BEST PRACTICES IN DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION SERIES

Applying a human rights and gender equality lens to the OECD evaluation criteria

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Abbreviations and acronyms

AAAQ	Availability, accessibility, acceptability (or adequacy) and quality
ADA	Austrian Development Agency
AECID	Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation
BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Co-operation and Development
CAT	Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
CED	International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CMW	International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
Danida	Danish International Development Agency
DFID	UK Department for International Development
DGPOLDES	General Directorate of Sustainable Development Policies of Spain
EC	European Commission
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
DEval	German Institute for Development Evaluation
ICERD	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

LGBTI	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex
LNOB	Leave no one behind
MAEC	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation of Spain
MFAD	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark
MFAF	Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland
Norad	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SMART	Specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely
ToR	Terms of reference
UN	United Nations
UN CEDAW	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
UN CESCR	Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
UN CRC	Committee on the Rights of the Child
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

Executive summary

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948 lays out core human rights and gender equality principles ratified by most UN member states. These principles are likewise integral to the global commitments made in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

A growing number of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members have adopted policies and strategies to systematically integrate human rights and gender equality standards and principles into development co-operation. These strategies embed human rights principles (equality and non-discrimination, accountability and, participation and empowerment) and gender equality objectives within the planning, design, programming, monitoring, and evaluation of interventions.

At the same time, public policy evaluation is becoming increasingly common, and methods and approaches are being developed to tackle an increasingly wide range of learning and accountability needs across policy areas. In 2019, the OECD DAC updated its common definitions for six evaluation criteria to strengthen the normative framework to underpin consistent, high-quality evaluations of development co-operation. The six criteria are included in the 2022 *Recommendation of the Council on Public Policy Evaluation*, demonstrating their usefulness across policy areas.

This document focuses on the questions to ask through evaluation. It builds on and complements the OECD's 2021 publication *Applying Evaluation Criteria Thoughtfully* and the 2022 *Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls: Guidance for Development Partners*, which are also useful resources for readers. The *Applying Evaluation Criteria Thoughtfully* guidance describes the ways human rights and gender equality considerations have been incorporated into the updated definitions, as well as providing basic guidance.

This document offers more in-depth practical guidance in how to use these criteria in the context of a human rights and gender equality approach – e.g., when human rights are a top strategic priority. It can also be used in other contexts where human rights are not explicitly targeted or prioritised. It is designed to help evaluators, evaluation managers and programme staff to reflect upon and increase the extent to which interventions consider human rights and gender equality norms and standards, and ultimately to improve the effectiveness and results of development co-operation (interventions that explicitly target human rights and gender equality objectives and those that don't).

This document does not prescribe or endorse specific evaluation methodologies or approaches, nor does it endorse a particular approach to development co-operation. It can be used in any type of evaluative work and can inform the use of the criteria in intervention design and strategic planning. It offers ideas and examples of how to incorporate a human rights and gender equality lens into the various approaches and methods used for assessing interventions using the evaluation criteria. Case studies from real-life evaluations of interventions around the world share lessons and techniques for applying the lens.

When evaluating an intervention through a human rights and gender equality lens, the six criteria can be viewed as follows:

- **Relevance:** *Is the intervention doing the right things?* A human rights and gender equality lens helps evaluators to assess the relevance of an intervention to the rights, needs and priorities of rights-holders. Assessing relevance involves understanding how contextual factors, power dynamics and intersecting forms of discrimination may affect rights-holders, especially those marginalised or at risk of discrimination.
- **Coherence:** *How well does the intervention fit?* Applying a human rights and gender equality lens entails assessing the consistency of an intervention with international, regional, and national human rights and gender equality treaties and commitments of stakeholders (primarily beneficiary communities, and funding and implementing partners). For targeted interventions, an evaluator should consider the complementarity and co-ordination of an intervention with those of other human rights and gender equality actors.
- **Effectiveness:** *Is the intervention achieving its objectives?* Effectiveness considers the extent to which the intervention has achieved its objectives, including differential results across parts of the population. A human rights and gender equality lens means the analysis of objectives and their relative importance will be informed by key human rights principles: equality and non-discrimination, accountability, participation, and empowerment. The human rights and gender equality lens helps bring an equity focus by investigating the extent to which desired changes related to human rights, for example increased capacity to identify violations of labour rights, have been achieved. The criterion also supports a more refined analysis of how outcomes vary across people, supporting evaluators in assessing the extent to which the intervention has involved rights-holders, including people of different genders and marginalised groups, and has reduced inequalities or otherwise improved their situation. Analysis of effectiveness should capture both intended and unintended (positive or negative) results.
- **Efficiency:** *How well are resources being used?* A human rights and gender equality lens will assess the quality of implementation and management processes in converting inputs to results. It examines if and how resources were allocated to achieve inclusive, equitable and gender-transformative results.
- **Impact:** *What difference does the intervention make?* A human rights and gender equality lens focuses on assessing the high-level or systemic results of interventions, including changes in norms and laws and the contribution of an intervention to changes in the lives of different groups of rights-holders. It offers the opportunity to assess more thoroughly dimensions of transformative change, such as the socio-cultural, economic, or political dynamics that have led to or hindered the fulfilment of rights and empowerment of women and girls, indigenous people, people with disabilities and other marginalised groups. In keeping with the SDG remit to 'leave no one behind' and to safeguard human rights, including gender equality, assessing impact with a human rights and gender equality lens places significant emphasis on unearthing differential impacts and the potential negative distributional effects of an intervention.
- **Sustainability:** *Will the benefits last?* A human rights and gender equality lens helps to assess the extent to which a system has the social and institutional capacity to sustain changes, and whether an intervention has contributed to an enabling environment for a continuous realisation of human rights, gender equality and the inclusion of marginalised groups.

Evaluators, evaluation managers and programme staff may face several challenges when using the evaluation criteria in the context of a human rights and gender equality approach. The tables in Section 3 offer practical suggestions for how evaluators, evaluation managers and programme staff can address these challenges, including by clearly defining the expected scope of human rights and gender equality assessments; allocating sufficient time and budget to a thorough intersectional analysis; being sensitive to how rights-holders and duty-bearers themselves perceive and understand human rights and gender equality; and applying an ethical code of conduct throughout the evaluation process.

1 Purpose and use of the guidance

What is this guidance about and who is it for?

This publication responds to the need for practical guidance on how to use the six OECD criteria (OECD, 2019[1]) (relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability) that define "good" development co-operation in the context of a human rights or gender equality approach. It aims to support the design, management and delivery of credible and useful evaluations that assess whether and how interventions contribute to realising human rights and gender equality – both interventions designed to support human rights and other types of interventions.[1]

The guidance has primarily been written for evaluation commissioners, managers, and those conducting evaluations of development co-operation and humanitarian assistance. However, it will be useful to all actors (at regional, national, and local levels) working towards sustainable development, whether in a domestic or international context. It describes concepts that can be useful in designing and managing interventions, and which should be considered from the outset of intervention design to avoid common pitfalls.

The guidance is designed to be applicable to various contexts, and for different types of evaluation and intervention. It applies equally to evaluations of interventions that have human rights or gender equality objectives or explicitly engage a human rights-based approach and to those that do not explicitly work towards realising human rights or gender equality.

While the guidance is most likely to be useful to people working in (institutional) contexts where a human rights-based approach[2] is being used, or human rights or gender equality are strategic priorities, it can also be helpful to evaluators working in more challenging contexts, helping them to find entry points for important questions related to equity and rights, even when these are not part of the institutional approach or interventions themselves.

Why is this guidance needed?

In international development co-operation, the focus on and prioritisation of human rights has ebbed and flowed over the years. In recent years, human rights have received relatively less attention, though several DAC members have explicitly adopted a human-rights based approach and many integrate human rights into their strategic policies.

On the other hand, an increasing number of bilateral and multilateral development agencies have set strategic objectives to prioritise gender equality and women's empowerment. Several have – or are in the process of – incorporating gender equality principles and objectives in their policies and practices (see Section 4.1). Official development assistance (ODA) data confirm DAC members' prioritisation of achieving gender equality, with 40% of total bilateral aid addressing gender equality objectives (OECD, 2022[2]).

The prioritisation of human rights and of gender equality in policies and interventions is reflected in the extent to which they are targets of evaluation. The OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation's

study of evaluation systems reveals that gender equality in particular is now referenced in the evaluation policies of a majority of DAC members (OECD, 2023 forthcoming). Yet several reviews conclude that there remains room for improvement in the systematic consideration of human rights and gender equality in monitoring and evaluation (ADA, 2021[3]; MFAD, 2016[4]; MFAF, 2018[5]; Polak et al., 2021[6]; SIDA, 2020[7]). For example, a review of 51 evaluations conducted between 2011 and 2020 found a gap between the ambition and the practice of mainstreaming human rights and gender equality throughout evaluation processes (Worm and et al., 2022[8]).

Between 2017 and 2019 the DAC Network on Development Evaluation (EvalNet) undertook a wide-ranging consultation process to review the five evaluation criteria – relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability – first set out in 1991, and adapt them to the evolving development landscape that included the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Climate Agreement. The five criteria were revised and a sixth criterion – coherence – was added (OECD, 2019[1]). In 2021, the OECD published guidance on how to interpret the criteria and apply them thoughtfully in evaluations of interventions (OECD, 2021[9]). In 2019, the OECD DAC updated its common definitions for six evaluation criteria to strengthen the normative framework to underpin consistent, high-quality evaluations of development co-operation. In 2022 the OECD's Recommendation of the Council on Public Policy Evaluation, uses these six criteria in its definition of public policy evaluation, demonstrating their usefulness across all policy areas.

During the process of reviewing the five criteria – and in earlier review processes for the DAC evaluation principles – challenges around human rights and gender equality were identified by many stakeholders. These include weaknesses in data quality, monitoring and evaluation capacities, political prioritisation, and concerns linked directly to the criteria. While some conceptual elements were incorporated into the updated definitions in 2019, and initial tips provided in the 2021 guidance on applying evaluation criteria thoughtfully, it was clear that more detailed guidance was needed on how to evaluate in ways that reflect human rights and gender equality principles and goals, and how to evaluate interventions that have both explicit and implicit human rights effects (OECD, 2019[10]). In 2020, the DAC Network on Evaluation (EvalNet) and the DAC Network on Gender (GenderNet) formed a joint working group to address the conceptual and practical challenges related to using the criteria in different contexts. This guidance is an outcome of the thinking and work of this collaboration.

What is its scope?

This guidance focuses on the criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability and is therefore mainly about what is being evaluated, rather than how the evaluation is undertaken. However, it should be noted that a human rights and gender equality lens is best applied throughout the programme cycle (design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation). Nonetheless, some evaluations may find ways to use elements of human rights and gender equality approaches even in contexts where this is not explicitly part of the entire programme cycle. Rights-based approaches in evaluations identify rights-holders and duty-bearers to instil and enable accountability, identify whether objectives were achieved in an equitable manner and ensure participation. They consider intersecting forms of inequalities which create systemic discrimination and disadvantage and how they affect the achievement and distribution of outcomes.

More general guidance on how to conduct evaluations and on rights-based and gender-responsive evaluation approaches is listed at the end of this section. These resources tackle important questions about *who* is involved in decisions regarding evaluation, including what evaluations will be undertaken, what questions will be asked, whose perspectives will be captured, and how findings will be used. Power dynamics that result in the systematic exclusion of some people are reflected both in interventions and in their evaluation.

Key terms used

Throughout this guidance, the terms human rights and gender equality are used in combination to reflect their joint importance and crucial interdependence. Human rights are universal and apply to all human beings. Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are embedded in the fundamental principles of human rights of equality and non-discrimination. Given persistent inequalities and the systemic discrimination faced by women and girls, a specific focus is needed on gender equality.

The guidance also uses the terms “rights-holders” and “duty-bearers”, especially when referring to the individuals, groups, or organisations, whether targeted or not, that benefit, directly or indirectly, from the intervention (“beneficiaries”).

This guidance focuses on the application of a human rights and gender equality lens to the evaluation criteria specifically – and therefore mainly addresses the questions an evaluation will answer, rather than the methodology or how the evaluation is conducted per se. Even so, noting that what an evaluation seeks to answer is inextricably linked to how it is designed, conducted, and disseminated, principles of inclusion, participation and respect should guide evaluation processes. At a minimum, this means that evaluation managers must consider how to:

- ensure that relevant rights-holders participate meaningfully in the evaluation
- avoid potential harm to any evaluation stakeholders, interview partners and evaluation team members
- apply adequate methods to understand clearly if and how interventions contribute to transformative or systemic change
- communicate evaluation findings to the rights-holders involved in the evaluation.

Evaluators must also apply the do-no-harm principle and use trauma-sensitive methods. This principle applies all the time and is an important rule of thumb throughout the evaluation process. Depending on the context, sensitivity and protection issues need to actively account for the specific risks for women and girls, and other marginalised groups (Box 1.1).

Box 1.1. Measuring the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming approaches in post-conflict contexts

An evaluation conducted by the German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval) on "Supporting Gender Equality in Post-Conflict Contexts" examined the extent to which the gender mainstreaming process used in German bilateral official development co-operation was suited to post-conflict contexts.

As part of the evaluation, case studies were conducted in Colombia, Liberia, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. To collect data in a trauma sensitive manner, the evaluation used the "Most Significant Change" approach to capture the perspective of rights holders. The approach centres on the experiences of rights-holders by capturing the most important perceived changes in their lives, and their understanding of if and how the intervention may have contributed to it. It allows the interviewees to guide the conversation, thereby avoiding accidental or unintentional focus on disturbing or re-traumatising issues. A total of 90 stories were collected.

Most of the women reported increased self-esteem due to participation in the projects and strengthened roles in their families and communities due to an independent income. Psychological counselling, along with networking and dialogue among other women who had also experienced trauma, demonstrated improvements in their ability to regain control of their own lives. By contrast, there was little evidence that interventions addressed the strategic interests of women and men in post-conflict contexts, for example by promoting their active involvement in peace and reconciliation processes.

Source: Brüntrup-Seidemann, S., V. Gantner, A. Heucher, and I. Wiborg (2021[11]), Supporting Gender Equality in Post-conflict Contexts, German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval), https://visualizer.sprockler.com/en/open/DEval_gender_storytelling

How should the guidance be used?

This guidance can be used at any stage of an evaluation, as well as to inform intervention design, strategic planning and other processes of quality assurance before, during and after an intervention is carried out. Assessments conducted during the design of an intervention are important in ensuring relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. When it comes to identifying intersecting forms of discrimination that may affect rights-holders, especially marginalised groups, assessments that actively involve people and communities affected by the intervention or are meant to benefit from it are important.

Following this introduction, Section 2 provides a normative background for working with a human rights and gender equality lens. It gives succinct definitions of gender equality, human rights standards and principles and outlines how they relate to the context of development co-operation. Section 3 provides guidance on how to apply a human rights and gender equality lens to the six evaluation criteria. Section 4 highlights how different institutional and societal contexts might impact the application of a human rights and gender equality lens in evaluations. Throughout the document, case study examples illustrate real-life ways of applying a human rights and gender equality lens in evaluation practice.

This guidance is not an exhaustive source of information. It focuses on the criteria themselves and highlights the most relevant evaluation questions that can be asked when using the evaluation criteria. Readers are advised to refer to the resource box below for further reading. They should also apply relevant ethical standards and quality standards.

Further reading

Evaluation tools and standards

BetterEvaluation: A knowledge platform and global community for better evaluation, better decisions, and better results for people and the planet. https://www.betterevaluation.org

OECD (*Forthcoming*), *Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-Based Management in Sustainable Development* (2nd Edition) English-French-Spanish.

OECD (2021), *Applying Evaluation Criteria Thoughtfully*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/543e84ed-en

OECD (2007), *DAC Quality Standards for Development Evaluation*, https://www.oecd.org/development/evaluation/qualitystandards.pdf

The Network of Networks on Impact Evaluation (2009), *Impact Evaluations and Development, Nonie Guidance on Impact Evaluation,* https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/411821468313779505/pdf/574900WP0Box351BLIC10nonie1guidance.pdf

Gender equality and evaluation tools

Global Affairs Canada (2022), *Gender Equality and Empowerment Measurement Tool*, https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/funding-financement/introduction_gender_emt-outil_renforcement_epf.aspx?lang=eng

OECD (2022), *Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls: Guidance for Development Partners,* OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/0bddfa8f-en

Save the Children and HAQ: Centre for Child Rights (2010), *Budget for Children Analysis*, https://internationalbudget.org/wp-content/uploads/Budget-for-Children-Analysis.pdf

Stephens, A. et al. (2018), *Inclusive Systemic Evaluation (ISE4GEMs): A new Approach for the SDG Era*, UN Women, New York, www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/9/ise4gems-a-new-approach-for-the-sdg-era

UN WOMEN (2015), *How to Manage Gender-Responsive Evaluation, Evaluation Handbook, https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2015/UN-Women-Evaluation-Handbook-en.pdf*

UN WOMEN (2021), *Intersectionality resource guide and toolkit*, https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-01/Intersectionality-resource-guide-and-toolkit-en.pdf

Human rights and evaluation tools

CESR (2012), *Assessing Fiscal Policies from a Human Rights Perspective. Methodological case study on the use of available resources to realize economic, social and cultural rights in Guatemala*, Center for Economic and Social Rights, http://www.cesr.org/sites/default/files/assessing.fiscal.policies.from_.a.human_.rights.perspective.pdf

GIZ (2019), *The ABC of Human Rights for Development Cooperation*, e-info-tool published by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, last updated on July 2019, https://www.institut-fuer-menschenrechte.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Publikationen/E-Info-Tool/e-info-tool_abc_of_human_rights_for_development_cooperation.pdf

OHCHR (2010), *Human Rights in Budget Monitoring, Analysis and Advocacy*, https://internationalbudget.org/wp-content/uploads/Human-Rights-in-Budget-Monitoring-Analysis-and-Advocacy-Training-Guide.pdf

OHCHR (2018), *A Human Rights-Based Approach to Data, Leaving No One Behind in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Guidance note to data collection and disaggregation*, New York, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/HRIndicators/GuidanceNoteonApproachtoData.pdf

UNEG (2014), *Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations*, United Nations Evaluation Group, New York, http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1616

UN HABITAT (2014), *Briefing Note: HRBA Monitoring and Evaluation,* https://unhabitat.org/briefing-note-hrba-monitoring-and-evaluation

World Bank and OECD (2016), *Integrating Human Rights into Development, Donor Approaches, Experiences and Challenges*, World Bank, Third Edition, Washington, DC., https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/25859?show=full

UNICEF (2019), *Guidance on Gender Integration in Evaluation, https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/media/1226/file/UNICEF%20Guidance%20on%20Gender%20(Full%20version).pdf*

Peacebuilding and evaluation

OECD (2012), *Evaluating Peacebuilding Activities in Settings of Conflict and Fragility: Improving Learning for Results*, DAC Guidelines and References Series, OECD Publishing. http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264106802-en

2 A quick guide to human rights, gender equality and development co-operation

This section provides readers with an overview of the core instruments and concepts that underpin human rights and gender equality frameworks, standards and principles used in development co-operation today and referred to in this guidance. In many ways, development co-operation, which aims to improve well-being and development, is an exercise in supporting the fulfilment of fundamental rights of all people. While not all development actors use the language of rights, it is important for evaluators to understand core concepts and frameworks that underpin human rights and gender equality, in order to apply these perspectives to their work.

Human rights and development co-operation

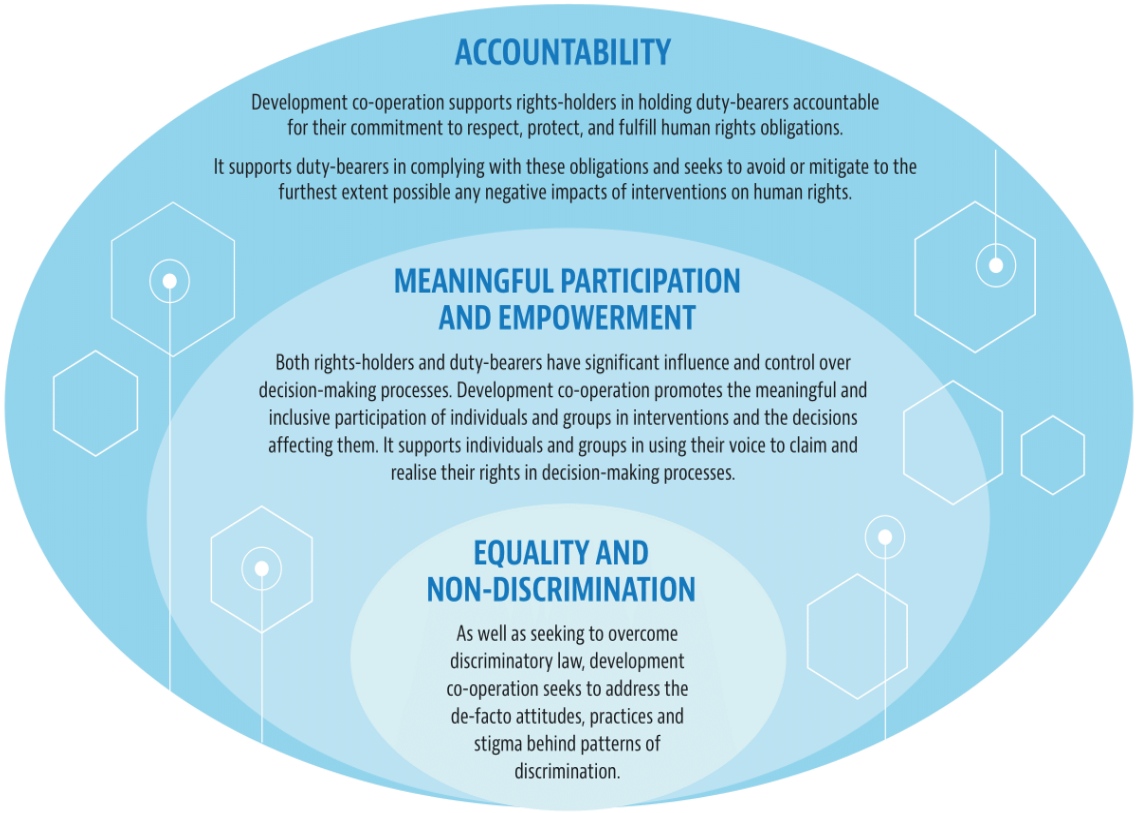
In this guidance, human rights refer to the established framework of rights set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the nine core human rights treaties and instruments ratified by UN member states as of 2022.[3] Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, disability, language, religion, or any other status. These include the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, the right to work, and the right to health and education, amongst others.

For each of these treaties a committee of independent experts – the treaty body – monitors the implementation of treaty provisions by the state signatories, issues recommendations on the reports submitted by the state parties, and interprets and establishes the content of specific human rights and principles in their General Comments or General Recommendations.[4] Once state parties have ratified a treaty, they are obliged to respect, protect and fulfil the rights enshrined in it, and must regularly report to the treaty body. These reports, and those of the treaty bodies, contain information on the performance of states in implementing the rights enshrined in the respective conventions, which can be used when applying the evaluation criteria. Evaluators can refer to relevant websites, such as the OHCHR "Core International Human Rights Instruments and their monitoring bodies" (OHCHR, 2023[12]), to identify relevant treaties and their status.

In their General Comments on social and economic rights, the treaty bodies have emphasised that development co-operation providers have an obligation to provide development assistance in a manner consistent with human rights (UN CESCR, 2003[13]; UN CESCR, 2008[14]; UN CESCR, 2009[15]; UN CESCR, 2016[16]; UN CESCR, 2017[17]). For example, Article 32 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) 2006, prescribes that international co-operation support national actions to ensure all international, regional and civil society organisations work in tandem to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities.

International human rights law determines the relationship between individuals and groups with entitlements (rights-holders[5]), and state actors with obligations (duty-bearers[6]) to respect, protect and fulfil the civil, political, economic, cultural, and social rights to which they have committed. Both specific human rights standards and wider, overarching human rights principles are relevant to development co-operation and evaluation (Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1. Foundational human rights principles relevant to development co-operation



In applying a human rights lens to an intervention, an evaluator will routinely examine its benefits to "rights-holders". However, depending on the nature of the intervention, duty-bearers might also be the "beneficiaries" of an intervention. For example, the intervention may increase the capacities, knowledge, and experience of duty-bearers, which will ultimately improve the fulfilment of rights. Similarly, whilst state partners are the primary duty-bearers, international human rights law increasingly recognises that other actors, such as business entities, are bound by human rights legislation, and their performance in this regard may also be subject to evaluation.

These principles are integral to the global commitments made in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and are closely related to other principles that inform development and humanitarian assistance, such as the "leave no one behind" (LNOB) principle and the "do-no-harm" principle.[7] In adopting the 2030 Agenda, United Nations members have committed "to realise the human rights of all and to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls" under SDG 5, and "reducing inequalities and ensuring no one is left behind" under SDG 10 (UN, 2015[18]).Several other SDG targets and indicators explicitly mention human rights, and others support progress towards established rights, such as the right to education (UN, 2022[19]).

With the overarching "leave no one behind" (LNOB) principle, the 2030 Agenda affirms the commitment to address and overcome structural inequalities and discrimination. Similarly, the "do-no-harm" principle is tied closely to the human rights principle of accountability.[8] It requires that development co-operation and humanitarian actors assess the unintended negative effects of interventions on human rights to mitigate them to the greatest extent possible and assume accountability for the (negative) unintended effects that do occur. It also signals the importance of conflict- and trauma-sensitive approaches, particularly – but not only – in the context of humanitarian aid and peacebuilding.

An important consideration for development co-operation and humanitarian assistance providers is the concept of progressive realisation. This principle implies that providers support partner governments in adopting appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures that allow a gradual but continuous (progressive) realisation of cultural, social and economic rights. Besides an immediate obligation to confer specific civil and political rights, state parties are obliged to ensure that minimum levels of social and economic rights are met without discrimination, and to progressively realise them. Several General Comments define and specify the core elements of economic and social rights as availability, accessibility, acceptability (or adequacy) and quality (AAAQ).

Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and development co-operation

The full enjoyment of human rights by all women and girls is a crucial goal in its own right, as reflected in SDG 5 of the 2030 Agenda and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) oblige state parties in their common Article 3 to ensure that men and women equally enjoy all rights set out in both covenants. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) outlines areas in which women are discriminated against and specifies measures to ensure equality between men and women. To this day, however, not all countries have ratified the Convention.

Most providers recognise the importance of working towards gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Women around the world at present face systemic discrimination and disadvantages, have lower access to opportunities, earning and spending power, are more likely to experience violence and abuse and are subject to harmful social norms and power imbalances that inhibit their individual and collective progress. The importance of achieving equal rights for half of the world's population is critical for economic growth and sustainable development. There is also widespread recognition of discrimination on the basis of age, with children facing exclusion and lacking protection of core rights in many contexts, and girls facing particular challenges in most countries.

In recent years, there have been increasing efforts to address rights violations and discrimination faced because of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC), and to achieve the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI+) people (OHCHR, 2019[20]). The treaty bodies include discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity in their interpretation of "prohibition of discrimination". More recent joint statements and policy documents such as the New European Consensus on Development (European Commission, 2017[21]) and the EU Gender Action Plan III make clear references to the need to protect the human rights of LGBTI+ people and people with diverse SOGIESC.

Though several providers use a binary definition of gender, a recognition of diverse gender identities, expressions and sex characteristics is gradually being reflected in some provider strategies too. In 2019, significant support to the realisation of the rights of people with diverse SOGIESC was being provided by the Finnish Development Cooperation, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), the UK Department for International Development (DFID), the Netherlands Development Cooperation,

Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad), Global Affairs Canada, and the European Commission (EC) (Bolton, 2021[22]).

This guidance does not prescribe which concept of gender equality (binary or beyond) should be applied in evaluations, nor the relative prioritisation of any particular human right or specific definition of these. Evaluation commissioners and managers should adapt to the context of the evaluation and the intervention being evaluated, including the values and priorities of people that are meant to benefit from the intervention, when determining which specific concepts and definitions are most appropriate. Evaluation stakeholders need to consider the pros and cons of applying a binary gender concept or broadening the concept to all gender identities.

Intersectionality, human rights and gender equality

Intersectionality promotes an understanding of human beings as shaped by the interaction of different social locations (e.g., 'race', ethnicity, indigeneity, gender, class, sexuality, geography, age, disability, geographic location, ability, migration status, religion). These interactions occur within a context of connected system and structures of power (e.g., laws, policies, state governments and other political and, economics unions, religious institutions, media). Through such processes, interdependent forms of privilege and oppression shaped by colonialism, imperialism, racism, homophobia, ableism and patriarchy are created. (Hankivsky, 2014[23]) Assessing how different forms of discrimination interact and reinforce each other to affect a person's social and economic situation and consequent outcomes is key to understanding the underlying factors that impede structural transformation.

An intersectional evaluation approach can help to identify these layers and to analyse the factors that drive them. Systematically unpacking these multiple dimensions can help evaluators to understand how interventions can promote inclusion in accordance with the human rights principle of non-discrimination and the LNOB principle of the 2030 Agenda (see practical examples in Box 3.1 and Box 3.2). In an evaluation, intersectionality is an important consideration for relevance, effectiveness and impact (especially when considering the terms as referred to in treaties "prohibited grounds of discrimination" and "multiple forms of discrimination") as not everyone experiences the same forms of discriminations at equal levels.

Box 3.4 in Section 3 outlines different ways to address the challenges of assessing intersectionality.

3 Applying a human rights and gender equality lens to the OECD evaluation criteria

This section provides readers with the definitions of each of the six criteria as presented in *Applying Evaluation Criteria Thoughtfully* (OECD, 2021[9]) and helps readers interpret each definition through a human rights and gender equality lens. It explains how key elements of each definition can be used as tools to assess the human rights and gender equality dimensions of an intervention and its effects, even when evaluating interventions that do not have specific human rights objectives.

Then, for each criterion, the guidance identifies key conceptual and practical challenges and offers recommendations on how these could be managed by evaluators, evaluation managers or programme managers. Examples are provided throughout to illustrate the concepts.

Relevance

Relevance: Is the intervention doing the right things?

The extent to which the intervention's objectives and design respond to beneficiaries' global, country and partner/institution needs, policies and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change.

Note: "Respond to" means that the objectives and design of the intervention are sensitive to the economic, environmental, equity, social, political economy and capacity conditions in which it takes place. "Partner/institution" includes government (national, regional, local), civil society organisations, private entities and international bodies involved in funding, implementing and/or overseeing the intervention. Relevance assessment involves looking at differences and trade-offs between different priorities or needs. It requires analysing any changes in the context to assess the extent to which the intervention can be (or has been) adapted to remain relevant.

Source: OECD (2021[9]), *Applying Evaluation Criteria Thoughtfully*, https://doi.org/10.1787/543e84ed-en.

Understanding relevance using a human rights and gender equality lens

One of the most important elements for analysing relevance is assessing the rights, needs and priorities of beneficiaries. Assessing relevance with a human rights and gender equality lens involves understanding how intersecting forms of discrimination may affect the needs and priorities of rights-holders and the extent to which the intervention addresses these. It also involves assessing the underlying contextual factors and power dynamics that may explain diverging priorities, and how the intervention managed and influenced these dynamics (if at all).

Assessing relevance through a human rights and gender equality lens

Does the intervention respond to rights, needs and priorities?

Assessing relevance is tied closely to the quality of the design of an intervention and the extent to which it responds to the rights, needs[9] and priorities of rights-holders. This requires identifying the respective groups of rights-holders and the driving factors of their marginalisation. If programme managers have conducted contextual analyses, stakeholder analyses, gender analysis[10] or vulnerability assessments to inform the design of an intervention, evaluators can use these to assess the intervention's relevance. However, this is often not the case, particularly for interventions that do not explicitly target human rights and gender equality. In such cases, evaluators may choose to recreate this analysis via programme documents or undertake it themselves. Box 3.1 gives an example of one such assessment which helped prepare the ground for evaluations.

Box 3.1. Vulnerability assessments to identify and address rights, needs and priorities of rights-holders

In 2016, the United Nations (UN) Team in the territories under the Palestinian Authority conducted a Common Country Analysis (CCA) to provide an analytical basis for its development strategy. The analysis set a deliberate focus on vulnerability and asked why some groups were systematically more disadvantaged than others.

The analysis identified 20 groups most affected by five structural drivers of disadvantage and vulnerability in the Palestinian context: location/place of residence; exposure to violence; economic factors; institutional and political factors; and socio-cultural norms. Among these groups were food-insecure households headed by women, children in the labour force, and Bedouin and herder communities. Detailed profiles of the drivers of their vulnerability were prepared for each group.

The assessment recommended closing data gaps to make vulnerable groups visible, fostering their participation in development processes, investing in cross-sectoral planning processes, and improving the coherence between development and humanitarian interventions.

Source: United Nations Country Team (2016[24]) *Common Country Analysis, Leave No One Behind: A Perspective on Vulnerability and Structural Disadvantage in Palestine,* https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/common-country-analysis-2016-leave-no-one-behind-perspective.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) framework is another tool that evaluators and programme managers might use to identify and understand marginalised groups and drivers of marginalisation (UNDP, 2018[25]). It includes five key factors: discrimination, geography, governance, socio-economic status, and shocks and fragility. Most often marginalised groups face intersecting disadvantages stemming from more than one of these factors.

To understand people's priorities, they need to have been consulted (during intervention design and implementation and/or as part of the evaluation). Evaluators should pay particular attention to different prioritisation of needs across different stakeholders and the extent to which the needs and priorities of intended beneficiaries were truly accounted for (or whether the focus was on pre-determined priorities influenced by external parties). Box 3.2 shows how a feminist evaluation approach involved rights-holders throughout the evaluation process and validated the relevance of a programme together with those affected by it.

Box 3.2. Assessing the relevance of the Women's Voice and Leadership Program

The Women's Voice and Leadership Programme is implemented by Global Affairs Canada (GAC) and runs from 2018 to 2023. The programme aims to build the organisational capacity and sustainability of women's rights organisations (WROs) and lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LBTQI+) groups, enhance their programming and advocacy activities and increase the effectiveness of networks and movements advocating for change. It encompasses 30 bilateral projects in 28 countries, in addition to 3 regional projects in the Caribbean, the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa. Global Affairs Canada applied a feminist approach both in the programming and in the formative evaluation (conducted early on to inform the programme as it was being implemented) of the Women's Voice and Leadership Programme. The approach was grounded in three principles – participation, inclusion, and empowerment – and in the belief that gender-based inequalities are systemic and lead to social injustice. The evaluation encouraged reflective, empowering, collaborative and participatory processes, and provided a platform for women's voices and those of others who are often unheard.

One objective of the formative evaluation was to determine whether the design features and implementation modalities of the programme were relevant and appropriate to addressing the diverse needs of women's rights organisations and movements. The methodology included four country case studies led by local feminist evaluators who conducted data collection in-country, using interviews, surveys, discussions and document reviews. The methodology included 10 virtual focus groups with participating WROs that also assessed the relevance of the program design to their needs and priorities.

The findings show that the programme was highly relevant to the women's rights organisations participating. They greatly appreciated that the programme did not prescribe thematic priorities, and thus allowed them to focus on the priorities of their own communities. Support was sufficiently flexible to allow projects to address the diverse needs of their organisations. The projects successfully targeted diverse organisations representing the multiple intersecting identities of women and gender-diverse people. However, the projects also struggled to reach informal organisations, and, in some contexts, organisations representing women with disabilities and the LBTQI+ community. The evaluation recommended additional efforts to reach these groups in the future.

Source: Global Affairs Canada (2022[26]), *Summary of the Women's Voice and Leadership Program,* https://www.international.gc.ca/transparency-transparence/audit-evaluation-verification/2022/2022-05-wvl-vlf-summary.aspx?lang=eng; Global Affairs Canada (2022[27]), *Women's Voice and Leadership Program Formative Evaluation,* https://www.international.gc.ca/transparency-transparence/assets/pdfs/audit-evaluation-verification/2022/2022-05-wvl-vlf-summary-en.pdf

An analysis of relevance, whether ex ante or ex post, must examine alignment with stakeholders' rights as well as their priorities and needs. For example, a social protection programme requiring people to collect pay-outs in-person should ensure accessibility in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Box 3.3). Evaluators should check the relevant human rights instruments to assess project design, implementation, and outcomes against the relevant provisions.

Box 3.3. Assessing the relevance of Germany's Action Plan for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities

From 2013 to 2017 the Action Plan for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities guided the efforts of German development co-operation on disability inclusion. The action plan was the object of an evaluation by the German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval).

The evaluation examined all three strategic objectives of the action plan, which comprised a total of 42 individual measures, using a theory-based approach. The three objectives of the action plan were:

1. Setting a good example at BMZ
2. Fostering the inclusion of persons with disabilities in partner countries
3. Co-operation with other actors at the national, regional and international levels

Each of these objectives was assessed by several questions covering a broad range of evaluation criteria. However, for each objective, the first question concerned the relevance of the measures dedicated to this objective against the backdrop of the provisions of the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD): "To what extent do the selected fields of action and measures correspond to the provisions of the CRPD?"

The CRPD has a specific article concerning the role of international co-operation to further the rights of persons with disabilities. In addition, other articles (such as Article 27 on work and employment) are also relevant for specific development interventions. These articles guided the assessment and appraisal of the relevance of the measures included in the action plan and its implementation.

Source: Schwedersky, Ahrens and Stekhan (2017[28]), *Evaluation of the BMZ Action Plan for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities*, https://www.deval.org/fileadmin/Redaktion/PDF/05-Publikationen/Berichte/2017_API/DEval_Bericht_APInklusion_2017_EN.pdf.

Is the intervention sensitive and responsive to context?

Another important dimension of relevance is the extent to which an intervention has responded and adapted its approach to contextual changes (OECD, 2021[9]). Contextual changes may have an impact on social and power dynamics – some groups may benefit from the changes, while others might become worse off. Localised events, such as an outbreak of conflict, may lead to violations of civil and political rights and increasing violence towards rights-holders that affect people of different groups differently (including women and men). Global events, such as pandemics or a food crisis, may impede the (progressive) realisation of social and economic rights, and accentuate pre-existing exclusion patterns.

Evaluators should consider the extent to which potential risks to human rights and gender equality were considered in the intervention design and whether (and how) an intervention adapted to remain relevant in an evolving context.

Accounting for intersectionality

Intersectionality recognises that multiple systems of discrimination interact to determine a person's social identity and life outcomes – including realisation of their human rights. While women frequently face discrimination on grounds of their gender, and people with disabilities on grounds of their disabilities, such discrimination often interacts with additional factors, such as race, socio-economic status, or age (OECD, 2022[29]). An intersectional analysis involves examining how multiple forms of discrimination and power dynamics interact to promote or impede structural change. Assessing intersectionality is a major cross-cutting programmatic and methodological challenge due to:

- limited availability of data on marginalised groups
- challenges in responsibly prioritising the focus of an intersectional analysis on select dimensions of discrimination due to limited resources
- participation of marginalised groups being limited and influenced by underlying power dynamics between different marginalised groups, between rights-holders and duty-bearers and between evaluators and evaluands.

The following may help evaluators, evaluation managers and evaluation staff address these challenges:

- Contextual information: In the inception phase of an evaluation, define the key dimensions of discrimination, ideally together with the affected populations, and accordingly determine the range of stakeholders to involve in the evaluation based on stakeholder or context analyses or vulnerability assessments.
- Process and resource allocation: Clarify the link between an intersectional analysis and the purpose of the evaluation for a compelling argumentation on why sufficient resources and time need to be allocated to prioritise an intersectional analysis, including data collection.
- Methodology: If a rigorous impact evaluation design using a counterfactual approach is chosen, define the intersectional dimensions of discrimination. Use appropriate data collection and analytical methods to examine disaggregated effects. If a theory-based evaluation is chosen, visualise potential effects on different groups of rights-holders in the theory of change or narrative contribution story.
- Sampling stakeholders: Apply adequate sampling methods to ensure sufficient representation of sub-groups of rights-holders for an intersectional analysis. If such sampling methods are not possible, for example due to limited budget or time resources, be mindful of the perspectives that are missed, and of any resulting biases and limitations. In addition, and in line with OECD evaluation quality standards, the evaluation report should include an explicit reference to these missed perspectives and biases to ensure transparency around the process and findings.
- Engaging with stakeholders: Involve stakeholders throughout the intervention process, including those beyond the direct influence of the intervention, to acquire multiple perspectives of marginalised groups. Such engagement should be trauma-informed and should critically consider, mitigate, and avoid the risks that involvement could pose to participants. Include an assessment of the broader power dynamics that may influence transformative change in a contextual analysis. At a minimum, include questions on intersectionality, multiple forms of discrimination, and different dimensions of transformative or systemic change in interviews or focus groups with stakeholders and representatives of rights-holders and marginalised groups.

Suggested evaluation questions

Table 3.1 provides examples of evaluation questions that integrate a human rights and gender equality lens in analysing the relevance of an intervention. Rather than a checklist to be followed to the latter, it is intended to stimulate thinking. Evaluators can adapt these questions to the purpose, object and context of the evaluation and integrate critical elements from these into their own guiding questions.

Table 3.1: Relevance: Examples of guiding evaluation questions

Category	Guiding questions
Responding to rights, needs and priorities	• To what extent were 'relevant marginalised groups' defined/identified by rights-holders themselves? To what extent were rights-holders, especially relevant marginalised groups, involved in the intervention's design? • To what extent was the intervention designed in ways that respond to the specific rights, needs and priorities of different rights-holders, including women and girls, and people of relevant marginalised groups? • To what extent has the intervention managed diverging needs and priorities? Whose rights, needs and priorities are being met with the intervention? • To what extent has the design of the intervention considered multiple forms of discrimination, used available information on intersectionality or conducted an intersectional analysis? • To what extent does the intervention explicitly address gender norms and practices and structural barriers to equality? To what extent is the approach of the intervention gender transformative, i.e., based on a critical assessment of gender roles, norms, and dynamics? • To what extent does the design of the intervention address power dynamics between different groups of rights-holders? • To what extent does the design of the intervention address power dynamics between duty-bearers and rights-holders? • To what extent has the design, monitoring and evaluation system of the intervention overlooked (left behind) groups of rights-holders?
Being sensitive and responsive to context	• To what extent was the design of the intervention informed by an analysis of the country- and sector-specific human rights and gender equality situation? • How far does the design of the intervention include measures to address existing or potential conflicts and trauma? • To what extent does it take gender-based violence and other forms of violence relevant to the context into consideration? • Is the intervention backed up by a sound risk analysis that is explicit about trade-offs and competing priorities of rights-holders and duty-bearers? • To what extent does the monitoring and evaluation system of the intervention include ongoing analysis of context changes and potential human rights risks, including unintended effects on human rights? (e.g., changes in government that result in the rights of parts of the population being curtailed)

Challenges and how to address them

Table 3.2 summarises specific challenges to evaluating relevance with a human rights and gender equality lens and makes suggestions as to how evaluators and evaluation managers might deal with them, as well as actions that can be taken to design future interventions better to ensure that they are relevant to achieving human rights and gender-equality objectives.

Table 3.2: Challenges of evaluating relevance with a human rights and gender equality lens

Challenges	How to address: evaluators	How to address: evaluation managers	How to address: programme staff
Difference between the globally agreed definition of rights and the interpretation of rights by rights-holders and/or duty-bearers.	Evaluators need to consider both the definition of rights as set out by international human rights law and the interpretation and views of the rights-holders and duty-bearers in the national context. Differing interpretations could be explained by socio-cultural factors and addressed in the context analysis.	The degree to which rights and priorities have been achieved can be assessed against legal requirements, global commitments, and the subjective needs and priorities of different rights-holders. Evaluation managers should clearly state in the terms of reference (ToR) the criteria against which evaluators should assess, and the benchmarks by which findings should be measured.	When designing an intervention, programme staff must include the views of the rights-holders on their rights, needs and priorities in stakeholder analyses or context analyses.
Diverging priorities between rights-holders and duty-bearers.	Evaluators should try to identify the rights, needs and priorities of rights-holders and duty-bearers in a stakeholder analysis. They could examine the relationships and power dynamics between different stakeholders, account for trade-offs and address these in interviews, focus-group discussions or workshops with partner organisations and programme staff. There will almost always be differing views about priorities; the relevance of an intervention for rights-holders should be weighted heavily when assessing relevance from a human-rights perspective.	Evaluation managers should plan for and allocate the necessary time and resources required to enable a sound analysis of diverging priorities. The ToR of the evaluation should clearly state any desired weighting of priorities or groups vis-a-vis others and ensure that this is built into the intervention design, in case divergences become apparent during the evaluation process.	When cementing the scope of a stakeholder or context analysis, programme staff should analyse roles and potential conflicts between rights-holders and duty-bearers in the context of the intervention.

Coherence

Coherence: How well does the intervention fit with other interventions in a country, sector, or institution?

Coherence assesses the extent to which other interventions (particularly policies) support or undermine the intervention, and vice versa. It includes internal coherence and external coherence. Internal coherence addresses the synergies and interlinkages between the intervention and other interventions carried out by the same institution/government, as well as the consistency of the intervention with the relevant international norms and standards to which that institution/government adheres. External coherence considers the consistency of the intervention with other actors' interventions in the same context. This includes complementarity, harmonisation and co-ordination with others, and the extent to which the intervention is adding value while avoiding duplication of effort

Source: OECD (2021[9]), *Applying Evaluation Criteria Thoughtfully*, https://doi.org/10.1787/543e84ed-en.

Understanding coherence using a human rights and gender equality lens

The coherence criterion was added to the DAC evaluation criteria in 2019 to direct attention to synergies and trade-offs between policy areas and to the need for cross-government co-ordination, particularly in settings of conflict and humanitarian response. Reference to international norms and standards includes human rights conventions (OECD, 2019[1]) and provides a direct entry point for applying a human rights lens to the evaluation criteria.

A human rights and gender equality lens would assess the consistency of an intervention with international and regional human rights treaties, and relevant gender equality commitments of stakeholders involved in the intervention.

Assessing coherence through a human rights and gender equality lens

When evaluating coherence with a human rights and gender equality lens, internal coherence is likely to be more relevant to the objective of the evaluation than external coherence. External coherence issues such as levels of co-ordination with other actors and duplication risks cut across sectors and might not always require an explicit human rights and gender equality lens.

Internal coherence: alignment with other policies and interventions implemented by the institutions

Evaluating internal coherence involves comparing the objectives, approach and effects of an intervention with those of other interventions implemented by the same government or agency, or with its policies in other sectors, e.g., trade or tax policies. For instance, from a vertical perspective, an internal coherence analysis of a country's trade policy could examine the extent to which trade policy objectives align with the human rights and gender equality priorities under the same country's development co-operation policy. From a horizontal perspective, internal coherence analyses could, for example, examine the extent to which those working along the gender equality-climate change nexus harmonise their interventions.

Internal coherence: alignment with policy commitments

This implies assessing the extent to which the objectives and approach of an intervention align with the stipulations of related international human rights treaties and the respective (at-risk) rights embodied in these treaties. All sustainable development interventions impact human rights and gender equality directly or indirectly. However, these impact pathways are not always detailed in strategies or programme documents, especially when interventions do not explicitly relate to protecting and promoting human rights or supporting specific conventions.

For example, an intervention that promotes disability inclusion is more likely to align with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD; see Box 3.4), enabling a more clear-cut human-rights informed coherence analysis. However, an intervention around agriculture or manufacturing might be more complex. In this case, a human-rights informed coherence analysis could look at the extent to which the intervention affects child rights and the elimination of forced child labour, in alignment with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

While coherence could be applied in any evaluation, the intensity and detail of the coherence analysis may differ depending on the type of intervention evaluated, and the purpose and context of the evaluation. Some agencies have taken a risk-based approach, focusing evaluations on potential, or reported areas of incoherence or harm.

For an in-depth evaluation of coherence with human rights treaties, evaluators could consider regional treaties and any additional protocols. They could refer to the General Comments and Recommendations of the UN treaty bodies for more details on the content of these rights and the respective standards under

international human rights law. It may also be helpful to look at any individual communications to the UN treaty bodies brought under any of the applicable treaties, as well as the State responses to these communications. A country's Universal Period Review can additionally provide a holistic perspective on their human rights record.

Box 3.4. UNDP's evaluation of the coherence of its development co-operation strategies with the rights of people with disabilities

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2006 and entered into force in May 2008**.** According to the Convention (Art. 32), development co-operation must also be inclusive of and accessible to persons with disabilities. The UNDP evaluated its disability-inclusive development over the period 2008-2016. One of the four major areas of the analysis involved assessing the extent to which disability-inclusive development has featured in UNDP's strategic planning cycles since the CRPD came into force. Hence the evaluation assessed the coherence of UNDP's strategic plans with the CRPD: in other words, it looked at the extent to which the principles and provisions of the CRPD were reflected in UNDP's strategic plans.

The findings of the evaluation show that the rights of persons with disabilities and disability-inclusive development are both addressed at various levels of UNDP's work. However, a more coherent and strategic approach to disability inclusion could better leverage UNDP's role as advocate and facilitator of a dialogue between government, civil society and national human rights institutions in support of the CRPD.

The evaluation recommended that "UNDP's strategic plan should give significantly greater prominence and attention to the rights of persons with disabilities, with outcomes and outputs designed to align substantively with the breadth of the provisions of the CRPD." (UNDP, 2016).

Source: UNDP (2016[30]), *Evaluation of Disability-Inclusive Development at UNDP*, http://web.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/thematic/disability.shtml

In ratifying an international human rights treaty, countries commit to taking steps to implement the rights set out in that treaty. In many countries, ratification is followed by drafting new national instruments or adapting existing ones. These national instruments might be the benchmarks against which coherence can be evaluated. In certain contexts, however, national instruments may not be up to date or in line with the objectives of an intervention. In such cases, different benchmarks such as regional policy frameworks or international human rights or gender equality provisions might be used to evaluate coherence. This guidance encourages evaluators, evaluation managers and programme staff to use those most relevant to the objective and purpose of the intervention and its evaluation.

External coherence: alignment with external actors

External coherence considers how the intervention adds value compared to others, how duplication of effort is avoided and whether existing systems and co-ordination mechanisms are optimised. Box 3.5 gives an example of how both external and internal coherence of a global programme was assessed.

Box 3.5. External and internal coherence of the Joint UNFPA-UNICEF Programme on the Abandonment of Female Genital Mutilation

The UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme is a global programme, currently implemented in 17 countries with high levels of female genital mutilation (FGM). It aims to transform social norms in affected communities while working with governments to put in place viable national response systems to reduce the prevalence of the practice.

An evaluation of the Joint Programme assessed both the external and the internal coherence of the joint programme with the international human rights framework – specifically the CEDAW and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) – as well as with the regional framework – i.e., the Maputo Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' rights (internal coherence). It also looked at how the programme co-operated with human rights actors, such as national human rights institutions (external coherence).

The evaluation showed that the Joint Programme was aligned with global and regional policy frameworks and continued to be proactive within global advocacy and to shape international policies and norms. It also found the programme to be coherent with international human rights standards, although linkages with human rights actors were not optimised and the design of subnational interventions did not always use messaging around rights violations (UNFPA and UNICEF, 2021: 19). The evaluation explored synergies and linkages with work such as on child marriage and gender-based violence within both agencies. It examined co-ordination between two joint programmes: the UNICEF and UNFPA Joint Programme on the Abandonment of Female Genital Mutilation (led by UNFPA), and the UNICEF and UNFPA Global Programme on Ending Child Marriage (led by UNICEF). It found co-ordination to be variable and indicated the need for better synergies and mechanisms to encourage more co-ordinated programming. Health, gender and education were also identified as sectors in which linkages could be enhanced and systematised.

The evaluation recommended that in the next phase the Joint Programme strengthen its linkages and synergies with those addressing other harmful practices, child marriage in particular, enhancing the opportunity to work on the shared drivers of both harmful practices for more efficient programming. It also recommended that cross-sectoral linkages for more systematic and co-ordinated programming (including education, health, child protection, youth and others) be strengthened.

Source: UNFPA and UNICEF (2021[31]), *Joint Evaluation of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Abandonment of Female Genital Mutilation: Accelerating Change Phase II and III (2018 - 2021)*, https://www.unfpa.org/joint-evaluation-unfpa-unicef-joint-programme-abandonment-female-genital-mutilation-accelerating.

In conflict or fragile contexts, evaluators need to assess cross-cutting issues and synergies between development and humanitarian interventions (see Box 3.6 for an example). This includes assessments at two levels:

- Policy and programme level: Interventions should support and not undermine people's own efforts in exercising their rights. Therefore, coherence with local civil society working on human rights and gender equality, conflict prevention, peacebuilding, trauma-sensitivity and (gender-based) violence is the key to ensure interventions do no harm.
- Policy level: coherence with human rights and humanitarian law, the Women, Peace and Security Agenda and the respective United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR).
- Programme level: coherence with other development and humanitarian interventions that address the rights of different people, including women and girls, and other marginalised groups.

Box 3.6. Assessing the coherence of the Spanish Cooperation Humanitarian Action Strategy

In 2007 the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation published its "Spanish Cooperation Humanitarian Action Strategy", which emphasises the cross-cutting priorities of gender equality, human rights and cultural diversity throughout its design and implementation. It has six objectives, with the fifth objective aimed at "…supporting synergies with other instruments". The implementation of this strategy was evaluated in 2018, notably assessing its internal and external coherence.

At the implementation level, both development co-operation and humanitarian interventions supported by Spain promoted the cross-cutting priorities of gender equality, human rights and cultural diversity. Institutional focus on mainstreaming gender equality emerged as a strong focus through the evaluation, evidence by the Spanish Cooperation Gender in Development Sector Strategy and gender-sensitive hiring practices at the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), the Humanitarian Action Office as well as across main partner organisations. At the global level, Spain was found to be highly committed to the promotion of the Women, Peace and Security agenda and the respective UNSCR. Co-operation agreements designed to enhance synergies were also implemented with multilateral partners, such as UN Women.

Coherence across other cross-cutting priorities relating to human rights and cultural diversity was less visible due to an absence of quantifiable information, reports and evaluation of how the human rights-based approach was applied in humanitarian aid; and a lack of specific markers to track progress.

The evaluation concluded that though Spanish Cooperation upheld its international commitments and initiatives on gender equality and human rights, a more strategic approach and firm priorities would increase the value of Spain's contribution in a complex international setting.

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, (2018[32]), *Evaluation of Spanish Cooperation's Humanitarian Action Strategy* (in Spanish), https://www.aecid.es/Centro-Documentacion/Documentos/Acci%C3%B3n Humanitaria/Evaluacion de la Estrategia de Accion Humanitaria de la Cooperacion Espa%C3%B1ola.pdf

Suggested evaluation questions

Table 3.3 provides examples of evaluation questions that integrate a human rights and gender equality lens when analysing the coherence of an intervention.

Table 3.3: Coherence: Examples of guiding evaluation questions

Category	Guiding questions
Internal coherence	• Which are the rights (and whose) most at risk this intervention, and which are the relevant human rights treaties or policies to which these relate? To what extent is the intervention and its effects aligned with these human rights laws and policies? • To what extent is the intervention consistent with the human rights-based and gender equality policies, strategies, and other interventions of the donor and partner institutions? • To what extent is the intervention consistent with human rights and gender equality policies, strategies, and other interventions in areas other than development co-operation (e.g., foreign policy, humanitarian aid)? • To what extent is the intervention consistent with international, regional human rights treaties and conventions? • To what extent is the intervention coherent with international and regional human rights treaties and global commitments to gender equality and women's rights?
External coherence	• Does the intervention support and co-operate with civil society actors, such as human rights organisations, disabled people's organisations, women's rights or feminist organisations? • To what extent is the intervention consistent with the human rights and gender equality commitments of the relevant stakeholders, and of the institutions or governments involved in the intervention (as laid down in ratified human rights treaties, the constitution, national laws, and policies)? • Does the intervention co-ordinate and co-operate with other interventions supporting human rights and gender equality, and does it strive for synergies?

Challenges and how to address them

Table 3.4 summarises specific challenges in evaluating coherence with a human rights and gender equality lens and makes suggestions for how evaluators and evaluation managers can deal with them, as well as actions that can be taken to design future interventions better to ensure that they are internally and externally coherent. Many other challenges related to evaluating questions of coherence – such as access to data and limits in mandate – are not specific to human rights and gender equality and therefore not covered here.

Table 3.4: Challenges of evaluating coherence with a human rights and gender equality lens

Challenges	How to address: evaluators	How to address: evaluation managers	How to address: programme staff
Interventions might affect several human rights, making a coherence analysis practically challenging due to trouble in identifying the most relevant policy commitments and legal instruments as well as highlighting resource constraints.	Evaluators can address this challenge by focusing the coherence analysis on the most relevant pre-identified rights and human rights treaties as laid out in the ToR or evaluability assessment.[1] If not specified, evaluators can collaborate with evaluation managers to ensure that the scope is clearly and realistically defined at the outset of an evaluation.	Evaluation managers can strengthen the evaluation by narrowing the focus on select human rights that are directly linked to the intervention. Depending on the scope set out in the ToR, evaluation managers should allocate resources that facilitate a careful analysis. Conducting an evaluability assessment on where coherence might be possible to assess at the outset of commissioning an evaluation can also shed light on the more practical limitations evaluators might come up against, such as the availability of data and access to information across a range of development partners.	During the design phase programme staff must identify the major human rights treaties relevant to the intervention.
Different stakeholders involved in the intervention hold different views about human rights (for instance, international funders and the national legal framework have different approaches to women's rights).	Interventions coherent with the standards and practices of one state/actor might not be coherent with those of other actors, international human rights treaties and commitments (such as the policies of another stakeholder). When evaluating interventions, evaluators must specify the benchmarks against which coherence is assessed. If this has not been done during the intervention's design, evaluators can identify the most relevant policy commitments, legal instruments and national or regional human rights frameworks considering the objectives of the intervention, the context of implementation, perspectives and accountability requirements for different actors. This is particularly critical when the intervention has more general development objectives and is not explicitly aimed at increasing fulfilment of human rights and gender equality.	Evaluation managers should clearly specify with which frameworks, instruments or commitments the intervention should align, including the fact that an intervention may aim to close the gaps on fulfilment of human rights from some stakeholders' perspectives, but not from others. The specification can be made in the ToR or in the evaluation questions and indicators. As this may be sensitive information (for both the intervention and the evaluation), at the very least these specifications should be discussed and agreed with the commissioning agencies, partners, and impacted people, and approaches for managing differences specified in internal documents.	In the design phase, programme managers should ideally state the objectives of the intervention and whether they differ from relevant policy commitments, legal instruments and national or regional frameworks. If necessary, programme managers might also include specific indicators of coherence in the monitoring framework.

Note: 1. An evaluability assessment determines the extent to which an intervention can be evaluated in a reliable and credible fashion, for example by looking at whether its objectives are clearly defined, or data about results are available.

Effectiveness

Effectiveness: Is the intervention achieving its objectives?

The extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives and its results, including any differential results across groups.

Note: Analysis of effectiveness involves taking account of the relative importance of the objectives or results. The term effectiveness is also used as an aggregate measure of the extent to which an intervention has achieved or is expected to achieve relevant and sustainable impacts, efficiently and coherently.

Source: OECD (2021[9]), *Applying Evaluation Criteria Thoughtfully*, https://doi.org/10.1787/543e84ed-en.

Understanding effectiveness using a human rights and gender equality lens

A human rights and gender equality lens helps examine achievement of objectives from the perspective of inclusiveness, or the extent to which the intervention has succeeded in involving and improving the situation of different rights holders, including women, girls and people from marginalised groups. It includes assessing the process through which objectives were achieved i.e., whether the process was equitable and fair and the extent to which inequalities and gaps between different groups of rights-holders were reduced. From a human rights-based approach, process and outcome are seen as equally important.

Evaluating effectiveness with a human rights and gender lens also includes looking at the relative importance of what was achieved and any influencing factors as these relate to realisation – or not - of human rights. The concept of differential results in the definition of effectiveness is a useful entry point for evaluators to disaggregate the outcomes and explore how different groups of rights-holders may have been impacted – positively or negatively. The OECD/DAC Guidance on Gender Equality for Development Partners has a section on planning for gender equality results, which is a useful reference point to strengthen effectiveness approaches in both interventions and evaluations.

Assessing effectiveness through a human rights and gender equality lens

To assess the results and implementation process of an intervention, and the extent to which they reflect human rights principles and gender equality, evaluators must define what these principles mean in the context of the intervention and how to measure them. Evaluation managers may need to set priorities and decide which human rights principle(s) should be assessed in depth when assessing effectiveness.

For example, in evaluating land-use or agriculture interventions in a context where most farmers are women, evaluators could set a focus on non-discrimination, participation and empowerment by examining how the intervention has supported the empowerment of women and marginalised groups in their access to land and agricultural services, and whether they were able to genuinely participate in decisions on issues such as land distribution. Members of these groups could play an active role in the evaluation process, for example as evaluation team members or facilitators. Alternatively, in an evaluation of budget support to the education sector evaluators may choose to focus on accountability, by examining if and how partner countries and development institutions have considered the core elements of the right to education and the principle of progressive realisation in budgeting processes.

Is the intervention achieving its objectives and results, and how?

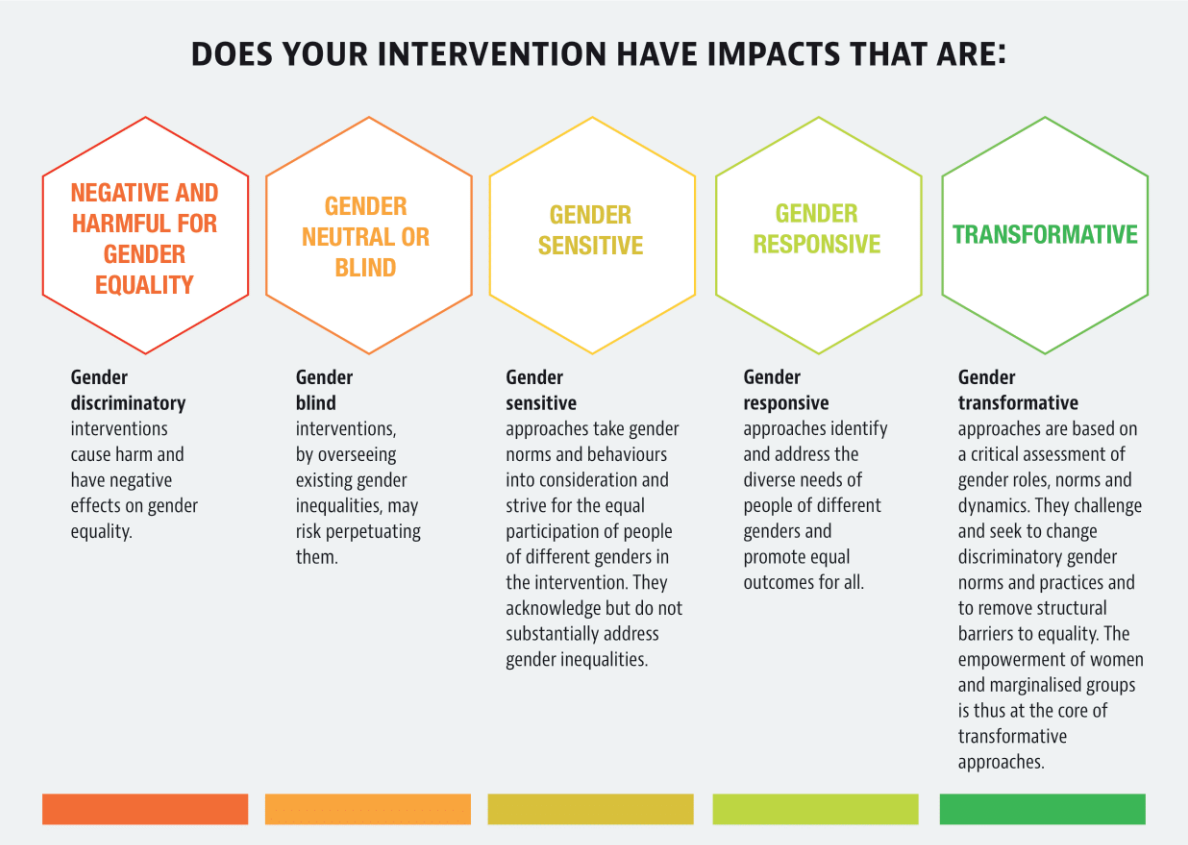
Effectiveness focuses on the achievement of objectives, which may or may not explicitly focus on an increased fulfilment of rights of rights-holders, depending on the intervention in question. For interventions with an explicit human rights and gender equality focus, objectives generally manifest over long time horizons and in a non-linear way. Progress made on addressing root causes (such as underlying power imbalances) that drive inequalities and rights violations are important considerations under effectiveness as they can give early indications of expected results.

When evaluating an intervention that does not have explicit rights-related objectives, evaluators can use effectiveness as an entry point to introduce a human rights framework to assess the intended and unintended (positive or negative) effects.

However, interventions aren't deemed effective based solely on the outcomes they enable, but also on the processes by which they are achieved. In assessing effectiveness with a human rights and gender equality lens, assessing whether the intervention processes were inclusive is critical. Poor processes, which can include the occurrence of (negative) unintended consequences, can undermine the relative importance of what was achieved.

When assessing the extent to which interventions lead to gender equality results it is helpful to use the gender equality continuum scale (Figure 3.1). This categorises the approaches of different interventions and their (expected or actual) results on a scale from gender negative or discriminatory, to gender blind, gender sensitive, gender responsive or gender transformative (OECD, 2022[29]; UNICEF, 2021[33]; Save the Children, 2014[34]). The categories could also be applied to other dimensions of difference. However, the transferability of this continuum is suggested with caution owing to the varying drivers that influence other forms of discrimination.

Figure 3.1. The gender equality continuum scale



Source: Adapted from OECD (2022[29]), *Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls: Guidance for Development Partners*, https://doi.org/10.1787/0bddfa8f-en.

An analysis of the process through which objectives are achieved and any (negative) unintended effects, is closely linked to the human rights principle of accountability. In the context of international development co-operation, development co-operation providers – including funding and implementing institutions – are required to respect and protect human rights, including identifying, avoiding, and mitigating any unintended negative effects on human rights and gender equality that may result from an intervention. Even an "effective" intervention that achieved all its stated objectives, may ultimately be deemed a failure if it had negative effects or undermined human rights and gender equality. If negative effects are identified, evaluators should deepen their analysis to understand why risks were not identified and mitigated earlier in the process. This can include examining whether ex-ante human-rights safeguarding procedures are sufficient, and whether the processes for identifying and mitigating potential negative effects on human rights in intervention design and monitoring processes are sufficient.

This consideration is particularly relevant for interventions that do not explicitly aim at promoting human rights or gender equality, such as infrastructure development or private sector engagement. Interventions may have unintended negative consequences on human rights and gender equality by building on and thereby reinforcing existing harmful social, cultural or gendered norms (Box 3.7).

Box 3.7. Human rights and effectiveness of World Bank natural resource management projects

Between 2009 and 2019 the World Bank supported 253 projects in 82 countries in the sector of natural resource management. An evaluation of the World Bank's Support for Sustainable and Inclusive Natural Resource Management (2009–2019) assessed how well the bank has addressed natural resource degradation to reduce the vulnerabilities of resource-dependent people. The evaluation covered natural resources critical to the livelihoods and welfare of the vulnerable people who depend on them. These resources include soil and land, local forest resources, groundwater, and small-scale fisheries.

Using both the relevance and the effectiveness criteria, the evaluation assessed how effective the World Bank's support for natural resource management had been at promoting sustainable use of resources and reducing the associated vulnerability of resource-dependent people. It used a mixed methods approach, including structured literature reviews, a global data analysis, geospatial analyses, interviews, portfolio review and analysis, and comparative case studies.

Overall, the evaluation showed that although the World Bank has been effective at improving natural resource management practices, there is little attributable evidence of a reduction in natural resource degradation or in the vulnerability of resource users. One major reason is that projects did not adequately identify, assess, or address heterogeneous effects on different subgroups of vulnerable resource users. The evaluation did find projects that had a positive effect on the reduction of natural degradation by addressing the rights of poor and vulnerable population groups. For example, in East Asia the provision and enforcement of local fishing rights reduced illegal extraction and increased incomes. In India strengthening community groundwater rights helped stem illegal well drilling that was leading to groundwater depletion.

The evaluation also shows that land restoration projects that did not take traditional land access and use rights into consideration increased the vulnerability of groups such as transhumant herders and traditional livestock farmers. For example, in Niger, land was restored effectively, but parcels were also sold into areas that lacked good land governance, outside the reach of the local community. Unintended effects included "predation by elites", and "encroachment by non-traditional farmers". The evaluation recommended that World Bank operations aiming to address natural resource degradation should direct attention to resource governance challenges, for example, by clarifying resource rights.

Source: World Bank (2021[35]), *The Natural Resource Degradation and Vulnerability Nexus: An Evaluation of the World Bank's Support for Sustainable and Inclusive Natural Resource Management (2009–19),* https://ieg.worldbankgroup.org/evaluations/natural-resource-degradation-and-vulnerability-nexus; Kelly, J. and Butscher, J., (2021[36]), *Four Lessons from the Sahel on Land Restoration Programs and their Impact on Vulnerable Populations*, https://ieg.worldbankgroup.org/blog/four-lessons-sahel-land-restoration-programs-and-their-impact-vulnerable-populations

Evaluators can use human rights impact assessment tools to assess whether programme staff have taken measures to avoid, monitor, or mitigate negative effects and adapted their intervention approach. Although these tools are generally used in ex-ante assessments – at the appraisal and design stage of an intervention – evaluators can adapt them for ex-post evaluations (Danish Institute for Human Rights, 2020[37]) (World Bank and The Nordic Trust Fund, 2012[38]). When assessing whether progress indicators are human rights sensitive, evaluators might also use the Availability, Accessibility, Acceptability and Quality (AAAQ) framework (see Box 3.8 for an example). When assessing whether objectives were reached in a manner reflective of human rights standards and principles, evaluators might also use the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) guide on human rights indicators (OHCHR, 2012[39]). Likewise, evaluators may refer to guidance on monitoring gender equality objectives and results indicators by differentiating between gender-sensitive, gender-responsive and gender-transformative indicators (OECD, 2022[29]).

Box 3.8. Assessing the progressive realisation of the right to water

Baquero et al. (2016) operationalised the principle of progressive realisation in their case study on a drinking water project in a rural municipality of Northern Nicaragua. The study design was case control based, with a stratified sample differentiating between households served by providers and households that were not included in the community-managed water supply system and sourced their own water.

The research used the definition of the right to water, as interpreted in the comments of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Right to Drinking Water and Sanitation. It applied the Availability, Accessibility, Acceptability and Quality (AAAQ) framework and the core dimensions of the right to water to set indicators and research questions.

Household surveys included a set of questions and indicators that covered the first four dimensions of the right to water (availability, physical accessibility, affordability, acceptability). The fifth dimension (quality) was measured using a technical audit of the water quality at different points. Indicators were set for all five dimensions. The findings show that the main intra-community disparities relate to the availability and quality of water. Clean water was not always available for self-provided households.

Source: Flores Baquero et al. (2016[40]), *Measuring disparities in access to water based on the normative content of the human right*, https://upcommons.upc.edu/bitstream/handle/2117/89368/SOCI_draft_v3press.pdf;sequence=1.

Did the intervention affect groups differently and were outcomes equitable?

Assessing effectiveness through a human rights and gender equality lens does not only ask whether an intervention has reached marginalised groups, but also whether it has succeeded in reducing disparities and gaps between population groups. Evaluators should therefore assess the differential effects of the intervention on groups of rights-holders, particularly on marginalised groups, and explore whether outcomes were equally distributed across different groups.

For this, the availability of disaggregated data is crucial – which unfortunately remains a major barrier to analysing differential results in most contexts. Evaluators can draw on the intervention's monitoring system or existing surveys, for example demographic and health surveys, if these provide sufficient disaggregated data. If not, evaluators could use sampling, data collection and analysis methods that allow for sufficient representation of different groups of rights-holders (OHCHR, 2018[41]). The availability of disaggregated data is a persistent challenge that must be addressed by programme staff at the outset of an intervention by building in data collection mechanisms that allow for the required disaggregation by sex, as well as other dimensions such as sexual orientation, gender identities and expression and sex characteristics. The do-no-harm principle is especially relevant when collecting disaggregated data and evaluators and programme staff must carefully consider and mitigate or avoid the risks to respondents when doing so.

Did rights-holders participate meaningfully in design and implementation?

In general, evaluations look at the factors (internal and external) that contribute to the attainment of results. An evaluation using a human rights and gender equality lens should examine the level and quality of participation and ask whether rights-holders – including women and girls, and other marginalised groups – have participated in a meaningful way in the implementation process. Evaluators can use categories along a continuum ranging from nominal and instrumental participation to representative or transformative participation (Guijt, 2014[42]) to assess the extent to which rights-holders have participated in an intervention. This participation is important as the self-confidence that comes with control over decision-making processes affecting the lives of rights-holders is a key dimension of empowerment.

Participation by affected communities in the intervention as well as in the evaluation can provide important contextual information that might have influenced outcomes. Investigating these influences is paramount to understanding how and why outcomes manifested and whether they were truly inclusive. Box 3.9 shows how evaluators can understand and assess the empowerment of women using participatory methodologies.

Box 3.9. Measuring the effectiveness of Canada's gender equality and women's empowerment programming in the Middle East

In 2021, Global Affairs Canada conducted a thematic evaluation of their gender equality and women's empowerment programming in the Middle East and the Maghreb region. The evaluation covered a range of projects in development co-operation and humanitarian aid that either fully integrated gender equality in their objectives or were specifically designed to advance equality, as per the Global Affairs Canada's gender equality coding framework. An important objective of this evaluation was to identify which factors enabled and supported women's empowerment and helped advance gender equality objectives.

Due to limited data on the results of the evaluated projects, the evaluation developed an Empowerment Measurement Tool to assess the intervention's contribution to empowerment and gender equality. The tool, based on five empowerment categories (economic, psychological, physical, knowledge, and social influence) was applied by local feminist researchers in 43 focus groups with women across six countries.

The most significant outcomes were that most women reported increased confidence and trust in themselves and in their ability to make decisions, and the knowledge and skills they used to reach their goals. The women felt a greater ability to voice their concerns and make their own decisions and more sources of income lent them greater decision-making power over spending. Overall, empowerment grew in overlapping and interconnected ways - greater self-confidence was commonly linked to both increased skills and knowledge gained from training initiatives, and increased income.

Notably, the women identified harmful cultural norms and gender stereotypes as significant barriers. Women's empowerment required an enabling environment, including support from their family and community. Projects that advocated for wider transformative change empowered women more effectively, and a key challenge for achieving more transformative results in this case was a relatively small pool of partner organisations with the expertise and capacity to implement a wide gender transformative mandate.

Consequently, a key recommendation that arose from the evaluation was that programmes in the Middle East and the Maghreb region should increase their focus on enabling the environment to support women's empowerment.

Source: Global Affairs Canada (2021[43]), *Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in the Middle East and the Maghreb 2015-16 to 2019-20*, https://www.international.gc.ca/gac-amc/publications/evaluation/2021/empowerment-pouvoir.aspx?lang=eng.

Suggested evaluation questions

Table 3.5 provides examples of evaluation questions that integrate a human rights and gender equality lens when analysing the effectiveness of an intervention.

Table 3.5: Effectiveness: Examples of guiding questions

Category	Guiding questions
Achievement of objectives	• To what extent has the intervention involved the rights-holders, including marginalised groups in the development process? • To what extent has the intervention promoted meaningful participation and enabled rights-holders to be aware of and claim their rights? To what extent has the intervention supported women's empowerment and facilitated for women to exercise their rights? To what extent has the intervention supported partners as duty-bearers to meet their human rights and gender equality obligations and commitments? • To what extent has the intervention supported partners as duty-bearers to progressively realise social and economic rights of rights-holders? • To what extent has the intervention worked on discriminatory gender norms and practices and structural barriers to gender equality to achieve its objectives? • Did the intervention have any unintended negative effects, e.g., accentuate existing exclusion patterns of discriminatory practices against women and girls?
Differential results	• Has the intervention achieved inclusive results? Were there differential results for different groups of rights-holders, diverse groups of women, men, and gender diverse people? • Do the results of the intervention show that disparities between marginalised groups and other population groups have reduced, increased or stayed the same? Do the results of the intervention show that disparities between diverse groups of women, men, and gender diverse people have reduced? • Was there sufficient monitoring of differential effects?
Influencing factors	• Which contextual factors might explain observed outcomes? Could these results be achieved in a different context (external validity)? • How has the way the intervention was implemented influenced its results? • Who was involved in design and implementation, and how did this influence outcomes?

Challenges and how to address them

Table 3.6 summarises the specific challenges of evaluating effectiveness with a human rights and gender equality lens and makes suggestions for how evaluators and evaluation managers can deal with them, as well as actions that can be taken to design effective interventions.

Table 3.6: Challenges of evaluating effectiveness with a human rights and gender equality lens

Challenges	How to address: evaluators	How to address: evaluation managers	How to address: programme staff
Assessing whether all human rights principles were incorporated into the intervention design and implementation demands considerable resources.	Evaluators must reflect on how to assess the selected principle(s) in-depth, drawing on the results of an evaluability assessment (if one was conducted), and clearly state it in the evaluation design or inception report. When operationalising the selected human rights principles into the analysis, evaluators should leverage synergies across the different criteria. For instance, the principle of participation might reveal insights for a relevance analysis as well as an effectiveness analysis.	Evaluation managers should consider running an evaluability assessment on the key human rights principles that would inform the effectiveness analysis. The evaluability assessment can also highlight how resource intensive an evaluation exercise might be, and necessary allocations can be made in the ToR for the same. In the ToR, defining the relevant principles given the purpose and type of evaluation can help limit the scope of the evaluation, especially for interventions that touch upon all human rights principles.	Programme staff should clearly define which human rights principles are most relevant to the intervention and how, if appropriate, they will be incorporated throughout the implementation and monitoring process.
Identifying the degree to which the intervention contributes to the results is complex.	Evaluators can use or reconstruct the intervention's theory of change with programme managers and key stakeholders and visualise gender equality and human rights effects based on existing documentation and consultations. As an evaluator, assessing the extent to which an intervention contributed to shifting entrenched practices can be challenging. Referring to the major drivers of change and influencing factors can support in determining attribution or contribution links.	Evaluation managers can define the key dimensions of expected results in relation to the evaluation context in the ToR. A realistic expectation, especially when referring to long-term non-linear processes, can support the design and delivery of credible evaluations.	Programme staff must define how the intervention contributes or is expected to contribute to results in the design of the intervention. Designing indicators to reflect these expected results can also help monitor progress. A clearly stated impact logic that considers the evaluation criteria with a human rights and gender equality lens at the outset of an intervention can strengthen the intervention as well as related evaluations. It can also support identifying and describing the (un)intended gender equality and human rights effects of the intervention in the theory of change or results chain of the intervention.

Efficiency

Efficiency: How well are resources being used?

The extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way.

Note: "Economic" is the conversion of inputs (funds, expertise, natural resources, time, etc.) into outputs, outcomes and impacts, in the most cost-effective way possible, as compared to feasible alternatives in the context. "Timely" delivery is within the intended timeframe, or a timeframe reasonably adjusted to the demands of the evolving context. This may include assessing operational efficiency (how well the intervention was managed).

Source: OECD (2021[9]), *Applying Evaluation Criteria Thoughtfully*, https://doi.org/10.1787/543e84ed-en.

Understanding efficiency using a human rights and gender equality lens

Efficiency assessments consider both the economic and operational dimensions of an intervention, including the implementation process. A human rights and gender equality lens focuses on the quality of implementation and management processes, especially whether and how resources were allocated to achieve inclusive, equitable and gender-transformative results. Equitable refers here to equality of outcome across different groups of rights holders, for which differential resource allocations may be necessary (can you get the "same results" for more/less money?). Hence, evaluators need to pay careful attention to the definition of "quality" and its implications for the relationship between allocated resources, outputs and equity in outcomes – particularly between women and men, and between rights holders from different marginalised groups.

Assessing efficiency through a human rights and gender equality lens

Was the intervention economically efficient in reaching marginalised groups?

In an efficiency analysis applying the human rights and gender equality lens, inclusion and equity are key quality indicators to be considered when justifying the costs of an intervention in relation to its results. Hence, evaluators need to consider "if inclusive and equitable results are achieved at a reasonable cost, how reasonable cost is defined and determined and how such a cost varies between different groups of beneficiaries" (OECD, 2021[9])

An intervention that improves the situation for a great number of people without simultaneously improving that of marginalised groups might not be efficient, even if results were achieved at low cost. By contrast, if an intervention achieves inclusive and equitable results for *all people* at a higher cost, it might still be considered efficient (Box 3.10). The cost of achieving results can vary across groups. Involving marginalised groups and improving their accessibility to services often have substantial budget implications, especially if they live in remote regions that are difficult to access.

There is a risk that for the sake of economic efficiency, interventions follow a low-cost strategy, focusing on relatively poor but still better-off groups, thus reinforcing existing discrimination patterns. On the other hand, if an intervention only targets marginalised groups at the expense of other groups, it can lead to tensions or conflicts between groups of rights-holders. Evaluators thus need a sound understanding of the context, potential unintended effects, and eventual trade-offs in their efficiency analysis.

Box 3.10. Inclusion of marginalised groups and implications for efficiency analyses

From 2016 to 2020, Hivos implemented the "Open Up Contracting Programme – Engagement with Marginalised Groups" with the objective of ensuring that citizens across seven countries had equal and inclusive access to public goods and services and could meaningfully engage in public resource allocation and policy decisions.

The programme's evaluation aimed to assess the extent to which groups usually excluded from contracting processes, particularly women, were included in the programme. The evaluation's contextual analysis revealed that technical barriers, such as the digital divide, and discriminatory social norms obstructed women and marginalised groups from fully participating in contracting processes. The geographic location of communities was also a significant barrier, as contracts were usually awarded to organisations based in capital cities.

Although the evaluation was not structured according to the OECD evaluation criteria, significant dimensions of efficiency were addressed. The evaluation found that overall, it took longer for marginalised groups to access, understand and use information and data for advocacy. The costs of properly reaching out and engaging marginalised groups were often underestimated – for example mobility for meetings, payments to radio stations broadcasting to remote areas, translation, and in certain contexts, the creation of women-only or physically accessible spaces.

The OUC programme structure was flexible and could adapt its approach in response to specific issues faced by marginalised groups, including women. Partner organisations helped overcome socio-cultural barriers to engagement, and network-building supported indigenous population groups in advocating for changes to policy and legislation.

These findings highlight that economic costs are not the sole determinant of efficiency; a range of factors affect both cost and time taken to achieve results. An efficiency analysis with a human rights and gender equality lens accounts for aspects of equity, inclusion and opportunity costs when drawing conclusions.

Source: Hivos (2020[44]), *End-Term Evaluation of the Hivos Open Up Contracting Programme – Engagement with Marginalised Groups*, https://hivos.org/assets/2020/11/ETE-OuC-Marginalized-groups-Case-Study.pdf.

Was the intervention operationally efficient?

At a policy and institutional level, operational efficiency includes assessing whether internal structures and processes within institutions were set up to further human rights and gender equality objectives and approaches. Interventions are impacted by their context. This goes beyond the political, socio-economic or cultural, to both institutional and operating contexts. An efficiency analysis should examine whether institutional capacity, leadership and technical expertise enable or hamper inclusive outcomes for all and whether institutions themselves are conducive to designing and implementing inclusive and coherent interventions.

At an implementation level, when assessing operational efficiency through a human rights and gender equality lens, evaluators can also look at budgeting and implementation processes (Box 3.11). Evaluators can examine the transparency of the budgeting process, whether all stakeholders were aware of the cost implications of an inclusive and gender transformative approach, and the extent to which the budget could be adapted to respond to changing contexts or power dynamics between diverse groups.

Working with human rights-based and gender equality strategies and approaches in development co-operation requires an appropriately sized budget, and resources should be allocated and accounted for in

the design and planning phases of an intervention. When evaluating such efforts, it is important to assess whether programme managers have made the best use of resources and time. The resource box at the end of Section 1 of this document provides readers with further reading on several budgeting approaches and tools that consider human rights (OHCHR, 2010[45]) (CESR, 2012[46]), gender equality (UNIFEM, 2009[47]) or child rights (Save the Children and HAQ: Centre for Child Rights, 2010[48]).

Box 3.11. Assessing the efficiency of the African Development Bank's gender mainstreaming strategies

Gender mainstreaming formed an important element of the African Development Bank's (AfDB) gender policy (2001), gender strategy (2014-2018) and programming between 2009 and 2014. An evaluation of the AfDB's gender mainstreaming approach aimed to provide evidence to support the finalisation of a new gender strategy within the framework of the AfDB's Development and Business Delivery Model.

The evaluation applied a utilisation-focused approach and assessed two aspects of efficiency:

- Were the human resources and total budget adequate for effective and efficient gender mainstreaming?
- How timely and efficient was the operationalisation of gender mainstreaming, both internally and externally?

The assessment found that detailed information on gender mainstreaming in project budgets was lacking and as such could not provide any evidence on whether differential resource allocation or gender budgeting was systematically undertaken. Overall, financial resources for comprehensive gender mainstreaming were found to be insufficient. To compensate for this, trust funds financed by bilateral donors were set up and used to conduct gender-related interventions.

A team of gender experts at headquarters and in regional offices supported gender mainstreaming, but their limited availability for project missions and the varying depth and breadth of their sectoral knowledge were challenges. The evaluation also found that several delays in rolling out budgets to support the gender strategy, a departmental merger, a change in leadership and the repositioning of the gender team within the bank all undermined the efficient realisation of gender-mainstreaming objectives.

AfDB's efficiency analysis of its gender mainstreaming approaches highlights that efficiency is affected by resource allocation and time considerations, but also the institutional culture and set-up within which an intervention is situated.

Source: Independent Development Evaluation (IDEV) African Development Bank Group (2020[49]) *Synthesis of Gender Mainstreaming at the AfDB - Summary report*, https://idev.afdb.org/en/document/evaluation-synthesis-gender-mainstreaming-african-development-bank

Suggested evaluation questions

Table 3.7 provides examples of evaluation questions that integrate a human rights and gender equality lens when analysing the efficiency of an intervention.

Table 3.7: Efficiency: Examples of guiding questions

Category	Guiding questions
Economic efficiency	• To what extent have programme managers optimised resources to achieve inclusive and equitable results for all people? • Does the budget monitoring include information on the allocation of resources to all rights-holders, including women and girls?
Operational efficiency	• How far have gender-sensitive (or other human rights-sensitive) budgeting tools been used? • Have additional resources been allocated to integrate human rights and gender equality in the intervention? If so, how was the implementation process managed and did it lead to more inclusive results? What were the costs and time implications?

Challenges and how to address them

Table 3.8 summarises a specific challenge in evaluating efficiency with a human rights and gender equality lens and makes suggestions for how evaluators and evaluation managers can deal with it. It also suggests actions that can be taken to run interventions efficiently.

Table 3.8: Challenges of evaluating efficiency with a human rights and gender equality lens

Challenges	How to address: evaluators	How to address: evaluation managers	How to address: programme staff
Disaggregated data on the allocation of resources to the intervention's outputs and outcomes are not available. Data on relative investments for each group of rights-holders have not been recorded.	Evaluators must check for data availability and address the issue of incomplete data with programme managers and partners. Evaluators can supplement efficiency analyses by including an analysis of other aspects of efficiency that do not depend solely on disaggregated financial reporting. When drawing conclusions on efficiency, evaluators should check whether trade-offs were identified and accounted for in the intervention design. Relying on interviews and recorded data on resource allocation decisions to understand factors driving decisions can help determine whether resources could have been used in a different way to reach more inclusive results and whether spending corresponds to the principle of maximum return.	Evaluation managers should clearly define in the ToR the aspects of efficiency they expect to be evaluated. If an analysis of cost and time efficiency is required, evaluation managers may run an evaluability assessment to check if sufficient data are available for a cost/benefit analysis for each group of rights-holders. If not available, they could consider providing estimations based on project and financial data.	Programme staff must at the outset of an intervention employ budgeting approaches that are sensitive to human rights, gender and/or other rights such as child rights, rights of people with disabilities etc. Integrating budget monitoring sensitive to gender and marginalised population groups is good practice that can support efficiency analysis in evaluations or as independent exercises during an intervention. When designing interventions and planning approaches, programme staff should consider the possibilities of trade-offs between reaching as many individuals as possible and reaching the most disadvantaged groups. Justifications of accepting such trade-offs (or not) and recording decisions through strong knowledge management systems can further strengthen an evaluator's understanding of whether or not an intervention was efficient given the operating constraints.

Impact

Impact: What difference does the intervention make?

The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects.

Note: Impact addresses the ultimate significance and potentially transformative effects of the intervention. It seeks to identify the social, environmental and economic effects of the intervention that are longer term or broader in scope than those already captured under the effectiveness criterion. Beyond the immediate results, this criterion seeks to capture the indirect, secondary and potential consequences of the intervention. It does so by examining the holistic and enduring changes in systems or norms, and potential effects on people's wellbeing, human rights, gender equality, and the environment.

Source: OECD (2021[9]), *Applying Evaluation Criteria Thoughtfully*, https://doi.org/10.1787/543e84ed-en.

Understanding impact using a human rights and gender equality lens

The definition of impact explicitly mentions human rights and gender equality as aspects to consider under the higher-level effects of an intervention. All interventions, directly or indirectly, ultimately affect human rights and gender equality. In trying to answer the big "so-what" questions, a human rights and gender equality lens encourages a thorough analysis of transformative change in relation to human rights and gender equality. The term "higher-level" was introduced in 2019 to capture the significance, the scope, and the transformative nature of the effects. This meaning has policy relevance in a context where the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement call for transformative change – and is also particularly relevant for evaluations taking a human-rights approach.

Evaluating under the impact criterion through a human rights and gender equality lens assesses whether drivers of discrimination – such as socio-cultural differences, economic and political dynamics, societal norms and values that affect gender equality – were addressed or changed by an intervention. It assesses the contribution of an intervention to systemic differential results in the lives of women and girls; historically marginalised groups – such as indigenous communities, LGBTI+ people and people with disabilities; as well as the conditions throughout society that can help sustain these changes. Examining the extent to which an intervention is gender transformative implies considering "how power dynamics based on gender intersect and interact with other forms of discrimination" (OECD, 2021[9])

Assessing impact through a human rights and gender equality lens

Has the intervention contributed to transformative change?

Regardless of the specific design and methods used for the assessment, evaluators need to first define in the methodology the kind of high-level impacts and transformative changes to be analysed under the impact criterion. Assessing transformative effects through a human rights and gender equality lens requires looking at how structural inequalities and the driving factors of change have evolved. It is therefore closely related to the context analysis. If evaluators have identified the drivers of change in the context analysis under the relevance criterion, under the impact criterion they can check the causal relationships between these factors and the intervention.

While interventions may have positive impacts on the economic situation of specific women and girls or other rights holders, they might not lead to changes in gendered norms or in the inclusion of marginalised

groups at a societal level. In evaluating and capturing such transformative change, evaluators need to consider the different areas where change manifests:

- Individual level: non-discriminatory access to information and public services, awareness of rights and the agency and ability to voice needs and claim rights.
- Societal level: changes in social norms that reflect improved attitudes and cessation of harmful practices towards girls, women, indigenous people, LGBTQI+ people, people with disabilities and other marginalised groups.
- Institutional and policy level: incorporation of ratified human rights treaties into domestic law; elaboration and implementation of anti-discrimination laws, policies and strategies promoting gender equality and human rights; spaces for the meaningful participation of civil society actors and marginalised population groups; and provision of accessible redress mechanisms and remedies where rights have been violated.

These dimensions can be incorporated into a theory of change that visualises pathways of change and intended (and possible unintended) effects on human rights and gender equality. Evaluators would then be able to assess the contribution of an intervention against the theory of change and the assumed processes of change (Box 3.12).

Box 3.12. Using a theory of change to assess the long-term impacts of an Oxfam health and education programme

"My Rights, My Voice" (2012-16) was a multi-country programme implemented by Oxfam to achieve sustainable changes in policies, practices, and beliefs to meet the specific health and education needs and aspirations of marginalised children and youth, with a particular focus on the rights of girls and young women.

The programme's theory of change integrated human rights and gender equality objectives and impacts along the linkages of the results chain. "Impact" referred to the ability of young people and their allies to claim their rights to health and/or education by agreeing and voicing a shared agenda in open and closed decision-making spaces. Duty-bearers and influencers would recognise young people as a valid constituency with specific health and/or education needs and aspirations. Finally, duty-bearers and influencers would take specific actions to improve access and quality of health and/or education services for boys and girls, young women and men.

The programme evaluation analysed both the short-term and longer-term outcomes of the programme and the underlying working mechanisms against the programme's theory of change. Its findings related to three levels:

- Impacts on families: The evaluation found that children, especially girls, were increasingly attending school. Parents were creating an enabling environment at home by reducing the girls' domestic workload, thus increasing their school attendance.
- Impacts on schools and communities: Community leadership of all kinds (traditional, religious, formal) increasingly recognised the capacities of youth leaders who were frequently called upon to redress issues in the community.
- Impacts on regional and national institutions: National government authorities increasingly recognised the role of youth as change agents and involved youth leaders and their organisations in the formulation of national strategies and policies related to youth needs and interests. This was evidenced by the inclusion of life skills education in a national youth policy, and the establishment of a national youth fund.

The evaluation found that the programme strategy of focusing on building the capacities of rights-holders and duty-bearers and raising their awareness of education and health rights has had an impact beyond that of the young people included in the programme, paving the way for sustainable transformative change.

Source: Van Esbroek et al. (2016[50]), *Final Evaluation of the 'My Rights My Voice' Programme*, https://oi-files-d8-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/file_attachments/er-my-rights-my-voice-final-evaluation-240816-en.pdf

Were there differential impacts or unintended effects?

As discussed under the effectiveness criteria, interventions often have differential long-term impacts on the lives of men, women and marginalised rights-holders (Box 3.13). Positive impacts overall can hide significant negative distributional effects (Box 3.14). It is essential to consider this at the evaluation design stage, or indeed at the intervention design stage, to ensure that impact on each target group can be monitored and then evaluated. This requires early planning in design and evaluation to ensure that disaggregated data are available and may also involve looking at a range of parameters on exclusion/inclusion. It should involve a granular analysis of disaggregated data where feasible.

Box 3.13. Assessing the differential impacts of inclusive education programmes on marginalised groups

Finland's Education Strategy for Development Co-operation (2006) promotes an inclusive approach to education with particular emphasis on the importance of educating girls, and the need to take specific measures to further the education of children, young people, young persons with disabilities and those from the indigenous population. Finland's contribution to inclusive education in development co-operation over 2004-2013 was evaluated along the six OECD evaluation criteria, where long-term impact was defined as "improved learning for all" in the evaluation's theory of change.

The evaluation was challenged by a lack of reliable data on learning outcomes for children and youth with disabilities. However, key findings across three countries revealed that children with disabilities attending schools without special provisions for people with disabilities did not receive much support in terms of assistive devices or adaptive learning materials. In one country, the numbers of indigenous children enrolled in school improved in the communities supported by the project, though girls' enrolment was lower than that of boys. These findings show that whilst one marginalised group (indigenous children) may benefit from a project, others (children with disabilities or girls) may still be left behind.

The evaluation also revealed that Finland's support had a significant effect on legislation and policies addressing inclusion and helped to influence the attitudes of many administrators, teachers, and parents regarding inclusive education for the better. However, these efforts did not have a significant impact on learning outcomes for children with disabilities.

The evaluation recommended that Finland's development co-operation ensure accurate data gathering and data availability in the countries it supports, including commissioning stratified sample surveys for use in estimating the number of children with socio-linguistic, visual, auditory, and other special needs. It also recommended that Finland's support to inclusive education should focus on the process through which inclusion in education is achieved, such as strengthening itinerant teacher performance and supervision, using adaptive materials and devices, and improving communication within and across schools and with parents.

Source: MFAF (2015[51]), *Evaluation: Inclusive education in Finland's development cooperation in 2004–2013*, Synthesis Report, https://um.fi/development-cooperation-evaluation-reports-comprehensive-evaluations/-/asset_publisher/nBPgGHSLrA13/content/evaluointi-inklusiivisesta-koulutuksesta-suomen-kehitysyhteistyossa-2004-2013/384998.

Box 3.14. Exploring the differential impacts of energy projects on women and men

An independent review was conducted of the Dutch development bank FMO's investments and broader role in supporting the off-grid electricity sector. It assessed the effects and broader impacts of FMO's investments in off-grid solar companies between 2014 and 2020.

The review drew its information from internal FMO reports, interviews with FMO investees, a set of sales data and impact calculations, discussions with other sector experts and a literature review. One of the questions the review sought to answer was what results FMO had achieved in the sector and what had been learnt about making impactful investments in the sector.

The review found that long-term impacts of FMO's investments included environmental effects (reduction of CO_2 emissions), employment effects (jobs and salaries in the solar value chain), household income effects (cash savings on energy expenditure), as well as improved well-being and quality of life.

Solar energy products gave households access to a basic energy service, which improved the well-being of both men and women through access to lighting, reducing time spent collecting conventional fuels, and access to communication and information technologies. The off-grid energy products often benefitted relatively poor rural communities. However, the findings also revealed differential impacts on women and men, both in terms of their economic empowerment as well as their participation in decision-making processes:

"While women were often the main beneficiaries of access to off-grid energy systems, they were still significantly under-represented in the supply chains to deliver these systems and in customer decision making. Women made up just 27% of employees in the off-grid solar value chain, and the decision to buy a solar home system remained predominantly the purview of male heads of households". (Greencroft Economics, 2022[52])

These findings show the importance of addressing gendered norms that may impede the meaningful participation of women in and beyond the provision of technical solutions that improve their well-being.

Source: Greencroft Economics (2022[52]), *FMO's Contribution to the Off-Grid Electricity Sector Review 2014-2020,* https://www.fmo.nl/off-grid-sector-evaluation.

Suggested evaluation questions

Table 3.9 provides examples of evaluation questions that integrate a human rights and gender equality lens when analysing the impact of an intervention.

Table 3.9: Impact: Examples of guiding questions

Category	Guiding questions
Significance	• Has the intervention generated systemic changes in the lives of rights-holders? To what extent are rights-holders, particularly diverse groups of women and marginalised groups, able to enjoy and claim their rights? Does their immediate environment enable and empower them to do so? • Has the intervention helped to overcome discrimination that negatively affects segments of the population? Has it helped to overcome barriers to the inclusion of marginalised groups in society? • To what extent did the intervention have an impact on peacebuilding processes, prevention or resolution of conflicts and trauma recovery? • To what extent did the intervention have an impact on the representation and meaningful participation of women and marginalised rights-holders in decision-making processes? To what extent did the intervention have an impact on the access of diverse groups of women and girls, and the access of people from marginalised groups to assets and resources?
Differential impact	• Were there equal or differential impacts for different groups of rights-holders? If so, why did these differential impacts occur? • Were there any gender-related differences in impacts? If and how did gender-related impacts intersect with impacts on other forms of discrimination?
Unintended effects	• Did the intervention have any negative effects, i.e., accentuate discrimination and exclusion patterns? • Did the intervention have any unexpected positive effects?
Transformational change	• To what extent has the intervention helped to change social and gendered norms and attitudes that negatively impact fulfilment and protection of human rights? • Has the intervention influenced societal power dynamics?

Challenges and how to address them

Table 3.10 summarises a specific challenge of evaluating impact with a human rights and gender equality lens and makes suggestions for how evaluators and evaluation managers can deal with it, as well as actions that can be taken to address the challenge in the design phase itself.

Table 3.10: Challenges of evaluating impact with a human rights and gender equality lens

Challenges	How to address: evaluators	How to address: evaluation managers	How to address: programme staff
Often, though not always, higher level impacts in relation to human rights and gender equality are non-linear and may take a long time to materialise.	Evaluators must clarify at the outset of an evaluation what "higher level impact" means to the different stakeholders involved in the intervention and how they anticipate or expect it to materialise. Recording differences in interpretation of higher-level change across actors can support a deeper analysis that is relevant to different stakeholders. It can also provide a better understanding of what level of change is expected to be evaluated and allows an open discussion on whether that is realistic. Evaluators can refer to the theory of change and evaluability assessments (where available) to check at what level of the impact pathways the evaluation might reveal the most useful insights. Should impact pathways or theories of change not exist, reconstruct them with the different stakeholders to identify insights that an evaluation can be expected to reveal.	Evaluation managers could undertake an evaluability assessment to ascertain whether higher level or transformative change can be measured. Accordingly, they may decide whether evaluating higher level impacts is a feasible and useful exercise and whether data for such an evaluation might be accessible. If yes, managers should clearly state in the ToR in which areas of change they expect to see progress. If not, they might focus on other intermediate results and indicators.	Programme staff should clearly define the higher-level impacts expected of an intervention in the design phase. They should critically and honestly assess whether the period within which impacts are expected to appear is realistic. Human rights and gender equality interventions can be characterised by frequent backlash and in certain contexts probably lead to contested impacts. Designing a ToC that represents these complexities in the causal pathways can support iterative learning throughout the programme cycle should deviations from the anticipated process arise. Accordingly, budgeting for necessary baselines and evaluability assessments, and developing and monitoring intermediate indicators to capture staggered and non-linear progress over time, can support adaptive programming and strong evaluations.

Sustainability

Sustainability: Will the benefits last?

Sustainability assesses the extent to which the net benefits of the intervention are likely to continue into the longer term.

Assessing sustainability calls for an examination of the enabling environment: the ability of the financial, economic, social, environmental, and institutional systems to sustain net benefits over time. This will include an analysis of resilience, risks and potential trade-offs. This may mean mapping the actual flow of net benefits at the time of the intervention or projecting their possible evolution over the medium and long term.

Source: OECD (2021[9]), *Applying Evaluation Criteria Thoughtfully*, https://doi.org/10.1787/543e84ed-en.

Understanding sustainability using a human rights and gender equality lens

Changes in human rights and gender norms, laws, values, attitudes and behaviours often take place over a long time horizon, often beyond the implementation period of an intervention. These changes might be positively sustained by an enabling environment or jeopardised by a fragile or repressive political or social environment. A gender equality and human rights lens focuses on assessing whether and how the intervention has contributed to building an enabling environment for the continuing realisation of human rights, gender equality and the inclusion of marginalised groups.

Assessing sustainability through a human rights and gender equality lens

Does the intervention build an enabling environment for human rights and gender equality?

When considering the sustainability of an intervention, evaluators could consider the underlying drivers that promote or impede the protection, respect and fulfilment of human rights and gender equality (see Box 3.15 for an example). This can be done at several levels:

At an individual level, evaluators could note changes in:

- The general attitudes and perceptions of different societal actors regarding women, all gender identities and expressions, and marginalised groups. A reduction in stigma and/or harmful practices could be one indicator of progress.
- The ability of rights-holders to assert their rights and take ownership of the human rights and gender equality goals and objectives. Duty-bearers adopting the values of human rights and gender equality rather than seeing them as imposed by outsiders, could be one indicator of progress.

At an organisational and institutional level, evaluators could examine changes in:

- Corporate identity and accountability mechanisms empowering rights-holders, including marginalised groups, to participate, access services and redress violations. The use of gender budgeting across institutions and the creation of ombudspersons for employees are some indicators of progress.

At a systemic level, evaluators could examine changes in:

- Laws, policies and strategies upholding the legal protections to which rights-holders are entitled. They could also ask whether these have incentivised or catalysed positive change at the

institutional and individual levels. The passing and enforcement of anti-discrimination laws and the outlawing of harmful practices are some indicators of progress.

Have positive effects been sustained, and how?

When evaluating sustainability, it is important to keep in mind that changes at all levels reinforce and influence each other. For an intervention to be sustainable, different drivers at different levels must be in place and support each other concurrently – an individual aware of their human rights needs the resources, as well as policy and institutional environment to exercise these rights. These interdependencies underline the importance of a holistic approach to ascertaining sustainability with a human rights and gender equality lens.

Higher level changes, especially in gender norms, can take decades to materialise and might not be linear. In terms of evaluating actual sustainability, the evaluator can assess the extent to which any positive effects generated by the intervention were continuing for key stakeholders, including intended beneficiaries, after the intervention has ended (OECD, 2021[9]).

Evaluators could also consider the extent to which other stakeholders can contribute to sustaining these changes. For example, if an education intervention has increased female school completion rates and reduced the number of child marriages, evaluators could assess the extent to which community influencers such as religious leaders support these outcomes. Evaluators can also look at whether efforts to sustain higher level changes were made through lobbying and advocacy, by setting legal and cultural precedents, and so on.

Box 3.15. Assessing sustainability and good practices in education programmes

The evaluation of Finland's Education Strategy for Development Cooperation (2006) described in Box 3.13 also assessed the sustainability of Finnish-supported inclusive education programmes interventions under this strategy.

The evaluation considered education programmes to be sustainable if they contributed to lasting change in processes, belief systems, service delivery or learning outcomes. In addition to assessing the sustainability of financial and human resources, and the strength of attitudinal changes, the evaluation also identified good operational practices that influenced sustainability.

The evaluation found indications of sustainability evidenced by partner country NGOs, and by organisations led by people with disabilities taking stronger positions and more active roles in mainstreaming inclusive education and in influencing national policies and plans. This was supported by Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs grants for strategic advocacy by people with disabilities, together with work by local NGOs on inclusive education in remote regions beyond the reach of government programmes.

The evaluation concluded that "inclusive education programs that had support from local stakeholders, including marginalised groups and NGOs as well as governments, proved more sustainable." (MFAF, 2015[51]). It recommended continued engagement of local stakeholders, including organisations led by people with disabilities, and attention to building management capacity and accountability at the regional and local levels.

Source: MFAF (2015[51]), *Evaluation: Inclusive education in Finland's development cooperation in 2004–2013*, Synthesis Report, https://um.fi/development-cooperation-evaluation-reports-comprehensive-evaluations/-/asset_publisher/nBPgGHSLrA13/content/evaluointi-inklusiivisesta-koulutuksesta-suomen-kehitysyhteistyossa-2004-2013/384998

Suggested evaluation questions

Table 3.11 provides examples of evaluation questions that integrate a human rights and gender equality lens when analysing the sustainability of an intervention.

Table 3.11: Sustainability: Examples of guiding questions

Category	Guiding questions
Building an enabling environment	• Has the intervention contributed to enduring changes in laws, social norms and values, attitudes, and behaviours towards the identified rights-holders, including those from the most marginalised groups? • Can these achievements and changes be sustained over a long period? Is there wide acceptance in communities, partner institutions, social and religious institutions of these changes and of human rights and gender equality norms? • Has the intervention had a leveraging effect on creating an enabling environment for the continuous promotion and realisation of gender equality and human rights? • To what extent has the intervention contributed to societal discourse conducive to the exercise of human rights?
Continuation of positive effects	• Has the intervention helped to generate stable and long-lasting accountability and participation mechanisms for people from marginalised groups? • Can these achievements and changes be sustained over a long period? • Which aid modalities, instruments and mechanisms are appropriate to sustain human rights-based, gender equality and inclusive strategies and approaches over a long time?

Category	Guiding questions
Risks and potential trade-offs	• Are there factors that risk jeopardising the continuous realisation of gender equality and human rights? • Did the intervention have a well-planned exit-strategy to mitigate risks of backsliding?

Challenges and how to address them

Table 3.12 summarises specific challenges of evaluating sustainability with a human rights and gender equality lens and makes suggestions for how evaluators and evaluation managers can deal with them, as well as actions that can be taken to address the challenge in other stages of programming.

Table 3.12: Challenges of evaluating sustainability with a human rights and gender equality lens

Challenges	How to address: evaluators	How to address: evaluation managers	How to address: programme staff
The complexity of contextual factors (e.g., climate change) that might either jeopardise or enhance the positive human rights and gender equality achievements mean that interview partners and evaluators can find it difficult to envisage the future.	Evaluators can explore and discuss different scenarios – best case, worst case - with interview partners, and assess the probabilities of risk inherent in each	Managers can clearly define a timeline for the (prospective) assessment of sustainability, and clearly define what is expected of evaluators in assessing long-term transformative change.	Include human rights and gender equality aspects in monitoring risk for sustainability.
Complex dynamics of acceptance or resistance to changes in norms and practices. **Broad range of stakeholders involved beyond the intervention.**	Evaluators can identify key influential stakeholders in the context or stakeholder analysis. If not possible to interview them, include these aspects in interviews/workshops with rights-holders and duty-bearers	Managers should consider the budget implications of involving a wide range of stakeholders in the evaluation.	Stakeholder analysis or context analysis during programme design should also consider the potential resistance of stakeholders, including those that are not directly involved in the intervention.

4 Evaluating effectively in different contexts

The application of a human rights and gender equality lens to the evaluation criteria is influenced by a range of factors: the intervention being evaluated, the purpose and type of evaluation, the resources available, the stakeholders involved and the institutional and socio-cultural context of both the intervention and the evaluation. This section lays out how evaluations are affected by the contexts within which they are conducted. It deals with institutional policies and practices that enable or inhibit evaluations adopting a human rights-based approach, as well as the political and cultural contexts that affect the parameters of an evaluation and its subsequent findings.

Institutional policies and practices

The policy environment within which evaluations are commissioned, managed and executed influences the ways and extent to which a human rights and gender equality approach can be taken.

Policy context

It is best practice to consider issues of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability – or to ask key questions of "Are we doing the right things?" or "Will the benefits last?" – at all stages of the intervention process: strategic design, planning, implementation and evaluation during design and implementation and not only in evaluations. A human rights and gender equality lens should likewise be integrated throughout the project cycle, as it can be challenging for evaluators to bring in these perspectives at a later stage. The influence of Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy on its approach to evaluation highlights how policies can create enabling environments for mainstreaming human rights and gender equality across all stages of the programme cycle, including in evaluation – affecting both what questions are asked and how they are answered (Box 4.1).

Box 4.1. Canada's feminist international assistance policy

Canada's feminist international assistance policy reflects a commitment to promoting gender equality, the empowerment of women and the human rights of all vulnerable and marginalised groups. It emphasises "ensuring the active and meaningful participation and decision making by women and girls in all international assistance initiatives, including in project implementation, monitoring and evaluation" (Global Affairs Canada, 2017[53]). It creates an imperative to ensure that monitoring, evaluation and learning systems measure and sustain transformative change in support of gender equality and inclusion.

The relevance of applying a feminist evaluation approach stems from this policy. Since the launch of the policy, Global Affairs Canada has been exploring ways of operationalising feminist principles in evaluation work, building on efforts in programming branches and recent corporate experience. Several sets of guidance tools now support internal evaluators, evaluation managers and commissioners to mainstream a feminist lens into evaluations. These tools explain feminist evaluation as "participatory, empowering, and inclusive approaches that actively support social justice agendas and aim to shift unequal power dynamics. Rather than a framework or precise approach, feminist evaluation is a way of thinking about evaluation. Feminist evaluation focuses on gender inequities that lead to social injustice, as they intersect with other causes of discrimination. A feminist evaluation aims to challenge and change inequalities at every step of the evaluation. It encourages the evaluation process to be transformative and recognizes that evaluation itself can be a tool for positive change and for rebalancing the distribution of power."

Source: Global Affairs Canada (2023[54]), *Guide To Planning and Managing Feminist Decentralized Evaluations*, (unpublished)

Gender equality as a cross-cutting issue

Some bilateral institutions mainstream human rights and gender equality into their evaluation processes explicitly – Spain and Finland are good examples (Box 4.2 and Box 4.3). Other OECD/DAC members, such as Denmark (MFAD/Danida, 2018[55]), Germany (BMZ, 2020[56]), Sweden (Sida, 2020[57]) and Switzerland (EDA/DEZA, 2018[58]), explicitly refer to human rights under the coherence criterion of their evaluation policies or guidelines.

Box 4.2. Spain and Finland's evaluation policies and guidelines

The Spanish Co-operation Evaluation Policy defines human rights, gender and cultural diversity as cross-cutting issues that should be considered in every evaluation and mainstreamed into the evaluation process at every evaluation stage. An evaluation sensitive to human rights should explore the extent to which a specific intervention has contributed to addressing inequalities and discriminatory practices (Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, 2013[59]). Spain's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation has issued specific guidance on how to make evaluation sensitive to gender and human rights (MAEC, 2014[60]). The Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation has also issued several manuals on mainstreaming gender and cultural diversity and one on human rights in development co-operation, including evaluations (AECID, 2015[61]; AECID, 2020[62]);

The Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFAF) has mainstreamed human rights in its evaluation guidance since 2013. Its evaluation manual emphasises that human rights and gender equality should always be integrated into the standard evaluation criteria (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 2022[63]). A practical tip sheet by MFAF further supports its staff and stakeholders in addressing cross-cutting objectives in evaluations. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, 2022[64])

Box 4.3. Gender equality as a cross-cutting issue in the evaluation of a good governance programme

Spanish Co-operation's Masar Programme aims to support democratic governance and social cohesion processes in the Maghreb and the Middle East by modernising and strengthening public institutions and civil society organisations. Within this programme, 19 interventions aiming to promote gender equality have been implemented between 2012 and 2020.

In 2021, the Spanish Agency for International Co-operation evaluated the programme and its interventions to identify good practice in mainstreaming and promoting gender equality. The evaluation applied a gender equality lens to all six OECD criteria. It identified good practices in six thematic areas: gender mainstreaming in Egyptian public administration; fostering partnerships and multi-stakeholder alliances; generating knowledge for protecting children against gender-based violence; building sustainable initiatives; promoting women's participation in public institutions and parliamentary life; and communication for gender equality.

The process also highlighted findings and lessons for each of the criteria:

Relevance: Women, and feminist organisations, can be the best sources of information and experience regarding the ability of institutions to address their needs, so it is helpful to support their ideas and actions.

Coherence and effectiveness: Civil society alliances can act as a powerful force for change and progress – for example, facilitating the inclusion of women living in remote geographical areas. Co-operation with a wide range of actors from different fields and levels strengthened highlighted the role of alliances within the overall community and with the government.

Efficiency: Adopting a management model in which projects have a degree of autonomy within a programme improved efficiency.

Sustainability: AECID has promoted the mainstreaming of a gender approach in the programmes of the various partner public institutions. The establishment of a technical dialogue and the encouragement of knowledge transfer between Spanish and Egyptian counterparts has fostered a sense of ownership of the project's tools and methodologies by Egyptian partner institutions.

Impact: Dialogue demonstrated its power as a tool for transformation in many areas, including women's empowerment, addressing taboos, consensus on sexual harassment, and visibility of female parliamentarians and their activities.

Overall, the evaluation emphasised the importance of establishing effective ways and means for managing knowledge, communicating, and learning, to replicate good practice in mainstreaming and promoting gender equality in interventions.

Source Spanish Technical Cooperation Office in Egypt (2021[65]), *Masar Program in Egypt- Spanish Cooperation's Good Practices in Gender Equality Promotion in Egypt's Democratic Transition*., https://www.aecid.es/Centro-Documentacion/Documentos/Evaluaci%C3%B3n/Informe%20G%C3%A9nero%20Egipto%202020.pdf

Gender equality as a separate evaluation criterion

In some cases, evaluation managers may decide to use gender as a standalone criterion, depending on the nature of the intervention and context within which it is conducted. For instance, policy mandates can

require that gender equality be an additional criterion in an evaluation (Box 4.4). If gender is used as a standalone criterion, evaluation managers should consider how to avoid redundancies and repetitions in analyses between the gender criterion and other criteria on cross-cutting areas such as differential results and context sensitivity. They should also decide which human rights aspects to address under the six evaluation criteria and which aspects under the additional gender equality criterion, to avoid the risk of a too broad or segregated approach.

Box 4.4. Gender equality and human rights as an additional standalone criterion in the evaluation of a peacebuilding project

Sri Lanka had experienced nearly three decades of armed conflict between the forces of the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) before hostilities officially came to an end in May 2009. The project "Addressing Sexual Bribery Experienced by Female Heads of Households, including Military Widows and War Widows in Sri Lanka, to Enable Resilience and Sustained Peace" was implemented by UN WOMEN, UNDP and the Centre for Equality and Justice. It aimed to empower female heads of household (FHHs) by improving their livelihoods and increasing their independence as well as influencing public institutions to protect FHHs from exploitation and abuse.

The evaluation assessed the criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability through a gender lens and also added a standalone criterion on gender equality and human rights. It assessed the overarching contribution the project made to gender equality using the gender results effectiveness scale (gender negative, gender targeted, gender responsive or gender transformative). It concluded that the project was gender responsive, as it addressed the rights and needs of women by helping them to be more financially independent and better informed of their rights, and by sensitising the government about their rights. The project was not gender transformative, however, as it had not yet contributed significantly to attitudinal changes at either the individual or institutional level. The evaluation concluded that a longer implementation period would have been needed to achieve such changes.

Source: Costa M.A. and Najab, N. (2020[66]), *End-Project Evaluation, Addressing Sexual Bribery Experienced by Female Heads of Households, including Military Widows and War Widows in Sri Lanka to Enable Resilience and Sustained Peace*, https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/pbf_irf-252_final_evaluation_report.pdf

Using the OECD/DAC gender equality and disability markers

The OECD/DAC Creditor Reporting System's (CRS) gender equality marker is a useful tool for mainstreaming the application of a gender equality lens throughout the programming cycle. OECD/DAC members are expected to apply the gender equality marker in the design phase of programmes to indicate the degree to which gender equality is intended to be taken into account in the intervention (OECD, 2016[67]). Similarly, the OECD/DAC CRS's disability policy marker tracks how disability is mainstreamed in development co-operation and emergency assistance. It allows for tracking projects and programmes that promote the inclusion and empowerment of people with disabilities and co-operation projects or programmes that support the ratification, implementation and/or monitoring of the UN CRPD (OECD, 2020[68]).

Both policy markers use a scoring system based on principles explained in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1. The OECD/DAC policy markers on gender and disability

Score	Gender equality marker	Disability policy marker
0	The project/programme has been screened against the marker but has not been found to target gender equality.	The activity has been screened against the marker, but was found not be targeted to disability.
1	Gender equality is an important and deliberate objective, but not the principal reason for undertaking the project/ programme.	Inclusion and empowerment of persons with disability although important, are not one of the principal reasons for undertaking the activity. The activity has other prime objectives but has been formulated or adjusted to help meet the relevant disability concerns.
2	Gender equality is the main objective of the project/programme and is fundamental in its design and expected results. The project/programme would not have been undertaken without this gender equality objective.	Inclusion and empowerment of persons with disability are fundamental in the design and impact of the activity and are an explicit objective of the activity.

Being sensitive to socio-cultural and political contexts

As illustrated in Section 3, evaluators, evaluation managers and programme staff can face challenges when applying a human rights and gender equality lens to the evaluation criteria. The impact that power dynamics and differences in cultural norms, values and political beliefs can have on interventions is an overarching challenge that cuts across the entire evaluation process and analysis. This is particularly true in the context of development co-operation, as it involves fundamental power imbalances between stakeholders from different contexts.

Evaluations of development and humanitarian interventions often take place in socio-cultural and political contexts in which human rights and gender equality norms and values differ across parties. In some cases, they can be perceived as an external donor-driven agenda, out of step with long-held traditions, leading to challenges in reaching out to rights holders, especially vulnerable groups, and obtaining credible information.

It may be the case that stakeholders involved in interventions and evaluation differ in their beliefs, values and perspectives regarding human rights and gender equality. This can include differences between duty-bearers or community influencers, and among rights-holders themselves.

In some contexts, vulnerable groups face extreme social stigma or even criminalisation. Activists may have to operate in restricted civic spaces, jeopardising their physical safety. In such cases, involvement in evaluations can pose serious threats to people's mental and physical well-being.

In many contexts, women and girls may be hindered, prevented, or otherwise reluctant to engage in evaluation activities. People's experiences with gender-based and other forms of violence can mean that their involvement in interviews or other data collection exercises reactivates trauma and adds to their emotional distress.

There is no blueprint that can guide engagement in such settings; however, evaluators, evaluation managers and programme staff can consider the following:

- Understand how different stakeholders think about and interpret human rights and gender equality, and where there are major deviations in perceptions. Be sensitive to how rights-holders themselves perceive and understand the specific human rights at play and gender equality (which might be different from the legal interpretation).

- If it proves challenging or triggering to explicitly mention words like “empowerment” or “gender equality” – or a specific human right – find ways to address them implicitly. Use words that fit the context and are comfortable for participants. Frame evaluation questions and interviews accordingly.
- Apply an ethical code of conduct consistently throughout the evaluation, including respecting the OECD/DAC guidance on the protection of people involved in evaluation (OECD/DAC, 2022[69])
- Reaching out to people and engaging them in evaluations can support and strengthen the evaluation process, and make the findings more relevant, credible and useful. However, in some contexts, involvement of certain groups may endanger the individuals involved. Respect informed consent, confidentiality and carefully anonymise sources of information. Before interviewing rights-holders and members of marginalised groups, ascertain whether they are exposed to risk, and clarify ways in which their involvement in data collection or other evaluation activities may impact them, and whether any risks are warranted.
- When setting up the evaluation team, consider the risks and benefits of involving (local) civil society members or evaluators. Consider how to ensure their safety and respect their advice and preferences on how to maintain security and confidentiality.
- Add trauma-sensitivity in the ToR and quality requirements for the evaluation team and process. Apply a trauma-sensitive approach in the evaluation (Johnson, 2016[70]); to be aware of possible trauma and conduct interviews in a trauma-sensitive way (Wienberg, 2011[71]).

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Notes

[1] Throughout this document we use the term intervention to refer to the activities being evaluated. Based on the OECD (Forthcoming), *Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-Based Management in Sustainable Development* (2nd Edition) English-French-Spanish an intervention is the intentional activity or effort that is being evaluated (also called the evaluand or object of the monitoring or evaluation). Interventions may be international, national, local or through partnerships, and are aimed at supporting sustainable development, climate, and humanitarian goals. They include but are not limited to development interventions, humanitarian aid, peacebuilding activities, climate mitigation activities, climate adaptation activities, market-based interventions, private sector engagement, normative work, and non-sovereign operations. Examples of such efforts include strategies, policy advice, technical assistance, financing mechanisms, programmes, institutions, or projects.

[2] This would include inter-alia OECD member countries that have instituted a ‘feminist foreign policy’, ‘feminist international assistance policy’ or “feminist diplomacy” such as Canada, Luxembourg, Mexico, Spain, Germany, and The Netherlands (Zilla, 2022[72]).

[3] While the Universal Declaration has influence, many institutions adopting a human rights approach today refer instead to the applicable treaties, which define duty bearers and have binding legal status in international law. Some have suggested the rights listed in the Declaration are now customary international law, but this has not been definitively resolved.

[4] A General Comment is a treaty body’s interpretation of human rights treaty provisions, thematic issues or its methods of work. General Comments often seek to clarify the reporting duties of State parties with respect to certain provisions and suggest approaches to implementing treaty provisions. It is also called a "General Recommendation".

[5] Under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, all human beings can be rights-holders. However, in many contexts, there are specific social groups, such as women and girls, indigenous communities, LGBTI people, people with disabilities etc. whose human rights are not fully realized, respected or protected.

[6] Duty-bearers are actors that have the obligation to respect, protect and fulfil human rights. While state actors are the primary duty-bearers, other actors, for example business entities, also have the obligation to respect human rights.

[7] The do-no-harm principle means to take steps to avoid exposing individuals or groups of people to additional risks through an intervention or an evaluation, and to consider how potential negative effects can be avoided or mitigated.

[8] Accountability is a state of or a process for holding someone responsible to someone else for something. International human rights law defines accountability as the process by which State Parties and governments show, explain, and justify how they have complied with their human rights obligations.

[9] In this context the term needs should be used carefully and may be omitted, or a different word used, as relevant to and preferred by the people concerned, to avoid reinforcing negative power imbalances or perceptions of people as passive recipients of aid. In this context needs often refers to gaps in fulfilment of human rights – such as the right to protection from abuse or the right to food. An evaluator may therefore assess the extent to which the intervention adequately addressed the protection rights of people because they have identified protection as a high priority and need.

[10] An examination of gender dynamics, norms, beliefs, and practices, including concepts of masculinity, femininity, and other gender identities, and power relationships among people of different genders.