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TOOL

14

Mainstreaming gender equality in community learning centres



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Objectives

The objectives of this tool are to:

- help trainees think about, assess and reflect on the gender sensitivity and responsiveness of the community learning centre (CLC) environment, management and the training;
- recognize the CLC's role in promoting lifelong learning.

Key information



Setting the scene



Community learning centres (CLCs) are community-focused, learning-opportunity providers and centres for lifelong learning. A clear theme in their development has been the need to reach female learners to help reduce poverty (UNESCO, 2012) and make progress on Sustainable Development Goal 4, Targets 4.6 and 4.7 (see **Box 1**).

While many CLCs aim to become self-sustaining social enterprises, the core business of most

remains promoting and providing classes in literacy. Literacy forms the building blocks for community development, especially for women. Women can be further empowered regarding income-generating by attending financial literacy programmes. These are usually available to learners at an advanced stage of participation in CLCs, when literacy and numeracy levels are of sufficient quality.



Box 1 Relevant Sustainable Development Goal 4 targets

	Targets	Indicators
	<p>4.6 By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy</p>	<p>4.6.1 Percentage of population in a given age group achieving at least a fixed level of proficiency in functional (a) literacy and (b) numeracy skills, by sex</p>
	<p>4.7 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development</p>	<p>4.7.1 Extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development, including gender equality and human rights, are mainstreamed at all levels in: (a) national education policies, (b) curricula, (c) teacher education and (d) student assessment</p>

A significant gap between male and female literacy rates is seen in many countries of the Asia-Pacific region, potentially limiting the development of those nations (see **Box 2**). CLCs are uniquely placed to identify the needs of female learners, provide women with the motivation to learn, and tailor literacy packages to suit their needs.



Box 2 Global adult literacy and gender disparities

In 2014, the global adult illiteracy rate was 15%, equivalent to 758 million adults (Table 5); 63% of adults who are illiterate are women, with almost no progress since 2000 in reducing this share. In Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, around one in three adults are illiterate. In Northern Africa and Western Asia, the proportion is nearly one in five.

Gender disparity in adult illiteracy rates is significant in all three regions. In Afghanistan, literacy rates for males are more than twice those for females. In Yemen, 47% of adult women and 16% of men are illiterate. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique and Togo, women are twice as likely as men to be illiterate. Youth illiteracy rates are lower overall than those of adults, reflecting improved access to primary and secondary education among younger generations. Globally, about 9% of youth aged 15 to 24 are unable to read or write a sentence,

equivalent to 114 million people. Gender disparity among youth is less than among adults in all regions.

Young people from poorer households are far less likely to possess functional literacy skills needed for everyday life. Among the poor, young women are the most likely to get left behind, while young men, along with women from richer households, are likely to achieve basic literacy skills (Figure 9). In Pakistan, only 15% of poor young women aged 15 to 24 are able to read in everyday situations, compared with 64% of poor young men.

Disadvantage in acquiring basic skills is compounded by poverty, location and ethnicity.... In Indonesia, rich young women in Bali province have near-universal literacy skills but just 60% of poor young women in Papua province are literate."

Source: UNESCO. 2016, pp.24-26.¹

CLCs, along with other levels of education, have a key role to play in facilitating lifelong learning (see **Box 3**). All people, no matter their age, should have the opportunity to learn and continue their learning. CLCs can offer flexible pathways into education and training that include accredited learning programmes to facilitate the development of knowledge, skills and competencies, enabling people to fulfil their potential and find routes into work.

1 UNESCO. 2016. Gender Review. Creating Sustainable Futures For All. *Global Education Monitoring Report*. Paris: UNESCO.



Box 3 Lifelong learning

“In essence, lifelong learning is rooted in the integration of learning and living, covering learning activities for people of all ages (children, young people, adults and elderly, girls and boys, women and men) in all life-wide contexts (family, school, community, workplace and so on) and through a variety of modalities (formal, non-formal and informal) which together meet a wide range of learning needs and demands. Education systems which promote lifelong learning adopt a holistic and sector-wide approach involving all sub-sectors and levels to ensure the provision of learning opportunities for all individuals.”

UNESCO et al, Ministry of Education, the Republic of Korea, World Education Forum. 2015. *Education 2030 Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action: Towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all.*

Incheon: World Education Forum.

In order to ensure CLCs are sustainable and operating to their full potential, it is necessary to consistently review their strategies and actions. Instructional and assessment innovations, including the use of e-learning, may be required to ensure that teaching is as effective as possible, especially when considering the needs of newly literate adults and subsistence-based communities.

Enabling policies and regulations are the prerequisite for establishing effective programme delivery. A clear government structure which supports transparency and accountability is vital, as are the roles of government from the local to national levels. Continuous capacity development at all levels is crucial to make the mechanism work effectively. At the community level, the enhancement of capacity and ownership with strong local leadership is essential.



Self-study and/or group activity Reflect on questions for analysing CLCs

- On your own or in groups, think about the following six key aspects of CLCs and how gender could have an impact on them:
 1. learners;
 2. teachers and facilitators;
 3. facilities and the learning environment;
 4. courses (timing, content/structure);
 5. information on courses available and distribution;
 6. management.
- For each aspect, write some questions that need to be asked in order to analyse CLCs using a gender lens. For example, regarding teachers and facilitators, you might ask whether there is a balance of male and female instructors.
- Once you have completed the exercise, read **Handout 1** and check your responses against the list of questions provided.
- Finally, pick at least three questions that interest you the most.
- Make a plan for how you could investigate these questions and address the issues arising. How you would do this, with whom, when, etc.?



Further reading

National Institute for Lifelong Education (NILE) and UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL). 2017. *Synthesis Report on the State of Community Learning Centres in Six Asian Countries: Bangladesh, Indonesia, Mongolia, the Republic of Korea, Thailand and Viet Nam*.

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Handout 1

Questions to ask when analysing CLC from a gender equality perspective

Learners and gender equality

It is important for CLC managers to collect and maintain relevant statistics to help ensure that the specific needs of female learners are being met. Here are some questions to help you assess the situation regarding CLC learners and gender equality:

- How many male and female learners are participating in each CLC course? Look for trends and differences in the courses that are usually taken by men and by women.
- What age groups are participating in CLC programmes? This data should be sex-disaggregated. Is there any age-group specific trend in the proportion of female and male learners?
- Are the total numbers of male and female learners at the CLC equal? Or are there more male or female learners? If so, why? Include a gender analysis of potential causes of lack of parity (e.g. domestic work, time of the day when lessons are held, poor facilities and infrastructures, lack of transport, safety, cultural and traditional beliefs, etc.).

Teachers and facilitators

- How is gender equality reflected in the teaching staff?
- How many male and how many female teachers/facilitators are there in the CLC?
- What subjects do male and female teachers/facilitators teach? Look for differences in the subjects they teach. Do men usually teach certain subjects, while women teach others?
- Are teachers trained on gender equality and how to achieve it through education?

Facilities and the learning environment

- Does the CLC learning environment promote gender equality?
- Is there enough space in the classrooms/ learning environments (the way in which the seats and tables are arranged, etc.) for male and female learners to feel comfortable during the class/session?
- Are the men/boys and women/girls featured in equal numbers in posters/wall decorations and in a manner that is free from gender biases and stereotypes? Note the number of men/boys and women/girls in each poster and wall decoration.
- Is the CLC facility located in a safe environment (safe against crime, abuse, etc.) for men/boys and women/girls?
- Is the location of CLC courses convenient to access by both men/boys and women/girls? Is there convenient and safe public transport?
- How many separate, functioning, clean and lockable toilets are there for men/boys and for women/girls?
- Is there a child-friendly area/space for girls and boys at the CLC, such as a playground or a child care centre?

The CLC courses

- Do the CLC courses promote gender equality? If so, do they promote gender equality explicitly or implicitly?
- What are the course timings? Do timings facilitate the participation of female learners? Do the timings of the courses take into

account the responsibilities and schedules of men, women, boys and girls?

- Are girls' and boys' school schedules considered when deciding on when to offer the course?
 - Do the courses offered target both men/boys and women/girls, or are they more inclined to only one sex?
 - Are the teaching/learning materials (TLM) gender responsive and free from gender bias? Has there been an assessment of the TLM from a gender perspective?
 - Are there enough TLM for both women/girls and men/boys? Is there any difference in access to TLM by gender in the CLC?
 - What course contents do women/girls and men/boys want? How are these contents relevant to their needs? Are there differences in the preferences between women/girls and men/boys?
 - What expectations do women/men and girls/boys have from the services and programmes offered by the CLC? Is there any difference in the level and type of expectation between women and men?
- organization of activities; and v) monitoring and evaluation? What kinds of decisions do they make?
 - How does the committee identify the needs of male and female learners? How does it address local resistances to women's empowerment and girls' education?
 - Do they consult both male and female learners?
 - Does the selection/election process of the management committee allow for, or encourage, equal opportunities for both men and women to be part of the committee? How are members of the committee chosen or elected? Are they elected on a voluntary basis? Do they receive any support? If yes, then from whom? Do men and women receive equal support for their nomination as members?
 - Who supervises the CLC? Is it a woman or a man? Who does she/he interact with during her/his visits? Does she/he interact equally with male/female CLC staff members?
 - Have CLC staff had professional training in gender equality relevant to the equitable and effective functioning of a CLC?

Information on CLC courses and gender equality

- Is the information on CLC courses sent to all household members?
- Do both women/girls and men/boys have the information on CLC courses?
- Do both women/girls and men/boys feel comfortable speaking with the main contact person for information at the CLC?

Gender equality and CLC management

CLC management has an important role to play in promoting gender equality.

- Is there a balance in the number of female and male members in the CLC management committee?
- What are the specific titles and roles of female committee members? Do they take part in: i) needs assessment; ii) planning; iii) curriculum development; iv) implementation/



References

UNESCO. 2012. *Community Learning Centres (CLCs)*. Paris: UNESCO.

_____. 2016. Gender Review. Creating Sustainable Futures for All. *Global Education Monitoring Report*. Paris: UNESCO.



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Education Sector

UNESCO Bangkok Office Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education

Mom Luang Pin Malakul Centenary Building
920 Sukhumvit Road, Prakanong, Klongtoei
Bangkok 10110, Thailand
Email: iqe.bgk@unesco.org
Website: bangkok.unesco.org
Tel: +66-2-3910577 Fax: +66-2-3910866



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