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GUIDE

Integrating **Gender Equality and Inclusion** (GEI) into Proposals

Guide to Integrating Gender Equality and Inclusion (GEI) into Proposals

This guidance document is intended to support applicants and parters in effectively integrating gender equality and inclusion (GEI) into their research proposals and design. Recognizing that inclusive research practices and strong gender integration lead to more robust, relevant, and impactful outcomes, IDRC encourages all applicants to consider how gender dynamics and broader inclusion principles shape their research questions, methodologies, team composition, and monitoring, evaluation and learning strategies.

By providing practical recommendations and illustrative examples, this document aims to help researchers move beyond compliance toward meaningful engagement with gender and inclusion. Applicants and partners are encouraged to reflect critically on who is involved, who benefits, and whose perspectives are represented throughout the research process.

The continuum of gender integration approaches and outcomes

Projects can be understood along a continuum of: gender limited, gender sensitive, gender responsive, and gender transformative. IDRC does not fund gender blind projects.

Definitions

Gender limited	Gender sensitive	Gender responsive	Gender transformative
A project that, in its rationale, design, and methodology, does not adequately consider gender differences and gender power dynamics. The project demonstrates only minimal recognition of the range of gendered experiences, opportunities, and outcomes in the local context, which limits its capacity to strengthen the evidence base to address gender inequality. Gender-limited projects are unlikely to challenge the status quo, risk worsening gender inequalities, and as a result, will not help transform gender norms and relations	A project that, in its rationale, design, and methodology, adequately considers gender differences and gender power dynamics, but does not follow this through to the analysis and action needed to address gender inequalities. The project falls short on integrating a gender lens in its implementation, analysis, communication, and knowledge sharing strategies.	A project that thoroughly considers gender differences and gender power dynamics in its rationale, design, and methodology, and takes preliminary steps to address gender inequalities through analysis and action. The project successfully integrates a gender lens in its implementation, analysis, communication, and knowledge sharing strategies, and engages n actions to address the symptoms of gender inequality. However, gender-responsive projects stop short of implementing strategies or interventions to tackle the root causes of gender inequalities and underlying gender power imbalances, and are unlikely to impact long-term, structural changes to gender norms and relations.	A project that examines, questions, analyzes, and builds an evidence base to address the underlying causes of gender inequalities (not just the symptoms) and contribute to long-term, structural changes for more equitable, fair, and inclusive systems. Gender transformative projects typically seek to address inequalities by strengthening individual and collective agency, transforming formal and informal institutions and policies, and rebalancing gender power relations at various levels (e.g., household, community, national).

Guiding questions

Gender limited	Gender sensitive	Gender responsive	Gender transformative
Does the project demonstrate some awareness and engagement with gender issues?	**Gender Limited plus:** Does the project extend its gender awareness to analysis or action to address gender inequality?	**Gender Sensitive plus:** Is the project engaged in analysis and action to address the symptoms of gender inequality?	**Gender Responsive plus:** Does the project seek to address the underlying causes of gender inequalities and to enact long-term, structural change at different levels?

Gender

The socially and culturally constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes assigned to women and men, girls and boys, and people whose gender identities do not fit neatly into those categories (i.e., gender-diverse people). Please see IDRC's Glossary of Terms Related to GEI.

Inclusion

Inclusion refers to a process or approach in which diversity is leveraged and different forms of exclusion are addressed to create fair, healthy and high-performing individuals, groups, organizations or societies.

Note: *Gender does not mean women. All persons have a gender – men, women and others.*

Principles for GEI integration in the research process

IDRC recommends the following principles to best integrate GEI into research projects. Please take the time to consider how each of these applies across your project's life cycle.

- **No gender-blind or inclusion-blind research: — All IDRC-supported projects integrate GEI** considerations throughout their life cycle. IDRC does not fund gender-blind or inclusion-blind research.
- **Be intentional:** Integration of GEI should be planned from the project's outset, sufficiently resourced and based on the conviction of the research team members that these dimensions matter for research quality and for project outcomes.
- **Context-based:** IDRC does not promote a single way to integrate GEI dimensions, but rather promotes the approach(es) chosen by the grantees and partners that are solidly justified in the context where research happens (e.g., by enabling co-production processes). It is suggested to focus on **multiple elements** such as beliefs and perceptions, practices and participation, access to resources, institutions, laws and policies, and the power dynamics that influence these. Also, consider **multiple levels** such as individual, relational (household, community, markets), and structural (norms, policies, institutions etc.). It is often best practice to use **multiple, mixed methods** in the research design to delve into these multiple elements.
- **Do no harm:** It is crucial to be conscious about the potential negative impacts of GEI integration and to put in place protective measures to ensure the Centre applies a do-no-harm approach.
- **Person-oriented:** IDRC supports research projects that consider people as rights-holders rather than beneficiaries, and we support the creation of evidence that will enable them to claim their own rights
- **Continuous:** GEI must be considered along the entire project cycle, from project design to final reporting and result dissemination, and go beyond collecting disaggregated data. Steps to reduce gender fade should be integrated throughout the project cycle.

Gender fade

Gender fade refers to the inability to advance gender equality and inclusion outcomes over the life of a project or program. That is, considerations related to gender feature more in the project rationale and design than in its implementation and outcomes.

- **Earlier is better:** GEI should be integrated into project management from the research design stage, and closely monitored throughout the project life cycle.
- **Budget matters:** Achieving GEI outcomes requires sustained and sufficient resources and adequate funding.
- **Be intersectional:** IDRC recognizes the importance of applying an intersectional lens throughout the research cycle to best understand how multiple factors of identity overlap and influence the extent to which individuals and communities experience oppression, privilege, discrimination and power. IDRC recognizes that there is no single intersectional lens, methodology or approach that is universally applicable.

Stage of the Project Cycle	Key Questions to Consider
Problem identification and background	What evidence exists on how the research problem affects men, women, boys, girls and gender diverse people within the context? • How is this influenced by identities or characteristics such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, caste, disability, class, where individuals live (e.g. rural, urban), etc.? What power dynamics exist between men and women and other groups related to this problem? • How are these power dynamics reflected in social and gender norms, resources, laws, policies, institutions, and governance structures? How have these respective groups been involved in identifying the problem? To what extent has prior research on this topic taken gender equality and inclusion into account? How will your research build upon or integrate a strong focus on gender equality and inclusion?
Research purpose and anticipated results	Does the goal of your research explicitly recognize and work to address the underlying causes of inequalities and unequal power relations between different genders? Does your work make gender- and inclusion-informed contributions to the available evidence on the research theme or topic? Is there a logical theory of change on how achieving the project's objectives will contribute to gender equality and/or inclusion? ***Note:*** *Adding "especially women and marginalized groups" after each of your objectives is insufficient.*
Project design and methodology	Is intersectionality (see Glossary of Terms Related to GEI) used consistently as a tool or lens across the project? How are marginalized groups' voices included in the research process? Are you using multiple methods to ensure inclusion of different groups? What priority actions or activities are most likely to impact people – both positively and negatively – across different identities such as women, men, ethnic minorities nd people with disabilities? • How has the project design involved the most impacted groups in defining these priorities?

	Have you considered the implications of participation by different groups e.g. participation of women and implications on their (unpaid) care loads? Are your research tools gender- and diversity-sensitive e.g. will data be disaggregated by sex/gender, age? Is there a comprehensive gender and inclusion analysis planned? Will this incorporate a power analysis? ***Note:*** *The evidence is clear that meaningfully integrating gender considerations into the research process improves research quality. For more information, please see* ***Research Quality Plus: Evaluating Research Differently****.*
Workplan and project team capacities	How are gender equality and inclusion considerations reflected in the project's budget? Are there sufficient resources and time allocated for research processes (e.g. translation, transportation, childcare, etc.) to ensure the inclusion of marginalized, remote, poor and illiterate participants who are often women and girls? Is there appropriate gender and intersectional representation on the research team for the local context and research topic? Does the research team possess the requisite gender- and inclusion-related capacity? • What capacity strengthening investments would be required to ensure research team members and consortium partners (if applicable) all have a sufficient level of gender and inclusion knowledge and skills? Are these investments reflected in the budget? • Do you have local partners in your team that understand contextual gender issues? If not, who could be brought into the research team and/or design phase? • Are all members of the research team aligned in addressing gender in their respective activities? Is there any resistance that should be addressed? • What is the distribution of men/women/others across the team's hierarchy? ***Note:*** *Having a woman on the team (especially if in a junior position) does not automatically equate to gender expertise. It's important to invest in qualified gender specialists and build partnerships that bring the necessary skills and insights to the work.*
Monitoring, evaluation and learning	How are gender and intersectional analysis reflected in the project's MEL plans and activities? How are gender outputs, outcomes, and impacts being monitored and assessed, including those that are both positive and negative? Have sufficient resources (human, financial) been allocated to ensure that MEL activities adequately address gender equality and inclusion concerns? Would the project benefit from an evaluation specifically focusing on gender and inclusion outcomes and impacts, and if so, is there sufficient budget to allow for this? What level of the gender continuum (see above) does your project reflect? What is the plan to identify and correct gender fade (see text box)? Is there a plan in place to assess the gender equality and inclusion-related impacts of the research through a long-term evaluation (e.g. 10 years out)? ***Note:*** *Understanding and implementing the MEL strategy should be the responsibility of the whole team.*