Checklist for Gender-Responsive Design

Support to ensure women's access to, and benefit from, project-related interventions

For use in activities involving plot selection, resource distribution, technology trials, and technical training

This checklist supplements the Gender-Responsive Engagement Activity Checklist. It is intended for activities where the project is offering something tangible — a plot for a trial intervention, access to a new technology or service, technical training, or material inputs. In these contexts, the risk is not only that women are absent from a meeting, but that they are systematically excluded from the primary benefits a project provides.

Note that exclusion can result from a design that fails to understand women's true needs and constraints, even when women are considered the main beneficiaries.

These questions are designed to surface that risk and prompt corrective action. They can be used at the design stage or as a field check during implementation.

1. Before the activity

Selection criteria and processes

□ Do we know who holds formal and informal decision-making power over land and plots in this context — and does our selection process account for that?

□ Are women being approached directly and individually, or only through a household representative, who may be male? In either case, we need to understand both what is culturally appropriate and what the consequences may be.

□ Are there women who farm independently, are widowed, or are heads of household who may be overlooked by a household-level approach?

□ Are the criteria we are using to select participants — such as land title, plot size, or group membership — inadvertently excluding women?

Barriers to participation

□ Have we asked women directly whether they are interested in participating — and if they say no, do we know why?

□ Are there practical barriers that would prevent women from participating even if selected, such as time constraints, mobility, spousal permission, or childcare responsibilities? Have we made any adjustments?

□ Are we assuming that inclusion at the household level is sufficient, when in practice the woman in that household may not be the one who benefits?

Quality of offer

□ If training is involved, is it being offered at a time, location, and in a format that women can realistically access?

□ Are women being offered the same information and opportunities as men, or are they receiving a simplified or secondary version?

□ Has the technology or service being introduced been assessed for its relevance and usability from women's perspective — or only from an assumed household or male-farmer perspective?

2. During the activity

Applies once the 'Before the activity' steps above have been carried out.

□ In technical or field-based decisions — such as site selection, plot assignment, or technology demonstration — whose knowledge and priorities are being weighted?

□ Are women present in a substantive role, or in a passive or observational one?

□ If women are declining to engage, do we know whether this reflects genuine disinterest or an unaddressed barrier?

3. After the activity

□ Did women and men benefit equally — or differently — from this activity? Do we have data to support that assessment?

□ Were women who participated able to apply what was offered — access the plot, use the technology, implement the training? Were there follow-up barriers?

□ Can we identify specific adjustments we should make to selection processes, timing, or the design of the offer before the next round?

Why this matters

Inclusion in a meeting is not the same as access to benefit. A project can report strong female participation in workshops while simultaneously allocating the majority of trial plots, technology access, or training opportunities to men — often without anyone noticing, because the data is not being collected. These questions are designed to make that gap visible.

Where patterns of exclusion are repeatedly identified, this checklist provides the foundation for a more systematic barriers assessment.

Important note

The checklist does not replace a gender study, which should ideally be conducted before a project to understand the complexity of gender relations in a given community. It is, however, a way to at least partially ensure a more gender-aware and responsive intervention.

Aligned with IUCN Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy (2018)