



GENDER EQUALITY IN INVESTMENT DESIGN

GOOD PRACTICE NOTE

1. OVERVIEW

DFAT requires new aid investments valued at \$3 million and over to include a gender equality outcome, regardless of sector. This Good Practice Note helps DFAT staff meet this requirement and integrate gender equality into program design. It also 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.

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).

Gender equality is central to economic and human development. Equal opportunity for women and men supports economic growth and helps to reduce poverty. Gender equality is critically important to achieving other development objectives and to improving the effectiveness of efforts to reduce poverty and support economic growth. It is also important in its own right.

Integrating gender equality into investment designs is key to securing an investment's good performance on gender equality during implementation, regardless of its sector. DFAT analysis shows that initiatives that have a principal or significant focus on gender equality perform better on effectiveness and efficiency during implementation. Development results cannot be maximised without explicit attention to the different needs, interests, priorities and roles of women, men, boys and girls, and people with diverse gender identities, and the relations between them.

This Good Practice Note helps program managers address gender equality at each stage of aid investment design. It is aligned with the planning and design chapters of the [Aid Programming Guide](#) and supplements the three design paths: Investment concept; DFAT-led design; and Partner-led design.

2. GENDER EQUALITY IN DESIGN CHECKLIST

Concept preparation

- Did gender analysis (existing or new) inform development of the investment concept?



- Were gender issues addressed in other analyses that were undertaken (e.g. political economy analysis; constraints to growth analysis; poverty analysis; time-use; social analysis; health and conflict analysis)?
- Do indicative outcomes include at least one gender equality outcome (either End of Program Outcome or Intermediate Outcome)?
- Was gender expertise used to inform the development of the investment concept?
- Were women and women's organisations consulted in the identification and prioritisation of the development problem?

Design

- Was gender analysis undertaken to inform the investment design?
- Was gender expertise used during stakeholder engagement and development of the design?
- Does the investment design clearly specify whether and how women, men, and people with diverse sexual orientation and gender identities will participate and benefit equally?
- Does investment design include at least one gender equality outcome (either End of Program Outcome or Intermediate Outcome)?
- Does the design narrative clearly articulate interventions and approaches to support achievement of the gender equality outcome/s?
- Are indicators to measure gender equality outcomes and changes in gender relations included explicitly in the M&E framework? Are relevant indicators disaggregated by sex, age, and disability? (See Gender Equality in Monitoring and Evaluation Good Practice Guide for more information).
- Does the design clearly outline 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 and addressing discriminatory social norms?
- Has the design considered the consequences (intended and unintended) that the intervention could have on participants, and included strategies for mitigating and monitoring negative impacts on different groups?
- Does the budget include adequate allocation to gender equality, including human resources?
- Is the investment committing time and resources to building capacities on gender within the investment team and within implementing partners?

Accountability

- Is collection and analysis of sex, age and disability-disaggregated data planned for, and are there gender sensitive indicators in place for monitoring and evaluation?
- Is gender equality addressed in the risk matrix?
- Is the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH)¹ addressed?
- Do the position descriptions include responsibility for addressing gender equality (including dedicated gender personnel, Team Leader, Specified Personnel, and monitoring and evaluation advisers)?

¹ For further information, including DFAT's policy, see <https://dfat.gov.au/international-relations/themes/preventing-sexual-exploitation-abuse-and-harassment/Pages/default.aspx>



- Is the implementing partner's performance on addressing gender equality being monitored as part of the monitoring and evaluation framework?

3. RISK AND SAFEGUARD ASSESSMENT

All proposed investments (including those seeking exemption from having a gender equality outcome) must be screened for risks and safeguards before the design can commence. This includes assessing and outlining gender equality risks and risk mitigation associated with implementation of the investment and how the investment will apply Do No Harm principles and the gender dimensions of relevant safeguards issues.

4. INVESTMENT CONCEPT

Addressing gender equality issues in the investment concept will maximise the ability of the investment to promote gender equality effectively and minimise the risk that the proposed investment may directly or indirectly exacerbate gender inequalities. It is difficult and inefficient to “add on” gender equality issues to an investment if they were not considered at the concept development stage. During the concept design stage:

- **Include the need to identify key gender equality gaps in the Terms of Reference (TOR)** for the team working on the concept note. Complex or large concepts should include gender expertise in design team.
- **Consult with a gender equality specialists;** ask them to brief the concept team, and request that they review the draft Investment Concept Note.
- In the Investment Concept Note, **identify the key gender equality issues** that need further exploration during the design phase.
- **Involve gender equality specialists in the reference group, peer review, and appraisal.** Explicitly put assessment of gender equality integration on the agenda of the peer review.

5. INVESTMENT DESIGN DOCUMENT OR INVESTMENT DESIGN SUMMARY

Gender equality must be a feature of design processes and documentation. Consult gender specialists early in the design process, for context-specific advice and referrals to external gender consultants (as needed). Involving gender specialists throughout the design process; don't wait until the peer review or technical appraisal of the investment design document.

5.1 GENDER ANALYSIS

Gender analysis assesses:

- Key gender equality issues and barriers which might prevent some groups (such as women, women with disabilities, adolescent girls, or people with diverse sexual orientation and gender identity) from participating in and benefiting equally from the investment
- How the above might constrain progress against investment objectives
- Whether the approach outlined in the design could directly or indirectly exacerbate gender inequality
- Where DFAT assistance should be targeted and gender equality activities to be included in the design



- Options for the investment to support progress towards gender equality.

All investments should be able to demonstrate how the design was based on findings from gender analysis in the relevant sector or area. There are different ways to go about this.

For larger investments and those targeting sectors where limited gender analysis exists, a **stand-alone gender analysis is needed** and should be attached to the design document as an annex. This analysis should draw on secondary sources (existing gender analyses, research, and data), as well as primary sources where needed (for example, in-country consultation with key stakeholders and participant groups). Gender analyses should be intersectional, considering multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination experienced by some people, and whether and how the equality gaps are different for women and girls of diverse backgrounds (see 5.2). An intersectional gender analysis helps to identify hidden structural barriers and supports an understanding of how individual experiences differ.

Gender analysis can be incorporated into other design analyses. In many cases, it is important to change the way sectoral or political economy analysis is conducted to ensure the needs and perspectives of men, women and people with diverse sexual orientation and gender identity are considered.

During the gender analysis:

- **Use gender expertise:** A quality gender analysis requires gender equality specialist skills.
- **Disaggregate all data by sex** (and where possible by gender, age, and disability) to identify where special efforts for people's equal participation and benefit are needed and to measure the impact and outcomes of investments on women and men.
- **Involve partners,** to increase their commitment to gender equality and sustainability of results. Partner involvement can lead to more relevant and useful gender analysis.

5.2 IN THE DESIGN TERMS OF REFERENCE

The TOR for the design team should include gender expertise, provided by a dedicated gender advisor (rather than relying on a non-gender specialist to provide gender equality inputs). A gender expert may provide periodic or long-term inputs and have responsibility for identifying key gender equality issues and recommendations to inform the design.

Recognizing that men and women are not homogenous groups, the design team must consult with female and male stakeholders of different ages, from different socio-economic, rural/urban and ethnic groups; women and men with disability; LGBTIQ+ persons; female and male officials working in partner government organisations; women's networks, civil society organisations, media, and local researchers. When doing consultations, consider forming separate groups for consulting with women and LGBTIQ+ persons.

5.3 IN THE DESIGN DOCUMENT OR DESIGN SUMMARY

Gender equality needs to be incorporated throughout the design narrative, not be relegated to a few stand-alone paragraphs. Throughout, the design should consider:

- How it can:
 - increase access to and control over resources for women and men of diverse backgrounds
 - increase women's decision-making power and leadership
 - promote and protect women's, girls', men's and boys' rights, in particular those who are marginalized and excluded, including people of diverse sexual orientation and gender identities
 - support partners to achieve gender equality objectives
 - strengthen local capacity to advance gender equality.



- How barriers preventing women and men from participating in and benefiting equally from the investment will be addressed.
- How it will work with men to secure their support for gender equality.
- How gender equality initiatives will be integrated in annual planning (important for sector wide approaches and facility designs).

5.3.1 Development context and situational analysis (what problem are we addressing?)

This section should reflect the findings of gender analysis. This section should concisely articulate:

- the main gender-related problems to be addressed by the investment
- issues/gaps (and their root causes) that are a priority for women and girls especially those who may be marginalised as a result of multiple aspects of their identity interacting to compound disadvantage/opportunity (for example women with disabilities)
- data disaggregated by sex, disability, and age
- evidence and lessons learned about previous efforts on gender equality

5.3.2 Strategic intent and rationale (why?)

Think about how addressing gender equality aligns with and supports Australia's and partner government/organisation policy priorities. How and where can Australia add strategic value by working on gender equality? This section should also articulate relevant areas where gender equality will be integrated and addressed.

5.3.3 Define the gender equality outcomes and discuss investment options (what?)

DFAT development and humanitarian investments valued at \$3 million are required to include a gender equality outcome (either End of Program Outcome or Intermediate Outcome). They must also meet the OECD DAC minimum criteria for gender equality to be classified as a Principal or Significant objective²:

- A gender analysis was undertaken and used to inform the design.
- The program takes a 'do no harm' approach.
- The M&E Framework includes indicators that track gender outcomes.
- Data and indicators are sex-disaggregated where applicable.
- Gender equality results are monitored and reported.
- Risks to gender equality are identified and managed.

The gender analysis should inform the development of the gender outcomes. The design narrative must articulate a clear intent to actively work to advance gender equality in line with the outcomes, and articulate what success looks like for women, women with disabilities, or people with diverse sexual orientation and gender identity.

Table 1: Examples of Effective Gender Equality Outcomes

² The minimum criteria for an investment to have gender equality as the principal or a significant objective are set by the OECD DAC. Gender equality is considered a significant objective where it is an important and deliberate objective, but not the principal reason for undertaking the investment. The investment, in addition to other objectives is designed to have a positive impact on advancing gender equality and/or the empowerment of women and girls, reducing gender discrimination or inequalities, or meeting gender-specific needs. Gender equality is considered the principal objective where gender equality is the main objective of the investment and is fundamental to its design and expected results. The investment would not have been undertaken without this gender equality objective. The minimum criteria are set out in the AidWorks [DAC Sector Gender Theme Quick Reference Guide](#)



The following examples demonstrate characteristics of gender equality outcomes:

Gender equality outcome examples	Rationale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased number of women have dignified work Increased access to support services for survivors of gender-based violence Church decision-makers actively implement policies and programs that promote gender equality, disability and social inclusion Targeted men in the public service demonstrate gender equitable leadership Relevant government decision-makers make policy decisions that explicitly promote the rights of people with diverse sexual orientation and gender identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actively works to advance gender equality by specifically promoting women's access to resources, services and opportunities Contributes to changing relations between women and men, and people of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity Contributes to shifting harmful norms around gender roles (gender relations) Specific about who and what is being targeted, realistic and measurable Provides adequate guidance about what is expected in implementation

Table 2: Examples of Insufficient Gender Outcomes

The following outcome examples refer to gender, but are not gender *equality* outcomes:

Outcome examples not advancing gender equality	Rationale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partners more effectively mainstream cross-cutting issues including GEDSI Diverse groups have the skills and knowledge to contribute to development that is aligned to our shared goals Farming women, men and youth have more resilient agriculture-based livelihoods A business enabling environment that is conducive to inclusive growth Increased economic participation and opportunities for marginalised groups, and rural populations. More inclusive governance systems and processes that benefit women, youth, and other marginalised groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mainstreaming is a process, not an outcome Does not describe desired changes in terms of gender relations Not specific about who or what is targeted Does not clearly articulate a specific outcome for women, girls and other marginalised groups compared with those achieved for men and boys Does not actively work to advance gender equality by specifically promoting women's access to resources, services and opportunities

In line with OECD DAC and DFAT design exemptions, a limited number of categories of support are exempt from the gender equality outcome mandate. Outside of these categories, DFAT investment managers seeking exemption from the gender equality outcome mandate are required to apply in writing. For a list of exempt categories and exemption application details, see the [Aid Programming Guide](#).

5.3.4 Implementation approach (how will DFAT engage?)

As part of the implementation approach, gender equality should be addressed in investment governance arrangements, accountability, sustainability, risk, resourcing, and M&E. For example, the governance arrangements should promote equitable representation of women and involve regular senior-level discussions about progress on gender equality. Consider whether gender inequality could undermine sustainability of the investment, or whether not focusing on gender equality sufficiently could risk overall investment performance. Ensure that the Policy Dialogue Matrix outlines policy reform priorities around gender equality.



5.3.5 Monitoring and evaluation (how will DFAT measure performance?)

The M&E section should articulate how gender equality results will be measured and reported. It is important to measure gender equality results because:

- We need to know whether women and men have benefited equally from the investment or whether the investment has exacerbated existing gender inequalities
- It helps us to improve the effectiveness of strategies to advance gender equality in different contexts
- It is important to gather evidence on the contribution that gender equality makes to overall program performance and to poverty reduction and sustainable development
- It is important to strengthen accountability and to identify areas where capacity building is needed among all stakeholders

At a minimum, the M&E system needs to collect **sex-disaggregated data** for all results relating to people. Sex-disaggregated data helps assess and report on:

- Whether an investment is successful at targeting and benefiting women, men, girls and boys
- Differences in participation, benefits and impacts for women, men, girls and boys

Where possible, data should also be disaggregated by age, disability status, and other important identities.

Within the Program Logic, choose gender-sensitive (quantitative and qualitative) indicators against which to track progress towards outcomes. Qualitative indicators will help to assess changes in social norms and attitudes, and how and why change is happening. The [Gender Equality in Monitoring and Evaluation and Reporting Good Practice Note](#) includes additional information on how to develop a gender-responsive M&E framework.

It is important that women are involved in M&E and that data is used to regularly assess progress and improve the performance of the investment.

5.3.6 Gender, disability, and other cross-cutting issues

Gender equality should be integrated throughout the design and addressed in the separate section on gender equality. The gender equality section should articulate the overall strategy to address gender equality. It should also provide a rationale for the [OECD DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker](#) that has been selected and outline how the investment aligns with priority pillars of [DFAT's Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy](#). This section should also describe how intersecting disadvantages will be addressed and how sustainable and transformative results for women and girls will be achieved. Where possible a draft gender equality strategy should be included as an Annex. The arrangements for further refining and socialising the gender action plan/gender strategy early in implementation should be spelled out.

5.3.7 Budget and resources

Adequate financial and human resources should be included in the budget. Programs that budget for gender technical expertise are more likely to achieve better gender equality results. Funding should be allocated for a gender adviser and to implement M&E gender equality actions and strategies where relevant.

5.3.8 Procurement and partnering

Consider the accountability mechanisms built into the design to ensure gender equality is addressed in implementation. Some types of accountability mechanisms that can be considered in the **Scope of Services** are:

- Ensuring adequate financial and human resources for work on gender equality are specified in the investment design.



- Linking milestone payments to gender equality deliverables such as the GEDSI strategy.
- Including gender equality related skills and knowledge as part of the selection process for Specified Personnel and adviser positions.
- Including specific responsibilities for integrating gender equality in job descriptions of the Team Leader and other key positions, and requiring team members to report on how they have dealt with gender equality issues in their work in their performance reviews.
- Earmarking support to ensure that the implementing team receives good quality gender equality training, followed by ongoing mentoring and support.
- Ensuring that implementing partners have clear standards, codes of conduct and protocols for all staff working on the investment to ensure that the investment Does No Harm. This should include implementation of national labour laws for women employed through the investment, with focus on prevention of sexual harassment and gender-based violence.
- Modelling good practice by requesting contractors appoint both women and men to program teams, especially at senior levels and ensuring gender balance on management committees.
- Ensure that gender equality standards are reflected in any performance-based funding arrangements.

5.3.9 Risk management and safeguards (what might go wrong?)

In the risk management matrix for the investment, consider whether gender inequality could constrain progress towards the investment's objectives and whether the approach outlined in the design could inadvertently exacerbate gender inequality. The risk management section should also identify risks in relation to PSEAH. Once identified, the design should explain how gender related risks will be mitigated throughout the investment.

6. FURTHER INFORMATION AND ADVICE

The Support Unit for Gender Equality (SURGE) includes a panel of gender advisers in different sectors who can provide technical assistance on gender equality across the program cycle. To access the panel and for further assistance on gender equality integration please contact the Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion Branch at gender.equality@dfat.gov.au.

