



BRACED: Sharing Lessons on Promoting Gender Equality through a 'Writershop'



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Aim of the project

The **Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Extremes and Disasters** (BRACED) project aims to build resilience in development projects. Promotion of gender equality is considered a key element of building the resilience of the population to climate extremes and disasters. Thus, the project aimed to document and learn different approaches to addressing gender inequality from the 15 consortia of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) funded by BRACED.



Dates

July–September 2016



Countries

Representatives from projects implemented in Myanmar, Uganda, Kenya, Chad, Sudan and Burkina Faso



Participants of the BRACED 'Writershop' in London (Source: V. le Masson, 2016)

Aim of co-production:

The co-production approach used was a 'writershop'. A 'writershop' is an intensive, participatory workshop that aims to produce a written output (e.g. case studies or a full report). Participants may include researchers, NGO staff, policy-makers, farmers, students – anyone who has, in one way or another, been involved in the experiences to be documented. These participants engage in an iterative way of writing, reading, reviewing and discussing their case studies with the aim of publishing their finalised reports at the end of the 'writershop'. The objective was to collectively write and review four case studies presenting how the NGOs used gender approaches in the design and implementation of their projects.

Context:

While gender equality is one of the priorities of the donor and research component of the project, the 15 consortia of non-governmental organisations funded by BRACED addressed the issue of gender inequalities in different ways considering their differing contexts. Therefore, co-production was needed in order to better understand, document and learn from these different approaches.

Who was involved and what were their roles?

The 'writeshop' was co-organised by members of the Knowledge Manager (KM) of BRACED, the Overseas Development Institute and the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre (ODI). It involved representatives of four consortia, the 'Implementing Partners'. The four NGOs who took part in the 'writeshop' included Mercy Corps (Uganda), ActionAid (Myanmar), Concern (Sudan/Chad) and Christian Aid/Kings College London (Burkina Faso). In total, the workshop involved 15 participants. Seven participants represented the consortium in which they worked as national and international practitioners, advisors or researchers. These representatives acted as 'authors'. The remaining participants included researchers and project officers from the Overseas Development Institute (leading the Knowledge Manager), who acted as 'editors', and also one independent gender and climate expert, and two facilitators from the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre. One representative of the donor also attended one day.

How was co-production done?

Co-develop solutions

This co-production exercise involved three stages.

First, and before the 'writeshop', practitioners – supported by researchers – conducted an initial round of analysis to produce four first drafts documenting the gender approach followed by their respective consortium. Researchers from the KM created a template with key questions to help authors create their first

What was co-produced?



- **Four case studies:** The primary goal of the week-long 'writeshop' aimed to produce four case studies to document NGOs' gender approaches in the implementation of their activities on resilience.
- **A synthesis report of the whole process:** The report was co-produced to share lessons with other implementing partners within BRACED and any other NGOs working on building resilience.



Benefits of the co-production approach

- Having practitioners author their own case studies was important in promoting self-reflection and ownership of the analysis and in compiling recommendations that were ultimately much more tailored to the projects' context and needs than if they had been written by people external to the project.
- The 'writeshop' was a conducive space for peer-learning and enabled critical reflection. Some of the participants did not necessarily have expertise on gender mainstreaming but the participation of people from different backgrounds and levels of understanding of the concept helped create an enabling environment for participants to raise questions and share best practices and advice.
- The 'writeshop' built the capacities of participants to not only adapt their project or their research to new knowledge gathered around gender mainstreaming and inclusion, but also to respect and draw on the diversity of perspectives and experiences.

draft and ensure that all four teams addressed the same questions but documented their own context. The authors had between four and six weeks to conduct their analysis, which involved key informant interviews with their own colleagues and members of their consortium.

Second, the 'writeshop' itself was held in London and lasted one week. It followed a clear methodology to help participants co-produce four research case studies of publishable quality. During the first two days, each team presented the first draft of their paper and reviewed the work of others, discussed different views and suggested revisions. The second drafts were presented and reviewed again on the third and fourth days – going through a third round if necessary – until the participants agreed on the quality of the case studies. The objective was to allow every participant to contribute his or her own knowledge on the topic. The facilitators ensured the discussions were inclusive, with every participant invited to provide their review and opinion equitably. They ensured that everyone had enough time to contribute, and they constructively, exchanged critical but respectful feedback, discussing points of agreement and disagreements. Editors assisted the authors in compiling the comments and addressing them before presenting the next draft.

Third, after the workshop, the case studies were edited by independent editors and reviewed again by the authors, who also needed the sign-off of their consortium colleagues before publication of the case studies. The communication team of the KM finalised the publishing process. In parallel, one researcher from the KM wrote a synthesis paper to reflect on the learning from the 'writeshop' and compile recommendations for all NGOs funded by BRACED. This synthesis paper was reviewed by the gender expert who participated in the workshop and an independent reviewer. The resulting synthesis and three case studies were published together a few months after the 'writeshop' (Le Masson, 2016; Opondo et al., 2016; Hilton et al., 2016; Rigg et al., 2016). The fourth case study was not published in the end as the final sign-off from the NGO consortium was never granted, partly for fear that the analysis of gender inequalities and recommendations to remedy gender issues would be too controversial in regard to the political context in which they work.

Lessons to learn from:

The 'writeshop' proved an original and very effective method to co-produce knowledge products involving researchers and development practitioners. This process can be replicated in any contexts to produce a wide range of documents, from case studies to research papers, project proposals or policy briefs. The success of a 'writeshop', however, depends on a number of key factors:

- **A common language is vital:** Each participant must speak the language used in the document(s) to ensure their meaningful participation and understanding of key concepts. Where some participants do not share a common language, instant translation must be provided.
- **The timing and duration:** Depending on the nature of the document to be produced, the 'writeshop' needs to occur at a suitable time (e.g. in the inception phase of a project, at the end of a research programme, during an important policy development, etc.) so that participants can provide informed inputs and useful recommendations.
- **Diversity of participants:** The more diverse the group is, the more detailed and critical the review process can be.
- **Appropriate facilitation and support:** Consistent, efficient and inclusive facilitation is crucial to ensure the 'writeshop' offers a positive experience and supports honest and constructive discussions between participants.

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