

## TOOL 3.7

### Facilitate Gender-Equitable Participation in Consultations on Infrastructure Operations

- » **GOAL:** Ensure women's equal participation in consultations for design of infrastructure operations and community initiatives
- » **TARGET UNIT:** Community Engagement

Over the life of a project, community consultations can take place in a variety of circumstances. Consultations can be held ahead of project initiation, as part of exploration/scoping and community consultation. They may be held during the operational phase at various stages as part of different community engagement activities. They may be held to discuss issues related to operations or benefit distribution, or they may be held to discuss project closure. An ongoing, trusted, transparent, and accessible consultation process is essential to:

- Keeping open communication and trust between company and community
- Maintaining up-to-date understanding of social license
- Continuing ability to address concerns
- Preserving smooth and uninterrupted operations

To facilitate these goals and guarantee ongoing dialogue, conduct regular consultations that are accessible to all members of the community. Be aware that gender roles and responsibilities often mean that men, women, or other vulnerable groups in the community may not have equitable access to consultations. Adapt accordingly, so that consultative forums reflect all community viewpoints. Remember that investment in a robust consultative process can help you avoid more costly issues down the road.

#### Four Steps to Facilitating Women's Participation in Consultations

What follows is a four-step process that will help increase women's participation in consultations.<sup>24</sup>

##### Step 1: Understand the community by conducting community and social mapping.

This information might have been uncovered in the baseline or social impact assessment (see **TOOLS 3.5** and **3.6**). But if your consultations occur later, changes could have

<sup>24</sup> The majority of this list was modified from Adriana Eftimie, Katherine Heller, and John Strongman, [Gender Dimensions of the Extractive Industries: Mining for Equity](#), 22.

happened in the meantime, so use this step to ensure that your community mapping is up to date. Be sure to map variations in gender as well as social and ethnic classes, such as:

- Female-headed households
- Groups of differing religious, cultural, or ethnic affiliations
- Variations in social/economic classes

Ensure that mapping includes gender-disaggregated information such as:

- Gender roles
- Gender responsibilities
- Gender differences in time allocation, amount of free time, or lack thereof (time poverty)
- Gender differences in access to and control of land and resources
  - Gender differences in property and land usage
  - Gender differences in property and land titling and ownership
  - Gender differences in property and land renting

Note that the information gathered in the activity and access and control profiles as detailed in [TOOL 3.5](#) can be helpful here.

## Step 2: Make sure that consultation logistics facilitate women's participation.

Logistics to be considered include timing and location. If it will be difficult for women to attend, make alternative arrangements so that the consultation is as inclusive as possible. To support gender diversity in the consultation process, consider:

- Setting targets for a gender equitable consultation, including equal numbers of men and women. Where co-ed consultations are not feasible or women may not feel comfortable speaking candidly in front of men (for instance, where cultural norms make this difficult), consider single-sex consultations.
- Scheduling meetings at times and locations convenient to women, determined through discussion with key community women.
- Addressing obstacles to women's attendance by recognizing them and providing solutions, such as providing transportation, childcare, and other support for domestic work.
- Using participatory mechanisms such as opportunity rankings and community scorecards to invite diverse and anonymous suggestions, opinions, and votes from men and women during consultations. (See [TOOL 3.16](#) for guidance on community scorecards.)

### Step 3: Facilitate women's leadership.

Make sure that there is gender diversity in leadership and the various representative positions in community management structures that relate to the project. This includes chairs of any committees established to ensure communication between the community and company. To help, several measures may be needed:

- **Leadership training:** If there are not enough qualified women for these positions, offer leadership training programs for women so they have the qualifications needed.
- **Gender awareness training:** If men in the community express resistance to women holding these leadership positions, conduct awareness training on women's equality and the benefits of gender equality in community and project leadership.

In addition, consultations with community leaders should occur at all stages of the project and community program and revenue management decisions. This group should always include formal and informal male and female community leaders.

Whenever possible, try to validate the credentials of the individuals—for example, by asking multiple sources—to ensure that they are, in fact, recognized community leaders and that they will reflect community views. Also keep in mind that more traditional societies can be very hierarchical, and that respect for this hierarchy and for community and traditional leaders must be shown. However, it may be necessary to hold multiple consultations to capture varying viewpoints, since the views of people in leadership positions may not necessarily reflect the views of everyone in the community—especially the most vulnerable.

### Step 4: Create an environment open to women's participation and leadership by sharing knowledge and building capacity.

Gender training for community members and company staff—including supervisory and security staff—can help open minds and broaden perspectives. Use such programs to:

- Increase gender awareness and sensitivity
- Educate community members and staff about the benefits of gender equality in the project and in the community
- Inform community members and staff about the interventions that will take place and allow open discussion about the changes to local customs and traditions that might result
- Reduce harassment and resistance to gender equality initiatives (For detailed guidance on how to reduce harassment in the workplace, see [TOOL SUITE 4](#))
- Encourage staff to collect information about gender aspects of project operations