**Tool: Gender Transformative Programming**

**Time needed:** 30-45 minutes

**Materials needed:** Flip chart, markers, tape

**Purpose:** To reinforce the complexities of gender and to look at project interventions critically through a gender lens.

**Advanced Preparation:** This activity is best conducted with a drawing on flip chart paper similar to the graphic below. Draw a horizontal line on flip chart paper and write the words “exploitative” and “accommodating” and “transformational” as in the graphic below.

**Notes to the Facilitator:**
This is not an introductory gender activity, but builds on previous gender tools in this package. This is more of a didactic presentation. The session should reinforce gender concepts, refer back to previous gender discussions.

**Step 1:**
Introduce activity by explaining that there are some projects in health that consider gender in their approach, planning and activities, and some that don’t. Ask participants for some ideas. Next, starting with “exploitative,” provide definitions for each of the three terms in practice (from IGWG, 2012).

*Exploitative gender interventions:*
“...on the left of the continuum, take advantage of rigid gender norms and existing imbalances in power to achieve the health program objectives. While using a gender exploitative approach may seem expeditious in the short run, it is unlikely to be sustainable and can, in the long run, result in harmful consequences and undermine the program’s intended objective. It is an unacceptable approach for integrating gender.”

*Accommodating gender interventions:*
“...in the middle of the continuum, acknowledge the role of gender norms and inequities and seek to develop actions that adjust to and often compensate for them. While such projects do not actively seek to change the norms and inequities, they strive to limit any harmful impact on gender relations. A gender accommodating approach may be considered a missed opportunity because it does not deliberately contribute to increased gender equity, nor does it address the underlying structures and norms that perpetuate gender inequities. However, in situations where gender inequities are deeply entrenched and pervasive in a society, gender
accommodating approaches often provide a sensible first step to gender integration. As unequal power dynamics and rigid gender norms are recognized and addressed through programs, a gradual shift toward challenging such inequities may take place.”

_Transformational gender interventions:_
“...at the right end of the continuum, actively strive to examine, question, and change rigid gender norms and imbalance of power as a means of reaching health as well as gender equity objectives. Gender transformative approaches encourage critical awareness among men and women of gender roles and norms; promote the position of women; challenge the distribution of resources and allocation of duties between men and women; and/or address the power relationships between women and others in the community, such as service providers and traditional leaders.”

**Step 2:** It is important that there is a shared understanding of these words, so as a group you can come up with more simple words or definitions for each. Use flipchart paper for this.

**Step 3:** Instruct participants to divide in to pairs or triads to discuss for 5 minutes about an intervention, and to determine where it falls along the line. Ask participants to read the intervention carefully and to discuss each level. Refer to “Gender Continuum Example Bank” for many different examples to use for this activity (IGWG, 2010). Sample interventions include:

- In Western Africa, there was once the Real Man campaign, urging men to be a real man and to adopt FP
- A project creates mother support groups for daycare; the mothers take turns watching over the children as the other mothers work in the fields or in the market and then they rotate
- CARE and partners identify vulnerable women and form a VSLA; after a year the VSLA is much stronger and men are invited to join
- CARE works with local leaders (all men) to bring their spouses to community meetings to sit together

**Step 4:** Reconvene participants to the large group to reflect on where interventions fall, remind participants that we may have different opinions on where the interventions fall and all opinions should be respected. Stress that the discussion is not meant to find the ‘right’ answer but foster dialogue.

Then ask each pair or triad to read their intervention and to state their case. Open up to the group for discussion. The exercise ends when all are read.

**Step 5:** Thank participants for their contributions. Summarize the activity by explaining that integrating gender alone may not always be enough, therefore it is important to reflect on why we design the interventions that we do. We should be asking ourselves: Are we exploiting gender inequities, accommodating but not fostering social change, or can we develop truly transformative gender interventions?
Notes: This activity was adapted from “The Gender Integration Continuum,” Facilitator Guide, IGWG, 2010.

Source: IGWG, 2010