Evaluation Insights

Mainstreaming Gender Equality

Emerging Evaluation Lessons

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Evaluation Insights are informal working papers issued by the Network on Development Evaluation of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC). These notes highlight emerging findings and policy messages from evaluations and share insights into the policy and practice of development evaluation.

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This paper draws on a synthesis study prepared by the Operations Evaluation Department (OPEV) of the African Development Bank. The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the policies or positions of the OECD DAC or its members.

This note summarises 20 years' experience of promoting gender equality in bilateral and multilateral development organisations.

The overall conclusion is that promoting gender equality is not yet integrated into the mainstream operations and organisational culture of development organisations: there is no example of a development organisation successfully mainstreaming gender to the degree that it has been incorporated into its "DNA". Getting new concepts and practices into the mainstream of an organisation demands a significant cultural change. Achieving a change of this magnitude needs more concerted and consistent action.

There are six areas where action is needed to promote gender equality for it to become embedded in the culture of an organisation. While most donors have taken action in some of the areas, no organisation has managed to keep up a sustained and successful effort in all six. This is necessary if the culture is to change.

First, an organisation's leadership must consistently lead and support the mainstreaming of gender equality and policy. This must start at the top. Second, systems of accountability and incentives must have enough "bite" so staff cannot evade responsibility for delivering gender equality results. Third, gender equality work must be properly funded and there must be sufficient trained senior staff to gain traction over an organisation; a few junior gender staff is not enough. Fourth, new procedures and practices must be well designed, given a big push at the outset and the momentum maintained rather than allowed to diminish. Fifth, there needs to be a consistent approach to recording results and disseminating lessons. Finally, the test of whether gender equality has been embedded in the mainstream of an organisation is the degree to which it is seen as contributing to rather than competing with the drive for more effective aid and other priorities. If gender equality is become an integral part of the culture of an organisation—part of what defines its mission, values and objectives then consistent and sustained action is needed in all six of these areas.

Twenty-six thematic gender evaluations provided the source material for this note. The longer working paper from which this summary is drawn is available on the African Development Bank website: www.afdb.org.

INTRODUCTION: GETTING CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES INTO THE MAINSTREAM

A cross-cutting issue is one that doesn't sit neatly within institutional, departmental or intellectual boundaries. Tackling the issue therefore needs action by every part of an organisation. All organisations face the challenge of how to get cross-cutting issues reflected in their work.

Promoting gender equality is a quintessentially cross-cutting issue. Achieving it requires action by all. It also requires a change in the management culture, so that the issue becomes integrated into the values, mission and management of the organisation. This process of promoting a cultural change in an organisation is called getting the issue "into the mainstream".

Achieving this sort of cultural change in an organisation is not easy. And there is always the danger that by putting the issue into the mainstream the issue will disappear from sight: in becoming the responsibility of everyone it becomes the responsibility of none.

The overarching lesson of this evaluation is that there is no single magic bullet that will achieve the cultural change needed if gender equality is to become part of an organisations' "cultural DNA". Many different aspects of management practice contribute to the overall "management culture" of an organisation. Relying too much on one or two—particularly the easy changes that do not threaten existing patterns and styles of working—at the expense of the others that are more difficult is a common mistake. Concerted and sustained action on all fronts is needed: leadership, incentives, money and skills, procedures and practices, results and reporting. If all these happen, then cultural change is possible and gender equality becomes an issue, value and ambition that define the organisation and the way it works.

> **Mainstreaming: Emerging Lessons**
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> Getting an issue into the mainstream of an organisation requires cultural change. Technical or bureaucratic solutions alone will not work. Action is needed on all fronts.
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> Some of the changes will take time. For example increasing the number of women in senior posts may take several years. Long-term commitment to achieving and maintaining the change is needed.
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> A common mistake is to focus on the easier bureaucratic changes, such as training staff and introducing boxes to be ticked, and avoid tackling the more difficult issues such as the quality of leadership and linking pay and promotion to performance on gender equality.

LEADERSHIP

Mainstreaming requires a step-change in the management culture of an organisation. Such change requires visible and sustained leadership and commitment from senior management, as well as the necessary resources, incentives, and accountability systems.

The importance of leadership was noted in all the evaluations that contributed to this review. The evaluations judged leadership on gender equality to be weak or at best variable over time.

Effective leadership requires power and authority. The evaluations found that it is not effective to delegate leadership on gender equality to technical staff, who don't have the authority or resources to lead. Without authority or resources behind them those who have responsibility for promoting gender equality are often seen as internal lobbyists or a special interest group who do not understand or appreciate the wider context. As a result their suggestions can easily be ignored.

> **Leadership: Emerging Lessons**
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> The leadership of an organisation embodies and communicates its culture. They must all be visibly and strongly committed to gender equality.
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> Leaders need incentives: leaders should be held accountable for delivering gender equality. Also, if the performance of senior staff on gender equality affects their pay and promotion this sends a strong signal of how seriously the organisation takes the issue.
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> More women are needed in senior leadership positions. The composition of an organisation sends a strong signal about its commitment to gender equality. A lack of women in senior positions shows that an organisation cannot apply to itself the policies on gender equality it advocates for others. This undermines its credibility.

The excuses given for weak leadership on gender equality are often the demands of other cross-cutting priorities, such as climate change, the MDGs, HIV/AIDS, aid effectiveness, and governance agendas. Furthermore, senior management and political leaders are often most responsive to priorities that receive the most international attention and resources, and so offer rewards and career enhancement. So efforts to mainstream gender equality tend to intensify alongside the quinquennial international conferences on gender equality but fade shortly afterwards.

Incentives are also important. Few organisations provide strong enough incentives to their senior managers to deliver gender equality results. If managers do not see clear organisational links between gender policy, incentive systems, sanctions, and career rewards, the leadership of an organisation will not focus on gender equality, or see it as the "way we do business".

Finally, men overwhelmingly occupy the positions of power and influence in most donor organisations. If an organisation has few women in senior positions then it is sending out a clear message that it is not providing the same opportunities for women as men in career advancement: in short, its management systems are not gender sensitive.

A billboard featuring President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf gives a positive message to the people of Liberia (Betty Press/Panos Pictures)

In summary, sustained, visible and dynamic leadership from the very top of an organisation is needed to drive forward action on gender equality. A short intense push is not enough – leadership must be maintained. Senior managers must have pay and promotion partly determined by their performance on delivering gender equality and job descriptions should include responsibility to deliver gender equality. More women are needed in senior positions. Again the momentum behind this style of leadership must be sustained, and not seen as a short-term political response to external pressure or advocacy.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND INCENTIVES

Systems of accountability and incentives play an important part in communicating the tone and direction of travel of an organisation to its staff.

The importance of incentives for the success of gender mainstreaming was emphasized in 20 of the 26 evaluations. The broad conclusion is that promoting gender equality has not been consistently incorporated into management systems. Instead it has been introduced as a "bolt-on" with no incentives or accountability to drive behaviour and performance. In short it has been seen as "nice but not necessary".

Accountability and Incentives: Emerging Lessons

Incentives for staff communicate a clear message about the direction of travel of an organisation.

Systems of accountability and incentives must have bite otherwise they are seen as "nice but not necessary".

Pay and promotion are important incentives and should be partly determined by performance on gender equality.

Professional recognition and recognizing and rewarding high-performing teams, departments, or projects are also important.

If there is no accountability for delivering on gender equality this is seen as a sign that top management is not committed to gender equality.

Ensuring everybody has gender equality performance targets in their job plans, terms of reference and job descriptions sends a clear signal about what is expected of staff. When the competencies required of a senior manager include a good knowledge of gender equality policy and practice, a clear signal is sent to those below them in the system that they too will be expected to perform with regard to gender equality.

Pay and rewards also provide powerful incentives and also send a clear signal about how seriously an organisation is taking gender equality. Recognition of outstanding work through prizes and other awards, pay awards and promotion opportunities, and corporate awards or budgetary incentives all raise the profile and status of gender equality. Gender Challenge Funds can be set aside to reward exceptional work or support innovative programs.

Strong incentives are needed to encourage all staff to attend training courses and be aware of the organisation's policy and practice on gender equality. These help maintain momentum. When promotion and posting opportunities are made contingent on completing the training at the right level, it sends a clear signal to staff about the importance attached to gender equality.

HUMAN AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Most of the evaluations concluded that donors have not provided enough money and people to ensure gender equality is incorporated into the mainstream of the organisation. There are two key issues. First, there is limited information on how much money is spent on gender equality. Second, despite the lack of financial data, most of the evaluations concluded that not enough money and people were allocated to support the organisational changes to mainstream gender equality.

Personnel responsible for mainstreaming gender in many organisations are often junior or part-time staff who find it difficult to influence senior management. A requirement to take account of gender and draw on expertise has not been integrated into the roles and responsibilities of non-gender specialist staff, with gender equality remaining the responsibility of a few junior staff.

The evaluations also found that when resources were constrained cuts in gender expertise were often made before cuts to other areas of work.

Human and Financial Resources: Emerging Lessons

Having sufficient senior staff qualified in gender equality is essential.

But all staff must be responsible for gender equality. Awareness of gender equality should be tested during staff recruitment and included in the competence assessment of all staff.

Reporting of spending on gender equality is patchy and inconsistent.

Kenya, Kisumu: A young female mechanic
(Sven Torfinn/Panos Pictures)

Having enough trained and senior staff is essential if gender equality is to get into the mainstream of an organisation. A comprehensive approach to mainstreaming requires gender specialists at both headquarters and the country level. These specialists must have the budget and mandate to influence the design and implementation of interventions, and to provide technical support to partner governments.

There must be enough money to ensure sufficient gender specialists and consultants can be recruited. Money is also needed for training, monitoring and evaluation and other measures to build capacity for gender equality.

PROCEDURES AND PRACTICES

Organisations often introduce bureaucratic procedures to support processes of change. These can support a broader process of changing the culture of an organisation, but they need to become part of normal practice, and not just another box to be ticked.

The evaluations found that many procedures and practices have been introduced to support the integration of gender equality into the mainstream of an organisation. However, the majority were introduced following the adoption of new gender policies or strategies, and were pursued for only a short period before falling into disuse.

Procedures and practices to support mainstreaming have included Gender Action Plans, gender analysis, toolkits, manuals, checklists, and staff training.

Procedures and Practices: Emerging Lessons

Having paper-based procedures and practices that support gender equality is not enough. They need to become the "daily bread" of an organisation: as natural and as unavoidable as brushing your teeth or tying your shoes.

Training can raise awareness, commitment and under-standing; but it must be tailored to local needs and not be too general.

There needs to be an element of compulsion in training. Senior staff must attend and be seen to attend. This sends a clear signal about the importance of the training.

The evaluations found that although there are good examples of procedures and practices they have not been introduced or used systematically. Procedures such as Gender Action Plans and gender analysis can be effective if they are integrated throughout the design, implementation, and monitoring of the intervention. But they tend to be confined to sectors such as education and health, where opportunities for gender-sensitive approaches are more obvious. Yet again, they have become "nice but not necessary", their use depending on the appetite and interest of staff.

The evaluations found that training often fails to raise the skills, awareness and knowledge of staff to a level at which they can fully embrace gender equality policy and practice, make it an integral part of "how we do business" and advocate and support the approach with other staff. This is because training is not tailored to local needs. Resources have not been consistently targeted at providing training; and the few gender specialists are overstretched with other responsibilities. Also, senior managers and operational staff often fail to attend, or only attend spasmodically, citing heavy workloads and other priorities.

RESULTS AND REPORTING

Results and Reporting: Emerging Lessons

Indicators of performance need to be concrete, consistent, comparable, and collected over a sufficiently long period of time to provide a clear picture of overall performance.

Think long-term: getting gender equality into the mainstream takes time, and results and reporting systems need to recognise this.

If something is not being measured or assessed in some way, then progress—or the lack of it—cannot be seen and it cannot be managed. The systematic recording and communicating of progress—or the lack of it—in achieving gender equality gives direction and authority to efforts to integrate gender equality into the mainstream. Just as individuals need gender equality targets and objectives, so too do organisations, and progress towards them must be assessed.

However, donor M&E and supervision systems have produced limited, anecdotal reporting and results are often invisible. Reporting tends to focus on women rather than gender equality. This reinforces the view of some that promoting gender equality has been achieved when there are a few more projects targeted at women rather than when a fundamental change has taken place in the management culture of the organisation.

Where results are reported, they tend to be in areas such as education and health where there is a good understanding of how gender equality improves results and there is clear donor and country ownership. However, results from these sectors have not been scaled-up or transferred to other important areas, such as infrastructure. Furthermore, results tend to be reported at project level, and cannot easily be aggregated to provide an overall picture of performance at country level.

Only the AusAid and CIDA evaluations acknowledged that achieving gender equality requires a long-term perspective that goes beyond the traditional three to five-year lifespan of most interventions, and also beyond normal practices of monitoring and evaluation:

> "Inequality is the product of a complex web of forces and cannot be addressed by isolated interventions… Equality is a long-term goal that must be seen as the work of generations. The complexity and long horizons make the identification and assessment of results inherently challenging, particularly over the short term." (Gender Equality: Annual Thematic Performance Report 2006–07. Australian Agency for International Development, Canberra, page 8)

Donor organisations should make longer-term commitments to gender equality in their programming, and should place the emphasis on building sustainability over a 10 to 20-year timeframe.

The desire to support the Paris Principles of aid effectiveness and have strong centrally-driven thematic policies presents donors with a dilemma. This tension can usually be seen in the different priority placed on aid effectiveness and central policy themes such as gender equality by different departments in the same organisation. Responsibility for delivering the policy on aid effectiveness usually rests with country programme offices. Thematic and cross-cutting policies such as promoting gender equality, tackling climate change or fighting HIV/AIDS are usually the responsibility of central policy departments. Resolving the tension between the two is not easy.

Gender Equality and Aid Effectiveness: Emerging Lessons

New aid instruments such as budget support and sector-wide approaches provide good opportunities for gender equality to be built into the mainstream of donor programmes.

The emphasis on ownership, participation and national-level engagement can help deliver gender equality at a national level.

Ensuring gender equality is built into the design of budget support operations and sector-wide approaches requires staff with commitment, seniority, and technical and political skills.

Other challenges include gender equality not being made a priority in poverty reduction strategies and country policy dialogue; a lack of harmonisation among donors around gender issues; and a lack of in-country gender expertise and tools to mainstream gender in policy dialogue and interventions.

The SIDA, Norad and DFID studies highlighted that ensuring gender equality issues were considered in the design of budget support requires staff with commitment, seniority, and technical and political skills. This is usually not the case, so opportunities to integrate gender equality into new ways of delivering aid were missed, moved to the periphery, or left to the attention of a single donor. Given the low overall priority of gender equality at an organisational level and in traditional project-based approaches, it is not surprising that efforts to harmonise and promote gender-sensitive dialogue on new aid modalities are proving challenging.

Tanzania: Tandahimba Women's Rights Association is responsible for seeing that health and education budgets are spent on the right things (Andrew McConnell/Panos Pictures)

The evaluations found that gender equality was not being integrated into policy-based lending instruments, general budget support, and sector-wide approaches. However, sector-wide approaches focused on education, health, and social safety nets reported better integration of gender equality than other sectors.

Delivering gender equality requires a long-term and sustained commitment and effort. Most donors, however, operate with a shorter-term view. Some new aid instruments also operate with short timeframes, with taps being turned on and off, which in itself presents challenges when measuring results, even without considering gender equality. Neither donor nor country M&E systems are set up to track long-term progress toward gender equality. Furthermore, subtle changes in gender equality that arise from shifts in the power relations between men and women cannot easily be measured. The Paris Declaration encourages donors to focus their efforts on activities that deliver measurable results in the short-term. This may cause them to stay away from promoting changes that are difficult to measure, including changes in gender equality.

Despite these challenges, there are good opportunities to harmonise the principles of aid effectiveness with those of bringing gender equality into the mainstream. First, the principles of aid effectiveness emphasise ownership and participation. If gender equality is incorporated into budget and sector support, then there is a good opportunity to scale up impact to a national level, rather than seeing impact confined to the project-level. Second, by working at the level of national policy there is scope for a shared analysis and a more coherent approach to policies, including gender equality. Third, there is the opportunity for a comprehensive dialogue on gender issues and for the issue to be at the heart of donor discussions with the partner government.

The first step is for gender equality to be included in the policy dialogue. Once there it can be incorporated into Poverty Reduction Strategies and other national policies that feed into the development of Policy Based Lending, General Budget Support, and Sector-wide approaches.

CONCLUSION: THE WAY FORWARD ON GENDER EQUALITY

Getting gender equality into the mainstream of an organisation's policy and practice entails a significant change in the organisation's management culture and systems. Achieving this change requires action by many across the entire organisation. In this it presents similar challenges as other cross cutting issues such as climate change and HIV/AIDS.

For all of these issues, responsibility must be shared, but not lost. Leadership from the top that is visible, committed and sustained is an essential ingredient. So too are the other elements: incentives, systems for accountability, people, money, training, procedures and practices and results and reporting all need to be aligned and harmonised. In just the same way that donors seek alignment and harmonisation around new aid instruments, so too must there be alignment and harmonisation of efforts to achieve gender equality. Without this progress will stall.

So far there are no examples of a bilateral or multilateral development organisation that has managed successfully to mainstream gender to the degree that it has been incorporated into the "DNA" of the organisation and become an integral part of the way it does business. But there are good examples of donors that have managed to make progress on some of the areas. The details of what needs to be done in the different areas have been well described. The way forward is for donors to acknowledge that they are engaged in a process of organisational cultural change that is yet to be completed, that they need to continue working on all the areas, that there is no single magic bullet that will produce results but that concerted, consistent and sustained action is needed by all. Leadership and management practices must be aligned and harmonised around gender equality. Only then will gender equality become one of the defining characteristics of the organisation, its values and behaviour.

> **The Way Forward**
>
> All leadership and management practices need to be aligned and harmonised around gender equality goals.
>
> Don't look for a magic bullet that will deliver gender equality to the mainstream. Delivering the cultural change necessary will require a long-term effort across a wide range of areas with sustained, committed and visible leadership.

Father and daughter (Crispin Hughes/Panos Pictures)

The 2012 World Development Report also focuses on gender equality and sets out the case for promoting gender equality: it's worth doing in its own right, and it also makes good economic sense. But to achieve the gender equality outcomes the World Development Report advocates, donors need to do more to get gender equality integrated into their management and organisational culture.

Evaluation Insights *are informal working papers issued by the Network on Development Evaluation of the OECD DAC. These notes present emerging findings and policy messages from evaluations and share insights into the policy and practice of development evaluation. This note summarises the OPEV working paper "Mainstreaming Gender Equality - A Road to Results or A Road to Nowhere", which synthesised the findings of 26 thematic evaluations of the experience of a range of development organisations with mainstreaming gender equality. It was prepared by Michael Schultz, a consultant to the Operations Evaluation Department (OPEV) of the African Development Bank.*

Further reading
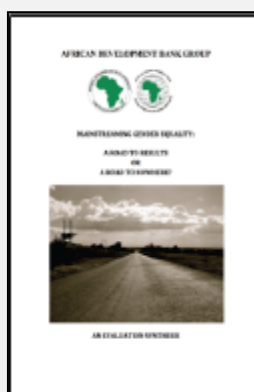
Mainstreaming Gender Equality: A Road to Results or a Road to Nowhere

May 2011

Following the Beijing Conference on Gender and Development in 1995, bilateral and multilateral development organisations have adopted policies and strategies to promote gender equality. "Mainstreaming" is the process through which donor organisations have sought to integrate gender into all their development work. This synthesis evaluation reviews experience, progress and results over the last 30 years. The review was prepared by Lee Risby of the Operations Evaluation Department (OPEV) of the AFDB and David Todd, a consultant to OPEV.
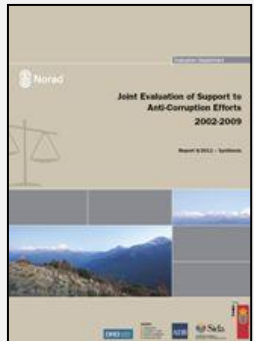
DEReC: the Development Evaluation Resource Centre

www.oecd.org/dac/evaluationnetwork/derec

DEReC brings together hundreds of development evaluations, including evaluations of gender mainstreaming and dozens of reviews of projects working on gender equality and women's empowerment. This dynamic database of evaluation reports is freely available for your use. DEReC continues to grow substantially, reaching an ever wider community, with hundreds of new reports added each year DEReC includes reports published by the independent evaluation units of our 32 members.
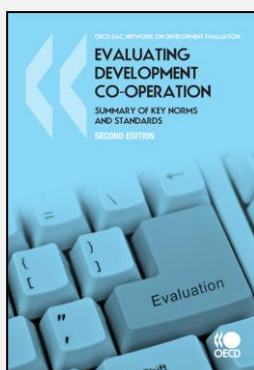
Summary of Key Norms and Standards - Second Edition

http://oe.cd/DevEvalNorms
June 2010

This concise document contains the main elements of the OECD Development Assistance Committee's approach to evaluation, including core principles for evaluation policy and management, a description of the five main evaluation criteria and internationally agreed quality standards. A working tool for assessing evaluation systems and the use of evaluation in development agencies is also presented. The last section points to other resources, including specific guidance on various types of evaluation. Also available in French: *Évaluer la Coopération pour le Développement : Récapitulatif des Normes et Standards de Référence.*

These free publications and more information on the DAC's work on evaluation and development co-operation can be found on the website: *www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation*