



GENDER MARKER MINI-GUIDE

Participation in Practice

WHAT is in this guide?

This practical guidance is to help teams use **CARE's Gender Marker**. It supports project teams to identify if their project is meeting the participation criteria of the Gender Marker, understand what the participation criteria in the Gender Marker means in practice, and share case examples with best practices for more gender responsive or transformative projects.

WHO should use it?

Anyone supporting a CARE project! This includes CARE staff in Country Offices, regional offices and CARE International Members and lead members involved in program management, design and implementation.

WHEN should it be used?

The Gender Marker should be used throughout the project lifecycle, during analysis, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. At all stages it should inform learning and improve program quality. Teams should schedule regular meetings (e.g. monthly, quarterly, annually) to assess progress along the gender continuum and to identify areas and actions for improvement.

GENDER MARKER CRITERIA: PARTICIPATION

Below are the Participation criteria from Columns A and B of CARE's Gender Marker Vetting Form.¹ The columns help assess your project's gender approach against the gender continuum (transformative, responsive, sensitive, neutral or harmful). The criteria to assess meaningful participation are listed in each column. In this context, 'meaningful' requires the careful design of activities, structures, or mechanisms to provide real opportunities for participation by marginalized groups. For example, this means going beyond the inclusion of marginalized groups in a meeting to ensure those groups have the confidence to speak out and others will listen to their views. The three criteria areas for Participation are: transparent information sharing, involvement in decision making, and responsive feedback mechanism.

¹ For more information and guidance on the Gender Marker, how to assess projects, and use the Marker as a learning and reflection tool, access the [Gender Marker Vetting Form and Guidance](#).

Teams should carefully design activities, project structures and feedback mechanisms to enable equal and meaningful participation of project participants and other stakeholders. This means identifying and addressing the barriers that women, girls, LGBTQI+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning and Intersex)² communities and other marginalized groups face in accessing information, actively participating in decision-making and feedback processes, and having actual influence over project design, implementation and learning.

² We use LGBTQI+ is an umbrella term to represent sexual diversity, as well as non-binary, and fluid gender identities that exist (and have existed) across cultures and geographies. We acknowledge the term itself, which stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning and Intersex is insufficient in its roots/representation of Northern and Western conceptions of gender and sexuality which have been globalized through imperialism.

Participation Guiding Questions

COLUMN A

Projects will score 'Gender Unaware, Neutral or Sensitive'

COLUMN B

Projects will score 'Gender Responsive or Transformative'

Gender Analysis

To meet the Participation criteria in Column A, programming needs to include meaningful participation in **AT LEAST ONE** of the following areas: transparent information sharing, involvement in decision-making, or responsive feedback mechanism. **If the project does not meet any of the three criteria, then it leaves this box unticked.**

To meet the Participation criteria in Column B, programming needs to include meaningful participation in **ALL THREE** of the following areas: transparent information sharing, involvement in decision making, or responsive feedback mechanism.

Transparent information sharing

The clear, honest, safe and equally accessible sharing of relevant information with all project participants (not just community leaders/authorities). The project provides information to participant groups so that they can understand project initiatives, participate in and benefit from them, and hold CARE to account.

- Has relevant information about the project been shared with participants of all genders and ages in a format that is clear and transparent?
- Are women and girls in all their diversity able to safely and equally access this information?

CRITERIA IN PRACTICE

- Information is posted in a location where project participants can see it if they want to.
- Information is posted in all local languages spoken in project sites.
- Information is disseminated in ways that reach non-literate community members (e.g., via posters using pictures, community radio, or community presentations or dialogues).
- Information is shared with contact information so that concerns or questions can be addressed to relevant staff.
- Decision-making processes are clear, transparent and openly communicated especially as concerns local partner selection, site selection, and program activities.
- Information is proactively shared with groups that represent marginalized populations (women, girls, LGBTQI+, poor, etc)

Involvement in decision-making

An equal and meaningful opportunity for project participants to be involved in decision-making at various stages of the program and project cycle.

- Are women and girls in all their diversity, ages, and backgrounds offered an equal and meaningful opportunity to be involved in decision-making throughout the project cycle?
- Can women, girls and LGBTQI+ people speak up and represent themselves in community consultations?

CRITERIA IN PRACTICE

- Women's Rights Organizations (WROs), women's and girls' groups, and groups representing marginalized populations (LGBTQI groups, youth groups, people living with disabilities etc.) are consulted during program analysis, design, project implementation and evaluation.
- The project solicits feedback from community members, with a particular emphasis on marginalized community members, on project design, implementation and evaluations.
- The project assesses and mitigates potential harm for community members and marginalized populations who participate in project decision making forums (e.g., discuss with community leaders and/or male relatives why women are being invited to participate, holding meetings at times and locations that are safe for women to attend, or women-only consultations (when needed).
- The project ensures that invitations to the community engagement activities seek to guarantee effective participation of women and girls.
- WROs, women's and girls' groups and organizations representing other relevant marginalized populations are directly included in the development of the project (e.g., attend program design workshops, review and provide inputs to program design, etc). Projects seek to cover costs of participation whenever possible.
- WROs, women's, girls' and LGBTQI+ groups and organizations representing other marginalized populations are consulted during implementation and provide inputs into monitoring and evaluation results/analysis.
- The project actively facilitates meetings and consultations to ensure that all participants are respected, and all voices are heard and taken into account.

Responsive feedback mechanism

Accessible, safe, and reliable processes through which participants can report complaints or feedback (including both sensitive and non-sensitive topics) about the project. These mechanisms should be transparent, with standard procedures for responding to and learning from feedback, within a set timeline.

- Does the project have an intentional process to receive feedback from participants on how to improve CARE's programming?
- Does the project have a standard procedure for responding to this feedback?
- Can people across ages and genders safely report complaints and other forms of feedback?

CRITERIA IN PRACTICE

- The project designs protocols for feedback to ensure that participants and community members/organizations can provide feedback on the project that can be provided via open, timely, safe, confidential and anonymous avenues (e.g., email address for comments, project phone number) that are language, literacy and contextually appropriate and with no reprisals or threat of reprisals. Clear information is provided on what will be done with feedback and sensitive/confidential information.
- Project creates regular feedback meetings with community organizations, WROs, women's and girls' groups, LGBTQI+ groups, youth organizations and other stakeholders (on a yearly basis).
- "Handling and investigations of sensitive complaints (e.g., fraud, corruption, abusive behavior, sexual exploitation or child abuse) require individuals with specific expertise and must be managed according to the specific procedures and standards defined by the CARE Member responsible for managing the office and programmes."³
- Timely response includes "not only to acknowledging and responding to the person who raised the feedback but also presenting a summary of feedback received and actions taken in response with the wider community"⁴

3 The following publication provides detailed guidance on feedback and accountability mechanisms -Guidance For Creating and Managing Effective Feedback and Accountability Mechanisms. Feedback and Accountability Mechanisms Working Group

4 Ibid

Case example A (meaningful participation in only Information Sharing, so this example would meet criteria for Column A only): At project start-up, Project Yellow posted the project description on the CARE USA website, outside CO offices, local CSO offices and community gathering locations, and discussed the project in depth with local partners and government. It also held several meetings in project site communities to present the project, discuss its objectives and open the floor to questions (Information Sharing met). The project invited local partners organizations (e.g., communication organizations, research organizations, and local government) to a project design workshop. They also held focus group discussions during the gender analysis with 30 women from the project sites to help inform adaptations in year one. The project senior staff felt WROs were not relevant and difficult to work with and did not consult with them (Involvement in Decision-Making criteria not met). Finally, the project staff informed local partners that their feedback would be relevant and asked the local government to contact them with any concerns (Responsive Feedback mechanism criteria not met).

Case example B (meaningful participation in all three areas, so criteria met for Column B): During project design, Project Blue held key informant interviews with a range of WROs, LGBTQ+ organizations, youth organizations, local government and a range of smaller community-based organizations. It then invited some of those key informants (including representatives from WROs, Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and youth organizations to one day of the project design workshop to provide analysis, feedback and inputs on the approach and activities (Involvement in Decision-Making met). The project created a project website and disseminated a project pamphlet with the website throughout community sites. Project handouts in local languages were distributed and included an email and phone number that people could use to send messages or feedback on the project. Project staff presented the project and contact information for feedback at community meetings and on community radio to reach a wider audience. A phone number was made available during presentations so that audience could give feedback. The information would be maintained as confidential as possible – records did not contain identifying information. Information was collected by one person in a space with visual and auditory privacy. The same actors that met for project design workshops (WROs, CBOs) met every quarter during the project to get updates on the project. Before and during project implementation, the project held meetings in project communities to discuss the project and its objectives (Information Sharing met). The meetings included an open floor for questions and an anonymous question/comments box which was presented at the meeting and which were kept at local CBO sites throughout the project. The WROs and CBOs presented feedback and suggestions during the quarterly meetings. The project ensured it created internal protocols in line with the Prevention of Sexual Harassment Exploitation and Abuse (PSHEA) policy to ensure complaints of abuse or exploitation were dealt with ethically and responsibly (Responsive Feedback mechanism met).

Does your team need more guidance on ensuring meaningful participation in project processes?

The Inclusive Governance team, Humanitarian team, and the Global Gender Cohort can help! Contact Lindsay Alexander (lalexander@careinternational.org) for support from the Inclusive Governance team. Contact gendercohort@care.org for more information about contracting gender technical assistance from Cohort members.

Contact Isadora (quay@careinternational.org) for support from the Gender in Emergencies team.

Want more information on the CARE Gender Marker?

See more guidance on the gender marker at: <https://genderinpractice.care.org/gender-marker/>

For more information, contact:

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Founded in 1945 with the creation of the CARE Package, CARE is a leading humanitarian organization fighting global poverty. CARE places special focus on working alongside poor girls and women because, equipped with the proper resources, they have the power to lift whole families and entire communities out of poverty. Last year CARE worked in 87 countries and reached 82 million people around the world. To learn more, visit www.care.org.