GENDER AUDIT:

EASY-TO-USE GUIDE FOR ILC MEMBERS

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Please send any comments and suggestions to e.cangelosi@landcoalition.org and s.pallas@landcoalition.org

Gender audit methodology for ILC members

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What is this guide about?

This guide is for ILC members who want to carry out a gender audit, as explicitly requested by members during the Coalition's 2017 gender audit.

There is no "one size fits all" gender audit that can be applied to all the diverse members of our network; some have already carried out gender audits, while others are new to it. While some members may be able to set aside a budget to hire external auditors, this guide aims to support a "self-assessment" with staff from the organisation taking the lead, or to work with another member to mutually audit each other.

This guide is not comprehensive or suitable for every member, but provides suggestions, tips, and ideas on how to proceed in the auditing process. It aims to be user-friendly and adaptable: different elements can be rearranged or combined and some steps can be skipped if they do not seem relevant to your organisation or if you lack financial or human resources.

So what exactly is a gender audit?

Often linked to the idea of financial assessment, an audit is a process of assessing an organisation's procedures, work culture, staff composition and awareness, and internal policies and systems. For a gender audit, the assessment is conducted from a gender perspective and evaluates whether internal programmes and policies are inspired by principles of gender justice.

Gender audits can be considered part of the broad category of "social audits". A gender audit goes beyond evaluating and aims to contribute to planning further steps towards gender justice for the organisation. It also includes a significant learning component, not just assessing the policies, operations, and structures of an organisation from a gender perspective but also collectively aiming to reach a higher level of awareness, competencies, and sensitivity.

In particular, a gender audit focuses on:

- ❖ Relevance of gender-related work for the organisation
- ❖ Gender awareness of the organisation (institutional documents and staff)
- ❖ Language used in campaigning, communications, and advocacy products
- ❖ Budget and fundraising
- ❖ Monitoring and evaluation (M&E)
- ❖ Project planning and implementation
- ❖ Human resources policies
- ❖ Work culture and protection against harassment.

How much time does a gender audit take?

Depending on your organisation, the context, and the human resources available, some parts of the audit can be done quickly, while others take longer to organise. To give an example, the (external) ILC gender audit commissioned in 2017 took about a year.

This guide suggests the time you should allocate as a minimum for each of the steps, with a complete audit likely to take between six months and a year.

How does it work?

An audit can take different forms and can mix quantitative and qualitative methods. However, there are a few elements, which are indispensable to make it work:

❖ *Senior staff commitment and buy-in:* If senior staff members are not committed to taking it seriously an audit can still achieve results, but it is highly unlikely to have any real impact. Individual commitment from all staff is conducive to change.

❖ *Participation and buy-in:* A successful audit must be participatory. Everyone in the team should be aware of and actively involved in the audit. The more participatory the audit is, the more effective it will be for the organisation.

❖ *Resources:* A gender audit requires specific financial, human, and time resources. It cannot be conducted just as an "extra task" for someone in the team.

  ❖ *Time:* Any audit requires time; this is particularly true for a gender audit as some of the issues to discuss might be sensitive. If there is too much ongoing work and enough time cannot be allocated, it might be better to delay the audit.

  ❖ should include *Openness and safe spaces:* An audit is an open and inclusive process in which people be allowed to ask questions and to disagree, and there should be safe spaces to discuss controversial or critical issues with confidentiality and respect.

❖ *Attention to organisation- and context-specific features:* Cultural norms, specific biases, and local traditions might have an unexpected impact on the audit and its results. Organisational features are also relevant: for instance, community-based organisations or those relying on volunteers are different in their nature and scope from NGOs or associations. When conducting the audit, the nature of the organisation involved is as relevant as the context in which it operates.

Methodology

A gender audit uses both quantitative and qualitative methodology, with the aim of understanding the gender sensitivity of policies and operations at all levels:

- Quantitative data collection is the basis for defining indicators to measure, for instance, how gender-sensitive the written documentation and policies of an organisation are
- Qualitative data collection involves interviews, focus group discussions, and direct interaction with staff in the organisation.

The collection of qualitative data relies on a culturally sensitive approach since it is a delicate process that can touch upon challenging and personal feelings, even frustrations, of those involved. The qualitative part of the analysis is time-consuming, but essential to the audit. What emerges from it, even if mentioned by only a few staff, should be taken very seriously.

In order to ensure the commitment of each member of the team, it is extremely important to allocate time before starting the audit to introduce its rationale and objectives to the team(s) involved. You need to allow enough time for all staff to provide feedback and ask questions about the process. Remember also to emphasise, at the beginning of the auditing process and whenever a new phase is introduced, that the participation of everyone is crucial.

Can you do a gender audit by yourself?

Hiring an external expert adds a neutral perspective and reduces the amount of staff time spent on the audit, but it is possible to have staff members lead the process, as long as they can be impartial and independent in their assessment, in an environment free from potential recrimination. It's also extremely important to allocate enough time to this task in order not to make it a burden on top of existing work. The participatory process of a gender audit requires active involvement and time allocation by all staff members, and sufficient time to allow for capacity strengthening through raising awareness and learning.

As a network, ILC aims to find **a middle ground between an external, more neutral, but costly type of audit exercise and the less costly, less neutral, internal audit or "self-assessment"**. We encourage members to consider **peer-to-peer audits**, in which members collaborate with each other, with a gender expert or an interested staff member with expertise from another member organisation leading the process. This builds on ILC's strength as a network, reinforces relationships between members, keeps the budget low, and ensures a more neutral approach. Ideally, two focal points, one from each member organisation, should perform the audit reciprocally, and members of the senior management of both organisations should jointly engage and commit to participate and respond to emerging recommendations.

How to use this guide

This guide has two parts: assessing the state of the organisation, and developing a strategy to promote gender justice within it. Each part suggests tools you can combine and modify according to your needs.

The first part includes:

❖ Assessing the structure of the organisation
❖ Assessing the context and level of awareness
❖ Assessing policies and operations

The second part includes:

❖ Analysing the findings and writing a report
❖ Setting objectives
❖ Laying out a path

PART 1

1.1 Assessing the structure of the organisation

This preliminary analysis focuses on the structure of the organisation, and whether it is gender-equal and gender-just. It covers:

- Internal practices
- Existing support mechanisms
- Identification of gaps and challenges
- Implementation of existing procedures

Areas to assess are: human resources policies, the gender balance of staff positions and tasks, benefits, responsibilities, and work (and meeting) culture, to be done through:

- A review of documents
- Interviews

Estimated time needed: 1–2 months

1.2. Assessing the context and level of awareness

Assessing levels of awareness and understanding of gender concepts among staff is a crucial part of a gender audit. The organisational and local context are also important to consider. This step includes:

- Eye opening exercises
- Individual interviews
- Focus group discussions.

This phase is particularly delicate, as it relies mostly on interviews and direct interaction with staff members. Staff might have concerns about confidentiality, about what happens at work as opposed to what is stated on paper, and might be reluctant to get involved.

Both self-assessment and focus group discussions can lead to many questions being raised by those involved, and exploring these is a time-consuming, yet crucial, part of the audit.

Estimated time needed: 1–2 months

1.3. Assessing policies and operations

Following the assessment of the structure of the organisation, the focus moves to internal policies, as well as planning, implementation, and monitoring of operations. This phase includes:

- Establishing a baseline of gender balance/gender responsiveness
- Monitoring progress
- Identifying gaps and challenges

- Documenting good practices

The aim is to measure the gender sensitivity of practices, mechanisms, policies, and operations within the organisation and to document positive examples. It also includes an assessment of budget allocations to operations that are gender-sensitive or gender-transformative.

This step includes:

- A review of documents
- Interviews
- Establishing a baseline

Estimated time needed: 1–2 months

❖ Analysing the findings and writing a report
❖ Setting objectives
❖ Laying out a path

2.1. Analysing the findings and writing the report

In this phase, you analyse and summarise the data collected, both to present findings to staff (as well as governing bodies if considered relevant), receive feedback and to define a strategy to enhance gender justice within the organisation and its operations. It is crucial to ensure the confidentiality of those involved in the review process.

For an effective report, build your analysis on the baseline and make recommendations for each of the areas covered by the audit, specifying if they should be addressed in the short, medium or long term and who is responsible.

Analysis and writing can take any form and can follow any methodology that fits with the specific needs of your organisation. However, you can have a look at the:

- Visioning excercise
- Guidelines and tips for writing a report and a gender action plan.

Estimated time needed: 1–2 months

2.2. Setting objectives

Discussing the findings of the audit with your team(s) is essential to set objectives, prioritise, clarify roles and responsibilities and the timeline for addressing audit recommendations. This discussion should take place as soon as findings are available to maintain momentum and ensure ownership of the results by team members. It might be useful to first discuss the findings and report itself with senior management to get support before setting objectives.

A summary of recommendations and suggested objectives based on these can help focus the team discussion to confirm and expand upon recommendations and prioritise the most relevant. A participatory process fosters greater commitment and ownership by the whole team.

Creating a safe space for discussion and guaranteeing confidentiality is essential, so consider using blind exercises for this, for instance, letting team members make anonymous inputs on objectives to be adopted or prioritised (by posting online on Google Docs or SurveyMonkey)

For this specific phase, you could use:

- Focus group discussions.

Estimated time needed: 1–2 months

2.3. Laying out a path

Once you have set your objectives, it's time to define how to achieve them. A gender action plan (the most common output of a gender audit) is the path envisaged by an organisation to become gender-just.

No gender action plan is the same, as each is linked to what has emerged during the audit and to the specific objectives and priorities set. Here are some suggestions on what to include:

❖ *Identify and prioritise core areas of work for action:* Rather than trying to achieve everything all at once, focus on things you can change quickly or which are most important to the team, and categorise all other actions as medium- or long-term changes.

❖ *Take time:* Change is a process. You cannot expect your organisation to become gender-just overnight simply because you have conducted a gender audit. Be patient but constant, and suggest a realistic timeframe for your action plan.

❖ *Create a gender team:* To reinforce your action with allies in the team, who can also support implementation of the gender action plan in their areas of work.

❖ *Link the gender audit to other operations:* Gender justice is cross-cutting . Ensure that these links to other areas of work are considered in your action plan and its implementation.

❖ *Include a monitoring system:* Monitoring progress provides motivation to push change further. Realistic and measurable indicators help you assess progress towards gender justice.

Writing a gender action plan can take any form and follow any methodology that fits with the specific needs of your organisation. However, you can look at:

• Guidelines and tips for writing a report and gender action plan.

Estimated time needed: 1–2 months

Tools

These tools are just suggestions: they can be combined and used with a great deal of flexibility. You may also have your own tools that suit your organisation best.

PRELIMINARY EYE OPENING EXERCISES

Gendered privilege walk, privilege for sale game, and gender lens transect walk

Both these exercises help participants understand their own degree of privilege. Either can be used, and both have pros and cons.

The *gendered privilege walk* has greater emotional impact but requires less active engagement by participants, who are guided by the facilitator. It is a powerful tool that exposes participants' personal circumstances and may cause discomfort to some, so use it carefully.

The *privilege for sale* game is an alternative option based on imagined "privileges". It requires more participation and interaction, but has less of an impact in terms of individual awareness as it is not "personal".

Both exercises are about identifying privilege more broadly from an intersectional perspective, i.e. considering other factors of discrimination beyond gender. However, the guidelines below focus explicitly on gender aspects in the framework of a gender audit rather than as part of a dedicated gender training session, where intersectionality could be further explored.

Gendered privilege walk

In practice:

- Ask participants to line up on the same starting line.
- Ask them to follow the indications provided by the guiding questions below.

Guiding questions (to be adapted depending on the context):

- *If you are male, take one step forward.*
- *If there have been times in your life when you skipped a meal because there was no food in the house, take one step backward.*
- *If you have a visible or invisible disability, take one step backward.*
- *If you feel good about how your identified culture is portrayed by the media, take one step forward.*
- *If you have been the victim of physical violence based on your gender, take one step backward.*
- *If you have been the victim of physical violence based on your sexual orientation, take one step backward.*
- *If you were able to pursue the education you wished, take one step forward.*
- *If you have freely decided on your career, take one step forward.*

- *If you are satisfied with your work/life balance, take one step forward.*
- *If you have ever felt passed over for an employment position based on your gender or sexual orientation, take one step backward.*
- *If you come from a supportive family environment, take one step forward.*
- *If you have ever felt unsafe walking alone at night, take one step backward.*

Privilege for sale

In practice:

- Create groups of four people.
- Provide them with a list of privileges (see list below).
- Game directions: Each privilege costs X (currency depending on context), and each group has a given amount (usually enough to buy up to four privileges). Each group should negotiate internally and decide which privileges to buy. The decisions of each group will be discussed all together.

List of privileges (to be adapted depending on the context):

- *Man*
- *Knows more than one language*
- *Mother tongue is the predominant language in the country/workplace*
- *Holds a degree*
- *Upper-class background*
- *White*
- *Supportive family*
- *Wealthy family*
- *Heterosexual*
- *Has a highly paid job*
- *Can access affordable childcare*
- *Belongs to majority religious group*
- *Has "connections"*
- *Can travel*
- *Has a car*
- *Has time to pursue interests/hobbies.*

Gender lens transect walk

This exercise aims to look at your workplace (and culture) through a "gender lens". Its specific objectives include:

- Learning about specific practices
- Creating evidence on gender-sensitive practices
- Assessing the distribution of resources
- Identifying hidden biases.

It requires active participation by staff members and provides insights into workplace dynamics, beyond the collection of data. While being an eye opening

exercise, this game can help provide a basis for in-depth analysis, as its results can be linked to analysis of documents and, above all, to focus group discussions. Hence, it is important for those conducting the audit to take good notes of the discussion at the end of the game.

In practice:

- Create groups of up to five participants.
- Ask participants to "wear" a gender lens (this can be imagined, e.g. fancy glasses or a paper mask).
- Game instructions: groups should walk around the workspace to "take" six snapshot pictures: three should reflect a "positive" image from a gender perspective; three should represent a "negative" image from a gender perspective. The choice of images should be discussed within each group. At the end, discuss the selected pictures collectively.

VISIONING EXCERCISE

A visioning exercise can be done as group work or as an individual exercise; it can be written or oral, or even use drawing. It consists of asking all participants to imagine an ideal situation with regard to the organisation.

Guiding questions include:

- What would a gender-just organisation look like?
- Please describe a context/organisation that you consider to be a model for gender justice.
- How do you see your organisation in two years' time, from a gender justice perspective?
- How do you see your organisation in five years' time, from a gender justice perspective?
- How do you see your organisation in 10 years' time, from a gender justice perspective?

DOCUMENT REVIEW

A document review is an assessment of an organisation's core documents, in different areas of intervention, with regard to specific gender criteria. It does not imply that all documents must be reviewed, but reviewing a meaningful selection is extremely important.

Among the documents that you can include are the following (this list is not exhaustive nor compulsory, and it varies depending on an organisation's specific needs and features):

- Annual reports and strategy documents

- Programme documents, including M&E reports, templates, and guidelines that you deem to be relevant (e.g. covering different areas and different kinds of intervention)
- Human resources policies and procedures
- Budget and other financial documents
- Communication strategies, policies, and products
- Campaigning materials
- Learning, training, and knowledge documents.

Ideally, documents should cover the most recent cycle of activity if the organisation works on the basis of multi-annual planning, or at least 2–5 years of work (depending on the size of the organisation).

The easiest way to conduct a document review is to use a scorecard methodology, as presented below. This also includes a language analysis, in order to assess whether the language used is gender-sensitive, and should also take into account and assess gender balance in any relevant events among the selected documents for which a list of participants is included. Clearly, this can only be done if sex-disaggregated data have been collected. If sex-disaggregated data are not available, this already provides relevant information for the audit!

Scorecards for document review

Scoring runs from 0 (none) to 3 (strong). The content of programmatic, policy, and advocacy documents should be scored against the following criteria:

- Gender is not mentioned at all: 0
- Gender is mentioned and acknowledged as an issue, but no real impact or action is reflected in the document: 1
- Gender approach and analysis are included and contextualised, but there is no transformative strategy: 2
- Gender is fully taken into account and incorporated, with a transformative approach: 3

Similarly, further specific scoring elements should be considered with regard to specific categories of document, with scores of 0, 1, or 2 (no: 0; partially: 1; yes: 2)

- A gendered approach is budgeted for.
- Governance bodies are gender-balanced and specific measures are in place to ensure gender balance at a governance level.
- Sex-disaggregated data are collected to monitor women's participation.
- Human resources policies explicitly mention gender equality.
- Human resources policies comply with relevant gender-related and equality laws.
- Human resources policies contrast gender discrimination.
- M&E methodology includes gender-sensitive criteria.
- Communication documents and strategy use gender-sensitive language.
- Gender sensitivity is included in staff ToRs and accountability is ensured.

- Gender awareness is promoted as part of human resources or knowledge management policies.
- Gender diversity is respected and acknowledged.

The lowest possible score in such an exercise would of course be 0, while the highest possible score would be 20 plus 3xno. of documents analysed.

When presenting and elaborating on these data, you could use graphs or a colour-coded chart. The overall score gives a general overview of the level of gender sensitivity in the organisation; however, it is also important to present detailed data (referring to specific documents analysed), as an organisation might perform very well in certain areas while requiring improvement in others.

The scorecard exercise should always be complemented by **individual interviews** and **focus group discussions**.

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

Individual interviews complement and reinforce information collected during the previous phases, focusing on three core elements:

- Staff understanding of gender
- Gender justice in the workplace and in an organisation's policies
- Specific challenges related to the implementation of gender-sensitive and gender-transformative approaches.

All the questions are open-ended. Questions to be used for individual interviews include the following (these questions can be adapted or rephrased and more can be added, but all the topics below should be covered):

- *What do you understand by the term gender?*
- *How do you perceive gender issues in the specific social and cultural context in which your organisation operates?*
- *Do you know if the organisation has a strategy for addressing gender inequality?*
- *Do you have any comments about the strategy and, more broadly, about how your organisation performs with regard to gender justice?*
- *Do you feel comfortable with gender-related terminology used by your organisation? Would you add more terms to your organisation's vocabulary?*
- *Does your organisation apply a gender approach to each area of work? Are you able (in terms of skills, knowledge, time, resources, etc.) to use a gender approach in your specific work? Please provide a few examples of how you typically address gender in your work (or where you think you should be able to if you do not yet do so).*

- *Does the organisation provide dedicated training on gender justice and how to promote it?*
- *What challenges and barriers do you think your organisation faces in promoting gender justice?*
- *What challenges and barriers do you face, personally and professionally, within the organisation?*
- *Are there external challenges and barriers that you or your organisation face in implementing operations?*
- *Does the organisation have a gender-sensitive approach to work/life balance?*
- *Do human resources policies promote gender equality and gender justice?*
- *Do women and men have the same opportunities within the organisation (career, benefits, promotion, child-care, travel, representation, training, security, etc.)?*
- *From a gender perspective, name one positive and one negative thing about the organisation.*

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

A focus group discussion builds upon the idea that collecting data and feedback is a participatory and collective exercise. Interaction among staff members can be very productive and can highlight elements that have been neglected in previous phases. The issues to be discussed are similar to those in individual interviews (examples below), but as this is a group discussion delicate issues are less likely to be raised. A "confidentiality clause" for focus group discussions (i.e. participants commit to not revealing what is discussed to anyone outside the room) is a must. When forming groups, bear in mind hierarchies within the organisation: some staff may not feel confident about speaking openly in front of their direct supervisors or members of senior management.

Running a focus group requires some facilitation skills, in order to ensure that no-one is marginalised or feels insecure or offended by the topics raised. It is more difficult for an "insider" to run a focus group as they will be less neutral, but this is still a viable option.

Suggestions on how to run a focus group, step by step:

Start by highlighting the functioning, rules, and goals of the focus group discussion.

Identify, with group support, three core issues to discuss. Options include (not an exhaustive list):

- ❖ Understanding gender and gender justice
- ❖ Existence (and knowledge) of the organisation's approach to gender justice

- ❖ Applicability of a gender justice approach and accountability within the organisation
- ❖ Context-related and/or culturally sensitive issues
- ❖ Gender-sensitive human resources policies
- ❖ Gender-sensitive budgeting, planning, and M&E procedures.

Once general topics are selected, discuss specific questions, such as:

- *Can you identify positive elements in your organisation/your personal experience from a gender perspective?*
- *Do you feel confident in dealing with gender justice?*
- *What are the most challenging issues, personally and at an organisational level?*
- *Do you think that some of these issues are linked to the specific context in which you operate? If so, how?*
- *How do you face these issues, personally and at an organisational level?*
- *What strategies would you suggest to cope with gender-specific issues?*
- *How do you assess gender justice in your organisation (with regard to the topics selected and more broadly)?*
- *What would you expect your organisation/staff to do better or differently?*

Focus group discussions can also be used to set a path forward, by asking:

- *What are the priorities emerging from the audit, from your point of view?*
- *What are the most significant weaknesses of the organisation from a gender perspective? How would you address them?*
- *How would you define the strengths of the organisation, as revealed by the gender audit, and how could they help in moving forward?*
- *What are the areas where intervention is most urgently needed?*
- *What are the three main goals to be achieved in the short, medium and long terms?*
- *What role would you envisage for yourself and your team in achieving these goals?*
- *What challenges do you envisage in achieving these objectives, and how would you deal with them?*

ESTABLISHING A BASELINE

Establishing a baseline is based mostly on analysis of documents, but it can also be informed by individual interviews and focus groups, via a system of scoring and monitoring the answers given to questions (e.g. with regard to the number of staff members considering gender justice to be a priority, being gender-aware, etc.).

This is easier and more effective if you can count on the collaboration of colleagues responsible for M&E. To collect data, you can consider the following indicators:

- *Number of policies (at all levels) that are/are not gender-sensitive*
- *Amount of positive/negative feedback on specific operations, from a gender perspective*
- *Sex-disaggregated data on personnel and positions held*
- *Data on the gender sensitivity of the working culture (parental leave provisions, etc.)*
- *Sex-disaggregated data on participation in events (at all levels)*
- *Gender balance in governing/decision-making bodies*
- *Number of gender-specific operations and their impacts*
- *Number (if any) of policies/operations specifically aimed at promoting women's participation/involvement/leadership*
- *Budget allocations for gender-sensitive/gender-transformative operations*
- *Frequency of/budget allocations for gender training.*

You can use indicators like this to establish a baseline, as well as targets for your gender action plan.

GUIDELINES AND TIPS FOR WRITING A REPORT AND ACTION PLAN

There are no specific rules for writing a report and/or an action plan, as this depends on the needs and practices of each organisation. However, it can be helpful to:

- *Describe the scope of the document at the beginning to contextualise the audit/action plan*
- *Specify the methodology used to conduct the audit*
- *Ensure that each topic you aim to present is clearly stated and is distinct from other topics*
- *Ensure consistency between all parts of the document*
- *Be clear and succinct*
- *Do not hesitate to share your draft with other colleagues involved. Four eyes are better than two, and six are better than four*
- *Clearly justify the statements you make: whether it is a criticism raised during the audit or a priority identified as part of the action plan, it must be clear how you reached that point*
- *Be as neutral as possible, but be aware that biases are always present*
- *Include quotes (from both external sources and from documents and interviews) and make sure that they contribute to your argument*
- *Make specific recommendations, and make it clear whether these are to be addressed in the short, medium, or long term*
  Ensure that the conclusions are clear, and refer back to previous elements presented or analysed