

GENDER-RESPONSIVE EVALUATION



A gender-responsive evaluation includes two main components. It assesses the degree to which gender and power relationships change as a result of an intervention. And it ensures that women's voices are prominent throughout the evaluation. Gender-responsive evaluations can be used to evaluate any intervention, but should be always be used when there is a focus on women's rights or empowerment.

A gender-responsive evaluation consists of two main components.

- Firstly, it assesses the *“degree to which gender and power relationships – including structural and other causes that give rise to inequities, discrimination and unfair power relations – change as a result of an intervention”* (UN Women 2015, p5). This means providing information on how projects and programmes affect men and women differently, and how far programmes are contributing towards gender equality, human rights and women's empowerment.
- Secondly, a gender-responsive evaluation is a process that is inclusive, participatory and respectful of all stakeholders. This means ensuring that women's voices, including different groupings, are prevalent throughout the evaluation.

Gender-responsive evaluations can be carried out for a number of purposes (ibid). Firstly, they enable projects, programmes and organisations to be held accountable to gender commitments, including rights, equality and empowerment. Secondly, gender-responsive evaluations should produce lessons and recommendations that can improve programming, either within the project or programme being evaluated or within other, similar, projects and programmes.

Whilst these two purposes – accountability and learning in order to improve – are to some extent shared in most evaluations, gender-responsive evaluations also seek to promote social change directly. They do this by empowering women to participate throughout the process of the evaluation. If done well, this can help raise women's capacity to participate in broader social change processes.

When to use gender-responsive evaluation

A gender-responsive evaluation should be applied when evaluating any project or programme with an explicit focus on women's rights or women's empowerment, or which particularly targets women. However, gender-responsive evaluations can also be employed in any kind of project or programme that seeks to contribute to social impact, irrespective of whether there are gender-based objectives. By contrast, a gender-responsive evaluation may not be so

useful for projects or programmes dealing with issues such as building infrastructure or curing sick people.

It is important to note that a gender-responsive evaluation is not a methodology. Instead, it is an approach that can be combined with any other kind of evaluation, such as an impact evaluation, case-based evaluation or theory-based evaluation.

How it works

There is no specific methodology for carrying out a gender-responsive evaluation. Instead, there are many different sets of guidelines covering different aspects of the evaluation process (see ActionAid undated, UNEG 2011). Guidelines are often categorised under the headings of inclusion, participation and equal power relations.

- **Inclusion** is about making sure that different groups contribute to, and benefit from, a gender-based evaluation. This usually means disaggregating stakeholders into different groups, depending on their gender or status. One of the aims of this is to make sure that specific groups of women or girls are not excluded from the process. For example, it is common for some evaluations to seek the views of women who have power in a community, whilst ignoring those who don't. An inclusive evaluation would try to ensure this does not happen, and would attempt to address power relations between different groups of women, as well as between women and men.
- **Participation** means ensuring that different stakeholders are consulted about the evaluation, and participate in decisions about what will be evaluated and how. It also means assessing how far different stakeholders, including women and girls, have been able to participate in the design and implementation of the project or programme being evaluated.
- **Equal power relations** involves addressing power relations between (or within) different groups. This means evaluators need to acquire a full understanding of the context in which any changes have taken place. It also means evaluations need to be conducted in a way that is sensitive to the empowerment of disadvantaged groups.

The box below contains several criteria that can be considered as important when developing a gender-responsive evaluation. These were developed by the United Nations Evaluation Group. However, it is important to note that each project and programme is different, and the elements required for a gender-responsive evaluation will differ according to the context.

Minimum requirements of a gender-responsive evaluation

A gender-responsive evaluation should ...

- include at least one explicit evaluation question in relation to gender equality;
- report against gender-disaggregated indicators;
- be based on gender-responsive stakeholder analysis, including human rights roles;
- include consultation with rights holders;
- include gender analysis in any description of context;
- include an analysis of the extent to which internationally and nationally agreed norms on gender equality are met by an intervention;
- include discussion of gender equality throughout any section dealing with findings; and
- have at least one conclusion and recommendation that explicitly addresses gender equality.

Source: UNEG (2017)

Of course it is also possible to go much further than this. A gender-responsive evaluation may seek to separate out any analysis of interview evidence based on gender. Or it may include women representatives in participatory analysis. Or it might highlight different gender dimensions for every conclusion and recommendation. There are endless possibilities for expanding the scope of a gender-responsive evaluation.

For many CSOs, gender is a mainstreaming or cross-cutting issue that should be considered in all projects and programmes. Some projects and programmes within these CSOs have an explicit focus on gender and rights, and these should take particular care to ensure that evaluations are gender-responsive. But gender-responsive evaluations may also be appropriate for other kinds of project or programme, whether or not gender and/or rights are a specific focus.

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Further reading and resources

Other relevant papers in this section of the M&E Universe can be found by clicking on the links below.



There are several UN-based guides that deal with gender-responsive evaluation. One of the most recent is called ‘*Good practices for integrating gender equality and human rights in evaluation*’, and is referenced under UNEG (2017) below. Many CSOs have also published advice on gender-responsive evaluation.

The Better Evaluation website (www.betterevaluation.org) contains the largest set of resources in the world covering evaluation in the social development sector. The site offers step-by-step guidance for those managing or implementing evaluations. Experienced evaluators or those with an interest in evaluation are recommended to go to that site and search through the different materials.

References

- ActionAid (u.d.). *International’s Draft Guidance Note - Evaluation Technical Briefing Note # 8: How to...Strengthen the Women’s Rights Focus in an Evaluation*. ActionAid.
- UN Women (2015). *How to Manage Gender-responsive Evaluation: Evaluation Handbook*. Independent Evaluation office, 2015.
- UNEG (2011). *Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation: Towards UNEG Guidance*. UNEG Human Rights and Gender Equality Task Force, March 2011.
- UNEG (2017). *Good practices for integrating gender equality and human rights in evaluation*. The UNEG Working Group on Gender Equality and Human Rights, 2017.

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