

# Leh Wi Lan

Improving Secondary Education  
in Sierra Leone

## How to ensure that training is gender responsive

We often think that being gender sensitive is to call on females as much as males. This is good, but there is still much more that we can do to ensure that females learn well. The table below provides some tips that facilitators should try.

Pay attention to seating: Do men sit at the front and dominate? Are some women in a corner and left alone? If so, re-arrange the seating so that it is more mixed and that quieter participants sit at the front.
Pay attention to all participants: Don't just call on the first person who raises their hand or the participants who speak a lot. Encourage <i>all</i> participants to speak and pay attention to shy women and men.
But don't force participants to speak: if a participant doesn't give an answer, rephrase your question. If they still cannot answer, don't force or ridicule them. Say, 'thank you for trying' and move on.
Encourage females during maths training: If you see that women have low confidence, be patient and encouraging. Let female teachers know that they are role models in maths and give extra support.
Point out stereotypes in English training: Look for gender stereotypes in teaching materials (eg., stories showing women at home or only men in professional roles). If you see these, point them out to participants and discuss how such stereotypes limit what females think they can achieve.
Challenge gender stereotypes in activities: When you give exercises or do activities like debates try <i>reversing</i> gender roles. For example, show women as engineers or discuss why men should cook.
Set ground rules for group work: Try to have an equal number of males and females in groups and set the following ground rules: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Equal numbers of females and males in <i>leadership</i> roles: Females should not just have assistant or deputy roles. Make sure that women lead groups and present just as much as men.</li><li>• Everyone should speak: Tell participants that they should pay attention to whether they are speaking too much. If so, they should stop and give others an opportunity to speak.</li><li>• Treat each other with respect: Tell participants that ridicule, teasing, bullying or disrespectful behaviour is <i>not</i> acceptable in groups or class in general.</li></ul>
Don't reinforce gender stereotypes: Training should not reinforce traditional gender roles. For example, don't have only females, serving tea, singing a song or cleaning up – all tasks should be done equally between males and females.
Be aware of sexual harassment: Facilitators have a responsibility to ensure that women and girls are not sexually teased, abused or harassed by men. If you see something that you would not want your daughter, sister or mother to experience, report it to the School Safety Committee and do what you can to prevent it from happening again.

