



GENDER EQUALITY IN INVESTMENT DESIGN

GOOD PRACTICE NOTE

1. OVERVIEW

This Good Practice Note helps DFAT staff integrate gender equality into program design. 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.

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 design is key to securing an investment's good performance on gender equality during implementation, regardless of its objectives or sector. Analysis shows that initiatives that have a principal or significant gender equality objective¹ at inception perform more strongly in gender equality quality assessments during implementation, and also perform more strongly on, effectiveness scores. 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. Attention to these issues throughout the design process will improve the quality of investments and the sustainability of results, and is much more effective than adding gender equality concerns after a design has been approved, or during implementation.

This Good Practice Note helps program managers analyse and assess gender equality issues 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; Partner-led design.

¹ 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](#)



2. CHECKLIST

Checklist to assess attention to gender equality in concept and design.

Concept preparation

- Did the team identify and draw upon gender analysis (existing or new) as part of the 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; social analysis; conflict analysis?
- 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

- How does gender analysis inform the investment design?
- Was gender expertise used during the design mission/development of the design?
- Does the investment design clearly specify whether and how both women and men will participate and benefit equally?
- Does the Theory of Change clearly articulate how gender inequalities will be addressed and are indicators measuring changes for women or changes in gender equality included explicitly in the monitoring and evaluation framework?
- Have gender equality outcomes and impacts been identified and discussed?
- Has the design articulated a coherent approach and strategies to promote gender equality and evidence of their effectiveness?
- 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 identified and made use of entry points within existing systems and policy frameworks of the partner(s)?
- Has the design considered the impact (intended and unintended) that the intervention could have on gender norms and women's status and included strategies for avoiding or minimising negative impacts on women?
- Does the budget include an allocation for activities promoting 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 Preventing Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH)² addressed?
- Do the position descriptions include responsibility for addressing gender issues (not just the gender adviser but also the Team Leader and Specified Personnel, including monitoring and evaluation advisers)?
- 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 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 take account of 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. The following steps can be taken during the design stage:

- **Include responsibility for identifying 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 Gender Equality Specialists** on possible external gender consultant. Ask Gender Equality Specialists to brief the concept team before it commences.
- In the investment concept **identify the key gender equality issues that need further exploration** during the design phase. Consideration should include: who has access to resources and services; who has decision-making power; what types of discrimination against women and girls exist; what are barriers to women's equal participation and decision-making; and what capacity and commitment do partners have to progress gender equality.
- **If the concept document goes through a peer review or appraisal** involve gender specialists in the reference group from the start and explicitly put assessment of gender equality integration on the agenda of the peer review.

5. INVESTMENT DESIGN DOCUMENT OR INVESTMENT DESIGN SUMMARY

While DFAT involvement in design will vary, depending on whether a process is led by DFAT or a partner, gender equality should always be taken into consideration and be visible in investment design documentation. Consult gender specialists early in the design process, for context-specific advice and

² For further information, including DFAT's policy, see <https://dfat.gov.au/international-relations/themes/preventing-sexual-exploitation-abuse-and-harassment/Pages/default.aspx>



referrals to possible external gender consultants. Consider involving someone with gender equality expertise in advance of peer reviews and during technical appraisal of the investment design document.

5.1 GENDER ANALYSIS

Gender analysis enables assessment of:

- What the key gender equality issues are and the main barriers which might prevent women and men, 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 the kinds of strategies and actions that should be included in the design.

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.

At times, a stand-alone gender analysis may be needed. **Use existing gender analyses and data prepared by others**, such as technical agencies, multilateral development banks, think tanks, and regional or local women's organisations.

Gender analysis can also 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 both men and women are considered. Gender analysis should also show whether and how the equality gaps are different for women and girls of diverse backgrounds (see 5.2).

- **Use gender expertise:** While the composition of the team will depend on the size, complexity and risk profile of the investment, the need for gender expertise should always be considered when determining the skills required in the design team. A gender expert may provide periodic or long-term inputs.
- **Disaggregate all data by sex** (and where possible by age and disability) to identify and justify where special efforts for women's and men's equal participation and benefit are needed and to measure the impact and outcomes of investments on both women and men.
- **Involve the partner agency**, to increase their ownership of gender equality issues and thus sustainability of results. Partner ownership can mean that the gender analysis is more likely to be relevant and directly applicable to the investment and partner priorities.

5.2 IN THE DESIGN TERMS OF REFERENCE

The TOR for the design team should include responsibility for identifying the key gender equality issues and exploring appropriate responses to be built into the design.

Recognizing that men and women are not homogenous groups, the design team should be instructed to consult with female and male stakeholders of different ages, from different socio-economic, rural/urban and ethnic groups; women and men with disability; LGBTQ persons; female and male officials working in partner government organisations; women's networks, civil society organisations and local researchers. When doing consultations, consider forming separate groups for consulting with women and LGBTIQ persons; or mixed male-female groups that have a critical mass of women.



5.3 IN THE DESIGN DOCUMENT OR DESIGN SUMMARY (IF PARTNER-LED)

Gender equality should not be relegated to a few stand-alone paragraphs in the design document. It needs to be incorporated throughout the program description. The following should be visible in each of the various elements/components of the design structure:

- How each of the elements/components of the design, where possible, will:
 - 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 sexual minorities
 - support partners to achieve their own (or national) gender equality objectives
 - strengthen local institutional capacity to advance gender equality.
- How the main constraints and barriers preventing women and men from participating in and benefiting equally from the investment will be addressed.
- How each element/component will work with men to secure their support for advancing gender equality.
- The approach and general principles for integrating gender equality to be followed during annual planning (important for sector wide approaches and facility designs).
- Reporting against whole of program accountability mechanisms

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

This section should reflect the findings of gender analysis. Investment design should either be based on a stand-alone gender analysis or gender analysis should be integrated as part of other analysis that is undertaken or drawn upon during the investment design. This section should concisely articulate:

- the main problems impacting on/experienced by women and girls
- 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 gaps aligns with, and helps progress, Australia’s and partner government/organisation policy priorities. How are where can Australia add strategic value by working on gender equality and women’s empowerment? This section should clearly articulate:

- how the investment design is aligned with Australia’s and the host country’s gender equality policy and strategic commitments and priorities
- relevant areas where gender equality will be integrated and addressed

5.3.3 Proposed outcomes and investment options (what?)

Think about what the investment intends to achieve in terms of gender equality. If we know what the main issues are and what we – and our partners – want to achieve it is easier to put in place strategies and actions



to achieve it. Simply having an outcome that says “gender equality integrated throughout the program” is not sufficient. Integration of gender equality is important, but it is not an outcome in itself, and it certainly does not provide adequate guidance about what we expect in implementation. Key priorities, strategies and actions that articulate how to advance gender equality should be included as part of the discussion around investment options.

This means thinking about how gender equality might be included in the wording of the end of program outcomes or whether there needs to be a specific objective related to progressing gender equality. Referring explicitly to women and men as beneficiaries and identifying key priorities for advancing gender equality (as long as these are directly linked to the overall goal of the investment) significantly improves the likelihood that the investment will deliver equal benefits to women and men.

The gender analysis should help to inform and shape the program logic and theory of change. Gender objectives and activities should not be added on or seen as separate to the program logic and theory of change. Make explicit in the program logic or the Theory of Change what success looks like for women as well as men, and how major gender equality gaps are expected to be addressed.

5.3.4 Implementation approach (how will DFAT engage?)

As part of the implementation approach, it is important to ensure that gender equality is addressed in discussions related to governance arrangements, accountability, sustainability, risk, resourcing and M&E. Consider how gender equality can be promoted in each of these areas. For example, the governance arrangements should promote equitable representation of women and regular discussion at senior management level of progress on gender equality. In discussions about sustainability consider whether gender inequality could undermine sustainability of the investment, or whether not focusing on gender equality sufficiently could be a risk to the overarching performance of the investment. Ensure that the Policy Dialogue Matrix outline policy reform priorities around gender equality and how these will be progressed.

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

The monitoring and evaluation (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 facilitate the collection of **sex-disaggregated data** for all results relating to people, regardless of whether they focus on gender equality. 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, further disaggregation by age, disability status, poverty status, etc is recommended, as are targets for gender equality.

Based on the Program Logic, choose appropriate gender-sensitive (quantitative and qualitative) indicators against which to track progress towards agreed objectives. Qualitative indicators will help to assess changes in social norms and attitudes, sense of empowerment and how and why change is happening, especially for



diverse women. 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. Gender-sensitive indicators will help to measure:

- Changes in the relative status of specific groups of men and women (positive or negative) as a result of an investment
- How gender equality impacts on the achievement of investment objectives.

It is also important to ensure that women, are involved in monitoring and evaluation and that partners are asked to report on it regularly. Data should be used to regularly assess progress and improve the performance of the investment.

Reviews: TOR for reviews (e.g. progress reports, annual plans, completion reports, evaluations) need to identify clear expectations for integrating gender equality concerns. Reporting on gender equality results should include sex-disaggregation of data as well as analysis of possible differences in participation, benefits and impacts on women and men. Given the complex nature of gender equality and that progress requires changes in attitudes and behaviours, and in power dynamics, reporting on lessons learned is particularly important so that DFAT can contribute to the evidence base about what works and what does not. To effectively address gender in reviews and evaluations, specify a team with gender expertise, and include gender equality in the Statement of Requirement when procuring an evaluation team.

5.3.6 Gender, disability and other cross-cutting issues

As well as referencing gender equality throughout the design, there is a separate section on gender equality, which should articulate the overall strategy to address gender equality issues. This section should not be the only reference to gender equality in the design. This section should explain how and to what degree the investment will contribute to closing gender equality gaps in the country/region/sector and how this has been reflected throughout the design (including in the program logic and M&E). It should also provide a rationale for the gender policy marker that has been selected in line with OECD/DAC minimum standards and outline how the investment will address the three priority pillars of DFAT's Gender Strategy.³ This section should also describe how intersecting disadvantages will be addressed and how sustainable and transformational results for women and girls will be achieved. The arrangements for developing a 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 resourced to ensure that gender equality is addressed during investment implementation and monitoring. Programs that include adequate technical expertise for gender are more likely to achieve better gender equality results. Funding should be allocated for a gender adviser and to implement gender equality actions and strategies where relevant.

5.3.8 Procurement, and partnering

Consider the types of accountability mechanisms that will be 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.

³ Refer to [Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment 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 women are not disadvantaged as a result of the investment. 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. Once identified, the design should explain how gender related risks will be mitigated throughout the investment.

6. FURTHER INFORMATION AND ADVICE

For further assistance on gender equality integration please contact the Gender Equality Branch at gender.equality@dfat.gov.au.

