



PURPOSE: This EVALSDGs Insight #10 concerns a long-standing issue: gender inequality and the degree to which the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can assure equality and equity among peoples. Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) of SDGs implementation in 66 countries indicate that countries must act vigorously to achieve gender equity across all SDGs. This Insight proposes some solutions for strengthening gender responsiveness in evaluations of the SDGs.

Leave No One Behind is one of the core principles of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2015 aimed at ending poverty, stopping climate change and inequality. This principle calls for inclusive development action in order to reduce poverty and inequality. Gender inequality, like gendered poverty, is at the top of this agenda. Poverty eradication has long been a key desired impact of global development action, but poverty remains an alarming reality in the world where income, material and other inequalities are commonplace and often deeply rooted. Gender inequality is among the most widespread and intransigent forms of inequality, which intersects with other inequalities such as of race, class, disability, caste, ethnicity, age and others. At the groundbreaking 4th World Conference on Women (Beijing 1995), gender mainstreaming was adopted as the principal global strategy for fighting gender inequality.

Gender Responsive Monitoring and Evaluation

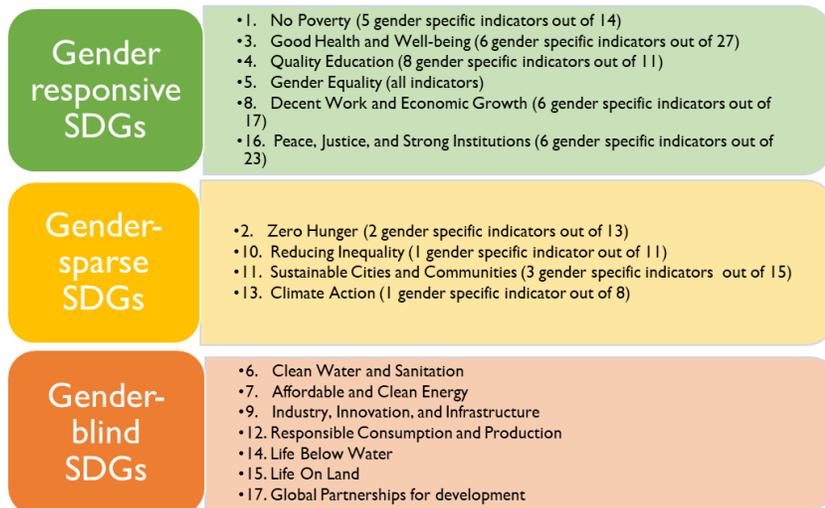
Gender mainstreaming involves the integration of a gender perspective into all stages of development action including monitoring and evaluation (M&E). Gender (and equity) responsive M&E integrates concepts, notions and ideas from the theory and practice of human rights, empowerment, gender and development to increase the success of development interventions through transforming gender relations.

It is also known as Rights-based Evaluation, Responsive Evaluation or Transformative Evaluation. The central

idea in this approach to development programming is respect for the rights of all humans to dignity whatever their sex, position, race, religion, or any other characteristics in life. Gender responsive monitoring is one way to track that no one is left behind while gender responsive evaluation illuminates the whys and hows, amplifying the structural barriers to sustainable equitable development.

As the contemporary global development compact, the 2030 Agenda and the 17 SDGs need to be implemented, monitored and evaluated with gender mainstreaming as the primary strategy. The preparation, design, and implementation of the 17 SDGs in all countries need to integrate a gender perspective. Of the 17 Goals, Goal #5 is entirely devoted to gender equality, while five other goals are gender sensitive, and eleven goals are either gender sparse or gender blind as shown below in Box 1^{1 2}

Box 1 Gender Sensitivity of the SDGs



¹ [UN Women Turning Promises into Action, 2018 p.49-50](#)

² [UN Women Progress on the SDGs The Gender Snapshot 2020](#)

ISSUE: The 2030 Agenda prescribes that development processes should be ‘people-centered, gender-sensitive, respecting human rights’ (para. 74(e)) and “open, inclusive, participatory and transparent for all people” (para 74(d)). The follow-up and review mechanisms also call for inclusiveness, participation, and ownership. The review and follow-up of SDGs implementation and processes should be informed by country-led evaluations, and strong data, to ensure they are rigorous and based on evidence (para. 74(g)).

Why Gender-Responsive Evaluation of the SDGs is Important

Although SDG 5 on Gender Equality addresses ending discrimination against women and girls everywhere, it is widely recognized that progress on all 17 goals (especially the gender sparse and gender-blind SDGs) would be stalled if women’s empowerment and gender equality are not prioritized. Evidence from VNRs shows gaps and challenges that countries face in using gender-responsive evaluation for assessing SDGs.

[EvalGender+](#) conducted an analysis of VNRs from 66 countries, 43 submitted in 2018, and 23 prepared in 2019 in order to discover the extent to which gender-responsive evaluative evidence was used or reflected in them as well as understand the process and governance of VNRs production. The key conclusions include:

- Limited use of evaluative evidence and almost no deployment of gender-responsive evaluation methods.
- Findings from national evaluations of gender equality plans and strategies were not extensively used.
- Mentions of gender equality frameworks such as the Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) had increased.
- Disaggregation of data by sex in the monitoring of general progress was limited but improvement in disaggregation of health and education data was evident.
- Limited inclusion of Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluation (VOPEs) and Women’s

Groups in SDGs governance and review structures. The assessment revealed the need for strengthening national gender-responsive evaluation capacities in order to ensure accountability for gender equality in the overall implementation of the SDGs.

Recommendations

- Agencies and institutions with responsibility for implementing the SDGs at country level should mainstream gender equality as well as gender and equity responsive evaluative thinking in SDG national review processes and mechanisms.
- Governments should commit to and invest in resources, skills and expertise for the promotion and use of gender and equity transformative tools and guidance in monitoring SDG implementation such as ‘Evaluating of Sustainable Development Goals with a “No one left behind lens” through Equity-Focused Gender-Responsive Evaluations”.
- In-country monitoring and evaluation professionals, VOPEs, other specialized government agencies and civil society groups such as national gender machineries and Women’s organizations should be invited to join national SDG governance structures to ensure their involvement in SDG monitoring and review processes and to provide evidence and information for VNRs.
- Governments should build broad and strong partnerships across statistical commissions, evaluation communities, the private sector, donors and relevant SDG implementation agencies to support adequate, appropriate and timely data collection and analysis based on solid gender mainstreaming principles using gender and equity responsive evaluation methods and tools.

Key Lesson: Countries need to strengthen their commitment to, resources for, and use of gender and equity responsive monitoring and evaluation approaches to implement and appropriately measure all SDGs in order to catalyze the transformation required for the world we want as encapsulated in the 2030 Agenda currently severely threatened by the COVID-19 pandemic.

About EVALSDGs INSIGHTS

EVALSDGs is a global network committed to adding value and learning to the SDGs, as well as support processes to integrate evaluation into global and national SDGs review systems. EVALSDGs Guidance Group is a sub-group of EVALSDGs made up of evaluators ready to support you in the evaluation of the 17 SDGs which is complex and requires strong collaborations and partnerships. It produces INSIGHT publications, training materials, and information on opportunities to strengthen global and national evaluation capacity. It shares good cookies around the impact and sustainability of the SDGs and suggests which competencies you need. EVALSDGs INSIGHTS are short, light and easy to digest notes on topics related to evaluation and the SDGs. They present ideas and new information and stimulate thinking to strengthen evaluation capacity. This EI is produced by EvalGender+ and EVALSDGs Guidance Group.

Authors:

EvalGender+: Florencia Tateossian, Sonal Zaveri, Svetlana Negroustoueva

EVALSDGs: Florence Etta, Hayat Askar, Isha Wedasinghe Miranda

Editorial Leads: Diana David Smith, Ravi Ram

Contact us to provide your feedback or for more information

Isha Wedasinghe Miranda, Sri Lanka Evaluation Association (SLEVA): ishamiranda2011@gmail.com

Svetlana Negroustoueva, Co-chair, EvalGender+: negroustoueva@gmail.com

Hayat Askar, Jordan Development Evaluation Association: hayat.askar@gmail.com

Katinka Koke, UNITAR, Planning, Performance M&E Unit / Division for Strategic Planning and Performance: katinka.koke@unitar.org