

TOOL 3.10

Ensure Gender Sensitivity in Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation and Grievance Mechanisms

- » **GOAL:** Ensure women participate in participatory monitoring and evaluation as well as in grievance mechanisms for project-affected communities
- » **TARGET UNITS:** Community Engagement and/or Independent Gender Expert

About Social Accountability Strategies: Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation and Grievance Mechanisms

Community members—male and female alike—must have a way to express concerns, questions, complaints, or satisfaction about an infrastructure project and specific community outreach activities. That is why participatory monitoring and evaluation processes and grievance redress mechanisms are key.

Such instruments are especially valuable if all voices were not heard and incorporated at the various stages of project development. They are efficient and effective methods to identify existing and potential problems as early as possible and throughout the life of a project. Involving both men and women in the initial design of the processes and mechanisms—as well in their execution—will ensure optimal effectiveness and functionality for all members of the community. This will increase their potential for success, and, in turn, contribute to the smooth operation of the project and community initiatives.

Participatory monitoring and grievance mechanisms take a number of forms, each with its own values and specific implementation techniques. Rather than detailing every technique, this tool provides guidance that can be incorporated into any of the approaches you might consider using.⁴⁰ Note that many financial institutions require such mechanisms. For example, IFC Performance Standard 1 requires the establishment of grievance mechanisms to hear grievances and facilitate resolution of affected communities' concerns related to IFC clients' environmental and social performance.

Designing Gender-Sensitive Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation Processes

Participatory monitoring and evaluation techniques (such as participatory rural appraisals, key informant interviews, outcome mapping, and community scorecards) differ from traditional monitoring and evaluation methodologies because they allow the project-affected community to play a role in determining indicators, priorities, and how success

⁴⁰ For more information on designing grievance mechanisms, see IFC's "[Good Practice Note: Addressing Grievances from Project-Affected Communities](#)" and CAO's "[Grievance Mechanism Toolkit: A practical guide for implementing grievance mechanisms in different sectors.](#)"

of projects and community initiatives is measured. They also give communities ownership over outcomes. (See [TOOL 3.16](#) for more on community scorecards.) Development institutions are increasingly utilizing participatory monitoring and evaluation techniques because they ensure more accurate analysis of project success.

Diverse members of the community should have the ability to play an equal part in all steps of the participatory monitoring and evaluation process, and they should be encouraged to do so. Here are some ways to facilitate inclusive participation:

- **Set indicators:** Any participatory monitoring technique starts with the definition of indicators of success—that is, a successfully implemented project or delivered service. Allowing those impacted by a service to be involved in determining the metrics by which it is evaluated helps ensure that you are focusing on the key project attributes and services and demonstrating commitment to accountability for these services. It is essential that women in the community are involved in determining these indicators, so that they reflect the priorities of both men and women. Indicators can be determined at the project and program level as well as on a higher level, such as those that can measure increases in women’s equality in the community and/or the meeting of their strategic gender needs—such as the percentage of women who participate in community meetings or the percentage of women with access to cash income or land or property titles.
- **Disaggregate the data by gender:** As previously noted, disaggregating data by gender is one of the first steps in integrating gender sensitivity into project and community initiatives. The only way to assess whether a project or program is disproportionately harming women is to view its impacts on women separately from its impacts on men. Programs and policies that appear to be “gender neutral” stand the risk of benefiting men over women and perpetuating or even exacerbating existing gender inequalities. (For more, see [TOOL 3.6](#).)
- **Share and analyze data with both men and women:** Results can be developed publicly, such as through community meetings, or confidentially and later disseminated. Take care to ensure equal participation by men and women and that they have equal access to results.
- **Adapt the project or program to reduce negative impacts on women and increase equal benefits:** Gender-disaggregated data should be analyzed against baseline data to determine ways in which the project or program may be inadvertently harming or benefiting men and women disproportionately. Changes and adaptations should be made in collaboration with men and women from the community so they will have a role in ensuring equal benefit from the project.

Designing Grievance Redress Mechanisms for Women and Men

Grievance mechanisms provide a formal and transparent process for community members to voice their concerns or questions about infrastructure projects. These mechanisms range from a simple approach, such as a box to deposit handwritten complaints, to more complex and formal processes.

Many institutional investors require that project-affected communities have access to a grievance mechanism process. It creates a credible way to learn of community concerns, to allow a company to take the necessary steps to address the issues, thus minimizing risk and safeguarding the company-community relationship.

Obstacles To Participation

Men and women, including vulnerable groups within both communities, may face obstacles when it comes to voicing their grievances about an infrastructure project. These obstacles can range from logistical to cultural challenges, such as:

- Cultural expectations for women or certain vulnerable groups: This may lead them to remain silent about grievances.
- Lower levels of literacy among some community groups: This can make it difficult to express concerns when processes require handwritten submissions.
- Limited familiarity with formal processes: This can occur if the company does not ensure equitable participation in consultations and community meetings.
- Lack of gender-diverse grievance mechanism staff.
- Lack of understanding and knowledge about the community on the part of grievance mechanism staff: They may not be familiar with the issues faced by men, women, and vulnerable community members. They also might lack training on the appropriate handling of gender-sensitive issues.
- Culture-based gender dynamics: In some communities, women are expected to rely on male family members instead of directly accessing grievance processes, law enforcement, or lawyers.
- Reliance on informal grievance structures: Some community groups may be more familiar with informal grievance structures, such as women's associations. Some might believe that it is not their place to participate in formal grievance mechanism procedures.

Concrete Steps to Enable Equal Access to and Use of Grievance Mechanisms

Here are specific measures your company can take to ensure that men and women alike can make use of the grievance mechanisms you have in place.⁴¹

- Involve women in the design of the mechanism from the very start.
- Publicize all relevant steps of the grievance process and make sure there is broad reach throughout the community: This includes information on points of contact for access to the mechanism, how to register a complaint, stages and timelines of the mechanism, when complainants can expect to receive communication on the progress of their complaint, and availability of advisory or expert support resources and how they are funded.⁴²
- Keep up a steady stream of publicity about the mechanism: This will guarantee that members of the community—including new community members—will remain informed. Engage local community organizations, women’s groups, or NGOs to help ensure that the information continues to reach diverse members of the community.⁴³
- Examine any potential barriers that might prevent women’s equitable access and participation (see list above).
- Ensure that the mechanism is rights-compatible in both process and outcomes. (See the next section for more on this topic.)
- Base the design of the mechanism on the inclusion, participation, and empowerment of all individuals, paying particular attention to vulnerable people.
- Appoint a company gender champion to ensure that men’s and women’s grievances are addressed equally:
- At a minimum, appoint one gender champion within the community engagement team.
- For best practice and to avoid elite capture, also bring on a democratically elected gender representative from within the community.

Ways to Facilitate Equal Access to and Use of Grievance Mechanisms

Here are some examples of ways to encourage the use of established grievance mechanisms by all community members, male and female alike.

- Do not charge a fee for use.

⁴¹ Christina Hill and Kelly Newell, [Women, Communities and Mining: The Gender Impacts of Mining and the Role of Gender Impact Assessment](#), Carlton: Oxfam Australia, 2009, 6.

⁴² Corporate Social Responsibility Initiative, [Rights-Compatible Grievance Mechanisms: A Guidance Tool for Companies and Their Stakeholders](#), Cambridge: John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, 2008.

⁴³ Ibid.

- Provide simple, user-friendly forms, with clear directions.
- Set up more than one method of submitting a complaint so individuals can choose the one that best meets their needs, ensures the confidentiality of their submission, and doesn't prevent them from freely submitting. For example, individuals who are illiterate may choose to submit in person or via an anonymous telephone hotline; others may prefer to submit in writing in order to quickly and anonymously complete the submission.
- Enable access to the process for people who only speak the local language or who are illiterate: Provide assistance and safeguards to ensure the successful filing of their grievance.
- Create an authorization process for third-party complaints: For complaints filed on behalf of someone else, provide a way to confirm that the person filing the complaint is authorized to do so.
- Clearly publicize more than one point of access to the grievance mechanism: Designate at least one independent access point separate from the company, such as a community organization or representative, trade or worker's union or representative, ombudsman, or hotline. Make sure that it is available to everyone, not just to the members of the organization or union they might represent.⁴⁴
- Provide separate locations and consider any additional accommodations necessary to facilitate participation of women and men as needed.
- Ensure the safety and security of locations for both men and women: Access points should be well-lit, easily accessible, not secluded, and not too public.
- Ensure the anonymity of complainants.
- Take every complaint seriously and treat every complainant with respect.
- Consider training for local community groups: In some communities, there may be a preference for informal grievance structures. In such situations, local community groups, women's associations, or women's dialogue platforms can be provided with training so they know how to handle grievances relayed to them. This also will help ensure that your formal grievance process incorporates any grievances gathered in this way.

⁴⁴ CSRI, [Rights-Compatible Grievance Mechanisms: A Guidance Tool for Companies and Their Stakeholders](#).