

SESSION 5:

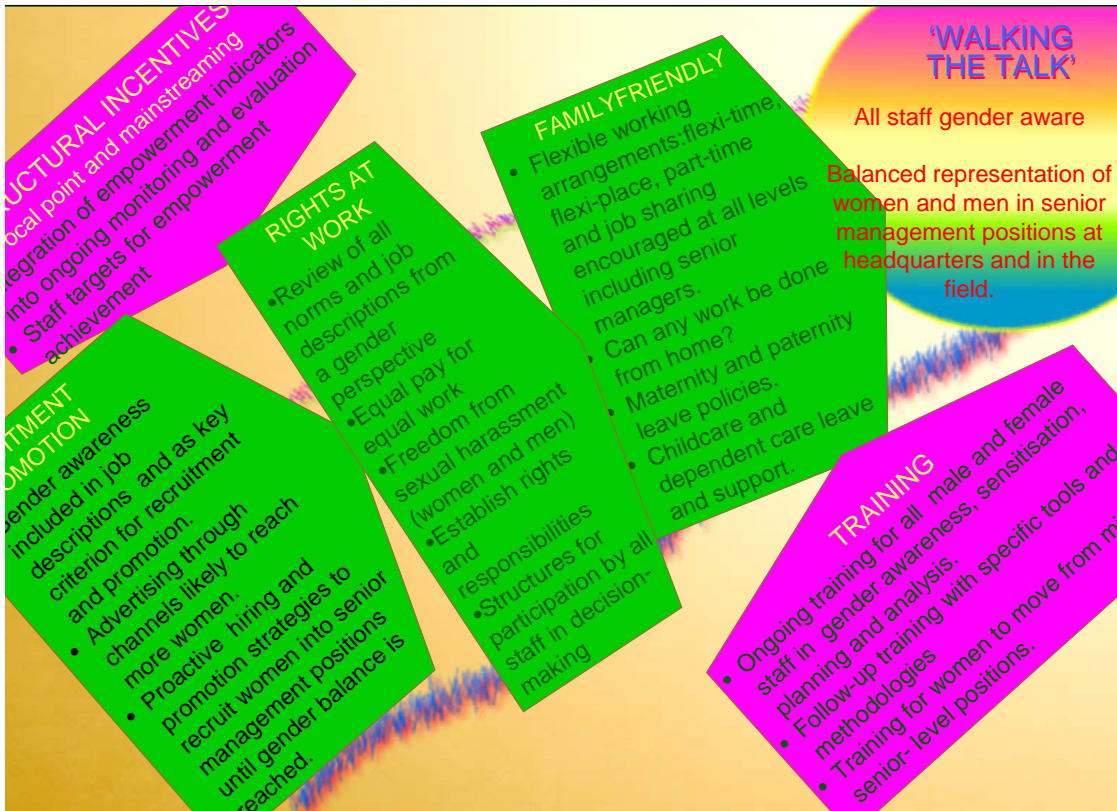
**INTERNAL
GENDER POLICY:**

Session 6: 'Walking the Talk' Internal Gender Policy

- Gives an overview of the necessary elements of internal gender policy.

These Powerpoint Presentation Notes are supplemented by:

- *Handout 3: Gender equality and empowerment checklist for examining programme products and services*
- Case Study 1 CODEC, Bangladesh – a mixed sex micro-finance programme with a training component which also has a gender policy



It is extremely difficult for an organization which aims to promote gender equity if it practices gender discrimination within the organization. It must 'walk the talk'.

Evidence indicates a clear linkage between contribution to women's empowerment, and even women's access to micro-finance, and levels of female staff. In the Pakistan context (and most other contexts) even where men are able to talk to women, there are many issues related to gender inequality and discrimination which women would not be able to discuss with men. This is not to say that male staff cannot have good relations with female clients. Male staff are also key in contacting and changing the attitudes of men within the community. At the same time although it is obviously the case that male staff may be very gender-aware and supportive, it is generally only where there is a 'critical mass' of women in positions of sufficient authority within organisations that gender issues become fully integrated into 'mainstream' programmes and implemented. 'Walking the Talk' therefore requires:

- All staff to be gender aware
- Balanced representation of women and men in senior management positions at headquarters and in the field.

Equal opportunities is likely to require quite profound changes in recruitment criteria, organizational culture and procedures in many programmes. Enabling women to join the organization and take up promotion possibilities will require changes in institutional culture and also introduction of more family friendly working practices. These would also enable male staff to fulfil their own duties and responsibilities towards their families.

Both female and male staff frequently lack expertise in gender analysis and may not have sufficient knowledge or experience of the situation of very poor women. There is therefore a need for gender training for both male and female staff. This gender training needs to identify priorities for gender policy at client level and how women's participation can be increased at all levels. It also needs to identify necessary changes in organizational culture, recruitment criteria and procedures to ensure equal opportunities becomes a reality at work, and also to enable female and male staff to overcome the many gender challenges they face in their lives outside work.

Structures for implementation of gender policy need to go beyond appointment of a junior member of staff as a gender officer and/or allocating a small percentage of time from different staff. There need to be clear lines of responsibility, adequate resources and forums for exchange of information and ideas. These in turn require clear guidelines and concrete incentives for implementation of empowerment policies if both women and men staff are to feel confident about spending scarce time and resources on these issues. Possible staff incentives would have to be piloted and tested with client groups and staff but targets could be things like eg numbers of women entering non-traditional and well-paid economic activities, numbers of SHGs taking collective action, success in particular areas of gender lobbying. Incentives could include staff prizes, taking these considerations into account in promotion or offering bonuses.



These internal changes are completely consonant with a financial sustainability approach. There are many benefits for the organization. Interestingly mainstream banks are generally way ahead of NGOs in implementing staff gender policies. 'Diversity' is also a key element in modern business 'Best Practice' in the West.

Many of these strategies are low cost : eg recruitment and promotion and removal of sexual harassment. Although gender policy may entail costs eg parental leave, this is compensated by high levels of staff commitment and efficiency when at work. Unhappy and harassed staff are not efficient and change jobs frequently leading to high costs of training new staff.

This is not to say there are no serious challenges, potential tensions and some costs.

Moreover mere formal change is not enough. Many gender policies remain on paper. ABOVE ALL it requires:

- a profound actual change in organizational culture and systems. This raises the issues also of staff participation in decision-making – one of the tenets of best business practice discussed in Session 2 on participation.
- a shift in the norms of behaviour for both women and men.
- willingness and support for change at all levels: field staff, middle staff, senior management and also donors.

Such changes and commitment are necessary in order to have a programme which really empowers women. Unless an organization itself 'walks the talk' then it cannot change attitudes and practices within communities.



QUESTIONS?