

Handout 5.3.4: 12 Box Framework

The 12-Boxes Framework¹ developed by Oxfam-NOVIB assesses the extent to which a gender justice perspective has been mainstreamed in what the organisation stands for and what it does, and based on this assessment, arrives at a conclusion as to where the organisation should go and how. The 12 Box Framework was envisaged as a self-assessment tool, but can also be used for assessment by external evaluation teams or by joint teams comprising staff and external evaluators.

Thus, it serves as a framework for learning, evaluating and planning. The 12 boxes represent twelve elements that all well-functioning organisations should have in common; elements that are inter-related building blocks. The 12-Boxes Framework (four columns and three rows) is presented in Figure 1.

The columns refer to an organisation's characteristics.

- **The organisation's mission.** This is about what the organisation stands for. The mission guides and sets boundaries for the programmes and activities. The main question here is whether the mission of the organisation is gender-transformative.
- **The organisational structure.** This is about the way tasks and responsibilities are defined and allocated, decisions are made, and internal and external cooperation is shaped. The questions for assessment/evaluation are whether the organisation's tasks are allocated in a non-stereotypical manner, whether women influence decision making, whether forums for women staff to articulate their interests exist and whether linkages with women's organisations have been formed.
- **The organisation's programme work.** It is about what the organisation does and how programmes are designed and implemented. Important questions here are whether the programmes meet needs and interests of women in a transformative manner, the

monitoring and information systems (MIS) include gender-indicators, programmes are owned by the staff and marginalised women and whether the mode of delivering is transformative

¹The '12-Boxes Framework' is the modification and engendering of the Nine-Boxes Framework developed by Tichy. See N.M. Tichy, 1983, *Managing strategic change*, Wiley, New York.

- **The staff.** The men and women who carry out organisational tasks, their space and capacity to do the work and their attitudes at the workplace. Important concerns here are staff's commitment to gender/social transformation, their capacities and their power to influence organisations' policies,

(Adapted from Oxfam NOVIB, 2010)

The columns refer to the three viewpoints from which an organisation can be viewed.

The functioning and continuity of an organisation are shaped by three different fields of interaction: technical, political and cultural. The three fields form the three rows in the framework.

- **The technical field of interaction** is about the organisation of social, financial, and technical resources. It includes the organisation's policies and actions, its systems and procedures, the way programmes are designed and the capacities and expertise of its staff. This field comprises the body and organs of the organisation.

- **The political field of interaction** is about who influences and deals with what and whom, and how resources and power are allocated. This field refers to the inner processes that make an organisation function, like the blood flow between the different organs in a body.

- **The cultural field of interaction** is about how the organisation is shaped by and challenges societal and organisational beliefs, norms, and values. Cultural aspects are usually, but not always, shared by staff. The cultural aspects form the personality or identity of the organisation.

(Oxfam NOVIB, 2010)

Table 1: Twelve Box Framework

	Mission	Structure	Programme	Staff
Technical	1 Do mission and policies reflect a gender-transformative perspective?	4. Are structures, roles and responsibilities gender transformative?	7. Do programme designs, budgets, MIS, reflect a gender-transformative perspective and address needs and interests of women	10 Do staff members have the capacities and expertise to address gender-transformative issues?
Political	2. Do the people involved in policy making actively pursue gender-	5. Does management take gender justice issues into consideration in	8 Do women who participate in programmes influence programme	11. Is there freedom and space for staff members to discuss gender equality, at both the

	transformative lens?	formal and informal decision-making? Is there a voice for field staff in decision making?	design?	organisational and the programme levels?
Cultural	3. Are beliefs, norms and values in the organisation conducive to gender transformation?	6. Do the norms and values on learning and co-operation among staff and with outsiders reflect a gender transformative lens?	9. Are the programmes delivered in a gender-transformative manner on the ground?	12. Do staff members express their concern and commitment about gender-transformative approaches? Do they behave in a gender equitable manner?

In evaluations, the 12-Boxes Framework can be used in three different ways or any combination involving the three

- external team assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation from a gender transformative lens across each box and suggesting overall direction and strategies for the same (including from which box to start and which box to end at);
- board members, the management team and other staff carrying out a self-assessment, debating on differences (if any) and coming to a consensus on performance across 12 Box if possible, along with overall direction for change and strategies for the same;
- marginalised women and men using parts of the 12 Box exercise for an assessment from a gender lens and suggesting overall direction and strategies for change

Source

Oxfam NOVIB, 2010, Mainstreaming a Gender Justice Approach, A Manual to support NGOs in self-assessing their gender mainstreaming competence, Oxfam NOVIB, Den Haag, Netherlands. <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/mainstreaming-a-gender-justice-approach-a-manual-to-support-ngos-in-self-assess-188709> Last Accessed 9th August, 2017(pp 20-33)