



gender

Main Messages and Findings from the ECG Gender Practitioners Workshop
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The [Evaluation Cooperation Group](#) (ECG) is dedicated to harmonizing evaluation work among multilateral development banks (MDBs). Its members are the evaluation departments of the African Development Bank, Asian Development Bank, Black Sea Trade and Development Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, European Investment Bank, Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), International Monetary Fund, Islamic Development Bank, and World Bank Group. Observers are the Independent Evaluation Office of the Global Environment Facility, the Network on Development Evaluation of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG).



The Gender Practitioners Community of Practice brings together the perspectives of evaluators from International Financial Institutions (IFIs) that are part of the ECG. This network aims to improve the methods and the quality of evaluations by promoting and participating in initiatives to exchange knowledge and stimulate a discussion on the approaches, challenges, and solutions to integrate gender in evaluation.

The first event that brought together this community was the two-day workshop organized by the Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) in Washington, DC in September 2017.

The material presented in this brochure summarizes the content of five sessions; additional sessions focused on the challenges of evaluating the gender strategy of IFIs, experiences in assessing gender in project-level validation, and challenges of integrating gender in the evaluation of infrastructure projects.

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RATIONALE, CHALLENGES, AND ADVOCACY ON GENDER-RESPONSIVE EVALUATIONS

Key Message

- 1. Data availability challenges arise from the retrospective nature of independent evaluations.**
- 2. Capturing gender impacts requires the selection of the right evaluation tools.**
- 3. When projects have gender objectives, they are often narrowly defined.**
- 4. Evaluators may need to develop a strategic or advocacy approach to ensure the appropriate type of data collection and information are available to conduct gender-responsive evaluations.**

The Setting

A major challenge to integrating gender in evaluation remains the lack of access to the right type of data. Evaluators often don't have control over the definition of gender objectives and the type of data available. In addition, gender objectives are often established during the project's design phase and tend to be quantitative and narrow. Data used by independent evaluation offices are normally produced by other parts of the organization, or sometimes by the client. Most organizations adopt standard evaluation tools rather than design customized tools to capture gender results.

Strategies that Work

- 1.** Leverage ECG and bilateral platforms to overcome common challenges by sharing strategies and learning about new approaches for integrating gender in evaluation. For example, an ECG workshop hosted by the IEG in 2017 served as a platform to discuss how different resources and experiences could be leveraged and to understand what integrating gender in evaluation means to different institutions. Propose using the ECG Gender Community of Practice to facilitate the piloting of joint initiatives and sharing of best practices and solutions to overcome data collection challenges.
- 2.** Use [ECG's Reference Document](#) as a starting point to understand the pros and cons of using data collection strategies of different organizations. Consider developing specific guidelines for your evaluation group (for example, see [guidance in Integrating Gender into IEG Evaluation Work](#)).
- 3.** Design specific tools to capture gender results, power relations, behavior change, women's time constraints and access to resources, and roles in decision-making processes. The focus should not be exclusively on women. Gender-responsive evaluation emphasizes understanding the broader framework to address interconnected issues such as the relationships between sex and age, education, ethnicity, and location, for example.
- 4.** Establish a clear theory of change and use participatory as well as mixed quantitative and qualitative methods as best practices.
- 5.** Find readily available ways to demonstrate the value added of a gender-responsive evaluation focus, including its cost-effectiveness and potential for resource mobilization, such as effectiveness in reaching vulnerable groups. Evaluators can push for better documentation of gender results by convincing colleagues in operations and other units to broaden the range of gender objectives a particular project can contribute to.
- 6.** Look at mandates an organization must meet. A strategic approach to evaluating gender is critical yet not often pursued. An organization must have a long-term strategy on incorporating and evaluating gender to address such complexities as the appropriate level of evaluation intensity; prioritizing certain sectors over others; serving the interests of project leaders and the broader interests of the institution and donors; and knowing where to start once an evaluation topic has been chosen.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Challenges can be overcome and opportunities provided for organizations to establish new, critical agendas to promote gender-responsive evaluations. This is one of the first pieces of evidence on the importance of the right approaches. The task now is to continue piloting and evaluating policies and projects to learn and share what works best.

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MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF INTEGRATING GENDER IN THE EVALUATION OF COMMUNITY-DRIVEN AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Key Messages

- 1. Legal constraints, traditional practices, and cultural norms determine women's access to and rights on assets in rural development.**
- 2. More women are moving into the agricultural sector, yet this trend is not being accurately measured and documented.**
- 3. Project development objectives infrequently establish gender-specific goals.**
- 4. Cross-sectoral approaches are more likely to succeed in reducing gender gaps and breaking traditional gender roles by providing women with access to markets, supporting higher representation of them in local decision-making bodies, and increasing literacy training opportunities.**
- 5. Insufficient attention is paid to gender impacts in community-driven development (CDD) programs.**
- 6. Major shortcomings when evaluating gender impacts in CDD are lack of sex-disaggregated data, excessive reliance on retrospective data, poor understanding of cultural context, limited time, and resource constraints.**

The Setting

Rural development projects often focus on asset ownership. This approach, however, is limited when it only considers household assets and not individual assets. Indeed, to better understand a woman's position, an evaluator needs to understand how decisions are made within a household, especially who owns the assets and controls resources by gender.

More women carry the agricultural burden as men move into rural non-farm activities. [A recent IEG evaluation](#) finds that rural non-farm activities account for 35 to 50 percent of rural income in developing countries. Households that rely solely on farm labor tend to be among the poorest. Yet, project objectives are often defined around increasing aggregate income or revenues, which creates incentives to support more successful cooperatives where men are normally over-represented.

Agricultural extension and technology programs are not generally designed with women in mind, which means they don't take into account women's needs, constraints, and behavior. Moreover, labor-saving technologies in cultivation and agri-processing that target women farmers are not usually part of projects. These technologies would provide more direct benefits to smallholder women farmers by addressing their limited access to energy, mechanization, and basic agricultural and agri-processing tools. Tackling gender constraints and gaps requires holistic interventions that can address problems on many fronts. [A recent report by the IFAD](#) identifies gender equality and women's empowerment practices that should be promoted and scaled up to contribute to transformative change.

Research shows that some practices can impact gender gaps more than others. For example, projects are more likely to be successful when they apply multisectoral approaches. Project designs may need to explicitly address potential impacts on women empowerment and identify both baseline and target gender-disaggregated indicators. For these impacts to be measured, operational teams and evaluators need to make them explicit in the theory of change. [An IEG review of the gender-specific impacts of CDD](#), especially on empowerment, found that CDD programs that support livelihoods or income-generating activities often do not measure impacts on empowerment (either in the economic, political, or social sphere), especially those dimensions of empowerment that are not part of the project objectives.

Participative approaches can support the achievement of outcomes for women, but they need to be combined with specific targeting strategies. The extent of women's participation in training and meetings also hinges on their active membership in community organizations, such as water user associations. Involving men may be necessary especially when they are the "gatekeepers" of customary practices.

Promoting unconventional, new gender roles can also help shift mindsets. Innovative financing modalities for women farmers can help increase their uptake of labor-saving technologies to enhance their productivity.

Strategies that Work

- 1.** Evaluation strategies can adopt new approaches to evaluate the gender impact of rural development projects that do not strictly focus on project objectives, but measure how men and women are participating in and benefiting from rural development and agricultural interventions.
- 2.** Using retrospective methods to evaluate gender outcomes of CDD projects has drawbacks. Many studies document economic changes for women, but few seek to find whether a woman's position within the household changes as a result of a project. Reasons include difficulties in defining the appropriate counterfactual, identifying good indicators, and adopting ways to collect reliable information. The lack of gender-disaggregated data on population, socioeconomic characteristics, gender division of labor, and time inputs in main productive activities makes it difficult to determine women's needs, roles, and priorities in agricultural work, and how these change after project implementation. Another problem is the use of retrospective and perception data. For example, women tend to understate their roles in the household decision-making process, and their reporting based on subjective perceptions can be biased. When using participatory methods and observing women within households, women who claimed their husbands were the decision makers may show more autonomy in making decisions than they report. This bias arises from a socially accepted image of how families are supposed to operate.
- 3.** Proper consideration of cultural context is essential when evaluating decision-making processes. For example, in many cultures, meetings are conducted to show a willingness to resolve conflicts, yet issues are expected to be sorted out in advance. Evaluations and assessments of participative decision-making processes that occur only at the beginning of public meetings will be inaccurate because they can't capture the role of women in the full decision-making cycle. Gender-sensitive evaluations need to take these cultural aspects into account.
- 4.** Timing is critical when conducting evaluations of gender-relevant impacts. Empowerment, for example, often takes place over a much longer period than the lifetime of a project. Yet, many evaluations are done soon after a project ends, which is often too early to see changes. [The IEG report on women's empowerment in rural community-driven development projects](#) found that CDD interventions should better frame what they can affect both in the short and long term. This dichotomy is sometimes difficult to solve due to resources and time constraints.
- 5.** Economic, analytically clean, and first-level analysis does not always work when evaluating gender impacts. Cultural and situational implications can be much stronger than assumed and are sometimes not easy to grasp and quantify. Second-level analysis can be costly and time consuming but may uncover more realistic outcomes and results. A combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches, such as beneficiary surveys and focus group discussions, is required to extract gender results in various dimensions, such as in time poverty, economic empowerment, voice and decision making, and resilience to risks and shocks.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Evidence points to the idea that individual interventions, or unisectoral approaches, are less effective in gender and gender-sensitive evaluation than bundled, multisectoral approaches. It is critical to understand which bundles work together to achieve transformational change for women. Individual interventions often do not have the capability to sufficiently address binding constraints and achieve transformational change. In CDD projects, as in other development projects, the need for gender-disaggregated data is paramount. Selection of the right methods and approaches is essential to generate the type of data that will allow for more meta-analysis of the impact of development projects on gender gaps.

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MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF INTEGRATING GENDER IN THE EVALUATION OF PRIVATE SECTOR PROJECTS

Key Messages

- 1. Evaluating gender outcomes in private sector projects poses wide-ranging challenges. The absence of clear norms against which to evaluate can include the lack of clear strategies, objective, or results framework as well as the difficulties in establishing overall and project-level targets.**
- 2. Results measurement systems need improvement. Critical areas are approving gender data clauses in contracts with clients, measuring the allocation of resources to gender components, defining relevance, distinguishing between recipients and beneficiaries, and more generally, adopting appropriate methodologies.**
- 3. Questions need to be considered to find the optimum path to close gender gaps. What should be the appropriate framework for a gender intervention involving the private sector? For example, what can MDBs do when private sector companies aggressively hire women and pay them less than comparable men (i.e., they accept the prevailing gender wage gap)? Do they call them out for discrimination or hope that more businesses will hire women and the increased demand for female workers will drive up women's wages over time?**
- 4. Find ways to motivate clients. It may be hard to convince clients of the valued added of conducting gender evaluations. One of the best "sales pitches" is pointing out how a business's bottom line will be improved by taking women's needs and choices into account and understanding the impacts of a firm's investments in women.**

The Setting

Evaluators face several challenges when integrating and assessing gender outcomes in private sector evaluations. Some difficulties are common to all projects while others are specific to the private sector. In private sector interventions, the client firm (or the client's client in the case of financial intermediaries or value-chain projects) implements the projects and collects information on the process and outcomes achieved. IFIs play a supporting role. When several IFIs finance the same project or when an IFI supports a fraction of an intermediary bank's lending activity, it is impossible to attribute gender outcomes to a single institution.

The challenge grows when proper monitoring systems are not in place because gender data needs may not be a contractual requirement. As a result, existing measurement systems are often of low quality. IFIs and their clients tend to provide imprecise figures on resources devoted to tackling specific gender issues. They may report on large segments of project funding but omit the tiny fractions allocated directly to gender-focused components. Often no gender baseline is available, and it must be established (see "[Establishing a Baseline for Lending to Women-Owned SMEs](#)").

With regard to methodologies, the first step is collecting sound before and after gender-disaggregated data. But relying on correlations and pre- and post-intervention comparisons alone is not enough for attribution or to conclude whether a gender-focused project is effective. Moreover, the appropriate intervention and desired result are not always clear. For example, in certain contexts, more women than men are employed due to their lower wages. If this is the case, what is the appropriate mechanisms to address the issue? Finally, companies often don't see the value of lengthy, complex, and costly evaluations as a tool to improve their business and tend to opt for protecting their data and avoiding evaluation altogether. The best way to convince a private sector client usually is making a business case: creating opportunities for women will improve the bottom line by increasing market opportunities, being better attuned to women's needs, lowering costs, or increasing efficiencies through more diverse teams, among other factors (see [Investing in Women's Employment and chapter 1, Results and Performance of the World Bank Group 2015](#)).

Strategies that Work

1. IFIs can be reluctant to ask their clients for too much information and may limit the amount of reporting to facilitate business relationships. A persuasive case for data collection on gender can be made for both IFIs and clients. Evaluating gender-related issues can bring benefits to businesses because the findings can help enhance programs, and the engagement with stakeholders during the evaluation process can improve relationships with them.

2. Investing in gender analysis can lead companies to change their business models and create additional opportunities by considering the various roles of stakeholders as employees, customers, suppliers, competitors, and more. At each of these levels, opportunities exist to overcome or avoid negative impacts

and create or enhance positive ones. For example, a transportation company might increase its passenger base by establishing new routes to meet women-specific needs, such as reaching schools and markets. Tuning into the “What’s in It for Me” mantra of companies will help guide behavior change.

3. A sound evaluation relies on a solid analytical framework and reliable results measurement. Critical questions for assessing the gender impacts of an intervention are: Does the intervention allocate resources to women? Do they reach women? Are women better off? And most critical—but also most difficult, are women better off because of the resource allocation? (See “[Microfinance at the Margin](#).”) It is important to be cautious about results measurement systems that merely check boxes instead of looking for exclusion (e.g., women who were to be included in the intervention but were not) or displacement effects (resources directed toward women or groups not in need).

4. Dependable sex-disaggregated data are needed to establish baselines for programs that lack a gender focus and to allow evaluators to assess proper targeting and program impact. Baseline data help direct resources toward sectors and regions where gender gaps are deeper. Holistic portfolio reviews at a macro level are typically less helpful. The largest gains are normally achieved in sectors, industries, or regions with poor gender outcomes or the largest gender gaps, which are also those more in need. For evaluators, these considerations are helpful for understanding the sector- and region-specific relevance of the intervention. Multilateral institutions should encourage private companies to report sex-disaggregated data in their sustainability reports and set an example by doing so themselves.

5. To overcome the time gap between the start of the intervention and its results, the evaluator may go “backward” after defining the portfolio of interest. This approach identifies a representative sample of interventions that are currently part of the portfolio. Rather than waiting N years to observe results, data can be collected for the ongoing interventions N years ago (for example, reconstructing initial employment rates), and intervening changes can be assessed between now and –N. If there is no time to set up a baseline now and wait, this method may be the most appropriate.

6. Portfolio reporting by financial institutions and the evaluation of their interventions should rely on client-based definitions, which will drive data collection, as opposed to evaluators creating their own definitions.

7. Relevance will need to be assessed in relation to how well the intervention addresses key constraints. It makes sense for resources to be spent on addressing binding constraints, including those that are gender-specific and not normally considered by the client, such as the perceived risk of lending to female entrepreneurs or the collaterals applied to female lenders. Recommendations that call for action on gender issues may also serve the client’s best financial interest. For example, a transport company may reduce car accidents by hiring more female drivers.

8. Care should be taken with cost-benefit analysis of investing in women. For example, an OECD analysis shows that the public returns on educating women are significantly lower than those for men because women earn less. Rather than conclude it doesn’t pay to invest in women’s tertiary education, the policy conclusion should be that more needs to be done to ensure well-educated women get better-paying jobs.

THE BOTTOM LINE

At the IFI-level, the first step for gender evaluations is to identify what specific strategies, policies, objectives, and action plans for gender exist in the organization and to develop an appropriate corporate-level results framework.

At the project level, it is important to identify what the specific gender components are, what the expected results chain is, how the results chain addresses key binding constraints, and how adequate gender-disaggregated data can be obtained, which is an easier task if the IFI collects appropriate gender-disaggregated data in its monitoring systems.

For private sector projects, it is important not only to address the gender impacts of the project, but also to explain the business case—why it makes sense for the company to measure and address gender issues.

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MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF INTEGRATING GENDER IN THE EVALUATION OF COUNTRY PROGRAMS

Key Messages

- 1. When gender is a cross-cutting theme in country strategies, evaluators should devote attention to the results chain for gender and assess the evidence available in the results framework for tracking progress and results.**
- 2. It is possible for evaluators to analyze the gender relevance of country strategies while conducting an overall evaluation of country programs, instead of approaching it as a separate task.**
- 3. Evaluation teams can assess the gender relevance of country programs' objectives, program design, policy dialogue, results framework, causal chain and key outcome indicators, and efficacy. Resources are available to guide them on integrating gender in the evaluation (for example, see guidance in [Integrating Gender into IEG Evaluation Work](#)).**

The Setting

Objective-driven evaluation requires assessing the specific objectives that were defined at the onset of the program. Little opportunity and incentive exist for the evaluator to focus on other aspects. When gender is not explicitly part of objectives, gender aspects can be easily neglected.

Although country strategies increasingly highlight the importance of mainstreaming gender, when gender is treated as a cross-cutting theme instead of being part of a specific pillar or objective it often results in diluted attention, weak support, and no accountability for achieving results in country strategies. In addition, when gender is treated as a cross-cutting issue, the availability of information on gender impacts and results in formal documents is often limited.

Very few country diagnostics give prominence to gender issues, especially among the priorities they identify, or indicate data and knowledge gaps as key issues to be tackled. Consultations around gender issues are rarely followed up with concrete actions specified in country programs, and the alignment between actions and indicators in results frameworks is often weak or absent. Corporate requirements concerning gender, and associated commitments, are often vague or are not mandatory. Even when gender is a specific objective, much of the progress expected cannot be measured within a typical country strategy cycle and hence within an evaluation horizon (see [RAP 2015, chapter 1](#), and appendix H in [IEG's evaluation of the country engagement model](#)). In addition, most evaluators are not gender experts. Finding the right expertise at the right time may be an issue when faced with limited time and resources.

Country program evaluations—ideally also validation reports—should assess achievements in cross-cutting issues, including gender. Although evaluators may face challenges, practical strategies can be successfully adopted. One option would be to assess, for each pillar of the country strategy, the extent to which gender equality objectives were “mainstreamed” into the pillar. Counting the rating of cross-cutting issues toward the overall outcome rating in country program evaluation and validation reports could represent a powerful incentive to take cross-cutting issues more seriously into consideration in future country programs.

Strategies that Work

- 1.** Review and refer to corporate objectives on gender and align them with country strategy objectives when evaluating country programs. The World Bank Group's gender strategy for example sets ambitious goals on gender and offers concrete entry points for gender integration. It aims to steer teams away from simple diagnostics of gender equality gaps to a better understanding of why those gaps exist and what the key constraints are that need to be lifted for the gaps to narrow. The gender strategy requires country strategies to state how they will contribute to removing constraints individually and countrywide.
- 2.** Leverage the IEG evaluative material on gender integration in country diagnostics and strategies, and follow practical guidance from [IEG on integrating gender in evaluation](#). The guidelines offer tips and resources to support evaluation teams in assessing gender in country program objectives, program design, policy dialogue, results framework, and overall efficacy. Suggestions are given on sources of information, which processes to follow, and whom to ask for help. Included are examples of gender-sensitive evaluation questions that reflect the OECD Development Assistance Committee's methodology for a country program evaluation.

3. When assessing gender in country programs, ask these questions:

- Were specific gender priorities identified in the country strategy? Which ones?
- Were gender issues discussed in the country strategy outcomes (e.g., cross-cutting themes, focus area or pillar, objective)?
- Is there any reference to gender data or knowledge gaps?
- Were specific gender-relevant lending and non-lending operations identified in the country program?
- Any concrete actions to address gender data or knowledge gaps?
- Does the country strategy's results framework identify outcome indicators to track gender results?
- Are the indicators aligned with the action steps above?
- Does the country strategy link gender issues to the overarching goals of the institution?

THE BOTTOM LINE

When evaluating country programs, evaluators should assess how consistent they are with respect to corporate priorities, in addition to client needs. Evaluators should also remember that even when progress on gender may require more than one program cycle, intermediate outcomes can reasonably be set and progress measured against targets. As gender is a corporate priority in most multilateral institutions, this makes these institutions accountable for identifying and assessing gender results. Evaluating the gender dimension of country strategies is, therefore, not only important to assess their distributional implications, but also a requirement based on existing corporate commitments.

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GENDER AS A SAFEGUARD – THE HUMAN RIGHTS APPROACH

Key Messages

- 1. For most multilateral organizations, including MDBs, mainstreaming gender equality and equity considerations in operations and evaluation is typically seen as an instrumental approach toward achieving better development results. For the United Nations (UN), integrating gender in operations and evaluations is primarily a matter of human rights.**
- 2. Commendable progress has been made in integrating gender in evaluation across the UN system, partly because of a strong commitment and concrete actions by its entities and the UNEG. An inconsistent understanding still exists of what it means for the UN systemwide accountability framework relative to meeting or exceeding requirements to accelerate gender mainstreaming in evaluation.**
- 3. The IADB is the only multilateral institution with a gender safeguard. Other MDBs, including the World Bank, tend to distinguish between safeguard instruments and gender action plans, with their related guidance and accountability mechanisms for advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment. The safeguard approach adopts a “do-no-harm” lens and focuses on “participation of communities” as a measure to safeguard women’s interests.**
- 4. Gender-responsive evaluation incorporates principles of gender equality, women’s rights, and women’s empowerment. UN Women defines gender-responsive evaluation as a “systematic and impartial assessment that provides credible and reliable evidence-based information about the extent to which an intervention has resulted in progress (or the lack thereof) toward intended and/or unintended results regarding gender equality and the empowerment of women.” This approach takes into account the structures that contribute to gender inequalities and social inequities, challenges these structures by helping women and other marginalized groups claim their rights, and contributes to the realization of women’s empowerment, gender equality, and women’s human rights as an element of overall human rights.**

5. Using gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation methods and processes, gender-responsive evaluation builds an understanding of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by measuring progress toward Goal 5 and its subgoals, and assessing how other sectoral or cross-sectoral SDGs contribute to gender equality and equity outcomes. The gender-responsive evaluation and human rights based evaluation approaches aim to leave no one behind by reaching out to traditionally marginalized groups. Gender-responsive evaluation goes beyond sex-disaggregating data and measurement of indicators. It asks why we observe gender gaps, why they evolve in a certain way, and how policies can be designed to reduce gender inequalities and ensure equity.

6. IADB's experience shows that, apart from do-no-harm and preventive actions taken by safeguards, there are good opportunities for institutions to leverage existing safeguard frameworks for gender as they provide mandatory and pre-defined sets of processes for the client government to follow.

The Setting

Two interrelated rationales are given for gender equality and its place in the development agenda. The “rights-based approach” considers achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment as an end in itself, based on rights, equality, justice, participation, and collective action. On the other hand, the “instrumental” approach focuses on advancing gender equality as a means for attaining higher levels of development and relates women’s empowerment to efficiency, investment returns, and productivity. The two perspectives are not incompatible, although there are questions of whether, in some cases, promoting gender equality may not promote efficiency.

The concepts of gender equality as a human right and the need to not leave anyone behind are central to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They should be integrated at all stages of implementing the SDGs. The agenda has a strong focus on the poorest, most marginalized, and those most left behind. The SDGs can only be achieved through transformative change and by addressing the root causes of discrimination.

Applying and evaluating gender-related safeguards remain a challenge, as it is for human rights based evaluation approaches. For both, gender-responsive analyses are needed to understand real and perceived gender differences in interests and needs, and to anticipate and mitigate threats or risks. Interventions that do not seek to address imbalances at the outset may be doomed to perpetuate them. Gender-responsive evaluations can use safeguard frameworks as an entry point and baseline to leverage information and build evidence for enhancing the use of safeguards beyond the do-no-harm principle. These frameworks can also address structural inequities and inequalities to avoid excluding anyone from receiving the benefits of a project.

Strategies that Work

1. Multiple tools must be used to unpack the nature of gender and social inequalities, treat gender and social inequalities as systemic, and examine the effectiveness of interventions around larger desired impacts. Mixed-method approaches can help better understand the systemic and complex nature of change processes. Participatory evaluation methods can be particularly helpful.
2. Gender-responsive evaluation could help go beyond aggregate indicators and differences in averages. This approach recognizes that progress overall does not mean progress for all.
3. Good practices in gender-responsive evaluations include analyzing projects, programs, and portfolios for gender equality in relation to the intervention design, implementation, and results at different implementation stages. Evaluation questions should touch on gender equality aspects. Purposive sampling should be adopted to ensure the right individuals are interviewed, which is essential for assessing the issues identified during context analysis. Gender analysis findings should be woven into the main report's findings, conclusions, and recommendations. Adopting a gender-responsive evaluation approach is a shift in mindset, which is required to change gender norms and heighten attention to equity considerations.
4. Gender-related safeguards may support the adoption of a human rights approach in designing projects and in evaluating the SDGs. Gender-responsive and human rights based evaluations aim to reach groups that are traditionally the most marginalized and left behind, and are more likely to be negatively impacted in the absence of safeguards. This approach is particularly promising for implementing the SDGs. Goals 5 and 10 are dedicated to achieving gender equality and reducing inequalities, which are also the goals of MDB safeguards.

THE BOTTOM LINE

The cross-sectoral nature of SDGs calls for adopting a holistic approach to their implementation as well as monitoring and evaluating their effectiveness, including through a variety of frameworks and entry points. From the UNEG, multilateral institutions can learn about the importance of integrating gender and equity in every evaluation by assessing the intended and unintended impacts of projects and programs. Generation and use of evidence in relation to safeguards and risk mitigation should go beyond the “do no harm” and toward the “leave no one behind” approach. Learning from the application of safeguard frameworks and gender-responsive evaluations can enhance SDG review mechanisms and further operationalize the principles of inclusiveness, participation, and ownership.

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