

Facilitator's Guide©
Gender Based Analysis Skills-Building Workshop
NSHRF Workshop, Halifax, 2007



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In this guide, you will find

- Objectives of the Workshop
- Rationale for the Workshop Format: Scenarios
- The Facilitator's Role in Group Work
- Principles of Effective Facilitation
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Objectives of the Workshop

This workshop is developed and delivered by the staff of the Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health (ACEWH) and coordinated by the Nova Scotia Health Research Foundation. ACEWH is "dedicated to conducting policy-oriented research aimed at improving the health status of Canadian women by making the health system more aware of and responsive to women's health needs.

"The goal of the Atlantic Centre is to support research, influence policy and promote action on the social factors that affect women's health and well-being over their lifespan. We support a woman-centred approach that respects women's perspectives and experiences, and listens to the voices of women not typically heard in health research or health systems."(www.acewh.dal.ca)

To this end, the objectives of the workshop include, helping participants to:

1. Understand the terms "sex" and "gender";
2. Appreciate the overlapping and discrete impact of sex and gender on health;
3. Recognize sex and gender differences that may affect health and wellness, broadly defined;
4. Gain a basic understanding of gender-based analysis (GBA) and practice it.

Rationale for the Workshop Format: A Stepped Approach to GBA

The exercise that forms the basis of the workshop is founded on research, but it has factual components as well as imaginative narrative elements. We recommend that the facilitator avoid engaging in debate over the likelihood or construction of the narrative elements, as well as the validity/source of data. In our experience, this behaviour can sometimes be used as a means to avoid grappling with the real impact of sex and gender on health and wellness and in society more generally. It is also a distraction from the objectives of the workshop and may compromise the learning environment. If participants request further information about the research that informs the exercise, they should be directed to the resource pages in the workshop folder, to the resource binders at the workshop, and/or to the ACEWH website.

The exercise is designed in a series of steps or stages that take participants from using evidence that is “gender neutral” and largely quantitative, through the use of sex-disaggregated data to consider the value of qualitative and quantitative data that addresses gender and sex as components of health and wellness. At each stage, participants are asked to think about how the evidence helps them understand “the problem” and then how new evidence changes and/or reinforces their understanding of the impact of sex and gender.

It may be helpful for the facilitator to read the entire exercise prior to the workshop in order to identify key concerns surrounding sex, gender, health, wellness, adolescence, etc. Please feel free to ask for clarification or further information if any part of the exercise is unclear to you.

The Facilitator’s Role in Group Work

Facilitating group work is an integral part of supporting participatory processes. The facilitator takes a central role in guaranteeing the smooth running of the session,

maintaining a balance between letting the group work on their own and assisting actively in order to avoid unnecessary detours and friction.

Principles of Effective Facilitation

These are some basic tenets of successful facilitation:

- State the objectives of the exercises so that all participants are clear on the task to be completed.
- Establish and get consensus on “ground rules” for conversation.
- Guide the discussion of others instead of participating in the discussion; think of the facilitator’s role as an “air traffic controller”.
- Encourage everyone to talk (explain at the beginning of the session that the facilitator will intercede and bring the session back to a group discussion if one person has dominated the dialogue); evoke participation by non-threatening observations such as “X, it looks as though you’re considering Y’s last comment...”
- Be ready to deal with emotional reactions and/or disclosure; have a respectful yet firm response ready, such as “Thank you for sharing that with us, now we need to return to the task at hand.”
- Avoid distractions or digressions; refocus the group using phrases like “And in what way do you see that point relating to sex, gender or health and wellness?”
- Signal the approaching conclusion of the exercise; use finite reminders (“We have five minutes left with our group”) or summary actions (“What are our three most pressing concerns to feed back on in this scenario?”)

Remember that "...A good facilitator is not a stage performer but one who creates space for other people to interact and have their passion flow on a matter of common concern..."

Techniques/Issues Specific to this Workshop

During group work, potential problems can arise; these can be issues of timing, equal airing of viewpoints, lack of focus, and individual communication styles. You may wish to follow these steps to ensure a clear and productive session.

Before the Session:

1. Familiarize yourself with all three parts of the exercise.
2. Ensure that you are comfortable with the content of the exercise – both with respect to evidence and to sex and gender. Do some background reading, if necessary. Come to the facilitators' meeting with questions.

At the Beginning of the Session:

1. Introduce yourself and explain your role (such as, to capture major items of interest).
2. Encourage participants to introduce themselves. Be sure to record phonetic pronunciation of participants' names if you do not feel confident you can say these correctly.
3. Ensure participants understand that consensus is not required or needed during this type of session; each participant is here to build her or his own skill level.
4. Hand out Part 1 of the exercise and give each participant time to read it. Offer to clarify anything people do not understand. It is unlikely that all participants will finish reading simultaneously; look to body language (shifting, raised head, eye contact) to determine when the majority of participants are finished. Speak quietly to begin the discussion so that others have a greater chance to complete the reading.
5. Guide the group through the questions for Part 1. For each question:
 - Encourage general discussion and allow the participants to talk freely about the scenario in general;
 - Guide the discussion to focus more specifically on the questions and gender components.

6. Repeat steps 4 and 5 for Parts 2 and 3 of the exercise.

During the conversation:

1. Encourage quieter participants to contribute and good-humouredly try to restrict more assertive participants (observe the general demeanour of the group to determine if this becomes necessary). Keep/record an overview and guide the group to adhere to a gender-based analysis (rather than other issues of social justice). You may find it helpful to acknowledge that teasing out the gender and diversity issues from other issues is often challenging. Watch the time closely.
2. Remember to demonstrate respect towards diversity at all times. Be aware that cultural, professional, sectoral differences may exist between the participants. When uncertainty is expressed, encourage participants to ask questions or discuss these practices in relation to the exercise discussion guidelines.
3. Try to remove yourself and your personal opinions from the content of the discussion. Observe and listen; this includes monitoring social interactions during the discussion and managing these where appropriate

Write the names of participants here to help you during the session:

Have a good session!