

USAID/TANZANIA GENDER AUDIT NEWSLETTER

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FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

USAID/Tanzania has been participating in a Gender Audit, with assistance from USAID/EGAT WID and the WID IQC Short-Term Training and Technical Assistance Task Order held by DevTech Systems. As part of this effort, six Focus Group meetings were held from May 10-12th, 2006 with staff members representing every office in the mission. Focus Groups are commonly used in a Gender Audit to shed light on commonly held or conflicting views within an organization. In the USAID/Tanzania Focus Group discussions, many staff members took the time to discuss the results of the survey and to brainstorm possible action steps for the mission to better integrate gender issues into programming and to achieve a higher degree of gender equality in the mission's human resources, procurement, and other operations. A total of sixty-eight people participated from the mission participated in one of the six Focus Group sessions, (i.e., 80% of those who were invited to participate.)

People from across the mission came to participate, including staff members from the motor pool, from the administrative staff, from the financial office, and from all the SO teams. The groups were divided up as follows:

1. Administrative and non-SO technical staff, all women
2. Administrative and non-SO technical staff, all men
3. Administrative and non-SO technical staff, mixed men and women
4. SO Technical and Program Office staff, all women
5. SO Technical staff and Program Office, all men
6. Motorpool

The focus groups provided many useful ideas about how to move forward an agenda to increase gender integration in the mission's programs and operations.



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Organization of the Focus Group Discussions

Each focus group started with introductions of the team members facilitating the discussions. The facilitators were primarily members of the Mission's Gender Working Group (GWG) assisted by the REDSO Gender Advisor.

After the introductions, a short exercise looking at men's and women's expected roles or characteristics helped to warm-up the group for discussing their own opinions and experiences. Each group viewed a short presentation to remind them about the gender audit process and the highlights of the survey results.

After that, the floor was opened up for hearing the views of the group. The focus group discussions were organized into three parts: first, to hear the participants' reactions to the survey results; second, to explore the meaning of their answers; and third, to brainstorm about ideas for moving forward.

The Questions Posed

Reaction to the survey results

What surprised you most about the survey findings?

Do you think that the survey results give an accurate reflection of the situation in the mission?

Which are the key areas of difference that you see between men and women in working together?

Who in the mission is responsible for ensuring that gender equality goals are met?

Exploring the meaning of the results

How many of the group members have had any training on gender, gender analysis, or other aspects related to gender?

What are the strengths of the mission's current approach to gender in programming and/or management?

What are the main challenges facing the mission in gender integration?

Brainstorming ideas for moving forward

What actions do we need to take to deepen our commitment to achieving gender equality in programming and mission management?

Mission Strengths in Gender Integration

- Having a mission director who is at the forefront in raising awareness about gender issues all the time;
- Having accomplished women as role models and having men able to work with accomplished women;
- Many women employees in positions of responsibility;
- Having a gender advisor
- No job discrimination or segregation;
- Strong support for integrating gender in procurement;
- Willingness to commit time and resources to a gender audit;
- Awareness of ADS guidance on gender

Mission Challenges in Gender Integration

- Finding an appropriate allocation of time and resources for gender integration;
- Addressing gender issues early in program design and identifying meaningful indicators for tracking progress in reducing gender inequalities;
- Helping technical staff access relevant information on gender issues;
- Identifying best practices in gender integration;
- Improving reporting on activities that are achieving successes in gender integration

Ideas for Action from the Focus Groups

A. To Demonstrate Leadership

- Give awards for gender successes
- Identify how SO team leaders can facilitate and provide more leadership on gender
- Identify women-owned businesses for procurement solicitations

B. To Formulate Policy

- Develop a gender vision statement for the whole mission
- Identify criteria that would help determine what level of gender integration the mission has reached and when it would have achieved its goals.

C. To Provide Training

- Hold annual off-site trainings on gender for administrative/financial and other staff
- Hold “mini-training” meetings on specific gender-related topics or skills
- Hold formal trainings either in-country or identify off-site training programs as needed for different groups within the missions
- Clarify the types of trainings needed by different groups within the missions

D. To Improve Programming

- Enhance knowledge sharing about gender issues and integration practices, e.g.,:
 - Send regular emails on relevant gender topics among staff and to partners
 - Send the gender expert to speak with partners and provide guidance
 - Expand the documentation center and send notices to staff to let them know what is there
 - Encourage all SOs to share their experiences, positive and negative, on gender-related activities
 - Make gender analysis tools available

E. To Improve Communication and Outreach

- Hold regular meetings open to all staff to raise awareness about gender issues. It was stressed that future meetings should encourage both men and women to participate and should involve people from all departments. Many suggestions were offered about the types of meetings that people would enjoy or find informative, e.g.:
 - Sessions to share the results of the Focus Groups and the Gender Audit
 - Sessions with people from USAID partners/supported organizations as well as other donors or local groups with gender expertise
 - Sessions at the sites of the other organizations mentioned just above
 - Session with community members helped by USAID to learn about the programs’ impact on gender relations
 - Showing videos and films that relate to gender issues and have discussions about them
 - Hold an annual “Gender Awareness Week” with T shirts or caps, to promote interest and further understanding about gender issues to which staff could bring spouses and families.
 - Sending home flyers about gender issues (in English and Kiswahili versions)
 - Continue with the newsletter and developing issues on best practices, synthesize key reports, to keep gender “alive,” “on the map,” etc.
 - Have more social events between Tanzanian and US staff.
- Develop a checklist for gathering information about the impact of programs on gender inequalities for field visits
- Improve understanding about gender relations among both Tanzanian and US cultural groups

Surprises in the Gender Audit Survey Results

Focus group participants noted the following surprises:

- That most of the results themselves were not surprising!
- That gender doesn't only mean working with women or addressing women's issues
- That women did not think gender issues were discussed openly and seriously in the mission
- That management was seen to be responsible for gender integration - people felt that everyone should be responsible
- That cultural patterns were not noted as being the most important obstacle to gender equality



Characteristics of a Gender-Sensitive Organization

- *Where everyone has a role to play in achieving gender equality*
- *Where each employee treats the people he or she deals with in the same manner, regardless of gender: courteously and with respect*
- *Where men and women are both expected to work hard and to be team players*
- *Where women and girls may be given special consideration when needed, but where men are also encouraged when programs focus on women*
- *Where women and men work easily together*

JINSIA (GENDER)

Jinsia ni mahusiano ya kijamii yanayotambua wavulana na wasichana, wanawake na wanaume wamelelewa katika misingi tofauti kufuatana na tabia, mila, desturi, utamaduni na matarajio ya jamii husika. Mahusiano ya kijinsia yanajengwa kwa njia ya kuelekeza au kufundisha yaani makuzi na malezi au kwa mtu kujifunza. Kwa hali hiyo, mahusiano ya kijinsia yaliyojengeka vilevile yanaweza kubadilika au kubadilishwa.