

## TOOL 3.12

### Create Community Development Initiatives that Benefit Both Men and Women

- » **GOAL:** Ensure that community initiatives are designed to reflect priorities of men and women in the community
- » **TARGET UNITS:** Community Engagement

In addition to assessing community status, impacts, and development objectives, many companies plan activities to promote community development. Such efforts include support for local economies, supply chains, and infrastructure. For rural communities that are underserved by government services, company activities and public-private partnerships can be important means of service delivery. These programs benefit both the community and the company. They facilitate positive relations, helping to achieve and maintain social license and smooth, uninterrupted project operations.

Including men and women in decisions about the type and structure of the company's community initiatives is critical to achieving real and sustained development and progress.

This tool provides suggestions on incorporating men's and women's perspectives and needs in equal measure as the type and design of community development initiatives are determined. This includes ensuring gender-equitable access to and benefit from activities, as well as initiatives specifically geared to promote the economic and social empowerment of women.

### Designing Gender-Equitable Community Initiatives

The following recommendations for designing gender-equitable community initiatives will help you optimize impact and sustainability:

- Make sure that gender is integrated as a strategic priority in the design of multi-year community development plans.
- Use the information gleaned from your gender-sensitive baseline community and social impact assessments (see [TOOLS 3.5](#) and [3.6](#)) as key inputs in the design of your strategic community plan and specific community initiatives.
- Include men and women at all stages of consultation for planning and implementation of community development activities:
  - Make sure to involve diverse participants from all social and economic strata to avoid elite capture.
  - If necessary, conduct separate meetings with men and women at times, in places, and in languages that will support their active participation (see [TOOL 3.7](#) for detailed guidance).

- Keep the community regularly informed of progress towards delivery of initiatives and other commitments. This management of expectations could prevent unrest in the case of implementation delays.
- Engage women and men in monitoring and implementation of the initiatives (see **TOOL 3.15**).
- Provide constructive guidance, based on the baseline and social impact assessments, to encourage input from women who have not previously been engaged in consultations or community program design. Initially, it might seem as if the women lack ideas. But this could be due to limited exposure, since past programs may have only served to reinforce traditional roles and opportunities.
- Look for opportunities to link economic and social empowerment activities with the company's local supply chain needs, which can greatly help with social license and the economic resilience of the local community:
  - Collaborate with local procurement/sourcing colleagues to identify needs that could be filled through local sourcing.
  - Use this information as a basis for community consultation on designing community training or providing other support (such as access to finance) that could enable the expansion of local sourcing. (See **TOOL SUITE 2** for detailed guidance on increasing integration of women-owned businesses into the supply chain.)
  - Collaborate across departments to share activity costs.
- Gain consensus on community priorities and make sure that initiatives align with these priorities: Sometimes communities agree to activities proposed by companies or development professionals even if they do not fit priorities, climate, or needs. Ensuring that activities genuinely align with community priorities will lead to higher success rates and, ideally, more positive impact for women.

## Implementing Gender-Equitable Community Initiatives

Here are some recommendations to guide you on gender-equitable community initiatives:

- Ensure that both men and women have equal opportunities to play a variety of roles in community programming: For instance, take steps so women can assume leadership or management positions in community management of outreach activities. This is not only a way to increase the social impact of activities, but also an opportunity to provide women with leadership opportunities.
- Stay informed about the community and gender initiatives of other companies, donor agencies, and NGOs in the area: This will avoid overlap and uncover opportunities for collaboration. Partnering with others also could help ensure sustainability after the project cycle ends and the company leaves the area.

**BOX 3E | Examples of Community Initiatives with Specific Benefit for Women**

This list highlights activities that have been implemented in communities to offset potential negative project impacts that disproportionately affect women and to promote women's economic and social empowerment.

- Capacity-building for female subsistence farmers: Examples include training on how to boost agricultural productivity and output.
- Capacity-building for female microentrepreneurs: Examples include training on marketing or financial literacy.
- Capacity building and financial support for local and regional women's organizations: Such efforts also contribute to community self-sufficiency and reduce the risk of overdependence on the company.
- Infrastructure projects to reduce women's time poverty.
- HIV/AIDS awareness programs: This includes counseling, screening, public service announcements, and free condom distribution, which benefit both men and women. Note that in many contexts, women may have less autonomy over sexual behavior and/or family planning options, so community-wide public health programs can have particularly strong impacts on women's ability to exercise healthy behaviors.
- Counseling, support, and shelter for victims of domestic and gender-based violence and alcohol and drug abuse: Such programs should be provided by trained experts and could be conducted in partnership with governments or civil society.
- Gender-based violence education and awareness: Programs should target both men and women to increase understanding of the consequences, legal implications, and broader impacts on the family.
- Gender-based violence education, awareness, and capacity building for local municipalities and authorities in order to ensure that they are better prepared to respond.
- Programs to encourage girls' primary and secondary education: Such efforts might involve partnering with governments and include initiatives such as subsidy programs to encourage families to keep children in school, rather than sending them to work or help with household chores.
- Health programs or improved infrastructure to facilitate increased access to healthcare.
- Education programs or improved infrastructure to facilitate increased access to education.