



# QSA Notes

## people, places & projects



**Gender Equality:** Gender equality entails the concept that all human beings, both men and women, are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles, or prejudices. Gender equality means that the different behaviours, aspirations and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favoured equally. (Source: United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), 'Glossary of Gender-Related Terms and Concepts,' n.d.)

### Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in International Development

*QSA recognises that sustainable development and poverty reduction can best be achieved with the active participation of as many stakeholders as possible. It seeks through its project selection, design and implementation, to promote the human rights and dignity of all involved, to enhance gender equity and to address gender imbalance in all aspects of the project. Also QSA is aware that traditional gender roles may have religious and cultural roots and be deeply entrenched in the community, requiring understanding and sensitivity in addressing them. (QSA Governance Policy on Development, 2011)*

The Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) of which QSA is a member, in line with global thinking and evidence, identifies 'gender equality as an essential prerequisite for a fair, just and equitable world. Gender equality is a human right, with every woman and girl entitled to live in dignity and in freedom from fear. It is also a development goal in itself, as well as a means of achieving other development goals' (1). As discussed in the *Closing the gap: Gender and Australian NGOs* (2) report, 'enabling women to participate in and benefit from development requires a focus on women and their status and rights. [It also requires]

men and women working together towards mutual goals and greater equality, and addressing the wider social, economic, cultural and political factors that perpetuate women's inequality'.

QSA currently works with project partners that have a keen interest in empowering women and addressing gender inequality for individuals, in the household and community. Most of QSA's project partners address gender equality through women's economic empowerment programs, working with women (as the primary project participant) and their families through activities to strengthen food and water security, environmental sustainability and income generation. Through these activities gendered health and social issues are also targeted - for example programs incorporate education around reproductive health rights, land and property rights, domestic violence, and challenging the benefit of gendered roles and responsibilities in the household (see QSA Notes November 2013). In Australia QSA supports two projects with aboriginal groups (Kornar Winmil Yunti Aboriginal Corporation and Kapuluangu Aboriginal Women's Association) that work specifically to address the development of positive gender relationships between men and women, boys and girls and in communities.

### International Women's Day is held on March 8th with the theme in 2014 of 'Equality for women is progress for all'

Gender seen through the lens of women's livelihoods/economic empowerment can have inconsistent results in terms of positive gender outcomes for a project (2). Some issues for development work to consider include how livelihood programs include men and women, boys and girls across the project cycle, from participatory assessments (including a gender assessment) and project design through to evaluation, incorporating both a focus on empowering women and girls and strengthening positive and equitable relationships between women, men, boys and girls.

How development work understands and engages with project participants within the household is also significant, for instance challenges around access to resources or decision making power, will differ for a widowed head of household as versus a married woman with extended family living under the one roof (2).

QSA works with and encourages project partners to integrate an understanding of gender equality into their strategies and approaches in their organisations and their programs.



**Left:** Exhibition for International Women's Day Pursat Province, Cambodia. **Photo credit:** QSA  
**Above:** Women learning more about their rights. **Photo:** Vasandham Society

### **Vasandham Society and Pitchandikulam Forest (PF), Tamil Nadu, India**

**Overall Objective:** To expand and enhance resources and training opportunities available with a focus on livelihood and health trainings and access to microcredit opportunities, to enable small business development for women's self-help groups.

**Outcomes:** 173 women's self help groups developed into 'federations' through whom a range of community inspired actions have peacefully occurred. Women's leadership roles have been strengthened with women managing loan repayments for micro-credit initiatives, taking on leadership roles in the group and federation meetings, and utilising local dispute resolution mechanisms. They have also used the federations to address issues they have identified as important to their

communities including improved bus services, unencumbered access to open water reservoirs by restricting agricultural encroachment, and the development of community initiated ways to address domestic violence, reduction of child marriages and dowry issues. They have also been working with high school drop-out students by raising awareness on the advantages of education, initiating a scholarship scheme with payments for costs associated with the last 2 years of schooling, thereby reducing incidence of child marriages especially for girls.\*

\*In one District, a survey in 100 villages of their last 3 marriage candidates revealed 42 brides were under 18, and 19 were under the age of 16 years.

### **More Information**

Facts and figures on Gender and Economic Empowerment see - [www.unwomen.org/](http://www.unwomen.org/)

[en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment/facts-and-figures](http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment/facts-and-figures)

Gender equality and the Millennium Development Goals - [www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/Goal\\_3\\_fs.pdf](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/Goal_3_fs.pdf)

### **References**

1. [www.acfid.asn.au/aid-issues/acfid-strategic-aid/gender-equality](http://www.acfid.asn.au/aid-issues/acfid-strategic-aid/gender-equality)
2. Kilby P and Crawford J (2011) *Closing the gap: Gender and Australian NGOs*, ACFID Research in Development Series Report No.2 Sourced from: <http://www.acfid.asn.au/resources-publications/publications/acfid-research-in-development-series/closing-the-gender-gap-gender-and-australian-ngos>

QSA is a member of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID), and is a signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct. The purpose of QSA is to express in a practical way the concern of Australian Quakers for the building of a more peaceful, equitable, just and compassionate world. To this end QSA works with communities in need to improve their quality of life with projects which are economically and environmentally appropriate and sustainable.

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