

## TOOL 3.6

### Integrate Gender Concerns into Social Impact Assessments

- » **GOAL:** Understand the gender dimensions of project impacts on impacted communities
- » **TARGET UNIT:** Community Engagement and/or Independent Gender Expert

#### About the Social Impact Assessment

While a gender-sensitive baseline community assessment helps companies understand the local community and how gender roles and relations function within it, a gender-sensitive social impact assessment is essential to identify impacts that the infrastructure project might have on the community and its gender roles, relations, and influencing institutions. Social impact assessments are becoming increasingly common as standalone efforts. In addition, they often are part of the environmental impact assessment process required by governments and investors for project approval. IFC Performance Standard 1 establishes the importance of integrated assessment to identify the environmental and social impacts, risks, and opportunities of projects.

A key aspect of the social impact assessment is its usefulness in understanding what community members themselves believe to be potential positive and negative project impacts. To gain such insight and to avoid a company-led, top-down approach, consider conducting a community-based impact assessment. Alternatively, a third party, such as an NGO or consulting firm, could carry out the assessment.<sup>22</sup> Keep in mind that also including potential positive impacts in the assessment will allow you to identify the resources and processes that will be required to realize them. This also will help ensure that women will be able to maximize their benefit from the opportunities created.

In this tool suite, the baseline and social impact assessments are treated separately to facilitate integrating gender into existing processes. But combining the two by adding social impact into the baseline assessment is also an option, particularly for companies that are in the midst of designing their community engagement programs or that want to redesign their methodologies, thus avoiding the need for multiple assessments. Yet another option is a gender impact assessment that incorporates both. See the Additional Resources section of this tool suite for more information on gender impact assessments.

<sup>22</sup> For more, see Oxfam America's "[Community Voice in Human Rights Impact Assessments](#)" guidance and this toolkit's Additional Resources section.

### BOX 3A | Commonly Experienced Negative Gender Impacts from Infrastructure Project Development

- Changing community dynamics with influx of labor and related industries
- Disruption of mobility and access patterns
- Increase in social and health problems in affected community introduced by the influx of a transient male workforce
- Increased safety risks due to changing community dynamics
- Disruption of social networks and social safety nets
- Increased social pressures associated with increased availability of cash, influx of people, and changing social dynamics, including alcoholism, prostitution, and increased risk of sexually transmitted infections
- Increase in social issues related to land access and land titling in sending communities
- Disproportionate negative impacts from environmental degradation (e.g., of land, air, or water resources) or climate vulnerability
- Unfair distribution of royalties
- Unequal employment opportunities
- Rebalancing of domestic and/or subsistence responsibilities, with women taking on more work if men gain paid employment with the project or related sectors
- Loss of livelihoods
- Inflation related to increased economic activity in the area due to the project

## Differentiating Project Impacts

Gender-sensitive social impact assessments examine the ways in which men's and women's roles—as identified through the baseline assessment—influence how they experience project impacts, as well as their resilience to these impacts. This examination can include:

- Direct and indirect socioeconomic impacts introduced by the construction, operation, and closure of the project
- Ways in which men and women differ in how they are affected by the above impacts based on their gender roles, including diversity considerations to account for additional vulnerabilities

- Ways in which men's and women's different access to and control of resources—including natural resources, cash, and project benefits—affects resilience and ability to cope with the changes listed above
- Distribution of power relationships, influence, and decision-making power inside households and in the community: How do these power relationships affect the impacts on men and women, including those from vulnerable groups?
- Influence of gender roles on livelihoods, subsistence, and mobility in light of project impacts
- Ways in which differing access to education and employment influence men's and women's ability to cope with the above changes
- Ways in which men and women are affected differently by health and safety changes resulting from the project

### Identifying Ways to Mitigate Risks and Increase Benefits

A gender-sensitive social impact assessment is a useful tool in uncovering ways to mitigate risks or increase community benefits from projects. To do so, however, your assessment should take into consideration gender-related differences. Here are some ways to account for these differences:

- Identify and address disproportionately negative impacts on women
- Enhance positive impacts for women
- Avoid perpetuating or exacerbating existing gender inequalities
- Find opportunities to improve gender relations and gender equality
- Involve women in participation in and design of consultation processes and negotiations
- Enhance benefit sharing among the women and men in the community
- Evenly distribute benefits among female and male members of the community and include vulnerable groups

Use the results of the gender-sensitive social impact assessment to inform the subsequent design of project phases, community consultations, and community programs. This will help to ensure that gender-sensitive community approaches are embedded at all stages of the project.

## Gender-Equitable Data Collection

Gender-equitable data collection is absolutely key to an assessment that appropriately reflects the gender-related differences in the social impacts from an infrastructure project. Standard data collection methods may inadvertently leave out women’s voices. For example, cultural factors may prevent women from attending community consultations or from speaking up in front of men, or women’s household or childcare responsibilities may leave them unavailable to attend consultations. See **TOOL 3.5** for more guidance on including women’s voices in the data collection process.

**TABLE 3H | Questions to Include in a Gender-Sensitive Social Impact Assessment**

### GENERAL QUESTIONS

What are the current or predicted positive impacts (economic, social, and environmental) of the different project stages on men and women, including on their activities and access to and control of resources?

What are the current or predicted negative impacts (economic, social, and environmental) of the different project stages on men and women, including on their activities and access to and control of resources?

Does the project provide opportunities to promote gender equality through specific institutions in the area? Which institutions?

Will social cohesion be diminished or damaged?

*Note: While some changes may be assumed to be positive, such as reducing the time it takes women to collect water, it is important to not make assumptions before consulting with women and men in a community. For example, in some communities, women do not want to reduce their water collection time because it is used as important time to converse with other women.*

Will any cultural heritage practices or culturally significant or sacred sites be diminished or damaged?

### INTERESTS AND PERCEPTIONS

What are the differences in women’s and men’s perceptions of the project and how it will impact them?

Do women and men have different hopes and concerns about the project?

## CHANGING HOUSEHOLD DYNAMICS

Are there opportunities for the project to improve gender equality within the home?

What are the potential implications of the changed access to resources inside and outside of the home for men and women? For instance, how are changes outside the home—such as in employment, livelihoods, or increased availability of cash—leading to changes inside households?

Will the project pose any threats to existing livelihoods, subsistence, or property ownership rules or customs? How would men and women be differently impacted by this?

Could any of the above changes lead to increased domestic or gender-based violence?

What steps can be taken to prevent or minimize potential subsequent risks of domestic or gender-based violence?

## INFLUENCING INSTITUTIONS

What influencing institutions or other stakeholders, such as civil society or community groups—especially those that work with women—and labor unions —particularly all-male unions—could either help or hinder gender equality efforts?

How can the company work with these stakeholders to partner on gender equality efforts or ensure that company gender equality efforts won't be obstructed?

How can the project work within or strengthen existing social structures and processes to further gender equality efforts?

## SOCIAL SUBGROUPS AND VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

Do any social subgroups or vulnerable populations (such as those of lower social classes, higher poverty levels, ethnic minority groups, disabilities, or anyone else with less voice and agency) have additional gender issues or particular sensitivity to community gender issues?

## SAFETY AND HEALTH

Will the project increase the risk of violence for women or men (domestic, gender-based, or other), sexually transmitted infections, or other threats to their personal safety or health?

What steps can be taken to prevent or minimize these risks?

Are there any injured, ill, or disabled members of the community who are usually taken care of by their female relatives?

Will the health and wellbeing of these individuals be affected by the changes in power dynamics or increased gender equality?

## **PARTICIPATION AND BENEFIT SHARING**

Will both men and women have opportunities to participate in the project through employment, local supplier development, community initiatives, and benefit sharing?

How can the company ensure that both women and men voice their opinions in community consultations?

How can the company ensure communication and connection with the community's female and male leaders?

What is the likelihood of elite capture (benefits going to members of the community who are more well off, such as men or women who have higher socioeconomic status)?

How can the concerns and participation of all members of society be taken into consideration?

How can the project be designed to provide leadership and professional development opportunities to both men and women (for example, through leadership or project management roles in the company, community, or government)?

Will women or men face different hurdles or bear disproportionate costs to participate in the project?

*TIP: This can include sacrificing paid work or juggling increased pressures of time and labor due to preexisting commitments to subsistence activities or domestic and childcare duties.*