Which analytical framework?

Different analytical frameworks are now available on the «market» (see list) and are very useful to inspire thinking. They can be applied to review endogenous social processes (the local scene) as well as planned interventions (the development scene). Ultimately, gender frameworks are most useful when they are developed to suit a particular context and local dynamics.

All analytical frameworks, in one form or another, try to establish:

- The gender division of labour (gender roles and responsibilities)
- Women's and men's access to control over resources at all levels
- Women's and men's gender needs (practical and strategic)

1 A number of SDC programmes have also created their own analytical frameworks, for example Niger and India.
The gender division of labour: identifying gender roles
The first question to answer is «who does what»? The participation of women and men in each of the four roles must be analysed qualitatively as well as quantitatively. The analysis of the gender division of labour using «gender roles» is the starting point of virtually all gender analysis. Because not all women and not all men are the same, it is necessary to disaggregate the «who» between women and men in their diversity (age, class, religion, ethnicity etc.), as relevant in the context.

The reproductive role includes activities that take place mainly at household level, such as domestic chores, caring for youth and old people, looking after the health of household members, their education, etc. These activities are unpaid because they are seen as «natural». The world over, women are more involved than men in the reproductive role.

The productive role refers to activities of women and men that produce economic resources, in cash or kind. In many contexts, women work at home and their productive work is invisible (e.g. doing piecework for factories from home) Subsistence farming or contribution to cash crop farming, in which many women are involved, is a productive task. In many contexts, men are involved in more remunerative and formal forms of work than women.

The community-managing role refers to voluntary activities at community level to ensure the provision and maintenance of collective resources and infrastructures (e.g. water points, roads, health services). Women are very involved in this role because deficient public goods and services affect them in the first place. Yet, they often have less access to decision-making than men.

The constituency-based politics role includes political and advocacy activities at community, local, national and/ or international levels, within traditional structures (e.g. village headship), party politics and/ or civil society. Women’s and men’s participation in this role is strongly influenced by their class, education, age, ethnicity etc. In most contexts, men dominate political leadership, except in women’s organisations.
Women's and men's access to and control over resources

To complement the gender division of labour, the analysis must identify what resources are relevant in each role, for example:

In the reproductive role, tangible resources are food, money, housing, clothing, clean water, transport e.g. to attend a clinic, information e.g. about social services. Intangible resources include (health, education, reproductive rights, time, social networks).

In the productive role, tangible resources include land, equipment, credit, raw materials, transport. Intangible resources are skills and knowledge, mobility, the right to work, to control one's income, access to economic markets and networks and information etc.

In the community-managing role, access to information and decision-making are critical. Time is a key resource as «participation» consumes time that women and men could otherwise spend on reproductive or productive activities.

In the political role, key resources are information, political education, rights e.g. to participate in public debate, be candidates for elections, vote, physical mobility and self-confidence. Political and civic rights are key resources for human rights and good governance.

The analysis of resources within the existing gender division of labour identifies:

- Resources that women and/or men need to play their existing gender role(s): They can be tangible or intangible, endogenous or brought in by programmes/projects. Their use may be common or specific to women and men. When resources are scarce, different groups of users may be in conflict.

- Factors that influence women's and men's access to and control over endogenous as well as programme resources (availability, scarcity, affordability, right to). Factors influencing access to and control over endogenous resources can be cultural. In the case of programmes, procedures can be influencing factors (e.g. if micro credit can only be accessed by those with collaterals such as land, access is difficult for women).

- Strategies used by women and men to access and control resources and potential conflicts of interest between women and men.

- Changes that should take place in the level/conditions of access and control over some resources to allow women or men to engage into new roles they have chosen.

Points to remember

- Most resources can be classified as need or benefit. For instance, money may be a need in the productive role (capital), and a benefit (income earned). In programmes, it is also useful to distinguish between resources (inputs) and benefits (outputs).

- The distinction between access to and control over resources is critical in the analysis. The continuum between the two is not automatic and often requires some level of empowerment for those excluded from decision-making.

In Niger, women have access to land but they do not control the fields their husbands lend them. Men can claim their land back, particularly if they have been improved by the women's work. Therefore, women do not invest too much as they know that they can be evicted from their plot any time. This situation affects productivity and farming outputs.
Women’s and men’s gender needs

The analysis of the gender division of labour and of women’s and men’s access and control over resources must lead to the identification of women’s and men’s gender needs.

- When women and/or men demand more access to some resources/opportunities to perform their existing gender roles better, they express a Practical Gender Need. Their demand does not aim to challenge the customary gender division of labour.

- When women and/or men want to challenge the customary gender division of labour and power relations and when they wish to fight factors that create gender inequalities, they express a Strategic Gender Need.

More programmes/projects respond to practical gender needs because they are easier to diagnose than strategic ones. They also create less resistance because they do not directly challenge gender-based power relations. Practical gender needs are often perceived as social and identified in sectors such as health or water and sanitation. In these sectors it is mainly women (and children) who are most visible as primary users of e.g. water or services. However, where gender is associated with and limited to «the social», linkages with power and the political can be overlooked.

Addressing practical or strategic gender needs?

There is no right answer as it is the context and the programme’s objectives that orient the strategies. Sometimes, it is necessary to meet a practical need first (e.g. construction of a clinic) to later on fulfil a strategic need (women's and men's shared control of the clinic). Other times, strategic needs are given priority, for instance when access to land (strategic need) is indispensable for women and men to increase their farming outputs and income (practical need). Strategic needs are strongly linked to decision-making and empowerment. Because of their low level of participation in politics, women cannot promote their practical needs (e.g. better health, competence). Gender specific programmes are appropriate to tackle women’s strategic needs.

It is for the women and men in a specific context to define their priority gender needs. Women and men may not always agree on what these are. Age, income level, religion etc., not only gender, may influence how women and men prioritise their gender needs.
In Mali, as in Madagascar, decentralisation provides a flagrant example of the gender exclusion logic. Women are less involved than men in the identification of needs at local level and very few are elected to municipal councils (strategic need). As a result, local development plans do not reflect their practical needs appropriately. In particular, women’s need for capacity building, information and credit are given limited priority compared to infrastructures (schools, roads, markets...). The exclusion logic continues as women are less involved in the management of community resources brought by decentralisation. In Mali, the political education of women is addressed in a gender specific programme.
This framework can be used with sheets 5 and 6 for gender analysis at different levels and also with sheets 7 and 8 for planning at different levels (eg. to define indicators, benchmarks). It can also be combined with sheet 11 to monitor programme outcomes and assess change in target groups.

The use of basic gender tools makes it possible to analyse the gender division of labour, women’s and men’s access and control over resources and decision-making and their respective needs and interests in any given context. It is crucial to obtain this information before planning any programme or project.