



# Commonwealth Foundation

***Mainstreaming Cross-Cutting Outcomes: Gender  
Equality, Environmental Sustainability, Cultural  
Respect and Understanding***

**A Toolkit**

January 2014

## **Introduction**

The Commonwealth Foundation has adopted a Cross-Cutting Outcomes mainstreaming strategy to ensure that the outcomes of gender equality, environmental sustainability, cultural respect and understanding are realised. This “toolkit” or checklist is designed to provide a common set of analytical concepts and tools for integrating these cross-cutting themes into development programmes and projects at the key stages of the project cycle: project identification and design, assessment of projects for funding; project implementation; and monitoring and evaluation.

The toolkit is not intended to provide a thorough discussion of each of the outcome areas and should not be relied upon as a sole source of information on the issues. It is also not to be used as a “form” that must be completed and submitted at any particular point in time. Rather, it is designed as a tool to generate discussion and to promote critical thinking about each of the issues and each of the questions. It is anticipated that the Foundation staff and partners will work together to respond to the questions raised in the toolkit and together plan strategies and actions that will improve the quality of the Foundation and partners’ capacity development and other programming initiatives. This toolkit will also benefit from testing and further use and will be refined and updated.

The guidelines consist of two parts for each outcome area. Part I focuses on definitions and provides an overview of the challenges and issues related to each specific outcome area. It also includes a set of projected results that can be used for measuring progress towards those results. Part II provides a core set of requirements, in the form of questions that apply to project development and results management.

### ***Users***

The toolkit is designed for use by Foundation staff together with partners involved in the development, implementation, management, monitoring and evaluation of development projects and activities supported by the Foundation. It is intended as a guide to help in the integration of the Foundation’s three cross-cutting outcome areas into Foundation projects and activities and to build the capacity of partners to mainstream these cross-cutting themes into their own policies, plans and programmes.

### **What is Mainstreaming?**

In every governance system there is a “mainstream” where choices are considered and decisions are made that affect the economic, political and social position, and options, of citizens. Mainstreaming is a strategy to ensure that concerns related to a specific issue or theme are considered within this central decision-making arena. The Foundation is committed to an approach to governance that sees mainstreamed considerations include those related to key cross-cutting themes as an integral part of planning, budgeting, programming and evaluation.

Mainstreaming these themes contributes to more responsive government and better service provision because it takes into account specific issues that “cut across” various government agencies or civil society organisations and impact on all sectors.

Mainstreaming is a long-term process that takes place on many fronts, requiring changes in awareness, attitudes, policies, plans and programme implementation. The end goal of mainstreaming is to ensure that initiatives to address the cross-cutting issues have been woven into the fabric of governance in a way that contributes to sustainable development.

Some examples of themes that are typically the focus of mainstreaming efforts include gender equality and women's empowerment, environmental sustainability and poverty alleviation.

### **Mainstreaming Strategy Objectives**

The Commonwealth Foundation is committed to mainstreaming its three cross-cutting outcome areas, namely: gender equality; environmental sustainability; cultural respect and understanding into programming at all levels.

The objectives of the mainstreaming strategy are twofold:

- to ensure that the three cross-cutting themes are integrated into all Foundation capacity development and programme initiatives and mainstreamed within the Foundation's decision-making processes;
- to increase the capacity of partners and grant recipients to mainstream the three cross-cutting themes within their own policies, plans and programmes.

## Cross Cutting Outcome: Gender Equality

### Part 1. Mainstreaming Gender Equality

#### What is *gender* mainstreaming?

Gender mainstreaming is a strategy to ensure that gender equality concerns are considered seriously by decision makers at all levels and are an integral part of all planning, budgeting and programming decisions. Gender mainstreaming recognizes that:

- gender equality is not a “women’s issue” but everyone’s issue
- the nature of inequality is often systemic and structural
- women historically tend to be disadvantaged relative to men
- gender differences can also result in men being disadvantaged
- neither women nor men should be treated as a homogenous group
- governance policies and programmes affect men and women differently and that they have specific needs

#### Why is *gender* mainstreaming important to accountable, responsive and effective governance and good projects?

Gender mainstreaming contributes to more responsive government and better service provision because it takes into account the particular interests and needs of both women and men. These interests and needs can often be different, requiring different approaches and services. At the same time, mainstreaming gender considerations capitalizes on the skills and contributions of both women and men, enabling both women and men to equally contribute to, and benefit from, the fruits of national development. Both women’s and men’s input are necessary if communities are to prosper, and equality between men and women is an essential element of sustainable development.

#### What are the main challenges to integrating *gender equality* in programme initiatives?

- Competing priorities and limited resources within partner agencies or organisations. Considering the many challenges currently facing the government and civil society sectors, gender equality may not be perceived as a priority.
- Insufficient understanding of gender equality as a component of participatory governance. Many governments and civil society groups perceive gender analysis and mainstreaming as donor driven concepts rather than as tools for effective planning and service provision.
- Policy environments may be responsive to gender equality issues, but often they are yet to be fully operationalised. Government officials or civil society leaders may not be aware of their responsibilities under the policies or have the technical skills, resources or authority to integrate gender considerations into local legislation and development programmes.
- Traditional gender roles are deeply entrenched even among well-educated professionals in the public and non-profit sectors. Many gender roles have religious and cultural roots and must be addressed with understanding and sensitivity.

**What will be the observable results of *gender* mainstreaming in Foundation-supported efforts?**

- Women and men participate equally in the planning and implementation of Foundation-supported capacity development and programming initiatives and both women and men have increased learning or capabilities in targeted competencies.
- Participants in Foundation-supported capacity development and programming initiatives have increased awareness of and sensitivity to gender equality issues.
- Strategies, skills and tools from the Foundation and partner experience in gender sensitive planning, implementation and monitoring are “transferred” and shared with stakeholders.
- Partners have increased capacity to mainstream and integrate gender equality promotion in organisational and governance planning and programming.
- Foundation and partner programmes and services more effectively meet the specific needs of women and men in their communities.

## PART 2. Key questions for the Foundation to consider when planning a project

1	Are there barriers or constraints to women's equal participation in the planning and implementation of the project by the partner? If so, can these constraints be overcome?	"Yes" implies that the project should not be implemented until there are concrete strategies to overcome the barriers/constraints. These should be included within the project profile, work plan and in the TORs for any consultants hired.
2	Will the short-term and long-term results of the project benefit both women and men equitably?	"Yes" implies that there will be no unplanned negative impact on either women or men. "No" suggests the project should NOT be implemented without major modifications. In cases where a project is designed to benefit women more than men in order to correct gender imbalances, this does not mean that the project will negatively impact men and will need to be re-designed.
3	Will the project contribute to enhancing capacity to integrate gender in planning and programming? Will gender equality awareness activities be integrated into the project?	"Yes" to either of these questions implies that this project provides an opportunity to build capacity around gender mainstreaming. Strategies to capitalize on this opportunity should be included in the final design and work plan
4	Have gender indicators been selected with which to measure the project results?	"Yes" indicates that the project has included the appropriate gender indicators. "No" suggests these should be identified.

### Key Questions for Partners

1	Participation of women and men in project identification <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has the project consulted both women and men on the problem or issue that the policy or project seeks to address as well as in the development of the solution?</li> <li>Have women's inputs influenced the design of the project?</li> </ul>
2	Collection of sex-disaggregated data and gender-related information as part of project development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has the project collected relevant sex-disaggregated data and other gender-related information from primary and secondary sources and used this in the problem analysis?</li> </ul>
3	Conduct of gender analysis and identification of gender issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are the needs of both women and men considered in the situation analysis?</li> <li>Are gender issues identified (i.e. identification of gender gaps in situation of women and men, their access to resources, and how this is likely to affect participation in the project or their access to project benefits, and if there will be any possible social problems?)</li> </ul>
4	Gender equality goals, outcomes and outputs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do project objectives explicitly refer to women and men? Is women's access to and opportunity to benefit from initiatives targeted as well as men's?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the project have gender equality outputs or outcomes?</li> </ul>
5	<p>Matching of strategies with gender issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do the strategies match the gender issues (including improvement of women's participation) and gender equality goals identified? Will the interventions reduce gender gaps or inequalities?</li> </ul>
6	<p>Supportive project management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is project leadership supportive of GE goals?</li> <li>Has adequate gender expertise been made available throughout the project?</li> <li>Are the project staff members technically prepared to promote GE or integrate Gender and Development (GAD) in their respective functions? Is there an individual or group responsible for promoting GE in the project?</li> </ul>
7	<p>GAD implementation process and procedures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do project implementation documents incorporate a discussion of GAD concerns? IF APPLICABLE: Are pilot of sub-projects required to have explicit GAD objectives?</li> <li>Does the project involve women and men equally or equitably, in various phases of the pilots/sub-projects?</li> <li>Are all project documents gender sensitive? (i.e. uses gender neutral language; does not contain gender stereotypes; uses examples of men and women in case studies).</li> </ul>
8	<p>Project monitoring system includes indicators that measure gender differences in outputs and outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the project have defined gender sensitive outputs and outcomes?</li> <li>Does the project monitor the inputs, activities, and results using GAD indicators?</li> </ul>
9	<p>Project database includes sex-disaggregated and gender-related information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the project support studies to assess gender issues and impact? Or, is the data being collected to assess the project's impact on women and men?</li> <li>Do project reports include sex-disaggregated data and cover gender equality concerns (i.e. information on gender issues and how addressed?)</li> </ul>
10	<p>Gender equality and women's empowerment targets being met</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are the gender equality targets in the project implementation plan being met? To what extent?</li> <li>Are these results sustainable?</li> <li>Has the project helped develop the capacity of partners/beneficiaries to implement gender-sensitive projects?</li> </ul>

## Cross-Cutting Outcome: Environmental Sustainability

### Part 1. Mainstreaming Environmental Sustainability

#### What is mainstreaming *environmental sustainability*?

Environmental sustainability is the capacity of an ecosystem's natural resources to endure. It is about how biological systems remain diverse and productive over time despite being threatened by activities such as deforestation, pollution and over-exploitation of natural resources. Environmental sustainability is the development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Environmental sustainability involves making decisions and taking actions that are in the interests of protecting the quality of the environment and preserving the capability of the environment to support human life. It is a vital consideration at the present time, as people are realising the full impact that businesses, governments, society and individuals can have on the environment.

Environmental sustainability is about making responsible decisions that will reduce negative impact on the environment, looking beyond making short term gains and considering the long term impact they are having on the natural world.

#### Why is mainstreaming *environmental sustainability* important to accountable, responsive and effective governance and good projects?

Environment and development issues are of paramount importance to governments and governance. The majority of governmental functions, activities and services (e.g. infrastructure projects, forest and fisheries management, water services, agriculture development, industry development and land use planning) have a potential major impact on the environment. This in turn will have long-term effects on communities, usually those most disadvantaged. Civil society organisations (CSOs) and citizens similarly have a responsibility to care for the environment too. Part of this responsibility is to hold governments accountable to put in place policies and practices supportive of environmental sustainability. The increasing extreme weather changes around the world are an example of the urgency of sustaining the environment and heeding the call for climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts.

Mainstreaming environmental concerns in planning and programming results in the protection and wise management of the environmental and natural resource base and ensures progress on a sustainable basis. Responsible governance includes citizens sharing with government the role of "steward" of the environment for the present and for the generations to come and ensuring environmental sustainability is consistent with the principles of sustainable development is paramount.



**What are the Main Challenges to Integrating *environment sustainability* concerns in programme Initiatives?**

- Sustainable Development in many countries still remains conceptual and has not been operationalized at the level of local government planning and management.
- Highly sectoral and compartmentalized understanding of development issues.
- Competing demands of economic and industrial development and resource conservation, pollution control and climate change adaptation.
- Capacity of governments to integrate environmental concerns in its plans and strategies is severely constrained by a lack and poor management of information.
- Knowledge and skills in sustainable development in the civil society sector is limited;
- Involvement of CSOs and other environmentally active agencies in the area are not institutionalized in government bodies.
- Documentation and dissemination of successful environmental management, technology systems, and local climate change adaptation practices are limited.
- Opportunities for learning from others in similar situations and site conditions are therefore constrained.

**What are the observable results of mainstreaming *environmental sustainability* in Foundation-supported interventions?**

- Foundation-assisted projects have no negative impact on the environment.
- Strategies, skills and tools from the Foundation and partner experience in mainstreaming environmental issues and sustainable development principles are shared with other stakeholders.
- Partners have enhanced understanding of the concepts and principles of environmental sustainability and sustainable development and increased consensus on local environmental issues.
- Foundation and partner programmes and projects are planned, or modified, to ensure that they have a positive or non-harmful impact on the environment.
- More partners and other concerned groups are actively participating in environmental planning and management activities of government bodies.

## Part 2. Key Questions for the Foundation to consider when planning a project

1	Will the project have a <b>direct</b> impact on the environment? A “direct” impact means that the project activities include such things as: constructing a building or infrastructure facility, altering a water course or drainage pattern, changing land use, producing solid or liquid waste, changing specific agricultural or fisheries practices.	“Yes” indicates that an Initial environmental examination and/or an Environmental Impact Assessment will need to be conducted before the project is undertaken.
2	Is there any potential indirect <b>negative</b> impact on the environment?	“Yes” implies that the project design must include activities to raise awareness of the potential negative impact and develop appropriate mitigating measures to minimize the risks. This should be included in the project Terms of Reference (TOR).
3	Are there opportunities for the project to integrate environmental and ecological sustainability concepts in planning, programming and building activities?	“Yes” implies that the project provides an opportunity to build capacity around environment mainstreaming within the CSO/ network and other participants. Strategies to capitalize on this opportunity should be included in the TOR and work plan
4	Have environment indicators been selected with which to measure the results of this project?	“Yes” indicates that the project sets specific targets addressing environmental concerns

## Key Questions for Partners

1	The partner’s scanning and situational analyses include the identification of the potential direct and indirect environmental impact of the project and the results of the analyses are included in the project design or inception plan.
2	The project stakeholders’ analysis includes environmentally active CSOs and citizens as appropriate
3	The inception report or project design includes a summary of the Environmental Impact Assessment if one was required (see Item #1 in Questions for the Foundation to consider)
4	The partner has a sound methodology and performance measurement framework (included in their work plan) for measuring the selected environment indicators and sub-indicators at the beginning and the end of the project
5	The staff assigned to this project by the partner has a good grasp of environment issues and Sustainable Development (SD) principles and are familiar with SD approaches and practices
6	The partner has included if appropriate to project objectives, awareness raising activities on environment and SD and uses relevant tools to check the project’s compliance with SD principles
7	The training and resource materials used incorporate and/or are consistent with environmental and SD principles and messages

8	<p>The partner considers and highlights the project’s impact on the environment including the corresponding measures undertaken in the progress and end-of- project reports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the project have defined SD outputs and outcomes?</li> <li>• Does the project have supporting indicators for the outputs and outcomes?</li> <li>• Does the project monitor project activities and results using these indicators?</li> </ul>
9	<p>Identified Environmental Sustainability targets being met</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are the environmental sustainability targets in the project implementation plan being met? To what extent?</li> <li>• Are these results sustainable?</li> <li>• Has the project helped develop the capacity of partners/beneficiaries to integrate environmental sustainability concerns?</li> </ul>

## Cross-Cutting Outcome: Cultural Respect and Understanding

### Part 1. Mainstreaming Cultural Respect and Understanding

#### What is *cultural respect and understanding* mainstreaming?

In this context Culture is defined as the learned behaviors, traditions, beliefs and a way of life created and shared by a group of people. The Commonwealth Charter recognises that the “special strength of the Commonwealth lies in the combination of our diversity and our shared inheritance in language, culture and the rule of law; and bound together by shared history and tradition; by respect for all states and peoples; by shared values and principles and by concern for the vulnerable.”<sup>1</sup> This upholds the belief in the importance of a respect for culture and diversity. Learning to live with and respect others’ cultures and backgrounds therefore is a core outcome area of the Foundation’s work.

In 2005, Commonwealth Heads of Government called for a Commission on Respect and Understanding. When they subsequently endorsed the resulting report on building tolerance and understanding of diversity amongst and within distinct societies, cultures and communities, they recognized the importance of Civil Society. The Foundation is the Commonwealth agency with a mandate to work on culture and to encourage dialogue on difference and the application of cultural interventions.

#### Why is mainstreaming *cultural respect and understanding* important to accountable, responsive and effective governance and good projects?

Alongside a respect for different cultures is the importance of making a distinction between respect and tolerance. Together with the need to respect one’s culture is the reciprocal condition to respect another’s culture. It is this mutual respect that makes a truly multicultural society. Reciprocity is at the centre of multiculturalism and without it there is merely a tolerance for the other cultures and not the respect for other people’s practices and values. This mutual respect requires education and an understanding about the beliefs, values and practices that each other has.

Mainstreaming this outcome is a strategy of the Foundation to support the leveraging of unique backgrounds, perspectives and experiences of the various cultures and peoples, the promotion of social cohesion and peace and the provision of opportunities for dialogue and creative expression for participatory governance and social change.

Learning from the work of organisations such as UNESCO, effective action in some countries is often rooted in the fields of culture, basic and natural sciences, social and human sciences, communication and education.

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<sup>1</sup> Commonwealth Charter, March 2013 available online at <http://www.commonwealthfoundation.com/sites/cwf/files/downloads/CharteroftheCommonwealth.pdf>

The underlying challenge is that of building capacities, bridges and networks in promoting problem-solving actions that mobilise key actors and constituencies; that generate effective momentum and impact; that are culturally sensitive and scientifically sound. Globally, there is increasing recognition of the intrinsic importance of culture to all aspects of the development process, reflected for example in the debates of the World Commission on Culture and Development and its report *Our Creative Diversity*<sup>2</sup>.

**What are the main challenges to integrating *cultural respect and understanding* in programme Initiatives?**

- Insufficient understanding of the concepts of culture, cultural respect and understanding, tolerance, creative expression.
- Projects that support culture and creative expression are not usually given priority in development.
- Civil society organisations and cultural practitioners do not always work together and are not aware of the benefits of and opportunities to collaborate for common goals and outcomes.
- Community leaders, CSOs and cultural practitioners may not have the technical skills or resources to integrate cultural respect and understanding into development programmes or local legislation and policy.

**What are the observable results of integrating *cultural respect and understanding* in Foundation programme Initiatives?**

- Foundation-supported projects help to build cultural respect and understanding within CSOs and among communities.
- Participants in Foundation-supported capacity development and other programming initiatives have increased knowledge and understanding of the concepts of culture, respect for difference and diversity.
- Strategies, skills and tools from Foundation-supported activities are shared with other stakeholders.
- The Foundation and partners have increased capacity to mainstream cultural respect and understanding in organisational and governance planning, policy and programming.
- Partnerships are forged between cultural practitioners and CSOs/other stakeholders to achieve common outcomes.

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<sup>2</sup> UNESCO website. Online at <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/priority-areas/sids/culture-tourism/culture/>

## PART 2: Key Questions for the Foundation to consider when planning a project

1	Will the project activities have a positive impact or make positive contributions to advancing cultural respect and understanding in the community? ie. Will the project involve multi-stakeholder, culturally diverse participation; be culturally-sensitive and socially-responsive; benefit citizens from diverse groups equitably, including marginalised groups, and not be perceived as favouring one group over another?	“Yes” implies that there will be no unplanned negative impact in the area of cultural respect and understanding . “No” suggests the project should be modified to effectively address these concerns.
2	If appropriate, will the project include strategy/ies for promoting respect for difference, tolerance and understanding? ie. Will the project integrate awareness-raising activities for increased understanding of cultural respect and understanding; facilitate dialogue among stakeholders with different backgrounds and points of view; utilise culturally-sensitive, peace promoting activities and result in increased mutual understanding?	“Yes” suggests that these strategies be described and included in the project design and work plan.
3	Will the project lead to partnerships between cultural practitioners and CSOs/networks or government bodies? i.e. Does the project support joint activities between different groups?	“Yes” implies that efforts to capitalize on this opportunity should be included in the project design and work plan. “No” implies that potential options for collaboration and joint activities be adequately explored.
4	Will the project contribute to enhancing partners’ capacity to integrate cultural respect and understanding efforts into organisational planning and/or development policy?	“Yes” suggests that this project will provide opportunities to build capacity among Stakeholders. Strategies to capitalize on this opportunity should be included in the project design and workplan.

### Key Questions for Partners

1	Project proponents have considered the specific interests and needs of participants from different ethnic, religious, cultural backgrounds and other marginalized groups.
2	Project proponents have considered issues of cultural respect and understanding with possible negative impact on project implementation and identified mitigating actions
3	Proposal includes activities to ensure cultural respect and understanding is maintained throughout the project life
4	The inception report or project design includes risk and conflict analysis (if appropriate) and corresponding strategies and mitigating measures to ensure project does not impact negatively particularly in already conflict-affected areas

5	Project design includes strategies that promote collaboration and joint activities between different groups (i.e. Cultural practitioners and CSOs/networks or local government bodies)
6	The staff assigned by the partner to this project demonstrates an understanding of the fundamental concepts of respect for religious and cultural differences
7	The project proponent ensures the inclusion of culturally sensitive activities i.e., activities, strategies, slogans in the work plan and resource materials, and ensures that training materials present equitable and positive images of divergent cultural/religious/marginalised groups.
8	The project considers and highlights project gains in cultural respect and understanding in the progress and completion reports
9	Project includes monitoring activities to assess progress, determine necessary adjustments and share learning with other stakeholders