Australian Government
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Australian Aid

GENDER EQUALITY INVESTMENT-LEVEL STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT
GOOD PRACTICE NOTE

1. OVERVIEW

This note outlines the key features of a good practice Gender Strategy. It supports staff to implement Australia's development strategy *Partnerships for Recovery: Australia's COVID-19 Development Response*, which commits the Australian Government to maintaining Australia's strong support and advocacy for initiatives to enhance gender equality and address gender-based violence, and to invest in gender equality and women's economic empowerment. It can be used by program teams and implementing partners as a reference guide when developing a Gender Strategy for an aid investment. It can also be used by DFAT staff when reviewing Gender Strategy documents developed by implementing partners. This guidance note can be read in conjunction with DFAT's *Gender Equality in Investment Design Good Practice Note* and DFAT's *Gender Equality in Monitoring and Evaluation and Reporting Good Practice Note*.

2. PURPOSE OF A GENDER STRATEGY

There are specific measures in Tier 2 of the performance framework for *Partnerships for Recovery* which allow us to measure progress on key gender equality issues (sexual and reproductive health, violence against women, and economic empowerment) and in Tier 3 which will allow tracking of effective gender mainstreaming (percentage of investments effectively addressing gender issues).

An investment-level Gender Strategy is an important tool for achieving progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment. The investment Gender Strategy:

- It provides clear guidance to implementing teams and partners about how strategic gender activities, policies, programs and practices will be operationalised in investment implementation and reporting

- It helps ensure that gender policies, programs and practices are explicit and visible to all stakeholders and sets out responsibilities and accountability for achievement of gender equality results

- It outlines how attention to gender equality will contribute towards the achievement of overarching investment goals and objectives, by addressing relevant gender gaps and unequal gender norms

- It outlines how the investment will contribute to Australia's objectives for the advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment

The Gender Strategy is often a stand-alone document/deliverable, however key principles, activities and actions outlined in the Gender Strategy should be fully integrated into the investment design, annual plans, core investment policies, practices and processes and in the monitoring and evaluation framework. This helps ensure that it is not seen as a stand-alone document but rather a key element of investment effectiveness. Responsibility for implementation of the gender strategy should also be included in all Terms of Reference for Program staff and advisers. If other inclusion issues such as disability are addressed in the Gender Strategy, they need to be dealt with individually and not conflated into a generalist social inclusion approach. Gender equality should always be reflected in the title of the Strategy to keep it visible. For example, Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion Strategy.

3. DEVELOPING THE GENDER STRATEGY

The process of developing the gender strategy is just as important as the document itself. If done well the strategy development process can begin build understanding and ownership of the relevance of gender equality to the investment. In general, it is a good idea to involve the partner agency/partners and advisers and local gender stakeholders/women's NGOs in the process to promote ownership and understanding. Partner ownership means that the gender strategy is more likely to be relevant, costed and directly applicable to the activity and partner priorities. It also means that the strategy is more likely to be implemented and monitored and that the results are more likely to be sustainable. Development of the gender strategy should be an iterative process led by an experienced technical gender adviser. It is important that the strategy be flexible in order to identify and capitalize on new opportunities to promote gender equality as they arise. The strategy should be a living document that is reviewed and updated periodically.

3.1 EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING PARTNER OWNERSHIP OF THE GENDER STRATEGY[1]

- Dialogue with a range of stakeholders including program staff, advisers, program partners and local gender stakeholders is needed to develop partnerships on gender equality. This means that the investment team needs to know the business case and human rights case for gender equality and be able to engage confidently in ongoing talks with partners about how gender equality benefits everyone and how it can increase the effectiveness of the investment and the sustainability of outcomes. In difficult social and/or sectoral contexts, the use of sound data based on empirical research can help to make a case for investing in women, and for strengthening partner capacity. Knowing and understanding the partner is essential for effective dialogue, and for negotiating shared objectives.

- Use a participatory, strengths-based, appreciative enquiry approach[2] in dialogue with partners to identify, replicate and scale up what they are already doing well for gender equality.

- Identify existing champions and involve both women and men in dialogue and strategy development

- Ownership of objectives and approaches is more likely to be shared if there is a clear link to policies and commitments that the partner has already made on equality for women.

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[1] See for example, Effective Strategies for Promoting Gender Equality, Prepared for the OECD DAC Network on Gender Equality by Juliet Hunt, April 2004 [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/261135380_Effective_Strategies_for_Promoting_Gender_Equality].

2 Appreciative Inquiry (AI) was pioneered in the 1980s by David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva, two professors at the Weatherhead School of Management at Case Western Reserve University. The principle underlying appreciative inquiry is that human systems move in the direction of their images of the future. When developing gender strategies we should seek to focus on what is already working and build on that, rather than focus on problems. The more positive and hopeful the image of the future, the more positive the present-day action. Positive questions lead to positive change. Positive images lead to positive actions.

See [http://www.davidcooperrider.com/] [https://www.centerforappreciativeinquiry.net/more-on-ai/what-is-appreciative-inquiry-ai/]

[https://appreciativeinquiry.champlain.edu/]

- Involve local gender stakeholders in dialogue. National machineries for women, local NGOs and other local advocates for women's rights can play a key role in holding institutions accountable for addressing gaps between commitments and practice.
- Assess and strengthen partner capacity for gender responsive planning and implementation. Lack of attention to partner capacity is a major obstacle to ownership and understanding of gender equality issues.

Case study: Australia Pacific Climate Partnership (APCP) Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Strategy

This Strategy was developed over a six-month period with the GESI adviser undertaking a literature review and developing an outline and then consulting with a range of people, refining and then going back to key stakeholders to build their commitment to implementing the strategy.

The initial literature review inquired into the ways in which gender equality and social inclusion issues have been addressed in academic literature as well as in policy and programs addressing climate change (CC) and disaster risk reduction (DRR) and resilience. This provided insights for framing issues for consultations and discussion, in clear, succinct questions such as: why is GESI important in Pacific climate change action? How can all development actors promote GESI?

Discussions were held initially with the program team and GESI/CC/DRR specialists in the Pacific, and then broadened through consultations and workshops with women and men in key Pacific DFAT posts and partners in regional organisations and programs (mostly scientists or engineers). Key women's NGOs and disabled people's organisations were also consulted. The consultations presented a light outline of the GESI strategy and then used open-ended inquiry to engage people. The discussions focused on the two questions above. Using and explaining the term "social inclusion" helped to bring out nuances and intersectionality as people were encouraged to use their own experience as a starting point to analyse who is being left out of development interventions and why. Discussions were facilitated to encourage participants to identify gender and other social norms and understand the impact of these norms.

The APCP GESI Strategy is a live document that allows for social exclusion to be addressed as evidence emerges and needs arises. While the Strategy prioritises gender equality and disability inclusion, there is also room to grow and the team are now exploring engagement with people with diverse sexual orientation and gender identity. Programming addresses both mainstreaming as well as dedicated support for research and advocacy by women and people with disabilities.

GESI is embedded at each level of the APCP Program logic and MEL system, with qualitative and quantitative data that considers participation and leadership, capacity in institutions and increasing resilience at community level for diverse women and men.

4. CHECKLIST - KEY FEATURES OF A GOOD PRACTICE GENDER EQUALITY STRATEGY

Background and Context

- Contains gender analysis relevant to the country, sector, and investment (but is not overly academic in nature)

- Outlines relevant Australian and partner government and organizational (e.g. multilateral) policies for gender equality and women's empowerment

Approach and conceptual framework[3]

- Approach and conceptual framework for the gender strategy are clearly linked to the overarching program logic, grounded in relevant literature but not overly academic in nature.

- Takes account of intersectionality and acknowledges that not all women and girls have the same needs and experiences

- Recognizes that gender is a power relation and contains actions to address unequal gender norms that constrain women and men, girls and boys, as well as transgender, non-binary and intersex people

- Ensures that gender equality is explicit and visible.[4] If other inclusion issues such as disability inclusion are included in the strategy, they should be dealt with individually, recognizing intersecting issues, and not conflated into a generalist social inclusion approach.

- Reflects DFAT's twin track approach. Includes clear direction on how the investment will mainstream gender into EACH investment component AND identifies specific relevant activities, actions and efforts with a dedicated primary purpose to tackle persistent challenges and barriers that are holding women and other marginalised groups back from achieving their full potential in relation to the investment's focus area.

- Outlines how the investment will contribute to DFAT priority areas for gender equality – in particular, enhancing women's leadership and decision-making, women's economic empowerment and eliminating violence against women

- Outlines how the investment will collaborate with local women's groups or other key gender equality stakeholders and programs

- Includes internal and external mainstreaming activities,[5] including capacity building activities for the implementing team.

- Outlines strategic principles to guide the implementation of the Strategy.

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3 There are many well know international frameworks for conceptualizing gender equality such as Moser and Sen [https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/Guide%20to%20Gender%20Analysis%20Frameworks.pdf], frameworks developed by International NGOs such as CARE International's Gender Equality Framework [https://insights.careinternational.org.uk/media/k2/attachments/Gender_equality_womens_voice_Guidance_Note_2018.pdf], and frameworks to conceptualize specific areas of empowerment such as the Women's Empowerment and Market Systems Approach [https://beamexchange.org/resources/794/]. A program may choose to draw on one or more such frameworks to shape its strategic direction.

4 Gender equality and disability inclusion are important issues in their own right and should both be reflected as such in the title of the strategy. E.g. Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion.

5 Internal strategies are those which the implementing partner can have direct control over and include steps such as capacity building for employed investment staff and advisers, inclusion of responsibility for gender in all TORs for advisers and gender sensitive recruitment. External strategies are those that are going to be implemented by advisers and partner,s and will assist to ensure that both men and women participate in and benefit from investment activities. This approach is in alignment with DFAT's Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy and its Women in Leadership Strategy.

Structure and objectives

- Gender Strategy objectives are directly linked with the overarching program objectives and Theory of Change (engendering overarching program objectives).

- Identified gender activities and actions are strategic and meaningfully address gender equality gaps and unequal gender norms.

Accountability and Resourcing

- Includes information about who is responsible for implementing each action.

- Includes information about the financial and human resources that will be allocated to implement and monitor the strategy.

Monitoring, reporting, learning and risk

- Meets the standards for monitoring and reporting outlined in the GEB Monitoring and Evaluation and Reporting Good Practice Note.

- Outlines risks and risk mitigation associated with the implementation of the strategy and how the investment will take account of Do No Harm principles[6].

- Includes information about how the Gender Strategy will be monitored and evaluated, and demonstrates how monitoring of the Gender Strategy will be integrated into overarching investment monitoring and evaluation.

- Includes a clear process for the collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data, for identifying gender equality results[7], and for capturing lessons learned and good practice.

For further information or advice on gender equality please contact the Gender Equality Branch (gender.equality@dfat.gov.au).

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[6] Risk mitigation should include an analysis of gender norms and social relations in a country, sector or organisation related to the program and how they could potentially impact on the effectiveness of the program and do no harm principles if not adequately addressed. As an ethical principle, 'do no harm' in relation to work on gender equality means recognizing that the actions we take in a particular context are not neutral. Our actions will affect the relationships within that context, either for better or for worse. We can ensure that we are actively applying risk mitigation strategies to ensure we don't make things worse [https://iwda.org.au/resource/do-no-harm-toolkit/].

[7] Collecting and analysis sex-disaggregated data helps to measure differences in participation, access and benefits between men and women. Reporting on gender results should move beyond simply counting women and include indicators that help to determine what has happened for women or for progress towards gender equality as a result of their participation. For example, improvements in women's agency, decision-making ability, realisation of their rights, changes in discriminatory social norms etc.