

Facilitation skills and gender-responsive facilitation of Ag-Scan workshops

1. General facilitation skills

Good facilitation is critical for enabling participants to feel comfortable to undertake critical assessments which is essential for the Ag-Scan process.

Tips on general facilitation

- At the start of the workshop, be clear about the goals of the workshop, the expectations of the facilitator and the participants.
- Facilitation is a process of learning, sharing, and coming to decisions using methods that are participatory and affirming of experiences and knowledge that all bring into the room.
- The facilitator is a neutral person who does not offer personal opinions and does not get drawn into the discussions. Should the facilitator want to engage in the workshop process, this is possible when the facilitator “steps out of the role of the facilitator” to make a comment.
- A facilitator is there to ensure that the discussion stays on topic and is progressing. S/he is also a timekeeper.
- S/he is there to ensure that everyone is able to engage in the workshop process, that all opinions are heard and respected, and that workshop participants are able to function as a group.
- Facilitation requires attitudes of acceptance, understanding, trust and care and respect; humour is also an asset.
- A facilitator will need to consciously and constantly examine her/his biases and how these affect her/his role as a facilitator.
- Skilful interventions and questioning by the facilitators can encourage the participation of all members of the group, especially women.

For further ideas on facilitation skills see Annex 1

2. Gender-responsive facilitation

Gender-responsive facilitation aims to ensure the active and equitable participation of women and men during the Ag-Scan workshop. Women’s participation - especially their ease with public speaking - can be affected by the cultural setting, social structures, gender relations and their status within their profession (see box).

Ag-Scan workshop experiences

Gender dynamics were problematic during the Sierra Leone workshop, probably symptomatic of the wider gender relations in the country. Not only was the number of female participants low, their contribution to discussions was minimal. The sub-group sessions offered more of an opportunity for female participants to voice their opinion, but this did not go far in creating an open and safe space for everyone to

contribute. All AVANTI team members were male (both international consultants, the NC, and both IFAD representatives) and the GCG was predominantly male. It would be worth thinking about how minority voices are amplified in other AG-Scan workshops.

In contrast, women played an extremely active role in the Ag-Scan workshop in Samoa, as reflected in the workshop report and associated videos.

10-point checklist for facilitating gender-responsive workshops

1. Ensure there are sufficient women among the participants (consider imposing a quota (eg at least 40% women, adapted to country context) and use affirmative action to reach the target).
2. (Ideally) have at least one female and one male facilitator, both of whom are gender-sensitive and aware of the specific gender issues affecting the Ag-Scan (as reflected in their ToRs).
3. Make sure the workshop environment is suitable for both women and men (including practicalities like restroom facilities, the location and duration of the workshop (eg women may find it difficult to stay away from home overnight)).
4. Ensure gender considerations are an integral part of the Ag-Scan process, where relevant, and points for consideration in the matrix.
5. Use gender-sensitive language and materials; images, illustrations and communication products should reflect and value both women's and men's experiences.
6. Be aware of bias, culture, prejudices and assumptions held by either participants or facilitators.
7. Use facilitation methods that increase the active participation of both women and men:
 - listen and respect each other's experiences and views
 - minimise dominance of discussions by senior male management
 - recognise and resolve any misunderstandings
 - use methods that encourage equal participation, such as group discussions, discussions in pairs, system of rotating chair, limited speaking time per participant, to go around the table and ask each participant to say a few words
 - make sure both women and men take on responsibility for note-taking etc
 - ensure women and men have equal opportunities and responsibilities to make presentations, including feedback from group work
 - pay attention to the composition and use of small groups; in some cultural contexts, women may feel more comfortable to share their point of view among other women rather than in mixed-sex groups.
8. Ensure any gender-based differences which have arisen during the discussions are noted in the Ag-Scan Journal and reflected in prioritization, summaries and action planning activities.
9. Include the sex of the respondent on the workshop evaluation form in order to determine whether there is any gender-specific feedback, and reflect in analysis.

10. Ensure gender balance in task force for following up on action plan.

Adapted from:

Gender and Water Alliance (2003) Gender Mainstreaming in Integrated Water Resources Management, Training Of Trainers Package

International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) (2009) Guidelines for Gender Sensitive Training (prepared by Min Bdr Gurung, Diederik Prakke and Brigitte Leduc)

IFAD (2017) How to do poverty targeting, gender equality and empowerment during project implementation

<https://www.ifad.org/documents/38714170/40197969/How+to+do+note+Poverty+targeting%2C+gender+equality+and+empowerment+during+project+implementation.pdf/d8e75674-450e-41cf-9786-106f059fe0bb>

Annex 1: Further tips on facilitation skills

AWARENESS. Don't get drawn into the emotions or chaos of the group. Keep your boundaries. Pay attention to how you are feeling – hunger, tiredness, frustration with domination by one or two members etc. Maybe others are feeling the same. Address these feelings.

LISTENING. Focus your mind and listen carefully. Maintain eye contact. Keep looking at the person speaking even if they are not looking at you. Convey acceptance and empathy with body language. Respond to the person speaking by nodding and acknowledging them. Do not slouch or look outside the window. Don't argue with the person, even in your head. Paraphrase after the speaker should that be appropriate.

OBSERVING. Watch the group attentively. What is the body language of the participants saying? Are they absorbed or losing interest? Make eye contact with the person who is waiting to speak.

ASKING OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS. Ask questions that are open-ended that invite participation and not those that call for yes and no responses. Examples are: "Would anyone else like to add something to this point?"; "Is there anything else you want to say about this?"

DRAWING OUT. You can encourage people to speak with either an open question or with eye contact. However, do not put a quiet person on the spot by drawing attention to them. Show people that you are interested in hearing what they have to say. Body language can do this.

RECORDING. When using flip charts etc., always record in the words and language of the person speaking. Do not use your own words. Check with participants if you are uncertain. Use the language of participants where relevant and refer back to the

recorded knowledge. You can also ask participants to assist you with writing, but ensure they know the rules.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION. Catch conflicts early. You might need to stop the workshop process to deal with it. On sensitive issues begin with sharing of personal experiences rather than opinions. State areas of agreement. Introduce humour. Break the issue into manageable parts. Work with the participants to create processes to address the conflicts. Enable the 2 sides to present their views and to listen to each other. Break into teams to find new ideas or approaches.

Source: Gender and Water Alliance (2003) Gender mainstreaming in integrated water resources management, Training of trainers package, page 109