

Tool #4

From Theory to Action:
Gender and Waste Recycling

Discussing gender roles

Objective:

Reflection on roles attributed to men and women in society

Time: 1 hour

Materials: Cardboard, scissors, magazines, and markers

This activity opened the afternoon session. The group was broken into two groups. The women were asked to draw the body of a man and a woman and to find images or words from magazines that represented the roles attributed to each. This activity highlighted the traditional and stereotypical ways in which gender is represented and is internalized in daily life. This activity allowed us to evaluate the participating women's level of awareness regarding gender roles. Furthermore, it allowed us to note whether or not the women participants had started to incorporate a more critical perspective on traditional gender roles, given the discussions in the previous activities.

By having the women focus on several conflicting attributes assigned to gender roles, the facilitators can encourage a more critical reflection on how women have overcome various obstacles and stereotypes in contemporary society. This activity also revealed that, while women waste pickers do not seem to

have problems doing activities that are typically designated as "male" in their cooperatives, men have not occupied the spaces typically designated as "feminine". This was important for further discussions on the role men must take in order to guarantee greater gender equality. In other words, effective transformation would involve the cooperation and engagement of men. The activity was also interesting because, in some groups, women reflected on how their race also affected the ways in which they experience gender inequality.

After the small group discussions, all the participants came together to share their reflections. Once again, this generated a lot of discussion among the women. This activity proved to be successful given that the participants often made links to comments from previous activities. Furthermore, the group began reflecting more seriously on their own experiences on how to challenge and confront gender roles.



Workshops in Conselheiro Lafaiete, August 2013, and Itaúna, October 2013.
Photos: A. C. Ogando



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