

How to conduct a Gender¹ Audit

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One of the key ingredients for embarking on a gender audit is to convince the leadership that there is a need for one. There are many business reasons why you would want to do this and each will depend on your own specific area of work.

Reasons to conduct a gender audit

- Establish a baseline to measure future progress
- Raise awareness and understanding of gender issues across your organisation/church
- Staff² are unhappy with the imbalance in the senior leadership and want to assess why this is the case
- To discover if you are reaching the specific needs of men and women within your organisation or church effectively [more effective use of time and resources]
- Identify good practice within the church or organisation so it can be replicated where feasible

Ultimately we want to increase our impact and efficiency in targeting our resources effectively by considering the differing needs of men and women throughout all our work, our mode of operation and changing the culture to achieve this where required

What a gender audit does

- It's a review of all the work from a gender perspective - how the work impacts men and women differently or affects men and women differently
- It takes a look at how we consider and respond to differing needs of women and men
- It also looks at the culture and attitude towards gender issues
- It raises the underlying theological issues to the surface so these can be openly and honestly discussed and debated rather than remaining hidden.

How to conduct a gender audit

Depending on the size of organisation or church, time allocated, resources allocated you can do a comprehensive audit or a quick overview. The best approach involves staff auditing themselves. This enables levels of awareness to increase and engages people in debate and discussion about gender issues.

1. Self Assessments

This uses a simple traffic light system of green, amber, red and black for assessing where staff feels they are in terms of achievement against certain questions. The simpler the questions, the better. For self assessments five questions is more than enough. Tearfund used three for the team self assessments and followed this up via

¹ Gender refers to the culturally prescribed roles of men and women in society. It varies from culture to culture and changes over time. In its simplest form it is stereotyping.

² I've used staff throughout this article to refer to the main body of people who will be affected by the audit. This could be clients, volunteers, members etc

focus group discussions and one to one interviews and a wider online, anonymous, survey.

Sample questions to ask for self assessments

1. I am clear about what gender is (relates to knowledge)
2. I am clear about what gender equality means for my own attitudes and behaviour (attitudes)
3. I am clear about how gender issues applies to my areas of work (practice)
4. The leadership are clear about what is required from me in terms of gender
5. The leadership model healthy gender relationships
6. The organisation provides equal opportunities for both men and women at all levels
7. I feel my opinions and points are valued when I raise them
8. I am confident that my leader/boss is taking a gender equal approach
9. The leadership is clear about what it expects of staff regarding gender equality

There is inbuilt flexibility in this model so that it can be adapted to suit your own circumstances. Simply add in the questions you think is most relevant to your church or organisation.

The first three are classic Knowledge, Attitude and Practice (KAP) survey approach that enables you to have a quick overview of the key issues. Most of the question will bring about discussion and debate which is a part of the process of participation and awareness raising of the issue. It engages staff and encourages them to continue thinking about the issue in the future. It also means that not everything is deflected back to the leadership but that we all start to take responsibility for gender within the organisation or church

-  **Traffic Light ranking**
GREEN: Indicator has been fully achieved.
-  **ORANGE:** Indicator has been mostly achieved, and action is in place to fully achieve it
-  **RED:** Indicator has been partly achieved, but there remain concerns about some aspects.
-  **BLACK:** Indicator has not been achieved at all, and there are no plans for achieving it.

2. Online questionnaire

This is exactly what is says in the title, a web based questionnaire. This is useful if you have staff, like Tearfund, based in different locations. It is flexible in terms of length of questionnaire and the actual time a person can complete it. The person does not have to be in the office at a certain place and a certain time. It enhances ownership and participation in the process that can result in greater engagement and outworking of the results and action points later on.

It is essential to give an indication at the start of how long the questionnaire will take to complete so that participants can allocate sufficient time aside. For Tearfund the online survey was kept very short, simple and in clear language. This was because some participants did not have English as a first language, internet access was bad in some countries so keeping it short meant it was easier to complete, and also due to the fact that there were two other internal surveys being conducted at the time so the gender audit needed to be short. It took less than 5 mins to complete.

It is key that basic data of the participants is collected for analysis especially what sex they are. The basic premise of gender is that we separate out the responses of men and women so it is essential to practice what you preach. The survey can be anonymous but it is usually helpful to have an indication of what level or position in the organisation or church the person is as they will have different perspectives based on access to knowledge and information.

In Tearfund we used nine questions that focussed around knowledge, attitude and practice. It was short, simple and to the point. For example, 'I am clear about what gender equality means for my attitude and behaviour?'

3. Focus Group Discussions [FGD]

FGD's are a fantastic way of getting some real debate and discussion on the issue within the organisation and church. It can spark ideas, highlight agreed areas for change, challenge each others perceptions and create a momentum for moving forward together. It has to be facilitated excellently to ensure that all participants are given a voice and that power dynamics in the room are minimised so that each participant's reality is aired and reflected upon. Careful consideration needs to be given to the selection of the individuals taking part. At Tearfund, there was a deliberate choice to have an International FGD, an overseas based FGD facilitated by a local manager, and a Teddington HQ FGD so that we could compare the differing response to the same questions. Again it is key that you seek to have a sex balance in the participants to actively demonstrate what you are attempting to achieve.

The discussion questions are inherently designed to be open ended to provoke and promote discussion. It is important not to shy away from the difficult or conflict areas but rather openly address them in a healthy environment.

4. One to one interviews

These give an in-depth insight into the perceptions and realities for different people at different levels within the organisation or church. The question areas are agreed in advance but the discussion flows from where the participants choose. However don't be too guided by the participants' tangents. It is important that information is gained in similar question areas for comparison purposes. Keep a focus on what you need to achieve

Ensure that there is a selection of representative individuals across the organisation. Don't just choose ones that will support/discourage the idea. Try to be fair and reasonable in all that you do so that you have data integrity.

5. Review of documentation

This gives an insight into how the organisation or church is presenting itself either internally to staff or externally to key stakeholders. It can be a surprising revelation that what is agreed internally isn't what is portrayed externally.

The key to conducting an audit is participation of staff and leadership. The discussions that will ensue as a result will enable the organisation or church to identify key areas of concern or good practice. These can then be addressed or replicated to have greater impact on your work in the future.

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