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GENDER AND EQUITY-FOCUSED EVALUATION IN THE SDG ERA: A CALL TO ACTION

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Introduction and background

Equity and gender equality are the core challenges of contemporary development, while evaluation serves as a means to assess the extent to which different social groups have equitable access to development outcomes. For African countries to be on track in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, their evaluation frameworks and policies need to include and consistently track the gender and equity (G&E) dimensions in all commissioned evaluations. However, a content analysis of 36 evaluation reports, guided by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), found that 78% of the evaluations were unsatisfactory or highly unsatisfactory in their approach to gender and equity. Similarly, a qualitative approach revealed a unanimous agreement from all key stakeholders that the primary reason for the non-use of gender and equity dimensions are: (i) gender and equity issues are not a requirement in the national evaluation policy for countries who have one; (ii) the capacity to conduct gender and equity evaluation is weak, and (iii) funds to conduct gender and equity-focused evaluation are not readily available. This questions the relevance of national evaluation systems to respond to current development needs.

The evolving development context necessitates that evaluations be focused on informing policy decisions, plans and programmes, and for holding state actors accountable for development results. The way development evaluations are rolled out and conducted needs to reflect the commitment countries made in achieving the SDGs. This has resulted in a push by development and evaluation experts for the harmonisation and better alignment of the evaluation criteria to meet the information needs of all stakeholders, donors and beneficiaries alike. The OECD/DAC Standards for Development Evaluation have served as a good practice in evaluation built through international consensus. However, with the complexity and the interconnectedness required in delivering sustainable development based on the agenda 2030, it becomes necessary that the five OECD/DAC criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability) are expanded to integrate other important dimensions like gender and equity. Ofir (2017) succinctly captured the argument around the DAC criteria expansion, describing them as necessary but not sufficient to determine the worth, significance or merit of a development intervention. She further argued that some important aspects are absent, creating a false sense of confidence about the extent to which they can lead to a sound, defensible

synthesis judgement about contributions to development (Ofir, 2017). The work of Reeves and Baden (2000a:11) provides a satisfactory framework for integrating other essential components into the evaluation criteria. The framework advocates for the squaring of gender/equity indicators (ratio of access, participation, inclusion, non-discrimination and empowerment) within the five evaluation criteria.

The Fourth World Conference on Women, which took place in Beijing in September 1995, focused on Action for Equality, Development and Peace. The conference resolution urged countries to adopt strategies for mainstreaming gender perspectives into all aspect of development in order to close the gender gap. However, 23 years since then not much progress has been made. Globally, women earn less than men and are more likely to work in poor quality jobs. A third suffer physical or sexual violence in their lifetime. Gaps in reproductive rights and health care leave 800 women dying during childbirth each day (UNWomen, 2017).

In Africa, women and girls continue to face a bleak future as boys are, for example, still more likely to benefit from a secondary school education than girls. Furthermore, complications due to pregnancy or childbirth leaves African women with a 1 in 3 chance of dying, compared to a 1 in 4300 chance in the developed world. Women's agency, movement and political voice remains restricted, sustained by customary belief and practices in most African countries (World Bank, 2016). While some significant progress was recorded in developed countries, most African countries are yet to show desirable progress in closing the gender and equity gap.

As African countries enter the fourth year of implementing plans, programmes and policies to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, an accelerated strategy is required to advance progress, specifically on the transformative result of ending gender disparities, inequality and all forms of social injustice. The analysis of Engela and Ajam (2010) supports the evidence of a severe paucity of information around government owned and led evaluations in Africa, with most African countries lacking gender and equity requirements in their national evaluation policies. However, African countries like South Africa, Uganda and Benin have shown remarkable leadership but still have a significant proportion of their evaluations driven by donors and development partners.

There is the need to evaluate the focus and quality of evaluations from a gender and equity perspective to ensure that evaluation is serving a developmental function. If the current global inequality and exclusion gap is to be closed, gender and equity-focused evaluations need to be embraced holistically by government agencies, private institutions, universities and sundries. This approach underscores the commitment made by 193 countries in the wake of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development set in 2015. Specifically, goal 5 of the SDG advocates for gender equality and calls for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women while goal 10 explicitly calls for the reduction in all forms of inequality. Similarly, the SDG targets place a strong emphasis on data disaggregation, i.e. providing data that distinguishes on grounds of gender, age and other relevant characteristics. Ending all forms of discrimination against women and girls is not only a basic human rights issue, but it is also a precursor for accelerating sustainable development. Evidence has it that the empowerment of women and girls has a multiplier effect and helps drive up economic growth and development across the board (Klasen, 2000).

Reiterating the criticality of gender and equity perspectives in development evaluation, an in-depth analysis of the 230 SDG indicator reveals that 32% of them are gender specific while 21% explicitly requires sex disaggregation. Twelve out of the seventeen goals speak to gender equality. Approximately 34% (58 out of 169 targets) implicitly address gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. Overall, the strong emphasis is on disaggregated data by sex and other relevant characteristics to capture the intersecting inequalities (Segone, 2013). Therefore, the principal focus of this study is to promote the correct and consistent use of gender and equity-focused evaluations to drive the achievement of sustainable and inclusive development.

The case for equity and gender perspectives

Based on the aforementioned gaps and challenges in the introductory section, the account of Robert Picciotto in *The 5th wave* gives a more concise global picture of the expanding scourge of inequality and inequity driven by the unprecedented growth of the private sector in the global economy. By his account, large parts of sectors such as social services and infrastructure (which in the past usually was the reserve of government) is now dominated by the public-private partnership (Picciotto, 2015). This situation is more pronounced in African countries where systems and institutions have remained weak (UNDP, 2014). Similarly, *Forbes Magazine* (2015) aptly captured the extent

of the global inequality and inequity stating that the three richest people in the world own wealth that is equivalent to the combined GDP of the world's poorest 48 countries. Families, communities, companies and countries are all paying a tremendous price for this inequality, with the global gender pay gap sitting at a staggering 59% (Mahmud, 2018). Recent figures estimate that women are being paid less than men, and their concentration in the unpaid, minimum wage and insecure work costs the global economy \$9 trillion a year (McCoy, 2017).

To clarify terms, "inequity" refers to the disparities between population groups that are avoidable and unfair, and which keeps a particular group of society in deprivation; "gender inequality" refers to the unequal treatment or perceptions based on gender, arising from differences in gender roles (UNICEF, 2013).

The account of Segone (2013) gives a glimpse into the prevalence of inequity in Africa, where about 90% of children with disabilities do not attend school. Furthermore, the majority of out-of-school children are girls (53%); thus, achieving gender parity would mean 3,6 million more girls in primary school (Segone, 2013). Wide and often mutually reinforcing inequalities are evident across developing countries, including inequality as per household wealth, rural/urban disparities, disability, indigenous people, ethnic minorities, those with migrant status, and gender (SDG Compass, 2015). Social equity and gender equality in human development are gaining the required support, more so with the SDG principle demanding that the furthest behind is reached first and that no one should be left behind. However, the resulting challenge is keeping the focus on achieving equitable development results through the evaluation function. The capacity of governments, civil societies and communities to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions on equitable outcomes for women and other marginalised populations remains the issue of concern.

Gender and equity-focused evaluations is an assessment of relevance effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of interventions on equitable development results (UNICEF, 2013). Gender and equity-focused evaluation employs a rigorous, systematic process in the design, analysis and interpretation of specific questions on what works or does not work for worst-off groups compared with the "better-off" groups, by providing evidence on what works in reducing inequality (Segone, 2013). Studies have shown that equity and gender-focused evaluations can be empowering for the worst-off groups as it provides evidence for advocacy, for holding duty-bearers accountable, and for demanding change (Round & Paulden, 2017).

This study adopted a set of criteria of UNEG to assess the equity and gender component of the evaluations reports in AfrED. Similarly, the argument of Reeves and Baden (2000b:11) was taken into cognisance, i.e. that a combined strategy of gender and equity-focus in programmes, and its integration into the evaluation criteria, is an efficient framework for evaluating social issues.

The evaluation practices and function are rapidly emerging in Africa, though largely donor-driven, necessitated by the need for accountability for the utilisation of donor funds (Rosenstein, 2013). Indeed, the funding and technical support from development partners have ushered in capacity and knowledge for the collection, analysis and use of evidence for decision-making in Africa. South Africa is one of the first African countries to develop and operationalise a national evaluation policy which is on par with international standards, with other African countries, like Uganda, Benin, Kenya and Ghana, achieving similar feats (DPME, 2014). It is worth mentioning, that the African Evaluation Association (AfrEA) established in 1999 has recorded giant strides, e.g.: (i) the hosting of the eighth African international conference on evaluation, (ii) the establishment of the *African Evaluation Journal* and the provision of oversight function to voluntary organisations for professional evaluation (VOPEs) in different African countries.

However, the analysis of Engela and Ajam (2010) reveals a severe paucity in government-led and solely funded gender and equity-focused evaluations in Africa. An enquiry is necessary to unravel the institutional root causes responsible for the over dependence by African countries on donor founded evaluations.

Given the above realisation, the study sought to:

1. Assess the extent to which evaluation reports published in AfrED (between 2005–2015) incorporated gender and equity dimensions in the evaluations conducted.
2. The factors (secondary or primary) hindering the inclusion/use of gender and equity in evaluations conducted in selected West African countries.
3. Lessons learned in practice and recommendations on how to overcome institutional challenges around the conduct and use of gender and equity-focused evaluation in different scenarios.

The incorporation of gender and equity in evaluations

A critical first step to understand the extent to which evaluations are responding to the need for gender responsiveness is to describe the current practice in evaluation reports. To do this, the study was sectioned into three: (i) the desk review/content analysis of the evaluation reports, (ii) qualitative investigation on the causes of non-inclusion and poor utilisation of gender and equity-focused evaluations, and (iii) an appreciative enquiry on recommendations and lessons learned for the conduct of gender and equity focused evaluations.

The review of the content analysis of the evaluation reports was sub-divided into two broad types of evaluation: (i) 'Thematic evaluations' refers to evaluation reports with specific intent to evaluate gender and equity, and (ii) the "General evaluations" represents development work which may not be specifically designed to evaluate gender and equity components.

Emphasis was placed on the type of evaluation, evaluation design, evaluation focus, and evaluation findings and recommendations. This is because an evaluation type should be applied first to establish whether the evaluation report considered gender and equity dimensions in the evaluation process or not. The two categories of general and thematic evaluations were further sub-divided into four niches for the purpose of managing the analysis:

- a. Project evaluations;
- b. Clustered projects;
- c. Policy evaluations; and
- d. Evaluation of gender equity funds (see Tables A.1 and A.2 in the Annexure).

Methods

For the first section of the study, a cluster sampling approach based on the aforementioned niches was used to select two evaluation articles each for the "General evaluation" category, and one evaluation report each under the "Thematic category". This was necessary because not all the evaluation reports in the database has a gender focus project, a necessary inclusion criterion for the thematic category. Twelve thematic evaluations and 24 general evaluation reports were selected from 492 evaluation reports captured in the AfrED database between 2015 and 2017.

For the second segment of the investigation (qualitative enquiry section), the study used a combination of purposeful sampling methods as conceptualised by Park and White (2017), which include purposeful sampling and sampling important expert groups. The “sampling of important expert groups” enabled the study to harvest relevant insight into the policy, practices and the political context hindering the utilisation of gender and equity components in evaluations from a donor and a policy maker’s perspective. The study also examined the perspectives of respondents in national and sub-national settings, to uncover any variation in respondent’s views based on location. The above sampling strategy examined 40 respondents, in line with the grounded theory methodology construed by Creswell (1998) and Morse (1994). The theory suggests that 30-50 interviews are enough to achieve theoretical saturation. Similarly, the sampling strategy proposed by Morse (2016) revealed that a combination of data collection approaches including key informant interviews, focus groups, and desktop reviews leads to higher qualitative study validity.

Two persons each from the stakeholders identified above using purposeful sampling were selected as construed by Goldstein and Reinert (1997). A respondent sample size of $n=40$ was adopted and more than ten years of evaluation experience regarded as an expert (on the premise that this period of cogent working experience in evaluation qualifies a respondent as such). Equally, the ‘Delphi-type’ key informant interview method was employed to identify the factors (primary or secondary) that hinder the implementation of gender and equity focus in Evaluation Delphi-technique as an appropriate method for reviewing plans and policies, especially when the judgement and opinions of experts are paramount (Hsu & Sandford, 2007).

Data collection

The study used a semi-structured interview guide, containing a series of open-ended questions and probes. Similarly, key informant interviews (KIIs) was utilised to collect information from experts, policy makers and heads of non-governmental organisational with over ten years experience in managing projects pertinent to gender and equity focused evaluations. Questions in in-depth interviews (IDIs) focused on identifying the challenges and documented recommendations on how to improve the conduct of gender and equity-focused evaluations.

Similarly, the application of gender equality in selecting respondent was utilised to prevent over-representation from a sex category which could skew the study findings towards a specific gender perspective. The research questionnaire was streamlined to answer the following research questions:

1. What were the reasons for the low utilisation of the gender and equity dimension in evaluation?
2. What were the lessons learned and recommendations made for improving the use of the gender and equity dimensions in evaluations?

Four countries in the West African region were selected purposively. Nigeria and Ghana represented the Anglophone countries (English-speaking), while Benin and Togo represented the Francophone countries (French-speaking) respectively. Important stakeholders like VOPEs, policy makers, national evaluators, representative from donor organisations and heads of NGOs were selected. The MAXQDA analysis tool was the tool of choice because of the advantage it has in analysing open-ended survey questions over NVivo, ATLAS.ti, and QDA Miner. Besides, it can graphically display a weighted frequency analysis of issue-based themes and at the same time show the weighted responses of different respondents to questions, using an infographic display feature (Franzosi, Doyle, McClelland, Rankin & Vicari, 2013).

Analytical framework

The research analytical framework was based on the integration model proposed by Reeves and Baden (2000b:11) founded on squaring gender/equity indicators (ratio of access, participation, inclusion, non-discrimination and empowerment) within the five evaluation criteria.

Table 3.1 Integration Evaluation Model (gender and equity components in the evaluation criteria)

Project/ Programme evaluation criteria	Mainstreaming of gender and equity dimensions/criteria				
	Ratio of Access	Participation	Inclusion	Empowerment	Non- discrimination
Relevance					
Effectiveness					
Efficiency					
Impact					
Sustainability					

Sources: Martha de Waal (2006); Reeves & Baden (2000b:11); Segone & Rugh (2013)

A comprehensive qualitative assessment was undertaken for each evaluation report selected. A data sheet was developed and tested using a sample of both "thematic" and "general" evaluations. The extent to which gender and equity were included in the evaluation report was assessed based on the parameters in the checklist below:

Table 3.2 UNEG quality checklist for evaluation

United Nations Evaluation Group quality checklist for evaluation	
Evaluation design	The report illustrates the extent to which the design and implementation of the objective, the assessment of results and the evaluation process incorporate equity and gender-based approach.
Critical questions	Is the project goal SMART and the beneficiaries identified? Is the intervention logic or theory, including underlying assumptions and factors affecting the success of the intervention present?
Evaluation Indicators	The report uses equity and gender-sensitive language throughout, including data disaggregated by sex, age, disability, income, etc.
Critical questions	To what extent was equity and gender-sensitive indicators used? Was the data collected disaggregated by sex and other parameters?
Evaluation analysis	The evaluation approach and data collection and analysis methods are responsive and appropriate for analysing the equity and gender equality issues identified in the scope.
Critical questions	Was there depth and quality in the equity and gender analysis conducted? Did the analysis show the disparities (who is getting what by sex, location, etc.)
Evaluation findings	The report assesses if the design of the object was based on sound equity and gender analysis and implementation for results were monitored through equity and gender frameworks, as well as the actual results on equity and gender.
Critical questions	Did the findings show the impact to beneficiaries as planned? Was attention given to how the resources were directed and spent?
Evaluation recommendations	Reported findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons provide adequate information on equity/gender equality rights
Critical questions	Are the recommendations relevant and reinforcing gender and equity positions? Are the recommendations specific and actionable with a focus on resources required to close the gender and equity gap?

Sources: Adapted from UNEG (2016);
European Commission (2010);
CSW (2017)

Similarly, Table 3.3 gives the rationale for scoring the evaluation reports into four categories: (i) highly satisfactory, (ii) satisfactory, (iii) unsatisfactory or (iv) highly unsatisfactory, based on the predetermined criteria ranging from 0 (which represents highly unsatisfactory) to 5 (which represents highly satisfactory):

Table 3.3 Scoring criteria and rating

Criteria	Rating	Evaluation recommendations	Evaluation findings	Evaluation analysis	Evaluation indicators	Evaluation design
Up to four or more coherent G&E statements in each Evaluation component.	Highly Satisfactory	4	4	4	4	4
Up to three but not less than 2 coherent G&E statements in each Evaluation component.	Satisfactory	3	3	3	3	3
At least one coherent statement in any two of the Evaluation components.	Unsatisfactory	1	1	1	1	1
No statement on G&E in the Evaluation component.	Highly unsatisfactory	0	0	0	0	0

Source: Adapted from UNEG (2016)

Findings on general evaluations

The findings in Table 3.4 presents the overall analysis of the extent gender and equity were included in the "general evaluation" category. A total of 24 project evaluation reports were assessed in the general category. The country report codes (NG2, ZM1, RW2, etc.) represent the evaluation reports selected from the AfrED (see Table A.1 in the Annexure for a full description of reports).

Table 3.4 Overall analysis for general evaluation category

Highly Satisfactory attention to gender and equity issues	Satisfactory attention to gender and equity issues	Unsatisfactory attention to gender and equity issues	Highly Unsatisfactory attention to gender and equity issues
	NG2 RW1 BW1 TZ2 ZA1	NA1 ZW2 NG1 ZM1 RW2 BW2 UG2 GH2	NA2 ZW1 ZM2 TZ1 UG1 GH1 ZA2 KE1 KE2 ET1 ET2
0	5	8	11

1. Eleven evaluations (45%) are highly unsatisfactory in their treatment of gender and equity issues. The evaluation reports did not examine the benefits or impact on women, neither did they assess women's participation. In most cases, little or no data was presented as evidence in the analysis although it was the intention. In some of the evaluation reports reviewed, the agency policy commitment to gender equality and equity was described and recommendations made that more gender or equity-related analysis was needed. The evaluation design, indicators, questionnaire, findings and recommendations did not consider gender and equity issues.
2. Eight evaluations (33%) were rated as having an unsatisfactory gender and equity component in their analysis. The evaluation reports measured in a limited way the participation of socially disadvantaged groups, including women, in project or programme activities. There was no clear information on how the socially marginalised groups, including women, have benefitted. Nor was there any statements about the impact of the project on women or

any other category of socially excluded individuals. The evaluation design, indicators, questionnaire, findings, and recommendations had very weak and incoherent references to gender and equity issues.

3. Five evaluations (20%) were rated as having a satisfactory gender analysis. The reviewed reports measured the participation of women in activities and provided at least two pieces of information on how the disadvantaged groups, including women, have benefitted from programme or project activities. It also gave at least two accounts on the impact of activities on the socially disadvantaged groups, including women. The evaluation design, indicators, questionnaire, findings and recommendations included clear gender and equity dimensions. A few of the evaluation reports captured in detail an assessment of changes in gender relations.

In conclusion, none of the evaluation reports reviewed under the "general category" scored a highly satisfactory rating (the gold standard) of having up to four or more coherent gender and equality statements in each of the evaluation components. However, it can be understood that these projects (under the general category) did not include gender and equity dimensions in their design from the onset as they were not designed to deal with gender or equity issues.

Findings on thematic evaluations

The findings from Table 3.5 presents an overall analysis of the extent to which gender and equity were included in the 12 "thematic evaluation" reports reviewed. The country report codes (UG0, ZAO, TZ0, etc.) represent the evaluation reports selected from the AfrED (see Table A.1 in the Annexure for a full description of reports).

Table 3.5 Overall analysis for thematic evaluation category

Highly Satisfactory attention to gender and equity issues	Satisfactory attention to gender and equity issues	Unsatisfactory attention to gender and equity issues	Highly Unsatisfactory attention to gender and equity issues
UG0 NG0 RW0	ZAO GH0 ET0 KE0 ZM0 BW0	TZ0 ZW0 NA0	
3	6	3	0

1. Three evaluations (25%) were rated as having an unsatisfactory gender and equity component in their analysis, though a gender specific intervention. The evaluation reports assessed the participation of socially disadvantaged groups, including women, in project or programme activities in a limited way. There was no clear distinction of information provided on how the socially marginalised groups including women have benefitted, nor was there any statements about the impact of the policy on women or any other category of socially excluded persons. The evaluation design, indicators, questionnaire, findings and recommendations had a weak statement on gender and equity issues.
2. Six evaluations (50%) were rated as having a satisfactory equity/gender analysis. The reports measured the participation of women and the targeted excluded population in project implementation activities. The reports also provide at least two pieces of information on how the disadvantaged groups, including women, have benefitted from programme or project activities and gave two accounts on the impact of activities on the socially disadvantaged groups, including women. The evaluation design, indicators, questionnaire, findings and recommendations had clear gender and equity dimensions. A few of the evaluation reports captured in detail an assessment of changes in gender relations.
3. Two evaluations (25%) were rated as having a highly satisfactory gender analysis. These reports gave a good account of the participation of women and the targeted excluded population in the project implementation activities. The project possessed a clear logic intervention (theory of change). The reports also provide more than three items of information on how the disadvantaged groups, including women, have benefitted from programme or project activities and give more than three accounts on the impact of activities on the socially disadvantaged groups, including women. The evaluation design, indicators, questionnaire, findings and recommendations had clear gender and equity dimensions. The evaluation reports gave a detailed analysis of changes in gender relations, analysis of the inequality differential and a relevant recommendation for improvement.

In conclusion, it is rather improper and unacceptable for projects and programmes specifically designed to close the gender and equity gap to score less than average in the gender and equity focus of such evaluation reports.

This calls for more in-depth research on why a commissioned equity/gender focused projects can deviate and fail to achieve their purpose.

Understanding the exclusion of gender and equity

Several factors ranging from capacity, competence to policy considerations present as determinants influencing the non-inclusion and use of gender and equity perspectives in evaluations. An analysis of the appreciative enquiry conducted amongst ten different stakeholders from different backgrounds, sex, expertise and experiences (policy makers, project implementors, evaluators and donors, etc.) revealed eleven broad themes which encapsulated the reason (primary and secondary) why equity and gender perspectives in evaluations were not included or used in the selected African countries. Table 3.6 highlights the eleven reasons why gender/equity dimensions in evaluations are not conducted or in low demand.

Table 3.6 Reasons for non-/low utilisation of G&E-focused evaluations

S/N	Reasons for non-/low utilisation of gender and equity-focused evaluations
1	Not a mandatory requirement in the national evaluation policy
2	Low capacity to conduct G&E-focused evaluation
3	Lack of funds to conduct G&E-focused evaluation
4	Time-consuming and difficult to measure
5	Low demand for G&E-focused evaluations
6	Donors not doing enough (funding + demand) for G&E-focused evaluation
7	The concept is not well understood
8	Lack of disaggregated data by sex, location, income, etc. not readily available
9	Non-inclusion of gender and equity component in the evaluation terms of reference
10	The project/programme is not about gender and equity so there is no need for G&E-focused evaluation
11	Political and religious issues around gender and equity perspectives

Similarly, Table 3.7 shows a combined frequency analysis (KII and IDI) from each stakeholder's view of what constitutes the primary or secondary reasons for the non-/low utilisation of G&E dimensions in evaluations.

Table 3.7 Reasons for poor utilisation of gender and equity perspectives in evaluations

Legend:

■ Primary reason for low G&E-focused evaluation

■ Secondary reasons for low G&E-focused evaluation

# Reasons for poor utilisation of Gender & Equity perspectives in evaluations	Policy Makers (National level) Female	Policy Makers (sub-National level) Male	VOPs (National level) Female	VOPs (sub-National level) Male	Evaluation experts (10+ years' experience) (Male)	Evaluation experts (10+ years' experience) (Female)	A representative from donor organisation (Male)	A representative from donor organisation (Female)	Head of NGO with 10+ years' experience in managing project (Male)	Head of NGO with 10+ years' experience in managing project (Female)	# Respondents
#1. Not a requirement in the National Evaluation Policy											40
#2. Low capacity to conduct G&E-focused evaluation											40
#3. Lack of funds to conduct G&E-focused evaluation											40
#4. Time consuming and difficult to measure											40
#5. Low demand for G&E-focused evaluations											40
#6. Donors not doing enough (funding and awareness) of G&E evaluation											40
#7. The concept is not well understood											40
#8. Disaggregated data by sex, location, income, etc. is not readily available											40
#9. Non-inclusion of G&E in the evaluation terms of reference											40
#10. The project/programme is not about gender and equity so there is no need for G&E evaluation.											40
#11. Political and religious issues around G&E perspectives											40
# Primary cause	4	4	6	6	5	5	6	6	7	7	
# Secondary cause	7	7	5	5	6	6	5	5	4	4	

Primary causes limiting use

From the frequency analysis above, all respondents considered the lack of policy requirement mandating the use of G&E focus in evaluations, the low capacity to conduct G&E-focused evaluation and the lack of funds as the primary reason for low G&E-focused evaluations. The next compelling primary reason highest amongst respondents, accounting for the poor utilisation of gender and equity perspectives in an evaluation, is the low demand for G&E evaluations. Below are some selected passages, revealing a more in-depth perspective of different stakeholders around the primary reasons for the non-inclusion and poor use of gender and equity perspectives in evaluation:

Gender and equity evaluations are time-consuming and difficult to measure. Considering conducting a gender and equity evaluation at the middle of a project or program is a difficult thing to do. (IDI with VOPEs at national level, Togo)

From my experience, end-of-project evaluations are not that difficult especially when you are not focusing on gender and equity issues. Gender and equity data are usually not readily available. (IDI with VOPEs at sub-national level, Ghana)

Not many projects request a gender or equity dimension in the evaluation and you as an evaluator are strictly bound by the terms of reference of the job. It is not professional to add G&E perspectives in an evaluation when it is not required. (KII with male evaluation expert with 10 plus years' experience, Benin)

The capacity to conduct gender and equity focused evaluations should be considered as the first primary cause. It is a worrisome challenge for Africa. Very few African universities have a comprehensive curriculum that strengthens the knowledge and practice of gender and equity focused evaluations. (KII with female representative from donor organisation)

Additional factors limiting use

From the frequency analysis above, all respondents except for VOPEs (male and female) consistently agreed that a major secondary cause for low gender and equity evaluation is that it is time-consuming and difficult to measure. Second, all respondents except for heads of NGOs (male and female) believed that the non-inclusion of G&E in the evaluation terms of reference is a secondary causative reason. Third, all respondents, with the exception of the voluntary organisations of professional evaluators (VOPEs), agreed that projects and programmes not focused on achieving gender and equity evaluations from the start, should be required to use a lens of gender and equity in their evaluation.

Lastly, all respondents, excluding evaluators with over ten years' experience, agreed that the lack of readily available data, disaggregated into sex, location, income, etc., constitutes a secondary cause for the poor utilisation of gender and equity perspectives in evaluation.

The selected passages below reveal an in-depth perspective of some stakeholders regarding secondary reasons for the poor utilisation of gender and equity perspectives in evaluation:

The concept and ideology of gender and equity-focused evaluation is still an emerging concept, though not entirely new. The call for it became stronger with the introduction of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000. The concept still needs a lot of sensitization and awareness raising amongst the civil society, evaluators, academia, etc.
(KII with heads of NGOs, Benin)

For evaluations that require gender and equity perspectives, the absence of disaggregated data by sex, age, income and location, etc. can make the evaluation process impossible. This is often the case in many projects. Even when there is a routine system capturing disaggregated data by sex etc. it is of poor quality.
(IDI with VOPEs at national level, Togo)

Evaluators are not magicians; we do not manufacture data. We evaluate based on the evidence provided (IDI with VOPEs, Togo). Stakeholders from Togo and Benin reaffirmed the need for further sensitisation and awareness on the concept of gender and equity and the need to have a routine system for capturing disaggregated data.

There are more pressing issues the government is trying to tackle now, for instance corruption, poverty reduction, and humanitarian issues. Gender and equity issues can be addressed later, as it is not so urgent.
(KII with policy makers at national level, Nigeria)

How religion influences the unequal power relation amongst sexes in the African society is underestimated. The push for gender equality is being slowed down, even by women groups due to religious and cultural beliefs. There are no gaining grounds without the active participation of our religious and traditional gatekeepers.
(KII with policy makers at sub-national level, Ghana)

Though a lot has been achieved over time, the concept of gender equality and equity is still being viewed as a western agenda even by highly educated top government personalities. Though public declarations are made in favour of gender equality, the political will to follow-up on these commitments is weak.
(KII with a female representative of donor group, Nigeria)

The perspectives from Nigeria and Ghana reveal that making gender and equity government priority is critical and that religious and cultural norms still remain the single most important determinant to overcome.

In summary, eleven distinct yet interconnected reasons were identified for the poor utilisation of gender and equity perspectives in evaluations. Respondents categorised differently the reasons for the non or poor utilisation of gender and equity issues in evaluation. However, there was full agreement from all the respondents regarding the primary reasons for low gender and equity focus in evaluations, namely (i) the lack of policy requirement mandating this focus; (ii) the low capacity to conduct these focused evaluations; and (iii) the lack of funds. This explains the institutional weakness present in the selected African countries examined. The context in which gender and equity-focused evaluations are conducted, the perception of different stakeholders on why it is commissioned are important factors that should not be overlooked. Other variables of importance are the political will, cost and legal issues.

Learning from practice – challenges institutionalising a gender and equity focus

The previous section identified the interconnected factors that influence the successful implementation of gender and equity perspectives in current evaluation practice. The review of what works and lessons learned (including good practices in different scenarios) is essential, particularly for most African countries operating in resource-constrained settings with weak systems and different institutional capacities. This section offers practical solutions on what to do when faced with five of the scenarios as described below.

Scenario 1 Government non-supportive of gender and equity-based evaluations

In a situation where the government opposes or is not favourably disposed to gender and equity-focused evaluations, it is important for evaluators to attempt to understand the cause of the problem or what is driving the resistance. The resistance may be rooted in religious perspectives that refuse to acknowledge women as equal to men in all ramification, though the country's constitution may support gender equality. Sometimes there is a deliberate lack of support of a certain group for not voting for the incumbent government during the election, or it may be that the government wants to restrict the movement of

a certain group from a specific region (i.e. migration issues). Several legitimate or illegitimate reasons may underscore why a government may not support gender and equity-focused evaluations. Be that as it may, evaluators need to be committed to their professional ethos to ensure that evaluation reports reflect the true situation. These issues are difficult to address as they are multi-faceted (financial, political, religious, etc.). As a way forward, evaluators can:

1. Partner with other donor and development agencies who support social change and transformation. Identify areas where gender and equity interventions are likely to be relatively non-confrontational and can produce some acceptable gains that are immediate. For example, the provision of subsidised transportation for pregnant women can increase the number of women from poor communities that access antenatal care. The evaluation of such interventions could show a positive benefit and will find acceptance with government (Bamberger, 2011).
2. Gaining acceptability from a resistant government by starting with non-confrontational findings is a good starting point. For example, by choosing to focus on the identification of cost-effective evaluations using the bottleneck supply and demand-side approach to identify potential areas that can easily be resolved. A good starting point is to examine factors affecting the ability of low-income households, and particularly mothers, to access services. Often this will identify issues such as inconvenient opening hours or locations, long hours of patient waiting time, lack of transport, etc., that could be addressed relatively easily.
3. The government can be subtly engaged through high-powered advocacy led by international NGOs. A reasonable shift in favour of women's rights can be demanded, for instance, a concerted approach by the monitoring and evaluation technical working groups to ensure that uncontroversial components of gender and equity are mainstreamed in the national evaluation checklist for the collection of gender and equity-related information.
4. The confrontational approach, though not the best option, also has its place. This is especially the case when the generated equity/gender data gap (evidence) is coming from the government-led statistical bureau. Speaking the truth to power using hard evidence through credible champions can be effective.

Scenario 2 Project or programme to be evaluated lacks or has no comprehensive theory of change or logical framework

First, a proxy theory of change can be reconstructed for a project without one. This can be achieved through a strategic discussion with the relevant stakeholders on the goal the project or programme was designed to achieve. This approach is based on the thoughts of the project designers and actors on what the project was meant to deliver and the pathway for the desired change to be achieved. In retrospect, it requires reflecting on the agreed outcome and how it should be done.

Second, a review of strategic documents, observation of the decision-making process, and consultation with relevant managers is also an effective method (Chen, 2005). The observational approach on how the project is implemented, what is critical and what is not in the project implementation, is explained to new clients. Using this approach allows you to decipher the difference between what managers say and what is observed in the actual field implementation. The observation of those who benefit the most from the project is the correct indication of the level of equity in the programme and not what was claimed.

Third, a new theory of change can be developed or the existing one enhanced by drawing on the knowledge of the programme executors. This can be done either through a forward-vision look at the intervention and proposing the desired outcomes, or through a backward visioning, i.e. by focusing on the desired outcome and looking backwards at the intervening factors and the identification of the critical determinants and pathway for change.

Lastly, a credible reality test to confirm the extent of the project's focus on gender and equity issues is by reviewing three critical issues. The first is the extent to which resource allocation reflects stated programmatic priorities. The second is identifying the extent to which information is available; a lack of data can reflect that an issue has not been prioritised. Finally, allocation of staff time and reflect programmatic focus. If an issue area is a stated priority, but staff time has not been meaningfully dedicated to it, this may reflect true programmatic prioritisation (Weiss, 2001).

Scenario 3 Project or programme to be evaluated is time and budget constrained

Evaluation design can be enhanced and result delivered by simplifying the design and prioritising the essential component of the data-collection points without compromising the validity. First, by using any available secondary data for baseline and as a comparison group. Second, the information to be collected can be simplified to the precise and relevant ones bearing in mind what the stakeholders and project owners consider vital credible evidence (e.g. scale of sample size, focus group discussions with beneficiaries, and case studies) The understanding of the different perspectives of stakeholders on what is credible will determine the type of information that ought to be collected despite fund constraints (Mabry, 2012).

Third, the cost of data collection can be shared with other organisations that have similar interest, through the ART of networking and partnership-building. With a good negotiation, some agencies may be willing to support a similar household survey by adding a few additional questions to their planned household survey. In addressing time constraints posed by the budget, etc., reduction in the amount of data to be collected and analysis can significantly reduce the budget and time constraint, bearing in mind that not all that can be counted counts. Skyping and video conferencing are reliable means of saving cost, especially during data collection and analysis and planning phases.

Household data collection can be costly and expensive when hiring experienced and seasoned data collectors. However, the use of less expensive data collectors that have general competence in the survey subject matter will make a good consideration, for example, the use of certified nurses for medically related surveys can lower the cost of hiring commercial researchers. The use of direct observation can be a more valid data collection method than the application of surveys, depending on the research needs. For example, the observation of patients arriving at a health facility can be a more reliable way of determining means of transportation to a health facility than conducting a general survey to determine this.

Significant cost can also be saved using technology and modern survey methods such as using of focus group discussions instead of individual interviews. Likewise, the use of data through cell phones (GPS, Internet-based surveys) is a faster and cheaper way of collecting and analysing bulk information at the same time.

Scenario 4 Substantial baseline information is not available to guide gender and equity-focused evaluations

The absence or insufficient baseline data in a project hampers the estimation of projects and programmes. Different scenarios play out that lead to the absence of a project baseline, for example, (i) a baseline may have been conducted but did not include a gender and equity dimension; (ii) a project may have been in operation for a while before a baseline was conducted; (iii) poor quality of baseline conducted; and (iv) planned baselines that were never conducted.

Any of the scenarios listed above can be salvaged by reconstructing a new baseline based on proxy measures for the gender and equity component of the evaluation. First, data from other organisations implementing similar projects

can be used to construct a comparison group, for example, data on school enrolment and health facilities. Second, baseline data can be determined from the routine data collected from the project, including administrative data. Third, data from the national datasets, for example, demographic health or multiple indicator health surveys) can also suffice. Fourth, the recall strategy can be an effective way of determining baseline data. However, it is subject to a high level of respondent bias and is very difficult to correctly adjust for the magnitude of bias. The technique requires, for example, that respondents reflect on their household income and expenditure or on the number of pregnant women who visited traditional birth attendants before a new health facility was constructed. More specifically, techniques like focus group discussions, key informant interviews and participatory rapid appraisal (PRA) are effective techniques to estimate baselines for underserved populations. However, it is difficult to determine bias because of loss of memory, intentional distortions, etc., since recall is the only source of information on the past.

The PRA approach is helpful in identifying the social categories through classifications like wealth quintiles or ranking, and for social mapping. It can also assist to determine the social map of a community by creating a standard for ranking a household based on certain criteria, for example, ranking households with a motorcycle and television as 'rich' and those without it as 'poor', or using other vulnerability characteristics (Bamberger, 2010).

Scenario 5 Poor demand and use of evaluation reports (a systemic approach)

The need to capacitate and empower civil society to demands that public policies and programmes are designed and implemented based on evidence cannot be overemphasised. Equity issues are human right issues and probably requires class actions to effect the needed change. The use of incentives can inspire managers to demand and use gender and equity perspectives in evaluations. Governments could also use sanctions for those who do not comply.

It is imperative for governments to invest in the required infrastructure for sustaining the monitoring and evaluation systems. Long-term training and capacity building (informed by a thorough capacity-gap assessment) are required. This strategy will, in the long run, be effective in building the needed political and financial support for sustaining the national M&E system and

structures. Similarly, strengthening the gender and equity indicators in the national data collection system is an important consensus to achieve in the periodic review of the national indicators. This strategy invariably guarantees the generation of important equity analysis like multidimensional poverty trend analysis, and benefit incidence analysis, which are essential for decision-making.

Conclusion

The use of the integrated evaluation model is effective for assessing the gender and equity focus of evaluations, through a checklist that integrates the gender/ equity indicators (ratio of access, participation, inclusion, non-discrimination and empowerment) within the five evaluation criteria. The content analysis of 36 evaluation articles (guided by a set of quality criteria), showed that under the "general report category" (evaluation of projects not focused to address gender or equity) only 20% of the evaluation reports reviewed were classified as satisfactory, 33% unsatisfactory and 45% highly unsatisfactory in their gender and equity focus. Similarly, under the "thematic report category" (evaluation of reports focused on addressing gender and equity) the review found 25% of the evaluation reports highly satisfactory, 50% satisfactory and 25% unsatisfactory with regards to the gender and equity focus. This landscape may change if commissioners of evaluations would prioritise a gender and equity focus in their evaluations.

From the qualitative appreciative enquiry section, it is clear that more needs to be done by African countries towards the inclusion, institutionalise and use of equity and gender perspectives in routine evaluations. First, the need to develop a comprehensive national evaluation policy that incorporates gender and equity perspectives, and the enforcement of such policies to assess the gender and equity outcomes in all commissioned evaluations. Second, the need for governments to provide the leadership, human capacity and funding (including sanctions or incentives) to ensure compliance at all levels. Third, the need to conduct quality checks and reviews on all project evaluations to ensure they attain a good rating through coherent incorporation of equity and gender perspectives in the design, indicators, findings and recommendations, regardless of whether the project or programme was focused on closing the gender or equity gap or not.

The inclusion of gender and equity dimensions in evaluation is not an end, but a means. The end is about achieving equitable development results for all citizens, with a focus on the improvement of the quality of lives of the excluded and the underserved populations. The dream of achieving the SDG agenda by 2030 will be an impossible dream for most African countries, without the timely provision of evidence to inform policies, programmes and plans directed at reducing the gender and equity gaps.

There is a need for African countries to heed the call and address all systemic issues identified in this study that undermine progress. Frameworks and policies that include, consistently track, and use results of gender and equity-focused evaluations would help African countries be on track for achieving the SDGs by 2030. This approach supports the equitable delivery of projects and programmes in compliance with the SDG approach of leaving no one behind, and the call to reach the furthest behind first.

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ANNEXURE

Table A.1 The type of evaluation reports selected under “thematic evaluation” category

S/N	Country	Thematic: title of evaluation	Code	Donor support	Category of evaluation
1	Ethiopia	Changing Gender Norms & Reducing Intimate Partner Violence (2015)	ETO	3ie	Project
2	Kenya	Changing Gender Norms and Reducing Intimate Partner Violence	KEO	3ie	Project
3	South Africa	Evaluation Report of the technogirl Programme in South Africa	ZAO	UNICEF	Project
4	Ghana	Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SFMP) Gender Needs Assessment Report	GHO	USAID	Project
5	Uganda	Govt of Uganda, 2015. Water and Sanitation for the Poor and Bottom 40% – Since 2006	UGO	World bank	Cluster
6	Tanzania	The impact of Tanzania’s Joint Forest Management Programme on Livelihoods, Governance and Forests	TZO	Sida	Cluster
7	Botswana	Botswana Performance Evaluation – Tsela Kgopo Gender and OVC Project Final Report	BWO	USAID	Project
8	Rwanda	Evaluation of HED/USAID Women’s Leadership programme, Rwanda (2012–2015)	RWO	USAID	Cluster
9	Zambia	2016 Midterm evaluation of stamping out and previous gender-based violence (GBV), Zambia	ZMO	USAID	Project
10	Nigeria	Explaining Gender Differentials in Agricultural Production in Nigeria	NGO	World bank	Policy

S/N	Country	Thematic: title of evaluation	Code	Donor support	Category of evaluation
11	Zimbabwe	Evaluation of Support to Zimbabwe under ZUNDAF (2012–2015) Enhanced Economic Management and Pro-poor Development Policies and Strategies	ZWO	UNDP	Policy / Cluster
12	Namibia	Effects of Community-based Natural Resource Management on Household Welfare in Namibia	NAO	3ie	Project

Table A.2 The type of the evaluation reports selected under “general evaluation” category.

S/N	Country	General evaluation: Title of evaluation	Code	Donor support	Category of evaluation
1	Ethiopia	USAID Ethiopia 2016 Ethiopia Strengthening Land Tenure and Administration	ET1	USAID	Cluster
		Opening Doors: A Performance Evaluation of the Development Credit Authority (DCA) in Ethiopia	ET2	USAID	Cluster
2	Kenya	Peace Initiative Kenya: Final Performance Evaluation	KE1	USAID	Project
		USAID Kenya 2015 Parliamentary Strengthening Programme	KE2	USAID	Project
3	South Africa	South Africa 2015 Report-Design & Implementation Evaluation of the Urban Settlements Development Grant	ZA1	Govt	Project
		Evaluation of the DFID-funded Safer South Africa Programme	ZA2	UNICEF	Cluster
4	Ghana	Ghana local Government Decentralisation Program (LOGODEP): Final Performance Evaluation Report	GH1	USAID	Cluster
		Estimating the Impact and Cost-Effectiveness of Expanding Secondary Education in Ghana	GH2	USAID	Policy Project
5	Uganda	Evaluation of Swedish Support to the Diakonia Uganda Programme 2008–2014 – Final Report	UG1	Sida	Cluster
		The Effectiveness and Efficiency of Implementing the Chronic Care Model for HIV Care in Uganda	UG2	USAID	Cluster
6	Tanzania	Tanzania 2015 The Tanzania Social Marketing Project – A Performance Evaluation	TZ1	USAID	Project
		Tanzania 2015 External evaluation. Amref Health Africa Project on Sex. Reprod. Health Right	TZ2	Sida	Project

S/N	Country	General evaluation: Title of evaluation	Code	Donor support	Category of evaluation
7	Botswana	An Information System for Gender-Based Violence Care and Support: Botswana	BW1	USAID	Project
		UNEG Botswana 2015_GoB-UN POP Final Evaluation Report 23 October 2015	BW2	UNEG	UN programme
8	Rwanda	Rwanda 2015 Evaluating the Cost and Quality of Service Delivery for Orphans and Vulnerable	RW1	USAID	Project
		Rwanda 2015 Using Provider Performance incentives to increase HIV testing & counselling Services in Rwanda	RW2	3ie	Project
9	Zambia	Measuring the Impact of SMS-Based Interventions on VMMC Uptake in Lusaka Province, Zambia	ZM1	3ie	Project
		Evaluation of the Zambian Governance Foundation (ZGF) Joint Financing Agreement	ZM2	Sida	Cluster
10	Nigeria	Targeted States High Impact Project (TSHIP): End-of-project Evaluation Report	NG1	USAID	Cluster
		Strengthening Integrated Delivery of HIV/AIDS Services (SIDHAS) Project: Mid-term Evaluation Final	NG2	USAID	Cluster
11	Zimbabwe	Performance Evaluation of the Strengthening Private Sector Services project in Zimbabwe	ZW1	USAID	Cluster
		Zimbabwe Livestock for Accelerated Recovery and improved resiliency (ZRR): Final evaluation report	ZW2	USAID	Project
12	Namibia	Endline Performance Evaluation of the Strengthening HIV/AIDS Responses in Prevention and Protection	NA1	USAID	Cluster
		Effects of Community-based Natural Resource Management on Household Welfare in Namibia	NA2	3ie	Project