?<sup>9</sup> This can be done through a situational appraisal of gender relations in the organization.
- Mechanisms must be established to ensure collective learning, with forms and channels of communication designed for this purpose, through consciousness-raising processes and training.<sup>10</sup>

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8 \_\_\_ Lobbying is understood as discussion to influence people with the power to make decisions in the desired direction.

9 \_\_\_ One of the organizations studied, whose work is related to the indigenous population, has developed a very interesting process of research and discussion on gender and ethnicity. This type of initiative is essential for overcoming the fears frequently occurring in NGOs regarding indigenous cultures.

10 \_\_\_ This theme is developed more extensively in chapter 4 of this module, which deals with human resources in equity.

- The need for change must be felt by a group of staff members<sup>11</sup> so that the goal of making equity a guiding principle can become an institutional objective. This group should consist of women and men in order to facilitate inter-gender relations. It is essential to sensitize fellow workers so that they will take an interest in the topic and apply it in the communities where they work.
- Time limits should be established. While it is true that constructing equity may take years, organizations should set concrete time periods for reaching each step. A consciousness-raising process cannot be allowed to go on forever, because this dilutes responsibility and impact. We need to define precisely what it is that we want to achieve, how we want to achieve it and when we will do it, and continue identifying new goals.

This process will make it possible to legitimize the people responsible for implementing a gender equity perspective; giving them a better position in terms of organizational decision-making will help make actions more effective.

It is impossible to predict the contents of a given gender equity policy with any certainty, but the following elements are essential:

- Gender equity policy must be linked with the themes in which the organization works.
- Mechanisms must be identified to ensure that the policy is mainstreamed. It may be necessary to define a learning process so that the forms of work giving best results can be identified.
- A consciousness-raising and training process should be put into place to facilitate the transformation of the organization into one that is gender-sensitive.
- Mechanisms must be created to balance staff composition with respect to women and men at the different levels of work and decision-making.

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11 \_\_\_\_ This group of interested staff members could be considered a driving force, or core group. The process may also be motivated by an agent for change, either internal or external, whose role is to help the organization reach the goal established.

## Integrating Affirmative Action in Gender Equity Policy

Policy for gender equity has both internal and external repercussions. In this module we are concerned only with the internal component since this is directly related to managerial and decision-making processes. The other modules of the "Toward Equity" series offer practical strategies and resources for working with populations participating in the activities to which the organization is dedicated.

*Defining steps and mechanisms to bring us closer to equity*

It is important that the gender equity policy be stated explicitly in a document that explains its intention and the organization's commitment to that policy. A plan of action should also be designed to operationalize this intention and ensure results, and prevent actions from becoming isolated, fragmented and focused on immediate needs and events of the moment. This will also ensure a continual process involving the de-construction and re-construction of social identities.

One of the mechanisms for turning policy into concrete action at subsequent levels is by formulating affirmative action. There is a tendency to equate affirmative action with quota systems, an error that frequently translates into enormous resistance toward these types of measures. In reality, affirmative action can be implemented through a wide range of mechanisms, some of which are already common in development organizations. These include training, preferential treatment, quotas, incentives and the promotion of an organizational culture that is friendly to women.

The best-known forms of affirmative action are the following:

- *Training to encourage women to hold strategic-level positions in the organization, participate in decision-making, etc.*
- *Economic support to provide women with better conditions for reaching a given end*
- *Setting goals and time limits for women's inclusion in certain positions*
- *Preferential treatment so that women can access jobs or benefits*
- *Quotas for positions, promotions, or job openings*

There are other strategies for changing the ways an organization works in order to establish more democratic and equitable relations, exercising more participative and interactive management/leadership, creating groups that are sensitized and committed to gender equity, and identifying mechanisms to ensure that these plans are fulfilled.

In the following sections we will return to the modalities described so far and examine some of these in greater detail as part of a strategy for management and decision-making with a gender perspective.

### III

## AN ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE FOR GENDER EQUITY

Through the organizational structure it is possible to define relations, communications, distribution of responsibilities, functions and tasks for the different areas in which the organization works (Espiral 1998.) Structuring involves the distribution of personnel by areas, components or units, and the respective functions that are assigned within each of these.

According to Espiral (Espiral 1998), the structure of an organization relates to both technical and social divisions of work. **Technical** division corresponds to the functions and responsibilities of the institution's day-to-day activities. This can be identified by breaking down the services provided by the organization. The **social** division of labor concerns the power relations established within the organization that affect its technical division and define positions, levels and responsibilities.

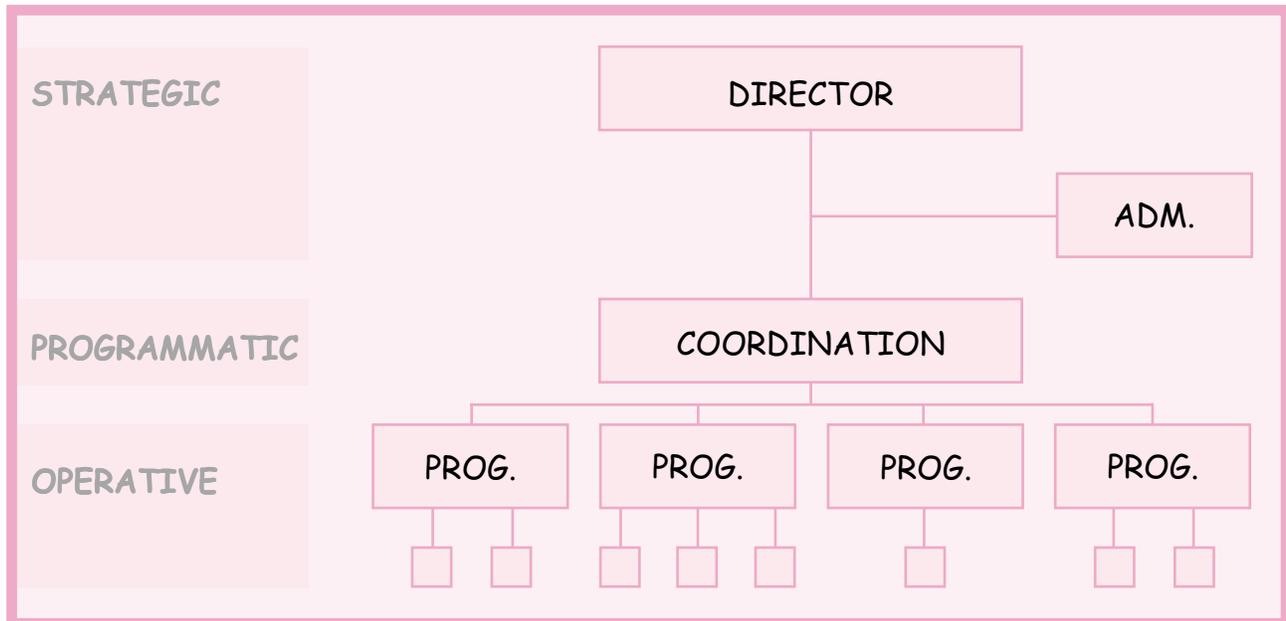
*This section explores the technical and social divisions of an organization or project. With regard to technical division, an examination is made of how the established structure impacts on the application of a gender equity policy. To do this, we describe various approaches or criteria used to define the organizational structure. Another aspect of the technical division has to do with what are called the «rules of the game,» or mechanisms for distributing responsibility. The examination of the social division includes a discussion of management's role, female leadership, the important role that can be played by the leading group within the organization, and finally, the topic of teamwork.<sup>12</sup>*

### Technical Division

By setting up different areas or departments, activities can be distributed in units with certain characteristics. They are **identifiable** because the activities they carry out are similar or connected, they can be **managed** because they operate as a unit,

12 \_\_\_\_ In Module 6 of the *Toward Equity* series, called «Eyes That See, Hearts That Feel,» a dimension of indicators called «Mixed Organization/Project» is developed to measure progress in attaining equitable inter-gender relations within organizations.

and they are **specialized**, since they have an emphasis and unique experience allowing them to be differentiated from other activities. This division could also be called a «horizontal differentiation,» since it allows a distinction to be made between areas of work at the same hierarchical level (Gestión Norsud, 1996.)



Organizations can utilize different approaches to create these areas of work. To a large degree, the decision will be affected by the group's capacity to analyze its real situation and the resources it has available. The most common types of divisions focus on some of the following types of categories.

The first involves **functions**, which relates to activities commonly carried out, such as production, marketing, research and training. Another involves **areas of action**, which is more related to thematic emphases, such as agro-ecology, organization and training. Another classification is by **participants**, or «clients,» as they are called in management literature, such as a program for young people, assistance for women or leadership, etc. Finally, divisions can be made by **territory**, where we find teams formed according to the geographical area in which they work, i.e., central zone, coasts, etc. The pros and cons of each one of these classifications should be taken into consideration.

These different variables can also be combined in a **matrix** system. This is a more complex structure and requires a great deal of dedication from the organization's management. Instead of concentrating power in one particular person, this system makes it possible for the different disciplines of the personnel to develop and encourages a more integrated and creative approach.

The matrix structure tries to integrate functions with areas of action or with other variables, such as territories or participants.

An example of this is an organization or project that sets up a matrix linking programs with areas of action and the territories where it has chosen to work. The person who coordinates the Social Program in all zones, also coordinates all programs in Zone A. The person in charge of the Agricultural Program in all zones coordinates Zone B. Continuing with this example, the coordinator of the Social Program is also responsible for the coordination of all other programs in Zone A. At the same time, that person is under the coordination of the Agricultural Program in Zone B, and under the coordination of the Forestry program in Zone C.

	SOCIAL PROGRAM	AGRICULTURAL PROGRAM	FORESTRY PROGRAM
Zone A Mountains			
Zone B Valleys			
Zone C Coasts			

Adopting a matrix system can be a powerful tool for promoting gender equity since it empowers staff members and links functions, providing a more global and dynamic vision of activities. It facilitates greater freedom of initiative and creativity in the group, as well as greater leadership in work. It questions the typical division of disciplines, which in most cases reinforces only the more technical areas.

In our research we found better opportunities for democratization when the organization mixed different variables in defining its working structure. For example, the organization «DRIP,»<sup>13</sup> in Costa Rica, set up teams based on work areas in combination with zones, as described in the example above.

13 \_\_\_\_ DRIP started out with a structure based on five areas of work, and later grouped these into two large areas, Human Resources and Natural Resources. This led to fragmentation and a lack of coordination, as well as leading to a separation between the «hard» sciences and the social sciences. Later on four basic programs were established with interdisciplinary teams, leading to greater impact.

This type of team formation facilitates a comprehensive internalization of the project's purpose, while also providing greater mobility among the staff. In this case, looking at rural development as a more comprehensive proposal made it possible to avoid the distinction commonly made between technical and social tasks. Even more, consistency was maintained between the teams with regard to the level of responsibility and decision-making for these tasks.

## Rules of the Game

Transparency should characterize mechanisms for distributing responsibilities, which should be known and internalized by all members of the organization, and be announced as clearly and straightforwardly as possible. The organizational chart provides a graphic explanation of this working structure by showing technical and social divisions of work, and decision-making, leadership and interrelation and communication among the different parts of the organization (Gestión Norsud, 1996.)

The importance of an organizational chart and work regulations is often underestimated by organizations, which argue that these unnecessarily bureaucratize internal administration. However, any organization that does not explicitly define its channels of communication and hierarchy is limiting its personnel's capacity for expression and growth.

By not occupying key leadership positions and having less access to these positions, women are acting within the parameters established by the organization. A situation of uncertainty arises if these parameters are not defined and taken into consideration, and freedom of action is reduced as a result.

It is important to clarify the processes used in assigning and delegating the authority and responsibilities of the different positions, along with providing a precise description of the decision-making possibilities for each. This facilitates personal growth by making it possible for personnel to apply their own criteria in carrying out their assigned areas of competence and in consulting the appropriate entities (which is beneficial because it allows women to channel work-related problems and obstacles of a specific nature.)

Another type of affirmative measure could be the establishment of **transparent channels of communication** and of opportunities and mechanisms for personnel to express their concerns and disagreement or to discuss the way power is exercised in work relations. This leads to clarity and confidence about the procedures, channels and possibilities people have for defending their rights.

*The need for  
transparent  
communication*

There should be suitable ways to present claims of harassment and violence. Verbal aggression is common in organizations, as expressed in shouting or discrimination against cleaning staff and people working in logistical support, such as secretaries, drivers, etc. If these situations occur, personnel should have institutionally established mechanisms for expressing their feelings. In the organizations we studied there was little evidence of sexual harassment claims. In practice, however, women told us they had been «put to the test» before being accepted as part of a work team, particularly if project activities were being carried out in a remote area. These tests can involve being exposed to frightening or dangerous situations or being assigned a heavier workload. Such forms of violence against women also occur when they enter situations traditionally considered to be «masculine.»

Providing formal mechanisms and opportunities where these situations can be talked about and ventilated strengthens women and makes the adoption of affirmative action possible. If this social problem is occurring on the outside, doesn't it seem logical that the problem is also occurring within the organization, as well?

Collective discussion to construct an organizational chart is useful because it allows us to identify these mechanisms and opportunities. More than just a system for establishing hierarchies of power in an organization, the organizational chart is like a photograph in that it represents reality and reveals how the rules of the game come into being, as well as the institutional spaces in which people move and manifest their relations of power. When controls are collective there is greater empowerment, security and possibility for participation.

When the rules of the game are unclear, decisions may be perceived as a management decision arising from the kindness and generosity of area or department heads. This interpretation makes it impossible for the institution as a whole to internalize the contents of a gender policy as personal rights or as a norm of the organization, irrespective of the particular person in charge at the time.

One of the requirements of an institutional policy aimed at equity is that it must be transparent and known to all, and particularly to women, so that it can inspire their confidence in the institution. Because women's socialization frequently includes discriminatory work experiences, they may constantly be on their guard or give up too soon. These or similar situations can only be avoided when people have been given some security regarding the behavior of the organization under a given circumstance, so that privileges, sanctions and other measures are clearly understood by all.

## Social Division

### a. The Role of Management

The issue of hierarchies or levels of management in organizations is not easily addressed. No matter how open people are to participatory processes, any contemplation of hierarchies takes us back to a power relation. Nonetheless, there can be no denying that organizations have a process for distributing work, responsibilities and also benefits.

Management plays an important role in the division of work. This role consists of guiding or orienting actions toward the proposed development objectives and making an efficient use of the resources available. For the purposes of this module we will limit our discussion to the role of management in an organization and its impact on the road to internal and external equity.

According to rural development projects, one of the Achilles heels in the incorporation of a gender equity perspective is overt opposition or simple lack of interest on the part of management, and in most cases these are the people who exercise maximum or sole power.

In effect, as our case studies showed, in all experiences where the organization's management maintained an open and committed attitude to the search for gender equity—in practice as well as speech—processes have been quicker and more impactful.

Criteria for distributing work should be transparent and geared toward achieving efficiency. Flow of information between the different levels should be ensured through the use of mechanisms for participation and consultation in decision-making. Timely and accessible information is essential, and providing clear and precise manuals allows each person to understand what is expected from his or her work.

Management should not allow personal relations to affect interactions with personnel. This does not mean that access to and cooperation and camaraderie with management are not desirable. Women in general may have few opportunities to interact with management levels which are mostly comprised of men, without being questioned or misinterpreted by the rest of the group.

*A new  
management  
style*

A new management style in which the exercise of central leadership is based on communication and the development of equitable relations promotes the creation of new leadership at all levels of the organization and in the local context in which the organization works.

In this model, leadership is conceived as a process of social interaction, rather than the actual behavior of any particular person. However, a range of abilities and skills is needed to initiate and sustain this interaction within the framework of a series of guiding principles.

The leader or leaders are those persons that influence the process and contribute to creating favorable socio-affective and working conditions for participants, with a view toward the attainment of the proposed goals. This contributes to the construction of collective understanding, which gives meaning to the proposal for change that guides the relations between the participants of the project.

## Transforming leadership

Management, in turn, relates to the capacity of an organization or project to move along smoothly, with order, coherence, a certain degree of predictability and consistency. To make this possible, the exercise of management is supported by the development of transforming leadership at the different levels making up an organization.

Experience has shown that the greatest advances take place in organizations with a gender-sensitive woman as director. There are also cases in which sensitive men with a commitment to gender equity have been able to open spaces in organizations. The position management takes on gender equity is critical with respect to reaching goals in this area.

In *COCOCH*, more significant advances were made toward equity under the administration of a woman director. Even though no institutionalized policies came into effect during her administration, today the new management and affiliated groups recognize the need to incorporate women more actively in institutional life.

Advances in *El Productor*, *Ak-Tenamit* and *ODESAR* were partly due to a management decision to facilitate conditions for defining policies aimed at equity. In the case of *El Productor* and *Ak Tenamit*, we found that personnel were sensitized toward working for equity. In the latter, for example, it is striking how each member of the staff manages and incorporates guidelines for gender equity, even though there is nothing actually written down.

This shows that in these cases written policies and guidelines may be unnecessary when there is an authentic experiential practice of institutional principles clarifying what must be done and how with respect to promoting gender equity among the staff and in the communities they work with (relations of transparency and respect.)

## b. Female Leadership

Female leadership has its own characteristics and advantages. If we recognize that women and men have been socialized in different ways, it is logical to assume that female leadership will have particular characteristics. As a result of their socialization, women have developed abilities of perception and skills in dealing with subjectivity, making it easier for them to identify the needs of others, and even to have a better understanding of the more qualitative aspects of personnel and communities, for example. Another strength of women is their negotiating capacity and ability for joint action, which contributes to creating a holistic and comprehensive vision of institutional work.

However, women's reference to leadership has been a masculine style within the context of a patriarchal culture. If a woman wants to be director she «has» to be like the men directors. It is often necessary to develop «masculine» skills to be recognized as a leader and director.

In referring to female leadership we are not attempting to create an idealized model, as society has done in the case of motherhood. Nor does this deny the existence of masculine leaders with a sensitive attitude toward the fight for gender equity. It is important to make conscious and ongoing efforts to stress the advantages of female leadership.

Obtaining a commitment from management will not be achieved simply by putting a person of a different sex in the position. What is important is that person's commitment to the transformation of gender inequalities.

### Formation of the Leading Group

The most common approaches used to develop in-house policy on gender equity include:

- *placing a woman in charge of gender or the section responsible for gender*

- *hiring a gender consultant*
- *mainstreaming responsibility*

In the first case, the person responsible for carrying out a gender policy finds herself isolated and separate from what are considered to be the core activities of the project or organization. In general, her budget is insufficient for impacting on all areas of work, and she is not assigned any staff to help her out. Some of the consequences of this situation (Macdonald, M. 1997) can be that the person feels obliged to set an example, and the overwork results in personal fatigue and frustration when no favorable results are obtained. Her position may become invisible, with no power and no resources for action. This person is unable to confront the structure of the organization and the way it operates. In many cases the situation of gender inequality experienced by this person makes her more radical than she would be under different conditions, triggering a negative reaction from the group at a conscious or unconscious level.

Not all of these problems can be solved by establishing a special gender unit, but this is one of the steps toward equity, and the unit should be maintained until the entire organization is working toward this objective.

In the second case, experience has shown that hiring external consultants to apply a gender perspective has varying results. In general, very specialized and sensitive women are contracted to do this work. They make an investigation, perform an appraisal or write a report of high technical quality. Although the consultant may be contracted for a prolonged period of time, she will always be an outsider. She may come to know a great deal about dynamics at work in the group but does not interact with it on a permanent basis, and may even take care not to have much influence. She has the consent of management, which she supports through external evaluations.

The third possibility is to mainstream responsibility among all the people making up the team. The result of such delegation to all members without creating any concrete mechanisms is that the effort falls into general oblivion, with no one taking responsibility. In practice, it seems that organizations do not yet have the overall capacity for carrying out this type of strategy. It could be successful if the entire organization has clearly defined objectives and responsibilities concerning the implementation of a gender perspective, but also requires mechanisms to monitor and evaluate progress. All areas and all persons in the organization need to be

clear about what they must contribute regarding application of the perspective and progress toward gender equity.

One of the proposals being made in this area is to implement several of these strategies at the same time. For example, the person in charge of gender could also participate in decision-making and be given the authority to designate individuals responsible for gender in each of the areas of work. This way there is always someone at a high level promoting the gender proposal. That person is also backed by a team whose members represent the different areas of the institution's work.

The most important factor in this case is the existence of the leading group. The group must be related to the organization's administration in coordination with the functions of management. The internal dynamics of this group can be defined by its members according to the institutional policy adopted.

This group must include both women and men with an interest in and commitment to the process. For this reason it is essential to include topics about masculinity in the consciousness-raising processes for personnel.

Some proposals (Macdonald, M. 1997) suggest that a gender-sensitive organization should commit at least 30% of its personnel to the application of gender equity measures. Affirmative action in this direction supports and strengthens the formation of this leading group.

Since applying the perspective is a long and difficult process that touches on many aspects of each member's subjectivity, it is necessary to join institutional forces with those of the persons making up that institution. When either the institution or its members becomes lethargic or grinds to halt, the other can energize the process.

## Teamwork

By teamwork, we are referring to a continuous process of elaboration, confrontation, discussion, conflict resolution and development of joint work processes.

A work team is different from other forms of group organization, in that members establish a symmetrical interaction between themselves. This means they are under equal conditions of participation in the group dynamic to contribute, dissent, reflect

on and analyze the problems being faced. Because of their nature, teams can be multidisciplinary and comprised of persons who know and do different things, which ensures that they can collectively attain an all-encompassing or comprehensive vision providing the basis for action. It is a different way of organizing for work. The search for group cohesion is not an end in itself; the goal is carrying out the task proposed, and socio-affective growth for its members (WHO, 1994.)

Within the work team efforts are made to integrate each person's needs and demands regarding the collective mission, rather than one that wins out over, or at the cost of, the other. When the goal is gender equity and the formulation of new relations between women and men, it is important to find ways of working that make the needs of groups with less power visible.

*Equity is  
required  
for  
genuine  
teamwork*

It is necessary to create an environment that recognizes differences of opinion, promotes mature reflection on confrontational issues, and allows these to be expressed and debated as a way of strengthening both the team and each one of the members.

For Gibb (Gestión Norsud, 1995) teamwork requires a suitable work environment in which members have confidence in one another, leadership is distributed, and there is flexibility, an understanding of the process and continual evaluation.

Discussion and conflict should be considered aspects that stimulate team growth. Creating a favorable environment for this growth is not an easy task, nor is it one that can be carried out by a single individual. It is a process in which all participants must contribute.

Forging this type of work unit requires a dedication and energy not always found in every group designated as a team. In our concept of teamwork, the conscientious search for equity is assumed to be one of its goals.

El Productor offers one example of an organization making efforts toward authentic teamwork. Weekly meetings are held to plan work, distribute resources and assign tasks. These sessions also involve discussions of formative issues related to national problems or the demands of practical work. This facilitates a collective environment of creation that members value a great deal and which makes them feel that they are co-participants in decision-making about resources.

Support staff, such as the receptionist, also attend these meetings. Along with administrative personnel, support staff also participate in field visits on a relatively regular basis. This has had a positive effect on the overall quality of attention they provide because these members can better identify and assess the concerns of the population El Productor works with. They also have criteria for making decisions when someone is out of the office.

## IV EQUITY IN HUMAN RESOURCES

Human resources management refers to an ongoing process of identifying personnel needs in an organization and assessing people's performance and potential. Human resource management with a gender equity perspective does not simply define technical functions for the staff, but also seeks to work with each member as an individual, an approach based on the premise that each person represents a key resource in the organization. This explains why human resource policies should ensure transparency at all times in the relation between an organization and its personnel, and in general, in work relations and conditions.

Human resource policies are defined as the guidelines that nurture greater dedication, commitment, efficiency and permanency of the organization's staff as a means of achieving objectives for promotion and change in society. Policies can include processes for attracting suitable people to the organization, programs and mechanisms for motivation and incentives, development of specific competencies, work environment, and the formation and training of personnel.

*Before addressing these issues, it is useful to comment on two aspects of human dynamics in organizations and rural development projects. The first of these is the dedication and commitment staff members feel toward their work and the second is the meaning and importance the organization gives to this sense of dedication and commitment. An analysis and understanding of these dynamics can provide direction for human resource policy with gender equity.*

### Dedication and Commitment<sup>14</sup>

In development organizations it is frequently stated that one of the staff's most important attributes is the dedication and commitment they feel for their work.

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14 \_\_\_\_ The word *mística*, used in the original Spanish version of this module, involves both a sense of dedication and commitment towards one's work and a personal internalization of the mission and objectives of that work.

This was emphasized by all the representatives we spoke to for this study. In their opinion, staff identification with organizational objectives is what, in the last analysis, defines the parameters for the work that is carried out. In an effort to pinpoint what it is that people mean by "dedication" toward work, we asked people in leadership positions and in the organizations what they understood by this concept.

Some of these comments and definitions have been summarized below:

- *"[Dedication is] what an individual or human group contributes to the activity that is above and beyond expectations based on the amount of remuneration or any benefit to be received in exchange for their activity (either physical or mental.)"*
  - *"It has to do with feelings of satisfaction about what you do, and about personal realization and service to your fellow human beings, including the person or entity that requires the service or good produced."*
  - *"Dedication means internalizing the objectives of the organization."*
  - *"Dedication is achieved when there is a commitment to the people."*
  - *"It is commitment to the development proposal."*
- ...Sometimes people talked about what dedication is **not**.*
- *"Dedication is not the same thing as the amount of time spent working."*
  - *"Dedication to one's work does not imply a voluntary or imposed sacrifice of one's rights, self-respect or self-esteem."*
  - *"Exploitation is exploitation. It has nothing to do with dedication."*

Discussion about dedication is interesting because it focuses on an element not usually explored in the existing literature. On the one hand, it is clear that in most cases, dedication ensures that an employee will fulfill her or his tasks. There is less need of supervision to make sure that the assigned work is being done as it should be when employees perceive these tasks as «theirs.» From the staff's point of view, dedication involves a personal satisfaction above and beyond such matters as remuneration, incentive packages and other benefits.

It also seems there is a tacit agreement between employer and employee that the institution's objective takes precedence over everything else, and for this reason the work relation is not classified within formal frameworks in effect for that purpose—despite the fact that so many development organizations and projects operate under difficult financial conditions clearly known to workers (ALOP et al., 1995.)

For the purposes of this module, if dedication is a determining factor in an organization's relations with its personnel, two positions can be taken:

1. One option is to refer to the consequences of principles that, from a gender perspective, have traditionally been lacking in relation to people's work rights (in which there is no doubt that dedication is not an element of consideration), even when the exercise consists in conducting a review of these rights.
2. The second option is to assume that while these relations have to do with work, they are different from the traditional ways of dealing with this issue, and thus endeavor to contribute some elements that may be useful, even though it would be necessary to examine this subject in greater depth in order to understand their real implications in practice.

We have inclined to the second option, although there is one reservation. Despite our strong criticism of a merely financial outlook on work, we do not adhere to positions in which such arguments are used to avoid a just fulfillment of employer responsibility. We believe that what should rule in this case is the need for development organizations to ensure the fulfillment of their goals through the establishment of labor relations, but always under the assumption that those who hold these positions are people with lives and responsibilities outside of their commitment to the organizational mission.

Excessive work should not be justified in the name of «dedication» either, since this can sometimes border on exploitation. Incentives, motivation or other mechanisms could be considered as a way of compensating the workload. Women take on much of these extra burdens in the name of dedication, causing an overload in their personal life that is difficult to handle, and generally requiring them to compete with their colleagues under less equitable conditions.

## **Sexual Division of Labor and Human Resource Management**

Some of the permanent items on the agenda for gender equity are recognition for the work women do, equal opportunity for women and men in the job market and shared responsibility for reproductive tasks. When we looked at these three issues, the organizations in our case studies offered some important experiences.

One project working in health and education provides services for a large number of people so must frequently hire men and women in neighboring communities to help out. In the indigenous communities attended by this project, as in other Central American communities, the dominant model for division of work assigns women the task of caring for minors, preparing food and other household chores, while men perform work traditionally considered «hard.» While the project takes advantage of the skills men and women already have when hiring, its unbending principle is that women and men should be paid exactly the same amount of money for performing their respective work. Women in the kitchen receive the same amount for a day of labor as men are paid for construction work.

We were able to corroborate that this principle also held for permanent positions in the project. In the case of one young couple, the woman worked in the crafts shop and the man promoted organic farming, but both received the same wages for the work they performed.

This type of effort has a positive effect in that it gives recognition women's work and provides an example for the participating population by assigning the same economic and social value to the activities performed by women and men.

Another strategy has been to promote new types of labor that are free of gender stereotyping. Work in conservation and sustainable resource management is one example: tasks related to the reproduction of wildlife species are not considered either male or female, which enables women to begin participating in this nontraditional activity.

Another dimension of this same issue should also be considered, which is that sexual division of labor requires peoples' reproductive responsibility to compete with their productive activities.

The tension between the family and work lies at the very heart of this discussion. This is because the rules of the game in the workplace are based on the patriarchal system, in which it is assumed that the people in the job market are men whose reproductive tasks are being taken care of (thanks to the work of some woman.)

For their part, even when women work outside the home they continue doing most of the reproductive work, which demands a great deal of time and energy and is often impossible to anticipate and plan for. Given this situation, an organization insensitive to gender perceives women employees' need for time to deal with these types of demands as an obstacle to the efficient and effective satisfaction of its objectives.

*Mechanisms  
for easing  
the tension  
between  
productive  
and  
reproductive  
functions of  
personnel*

An organization sensitive to gender is one that has mechanisms in place to resolve the tension between the productive and reproductive functions of its personnel. Given the effects on women of the traditional sexual division of labor, their particular situation must be taken into account. It must be assumed that they have an additional load of reproductive tasks that will have to be taken into consideration with respect to methodologies, strategic planning, organizational structure and administrative policies. A gender-sensitive organization must also recognize women and men in their roles as «couples», «fathers» and «mothers», and members of a family with particular living arrangements.

There are organizations where activities for interaction between fathers and children are organized during special celebrations held for personnel, and the same thing can be done in communities. For example, on field days project technicians can organize the same types of activities with farmers.

Introducing and implementing these values in the organization requires a certain flexibility and adaptability on the part of the institution. New forms of exchanging information and expressing opinions must be given value, as well as decision-making mechanisms that may be more effective than the rigid and formal traditional channels.

This means that until the sexual division of labor changes toward one with more equitable responsibilities for women and men in the home, women will need special support to bear up under the load of reproductive work. However, at the organizational level male personnel should be encouraged to carry out their role in the family.

## Hiring Policies

Solutions proposed by the organizations and projects studied to resolve this situation are actually very cautious, and are limited to greater flexibility in granting women special permissions, allowing them to bring their children to the workplace, and if they have just given birth, giving them time for breast feeding.

As we mentioned earlier, one particular characteristic of development organizations is the existence of pyramid-shaped gender structures, in which men are at the highest levels of decision-making and women are grouped in positions involving the implementation of activities. Changing this type of labor structure in an organization depends on the establishment of hiring policies and policies on promotions and incentives that are compatible with this end.

Genuine transformation of this situation is not that complicated given the mobility of human resources in many organizations and projects. The frequent entry of new personnel offers great opportunities for an interesting process. Although it may not provide results until the medium or long term, this process does not involve the same difficulties as it might in a government office, for example.

For some projects the real obstacle is finding women with the technical qualifications they need, particularly in areas in which traditionally there have not a great deal of women involved. The other serious constraint concerns the sometimes extremely remote location of rural development projects. In these circumstances it is much more difficult for women to make arrangements for other people to assume the reproductive tasks that usually fall on their shoulders.

In the following section we offer a series of hiring recommendations that could result in a better balance between women and men, even though we are fully aware that this will probably take longer than one would like.

The organization's hiring practices should plan for the adoption of affirmative action as part of a policy on gender.

We depart from the premise that these actions will be applied as part of a comprehensive policy implemented every time the needs of the organization (general growth, the opening of a new program or project, an illness or the resignation of an employee) require that one or more positions be filled.

## a. Establishing Criteria

Two of the categories of affirmative action mentioned in the first section of this module include preferential treatment and quotas.

Preferential treatment involves practices to ensure some type of preference for a certain category of persons within a group competing for a certain type of benefit. An example of this is when a young person is hired for a position (when age in itself neither adds nor detracts from the person's potential for successfully completing the expected mission), even when another candidate, who is older, has better qualifications for the job.

Preferential treatment can also follow another type of logic. The young person with less qualifications than the older person may be hired because the job is in a program for young people, and there may be more empathy between the group participating in the project and the person responsible because of their greater similarity in ages.

In one of the organizations studied, a policy regarding community attention required that all visits be made by a woman and a man, together. If the man working as a promoter in community "x" resigns, the person who replaces him must also be a man, even when a woman candidate might have better credentials and more experience in the field.

Quota systems offer another mechanism for addressing an organization's stated need to ensure that there are a given number of women on the staff, holding management positions, working in certain areas, or totaling a certain number within a given time. There are two possible ways of doing this. First, that the objective must be reached within "x" period, in which case it may be necessary to give preference to women even when one of the male candidates has better qualifications for the position. The other possibility is to make a decision that women will be preferred, when under equal conditions the job optimally calls for a male or a woman to be hired. The measure is discontinued once the pre-established quota has been reached, i.e., when forty percent of the organization's employees are women.

Again, we are referring here to actions that are part of a comprehensive policy observed at all times to ensure that advances are made. The right mechanisms and criteria for applying the policy must be established or we may not obtain the outcomes desired. An atmosphere of frustration could arise and people may claim women are incapable of taking advantage of these opportunities.

*Human resources policy includes criteria for hiring personnel*

The basic objective of these measures is usually to increase parity between men and women in the organization, with preference to hiring women for certain jobs.

## b. Promotion

Before beginning the selection process to fill a vacancy, it is important to be clear about:

- The requirements of the position and how these will be stated in order to make it attractive to women
- The candidate profile
- The most suitable type of contract for the position (permanent position, contract for a certain period of time or output, etc.)
- Environmental and working conditions that will be offered to the person selected
- Conditions allowing the candidate to access the position

One of the first steps is to determine how candidates will be obtained. Organizations can assess the possibility of hiring from within, or may announce the job opening in newspapers or other communication media. A profile of the position can also be sent to friendly institutions so they can recommend people they know.

If we look to internal human resources, vacancies can offer an opportunity for promotion, and in this case, a woman may be promoted to the job in question. However, if the organization is trying to establish greater parity between men and women because there are few women on staff, promoting from within may not be the best option.

Several of the people we interviewed said they preferred going to friendly institutions to seek out candidates for the position. In their opinion, this ensures that the person hired will have a certain social sensibility and familiarity with the nature of the work performed by development organizations and projects.

Continuing this line of reasoning, one possible way of getting more women candidates for the position is to indicate very clearly in the profile that the organization has a strong interest in hiring women. Another way is to set up alliances with women's organizations that can help identify candidates.

If the organization generally uses job application forms, these should be checked to make sure there are no questions about marital status or number of children. The answers to such questions tend to be assessed differently when the candidate is a woman as opposed to a man.

### **c. Interviews**

The interview can be made using a questionnaire whose purpose is to elicit the most amount of information possible about the abilities, qualifications, experience and commitment of the person being interviewed. It is important, however, to maintain a congenial and cordial atmosphere throughout the interview in order to encourage women to express themselves freely. The interview can be made by a man and a woman.

Customarily, it is only after being selected that a candidate is given complete information concerning the conditions of the work. This makes it impossible for a labor relation to be transparent from the very outset and candidates will not be able to assess whether these conditions suit their needs and expectations. A frank and open conversation from the very beginning allows both parties to evaluate the possibilities for a successful working relation.

### **d. The Orientation Process**

This is an organized process used to orient new personnel so they can be informed of the principles, policies, procedures and regulations of the organization or project. The goal of the orientation process is to make sure the person is integrated within the working environment as efficiently and quickly as possible. Usually organizations do not have a standard orientation procedure, but such a practice can have important effects on the person's output and on the expectations of the organization or project that has hired that person.

A prepared orientation program can include introductory visits and talks on what the organization considers to be good work practices. It is important to provide general information right from the beginning on disciplinary procedures, working hours, entering and leaving work, the relations between areas or departments, extra work (and the conditions, frequency and planning for such assignments), personal phone calls, travel expenses, payments, trips and other issues.

*Satisfaction of an organization's expectations is aided by a good orientation*

The orientation process is an ideal moment for introducing new personnel to gender equity policies in the organization. This should be done at two levels. First, it must be clear that every person working in the organization gives equal treatment to men and women (including both colleagues and the persons at whom the project is directed). Second, the new person must be informed of regulations concerning sexual harassment, maternity and breast-feeding. Secondly, the orientation process can include awareness-raising and training in gender equity, and providing new staff with the best instruments for applying a gender equity perspective in their work.

## **Wage and Salary Policy**

Equity between men and women in an organization should be reflected in the wages personnel actually earn.

Sometimes information about salaries and access to training is given in a very personalized way, and people do not have the information needed for understanding and accepting the legitimacy of the amounts assigned or the scholarships awarded.

In organizations, information about salaries is usually not public and no one knows exactly how much their fellow workers are earning. But in most cases everyone has a general idea of who makes more and who makes less and there are usually speculations about why these differences exist. Such speculation can lead to resentment and distrust, especially when salary differences could be attributed to discrimination for reasons of gender.

One of the organizations we studied had taken certain steps to avoid these difficult situations:

- A commission made up of women and men at all organizational levels is in charge of knowing how resources have been allocated.
- The institution informs everyone about salaries and salary policy.
- As part of the salary policy, wage differentials are regulated in such a way that, no matter what their position, no one can make double the wages of anyone else.
- Men and women earn the same amount for positions without formal professional or technical requirements (food service, boat handling, construction, etc.)

Here it is worth mentioning the case of Ak-Tenamit, an organization working with the Quetchí indigenous community in Río Dulce, Guatemala. Although this group does not have a written gender policy, it is evident that the entire staff knows, shares and applies a series of gender equity principles aimed at placing value on female labor and equal opportunity between women and men.

## A Gender-Sensitive Working Environment

This refers to aspects of the project or organization's institutional culture that affect relations between the organization and the people that work in it. The conditions in an organization should allow all persons to carry out their work satisfactorily and permit each member's qualities to be recognized and encouraged.

Indicators of a gender-sensitive organization:

- The materials displayed in the organizations are not disrespectful of women.
- Facilities such as showers and childcare are provided.
- Procedures have been established to fight sexual harassment.
- Men and women do not make disparaging jokes about the opposite sex.
- The difference in work styles between men and women is seen as one of the strengths of the organization.
- There are arrangements making it possible for staff to perform their work while also meeting their reproductive responsibilities.
- Living conditions for male and female project technicians are acceptable.
- People with authority treat others with respect and fairness.

## WHAT MAKES AN ENVIRONMENT GENDER-SENSITIVE?

*«Good life insurance for the entire staff. Some organizations don't think this is important for women; they assume women are covered by men.»*

*«Don't just ask women to serve the coffee.»*

*«Don't only hire women to assist visitors participating in conferences and other activities; include young men, too.»*

*«Only women's restrooms have facilities for changing a baby's diapers. Ask to have these placed in men's rooms as well.»*

*«Encourage male colleagues to help take care of small children during community activities.»*

*«Allow staff to take their vacations when their children are on their school breaks.»*

*«When male fellow workers take responsibility for arranging and decorating the hall for special activities.»*

Comments by the participants of validation workshops for this module.

## Training as a Personnel Development Policy

Three dimensions of intervention were identified in the area of training: 1) awareness-raising in gender equity; 2) practical instruments for putting a gender perspective into practice; and 3) enhancing technical capacity, a measure more specifically related to support for female personnel.

## a. Raising Awareness and Building Knowledge in the Organization

Even when it has been possible to establish the principle of gender equity as one of the values guiding the organization's actions, it may be necessary to continue consciousness-raising work. In the majority of cases studied, building awareness was an important element of the strategy. Nonetheless, from what we were able to observe, sensitizing work tends to act as a bottleneck where efforts become clogged. This may be because some institutions interpret «awareness-raising» as something that occurs at a certain stage, and not until it is obtained and the process has been exhausted is it possible to move on to the next step.

*Other actions should accompany the awareness-raising process*

In reality, building awareness is an ongoing process that should be accompanied by other types of exercises. The best results come from a combination of consciousness-raising and direct action, in which interventions are coupled with exercises, verification of knowledge and answering any questions or concerns that arise during training.

On a more operational level, certain aspects should be kept in mind to place the awareness-building and training process into motion within the organization:

- Training should follow a plan that not only covers certain topics, but also takes into account the time needed to absorb and process knowledge.
- The heterogeneity of professional background, positions and working styles should be taken into consideration, since these produce different levels of learning. This means that a prior analysis of the organization is important in order to design suitable contents and methodologies.
- The process must be well integrated at the management level. People who are resistant to participating can use the lack of involvement by leaders as an argument justifying their own reluctance to take the topic seriously.
- Maximizing the construction of knowledge within the organization is very important. However, it is a good idea to make use of external support as a way of keeping resistance generated by the process from becoming personalized.

## b. Technical Instruments for Putting Equity into Practice

In keeping with what was said earlier, it is important that training not be limited to technical aspects. While valuable, these aspects do not necessarily help people identify ways to implement gender equity actions in practice. Opportunities should be provided for personnel to learn about practical tools that already exist and to construct others, based on their experience in the project and their own disciplines. This is just as essential as a theoretical understanding of the subject.

## c. Enhancing Women's Technical Capacity

Another aspect for achieving gender equity in organizations and projects is how to support employment for women. It may be necessary to promote women's professional formation before and during employment. Because organizations often have difficulties finding trained women for some of the fields usually involved in rural development, one possible solution could be the development of a program of support for women interested in entering these areas.

For example, women could be given preference for training in areas that are central to the work of the organization, or even in areas where the organization would like to become involved but does not yet have the trained personnel to do so. This would allow women to capitalize on their training for possible promotion in the future and position themselves better in the organization.

## Personal Growth of Employees

One of the most important tasks of human resource management is to consider aspects directly related to personal growth. One possible strategy is holding self-esteem sessions to facilitate the transformation that a gender perspective stimulates in the personal and working life of men and women.

As the result of an excessive use of «self-esteem workshops,» we have a very narrow vision of their potential. They are usually associated with workshops held for low-income women with no formal education. Nevertheless, these exercises can provide inputs for comprehensive personnel development.

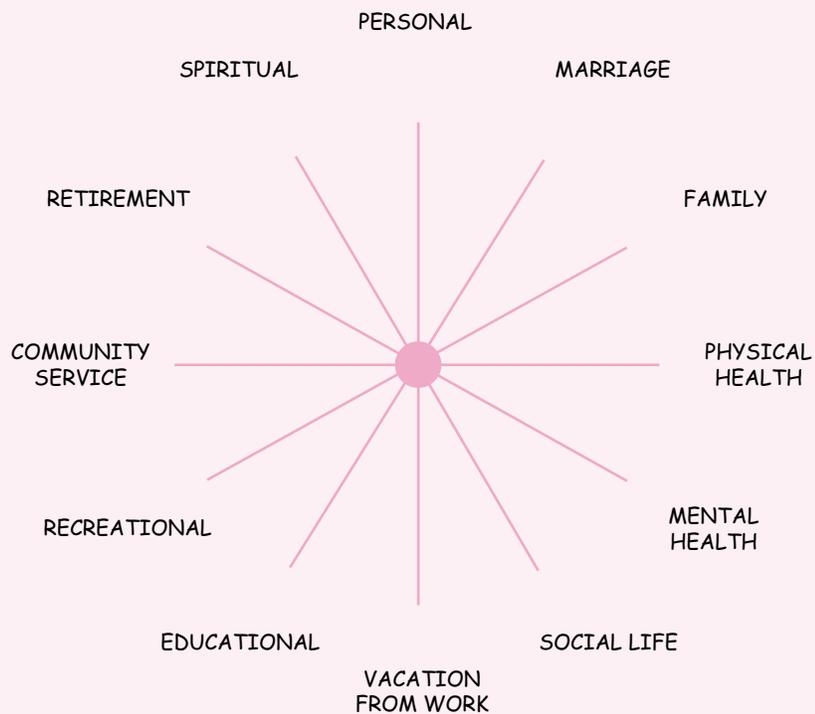
## Personal planning

Every January, one development organization in El Salvador carries out collective annual planning as an institution, while staff members carry out an individual exercise of personal planning at the same time. This enables the organization to identify and promote areas that employees need most.

It is important to recognize the different dimensions of growth, which can include educational, family, recreational or political goals. This exercise could also be applied in the communities with which we work.

### THE WHEEL OF LIFE

*Is your life in balance? Using this illustration as a guide, make a wheel that places important areas in balance. Set goals and write statements for each area to describe what investments to make for excellence in the next few years.*



## Staff Evaluation

While preparing this document we encountered different experiences in relation to personnel evaluation. Several organizations and projects use participatory and democratic exercises to evaluate performance. These exercises are carried out on a periodic basis with participation at different levels, depending on the personnel being evaluated. For example, people with whom they maintain a relation could be incorporated, or in some cases evaluation commissions could be made up of members selected by an assembly of the organization.

What is valuable about this type of performance evaluation is that it creates a collective responsibility for the work produced by every person in the organization. At the same time, each person feels responsible not only to his or her superiors but also to fellow workers. This mechanism also makes it possible to incorporate different outlooks on a person's work. In the best cases, this includes leadership, people with the same or different job, and support staff.

To perform the evaluation, forms can be designed to include criteria the organization considers valuable in its employees' work. People we interviewed mentioned the importance of incorporating aspects related to productivity (qualitative and quantitative), as well as how the person treats fellow workers and other people that collaborate or participate in the project.

Employee evaluation should be based on the work process and the way this process relates to the accomplishment of the mission. If the organization is sensitive to gender and has an equity policy, performance evaluation should make it possible to identify how people have contributed to achieving equity both individually and collectively as departments, sections, or programs. As a consequence, evaluation is not separated from the goals attained, the difficulties confronted and the characteristics of the relations we establish between women and men.

One final aspect of importance is that evaluation results must be discussed with employees. This provides an opportunity to give them inputs for improving performance, clarify situations and define rules, terms and conditions, and in general, maintain transparency in the work relation.

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- MODULE 1**    **A GOOD START MAKES A BETTER ENDING**  
Writing Proposals with a Gender Perspective  
Proposes a series of preconditions that contribute to the design of a project proposal containing the basic ingredients needed to facilitate the incorporation of a gender equity perspective.
- MODULE 2**    **SEEK AND YE SHALL FIND**  
Creating Participatory Appraisals with a Gender Perspective  
Basic recommendations for carrying out participatory appraisals with a gender equity perspective.
- MODULE 3**    **IF WE ORGANIZE IT WE CAN DO IT**  
Project Planning with a Gender Perspective  
Taking the step from appraisal to action using planning techniques that respond to the needs expressed by women and men.
- MODULE 4**    **TAKING THE PULSE OF GENDER**  
Gender-Sensitive Systems for Monitoring and Evaluation  
Basic guidelines for designing an evaluation and monitoring system that reveals gender inequities.
- MODULE 5**    **IN UNITY THERE IS POWER**  
Processes of Participation and Empowerment  
Examines the issue of power and its effect on development initiatives. An innovative presentation of carefully selected techniques for analyzing power and approaching the construction of new and more equitable and democratic forms of participation.
- MÓDULO 6**    **EYES THAT SEE...HEARTS THAT FEEL**  
Equity Indicators  
Proposes methodology for defining indicators with men and women in the communities. Presents a set of indicators to identify and assess progress toward more equitable relations, and actions that enable a project to develop along paths that are more democratic and just.
- MODULE 7**    **PRACTICING WHAT WE PREACH**  
Toward Administration and Management with Equity  
Considerations that can help organizations develop more equitable forms of administration and management.
- MODULE 8**    **SHARING SECRETS**  
Systematization from a Gender Perspective  
Proposes methodology for a participatory systematization of the experiences and outcomes of initiatives in the field using gender relations as the focal point for analysis.
- MODULE 9**    **UNVEILING GENDER**  
Basic Conceptual Elements for Understanding Equity  
Presents elements for a basic understanding of gender theory, along with a glossary of the terms most frequently used in the Toward Equity series.