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January 2022



# Gender Transformative Communication



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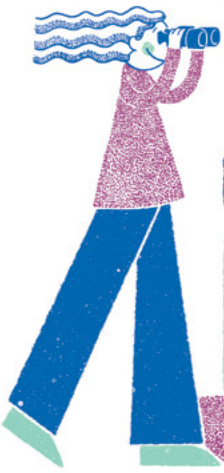
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# **Gender Transformative Communication**

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# GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE COMMUNICATION: A VISUAL GUIDE



## STEP 1

**GET TO KNOW THE FRAMEWORK**

- Aim to be gender-sensitive, specific or transformative in your communication.
- Refer to the framework (Toolkit, page 10)
- Consider country-specific context and global North-South position.



## STEP 2

**DECIDE THE TOPIC/FOCUS AREA** and consider three aspects:

- Context and historical background of the topic
- Common pitfalls.
- List of transformations in gender roles that can be brought about through the topic.



## STEP 4

**IDENTIFY AUDIENCE**

- Identify target audience and plan the message to increase engagement.
- Aim to transform gender relations based on audience demographics.
- Address gender in the local context with an eye on global conversations.
- Identify marginalized and less-heard groups and actors.



## STEP 3

**REFLECT**

- What are the author's and organization's positions (insider-outsider point of view)?
- What is your assumption?
- Who has power (and who doesn't)?
- What is the context: identities, representation, culture?



## STEP 5

**SELECT THE COMMUNICATIONS CHANNELS**

- Reports, policy briefs, news, articles, videos, and social media... each have different functions and are preferred by different target groups.
- Strategize who to reach (audience) through which channel by communicating and engaging both with those in power and with the disempowered in a certain issue.
- Refer to the GTC checklist (Toolkit, page 24).



## STEP 6

**CONTENT-PRODUCTION PROCESS**

For external authors:

- Conduct preliminary workshop to gain a common gender transformative perspective for the research and writing process.
- Identify country-specific challenges and potentials in publishing the topic.
- Create weekly plan for social media postings to create story series and maintain audience engagement.
- Maintain collaboration across communications divisions (news, social media, articles) to produce coherent campaign issues.



## THE DELIVERY

- **MAKE GENDER VISIBLE: KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION. NEW NARRATIVES**
- **PAY ATTENTION TO INTERSECTIONAL ELEMENTS AND GLOBAL NORTH-SOUTH RELATIONS**
- **ACTIVELY RESISTING GENDER-NEGATIVE MESSAGING. AND TRANSFORMING EXISTING NARRATIVES**



## STEP 7

**USE GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE VISUALS**

- Adequately balance North-South actors.
- Think creatively about images that can transform traditional gender roles.
- Include intersectional elements such as gender and ethnicity, class, sexual identity, disability, or migration to generate awareness and inclusion of various marginalized groups.
- Highlight the issues while portraying women as agents of their own empowerment.
- Use role models or real-life gender transformative examples where they narrate their own stories.



# Introduction

## What is gender transformative communication?

Gender inequity is widespread, often unquestioned, and can permeate all aspects of our lives. Its manifestations can be hard to notice because they sometimes seem individually small, or because we have become used to them. This means that gender inequity often persists despite our best efforts to learn about it and be aware. Gender inequity prevents equal opportunities for people of all genders in recruitment, programme design, funding allocation or even marketing and communication. **For mission-driven organizations, gender transformative communication can provide two benefits:** It can help them work towards their cause with an additional focus on gender; and at the same time it can challenge gender norms to reduce prejudice, and spark wider positive change in society.

**Gender transformative communication aims to change behaviour, attitudes and beliefs about gender, and to challenge power imbalances. It counters discriminatory gender norms through images, language or evidence. It does more than just make people gender-aware: It fosters real transformation.**

Gender transformative communication is important in several sectors but especially where women's contributions have been hidden or minimized.<sup>1</sup> A constructive approach is to identify a suitable domain and objective for gender transformative communication, and then develop a suitable plan keeping in mind the historical factors affecting that domain. Gender transformative communication could therefore be using sex-disaggregated data, encouraging a female narrative voice in traditionally male dominated fields, using images that actively counter stereotypes or norms, or representing the

multiple identities of people with a special focus on those who are disempowered.

Gender transformative communication goes beyond superficial modifications and aims to **transform the space where knowledge is produced, thereby creating new narratives around who gets to tell the story and how.**



<sup>1</sup> We use the term women in this toolkit while recognizing that gender is a spectrum and includes gender diverse and non-conforming individuals. It could also refer to other people historically disempowered as a result of their gender identity.

## Why is gender transformative communication useful?

Communication is one of the oldest ways in which behaviour can be influenced, from written advice in religious texts and sermons, to verbal advice from elders. Mass media communications such as broadcast news, radio and newspapers have also been widely used to inform people as well as affect change in their behaviour. Throughout history, state actors, civil society organizations and corporations have used persuasive communication techniques to persuade people, for example, to vote for them, to go and get vaccinated, or to buy the latest products. Today, people are influenced by constant communication through the Internet.

Unlike the methods of the past, internet-based communication through social media or news websites has become personal, direct and frequent. Digital communication both allows many causes to engage with their audience, and opens a range of options for people to engage in social change. Hence, adopting gender transformative communication can promote the cause of an organization and catalyse change in gender relations in turn influencing privilege.

**Adopting gender transformative communication can be challenging for programmes or events that are not designed to be gender-responsive. Hence, it is imperative that programmes and events are designed to bring issues related to gender to the fore.<sup>2</sup>** In situations where there is little or no attention paid to gender, it is often most effective to use creativity, diplomacy and cultural sensitivity to encourage some consideration of gender in designing programmes or events. Although gender transformative communication is no substitute for gender transformative programme design, it can contribute to a culture where gender equality is prioritized in organizations gradually leading to change in wider society.

This toolkit contains descriptions of how to use the right method of communication to transform entrenched gender hierarchies of power. It is based on an extensive desk review of the communication materials of FES offices in Asia.

**The toolkit lays out the best practices to follow as well as common pitfalls to avoid, in both visual and verbal communication. These are grouped into five topic areas: (1) politics and democracy, (2) labour rights, (3) social-ecological transformation, (4) future of work, and (5) peace, security and international cooperation.**

For each sector, the gendered historical context is briefly described. For example, the section on labour rights and gender provides an overview of the feminist struggle to establish equal and fair work opportunities, to demonstrate why a gender transformative approach is essential in conversations around labour rights. A historical perspective will also, hopefully, instil a sense of urgency in advancing much-needed change.

Arranging the toolkit by topic will also make it easier for organizations to use it in the context of their specific cause, and hopefully increase its adoption. The toolkit is purposefully brief to serve as a quick guide with multiple checklists and quick takeaways.

Finally, the toolkit aims to be an example of gender transformative communication itself, by adopting diverse examples and varied images in trying to reach as many non-expert audiences as possible.

<sup>2</sup> See FES (2003) Practicing Gender- a Toolbook on Gender Responsive Programming

# Principles of gender transformative communication



## Key principles underpinning gender transformative communication

**Making gender visible:** The aim of gender transformative communication is to intentionally include women and gender issues in the topics under discussion, especially in those that might seem non-gender specific. Including women and gender aspects helps understand how planning, policies and programmes affects or ignores those individuals.



**Attention to intersecting identities:** Such communication should not only acknowledge gender, but also different identities like class, religion, ethnicity, and race privileges or disadvantages. This includes considering the related needs, challenges, norms and roles, while avoiding stereotypes and subordinations and instead fostering sensitivity and equal representation.



**Actively resisting sexist messaging and changing existing narratives:** Communication that aims to challenge and reverse any discrimination that is based on gender inequality is one of the main principles of gender transformative communication. Using critical and creative thinking to question traditional narratives is key to sparking lasting change.

## Gender Transformative Communication Framework

The Gender Transformative Communication Framework on which this toolkit is based describes the degree and quality of gender responsiveness in specific types of communication materials, and whether each type may reduce, maintain or exacerbate gender discriminatory beliefs and attitudes.<sup>3</sup>

The following table shows the characteristics of each communication approach with the added dimension of intersectionality and Global South-North relations. The intersectional approach and Global North-South relations were added due to the position of Asia in the Global South and because it is home to people of multiple identities. Kimberle Crenshaw's (1991) intersectional approach highlights that people undergo various forms of marginalization based on their multiple identities. Hence, discrimination might be experienced not only on the gender axis but also on other axes such as religion or ethnicity. For example, in India a Dalit (low-caste) woman is likely to face more hardships than an upper-caste woman. The other dimension of assessment is Global North-South relations. The dominance of Western development paradigms, the legacy of colonial histories and a demeaning attitude towards underdeveloped countries as needing emancipation, are beliefs that can be examined through the framework.

The framework is a useful guide for planning or assessment, and shows how textual and visual content move along the continuum from gender negative to transformative.



<sup>3</sup> The framework is derived from the European Union's Toolkit for Gender Sensitive Communication (2019) and UNICEF's Gender Responsive Communication and Development: Guidance Tools and Resources (2018).

## GENDER CONTINUUM INTERSECTIONALITY GLOBAL NORTH-SOUTH

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### GENDER NEGATIVE

Invisibility and omission; prefer one sex over the other; privilege men over women; stereotypes; subordination and trivialisation

### GENDER BLIND

Discriminatory language; false generic; gender omission; ignores different needs and challenges; ignores unequal norms, roles and relations; ignores unequal allocations, access and resources; ignores unequal representations or lack of women representations

### GENDER SENSITIVE

Acknowledge different challenges and risks; acknowledge unbalanced access and resources; acknowledge unbalanced norms, roles and relations; acknowledge unequal situations; consider gender norms, roles and relations; gender representative; indicate interest in gender awareness

### GENDER SPECIFIC

Separate gendered section; ascribed gender roles; balanced/ equal coverage; particular needs of women; positionalities; targeting specific actors; voices of women; women's access to resources; women's multiple roles

### GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE

Address the cause/challenges/other structural shortcomings of gender-based inequalities; control over resources; data aggregation by sex; fairness on the portrayal; foster progressive changes; gender in policy and leadership; gender representatives in illustrations; gendered specific needs; promote gender equality; sensitivity to the diverse gender identities; ways to transform; women empowerment narrative

---

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT INTERSECTIONALITY

Avoid biases and consider intersectionality based on class, caste, religion, race, ethnicity, citizenship status, localities etc.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT GLOBAL NORTH-SOUTH RELATIONS

Avoid biases, consider historical positions of global South-North relations and existing power structures: decolonise narratives and ideologies; neoliberal and capitalist exploitation; self-agency of Global South people, particularly women; acknowledge locality.

# How to use the Gender Transformative Communication Toolkit?

## Gender Transformative Communication Continuum

Fig. 2



The toolkit contains the Gender Transformative Communication Framework, topic-specific guidelines for communication, and a general checklist.

As stated, the framework can be used to plan future communication and as a tool to assess existing communication materials' level of gender responsiveness. Ideally, one might want to **aim for the communication to be gender-sensitive, specific or transformative**, i.e. tilting to the right side in the above representation of the continuum (Fig. 2), as opposed to gender-negative or gender-blind, i.e. the left side. A good exercise to become familiar with the continuum can be to rate existing communication materials and practices to see where they fit along it.

In order to critically assess one's communication material or strategy, it is a good starting point to ask questions that perhaps have not been asked before to reveal where the power lies. For example:

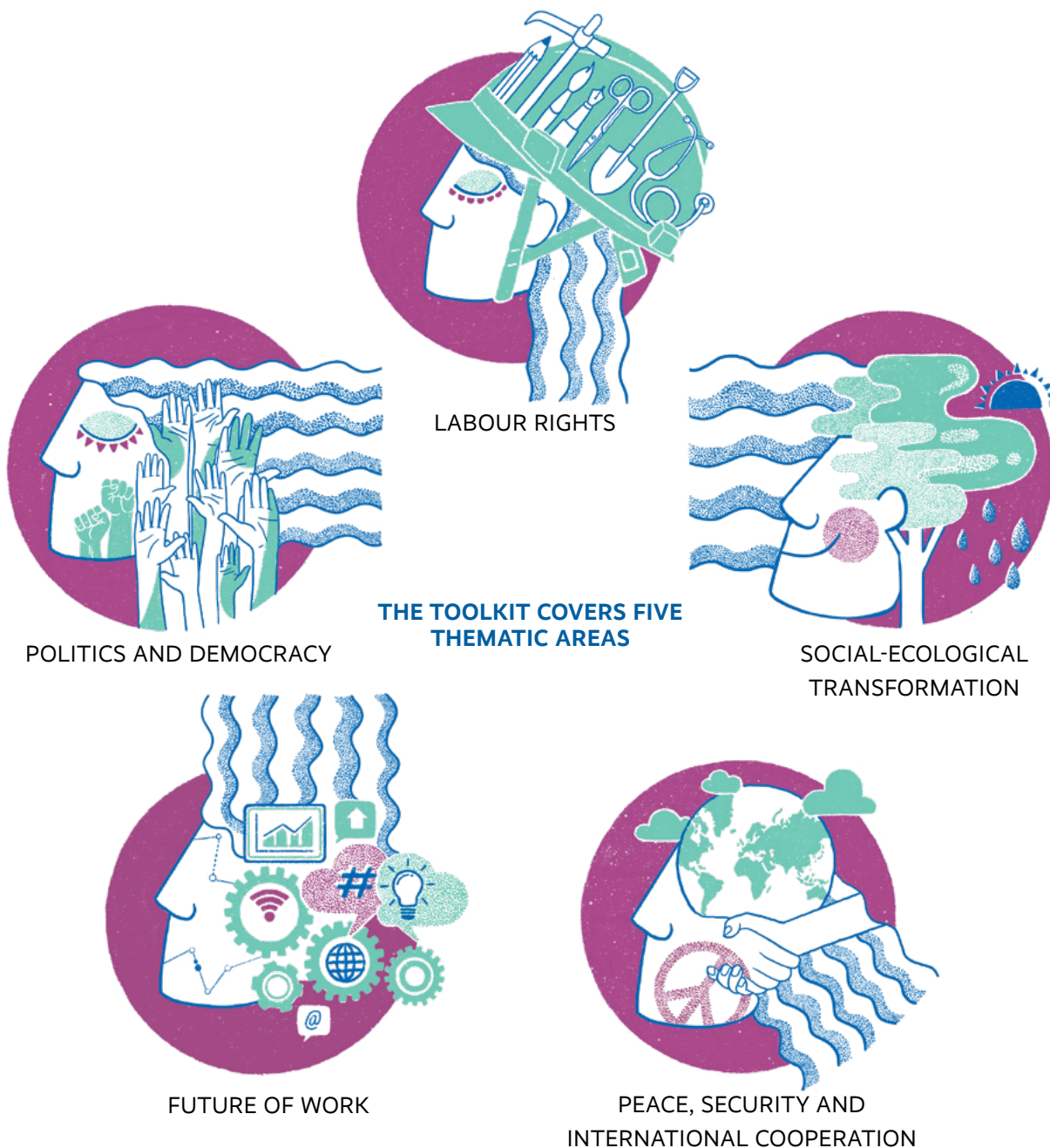
*What is the role of the Global North in the increase of carbon emissions of the Global South?*

*How do images of childcare facilities at a woman's workplace reinforce a woman's role as a primary caregiver, and what would be the implications if this was reversed to show childcare services at a man's workplace?*

In the latter example, this portrayal could lead us to question whether childcare was the responsibility of men, and whether more workplaces might provide childcare services, therefore potentially revealing to us who holds power and therefore the power to change. Clearly, a simple switch in the way we look at things can channel us towards asking questions that we might have not asked before.

The upcoming sections describe in greater depth how each of the approaches can be used in communication materials specifically applied to the respective focus areas.

# Gender transformative communication in focus areas





# Politics and democracy

Women have always been part of the broader social movements and continue to advocate for various socio-political issues. The numbers of those actively involved in government decision-making and leadership, however, remain low. Moreover, the latest trends of rapidly shrinking political and civil society spaces increasingly limit not only the political participation of women but of all marginalized groups. For example, only 20 per cent of seats in Asian parliaments were held by women in 2020 according to UN Women.<sup>4</sup> For laws, policies, and initiatives to be inclusive and address their needs, women's participation is indispensable and, in the end, the role of women in politics hinges on the understanding that democracy can flourish through redistribution, recognition, and representation (Fraser, 2013).

## Common pitfalls:

As nation building is often a masculine project,<sup>5</sup> men dominate contemporary politics. This male-centeredness could lead to issues being considered as 'generic', which in fact are not general but omit women's particular roles in history and society, and their specific needs.

## Things to keep in mind:

- **Diversify representation** by identifying women in electoral politics, government, civil society, social movements, and grassroots communities. This can also be done by unravelling or seeking real life examples where women are actively present in various communities or in a certain sector but their roles are often undermined or unacknowledged.
- **Examine engrained masculinism** in concepts and practices that are historically dominated by males such as the discourse around nationalism, nation building, and political concepts (who is included and who is not).
- **Consider the social, economic, and historical context of political regimes in their respective countries** and the specific impact upon women. Highlight the role of women in shaping the political landscape.
- **Include the politics of everyday life** by recognizing that the expansion of democracy is rooted in managing and negotiating daily life. Sensitive highlight women and other marginalized groups and their daily struggle for survival.
- **Recognize and represent different kinds of engagement** as not all women express their politics and democratic rights through formal politics. This could, e.g. include the work of artists.
- **Be mindful.** Shrinking civil society spaces also mean that you'll have to consider the negative impact that your output could possibly have on the women that you are representing and partners at large.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/women-in-politics-map-2020-en.pdf?la=en&vs=827>

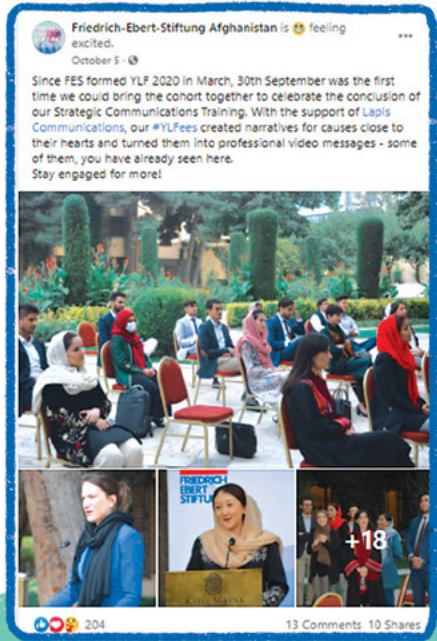
<sup>5</sup> See Nira Yuval-Davis (1993) Gender and nation, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 16:4, 621-632, DOI: 10.1080/01419870.1993.9993800

# Gender transformative images

FLIPPING. TRADITIONAL GENDER ROLES. WOMAN LEADING A POLITICAL DISCUSSION, AN AREA THAT IS CONSIDERED MALE DOMINATED.



CHANGING NARRATIVES: POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS CAN BE LIGHT, AND ENJOYABLE



FACEBOOK. POST ON YOUTH LEADERSHIP EVENT WITH WOMEN' AS EQUAL PARTICIPANTS



ILLUSTRATING THE STRUGGLES OF DIVERSE WOMEN AS FEMINISTS WITH AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COLONIALISM



WOMEN AT GRASSROOTS LEVEL GATHER AND ADVOCATE FOR THEIR POLITICAL RIGHTS



WOMEN AS POLITICAL LEADERS: AS LEADING OR EQUAL CONTRIBUTORS IN CONVERSATIONS



FOSTERING EQUAL GLOBAL NORTH-SOUTH RELATIONS



# Labour rights

Women's participation in the labour force has seen immense growth over the past decades. But deeply rooted power imbalances and gender roles continue to limit their options. Moreover, many women are spending extra time on unpaid care work. In India, for example, it is 10 times as much as men.<sup>6</sup>

Throughout the region, the legalities and influence of trade unions varies from suppression to public demonstrations. But either way, trade unions in particular are already playing an important role in ensuring women's participation in the labour force by challenging the status quo and ensuring that workplaces put an end to gender-based discrimination.

## Common pitfalls:

- Analysis of exploitative women's employment might **recognize problems without elaborating the causes**. This can lead to only some of women's challenges being represented and showing them only as victims.
- **Images used to portray certain sectors reinforce gender stereotypes**, such as displaying women in traditionally feminized positions like care work, and the dominance of males in discussion panels on labour law and worker's social security.

## Things to keep in mind:

- **Use gender-disaggregated data** to show gender inequality in labour. For example, incorporate percentage differences in wages, or gender discrepancies in the numbers of labour union leaders.
- Portray women in labour rights movements and areas of work in empowering ways. **Use striking images of women in leadership positions**.
- Keep an eye on **intersectional identities of workers**. Include the struggles of migrant workers, LGBT, and other socio-political minorities.
- **Analyze the low participation of females in the workforce** and support the analysis with evidence of causes such as low education, social norms, or religious customs.
- **Include the context underpinning unequal power relations for a more nuanced understanding of inequality**.
- **Be mindful**. Before publishing anything, consider the negative impact that your output could possibly have for trade unions or their members.

<sup>6</sup> <https://ourworldindata.org/female-labor-supply#informal-work-unpaid-care-work>



FEATURE REAL-LIFE WORK. BUT A JUST WORK ENVIRONMENT AND EMPOWERED WOMEN WORKERS



TRANSFORM MESSAGE OF LABOUR RIGHTS BY INCORPORATING WORKING MOTHERS IN EMPOWERING IMAGE



HIGHLIGHT WOMEN'S ISSUES WITH A LOCAL SETTING AND AN APPEALING VISUAL COMPOSITING



ENGAGING WORDS AND PHRASES



USE SIMPLE AND EFFECTIVE ILLUSTRATIONS TO PRESENT SEX-DISAGGREGATED DATA TO RAISE AWARENESS



PRESENT MEN PLAYING A ROLE IN DOMESTIC DUTIES



PRESENT WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS WITHIN THE LABOUR-RIGHTS MOVEMENT

SHOWCASE NON-TRADITIONAL WORK ROLES FOR WOMEN



ЭМЭГТЭЙ ЦУУДИЙН ХӨДӨЛМӨР



# Social-ecological transformation

Climate change is one of the most urgent priorities and numerous studies show how women are likely to be affected the most and yet hold the greatest power to prevent ecological disasters. Poor rural and indigenous women depend on local natural resources for their livelihoods and are disproportionately affected by climate change (ADB and UN Women, 2018). Emphasizing the roles of youth and women in renewable energy and sustainable cities is an effective innovation that promotes climate justice. There is also not enough emphasis on measures that originate from the Global South. And there could usefully be more efforts to show the effects of climate change on communities and livelihoods.

## Common pitfalls:

- The common stereotype that women are born as nurturing can lead to **feminization of nature-related issues**. This can lead to making conservation solely women's responsibility. It can also lead to the undervaluing of women's nature-based work such as agriculture or animal husbandry, and condoning men's environmentally destructive behaviours.
- Related to the feminization of nature-related issues is the **gender bias in the energy sector**, which portrays women as belonging to the traditional, rural, nature-embedded energy-producing sector, and men more to the technological, scientific, more advanced energy sector.
- Emphasis on small, local actors to be the agents of change for saving the environment often leads to **overlooking the bigger picture** that environmental problems are rooted in the discriminatory system because of colonialism, capitalism and other economic and class structures, which all intersect with gender.

## Things to keep in mind:

- **Promote narratives on women and science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) in renewable energy.** While it is important to give adequate representation of the role of women's traditional practices of energy production and preservation, it is equally important to provide a balance and show that women can go beyond stereotypical rural and non-scientific roles.
- The incorporation of women's voices should not be limited to female experts' but also include women from a variety of backgrounds to ensure the narrative of a socially just transition is **contextually specific, relevant and inclusive**.
- Highlight existing country **gender transformative national policies on addressing climate change** to demonstrate what is possible.
- Point out the **disproportionate social and environmental impact on women** of climate change and include the benefits and challenges of the renewable energy transition for all.
- Critically examine the concept of inclusivity in energy transformation and green job growth and whether these are **accessible to women and people with unequal resources**.



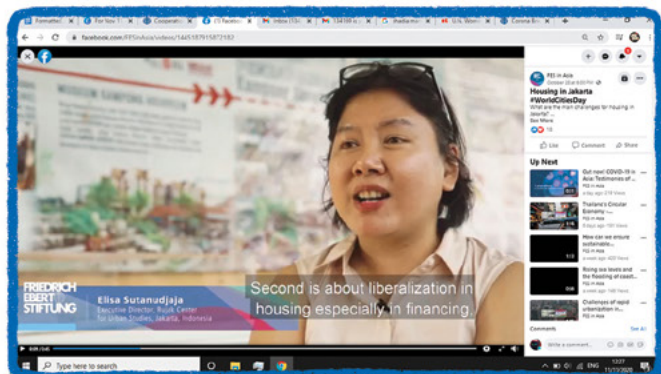
WOMEN AS ARCHITECTS OF CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AS SCIENTISTS, ENTREPRENEURS AND THINKERS WITH ATTRACTIVE ILLUSTRATIONS



CHANGING THE NARRATIVE THAT WOMEN'S NURTURING ROLES, PREDISPOSE THEM FOR CLIMATE-CARE WORK BY INCLUDING MEN



MORE INDIGENOUS VOICES IN CLIMATE CARE WORK, IN EMPOWERED POSITIONS, NOT JUST AS DATA TO BE STUDIED



WOMAN EXPERT AS THE ONLY RESOURCE PERSON, WHICH IS COMMONLY REPRESENTED BY A MAN, TO TALK ABOUT THE ANALYSIS OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND CITIES IN GENERAL IN A SHORT VIDEO



## Future of Work

In hardly any other region of the world can digital progress and the associated economic, social and political disruptions be observed more clearly. At the same time, the social questions and the contrasts on this continent of superlatives could hardly be more severe. Double-digit economic growth rates over decades have raised hundreds of millions of people out of extreme poverty into a steadily growing middle class. For an even larger number, however, precarious work, poverty, and life-threatening needs remain omnipresent. Across Asia, economic strength and social inequality are two sides of the same coin.

The changes brought about by the digital revolution are likely to exclude women, gender non-conforming people, minorities, and indigenous communities. Intersecting identities such as religion, caste, class, and ethnicity further compound these deficits. New technological platforms, for example, provide men with more jobs delivering or driving, but leave women mostly out of the picture because they do not provide the social security infrastructure that women need to balance work with other responsibilities. It is necessary that communication materials help people picture the possibilities of an alternative that is hidden from view.

### Common pitfalls:

- **Centring the voices of men** as experts on the topic or as authors, given that technology is a male-dominated field.
- **Showing women using digital technology in stereotypical ways**, like making purchases or working on a laptop with a child included in the frame.
- Associating **women's use of phones or other devices** to sending or receiving remittances, emphasizing women's domestic or dependent roles.
- Failing to check how **each issue within the topic might leave out women**.
- Not making the **publication or post accessible to a non-expert audience**, for example by not simplifying jargon.

### Things to keep in mind:

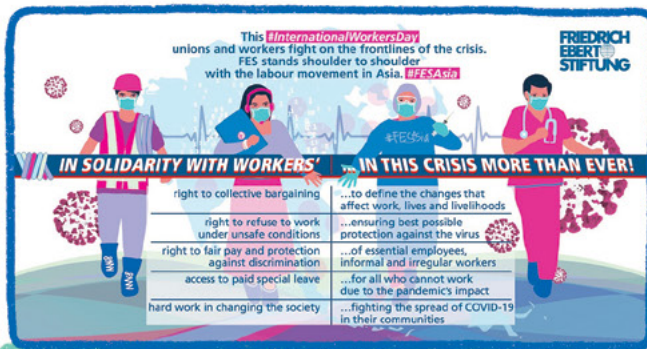
- A complete flip of the existing power relations in the future of work and economy of tomorrow will include viewing economies, infrastructure and trade relations through the lens of economists, technology innovators, urban planners and architects who **adopt an unambiguously feminist position**.
- **Mandate a feminist view or a section on gender**, because simply including authors and experts who identify as women might not by itself translate to a gender transformative approach to communication.



WOMEN AND MEN AS EQUAL POTENTIAL ARCHITECTS OF THE FOURTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION



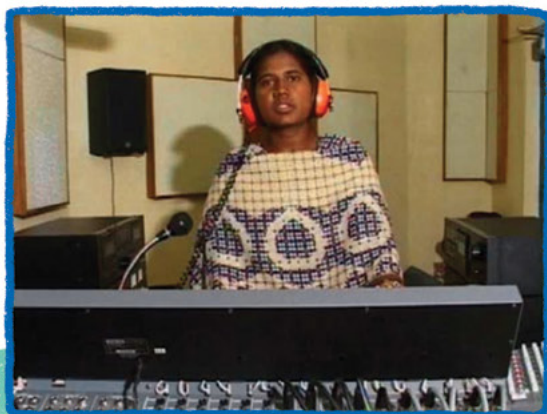
FUTURE OF WORK THROUGH AN INTER SECTIONAL, DIVERSE FEMINIST LENS WITH COLOURFUL ILLUSTRATIONS BRING AN OPTIMIST TONE



BOLD STATEMENT OF GENDER EQUALITY AND SOLIDARITY TO OVERCOME WORK CHALLENGES



WOMEN AS POLICY MAKERS AND LABOUR EXPERTS IN THE NEW ECONOMY



WOMEN USING TECHNOLOGY IN EMPOWERING WAYS AND NOT GENDER-STEREOTYPICAL WAYS



CHALLENGE GENDER ROLES BY RECOGNIZING MEN IN CARE WORK WITH ENGAGING QUOTES

ILLUSTRATE THE ROOT CAUSES OF GENDER OPPRESSION THROUGH EXPLOITATION OF WOMEN IN GENDER-STEREOTYPICAL WORK





## Peace, security, and international cooperation

Some Asian countries have gone through a series of protracted conflicts and wars, where women have felt the effects the most. Whether as carers for families and communities, responsible for livelihoods, or auxiliary combatants, they are often at the forefront of the conflict in different ways to men. However, most of these roles and the women themselves are not recognized and are excluded from formal forums of leadership where peace is deliberated. The UN Security Council noted that between 1992 and 2019, women constituted around 13 percent of negotiators and just 6 percent of mediators, and that about seven out of 10 peace processes excluded women mediators or signatories altogether (UN Women, 2020). Given this backdrop, gender transformative communication can play an important role in recognizing women's crucial role in bringing peace, highlighting the harmful effect of conflict on women and girls while acknowledging their active agency in ensuring their communities' survival, promoting human rights, and fighting for peace. Women's tacit knowledge on peace building is often unique and rooted in their everyday struggle to provide basic needs and care for their society. Their narratives and strategies are a significant part of gender transformative communication.

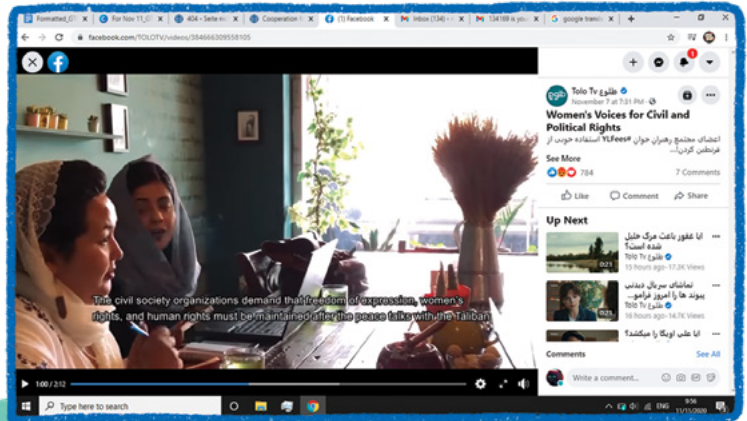
### Common pitfalls:

- Formal peace, security, and international cooperation processes are male-dominated spheres while women are relegated to the margins, with the non-formal mechanisms, community-driven initiatives, and so-called victims. Thus, high-level discussions where big decisions are made can **omit gender**.
- Inclusion of women at the negotiation table or in the peace process on the basis of their gendered sufferings instead of an equitable recognition of their particular experience and skills may perpetuate a discriminatory notion of **women's pitiful position with passive roles**.
- While women suffer multiple layers of conflict due to their vulnerable position in society, media coverage of peace and security issues may tend to perpetuate the image of pitiful, helpless women in photos and narratives, thus **victimizing them**.
- **Women's insights into the issues** of conflict, peace building and international relations in expert panels or consultancy forums are often minimized or undermined by emphasizing their stereotypical roles and their association with feminine issues such as children, women's reproductive health, and households, while men receive more broader and general questions and response.
- **Portraying men as the dominant actors** who wage the war and negotiate the peace, and as leaders in post-conflict societies, can perpetuate harmful stereotypes of men.

### Things to keep in mind:

- Provide **balanced portrayal and perspectives on peace and security affairs**, taking into consideration the various actors involved in conflict or peace efforts, especially women from diverse conflict-affected areas and different warring parties where they are actively involved in responding to their communities' needs.

- Integrate gender** by bringing women and men in the discussion of the so-called hard elements of peace and security, such as DDR (disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration), SSR (security sector reform), international mechanisms on peace settlement, and formal negotiation skills. At the same time, have equal coverage of roles among women and men in the frequently feminized sectors such as health, care work, and children’s education in the rehabilitation and rebuilding discourse.
- Build a new narrative by exploring photos and stories of women** in conflict and peace negotiations in an empowering message where they transcend the impact of war through their struggles and hopes, instead of portraying typical Asian women as destitute and helpless. This approach may produce photos that can seem appealing, but portraying these women as in desperate need of help from the Global North perpetuates the imbalance in post-colonial power relations.



VIDEO OF WOMEN'S ADVOCACY FOR CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS IN PEACE BUILDING WITH THEIR OWN NARRATIVES



RECOGNIZE WOMEN IN THE PEACE PROCESS WHO CAN BE ROLE MODELS, INCLUDE KEY QUOTES



WOMEN EMBOLDENED IN LOCAL AND CULTURAL EXPRESSION WHILE PRESENTING A QUOTE ON FREEDOM AND SOCIAL DEMOCRACY



NON-FORMAL ACTORS OF WOMEN FROM GRASSROOTS COMMUNITIES DEMANDING JUSTICE AND PEACE

# Overall strategies and checklist

This section presents a general list of what to keep in mind and a checklist of questions to guide a gender transformative approach across different types of communication. It is important to acknowledge that there is no one-fits-all solution. The checklist is intended only as a guide, and its items are only to be ticked off as applicable.



## Overall strategies

### 1. Undertake gender analysis by:

- disaggregating data by sex;
- highlighting different needs, challenges, impacts for women, girls, men and boys;
- considering gender norms and roles;
- identifying intersectional identities; and
- researching the background of the country.

### 2. Challenge negative gender stereotypes that reinforce women's subordinate place by:

- Using gender neutral pronouns to address people when their gender is unknown (they/them);
- avoiding sexist expressions;
- avoiding gendered connotations of certain characteristics and roles;
- balancing voices of men and women; and
- diversifying gender portrayals.

### 3. Promote progressive narratives to change perception and to make women visible. Several ways to create empowering narratives are to:

- invite gender experts (economists, urban planners, scientists, educators);
- exemplify women leaders; and
- recognize barriers and highlight stories of success.

### 4. Challenge other forms of unequal power relations by asking who might be excluded.



**5. Be aware of a country's particular context, including challenges, limitations, and spaces to convey messages. Some additional ways to address the political and cultural constraints are as follows:**

In countries or areas where the notion of gender equality is not widely accepted or controversial to some degree:

- adapt local expressions, folk stories, or terms that people can relate to the message of gender equality and women's empowerment as soft diplomacy;
- publish personalized stories on local women champions and men who can inspire others to transform their perspective on gender;
- use more photos of women in their various activities and work with encouraging captions;
- engage those in power, namely men and women in positions of social, political, cultural or religious authority, in the discussion and dialogue about gender and society; and
- reach out to diverse groups and youths by creating a forum or workshop where networks can be maintained, and relevant topics can be discussed and disseminated through their local activities.

In countries or areas where the freedom of expression on certain issues and democratic space are shrinking or limited:

- plan potentially politically sensitive topics such as peace, security, and labour rights through publications, social media posts or short articles that contain appealing evidence-based graphs and illustrations and soft narratives to avoid direct statements towards the topics;
- use women's empowering stories in local or national context that relates to a specific topic as the entry point to discussion in social media, workshop or forums;
- use more photos of women in their various activities and work with encouraging captions;
- collaborate or build networks with both mainstream or state media and independent or alternative media, to find ways in promoting and disseminating publications and other communication products; and
- collaborate with different researchers and universities to identify potentially progressive partners, and organize a preliminary workshop to build a common perspective in conducting a research project with gender transformative values.

## Checklist for publications

### Questions

tick or cross inside the circles

- 
- Is the data disaggregated by sex?
  - Does the data help analyse different needs based on gender?
  - Can the data explain the effects of gender norms or gender roles?
  - Is the publication representing progressive changes in gender norms?
  - Is there a balance of female and male contributors as interviewees, experts or authors?
  - Do the messages, images and videos challenge negative gender stereotypes?
  - Do the images represent women as empowered decision makers and leaders?
  - Does the publication acknowledge changes that women have made in overcoming their challenges and improving their lives and communities?
  - Does the analysis take into consideration intersecting identities?
  - Does the analysis embrace marginalized groups?
  - Does the analysis prioritize indigenous voices and histories?
  - Is the analysis informed by historical realities?
  - Does the publication include men and others as allies in women's empowerment?

## Checklist for news article

### Questions

tick or cross inside the circles

- Are the experts knowledgeable regarding women's issues in discussions, activities or events?
- Is there a balance of female and male voices on the issue being covered?
- Do the images or texts challenge negative gender stereotypes of women, men and others?
- Are the illustrations gender-inclusive?
- Is the data disaggregated by sex?
- Does the news article shed light on the issues that affect women differently to men?
- Do the news articles reference harmful norms and traditions that disproportionately affect women?
- Are positive developments represented in the article?
- Does the discussion/event/activity involve and encourage men and boys to promote gender equality?

## Checklist for social media

### Questions

tick or cross inside the circles

- Does the SM post challenge gender norms, roles and negative stereotypes?
- Does the SM post provide stories of role models that have defied traditional gender roles?
- Does the SM post actively feature women-related national/international events such as International Women's Day, and share links to women's organizations?
- Is there a call to action that encourages commitment of the audience to progressive actions?
- Do the images and videos depict real-life situations or characters, particularly female role models?
- Does the SM post represent people in power?
- Does the SM post flip notions of power?
- Is the content effective to reach the target audience?
- Does the broadcasting strategy consider access and control over social media platform usage, relevant timing and subordination in society between genders?

# Additional resources

## Gender-disaggregated data sources

1. UN Gender Data:  
<https://genderstats.un.org/#/home>
2. UN Women Count:  
<https://data.unwomen.org/data-portal>
3. Human Development Reports:  
<http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/dashboard-overview-gender-inequality-and-covid-19-crisis>
4. World Bank Gender Data Portal:  
<https://datatopics.worldbank.org/gender/>
5. Covid-19 data disaggregated by sex and gender:  
<https://globalhealth5050.org/the-sex-gender-and-covid-19-project/>

## Guidance on gender transformative communication

1. UNICEF Gender Responsive Communication for Development:  
<https://www.unicef.org/rosa/media/1786/file>
2. EU Toolkit on Gender Sensitive Communication:  
<https://eige.europa.eu/publications/toolkit-gender-sensitive-communication>
3. Overseas Development Institute, guide to addressing harmful social norms:  
<https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/9808.pdf>
4. BRIDGE Gender and Culture Change:  
<http://archive.ids.ac.uk/bridge/bridge-publications/cutting-edge-packs/gender-and-cultural-change.html>
5. BBC Media Action Resources:  
<https://genderandmedia.bbcmmediaaction.org/rsources/>

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Available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/facts-and-figures>.

## Gender transformative communication

Gender transformative communication goes beyond superficial modifications and aims to transform the space where knowledge is produced, thereby creating new narratives around who gets to tell the story and how. This toolkit contains descriptions of how to use the right method of communication to transform entrenched gender hierarchies of power. It lays out the best practices to follow as well as common pitfalls to avoid, in both visual and verbal communication.

Further information on this topic can be found here:

➤ [asia.fes.de](https://asia.fes.de)