

# Developing and Implementing a Gender Equality Policy

*A Guide for Community  
and Voluntary  
Sector Organisations*

Written by Marie Crawley and Louise O'Meara



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The NDP Gender Equality Unit provides support and advice to policy makers and implementing bodies on gender mainstreaming. This process is a requirement for all policies and programmes funded under the Irish National Development Plan 2000-2006 (NDP). The Unit has a specific remit to support the participation of community and voluntary groups in the gender mainstreaming process. This handbook is one of a range of supports developed following consultation with community and voluntary sector representatives. For further information on the work of the Unit, please see [www.ndpgenderequality.ie](http://www.ndpgenderequality.ie)

Readers are welcome to photocopy extracts from the handbook, but please always cite the source clearly and acknowledge the authors.

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April 2004

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# Foreword

This handbook on developing and implementing gender equality policies in community and voluntary sector organisations is a user-friendly guide which gives clear, practical suggestions on how your organisation can make a difference in this fundamentally important area.

Over the years, progress has been made regarding gender equality. However, much remains to be done, particularly regarding equality issues for women, whose voices are still under-represented in national and local decision-making arenas. The work of the NDP Gender Equality Unit of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform in providing support, advice, and information on gender mainstreaming is key to enhancing progress already made, and creating the conditions for addressing outstanding issues. This handbook is one of a range of resources developed by the Unit, aimed at supporting the participation of these sectors in the gender mainstreaming process.

Marie Crawley and Louise O'Meara have produced a comprehensive guide which reflects the involvement of both national and local organisations in the process of its development. Using a developmental, 'community work' approach is also essential for effective use of the handbook, so that gender mainstreaming can become an enabling and integrated part of the work of all groups, large and small.

The move from advances at the level of the individual experiencing gender discrimination to collective progress towards gender equality requires this focus on internal processes as well as external agendas. If organisations seek to eliminate gender discrimination and offset gender disadvantages in their internal operations – if, for example the days of men always chairing the meetings and women always making the tea can be truly consigned to the history books - then it is much more likely that they will also promote gender equality in the work they undertake.

Progress towards gender equality in the work or structures of organisations cannot be made without acknowledging the complexity and diversity of the issues involved for both women and men, neither of whom are homogeneous groups. It is quite clear in our increasingly diverse society that particular attention is needed to promote gender equality for migrant women, and to address the intersection between poverty, racism, social exclusion and gender inequality, which are daily experienced by many.

The handbook weaves together all of these dimensions. I am happy to commend it to you and encourage engagement with its suggestions as important building blocks for our future.

**Anastasia Crickley**

Chair,

National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism



## ***Gender Equality***

means that women and men have equal conditions for realising their full human potential, enjoying civil rights and for contributing to, and benefiting from, economic, social, cultural and political development. Gender equality is therefore the equal valuing by society of the similarities and the differences of men and women, and the roles they play.



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## Introduction

This handbook has been developed by the NDP Gender Equality Unit in the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform to assist community and voluntary sector organisations in the development and implementation of a gender equality policy. It is part of the Unit's overall objective of developing tools, information and aids to assist in gender mainstreaming (see definitions, p. 7).

It is aimed at staff, volunteers and management committee members of community and voluntary groups, projects and organisations and can be used by any group regardless of size or area of activity.

The handbook outlines a straightforward process towards developing a policy that sets out how you can promote gender equality in your organisation or group and what practical steps you can take to implement it in practice. These include:

- Articulating your **vision of gender equality** – that is, what would it look like if there was full gender equality in your organisation or group?
- Agreeing a number of **gender policy objectives** - i.e. what outcomes do you seek to achieve in the area of gender equality?
- Working out what actions you intend to take to **promote gender equality** in your organisation/group.
- Deciding what **skills/training** are required to enable you to effectively implement your gender equality policy.
- Clarifying what the **roles and responsibilities** of management committee members, staff, volunteers and users are in relation to your policy.
- Developing a system to be put in place to **monitor and evaluate** progress in relation to the promotion of gender equality in your group/organisation.
- Working out what **resources** are required to effectively implement your policy.

This handbook talks you through each of these steps and suggests practical ways to work through them. While the main focus of the handbook is on gender equality within your organisation or group, gender issues relating to community development activities are outlined in brief in Section Eight, along with information on where to source further information on this area of work.

In this Introduction, we outline the reason why organisations and groups need to develop gender equality policies, and provide data to highlight some of the more glaring inequalities in Irish society. Section One contains definitions of commonly used terms in gender equality work while Section Two outlines the key steps in gender equality policy development. Section Three lists key stages of development at which voluntary and community groups might incorporate gender equality considerations into their organisation and work. The gender equality policy issues associated with each of these stages are then detailed in Sections Four to Ten. Troubleshooting advice is included in Section Eleven. Resources and useful reference materials are provided in Appendix i and ii.



Community development is concerned with shaping the type of society we live in. Inherent in most commonly used definitions of community development is the principle of equality and/or inclusion and implicit in all is a commitment to actively bring about change in society. The community and voluntary sectors therefore are an obvious location to develop innovative gender equality policies and to model good practice in terms of gender equality. As sectors which are primarily concerned with challenging inequalities in society they are suitably placed to pilot new ways of working, challenge stereotypes and to take innovative steps in the interests of equality.

### Why a Gender Equality Policy?

Despite considerable advances, gender inequalities continue to exist with women, for the most part, experiencing inequality. Some statistical information helps illustrate this<sup>1</sup> :

#### Economics

- 97% of county/city managers in Local Authorities are men, 3% are women
- At the grade of Secretary General in the Civil Service, 91% are men and 9% are women
- Of clerical workers, 80% are women and 20% are men
- 76% of those in part-time employment are women, 24% are men
- Of CEOs (in top 100 companies) in Ireland, 96% are men and 4% are women
- Women earn 80% of men's average gross hourly earnings

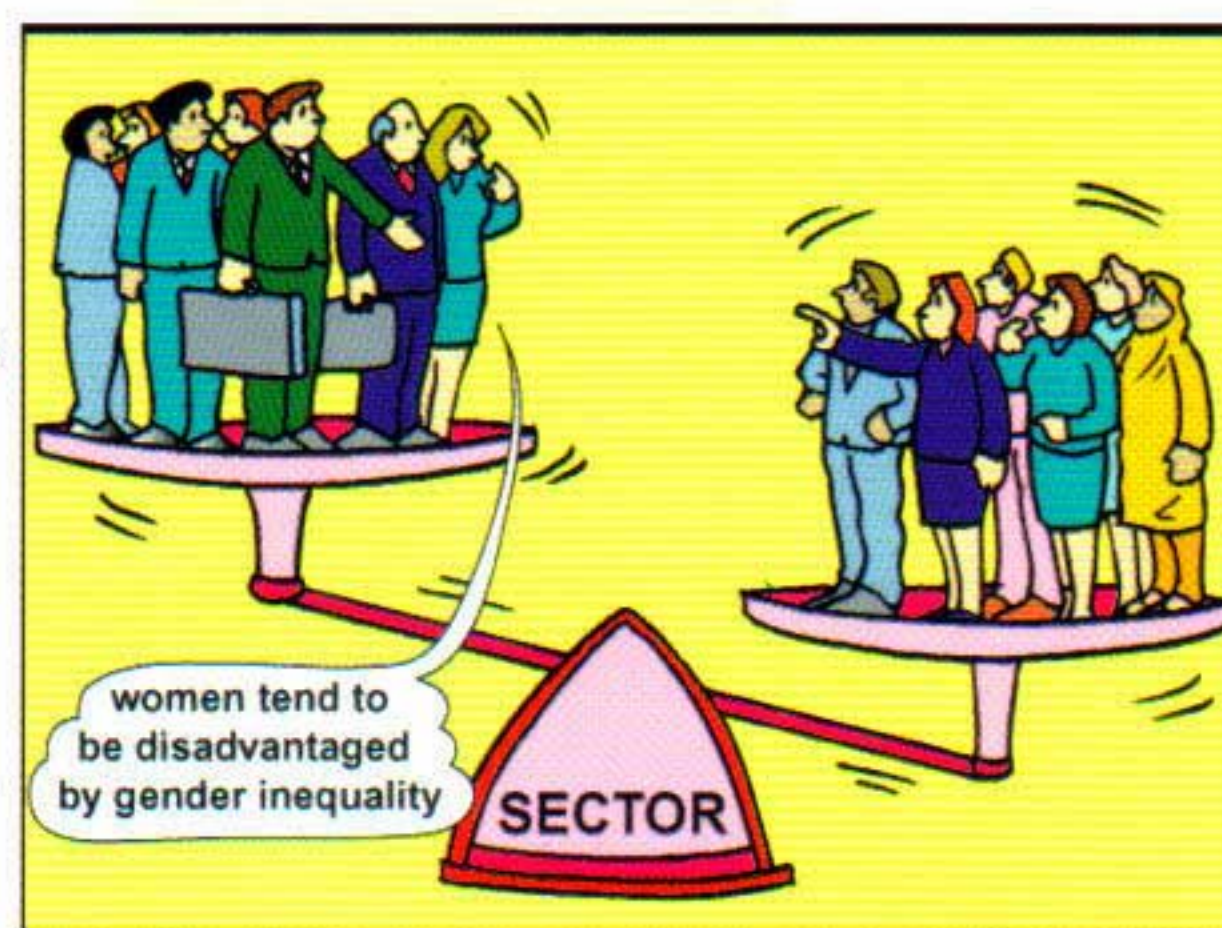
#### Within the Community and Voluntary Sectors

Gender disaggregated data for employment within the community and voluntary sectors is not available in the South, but recently collated figures for the North of Ireland provide a useful indication of employment trends within these sectors which are likely to be similar to those in the South of Ireland.

- Women make up 72% of the Community & Voluntary Sector workforces
- 35% of Chief Executives and Directors are women (representing 2% of women in the sector)
- Women comprise 78% of all part-time workers in the sectors
- 70% of volunteers are women

Gender disaggregated data for the South shows that:

- Within childcare provision, 99% of full time employees are women
- Of 1,204 Community Employment participants involved in childcare services, 97% are women
- Of 81 FÁS Jobs Initiative Scheme participants involved in childcare, 96% are women



<sup>1</sup>Sources:

Gender Proofing Handbook NDP Gender Equality Unit, DJELR.

Gender Issues in Community Development – Fact sheet, NDP Gender Equality Unit, DJELR.

ADM National Childcare Census 1999/2000

NDP Gender Equality Unit Database - [www.ndpgenderequality.ie](http://www.ndpgenderequality.ie)



## Democratic Deficit

- 85% of Councillors are men and 15% are women
- 86% of TD's are men and 14% are women
- 79% of Senate members are men and 21% are women
- On the 8 regional Health Boards, 20% of members are women and 80% are men

## Social and other areas

- 94% of unemployed lone parents are women, 6% are men
- 84% of domestic violence complaints are made by women, 16% by men
- Of those in receipt of carers allowance, 86% are women and 14% are men
- Of apprentices in Dublin Institute of Technology 4% are women and 96% are men
- Women comprise 69% of those undertaking part-time adult education courses, while men comprise 31%

These statistics paint a picture of significant inequality, experienced by women in the main. Along with the need to redress these, a number of other reasons why gender equality work is required are outlined below:

- A commitment to gender equality is enshrined in a range of laws, treaties and agreements, both international and domestic. Key among these are the Amsterdam Treaty, the Charter of the United Nations, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the European Union Structural Funds, the (Irish) Employment Equality Act (1998), the Equal Status Act, (2000) and the Irish National Development Plan 2000-06 (NDP). There is an imperative not to discriminate and, through gender mainstreaming commitments, to address pro-actively structural gender inequalities in society. Management committees and boards, as employers, have a responsibility to adhere to legal requirements which outlaw gender discrimination.
- Men and women experience different living situations and have different perspectives, opinions and priorities. Any area of work within or undertaken by your group or organisation will benefit from the contribution of whichever sex is underrepresented.
- The effective implementation of a gender equality policy will result in your organisation or group targeting women and men more effectively, thereby ensuring that the greatest possible number of people benefit from your activities. It also means that when you are trying to involve people in your actions or organisation you are drawing from the biggest possible pool of people.
- The social justice argument is one of the most compelling ones. In sectors which espouse justice and fairness, there is an ethical and social imperative to ensure that neither women or men are disadvantaged in any way because of their sex.
- The development of a policy on gender equality makes it easier for those who already have an interest in this area to progress the work within voluntary and community organisations. It provides a framework and a practical plan on how to include gender equality as an integral part of community development. While a written policy on its own is little guarantee of positive change, without a clearly articulated and agreed commitment to gender equality it is unlikely that any progress will be made in this area. The development of a policy coupled with a detailed programme of implementation is a powerful combination.



## 1. Gender Equality Definitions

there are many terms used in considering gender equality. Here we explain some of the key ones used in this handbook:

<b>Sex</b>	the biological differences between women and men.
<b>Gender</b>	the social differences between women and men that are learned, changeable over time and have wide variations both within and between cultures. For example, while only women can give birth (biologically determined) biology does not determine who will raise the children (gendered behaviour).
<b>Gender Equality</b>	means that women and men have equal conditions for realising their full human potential, enjoying civil rights and for contributing to, and benefiting from, economic, social, cultural and political development. Gender equality is therefore the equal valuing by society of the similarities and the differences of men and women, and the roles they play.
<b>Gender Mainstreaming</b>	involves the incorporation of gender considerations into all policies, programmes, practices and decision-making so that at every stage of development and implementation, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, and appropriate action taken to promote gender equality.
<b>Gender Proofing</b>	is the means by which it is ensured that all policies and practices within organisations have equally beneficial effects on men and women.
<b>Gender Disaggregated Statistics</b>	are statistics and data gathered and analysed on the basis of sex.
<b>Gender Budgeting</b>	focuses on the analysis of public expenditure and revenue from a gender perspective, identifying the implications for women/girls compared to men/boys. The ultimate goal is to reprioritise both expenditures and revenue-raising methods in order to promote gender equality.
<b>Gender Roles &amp; Responsibilities</b>	are classifications of the kinds of work done by women and men with different categories of work traditionally or typically assigned to one sex or the other.
<b>Gender Equality Audit</b>	is a gender-based analysis of an organisation's culture and how well that organisation/group is integrating a gender perspective into its work.
<b>Equality of Opportunity</b>	means that barriers which could limit participation in society are removed so that similar circumstances and conditions (opportunities) exist for both women and men.



**Equality of Outcome**

means that women and men benefit in an equitable way from policies and services – that the outcomes of actions and services are equally beneficial.

**Equality of Participation**

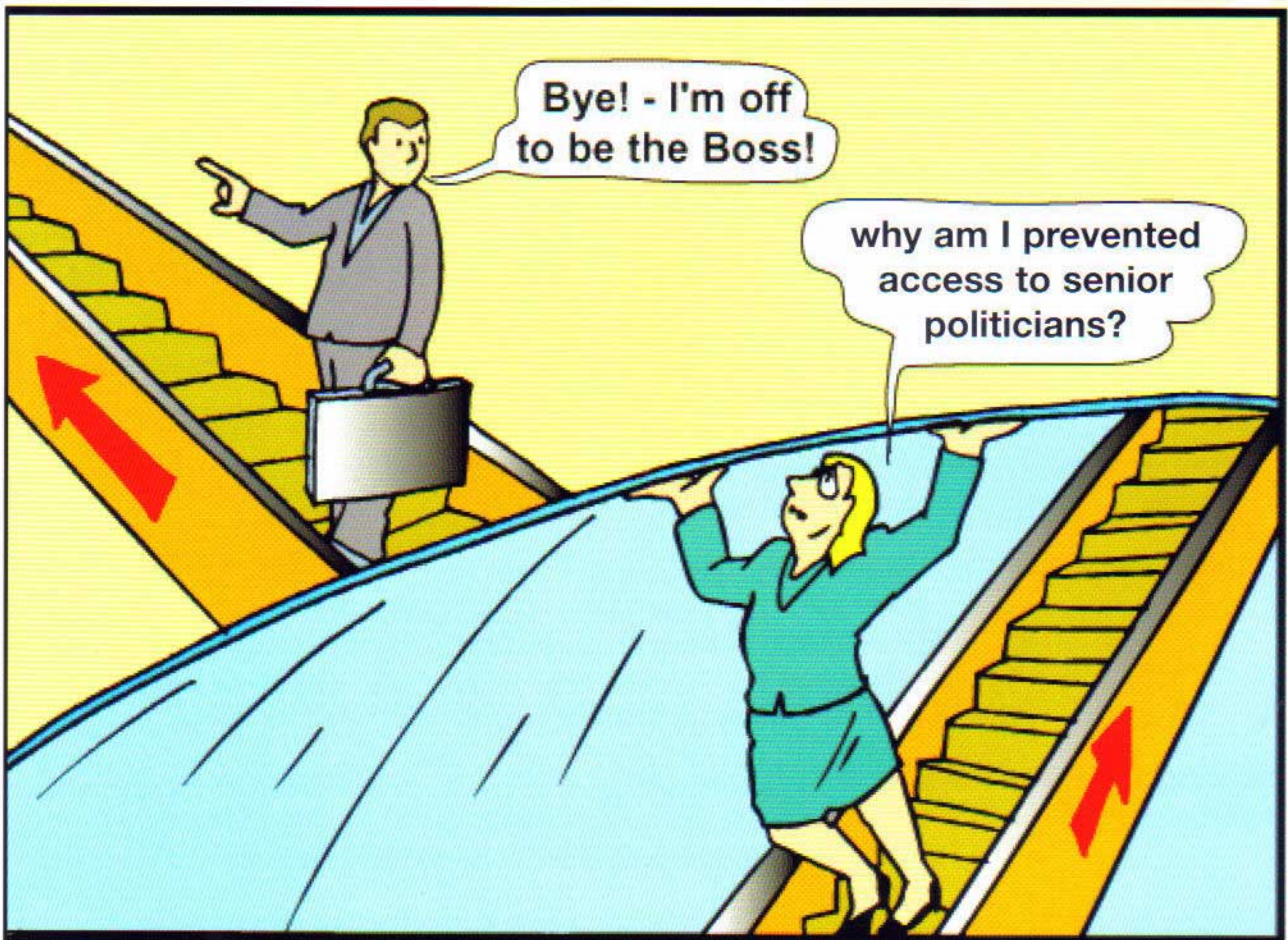
means equal involvement by both women and men leading to improved decision-making and greater member satisfaction with the process.

**Affirmative/Positive Actions**

are measures targeted at a particular group and intended to eliminate and prevent discrimination or to offset disadvantages arising from existing attitudes, behaviours and structures.

**Glass Ceiling**

refers to the invisible barrier arising from a complex set of structures in male-dominated organisations which prevents women from accessing senior positions.





## 2. Developing Your Policy: Key Issues

The development of a gender equality policy is an important starting point for many groups and organisations wishing to promote gender equality within their organisations and in the work they do. Here we look at what areas you might usefully cover in a policy, and consider issues regarding the process of developing your policy.

While every voluntary and community organisation will develop its own unique policy it is likely that most would include the following elements:

### 1. Introduction

Outline of what is contained in the policy.

### 2. Why a Policy for Gender Equality?

What is the rationale for having a gender equality policy for our organisation?

### 3. Defining Gender

What is meant by key terms used when talking about this area of work – such as 'gender', 'gender quality' and 'gender mainstreaming'.

### 4. Our Vision of Gender Equality

What would it look like if there was full gender equality in our organisation or group?

### 5. The Organisation's Gender Objectives

What are our gender policy objectives - i.e. what outcomes are we seeking to achieve in the area of gender equality?

### 6. Activities and Work Programmes

What do we intend to do to promote gender equality both within our organisation/group, and in carrying out our objectives?

### 7. Capacity Building for Effective Gender Equality

What skills / training are required to enable us to effectively implement our gender equality policy?

### 8. Roles and Responsibilities

What are the roles and responsibilities of management committee members, staff, volunteers and users in relation to our policy?

### 9. Monitoring and Evaluation

What systems will we put in place to monitor and evaluate our progress in relation to the promotion of gender equality in our group/organisation?

### 10. Resources

What resources are required to implement our policy effectively?

**To implement a gender equality policy, you need more than just a formal equal opportunities policy: a clear, agreed commitment to its implementation is also required.**



The **process** by which a gender equality policy is designed is an important element of that policy.

All the key stakeholders in the organisation - such as management committee members, staff, volunteers, users and funders – should be involved in the development of its equality policy. While this will make the process more lengthy, time spent on involving people appropriately at this stage will be more than recouped when it comes to implementation, as you will have a much higher level of commitment by then. Your own development worker or an external facilitator can be used to help design and lead the process. This will ensure that all stakeholder voices are represented and that everyone involved feels they have had an equal and fair chance to participate.

Some key questions for stakeholders to consider at the gender policy formulation stage include the following:

- What is gender equality and what does it mean for our organisation?
- Why does our organisation need to develop a gender equality policy?
- Who is – and is not – interested within the organisation in developing such a policy? Who will be the beneficiaries of such a policy?
- What process of consultation will be used with the various stakeholder groups? How will the policy be drafted and written up, and by whom?
- What implications will there be for the organisation in terms of changing certain practices in line with the gender equality policy – such as, for example, provision of childcare at all training events or increased paternity leave?
- How will we make our members, staff, volunteers and users aware of it? How will we engage their support?
- What current work practices will have to be changed to take account of the policy?
- How will the policy be best implemented and monitored? Who will be responsible for this?
- What will we measure (i.e. indicators) to determine if the policy is having a beneficial impact on gender equality within our organisation? How much change (i.e. what targets) in each area will we strive for, and in what timeframe?
- What other policies within our organisation will need to be amended in light of our gender equality policy?
- When and how shall we review the policy?

Having considered the questions above and built agreements as required, the stage is set to develop a 'formal' or written policy statement for your organisation or group. You can use the outline on the previous page as a guide.

***As with the introduction of any new policy, as it is implemented over time it will become part of your ongoing good practice. In this sense it should not be additional to your work, but rather something which is integral to what you do and how you do it.***



### 3. Developing Your Policy: Key Stages

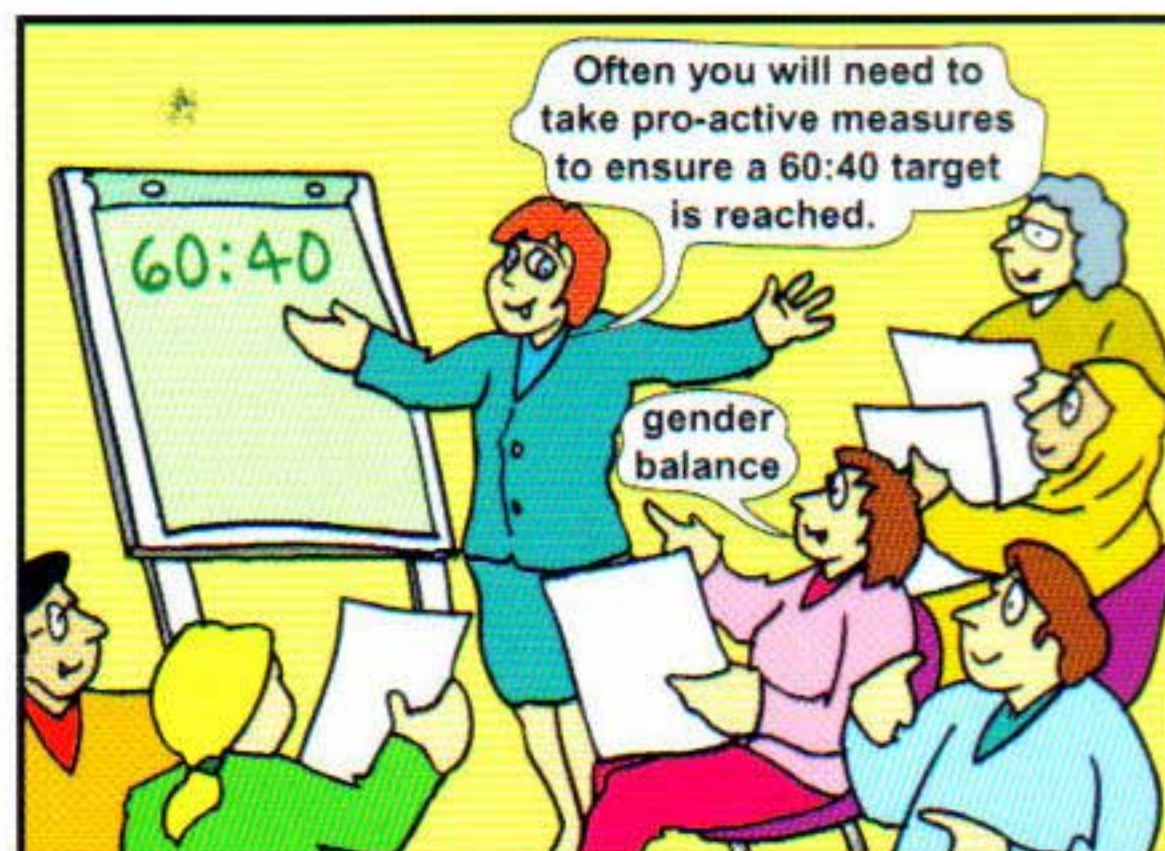
Most voluntary and community organisations and groups go through the following, often overlapping, stages in their ongoing development:

- Management committee formation
- Setting strategic direction – deciding what issues and needs the group wants to address
- Recruitment and employment of volunteers and staff
- Staff and volunteer training and development
- Undertaking community development activities / providing services
- Putting in place monitoring and evaluation systems

At each of these stages, gender needs to be taken into account and any required actions agreed to ensure gender equality is promoted. In the following sections of this handbook the gender considerations of each stage are outlined and a number of questions and/or actions suggested which will be of help when attempting to ensure gender equality in your organisation/group's work.



## 4. Formation of Management Committee



### Forming the Committee

Gender equality needs to be integrated at all levels of an organisation/group. It is important to take account of it when forming a management committee or board and reviewing membership of these. There are a number of things you can do to ensure gender equality in this area.

A key action is to seek a 60:40 gender balance on your management committee/board. Gender distribution is normally considered "equal" when at least 40 per cent belong to the under-represented sex. A 60:40 ratio is widely acknowledged to be an acceptable target in terms of gender balance. Having just one or two 'token' women or men will make little difference - research has shown that, when attempting to achieve equality, a critical mass of between 30% and 40% of the underrepresented group is required if they are to make an appreciable difference. The Government has set an objective of achieving a minimum representation of 40% for both men and women on boards of public bodies.

Often you will need to take pro-active measures to ensure a 60:40 target is reached.

**Research has shown that, when attempting to achieve equality, a critical mass of between 30% and 40% of the underrepresented group is required if they are to make an appreciable difference.**

This balance could be achieved in the following ways:

- co-option of additional women and/or men;
- seek female/male committee members who have relevant expertise from elsewhere within the community/voluntary area of activity;
- appoint alternates of women and men to hold posts such as Chair and Vice Chair;
- invite women/men to attend and contribute to meetings - consider sending a female deputy/alternate in place of a male representative to some meetings, to achieve a better balance of attendance.
- schedule meetings to encourage the participation of people with responsibility for dependants.



- examine terms of reference with a view to recommending changes in the composition of the committee which may include: limited term membership; limiting the number of ex-officio members; providing ex-officio women nominees; where election applies, provide encouragement and support to women.
- ensure that travel and care costs are met, as of right, for all members. (This is particularly the case if you are attempting to address the under-representation of women, who are the primary carers and have a greater reliance on public transport.)
- set targets and a timescale for reaching these targets. It may be realistic to incorporate stages, aiming to reach for example 25%, 35% and finally 40% representation of the under-represented sex.
- In the case of fora or networks:
  - nominating groups/organisations could consider nominating a woman or man (as required) to achieve a better gender balance of representation.
  - where such organisations have two representatives it could ensure that a woman and a man are chosen.
  - when new nominations are called for, the organisation could consider nominating a woman/man (as required) when the existing nominee resigns.

***The closer you come to a 60:40 balance on your committee or board, the more you will gain from having a wider, more diverse range of knowledge and experience around the table.***

## **Meetings and Decision-Making**

The process of decision-making – who makes decisions and how - is a crucial one in terms of empowerment and control. Within the community and voluntary sectors most formal decision-making takes place at committee meetings.

To enable both women and men to participate effectively in decision-making within your organisation/group it is important to:

- use a range of participation methods. Traditional ways of conducting business and making decisions at meetings may militate against those who are unfamiliar with such formal procedures and who may lack the confidence to speak out in a large group. There are a number of ways you can address this:
  - provide opportunities for people to discuss issues in pairs
  - make use of small group discussion
  - include individual reflection time, where appropriate
  - use a flip chart to record points for all to see (especially useful in more complex discussions)
  - use facilitators to support the group in reaching difficult decisions
  - use creative methods when developing policies or undertaking visioning work, for example drawing/collages et cetera.



- ensure the language of your meetings is accessible - explain jargonistic terms and acronyms used.
- challenge language which is sexist or patronising to either women or men. At a formal level use gender-neutral language such as 'Chairperson' instead of 'Chairman'.
- provide training in effective and participatory ways of running meetings. By ensuring that those who run/chair meetings have a wide range of methods to choose from, an over-reliance on traditional ones, which tend to favour male ways of working, can be lessened.
- ensure that all board members receive adequate training on roles and responsibilities, committee procedures, legal and financial aspects and so on. This is general good practice, but will also help to build confidence in members lacking familiarity and experience in the role.
- facilitate women to network together and provide opportunities for them to establish mutual support systems.

**Gender equality work is a relatively new area of activity and, as with any new development, support is required to enable people within organisations and groups to understand and embrace it. Training is a key element in this and an appropriate training session on developing a gender equality policy can be a positive and energetic way to begin the process!**

In partnerships and/or other intersectoral bodies:

- if your organisation can nominate two members/advisors/observers to a forum or other body then you might ensure that one of these nominees be female and one male.
- provide training or mentoring for women who could potentially take up the role of member/advisor/observer in time.
- encourage rotation of all sectoral representatives to help ensure equal representation of women and men within each sector.
- establish working groups on particular themes/areas of work as a means of encouraging more involvement from the underrepresented sex. Smaller working groups can serve as a useful stepping stone to their fuller, more confident participation in a bigger, more formal forum.

**Representation on committees tends to reflect the gender profiles of organisations represented. It may therefore be appropriate for organisations to look at employment issues such as family friendly employment policies and recruitment and promotion procedures, in order to address the underlying problems.**



## 5. Setting Strategic Direction

Your gender equality policy will need to address how you will incorporate a gender equality perspective into all aspects of planning and resourcing your activities.

### Planning

When you engage in a planning exercise consider the following:

- Are there women and men involved in setting the strategic direction of the organisation/group/project?
- In carrying out an assessment of the external environment in which the organisation operates has this been done on the basis of gender, along with other variables? Consider whether:
  - there a need for training in gender analysis for members of the organisation/group to enable them to do this?
  - you need to access more gender disaggregated data to enable you to make a detailed and accurate assessment of what is available and what it needed by both women and men.
  - when undertaking needs analyses or community appraisals gender specific data is sought.
- Do the organisation's vision, mission and values reflect the views of both women and men? Have separate, sex-specific workshops / consultation sessions been held with women and men to ensure both sets of views and needs are identified? How can those involved in developing an organisation's/group's strategic plan tell if the views and needs of both women and men have been identified and taken on board?
- Is gender equality one of the agreed values which underpin the work of your group/organisation? How is this demonstrated in practical terms?
- If work needs to be undertaken in the area of promoting the need for a gender focus in your organisation/work has this task been allocated to a named individual or group? Have time and any other resources required been earmarked for this?
- If your organisation/group is involved in partnerships do others you work with have gender equality policies and how do they align with yours?



## Funding

- Do you consider your allocation of existing funding on the basis of how this impacts specifically on both men and women?
- When seeking resources for your work do you consider resource implications of the gender dimension of your work and submit a budget for these? For example, the absence of childcare is a very significant barrier to women's participation and the provision of support to women in this area is crucial. Such provision has resource implications.
- When planning your budget, remember to include resources required for other supports such as eldercare, single sex consultations, training and so on.
- Include a contingency element for funding to cover potential costs associated with maternity leave provision.

***While there clearly are resource implications associated with the implementation of a gender equality policy there are nonetheless a whole range of actions which can be undertaken at little or no (financial) cost.***

***While many organisations will need to seek additional resources – for example, to provide the required level and quality of elder and childcare – in the meantime many other elements of their policy which do not have a financial cost can be implemented. And remember, in the long run a good gender equality policy can prove highly cost effective, for example in terms of staff retention.***

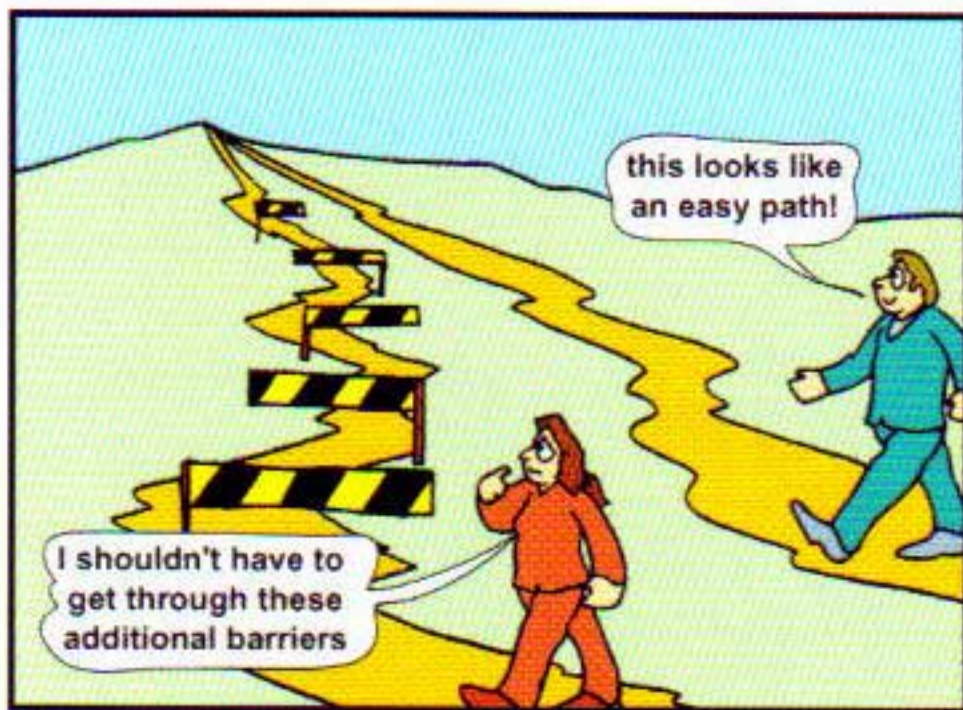


## 6. Recruitment and employment of volunteers and staff

The promotion of equal opportunities in the workplace means, in the first instance, the removal of legal and formal barriers to men and women's participation at every level in an organisation or project. There are, however, other informal factors which can affect whether or not women and men experience equal opportunities in employment.

Even where formal barriers to certain positions do not exist, people may have concerns they will not be treated equally. Women in particular tend not to apply for jobs because they have low expectations of success. Also, informal discrimination may continue to exist despite the existence of formal equal opportunities policies. Attitudes can be deep-rooted and people may not even be aware they are discriminating, so steps must be taken to ensure this does not happen.

In order to overcome barriers, both practical and attitudinal, there are a number of actions you can put in place.



### Recruitment

Staff recruitment is an important focal point for the implementation of a gender equality policy. Firstly, the decisions made at the time of recruitment in terms of conditions, flexible employment options and how candidates are targeted will have a major effect on where women and men are placed in your organisation. Secondly, the staff you recruit and their attitude and commitment to gender equality is an important factor in

the culture you create within the organisation.

There are a number of practical measures which can be put in place:

- Ensure that recruitment advertisements are accessible to both sexes, and make it clear that applications from the under-represented sex are particularly welcome. This could include advertising in media and at venues that members of that sex are more likely to use, rather than simply advertising generically. Also include in the advertisement the words – 'applications are welcome from suitably qualified women or men'[depending on which is the under-represented sex in the area for which you are recruiting or if seeking membership of a board or committee - '[The organisation] is committed to increasing the representation of women.'
- In the job advertisement, indicate that flexible working options, if available, will apply to the post. It may attract women who, because of caring responsibilities, may not otherwise apply for a full-time job.
- Include 'an understanding of gender equality issues' or a 'commitment to gender equality' in job descriptions and person specifications. This will provide you with an opportunity to assess the extent to which potential candidates share your organisation's understanding of, and commitment to, gender equality. Secondly, inclusion of the issue in recruitment documentation is a strong statement of your organisation's commitment to the issue. Thirdly, it has a wider benefit in that candidates are likely to seek information on gender equality by virtue of the fact that it is included on a job description, thereby encouraging increased awareness of the issues.



- Depending on the nature of the post being advertised, briefing members of the traditionally under-represented sex for the interview panel can be a useful way of informing them of the skills and experiences required for posts they may have little information on. For example, if recruiting childcare workers, include men on the interview panel. This additionally could be a useful way of increasing awareness in, and promoting the value of, childcare work.
- The interview is an opportunity for your organisation/group to display its openness and commitment to gender equality. If you have included it in your job description and person specification, ask a question on the issue which provides an opportunity to open up a discussion on the topic.
- Ensure panel members are trained so that they do not ask questions which either intentionally or unintentionally discriminate against either sex. It is important that panel members know the law in terms of employment legislation and also that they are aware of the organisation's policies in relation to the promotion of equality of opportunity and positive action programmes (if such are in place.)
- Questions should focus strictly on a candidate's ability to do the job. Avoid questions related to, for example, family responsibilities and plans to have a family (even though in short term contracts, these factors can have very real implications for your project). To ask questions of this nature can inadvertently disadvantage women in the interview process... and, remember, they're also illegal!
- Be mindful of the language you use. For example, when recruiting new staff do you automatically presume a new secretary will be a 'her' and a new chair a 'him'?
- Celebrate good practice. If your recruitment drive results in the appointment of either women or men in non-traditional posts or roles – publicise and celebrate the fact. It is likely to generate interest in your project, can act as an incentive to others to do things differently and also help break down stereotypes of one sex having certain jobs within the community and voluntary sectors.

***Advertising jobs in a way which makes them attractive to both women and men is beneficial to your organisation, as it ensures you are reaching the widest possible pool of people***

## **In the Job – Good Practice in Employment**

Employment within the community and voluntary sector can be precarious! Contracts and funding are almost always short term and few of the opportunities available to employees in the public sector, such as career breaks, or long term study leave are available to staff in the sector. In this context, it is all the more important to ensure that you create an equality-based workplace which will encourage staff to stay with your organisation or project. Taking gender into account is important in ensuring your organisation is attractive to both sexes.



The following are possible ways of ensuring that both women and men have the opportunity to achieve and enjoy their full potential in your organisation or community group:

- Carry out equality audits so that you are aware of the status of the sexes within your organisation. Who gets the best jobs? Where are women and men placed in your organisation?
- Are either sex under-represented in particular jobs? Have you found out the reasons for this? Do you ask members of staff why they do not apply for promotion/certain jobs?
- In what ways does your organisation actively promote the fact that it places equal value on areas of work traditionally carried out by either women or men?
- Introduce family-friendly work practices to help employees combine work and other responsibilities. In Irish society, where women primarily undertake child-rearing and domestic roles, this can be a huge incentive for women (see 'Flexible Employment' section, p.19 for ideas).

## Positive Action Programmes

- You may need to put positive action programmes in place. The term 'positive action' here refers to the attempt to achieve gender balance in a particular grade or type of work, where one sex has been under-represented in the previous year. Under section 24 of the Employment Equality Act, 1998, positive action (also known as affirmative action) is permitted. The Act permits "measures to promote equal opportunity for men and women, in particular by removing existing inequalities which affect women's opportunities in the areas of access to employment, vocational training and promotion and working conditions".

Positive/affirmative action is aimed at addressing under-representation and overcoming obstacles to career progression, and at realising the full potential of all workers, regardless of their gender. The merit principle in relation to recruitment and promotion is fully respected.

## When a Joke is not a Joke - Sexual Harassment in the Workplace

**Sexual harassment can be defined as 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature or other conduct based on sex affecting the dignity of women and men at work.'**

### What is Sexual Harassment?



Essentially sexual harassment is behaviour and attitudes of a sexual nature which can make someone feel uncomfortable or unsafe in the workplace<sup>2</sup>. Sexual harassment can be:

<sup>2</sup>Equality Matters for Trainers' – FAS. Code of Practice: Measures to Protect the Dignity of Women and Men at Work, Department of Equality and Law Reform, 1994. For further information, see 'Sexual Harassment and Harassment at Work' The Equality Authority



- Non-verbal - sexually suggestive or pornographic pictures and calendars, leering and offensive gestures, whistling, email jokes and images, faxes and text messages
- Verbal - unwelcome sexual advances, unwelcome pressure for social contact, sexually suggestive jokes or songs, remarks or innuendo, questions or insults about one's private life, lewd comments about physical appearance
- Physical - unwelcome physical contact such as pinching, patting or unnecessary touching
- Suggestions that sexual favours may further someone's career or that refusal may damage it

Sexual harassment can create an intimidating, hostile or humiliating work environment – whether that be in the actual workplace or at committee or Board meetings. Employers are legally obliged to take steps to prevent it. An organisation with a gender equality policy which strives to ensure that women and men have equal opportunities within the organisation must ensure that women and men equally feel comfortable in the work environment and at meetings.

- Within your gender equality policy include a clear and unequivocal statement that sexual harassment of any kind is unacceptable.

## Flexible Employment Options

The absence of women in senior positions in the workplace, including within the community and voluntary sectors, has been well documented. One of the key reasons women do not break through this 'glass ceiling' concerns the difficulty in balancing the demands of a senior position with domestic and childrearing responsibilities. The introduction of family-friendly working arrangements can be useful in overcoming this barrier for women.

Here are some options you could consider introducing within your organisation:

### • Flexitime

Flexitime refers to flexibility around starting and finishing times. Whilst there are core hours when all employees must be present, flexitime offers employees increased freedom in arranging other demands, such as organising childcare and journeys to work and school, around work hours.

### • Job-Sharing

This is where two people share one full time position and divide the duties and responsibilities of the post between them. Job share often involves a degree of overlap time to ensure that there is an opportunity to discuss the work. It can be a highly advantageous option in the community and voluntary sectors, where organisations typically have low staffing levels, as it brings two sets of knowledge, skills and experience into a particular post.

### • Part-Time Work

Part time work is where the employee works less than full time hours on a regular (including permanent) basis. Some part-time workers may be entitled to accrue leave and other benefits on a pro-rata basis. However, clearly the lower income will be reflected in pension entitlements later on in life and can affect issues such as applying for a mortgage or other loan. While it can also reduce opportunities for promotion the high level of uptake of part time work options by women is indicative of its attractiveness to those who are trying to balance a career with caring responsibilities.



**It is important that the culture of the organisation mirrors the introduction of any new flexible employment options. In other words, staff who avail of such options and as a consequence spend less time in the organisation should not be treated differently or as having less commitment to staff who work on a full time basis. They should be genuine options and alternatives and not viewed as 'second best.' In other words, there should not be a penalty clause – formal or otherwise – for staff who avail of other than full time work options. The options should also be available to staff at all levels in the organisation. This should be supported and endorsed by senior management and/or the management committee.**

There are also a number of leave options which can assist in the promotion of gender equality:

- **Paternity Leave**

Paternity leave is paid leave given to fathers after the birth of a child and is additional to the time provided for the birth of the child. There is no statutory entitlement to paternity leave in Ireland. However, it is an important part of good practice in the promotion of family friendly options in the workplaces. It sits well with positive action programmes and is important in terms of supporting men in their roles as parents and promoting gender equality in the workplace and in the home. This is well established in other EU countries. For example in Sweden, each parent has the right to a maximum of 180 and a minimum of 30 days of paid leave. These 360 days are paid at an 80 % wage replacement rate.

- **Term-time working**

This is an arrangement whereby staff can take unpaid leave of absence during childrens' school holidays (with their salary being evenly distributed over the whole year). As school holidays on the island of Ireland for primary children can be up to three months, it can be difficult for parents to arrange care for such long periods of time and such an option can ease the burden on parents, particularly in rural areas where after-school options tend to be limited.

**The promotion of work/life balance initiatives within your organisation is one way of actively promoting gender equality. Information and guidelines on initiatives and events are available on [www.familyfriendly.ie/wlbd](http://www.familyfriendly.ie/wlbd).**





## 7. Staff and Volunteer Training and Development

Within community and voluntary organisations, policy is developed by the management committee or board which also has overall responsibility for its implementation. However in practice, the policies of a group or organisation are usually implemented on a day to day basis by the staff (either paid or voluntary) in the group/organisation. Staff awareness of, and commitment to, gender equality is therefore crucial in determining the effectiveness of related policies.

Likewise, the extent to which staff benefit from the policy will be determined by the degree to which it is prioritised on an operational level. The following are suggestions to ensure that gender equality is an integral part of staff development:

- Provide gender equality training for all staff. Keep the issue 'live' within the group to ensure that it is always on the agenda.
- Explore the issue in your organisation. Conduct surveys on attitudes and experience so that you are always 'clued in' to where your organisation and staff stand in terms of gender equality rather than where you think it is or would like it to be.
- Ensure that staff induction includes a 'gender equality' component. This is an opportunity to outline how your gender equality policy operates in practice, to state the commitment and responsibilities required from individual staff members in relation to gender equality and to offer practical support to new staff members in relation to this issue. At this point, good practice in relation to maintaining gender disaggregated statistics and information and gender proofing all areas of work can be passed on to new staff.
- Provide training opportunities to encourage a gender balance in jobs which have been traditionally held by one sex throughout the organisation. This might mean for example, management training for women. Encourage all development staff to avail of training to enable them to apply for management positions and encourage both women and men to apply for promotion.

Volunteers do not have contracts of employment and are therefore not legally bound to implement your organisation's policies in the same way as paid staff. However, if your organisation has a 'membership pledge' or 'volunteer agreement', you could include a statement on gender equality in this document. It is also worth considering creative ways of ensuring that the work of your volunteer members supports and reflects your gender equality policy:

- When volunteers are being recruited, ensure they are made aware of your gender equality policy in whatever agreement or contract you have with them. Inform them of your principles and values on the issue of gender equality and discuss with them the ways in which these are reflected in the everyday work of your organisation or group.
- Offer gender equality training as part of an attractive package. Hold it in a comfortable and accessible venue and build in a social element.
- Enable and encourage volunteers to try innovative ways of working which promote gender equality. Offer rewards or quality marks for excellence in the promotion of gender equality.



## 8. Community development activities

The activities and services offered by community and voluntary groups and organisations are developed in response to identified concerns and needs. These activities and services are therefore very diverse, and will have diverse gender implications. Key to the promotion of gender equality in the activities you engage in and the services you deliver is to gender proof your work. A guide to this, 'The Gender Proofing Handbook', has been produced by the NDP Gender Equality Unit and is available on line, <http://www.ndpgenderequality.ie>, and in hard copy, free of charge. This Handbook takes you through a five-step process for gender proofing your activities and services. The type of questions raised are likely to include the following:

- Does the work of your organisation/group address needs that are different for men and women? What are these needs and how do they differ?
- Does your work deliver outcomes that affect men and women differently? If so, in what way?
- Do men and women have the capacity and opportunity to access your services equally? Are there any barriers which might impede such access? For example if you run joint training courses for men and women in your local community do you make childcare support available? Without it women may be less likely to access these. If you run an advice centre does it open on a Saturday morning or on a weekday evening? If not, men may be less able to access the service.
- Are there any positive actions in place to help women and/or men access particular services?
- Do you consider how women and men benefit from the allocation of resources within your organisation?
- Are women and men equally able to influence the nature and level of the activities you run? Can men and women participate equally in the decision-making which underpin the activities?
- Do you collect and analyse information on a gender disaggregated basis? For example, at events and activities, do you record the number of women and men attending? When carrying out an area profile or a needs analysis, do you analyse information on the basis of gender?
- In terms of how to influence regional and national policies – do you include a gender dimension in your policy submissions? Do you create a space for women and men to consider policy issues separately and then collectively?

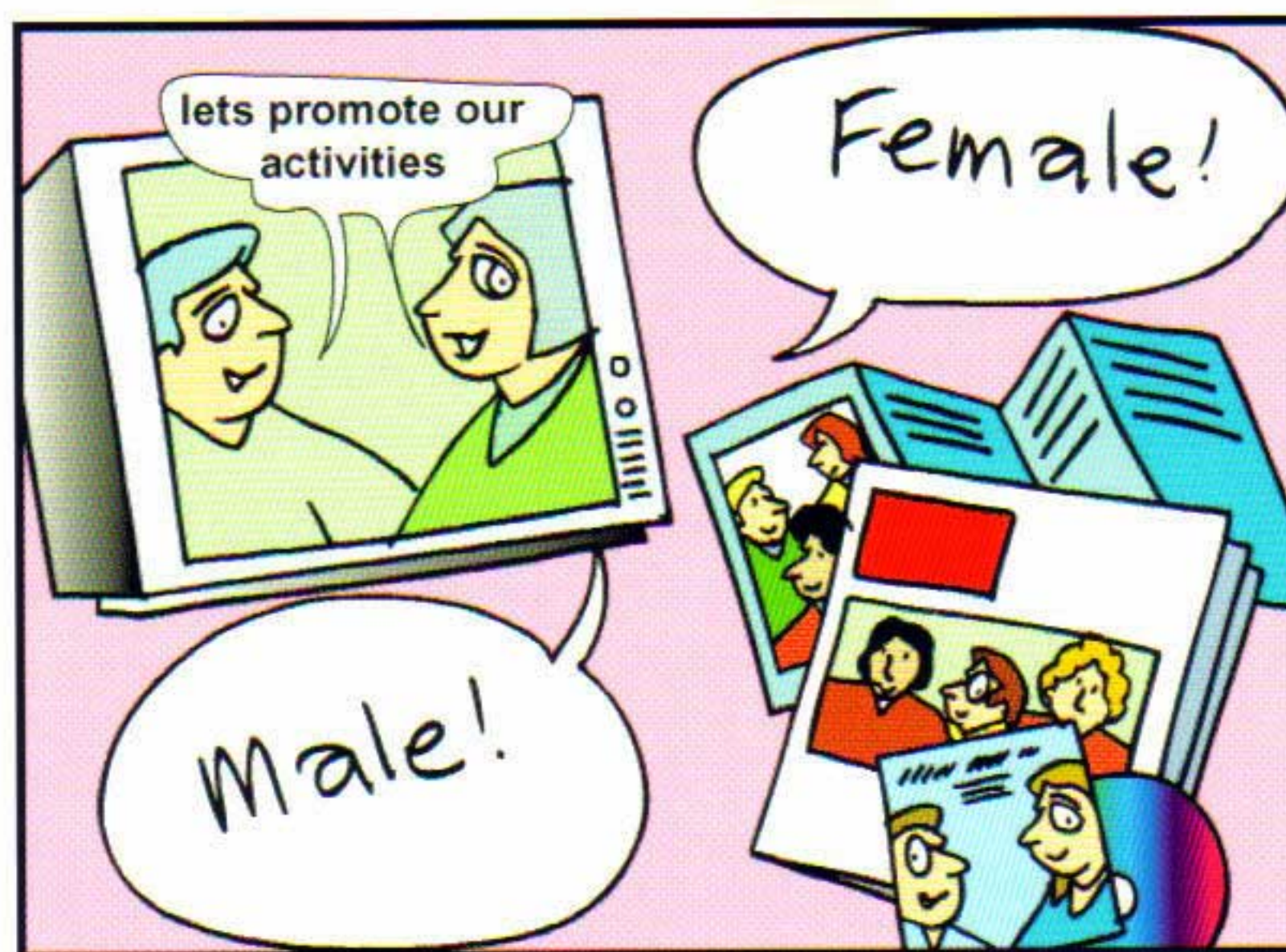


**The focus on gender equality does not preclude the need for development work which is gender specific, i.e. 'women only' or 'men only'. In fact, this work is often essential to level the playing field.**

## Promoting your activities

The promotion of the activities/services of your organisation or group needs to be gender sensitive if you want to ensure equality of access for women and men. The following questions and pointers will help you maintain such a focus:

- What is the 'public face' of your organisation and your services/activities? Who typically appears in press photos and speaks at public events? Ensure that photographs and other publicity material contains both women and men.
- If you usually have either a man or a woman speaking at public events, try swapping this around, as it can change the way in which your organisation is perceived.



- When promoting training courses or community events, have both men and women as spokespeople to promote them and, if possible, to field any questions prospective participants may have.
- Do you draw attention to the ways in which you promote gender equality in your annual report and other publications? Highlighting the gender dimension to your work can be a useful way of keeping the issue firmly on the agenda and also of drawing attention to good practice and achievements.



## Your Premises

For many community and voluntary organisations, the development of a community facility is both a project in itself and can also be the base from which other projects and activities are run. It is important, therefore, to invest in the planning stage to ensure that the design of the facility will meet the needs of women and men and girls and boys.



At the design stage of a community/sports facility, consider the following:

- Is there a purpose built crèche which meets the needs of children of different ages?
- Is there a room suitable for homework, after schools clubs, i.e. which can be used by older children and young teenagers?
- Ensure that women and men have been involved in the design of the building. Given that architecture and building construction tend to be male-dominated areas, it is important to seek the views of women at the design stage. This may result in, for example, increased emphasis on adequate lighting, personal safety and appropriate bathroom and catering facilities –features that experience has shown women are more likely to highlight.
- Have groups such as the women's group been consulted to find out what activities they might want to run in the hall?
- Have changing rooms been designed to enable an uptake of team sports by both males and females?
- Is there sufficient exterior lighting to ensure that all users of the centre feel safe in going there?
- What images and photographs do you put on the walls? For example, do you celebrate the achievements of girls' sporting teams in the same ways as boy's?
- How do you manage the scheduling of events, such as team sports in the centre? For example, are girls' and women's teams given the same degree of preference as men's and boy's?
- Particularly in the case of sports facilities, strive for a balance of male and female staff working in the centre, and consider whether it is appropriate to offer 'single sex' spaces.

***The images and photographs you display on your premises can be an important indication of how your organisation views men and women. For example, use photographs of women in sport, men with children and both women and men in non-traditional areas of work. If you don't have any to hand, it could be the subject of an arts or photography project within your group or organisation or you could commission a series of photographs and images using local people and situations.***



## 9. Monitoring and evaluation

All voluntary and community sector organisations need to monitor and evaluate their work. As well as being a requirement of funding it is vital in assessing your effectiveness. The following questions will help you focus on the gender dimensions of monitoring and evaluation.

### Monitoring

- Who was involved in setting up the monitoring framework? Is there a gender balance on the management committee/sub-group responsible for monitoring?
- What kind of performance indicators will be used to determine the success of your organisation/group? Do these include gender equality indicators?
- Do you report on gender outcomes to funders – whether or not they specifically request such information?
- Does monitoring include the collection of gender disaggregated statistics?

### Evaluation

- Who is involved in the evaluation?
- Who drafted the terms of reference and do they make specific reference to gender outcomes?
- Did both women and men have an opportunity to participate at this stage?
- Are external evaluators required to have a knowledge of gender equality issues?



Organisational culture has been identified as a key factor in the persistence of gender inequality and in particular as one of the main barriers women face in attempting to break through the glass ceiling.

For example, on intersectoral boards or committees which operate at a county or regional level the male members are typically in senior positions within their own agencies and likely to have a working relationship outside of the board itself. While little data is available it is likely that this situation is mirrored at local community group level. These relationships influence the culture of these structures, frequently resulting in the creation of informal networks which men are able to access, but from which women are effectively excluded or marginalised.

In some organisations women also report the prevalence of sexist or patronising attitudes towards them<sup>3</sup>. These conditions obviously create an environment which is far more conducive to the participation of men than of women at decision-making level. As a result, decisions made on these boards are unlikely to reflect women's priorities to the same extent that they reflect men's.

A number of actions can be taken to ensure that the culture of your organisation is one which facilitates the full and meaningful participation of women and men in all areas:

- Organise workshops where women can explore different models of leadership and styles of participation, and make recommendations on how these can be integrated into how your organisation/group carries out its business.
- The creation of a culture that reflects equality and partnership can be facilitated through training aimed at enabling men and women to explore behaviour, different ways of working and awareness of language and its impact. Such training should be made available to all committee, staff members and volunteers and form part of the induction of new members.
- Training for women in the structures, procedures and operation of organisations, including legally constituted charities and companies limited by guarantee, is vital to increase their self confidence and, in turn, secure their meaningful participation.
- Measures to ensure the equal participation of women in your organisation should be a concern for men and women and not just be regarded as a 'women's issue.' Awareness raising is often likely to be required to address this.
- Chairs, directors and managers need to take a lead in ensuring the culture in the organisation is an open and inclusive one, in which the contribution of all members is equally respected and valued. They need to make it clear that disrespectful, sexist or patronising behaviour and attitudes are unacceptable and will not be tolerated.



<sup>3</sup>Women in Local Development Consortium 'Áit ag an mBord: Representation of Women in Decision-Making Structures for Local Development in Ireland'



### ***We don't need a gender equality policy because we already engage in good practice in this area. Why bother formalising it – and possibly in the process turn some people off!***

If your organisation/group engages in good practice in relation to gender equality – i.e. already does lots of the things suggested in this handbook – great! However there is a weakness in not having a written and agreed policy – it means that your practice is only as good as your current management committee/staff members. If there are changes in personnel over time – as there inevitably will be - the good practice may leave with them! Also when talking with new committee or staff members it is less easy to describe something which is informal and to suggest that it is important to the organisation. New members are likely to think 'If this was important surely it would be recorded somewhere...'

### ***There are so many steps to take - we don't know where to start...***

Take your pick! While we have outlined steps in a particular order these are flexible, not formulaic. So, for instance, you could begin by organising a half-day training session for management committee members and/or staff on 'why develop a gender equality policy' – or perhaps a session with a wider gender awareness raising theme. Another option would be to ask for volunteers within your organisation to form a gender equality working group and prepare a number of suggestions on which steps to take first and why. You could invite an expert on gender equality – perhaps using the NDP Gender Equality Unit as a starting point – to give a talk to your organisation/group. Alternatively you could organise a planning day, again with either management committee and/or staff members – you might consider using an outside facilitator for this. Wherever you start, you will be best placed to make an assessment of what will work best in your particular situation - there is no 'one right way' to do it.

### ***We'll never convince men that there's something in it for them!***

Gender inequality primarily operates to the disadvantage of women. As shown earlier, women are less likely to be represented in important decision-making positions and to earn less money. Nonetheless inequalities do exist for men in a number of areas and these need to be analysed and acted on. For example, boys are more likely than girls to leave school early, and men have lower life expectancy than women. The development of a gender equality policy for your organisation means that issues affecting men as well as women will be identified and acted upon.

Another way to get men on board is to ensure that there is overt support for your gender equality policy among the senior post holders in your organisation and/or respected leaders in your local community. If these people are unconvinced as to the importance of gender equality this lack of conviction will be communicated to others.



## ***It seems like a lot of additional work – they'll never take it on!***

While it may seem a little daunting if you are new to it, the development and implementation of a gender equality policy is much simpler than it may at first appear. In essence it is concerned with ensuring what you do and how you do results in equal outcomes for both women and men. Few would disagree that this is a reasonable aim! A number of supports to help with this work can be made available:

- Organise training for management committee and staff members on developing and implementing a gender equality policy. This can be enormously supportive and take pressure off staff who may feel unable or unwilling to take on the task of bringing everyone up to speed on the issue. If you can combine a facilitated training which results in your organisation developing a draft policy - all the better.
- Liaise with members of other organisations and share experiences on how you have been successful – and otherwise – in attempts to develop and implement your gender equality policy. There are few richer ways of learning than from the experience of others. It may even be possible to establish a network (either formal or otherwise) of those with a particular interest in progressing gender equality within the community and voluntary sectors.
- Ensure that your management committee or board of management is supportive of the initiative – without this it will be very difficult to secure commitment to the implementation of your policy.
- The NDP Gender Equality Unit (see 'Useful contacts') provides advice and support to organisations involved in promoting gender equality. It has produced a number of factsheets which outline the main gender equality issues in a range of policy areas, as well as identifying mechanisms which have been used to address inequalities between women and men in these areas. The Unit also has an extensive database of gender disaggregated statistics.



## ***Does this mean there is no longer a need for 'women only' work?***

Absolutely not! In this handbook we have referred to the need to 'level the playing field' and this will inevitably involve designing and delivering programmes which aim to provide women with the skills and confidence to participate in, and benefit from, all aspects of community and voluntary sector activity. Because women have suffered disproportionately from gender inequality it makes sense that policies and programmes to redress this imbalance will very much continue to be required.

## ***Presumably women's organisations don't need a gender equality policy?***

While many development organisations are concerned with promotion of equality for women (or men), how the organisation in itself operates may not necessarily actively promote gender equality. So, for instance do you provide family-friendly work options, encourage the breakdown of stereotypes or promote positive images of both sexes within your organisation or group? Are you intolerant of sexist jokes or images directed at either sex? The development and implementation of a gender equality policy will provide you with an opportunity to address these questions.





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### Northern Ireland

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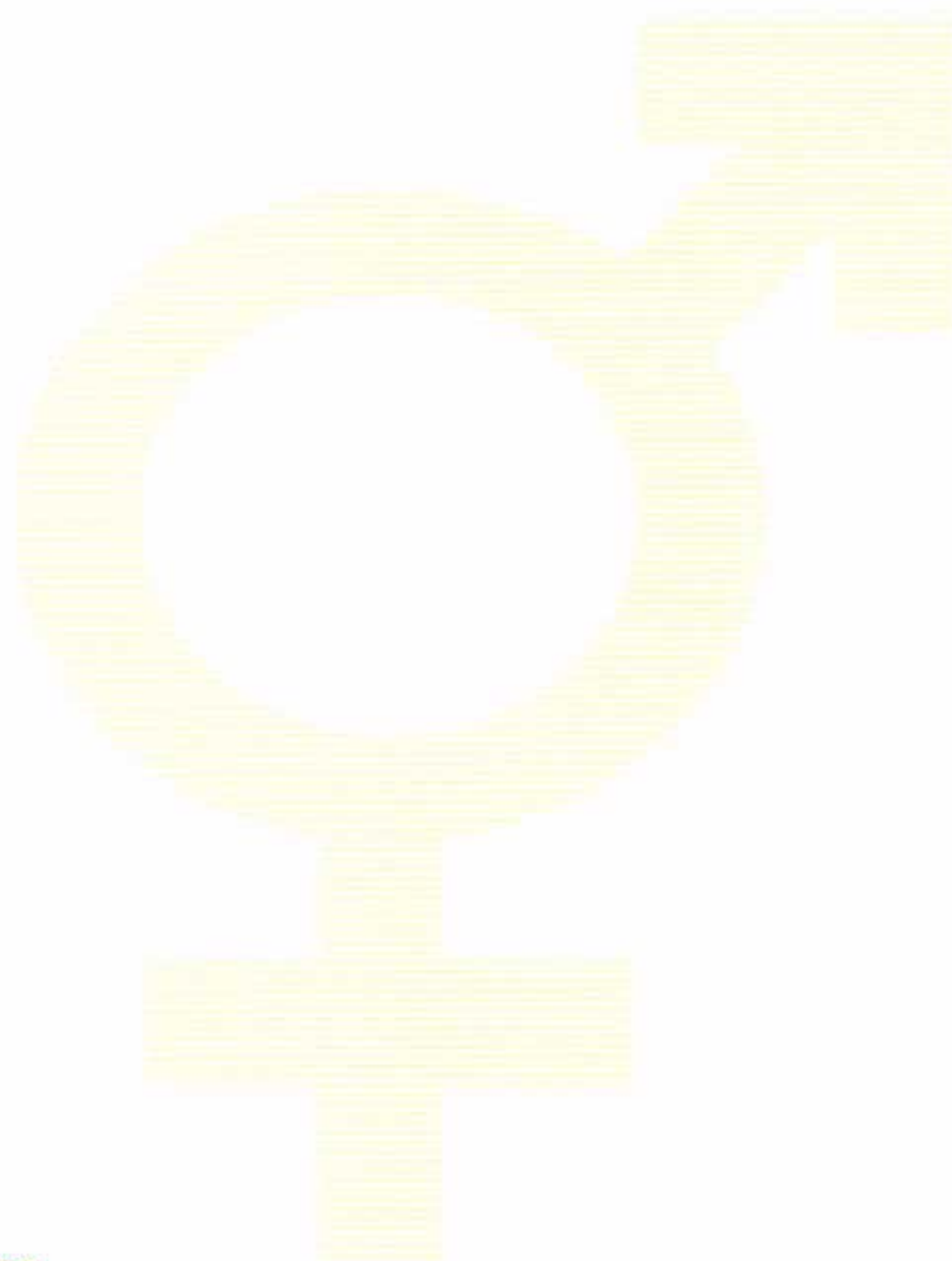
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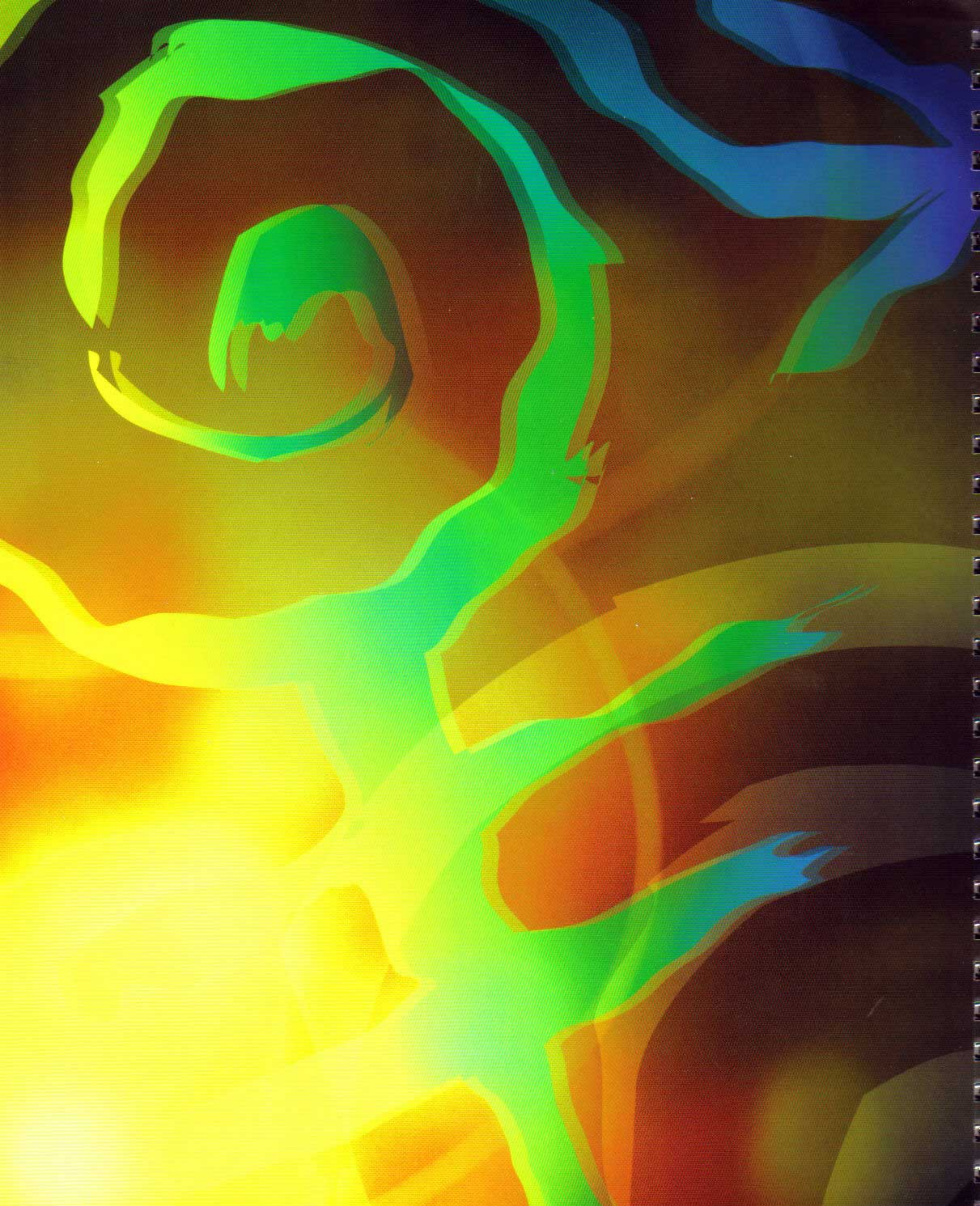
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