

C.9 Working with women and men

This section is designed to help participants to work with women and men on gender issues in their own organisations or in popular or 'grassroots' organisations. The frameworks of analysis we presented in the previous section may identify the need to question and alter the nature of development or relief interventions. In many Oxfam-run workshops, facilitators have been asked by the participants to give guidelines on how to go about implementing the insights of gender analysis. How do we introduce gender-awareness into our own work, and the work of others?

1 Listening

The first group of activities focuses on listening, and gathering information. It is not enough to know what questions to ask; it is necessary to know how to listen, particularly how to listen to women. Listening well, and hearing what people really say, not what you expect them to say, is a skill which needs practice and awareness. Women are often constrained by many political and cultural factors in their ability to communicate their real needs and interests, and to give information about themselves. Working in a gender-sensitive way, in the practical sense, means knowing how to listen to and find out about women as well as men. A number of activities in this section focus on listening and gathering information.

2 Working with women and men

This groups of activities looks at some of the dangers of not listening to and talking to women, at the dangers of excluding women from effective participation, and at practical ways of introducing gender issues to counterpart agencies.

C.9 Activities

1 Listening

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75	Listening skills (<i>Handout 90 Good and bad listening</i>)	35 mins	467 469
76	Listening to women	2 hrs	471
77	Did you know she knows a lot? (<i>Handout 91 What does she know about...</i>)	1½ hrs	473 475

2 Working with women and men.

78	Working to include women (<i>Handout 92 Briefing for role play</i>)	3-4 hrs	477 481
79	Working with women and men on gender	1½ hrs	483
80	Village meeting role play (<i>Handouts 93 to 99: Map of village and role cards</i>)	2-3hrs	485 489-501
81	Working with partners on gender (<i>Handout 100 Burma case study</i>) (<i>Handout 101 Philippines case study</i>)	2 hrs	503 505 509
82	Finding out about women	1 hr.	515
83	Positive action (<i>Handout 102 Working with project partners</i>)	1½ hrs	517 519

Distortion of message

Objectives

- 1 To show the importance of good listening.
- 2 To show how easy it is for messages to be distorted.

Method

- 1 Ask for five volunteers, who then leave the room with one facilitator. The facilitator explains that they will be asked to listen to and repeat a story which they will hear. They wait outside until they are called in one by one, in turn. (20 mins)
- 2 The facilitator enters with the first volunteer and they sit facing each other in chairs in the centre of the group. The facilitator reads the story once only to the volunteer. The volunteer cannot ask any questions and must not see the paper. The rest of the group remains silent.
- 3 Then the second volunteer is called in and the first volunteer has to repeat the story as she/he remembers it to the second volunteer. The same rules apply. The volunteers remain in the room after they have had their turn speaking.
- 4 This is then repeated until finally the fifth volunteer repeats the story to the facilitator. The facilitator then reads out the original story.
- 5 Then, in the large group, ask what was learned in that exercise. (20 mins)

Materials

A story relevant to the local situation, not more than one page long.

Facilitator's Notes

1 Choose a realistic story, not too long, but with some lists of names and things to remember.

2 Points to emerge from the discussion:

- a. It is very easy for a message to be distorted.*
- b. It is hard to remember something one does not understand.*
- c. Sometimes the meaning gets lost or changes — it may even have the opposite meaning from the original.*
- d. Listeners' own assumptions may affect what they hear.*
- e. It is easier to remember information accurately if one can see it written down or ask questions.*

Listening skills

Objectives

- 1 To experience the effects of not being listened to.
- 2 To identify listening skills.
- 3 To practise listening skills.
- 4 To relate these to gender work.

Method

- 1 Ask the group to form pairs and share experiences of not being listened to.
(5 mins)
- 2 In the large group, drawing from experiences just discussed, brainstorm 'what makes a good listener'.
(15 mins)
- 3 Ask the pairs to reform and practise good listening, based on the list of skills identified. One person talks and the other listens actively for five minutes, then they swap around for five minutes. Finally they discuss the experience together for five minutes.
(15 mins)
- 4 In the large group, ask participants to share their experiences of being listened to, and of listening; and how these are related to working with women.
- 5 Give out **Handout 90** Good and bad listening.

Materials

Handout 90

Facilitator's Notes

1 One problem often identified by women is that of not being listened to, or taken account of. The problem often identified by men (or women) in their work with women is of not knowing what the women want because women's views are not expressed. Learning to listen can be the first step for a programme worker trying to work with women. Listening is not just a passive process, but needs working at in order to encourage, accept, appreciate and understand what another person is saying. This is particularly important when that other person is somewhat fearful or reluctant to speak, or if she feels that certain things will not be understood (as may often be the case with uneducated women). If people often have the experience of not being listened to, they may find it difficult to express themselves freely when first asked, but will often respond to good listening.

Good and bad listening

Some examples of blocks to good listening include:

- a. 'On-off listening' when the listener 'switches off' at times.
- b. 'Red flag listening' when certain words trigger a response that causes us to stop listening.
- c. 'Open-ears, closed mind listening' when we quickly decide we know what is to be said.
- d. 'Glassy-eyed listening' when we appear to listen while daydreaming.
- e. 'Too-deep-for-me listening' when we stop listening because we don't understand.
- f. 'Don't-rock-the-boat listening' when we don't listen to something that may challenge our opinions.

They also identify some 'do's and don'ts' in listening. In listening we should **try to do** the following:

- a. Show interest.
- b. Be understanding of the other person.
- c. Express sympathy.
- d. Single out the problem if there is one.
- e. Listen for causes of the problem.
- f. Help the speaker associate the problem with the cause.
- g. Encourage the speaker to develop competence and motivation to solve his or her own problems.
- h. Cultivate the ability to be silent when silence is needed.

In listening, do **not do** the following:

- a. Argue.
- b. Interrupt.
- c. Pass judgment too quickly or in advance.
- d. Give advice unless it is requested by the other.
- e. Jump to conclusions.
- f. Let the speaker's *emotions react too directly on your own*.

(Source: *Training for Transformation*)

Listening to women

Objectives

- 1 To practise listening skills in a real-life situation.
- 2 To listen to what women say.

Method

- 1 Explain the exercise and divide the participants into small groups (no more than four people per group). Their task is to find a group of women and simply listen to what they have to say.

(10 mins)
- 2 Each group goes to listen to some women. If necessary they explain that they are participants on a course on women and development and they are learning how to listen to women.

(30 mins)
- 3 Back in the large group, each group reports in turn:
 - a. Which group did you visit?
 - b. What did they talk about?
 - c. What did you hear?
 - d. How did you find doing the task? (Easy/difficult..)
 - e. What was the reaction of the group?

(30mins-1hr)
- 4 Lead a group discussion on the differences or similarities between the experience of the groups, and what is to be learned from the exercise.

(30 mins)

Facilitator's Notes

1 Some people can feel uneasy about visiting a group of strange women without the visit being arranged, and without an introduction. They could choose to go on a pre-arranged visit. Others felt that the facilitators might have told the women what to say — they were able to choose their own group of women to listen to.

2 It can be difficult for men to accept that they are just going to listen, and not to tell the women anything. However, when we did this activity, explaining that they are 'students' on a training course seems to have been accepted as a reason, and the women did talk to all the groups.

3 Some groups found it impossible to do this activity without asking questions or having a dialogue. It may be beneficial for the facilitators to accompany the groups on their visits to ensure that good listening skills are being used.

4 This activity can be done either with preparation or not. In our case one group had been informed of the visit previously, another one was an Oxfam project partner; the remaining two were found by the group themselves. The groups visited should be women only.

Did you know she knows a lot?

Objectives

- 1 To discuss how women's knowledge is ignored.
- 2 To raise awareness of the importance of gathering data and perspectives from women for development planning.

Method

- 1 Explain the aims of the session to the participants. Hand out the chart (**Handout 91**).
(5 mins)
- 2 Ask the participants to think about a woman they know (in their family or in a community where they work) and fill up the chart provided (**Handout 91** What does she know about...).
(15 mins)
- 3 Participants share with the group information from the chart. Write down key words from the debriefing on flipchart.
(35 mins)
- 4 Wrap up the session highlighting the following:
 - a. Listening to women is essential for gender sensitive planning.
 - b. Because of their multiple roles (community/social, productive and reproductive) women can provide important information for planning.
 - c. Because of their caring role and social networks women are better placed than men to provide information about household issues.
 - d. Because of women's subordinate position they may have a different perspective in relation to use and allocation of, and control over, resources at community and family level. Development workers need to understand these differences.

- e. Women's work is still largely invisible. We must consult them to ensure that their contribution to household economy as well as workloads are fully incorporated into planning.

(10 mins)

Materials

Handout 91(one per person), flipchart and pens

Facilitator's Notes

This activity could be used in a field visit, and combined with the previous one, Activity 76 Listening to Women.

Handout 91

Activity 77

What does she know about ...

Herself

- i. _____
- ii. _____
- iii. _____

Her children's needs

- i. _____
- ii. _____
- iii. _____

The economy of the household

- i. _____
- ii. _____
- iii. _____

Her work in agriculture or other activities

- i. _____
- ii. _____
- iii. _____

Her neighbours' needs

- i. _____
- ii. _____
- iii. _____

The problems of her community

- i. _____
- ii. _____
- iii. _____

The problems of other women

- i. _____
- ii. _____
- iii. _____

Working to include women

Objectives

- 1 To explore ways of working to include women.

Method

Part 1: Preparation

- 1 Give each participant a copy of **Handout 92** and go through it with them.
(5-10 mins)
- 2 After outlining the role-play divide the participants into three groups:
 - i. The NGO assessment team (all male).
 - ii. The community group, comprising elders (all male) and equal numbers of women and men.
 - iii. A group of more or less equal numbers of women and men should make up the ‘observers’ of the role play.One person should be nominated timekeeper and ‘run around’ link between the groups.
(5 mins)
- 3 Ask the three groups to go into separate rooms to discuss the briefing and to identify issues to be discussed in the role play.
- 4 Explain that the meeting was to be held at the temporary camp before the return of the community to their home village.
- 5 In addition to the general briefing given above, give each group of participants (separately) additional information relevant to their roles.
 - i. NGO assessment team:
 - a. Their task is to identify the community’s needs and the priority of those needs.
 - b. The NGO has no food resources available, but this may be available from the government relief agency of WFP (World Food Programme).
 - c. The NGO is not involved in the health/nutrition sector in general.

- d. The NGO has worked in the region for some years, but in other districts with other ethnic groups.
 - e. Stress to the NGO team that the objective of the role play is ‘to explore ways of working with women’ and not to get too caught up in the issues of types of assistance, etc.
- ii. The community group:
- a. The local wells at the home village are owned by a rival ethnic group. The community group uses the ponds whenever possible or walks 10km to a well put in by the government for public use.
 - b. The clinic in the home village never opened as there were no staff assigned, so the community uses the health centre 5km away. The community’s TBA is trained and the trained CHA (Community Health Agent) is very active. Health is therefore not a major issue for the return home.
 - c. The community traditionally lives in stone houses and will rebuild them over time, therefore shelter is not an issue upon return to the home village.
 - d. The women in the community group have heard from their husbands about the forthcoming meeting with a visiting NGO team but they have not been invited to the meeting as in their culture meetings are for elders and the men of the community.
- 6 Ask the community group to split into their sub-groupings along gender/leadership lines and to look at the following questions:
- a. What needs do the elders see as a priority for NGO assistance?
 - b. What needs do the men see for NGO assistance?
 - c. What needs do the women see as a priority for NGO assistance?
- 7 Tell the elders and men to come together just before the role play starts and share their basic priorities and needs. The women are not consulted and told not to be present at the meeting (physically out of the room).
- 8 Observers: the observers should sit in with the community group during the preparation period and hear the additional information given. Stress that the task of the observers during the role play is to assess the role of the NGO assessment team in ‘exploring ways of working with women’.

Part 2: Role play of meeting between the NGO team and the community

- 9 Bring all the groups together for the meeting — excluding the women, who have to stay out of the room.
- 10 After the meeting convene the whole group, and ask the observers to report back on how they felt the NGO team had performed in terms of exploring ways of working with women.
- 11 Make notes on flipchart of the main issues and allow time for a general discussion.

Materials

Flipchart and pens. **Handout 92**

Facilitator's Notes

1 When this role play was performed in Ethiopia a number of strategies were tried by the NGO team:

- They raised questions related to areas of women's activity, such as water availability and collection and infant mortality—however the elders spoke 'for' the women.*
- The teams brought up the possible needs of particular groups such as widows and women who maintain their households alone. The elders said there were such women in the community and allowed some of the women to be called to the meeting to speak to the team.*
- To facilitate this, one of the NGO team was changed to a woman. This made access to women by the NGO team more acceptable to the men and the elders.*
- They suggested to the community that the team split up, so that one group would remain talking to the woman, and the other would move around the camp looking at conditions and thus taking the opportunity to talk to the woman.*

2 There were some interesting comments from the participants after the role play.

Elders: one noted that he had realised the power implicit in his role and enjoyed dominating the meeting with the NGO team. Another felt that the elders had been too obstructive to the NGO team and in his experience the elders would not have been so dismissive of the suggestion that women attend the meeting to discuss the issues which concern them like water and health.

Men: a general comment from the players was that although the elders were speaking on behalf of the community about going home, there was dissent among the men because at least two had decided to stay in the camp.

The men had found it interesting that the elders were not prepared to allow for this. Some of the men had also felt that the women should have been invited to the meeting when the NGO team had asked about the issues of water and health but could not speak over the elders to the NGO team.

Women: the players (who were in fact all women) commented that their exclusion from the meeting was 'typical', and even when they eventually attended (as widows

and heads of households) they were talked over by the elders, and their spokesperson didn't say all she wanted to but was continually cut off.

NGO team: All the members found the session hard work. A couple of the members admitted that they kept forgetting that the objective of the role play was to explore ways of working with women and were trying harder to find ways for the NGO team to assist the community.

The NGO team felt that the experience of the role play had helped them to think about their work with communities in a new light.

*(Source: Based on a role-play in **Getting the Community into the Act**, by Pat Ellis, published in 1983 by Women and Development Unit, Extra-Mural Department, University of the West Indies.)*

Briefing for role-play

Background:

- 1 A displaced community group has been living in a camp sited near a town for six months.
- 2 The group was displaced by ethnic conflict in their home area.
- 3 They had no harvest last year because of drought.
- 4 They are traditionally rural and rely on agriculture for a livelihood.

Situation for role play:

- 1 Government officials have discussed with the group the possibility of returning to their village, and the group has agreed.
- 2 The government has asked NGOs working in the region to assist the returning group with basic services and needs.
- 3 An assessment mission of staff from one NGO has requested a meeting with the community group members to discuss their needs.

Considerations:

- Displaced Camp: Monthly food rations;
Water trucked from sources to camp;
PHC, supplementary feeding for women and children provided at camp;
tents (family size) provided.
- Home Village: No household food stocks because no harvest last year;
Traditional wells are not functioning and rain-water ponds are dry;
Community buildings (eg clinic, school) and houses were looted and destroyed in ethnic conflict

Note: The timing of the NGO visit to the camp and the planned return of the group to their home village is during the local dry season. The traditional planting season for the staple food crop is six weeks away.

- The community group:
- 1 Traditional leaders (elders) speak to 'outsiders'.
 - 2 Women do not have a public role in the community.

Working with men and women on gender

Objectives

- 1 To recognise the particular difficulties and possibilities for both men and women in their work with men and women on gender issues.
- 2 To come up with strategies for this work.
- 3 To relate what is learnt about gender to the work in the field.

Method

- 1 Introduce the aims of the exercise. Divide the group into small groups (five or six people) of men-only and women-only. *(5 mins)*
- 2 Ask each group briefly to share a few successes and problems in working with women on gender issues, and list these on flipchart. Ask them to write down some ideas for strategies to work with women. *(15-20 mins)*
- 3 Ask them to do the same for working with men on gender issues. *(15-20 mins)*
- 4 Ask the small groups to report back in the following order:
 - a. The first women's group reports strategies for working with women. Then the other women's groups add on any new ideas. After this the men's group(s) report strategies for working with women. *(10 mins)*
 - b. The second women's group reports strategies for working with men, then the remaining women's group adds any new ideas. After this, the men's groups report strategies for working with men. *(10 mins)*
- 5 Guide the whole group to discuss the issues which arise. *(10 mins)*

Materials

Flipchart, paper, pens

Facilitator's Notes

1 This activity and others where the group is split into single- sex groups may cause some division between women and men in the group, thus it should not be done in a group that is already divided. It should be done when a good group feeling has been established. It should be followed by two or three quick exercises to get the group back together again, e.g.

***Listening in pairs:** if there are approximately equal numbers of men and women, make pairs of one man and one woman. Each takes a turn, for five minutes, to talk about their feelings about the activity. The other one listens and tries to understand, and does not interrupt.*

***Numbers:** everyone walks about the room. The facilitator calls any number from two up to the number of people in the group, and participants try to form into groups of that number. For example, if the facilitator calls out 'four', everyone has to rush to form groups of four. The game is ended by calling the number of people in the group and everyone gets into one big group.*

*(Also see **Energisers** section.)*

2 When this activity was used in India, some interesting differences emerged between the men's and the women's groups. The men's group, for example, felt that in any context, gender issues should be raised with the women initially, and only raised with men after the women had gained strength and confidence.

The women's group, by contrast, felt that gender should be raised with all groups, mixed, men's and women's, at every opportunity, and should always be linked with caste and with class.

Both sexes felt it useful to work with gender-aware workers of the opposite sex when raising gender concerns, especially in mixed groups. Participants noted the importance of not giving out stereotyped signals as a man or woman when interacting with the opposite sex. This highlights the importance of gender awareness at the level of personal behaviour for effective gender-sensitive work with development projects and programmes.

Village meeting role play

Objectives

- 1 To give participants a new tool for using in work with women and men.
- 2 For people to experience the frustration of being ignored as a woman in decisions that concern them.
- 3 To enable participants to see how easy it is for women's concerns and other crucial information to be ignored when the agenda and the participants have already been set.
- 4 To enable participants to relate the role-play to real-life situations and suggest ways of involving women in decision making.

Method

Part 1 Preparation

- 1 Inform the group you are going to do a role-play and ask for five volunteers.
- 2 Take the five volunteers out of earshot of the main room. Brief them on their roles and give them their role-card (**Handouts 94-98**). Give the 'development worker' a map of the area (**Handout 93**). Ask each person to consider their role on their own for five minutes.

(5 minutes)

Ask the 'government worker' and 'development worker' to discuss together and the three 'headmen' to discuss together.

(5 minutes)
- 3 Meanwhile hand out the role statements to the remaining group, after dividing it up into three groups of 'women' from three villages (**Handout 99**).

Ask them to read their statements, then discuss in their 'village groups'. It is important to tell them to put away their papers and not reveal their identity until told to do so. *(5 minutes)*

- 4 Arrange a table with two chairs on one side and three on the other side in the centre of the room.

Part 2 Role Play

- 5 The three 'headmen' come and sit down.

The 'development worker' and 'government worker' enter and all introduce themselves.

Explain the purpose of the meeting and explain you will stop the role-play at any time by clapping hands.

- 6 After each participant in the meeting has stated their position, and a discussion or argument has developed, clap your hands then inform them that the audience is in fact the women from the three villages. Then say they can go ahead with their discussion.

- 7 After a few minutes, if they have made no effort to consult the 'women', clap your hands again and tell them to consult the women from all the villages.

- 4 If they fail to consult at least one woman from each village, then make sure that they do.

- 5 After consultation, if they return to their discussion as before, allow the discussion to continue for a few minutes before finally stopping it.

(30-45 minutes)

Part 3 Debrief

- 6 Women from each 'village' in turn say how they felt at being excluded, not consulted and bound by 'cultural rules'. Allow the expression of frustration and anger. Look at differences in how women interpreted cultural rules.

- 7 The 'headmen' debrief in turn. Especially on how they felt about consulting 'their' women.

- 8 The 'government worker' and 'development worker' debrief, especially on consulting women.

- 9 If it hasn't come out in the role-play, ask why no-one discussed the design of the well. Explain that all the information was present on the role cards. Women describe the water pots they use. Explain (if necessary) that the well might not have been used wherever it had been placed, because of the design of the well and the shape of the water vessels. Point out the difficulty of finding out useful information when the agenda is already set, such as what women use water for, how this affects their livelihoods, etc. *(15-30 minutes)*

Part 4 Relating the role-play to real life

10 In large or small groups, discuss the following questions:

- a. Have you ever seen a situations like this is real life?
- b. What could be done to overcome it?

(These can be listed on flipchart if appropriate).

(10-15 mins)

Materials

Map drawn on flipchart (**Handout 93**).

Role-cards for:

Handout 94 Development Worker x 1

Handout 95 Government Worker x 1

Handout 96 Headman from Mwingi x 1

Handout 97 Headman from Ikutha x 1

Handout 98 Headman from Kalongo x 1

Handout 99 Women (as many copies as participants)

Facilitator's Notes

1 The roles of the government worker, the development worker and the headmen are all male, and best played by men. If there aren't enough men in your group, they can be played by women.

2 The women in the role-play should be played by men as well as women — it is a useful learning exercise for men to feel how it is to be ignored.

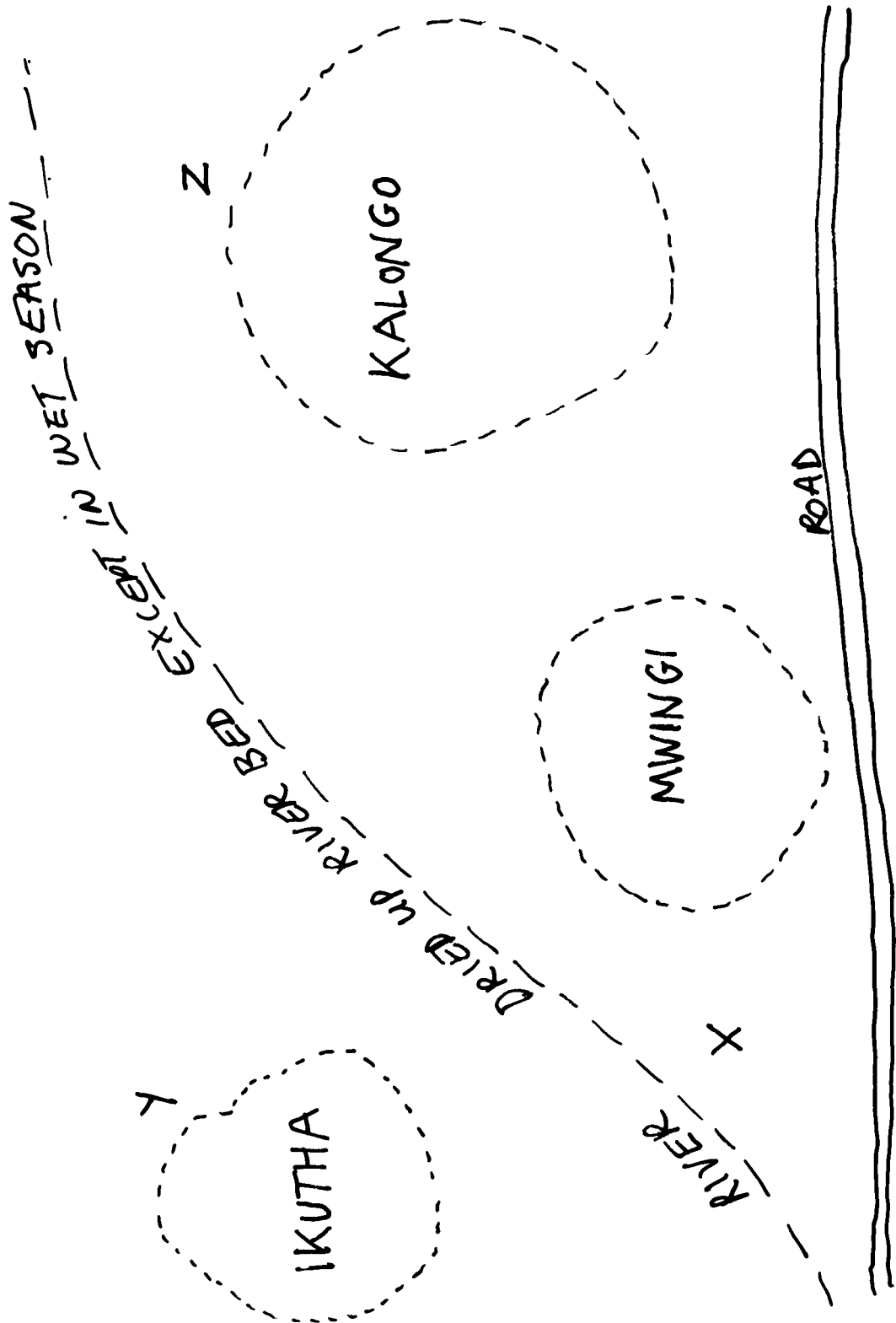
3 Ask participants to base the way they play their parts on their own experience, to make it more realistic. They should not exaggerate roles.

4 You can change the village names to those which suit your part of the world.

*5 It is important to finish the activity on a positive note — on what could be done to improve the situation (Part 4) — or follow it with another activity, such as **Activity 88, Construct an Image**.*

6 It is very important that the players of the male roles do not know that the 'audience' are in fact the village women, until you tell them.

7 It can take a long time to give the instructions for this activity: do it when you have plenty of time.



Role: Development worker

- 1 You are a development worker. There is a lot of sickness in this area, (which comprises three linked villages: Kalongo, Ikutha, Mwingi), much of it caused by contaminated water. Your agency has great expertise in providing water pumps which are hygienic and efficient. The pumps raise large amounts of water quickly and efficiently and have a flat concrete surround.
- 2 There are only three places where it is technically possible to site the well: X, Y and Z.
- 3 Your favour X, since it is nearer to the road and it would be easier to bring in supplies.
- 4 In this area you have to liaise with the government, and you are in contact with their Department of Water Affairs over this matter. Your agency would like to consult with the community. The government department has been very slow, but at last has set up a community meeting to discuss this issue.

Role: Government worker

- 1 You are the government worker in the Department of Water Affairs. You are happy that a foreign agency is willing to put in a water pump since there is a great need in the area, and the government cannot afford to put pumps everywhere.

- 2 The foreign agency has said that they want to talk to the community leaders, so eventually you have set up this meeting. However, the government does not want foreign interference in political affairs, and you must make sure that they do not stir up trouble in the village.

- 3 You know that three possible sites have been mentioned. You believe that it would be more efficient if your department chose the site because you can look at it in the context of planning for the whole country. You favour site Y since it is the furthest from any other supply.

Role: Kalongo village headman

- 1 You are one of the community leaders (headmen) from village (Kalongo). You have been informed that you will be getting a water pump which will supply the three villages (Kalongo, Mwingi, Ikutha). You are very glad and want the pump sited as near as possible to your village.
- 2 You think it should be placed at the centre of your village because you have the largest village and therefore the greatest number of people will benefit. Also you have worked hard for your people and want to prove to them that you are a good leader by bringing development to them.
- 3 You have heard that one of the possible sites is at Z, which is on the outskirts of Kalongo, your village. You don't think that makes sense and you want to ask for it to be put in the centre, which is also near your house.
- 4 You want to know what the pump will be like and how it will benefit you.

Role: Ikutha village headman

- 1 You are one of the community leaders (headmen) from village (Ikutha).
- 2 You have been informed that you will be getting a water pump which will supply the three villages (Kalongo, Ikutha, Mwingi). You are very glad and want the pump sited as near as possible to your village.
- 3 You think it should be placed at the centre of your village because you have been suffering terribly, especially in those years of little rains. Your village is the furthest from any existing water supply and getting enough water has really been a problem sometimes.
- 4 The people from Kalongo seem to dominate the group of three villages, and you are not sure if they will allow you free access to their pump if it is situated in their village.
- 5 You want to know what the pump will be like and how it will benefit you.

Role: Mwingi village headman

- 1 You are one of the community leaders (headmen) from village (Mwingi).
- 2 You have been informed that you will be getting a water pump which will supply the three villages (Kalongo, Ikutha, Mwingi).
- 3 You are very glad and want the pump sited as near as possible to your village.
- 4 You think it should be placed at the centre of your village because your village is between the other two villages, so that everyone will be able to use it. Also if the water is there you might be able to take the produce there without too much difficulty.
- 5 You want to know what the pump will be like and how it will benefit you.

Role: Village women

- 1 You are the women. One of your tasks is to provide water for the family. You collect it from particular places in the river at different times of year. You have to travel many kilometres to get it, particularly when the rains have not been good. You collect it in pots with rounded bases.
- 2 Some of you come from Kalongo village. This is the biggest village, and is nearest to the river. You have vegetable gardens there beside the river and use the water to irrigate your vegetables. You then use them for family food. Some of you also have fruit trees there. You sell some of the surplus after feeding your family.
- 3 Some of you come from Ikutha village. You have the biggest problem with water since you are furthest from the river. It takes you three hours to walk to the river in the dry season.
- 4 Some of you come from Mwingi village. In addition to your other work you sometimes go to town and sell surplus crops or other things in the market. You can only grow vegetables for part of the year, because the rest of the time it is too dry. You have some vegetable gardens near the river. You spend more time in the dry season going to fetch water.
- 5 It is not considered proper for you to speak to strange men in public, or to contradict your leader or your husband publicly, or to volunteer your opinion.
- 6 There will be a community meeting for the community leaders to discuss the siting of a new water pump. You can attend if you are not too busy.

Important: In this role-play, do not reveal your identity until asked to do so.

Working with partners on gender

Objectives

- 1 To discuss problems faced by NGOs in trying to incorporate a gender perspective into the work of project partners.
- 2 To look at two different situations:
 - a. The problems that NGOs working with a gender perspective face.
 - b. The problems of working through male-dominated institutions.

Method

- 1 Introduce the activity *(5 mins)*
- 2 Present the Burmese case study (male-dominated institutions) (**Handout 100**) using flipchart for the main points. *(30 mins)*
- 3 Allow for questions and discussion. *(20 mins)*
- 4 Repeat the process with the Philippines case study (gender perspective of NGOs: **Handout 101**) *(50 mins)*
- 5 If there are two facilitators, while case studies are being presented, the other facilitator writes down key issues on flipchart.
- 6 Sum up the session, addressing the questions:
 - a. What does the Philippines case tell you about the situation of women in Burma?
 - b. Are there common strategies that can be identified from these cases?Summarise the key points. *(15 mins)*

Materials

Flipchart, pens, paper, **Handouts 100 and 101**

Facilitator's Notes

1 If you are doing this as a sole facilitator, prepare flipcharts with the key issues before the session.

2 If participants have knowledge of the areas of these case studies, you could ask them to present the studies.

Case study: Working with partners on gender issues in Burma

Burma's political problems started soon after Independence in 1948 when a series of opposition groups went underground. During successive governments, both democratic and military, a number of uprisings took place, with the largest in 1988 being led by students. Thousands were killed or arrested, while around 10,000 fled to the border areas. After pressure from the international community, the government held elections in 1990 which were considered to have produced a fair result. The main opposition party, the NLD, won 85 per cent of the vote, but the junta refused to hand over power. The current situation is a stalemate; however, the government at present has the upper hand, having acquired international support since announcing the elections, notably from logging and oil companies. It is believed that it may soon be in a position to overcome the opposition groups.

The Burmese Relief Centre

The Burmese Relief Centre was set up in 1988, originally to help students living around the Thai border. It later started extending assistance to refugees from the Keren ethnic group, who had been in exile or semi-exile since soon after Independence. About 70,000 Burmese refugees now live in camps in Thailand. BRC works through the All Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF), the Keren National Union (KNU) and through other member organisations of the Democratic Alliance of Burma (DAB). It works both in camps in Thailand and in areas inside Burma controlled by the resistance forces. Most of BRC's assistance is focused on three elements: emergency provision of food, medicine, clothing, etc; medical training; and education.

Specific problems of women

Within these populations, the particular problems women face are the following:

- 1 Forced labour, either in construction work or as porters for the Burmese army. Women form about 50 per cent of the labour force in construction work and are about 20 per cent of army porters. Survival rates among the latter are extremely low,

with illnesses, including malaria, resulting from lack of care and lack of food. Women porters in particular are often subject to nightly gang-rape by soldiers.

- 2 Lack of family planning and pre- or post-natal care. Abortion is common and there is much inaccurate knowledge surrounding childbirth.
- 3 Infant mortality rates are very high, reaching 50 per cent of under-fives in some of the areas controlled or partially controlled by the resistance.
- 4 Single-parent households.
- 5 Prostitution. 40,000 Burmese women are estimated to be working in Thai brothels. Many of these are girls who enter domestic or other sorts of menial service and are later sold into prostitution. The prevalence of AIDS is very high among prostitutes in Thailand and the killing of AIDS victims is not uncommon.

BRC is able to address some of women's problems, notably 2 and 3 above, but on too small a scale to solve the problems, being restricted both by lack of funds and staff and by the lack of gender awareness within BRC and its partner organisations.

The students and the Keren refugees present two different communities with different gender profiles. Keren refugee women are highly respected and valued by men. They have equal opportunities and often control the family budget. There is a death sentence in cases of rape. Yet Keren women face many problems which the current political organisations are not dealing with, since there are few women at the higher levels of the organisation. For example, despite women being 52 per cent of the Keren population, there are only 5 women out of 45 in the central committee of the Keren National Union (KNU). Women tend to feel satisfied with their present role and don't want to challenge men.

The Keren Women's Organisation was in fact set up by the president of the KNU, with the intention of bringing women into the political struggle, rather than at the instigation of Keren women themselves. The KWO is thus an arm of the KNU, to whom its policy is subordinated; KNU policy is set up by men and women are not consulted in the process. The KWO is also disadvantaged financially, receiving around 10 per cent of the movement's (diminishing) income while the KNU receives 90 per cent.

The Burman student population, around 2,500 of them living in 22 camps on the Thai-Burma border, have a somewhat different composition, since women form less than 10 per cent of this population. Most students have sought refuge as individuals rather than families, and women have proved reluctant to cut themselves off from their families to the same degree as men. Commitment to the revolutionary struggle is a strong part of the students' motivation, in addition to fear of reprisals from the government.

Women among the students tend to feel they have no significant role in the struggle (there are no women on the central committee) and their morale is low as a result. In addition, they face many health problems and, having no knowledge about or access to contraception, many of them become pregnant. The women students have limited occupational options; those with education may become teachers or nurses, while those without tend to be cooks or cleaners. However, one woman has recently received training in women's development and may soon begin to change things.

For women's needs to be addressed as a higher priority, much groundwork needs to be done in raising gender awareness among all parties, as well as strengthening women's representation within the political structures: for example by strengthening the KWO, by increasing the number of women in the KNU central committee, and by promoting a women's movement within the ABSDF. However, this issue is currently clouded by the serious military situation in which the rebel movements find themselves. Is this the moment to start working for greater gender equality?

On the one hand, women stand to gain considerably from a Keren victory (in terms of freedom from gross abuses such as slave labour and, in the longer term, prostitution). Because of this, maintaining the military integrity of the movement is a priority for women as well as for men.

On the other hand, the refugees' survival depends not only on military strength but also on the strengthening of the community's coping mechanisms, which are in fact being eroded by the inability to address gender issues. It is perhaps exactly at this critical time, when all established patterns of behaviour are threatened with radical change, that gender most needs to be addressed.

Main points

- 1 In situations where gross discrimination is practised against a particular group, for example on ethnic or political grounds, the goal of gender equality within that group may appear to some to be subordinate to the needs of the political and military struggle, which aims to create the conditions for empowerment of the whole community. But can empowerment of the community exclude women?
- 2 Enabling all sections of the community to contribute to that struggle as fully as possible is also a vital survival strategy for the whole population. Times of crisis provide opportunities for change.
- 3 Helping resistance organisations to become aware of the gender dimensions to their struggle may be a timely contribution by outside support agencies.

(Source: Shona Kirkwood, Agra-East Conflict Workshop, Thailand, 1993)

Case study: Psychosocial support systems for women in the Philippines

Attending to the psychosocial needs and problems of people — especially women — during armed conflict is a relatively new field of disaster response in the Philippines.

While more and more NGOs are now aware of the great need to address the problem, the majority are still in the process of defining approaches to respond to the psychosocial effects of conflict. Only a few groups have gone beyond the research and conceptualisation stage and have begun to implement direct programmes with psychosocial services. Yet even these advanced groups still have to emerge from the 'infancy stage' of psychosocial work. Currently, each of them still faces problems associated with lack of human resources, lack of funds, and lack of experience.

If psychosocial work in general is as yet an emerging field, then much more so are psychosocial services directed towards the particular circumstances of women in situations of armed conflict. However, a few groups have already begun to establish mechanisms in response to this. These include some women's groups at national level. Already hampered by the problems mentioned above, these women's NGOs also have to contend with a male-oriented and male-dominated culture which tends to refuse to acknowledge women's needs and concerns. Nevertheless, despite major obstacles, hopes are high among these women's NGOs that co-ordinated efforts to raise the key issues in this field of disaster response will lead to a higher level of effectiveness in the future.

Psychosocial effects of armed conflict on women in the Philippines

The most obvious effect of armed confrontation between government troops and rebels is the massive displacements of communities, causing serious economic and psychosocial problems. Women are particularly vulnerable in this situation. Data from NGOs show the extent of armed-conflict-related traumas suffered by women.

- Emotional and mental distress caused by physical and economic displacement, especially in women-headed households.

- Experience of disaster-response NGOs show that women act as both father and mother in most situations of armed conflict. Having to take care of the children, they face the additional burden of ensuring that the family has enough food to eat.
- On top of this; women constitute the majority of volunteers for disaster-response groups. As such, they take part in registering disaster victims, acting as disaster-response committee members, attending training courses and acting as negotiating panel for peace talks with warring groups.
- Women have to do all this at the same time as trying to cope with the emotional stress of being physically separated from their husbands, who may be in hiding for fear of being suspected as a rebel or may be combatants.
- The fact that women comprise the majority of disaster volunteer workers reflects a gender-bias not only at the community level, but within NGOs as well. Many NGOs believe that women are easier to mobilise for disaster response because:
 - i. they are not tied to production work;
 - ii. disaster response is a women's job;
 - iii. women are more committed to service because of their innate nurturing/maternal spirit.
- The distress of having to face all these is often expressed in psychosomatic illnesses. Women in evacuation centres, for example, usually complain of recurring headaches, or body pains and dizziness without any identified medical cause.
- Torture. Because they are more visible in the community (having to do all the fathering-mothering at the family level and volunteering for community work etc.) women are more vulnerable to extreme human rights abuses than men. Reports of women direct service workers (who compose the majority of the DSWs) being harassed are common. At times, they are even used as human shields as in the case in Masbate and Ifugao, where women direct service workers (DSWs) were made to stay with soldiers in one room for about a week to thwart any attempt by rebels to raid the building.
- Rape and other forms of sexual abuse. Apart from the usual physical torture, women are also vulnerable to rape and other forms of sexual abuse and harassment. Cases of women being raped first (sometimes in front of their husbands) before being killed are not uncommon.
- Cases of 'comfort women' do occur. For example, in the Masbate and Ifugao incidents, the DRWs involved later related (during a training) that the soldiers who stayed with them in the one room made several attempts to rape them. Soldiers did this usually after a drinking spree.
- Rape is said to be mainly perpetrated by government soldiers during a military operation. Past experience with civil war in the Philippines has also shown that rape at times is part of the war strategy. During the Muslim war (in the southern part of the Philippines) in the 1970s, warring groups raped the women of their enemies as a way to 'get back' at their foes.

Response

At the community level, there are rarely, if at all, any support systems provided for those suffering from psychosocial effects of conflict. The communities or the NGOs do not only lack the professional capacity to assist, their attention is also focused on the more basic concern of ensuring that the children are safe from physical harm during the emergency.

On the part of the government, most agencies given the task of attending to the displaced communities do not consider assisting psychosocial cases as part of their work. Hence, apart from sometimes bringing a patient directly to the mental hospital, they just ignore the problem.

Even among the NGOs, only a few (less than ten) have set up services at the national level in response to psychosocial effects of armed conflict. These programmes started only a year or two ago.

Of these few NGOs, only about two or three deal specifically with women victims. The rest are not gender-sensitive and have no gender perspective in their programmes. Programmes are then implemented without gender considerations.

Type of psychosocial support services provided

As mentioned, the majority of these groups are new in this line of work, having taken off only in the middle 1980s. Except on gender issues, these groups use similar approaches and methodologies in their work, which include the following:

- a. Tension-relaxation training aimed at relieving psychosomatic symptoms of patients.
- b. Individual counselling and group counselling to patients.
- c. Group dynamics among patients.
- d. Individual and group counselling of relatives.
- e. Sessions with community members.

All these are aimed at relieving the tension of the patient as well as providing a conducive atmosphere for her/him to get well.

Staff running these programmes are composed mostly of psychologists. Services of psychiatrist-consultants, however, are also tapped for extreme cases. But problems usually occur when psychiatrists come in since most patients oppose the idea of seeing psychiatrists. People associate psychiatry with losing one's mind.

Problems faced by these groups generally focus on the lack of human resources, lack of experience and reference materials to guide them, and financial constraints. Those who do attempt to respond to women's psychosocial problems, however, face

additional constraints related to gender, one of which is the lack of gender-sensitive psychiatrists in the country.

Gender-related problems also crop up during therapy/counselling sessions for relatives or community. Men usually view counselling sessions as tasks of women, and so do not attend and actively participate in these activities. Taking care of the patient is also seen as the mother/wife's task.

As mentioned, the few NGOs that work on psychosocial problems resulting from armed conflict are still in their infancy. The following issues are important to raise the level of work:

- 1 The need to incorporate gender perspectives, issues, and concerns in armed-conflict related disaster response and in other fields of community work. Only a few NGOs are addressing the specific problems of women victims of armed conflict. This is not only true in the psychosocial field but also in relief and rehabilitation. NGOs generally do not make specific provisions for women in relief/rehabilitation work despite the fact that women have expressed particular needs during emergency situations and that displacement increases their burdens.

This is not to say that most NGOs do not have an awareness of the value of gender in development. However, the majority lack the necessary knowledge and skills to take definite steps in integrating gender into their programmes and services. In this situation, gender training is definitely required.

Along with gender training, efforts should be made to incorporate gender issues into existing training programmes. This is specially true for current disaster management training programmes which do not recognise women's needs and roles in disaster response, despite the fact that the majority of disaster volunteers and training participants are women.

Likewise, other fields of community work such as health, organising, socio-economic work, lack a gender perspective.

- 2 Continuing research and documentation on women in relation to armed conflict. There is currently a dearth of information on the impact of armed conflict on women, including the psychosocial effects of war. Data on this would facilitate essential work such as training curriculum development, programme planning, and even awareness raising.
- 3 Creating space for sexually-abused women. An atmosphere for the women victims to come out into the open should be encouraged, and people should be informed about the issue to erase stigma and biases. There are now several groups working towards this although they do not specifically deal with those victimised in situations of armed conflict. As a result perhaps of these groups' efforts,

compared with the previous years, more Filipino women have publicly related their traumatic experiences and thus contributed to the public's education on the issue of sexual abuse.

- 4 Recognition of mental health as an issue and the need to correct misconceptions about mental health. There is a tendency for people, even health workers, to ignore or not to recognise or acknowledge mental health concerns. Community and even health workers tend to look at people's disaster-related problems in terms of physical and economic needs only. Hardly anybody looks into the disaster's effects on the people's mental and/or emotional well-being and people adjudged as having mental problems are stigmatised. For example, one difficulty expressed by psychosocial workers is the patient's reluctance to be referred to psychiatrists. They associate psychiatry with having 'gone crazy'. Even their relatives express negative reactions at the idea for fear of the attached stigma.

Although this trend has started to be overturned now with more people realising the need to look into disaster victims' emotional and mental health, increased efforts have to be made in this respect. There is a great need for NGOs to exert efforts to correct misconceptions and other myths surrounding mental health. People should be brought to recognise the role of psychiatry in mental health.

- 5 Creating structures for community-based approaches in psychosocial response work. One of the limitations of the current work being done in the country is the NGOs' inability to set up psychosocial support mechanisms at the community level. This should be done to supplement the prevailing clinical approach.

This is not to diminish the importance of the clinical approach. But one limitation of the clinical approach is the reality that there are more patients than there are psychologists to attend to them and that success of treatment could be boosted when there is a mechanism at the community level to do follow up work. Furthermore, the psychosocial impact of any armed hostility may be lessened with the timely proactive intervention of a community-based structure.

A lot of work remains to be done in the field of providing psychosocial support to women victims of armed conflict in the Philippines. Work has just been started by a few groups who have now raised key issues that if addressed can help improve and order approaches to work.

In our experience, the simple act of consistently asking about the particular needs of women disaster victims led to a partner's initiative to add a session on gender issues in one training programme.

(Source: Arlene C Mahinay, Agra-East Conflict Workshop, Thailand, 1993)

Finding out about women

Objectives

- 1 To explore practical ways of finding out about women.
- 2 To enable participants to share ideas and methods for finding out about and from women.

Method

- 1 Ask the participants, if a mixed group, to split into groups of women only and men only. Explain that the practical questions which arise for women and for men in consulting women are very different.
(5 mins)
- 2 Ask the groups to make lists on paper of the methods they had used or knew about or could suggest for finding out about women.
(30 mins)
- 3 Ask each group to report back in turn, one new idea at a time. Write these on flipchart, noting any that are suitable for women or for men.
(10 mins)
- 4 Draw out of the discussion common perceptions of useful methods, and the differences in the ways women and men seek the views of women.
(15 mins)

Materials

Flipchart, sheets of paper, pens

Facilitator's Notes

You may be asked why the group is divided into single-sex groups. Explain (and discuss) the fact that in many cultures it is not possible or easy for women to talk to men, especially strangers.

Positive action

Objectives

- 1 To identify some positive actions which can be taken to encourage a gender perspective in partner organisations.

Method

- 1 Explain the aims of the session. *(5 mins)*
- 2 Divide the group into small groups of four or five and ask each group to make a list of different types of resistance they face in addressing gender issues with partners, and why these occur; and to produce a list of positive actions which could be taken. *(60 mins)*
- 3 Ask each group to stick their list on the wall and read all the lists. *(10 mins)*
- 4 Pick out the main issues. Give out **Handout102** and go through the points with the groups. *(10 mins)*

Materials

Flipchart, pens
Handout 102

Ideas for working with project partners in exploring gender in their work

Raising gender issues with partners can either strengthen or weaken partnership. It can strengthen partnership if it is done as part of a long-term strategy of permanent dialogue: it can weaken it if done on an *ad hoc* basis, and can lead to issues about imperialism and cultural inappropriateness being raised.

A long-term strategy for working with project partners should be characterised by:

- open dialogue;
- the ability to listen to critical questions from partners;
- transparency in our approaches to our work;
- recognition that learning is a two-way process;
- time;
- resources;
- clear prioritisation on where to start, who to start with and why.

The following is a list of possible components for such a strategy in relation to work on gender.

- 1 Joint training workshops on gender involving NGO staff and project partners, using resources from local organisations and the resources available from within the NGO.
- 2 Strengthening ties with and understanding of women's organisations and movements, since they will have information and insights about the situation of women in the country or region which will help us to develop our own country or regional perspectives and outlook.
- 3 Strengthening and developing a consistent strategy for networking and information exchange between those working on gender issues and those working on development issues in general, at country level.

- 4 Commissioning research which documents and synthesises the experiences of men and women in a range of situations; prioritising the contracting of local and regional researchers for this task and investing resources in documentation and distribution.
- 5 Strengthening the NGO's resource-base of local women consultants, trainers and experts which will enhance the likelihood of culturally-sensitive gender-balanced perspectives being incorporated into planning.
- 6 Prioritising the integration of gender into technical issues by supporting the training of specialist gender staff to work with or in technical teams.
- 7 Inviting the participation of partner groups in agency meetings and workshops.
- 8 Providing gender-sensitive partners with opportunities to contribute to the design of agency strategies and long-term planning.
- 9 Encouraging agency staff to develop skills as 'trainers of trainers'; strengthening partners' ability to explore gender issues in their own work; providing resources such as time, training and technical resources to facilitate this.
- 10 Exploring mechanisms whereby we can establish dialogue with ongoing partners, such that our experience on gender can be incorporated in concrete ways during project design and implementation.
- 11 Encouraging the development of ties and networking between partners on a regional or cross-regional basis.
- 12 Aiming through research and practical experience to recover the concept of gender as it is expressed in the societies in which we work, and working through with partners its liberating and oppressing aspects.
- 13 At grassroots level, seek out individuals holding moral and spiritual authority within the community who share the agency's concern for equity and social justice, and who can become our allies, and strengthening them in their work.