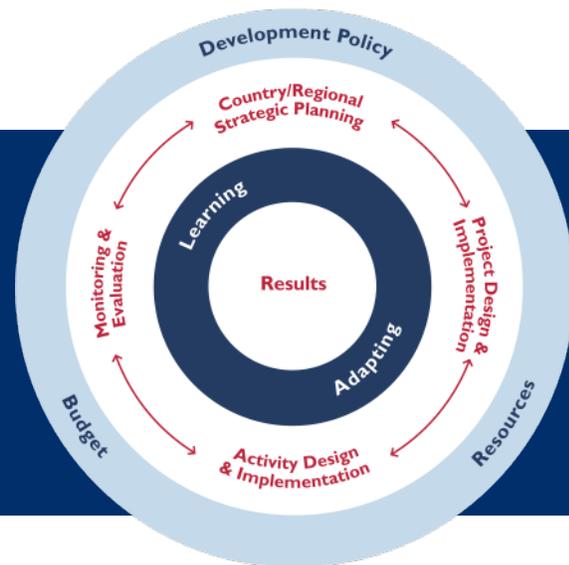


# PROGRAM CYCLE

## HOW-TO NOTE

# Engendering Evaluation at USAID



This Note describes key steps and good practices in engendering evaluation.

How-To Notes are published by the Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning and provide guidelines and practical advice to USAID staff and partners related to the Program Cycle. This How-To Note supplements ADS 201, ADS 205, and the Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy.

## INTRODUCTION

The [Evaluation Policy \(2016\)](#) and the standalone [Automated Directives System \(ADS\) 201](#) affirm the importance of conducting and learning from rigorous evaluations as an integral part of the USAID Program Cycle. The release of USAID's [Gender Equality and Female Empowerment \(GE/FE\) Policy](#) in 2012 and the related standalone [ADS 205](#) heightened attention to gender integration across all phases of the Program Cycle, including the development of Country Development Cooperation Strategies (CDCSs), the project design process, drafting solicitations, and the monitoring and evaluation of program results.

Previous How-to Notes have addressed how to report on gender in operational plans (OPs) and Performance Plans and Reports (PPRs) and how to integrate attention to gender in project design and the resulting Project Appraisal Document (PAD). The purpose of this How-to Note is to describe key steps and good practices in engendering evaluations with the goal of assisting USAID staff to:

1. Design, manage, and participate in evaluations that reflect attention to gender issues;
2. Examine the extent to which USAID programs address gender issues and/or produce results that benefit people of both sexes; and
3. Assess whether addressing key gender gaps has resulted in better development outcomes.



## **USAID REQUIREMENTS RELATED TO GENDER IN EVALUATION**

ADS 201, ADS 205, and the GE/FE Policy require rigorous monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) that takes gender into account. In general, Bureaus and Missions should strive to ensure that evaluation designs, methodologies, data collection and analyses adequately capture the situations and experiences of both males and females. ADS 205 details several specific requirements, including that operating units (OUs) collect appropriate sex-disaggregated data, develop indicators designed to track changes in key gender gaps, and ask clear questions to uncover intended and unintended positive and negative changes for women or men using appropriate qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

OUs should also consider whether key evaluation questions examine the extent to which closing gender gaps has improved project outcomes and whether the project has transformed gender norms and reduced gender gaps for men and women across diverse sub-groups (e.g., different ages, people with disabilities, etc.), where applicable.

## **KEY DEFINITIONS**

**Gender equality** concerns fundamental social transformation—working with men and boys, women and girls, to bring about changes in attitudes, behaviors, roles and responsibilities at home, in the workplace, and in the community. Genuine equality means expanding freedoms and improving overall quality of life so that equality is achieved without sacrificing gains for males or females.

**Female empowerment** is achieved when women and girls acquire the power to act freely, exercise their rights, and fulfill their potential as full and equal members of society. While empowerment often comes from within, cultures, societies, and institutions create conditions that facilitate or undermine the possibilities for empowerment.

**Gender integration** involves identifying and then addressing gender inequalities during strategy and project design, implementation, and MEL. Since the roles and power relations between men and women affect how an activity is implemented, it is essential that project managers address these issues on an ongoing basis.

**Gender-sensitive indicators** point out to what extent and in what ways development strategies, projects, and activities achieved results related to gender equality and whether/how reducing gaps between males/females and empowering women leads to better development outcomes.

## KEY DEFINITIONS

**Impact evaluations** measure the change in a development outcome that is attributable to a defined intervention. Impact evaluations are based on models of cause and effect and require a credible and rigorously defined counterfactual to control for factors other than the intervention that might account for the observed change.

**Performance evaluations** represent a broad range of evaluation methods. They often incorporate before/after comparisons but generally lack a rigorously defined counterfactual. Performance evaluations may focus on what a particular strategy, project, or activity has achieved, how it was implemented, how it was perceived and valued, contribution of USAID assistance to the results achieved, and other questions pertinent to strategy, project or activity design, management, and operational decision-making.

## GENDER-SENSITIVE OR “ENGENDERED” EVALUATION

Meeting the requirements of ADS 205 is part of ensuring that an evaluation is gender-sensitive or “engendered.” Engendering an evaluation means that all stages of the evaluation reflect: (1) an awareness that the degree and meaning of program participation, program results, and potential sustainability are shaped by gender; (2) a recognition that explicit attention to gender issues must be integrated into the evaluation if gender equality objectives are to be addressed; and (3) a commitment to examining the extent to which gender equality was achieved as a result of the strategy, project, or approach that was implemented. A fully gender-sensitive approach would include these elements in the Evaluation Statement of Work (SOW); the evaluation design, methodological approach, and data collection methods; and throughout data analysis and reporting. Without engendered evaluation, USAID will be unable to examine the extent to which its programming achieves positive results and improves quality of life for women as well as men; reduces gender gaps and empowers women and

girls; and contributes to the high-level outcomes articulated in the GE/FE Policy.

## ENGENDERING AN OPERATING UNIT’S EVALUATION PLANNING

Successful integration of gender into evaluations starts early. Although it is never too late to consider gender issues in an evaluation, better integration is likely to occur if the intersection of gender and evaluation is considered well before an individual evaluation is planned. From strategies to project design and implementation, there are numerous opportunities in the Program Cycle to consider integrating gender in order to produce more successful engendered evaluations. Some particularly opportune stages include:

*The Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS).* Gender analysis is a mandatory analysis for a CDCS and should occur prior to the development of the results framework. The gender analysis is a valuable source for considering where in the results framework an OU might want to focus evaluation questions that address gender issues, or when, over the life of the CDCS, it makes sense to ask gender-sensitive evaluation questions that can help the Mission understand to what extent and how gender equality goals are being met. Final CDCS documents are required to identify high-priority evaluation questions.

*The Mission Performance Management Plan.* The Mission evaluation plan is a required element of a Performance Management Plan (PMP) that is to be completed within six months after the development of a CDCS and continuously updated over the life of the CDCS. Although it only includes summary information

about planned evaluations, viewing the entire set of evaluations together can help reveal where it would be helpful to further integrate gender concerns.

*The Portfolio Review.* Missions should consider during Portfolio Review where gaps in knowledge about the effects of USAID programming on gender issues might be addressed with an evaluation along with what has been learned about gender gaps from evaluations since the last Portfolio Review.

*Project Design and Implementation.* The GE/FE Policy and ADS 205 require that a gender analysis also be carried out as part of the project design process and that the results of the analysis inform the design itself. This is to ensure that the project addresses the needs of both women and men, maximizes the likelihood that members of both sexes will be able to participate, and produces equally positive results for both. With these design considerations in mind, and by incorporating the collection of gender-sensitive indicators at both baseline and end line in the Project MEL Plan, design teams can ensure that gender-related results will be monitored across the life of the project and that evaluations can be designed to effectively address gender gaps and female empowerment. When Project MEL Plans and Activity MEL Plans are not designed, from inception, in a gender-sensitive manner, it is unlikely that a post-hoc decision to evaluate gender-related results will be successful.

## **ENGENDERING THE PLANNING AND DESIGN OF AN EVALUATION**

The planning and design of evaluations, from the development of the SOW to the final design submitted by the evaluation design team, should integrate explicit attention to gender issues. Key areas of attention include:

*Evaluation Purpose.* Evaluation begins with a purpose. The evaluation purpose states why the evaluation is being conducted, who will use the results of the evaluation, and how they will do so. Purpose statements often link the evaluation to future decisions to be made by USAID leadership, partner governments, and/or other key stakeholders. Because USAID evaluations cannot address all aspects of a project from every angle, it is encouraged that they have a specific focus consistent with the resources devoted to the evaluation. It is entirely appropriate for a USAID evaluation to focus exclusively on issues of gender equality in the strategy/project/activity being evaluated. For example, a portfolio-level evaluation may focus on how gender has been addressed in the design and implementation of portfolio activities, or whether gender outcomes have improved in those areas where a variety of activities have been implemented.

However, in cases where gender is not the exclusive focus of the evaluation, or where the strategy/project/activity being evaluated does not have a primary focus on gender, addressing gender issues may still be a subsidiary purpose that is reflected throughout the evaluation SOW and evaluation design.

*Evaluation Questions.* For evaluations of gender equality strategies/projects/activities with an exclusive focus on gender issues, evaluation questions that focus on specific gender concerns will naturally follow. For evaluations that do not have a primary purpose of addressing gender, gender should nevertheless be considered in the development of the evaluation questions. [ADS 201 mab, USAID Evaluation Statement of Work Requirements](#) notes that an Evaluation SOW must identify all evaluation questions for which sex-disaggregated data are required as well as identify questions for which an examination of gender-specific or gender-differential effects are required.

In some cases, such integration will take the form of one or more questions that specifically focus on gender, such as whether an activity effectively included women when reaching out to potential beneficiaries or

whether the empowerment of women increased over the course of a project. It is good practice to review the gender analyses that were carried out for the relevant CDCS and PAD when drafting evaluation questions to ensure that they are engendered.

At a minimum, the primary evaluation questions should include sub-questions that ensure that the data reported are sex-disaggregated. For instance, questions from a survey of project beneficiaries about knowledge gained from a recent USAID training should be reported separately for men and women. *Engendering the Methodology and Design*. ADS 201 mab and ADS 205 both note that evaluation methods should use sex-disaggregated data and incorporate attention to gender relations in all relevant areas.

For USAID impact evaluations, attention to gender will typically mean that the experimental or quasi-experimental design should estimate the impact of the USAID interventions on both male and female beneficiaries where appropriate. Doing so will require sufficient sample sizes and consideration as to whether the intervention is expected to have differential impacts on males and females.

For USAID performance evaluations, attention to gender will require the disaggregation of person-level output and outcome data that is presented as evidence in answering evaluation questions. The choice of evaluation designs and methods for performance evaluations will depend on the specific evaluation questions that must be addressed by the evaluation team, but should also take into account how design and method choices will affect the ability of the evaluation team to address gender. Both quantitative and qualitative methods may be appropriate, and often a mix of the two is optimal for engendered evaluations.

Because many development programs are conceived in a gender-neutral manner, project managers may fail to recognize the unintended consequences for women that result from their programs. Similarly, many evaluation methods only examine the expected outcomes of the project on the expected beneficiaries. In developing an engendered evaluation design, evaluators and evaluation managers should consider methods and designs that are capable of identifying both positive and negative unintended consequences for women or girls. For instance, this might include qualitative interviews or focus groups with women who were expected to benefit from the project but did not, or women who were only indirectly involved in the project. Participatory evaluation approaches may be particularly relevant, since deep involvement of local stakeholders, including women, in the design and conduct of an evaluation can help ensure that unintended consequences for women are avoided or addressed, and issues of gender equality are not overlooked.

## **ENGENDERING THE CONDUCT OF THE EVALUATION**

*Gender expertise on the evaluation team.* The extent and nature of the gender expertise needed on an evaluation team will, to some extent, depend on the type of evaluation questions that are being examined. If the evaluation is designed to examine questions that are primarily or wholly focused on gender, then at least one member of the design team should be a gender expert with experience in gender analysis and designing or leading engendered evaluations. It will also be beneficial if this team member or another person has specific knowledge of key gender issues in the sector being examined.

If only a small subset of the evaluation questions address gender issues, it may not be necessary to include a team member with sole responsibility for integrating gender in the evaluation. Nevertheless, one or more team members should have experience in engendered evaluation methods and knowledge of gender issues in the relevant sector. The evaluation team should also include one or more members with local cultural

expertise, including an awareness of gender norms, how gender interacts with other identity elements, and which sub-groups of women may be at risk for exclusion from the project or evaluation.

Ideally, evaluation teams should include members of both sexes. Gender-balanced evaluation teams are particularly important in cultural contexts in which constraints prohibit women from talking to unrelated men, or where women may not be comfortable speaking to a man. Including local evaluators with relevant gender and cultural expertise can be particularly valuable in this regard.

*Gender-sensitive data collection.* Evaluators will need to be attuned and responsive to factors that might influence the likelihood that disproportionate numbers of males and females will participate in data collection for the evaluation, including factors such as where and how they spend their time, how much leisure time they have, whether there are prohibitions on women appearing in certain places or speaking with certain types of people, and whether powerful cultural gatekeepers have control over who participates.

Data collection instruments and protocols should also reflect an understanding of gender roles and constraints in a particular cultural context. For example, questions on a data collection tool may need to use locally recognized symbols or terminology, be sensitive to potentially different meanings that males and females might ascribe to the same terms, acknowledge and collect information about the different roles that men and women play in the sector being examined, or ask sex-specific questions to tap into the unique experiences of men and women. Data collection protocols will also need to reflect local contexts and norms concerning the conditions under which women (or men) feel empowered to speak freely. These considerations could determine, for example, whether it is best to collect data individually or in groups, whether groups should include all people of the same sex or both sexes, or whether groups should also be stratified by age. These considerations could also determine where it is best to collect data, since local contexts and norms may influence whether women (or men) feel empowered to speak freely in various locations, such as the home, the street, a village square, or an institutional setting, such as a hospital.

## **CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED IN ENGENDERING EVALUATION**

There are many and diverse reasons why evaluations may not be fully engendered and/or evaluation results may not fully reveal hidden gendered patterns of participation or results. Many of these reasons can be traced to problems with initial project design, including: (1) the absence of or failure to utilize a quality gender analysis in the relevant sector; (2) a planned timeline insufficient to capture transformative gender results; (3) an engendered project design that was not fully implemented; and (4) lack of attention to contextually relevant gender-sensitive indicators.

Design problems can also lead to segments of the population being absent from the evaluation, especially underrepresented or marginalized groups that include vulnerable sub-groups of women and girls. Gender-blind data collection tools, protocols, and research methods may unintentionally narrow the diversity of perspectives and experiences captured from key stakeholders, especially those who are low in social power. Even evaluations that include a careful and thorough examination of expected gender-related results may suffer from the failure to anticipate and investigate unintended consequences of the strategy, project, or activity, including harmful or negative effects on gender norms, women's experiences, or female empowerment. Engendered evaluation may also be undercut by insufficient knowledge, interest in, or commitment to gender equality goals among USAID technical staff or leadership. Many of these challenges can be managed, at least in part, by including people with relevant gender expertise in all stages of project design and implementation as well as in the design, management, and execution of evaluations.

## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

The following resources can be used to provide additional information. Some other resources exist but are out-of-date with current USAID guidance. Where information differs, the USAID Evaluation Policy and the USAID ADS (Automated Directives System) 200 series take precedence over information in other resources.

- Gender-Sensitive Evaluation: Best and Promising Practices in Engendering Evaluation:  
<https://dec.usaid.gov/dec/content/Detail.aspx?ctID=ODVhZjk4NWQtM2YyMi00YjRmLTkxNjktZTcxMjM2NDBmY2Uy&rlD=MzUzNjU5>
- USAID Evaluation Policy: <https://www.usaid.gov/evaluation/policy>
- USAID Gender Equality and Female Empowerment (GE/FE) Policy:  
<https://www.usaid.gov/policy/gender-equality>
- USAID ADS 201: <https://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/200/201>
- USAID ADS 201 mab: <https://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/200/201mab>
- USAID ADS 205: <https://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/200/205>