

Gender equality

Achieving gender equality and women's empowerment is fundamental to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The UK government has a strong global track record in this area. It was a strong champion of gender equality during intergovernmental negotiations to agree the SDGs and has recently hosted major international summits aimed at galvanising action on critical issues such as family planning.

The scale of the challenge is huge and at the current rate of progress the SDGs will not be achieved. In order to ensure that the projects funded under UK Aid Direct properly respond to the specific needs of women, boys, girls, men and people of third gender¹ it is important to recognise the differences in the needs, perceptions, behaviours, responses, opportunities, barriers, and the priorities of each gender, as an essential part of addressing poverty, inequality and vulnerability.

About this guidance

This guidance seeks to ensure that UK Aid Direct applicants and grant holders understand what Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) means by gender and gender equality, and more specifically, that they:

- understand the terms used in relation to gender in UK Aid Direct guidance and templates
- know why and how gender equality should be considered at all stages in the project cycle
- understand that gender equality also needs to be considered as an issue across the organisations involved in the fund.

Each of these areas is addressed in the following sections. At the end of the document there is a list of useful websites for further information and reference.

Definition of key terms

Gender

“Differences between men and women are both biologically and socially determined. Sex differences are based on biology. Gender differences are socially defined and differ between countries and cultures. This means that they are not fixed and can be changed.” (DFID Gender Manual 2008)

It is also important to recognise people who are agender or third gender; those who are either biologically or ideologically not defined as either men or women for whatever reason. Increasing of awareness about these individuals must be addressed in any comprehensive programme.

What is gender analysis?

Gender analysis is a systematic analytical process used to identify, understand, and describe gender differences and the relevance of gender roles and power dynamics in a specific context. Gender analysis typically involves examining the differential impact of development policies and programmes on women and men and includes the collection of sex-disaggregated and gender-sensitive data. Gender analysis examines the different roles, rights, and opportunities of men and women and the relationships between them. It also identifies disparities between men and women, examines why such disparities exist, determines whether they are a potential blocker to achieving results, and looks at how these disparities can be addressed.

What is the difference between gender equality and gender equity?

FCDO draws a distinction between equality of opportunity and equity of outcomes. Equality of opportunity means that women and men should have equal rights and entitlements to human, social, economic and cultural development, and an equal voice in civil and political life. Gender equity means that the exercise of these rights and entitlements should lead to outcomes which are fair and just. This distinction is important because it underlines the rights of women to define for themselves the objectives of development and to seek outcomes which are not necessarily identical to those sought and enjoyed by men. Equality does not mean that everyone must be the same. Diversity enriches human life and should be a cause for celebration not a basis for discrimination.

Gender equality means equal visibility, empowerment and participation of all sexes in all spheres of public and private life. It puts both women and men at the heart of policymaking and considers the diversity among men and women to ensure good governance and development.

What is gender inclusion?

Including gender equality means ensuring that women's, men's, boys', girls' and third gender concerns and experiences, are integral into the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all legislation, policies and programmes. The aim of this is ensuring that inequality is not perpetuated, that women's and men's different rights and needs are

recognised and addressed, and that women and men share benefits with the overall aim of promoting gender equality.

What does 'gender-neutral' mean?

"Gender-neutral is used to refer to policies and programmes that are seen to impact equally and in the same way on women and men. Because gender difference is intrinsic to human life, no policy or programme that impacts on people is gender-neutral." (DFID Gender Manual 2008)

Gender analytical information

Gender analytical information is qualitative information on gender differences and inequalities.

Sex-disaggregated data

This differs from gender analytical information. It is the separation of data about men and women and provides quantitative statistical information on differences and inequalities between men and women.

Gender considerations at each stage of the project cycle

Without gender analysis, targeting and inclusion, equal development cannot be achieved. It may also mean that interventions lead to negative development for those who are excluded, or people who are included but become overburdened as a result of project engagement. Gender needs to be 'mainstreamed' into all stages of the project cycle: identification, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation and learning.

Stage one: identification

The initial stages of gender analysis during project design include looking at the evidence of the need for a project intervention and determining what kind of intervention is required to address the poverty experienced by men, women, girls and boys. It is important to analyse from the start where the idea for the project came from, who has asked for the intervention, and who owns the idea. The political context will set out what is feasible and what is likely to be achieved within a given timeframe. The existing evidence base will indicate whether the anticipated achievements are likely and what has been done both within the same context and elsewhere.

A gender analysis should be undertaken at the project identification stage to identify gender issues at national, district and local project levels. Gender analysis is about understanding the

patterns and norms of what men and women, boys and girls do and experience in relation to the issue being examined and addressed. Patterns of gender difference and inequality are revealed in sex disaggregated data, and this can be used with qualitative gender analytical information, in gender analysis to examine why the disparities are there, whether they are a matter for concern, and how they might be addressed (DFID Gender Manual 2008).

Key issues at identification stage

- What are the different needs and priorities of women, men, boys and girls?
- Identify and understand the experiences of women, men, boys and girls
- Identify and understand the roles of women, men, boys and girls
- Understand the culture within which the society and community are operating.

Other questions to ask at the identification stage

- Who has access to what in terms of resources, information, education, decision-making?
- Whose voices are heard and where, in the public sphere, in the private sphere?
- Whose voices are listened to and where, in the public sphere, in the private sphere?
- What are the expected changes? For whom? Why? How?

Stage two: planning and implementation

Project planning needs to be designed to ensure that all of the issues identified through the gender analysis are addressed in order to achieve the project objectives. The project approach and implementation plans should consider:

- How the target group(s), including women, men, girls, boys, third gender, will be involved in an ongoing analysis of issues, decision-making and implementation
- What gender barriers they have to overcome to participate and how this will be achieved
- Who needs to be involved, and how they should be involved to make the necessary sustainable changes?

There will be barriers to equal access and appropriate responses for men, women, girls, boys and third gender. It should not be assumed that all groups have equal access to engage with the project and or equal access to the benefits offered by the project. UK Aid Direct projects should include clear processes to support relevant groups to overcome barriers.

Key issues during planning and implementation:

- What is being put in place to ensure that all identified target groups have access to services, decision-making, being heard, representation and power structures?
- Who else needs to be involved to ensure that the project addresses gender issues and ensures equal representation, respect and opportunities?

- Which other organisations can be involved to support the project to ensuring that women, men, girls and boys are fully involved and their priorities, needs and participation are addressed?
- Does the project take account of and/or address specific issues facing women and girls such as ending child marriage, delaying first pregnancies, stopping female genital mutilation and cutting (FGM), getting girls to complete secondary school, preventing violence against girls and women, or delivering economic assets directly to girls and women?
- Does the project directly address issues facing men and boys such as work migration, social and economic expectations, completing secondary school?

Other questions to ask while planning and implementing programmes:

- Are there clear approaches to ensuring equality of access to services and information, participation, involvement, and ownership of resources and assets?
- Are there clear strategies for ensuring that the targeted groups are not side-lined by project management, and clear mechanisms for them to feed into project decision-making?
- Are there strategies to ensure that men's, women's, boys' and girls' (depending on the target) voices/needs are taken seriously?
- Are opportunities for confidence-building built into the project approach?

Stage three: monitoring

Monitoring systems need to be established to measure the progress of the project. Monitoring is a key part of the UK Aid Direct project cycle and is closely linked to the logframe that grant holders develop during the initial stages of the project. Monitoring activities must include a strategy to monitor issues of gender equality identified in the gender analysis at the identification and planning stages. The monitoring systems should enable the involvement of all key individuals, including organisations and agencies that are both directly and indirectly involved in the programme. Monitoring activities must also enable participants' voices to be heard, to find out what is working and why – or why not. Monitoring must be linked to project management so that approaches can be modified if necessary.

Key questions and issues during monitoring:

- Is data sex/age disaggregated?
- Are indicators of success gender-specific?
- Who is involved and why?
- Who is being spoken to? Who is doing the speaking? Who is being listened to and why?
- How are gender lessons being learned and used?
- Is the result or outcome being monitored?

- Has gender been considered in the allocation of resources?

Stage four: evaluation

The final evaluation of a UK Aid Direct project is an important opportunity to review objectively and honestly the extent to which the project has achieved the anticipated outcome and how all members of the target communities have benefited. In terms of gender, the evaluation of UK Aid Direct projects should also include an appraisal of the original gender analysis and whether and how the project has led to changes in gender relations within the community. Evaluation should also consider whether there were any unintended or negative gender-related outcomes.

Questions related to gender to consider when carrying out an evaluation

- What are the changes to the division of power and authority within the community? For example, is it now possible for women to speak openly in meetings? Can landless men be elected onto the village committee(s)?
- How have women's, men's, girls' and boys' access to opportunities and resources changed? For example, in a project on breaking down the stigma of caste in India, can lower caste men now access training in institutions as a result?
- How have roles within society changed within households, families, village structures, or local government? For example, do fathers now get involved in taking sons and daughters to the clinic, when this was previously not considered to be their role?
- How have attitudes, beliefs and 'accepted gender norms' changed? For example, in a project focused on improving the marketing of agricultural products, gender analysis identified that women were not allowed to take part in the wholesale marketing of cash crops. As a result of the project, it was recognised that they had an important role to play and it became accepted practice for wholesaler traders to contact women farmers directly
- Have new entry points for changes to gender roles been identified? How will these be developed and built upon?
- How will changes be sustained? What is needed to support the sustainability of the changes?
- What are the connections to policies, laws etc. and how will these be followed through for action? For example, during one project it was recognised that inheritance laws needed to change to enable women to inherit land. Without this change the project would not sustainably achieve its objectives. The project needed to engage with the Ministry of Justice and legal rights groups to work towards the required legislative changes.

Stage five: learning

UK Aid Direct grant holders, FCDO, other donors, civil society organisations and governments want to learn from experiences and share findings, especially in relation to improving gender equality. There is a need to continue to build an evidence base for what works well – and indeed why it works - in relation to gender equality. This evidence is important not only to the UK Aid Direct but also to other FCDO funding mechanisms.

FCDO is particularly interested in learning from the experiences of projects which have brought about changes in gender relations – either at national, local or community levels – and ensuring that the lessons identified through that learning can be made available to UK Aid Direct applicants and grant holders, as well as other donors and non-governmental organisations.

As UK Aid Direct develops and the portfolio of projects grows, the sharing of project experiences and the evidence base both for UK Aid Direct funded interventions and their impact on gender equality and gender relations will be encouraged. The Fund Manager has a key role to play in building and sharing information within the UK Aid Direct portfolio and to create opportunities where lessons can be shared both widely between grant holders and on a one-to-one basis.

Useful gender-sensitive tools for use throughout the project cycle

There are many potential sources of gender-related information as well as several relevant methodologies that can be used to collect relevant data throughout the project cycle. Many of these methodologies are particularly relevant during the identification and planning phases but are also useful in monitoring and evaluation as they help implementing organisations to understand the impact of their work on various groups.

Collection of sex-disaggregated data

A great deal of sex-disaggregated data often exists in relation to issues such as health and education; for example, school enrolment or completion rates. Although it may also be available at the national, regional or district level in relation to legal processes, politics, the economy and agriculture. Sex-disaggregated data is useful in demonstrating where disparities exist, and it can be combined with qualitative information – for example, from focus groups and key informant interviews – to gain a more thorough understanding of community power relations and whose voices count in different contexts. Sex-disaggregated data is often useful in quantifying a problem. For example, only 50% of girls received measles vaccinations while 80% of boys did. However, other information is usually needed to provide a context for this information and to help design interventions which effectively tackle the problem. For example, why is there a disparity in the number of boy and girl children who are vaccinated?

Focus group discussions

Focus group discussions (FGDs) are a useful participatory method for obtaining information about the need and priorities of different groups. In running focus groups, project implementation teams need to be aware of the dynamics at work within the project communities. It is often useful to run separate focus groups for different members of the community. For example, to have different focus groups for young men, older men, young women and older women. FGDs are useful in going beyond the needs and priorities of various groups and providing information which assists in understanding the experiences of different stakeholders. FGDs can be used throughout the project cycle. In addition to using them at the project identification stage, they can be helpful during the implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases as they enable project staff to gain an insight into changes among various groups. FGDs are also one methodology which can assist in collecting sensitive information. Where violence against women is a particular issue, for example, it can be helpful to discuss the topics in small, sex and age-differentiated groups.

Key informant interviews

These are interviews with people who have important information about the topic you are investigating. Interviews can be 'semi-structured' in that they are guided by a series of questions which are open-ended and allow the interviewees to add in details that are important to them. As with FGDs, key informant interviews can be very useful in collecting information about sensitive topics such as female genital cutting, violence against women, or access to sexual and reproductive health services. Care must be taken to triangulate the data collected through key informant interviews as the interviewees will only be able to speak from their point of view. However, these types of interviews can clarify community dynamics, gender relations, and power relations. With both focus groups and key-informant interviews, it is important to consider who is collecting the information.

To encourage openness and build trust, it is often useful to have men interviewing or running FGDs with men, and women running similar activities with women.

Pair-wise ranking

Pair-wise ranking is a structured, participatory tool that allows women and men to identify, share and compare the priority they give to different problems and expenses. It is an activity which asks group members to choose between two options. When used as a method of collecting gender-sensitive information, it may be worth doing the activity separately with different groups. For example, older women, younger women, older men, younger men,

using differences in results as a point for discussion and planning. There are many examples of pair-wise ranking being used in development, see resources at end of this document.

Seasonal activity calendars

Calendars that capture seasonal activity are useful in understanding how patterns of community life vary throughout the year. These calendars are also useful in understanding how agricultural and non-agricultural tasks are divided up between family members or by gender. Having men and women complete the calendars together can assist development practitioners in understanding the way in which community work is structured as well as highlighting that all of those in the community contribute to its success. This methodology can, for example, demonstrate that women who work in fields but who are not usually considered 'farmers' are still carrying out critical work and are very busy at particular times of the year.

Access and control profiles

Access and control profiles are a useful participatory tool for understanding who has access to various resources and who controls them. Resources in this case can be anything – land, animals, crops, money or human resources. People with 'access' to a resource can use it; those who 'control' the resource usually own the resource, can decide whether or not to sell it and can also restrict or allow access. Profiles can be developed using 'proportional piling' where communities split piles of 10 rocks between women and men, indicating who has greater control and access. For example, access to bananas may be split 5:5 between women and men, but the control and sale of the bananas might be shown to be 9:1 in the men's favour. Following the development of access and control profiles, it is useful to follow up in groups of men and women to discuss the reasons for differences in access and control to certain resources.

Transect walks

These were originally used as both a way of representing information and as a technique to familiarise outside facilitators with different parts of a community and local land use. They are useful at the project identification stage and may be particularly helpful in communities where there are high levels of illiteracy. This technique is useful for understanding the realities of women's and men's lives as it is a tool that enables target groups to visualise the community's issues and to indicate how these issues affect their use of land and space. Transects can be done with different groups at different times to obtain various views on the way in which the community is organised.

Venn diagrams

These are useful in mapping individuals and institutions in a community together with their relationships and their relative decision-making power. As with transect walks, they can be a particularly useful tool at the project identification stage, but they could also be repeated during an evaluation to gauge changes within target communities. Venn diagrams can be used in several ways but one of the easiest is to cut out circles of varying sizes for various groups. The larger circles represent those with greater decision-making power so older men may be represented by a larger circle than older women, but older women may be represented by a circle that is larger than that of younger women. The circles can be arranged to represent difference levels of collaboration. For example, a small overlap for a small amount of cooperation, a large overlap for a large amount of cooperation.

Gender equality within organisations

The sections above focus on gender at different stages of the project cycle. However, in order to implement a project effectively it is also important for UK Aid Direct grant holder and their implementing partners to understand gender equality at an organisational level. An organisational understanding is therefore vital if good practices are to be promoted and efforts toward gender equality sustained.

Why is gender an organisational issue?

No organisation is gender neutral. Government ministries, non-governmental organisations, training organisations and private enterprises all have their own institutional culture, values and competencies in their respective fields. This makes up their identity and it is this identity that can greatly influence how gender equality is taken on board institutionally. In addition, within all organisations, there are individuals – women as well as men – who may support, or challenge, the principles of gender equality. Often, this happens regardless of the commitment of their organisation on the main issue. Within organisations funded by the UK Aid Direct, there needs to be a clear understanding of, and agreement on, gender and gender equality including what these terms mean and how they are promoted internally.

Key questions for grant-holding organisations

- Is there a gender equality policy? What does this look like?
- Is there a gender equality strategy, and how is it being adopted across the organisation?
- Does the organisation have the needed capacity in gender?
- Are internal systems engendered?

Key questions for implementing partners

The expectations for the UK Aid Direct implementing partners are similar to those for grant holders. Although grant holders have direct responsibility to FCDO, it is vital that implementing partners also adopt gender equality principles across their work and can demonstrate relevant knowledge, skills and capabilities in relation to gender equality.

- Do the partners have a robust gender policy?
- Is this policy supported by a clear strategy to embed gender equality across all elements of work?
- Do partners have the capacity to manage and implement projects in a gender-sensitive way?
- Do the projects being implemented represent potential opportunities for learning about gender for the staff?

References and links to further information

[Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action \(opens in new window\)](#)

[Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women \(opens in new window\)](#)

[UK Equality Legislation \(opens in new window\)](#)

[Monitoring gender across the MDGs \(opens in new window\)](#)

[DAC Sourcebook on Concepts and Approaches linked to Gender Equality \(opens in new window\)](#)

[Gender Budgeting: Practical application \(Handbook\). Matchorate General of Human Rights and Legal Affairs. Council of Europe. April 2009 \(opens in new window\)](#)

[Strategic Gender Mainstreaming in Oxfam GB \(opens in new window\)](#)

[Example of Action Aid Gender Policy \(opens in new window\)](#)

[Gender Justice \(opens in new window\)](#)

[Gender and Social Protection \(opens in new window\)](#)

[Guidelines for a Gender Sensitive Participatory Approach \(opens in new window\)](#)

[IFAD/FAO Programme for Regional Gender Capacity and Knowledge \(opens in new window\)](#)

[Gender Indicators: What, Why and How \(opens in new window\)](#)

[Data for monitoring gender \(opens in new window\)](#)