Adam Smith
International

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office/
British Embassy Kathmandu

Gender Equality & Social Inclusion Mainstreaming Research

Stage 1 | Global Literature Review

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Acronyms & Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank	**SRO**	Senior Responsible Owner
AFD	Agence Agence française de développement	**UK**	United Kingdom
AfDB	African Development Bank	**UN**	United Nations
ASI	Adam Smith International	**UNW**	UN Women
BEK	British Embassy Kathmandu	**UNDP**	UN Development Programme
CEDIL	Centre of Excellence for Development Impact and Learning	**USAID**	United States Agency for International Development
DFAT	Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade	**UNHCR**	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo	**UNDP**	UN Development Programme
DSU	Decision Support Unit	**UNOPS**	UN Office for Project Services
EACDS	Expert Advisory Call Down Service	**VfM**	Value for Money
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development	**WASH**	Water, sanitation and hygiene
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality	**WEE**	Women's economic empowerment
EU	European Union	**WHO**	World Health Organization
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office		
G&I	Gender and inclusion		
GADN	Gender & Development Network		
GEDI	Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion		
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion		
GESI-M	GESI Mainstreaming Research Project		
GPC	Gender Practitioners Collective		
HMG	His Majesty's Government		
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank		
ILO	International Labour Organization		
KPI	Key Performance Indicator		
LNOB	Leave No One Behind		
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation		
n.d.	Not dated		
PACT	Partnership for Accelerated Climate Transitions		
PSD	Private sector development		
RQ	Research question		
SDA	Social Development Advisor		
SEAH	Sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment		

Executive Summary

The Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Mainstreaming (GESI-M) research project was a one-year study which was commissioned by the British Embassy in Kathmandu (BEK) and undertaken by Adam Smith International (ASI) from 2023-24. The study was commissioned with a focus on generating learning in relation to the following three overarching research questions (RQs):

RQ1: What evidence is there of what works well in GESI mainstreaming (and what doesn't), from the international experience and literature?

RQ2: How do BEK-funded programmes mainstream GESI into their work?

RQ3: How does GESI mainstreaming in documents such as business cases and annual reviews translate into real delivery and observable outcomes?

The research methodology was developed to ensure all three overarching research questions and a set of related sub-questions could be explored. The methodology was divided into three interlinked stages:

Stage 1: Global literature synthesis which sought to map current thinking and evidence on GESI mainstreaming among major developed agencies.

Stage 2: BEK portfolio review which described the GESI mainstreaming approaches being used by BEK-funded programmes and compared these to findings from the global literature synthesis.

Stage 3: Deep-dive case studies which involved primary data collection to explore GESI mainstreaming approaches in further detail.

This report presents the findings from the Stage 1 global literature synthesis, outlining current thinking and evidence on GESI mainstreaming from a range of prominent development agencies to explore practice beyond the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO). In line with the scope of the wider research project, the synthesis focused on literature which related to GESI mainstreaming in projects and programmes which were not principally focused on GESI outcomes.

The primary purpose of the global literature synthesis was to provide a framing for the Stage 2 review of the BEK portfolio. This enabled GESI mainstreaming approaches used by BEK programmes to be categorised – and crucially for them to be compared to what the global evidence suggests are effective.

Description of the sample

Sources were identified for the synthesis through a combination of online searches, hand searches of specific websites and snowballing through searching the bibliographies of identified sources. A total of 60

documents were identified for potential inclusion in the synthesis. Initially, 22 of these sources were selected during the inception phase. This was subsequently expanded to 36 sources during Stage 1. Sources were selected from the wider sample based on publication date, relevance and purpose. Within the sample, sources could broadly be separated into two categories: those which presented current thinking on GESI mainstreaming and those which presented actual evidence related to GESI mainstreaming generated through studies, evaluations and reviews.

The sample includes sources from a wide range of bilateral donors, United Nations (UN) agencies, development banks, institutes, think tanks, practitioners' groups and donor-funded programmes. Reflecting available literature, there is a heavy weighting of documents with a stated focus on gender or women and girls.

Using FCDO guidance, the quality of each study or evaluation included in the review has been assessed. Results from these assessments show that all evidence included in the review are from sources rated either high or medium quality.

Overview of findings

A number of overarching issues are discussed in the literature, as summarised below.

The literature highlights a widespread lack of clarity about what mainstreaming actually entails and what it is ultimately trying to achieve. Linked to this, there is no standard framework that can be used to categorise or describe mainstreaming approaches.

Sources also point to perceived weaknesses in GESI mainstreaming as an approach, with widely acknowledged challenges in moving from commitments to practice – and on to outcomes.

Across much of the literature, intersectionality is considered a fundamental and crosscutting aspect of good practice in GESI mainstreaming, providing a more realistic understanding of the social processes which underpin inequality and exclusion. However, there can be challenges in translating a conceptual understanding of intersectionality into a practical reality.

Sources pinpoint the importance of funders including attention to GESI mainstreaming in procurement processes and throughout programme design and delivery.

In addition to these overarching points, **what emerges from the literature is a relatively consistent focus on three areas of work** or what the research team has identified as 'Essential

Elements', which can enable effective and meaningful GESI mainstreaming:

Essential Element 1: A systematic approach through strong **leadership and accountability** to motivate and enable a focus on GESI within programmes.

Essential Element 2: GESI being integral to programme teams through the development of **GESI capacity and an inclusive team culture**.

Essential Element 3: An outcomes focus, with an emphasis on GESI **results and ongoing learning and adaptation** within programmes.

Although distinct, these three Essential Elements are presented in the literature as being heavily interconnected and required in combination. The literature also points to a set of 12 commonly used approaches to GESI mainstreaming, which the research team mapped to the three Essential Elements, as outlined below.

Common approaches to ensure leadership and accountability:

1. Establishing a programme GESI strategy to clarify and elevate commitments.
2. Budgeting for GESI mainstreaming within programmes
3. Motivating programme teams to work on GESI

Common approaches to ensure GESI capacity and an inclusive team culture:

4. Diversifying programme teams
5. Including GESI experts within programmes.
6. Establishing GESI-focused partnerships within programmes.
7. Training programme teams on GESI

Common approaches to ensure a focus on GESI results, learning and adaptation:

8. Using intersectional analysis within programmes.
9. Strengthening participation and the reach of programmes
10. Incorporating GESI-focused interventions within programmes.
11. Addressing additional risks associated with work on GESI
12. Tracking progress on GESI by programmes

Findings from the global literature are summarised under each of the three Essential Elements in the following subsections.

Essential Element 1: leadership and accountability

- Programme leadership is consistently underlined as a crucial element of effective GESI mainstreaming, with a lack of progress on GESI often blamed on insufficient or inconsistent leadership. There is also a perceived link between organisational leadership on GESI mainstreaming and scope to address GESI through projects and programmes.

- The need for programme leads to demonstrate and elevate commitments to GESI mainstreaming through programme policies, strategies and/or action plans is emphasised. This includes giving these documents clear status and positioning GESI as being central to achieving a programme's primary purpose.

- Some sources stress the fact that GESI mainstreaming is often complex, requires a dedicated investment of resources and is accompanied with a degree of risk. There is a consistent emphasis on leadership ensuring GESI mainstreaming commitments are backed with sufficient resources and that these budget allocations are explicit and visible.

- There is value in programme leads intentionally motivating their teams to address GESI through their work. A lack of accountability, especially of managers, was identified as a factor which had hindered progress on mainstreaming.

- The literature suggests a mix of staff performance assessment against GESI targets, sharing of learning on GESI mainstreaming approaches and outcomes, and integration of GESI reflection into reporting templates and meetings help encourage and drive GESI mainstreaming, although evidence confirming the impact of this is limited.

Essential Element 2: GESI capacity and team culture

- The literature highlights that addressing GESI in the internal workings of programme teams makes them better equipped to address GESI through programming. This includes recruiting diverse teams and encouraging diversity to be valued so that alternative perspectives were listened to and acted upon.

- Consistent emphasis was placed on the need to invest in some form of GESI expertise so that teams had access to the technical capacity needed to implement GESI mainstreaming. This was linked to evidence that GESI experts had strengthened mainstreaming efforts, and that performance was weaker when they were not in place.

- A number of sources underlined the value of GESI expertise being embedded in teams, being sector and context specific and being in place at the very start of programmes, before they are designed.

- Several sources highlighted the value of working with local partners in helping to bring contextually-relevant innovation to programmes and access to marginalised communities. In particular, this was seen as enabling programmes to contribute to longer term processes of change.

- A lack of knowledge and skills among teams was identified in the literature as a considerable barrier to progress on GESI mainstreaming. Training is consistently highlighted as a valuable part of a wider approach to competency development.

- A common challenge emerging from the literature was that GESI guidance and tools were often difficult to apply in practice, especially if they were not programme specific.

- Several sources pointed to the importance of team members being personally convinced of the need and value of GESI mainstreaming in order to achieve anything other than token gestures on mainstreaming.

Essential Element 3: Results-focus, learning and adaptation

- Within the literature, the ultimate purpose of GESI mainstreaming is to make tangible contributions to GESI outcomes, rather than the emphasis being just on the process itself.

- Mainstreaming efforts include enabling marginalised groups to be reached and to benefit from programmes, as well as seeking to identify opportunities to maximise the potential for empowerment and transformative change. Some sources underline the value of an adaptive approach in which GESI ambitions grow throughout the life of a programme based on ongoing learning.

- Operationally focused GESI analyses can improve programme's GESI objectives and strategies and provide a vehicle for reflecting beneficiaries concerns.

- The literature also highlighted the importance of programme leads seeking to understand and address potential risks associated with GESI mainstreaming, especially where efforts seek to challenge the status quo.

- Addressing GESI through programme monitoring and evaluation (M&E) was consistently recognised in the literature as a vital aspect of mainstreaming, including the use of disaggregated indicators to identify who was accessing and benefiting from programmes.

- Within the literature there was also an emphasis on the value of looking beyond disaggregation of programme indicators to also develop GESI-specific outcomes and indicators.

- The need to locate GESI outcomes within broader pathways of change was highlighted in the literature as an important aspect of pitching indicators at a realistic level.

1. Introduction

The Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Mainstreaming (GESI-M) research project was a one-year study which was commissioned by the British Embassy in Kathmandu (BEK) and was undertaken by Adam Smith International throughout 2023. The study was commissioned with a focus on generating learning in relation to the following three overarching research questions (RQs):

RQ1:	What evidence is there of what works well in GESI mainstreaming (and what doesn't), from the international experience and literature?
RQ2:	How do BEK-funded programmes mainstream GESI into their work?
RQ3:	How does GESI mainstreaming in documents such as business cases and annual reviews translate into real delivery and observable outcomes?

A full list of sub-questions for each of these overarching research questions is presented in Annex 1. The research methodology was developed to ensure all three overarching research questions and related sub-questions could be explored. The methodology was divided into three interlinked stages:

- **Stage 1:** Global literature synthesis which sought to map current thinking and evidence on GESI mainstreaming among major developed agencies
- **Stage 2:** BEK portfolio review which described GESI mainstreaming approaches being used by BEK-funded programmes and compared these to findings from the global literature synthesis
- **Stage 3:** Deep-dive case studies which involved primary data collection in order to explore GESI mainstreaming efforts in further detail

Purpose of this report

This report presents the findings from the Stage 1 Global Literature Synthesis, outlining current thinking and evidence on GESI mainstreaming from a range of prominent development agencies to explore practice beyond the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO). In line with the scope of the wider GESI-M research project, the synthesis focused on literature related to GESI mainstreaming in projects and programmes which were not principally focused on GESI outcomes. The focus was on answering RQ1 and the set of sub-questions under it, as outlined in Table 1 below.

Table 1 RQ1 and related sub-questions

RQ1	Sub-questions
RQ1: What evidence is there of what works well in GESI mainstreaming (and what doesn't), from the international experience and literature?	- What is the current thinking among development agencies on what makes GESI mainstreaming meaningful and effective? - How does 'success' in relation to GESI mainstreaming tend to be defined in international literature? - What evidence have development agencies generated on the effectiveness of GESI mainstreaming approaches? - What does global evidence suggest are the main enablers and constraints to GESI mainstreaming? - What does global literature suggest is good practice in addressing GESI in value for money (VfM) analyses?

The primary purpose of the global literature synthesis was to provide a framing for the Stage 2 review of the BEK portfolio. This enabled GESI mainstreaming approaches used by BEK programmes to be categorised – and crucially for them to be compared to what the global evidence suggested was effective.

The findings presented in this report will also be of interest to those who commission and deliver BEK programmes, as well as FCDO staff more widely, in particular, the Department's cadre of Social Development Advisors (SDAs). Beyond FCDO, the findings from the global literature are relevant to those who lead on GESI mainstreaming within their own organisations, as well as those who are tasked with mainstreaming GESI in the programmes they are commissioning, designing, and delivering.

Structure of this report

Section 2 of this report outlines the methodology, which was used in the global literature synthesis, with Annexes 1-4 providing further detail.

Section 3 provides a description of the sources included in the sample for the global literature synthesis.

Section 4 presents the findings from the literature synthesis, initially providing an overview and then outlining each of the findings in turn.

A separate report presents overall findings from all three stage of the research, available at [link].

2. Methodology

This section presents a summary of the methodology used for the global literature synthesis. This includes an explanation of how documents were selected, reviewed and coded. It also outlines the limitations and bias which should caveat the review findings.

Document selection

Sources were identified for the synthesis through a combination of online searches using Google and Bing, hand searches of specific websites and snowballing through searching the bibliographies of identified sources. A list of search terms used is presented in Annex 2. Specific websites were selected for more targeted searches based on relevance of their work to FCDO programming and/or organisational reputation for their work on GESI.

A total of 60 documents were identified for potential inclusion in the synthesis. A distinction was found between literature which presents either:

- Current thinking on how best to mainstream GESI, which tended to be presented in guidance documents, 'How To' notes and handbooks.
- Evidence related to the effectiveness of GESI mainstreaming, which was often presented in reviews, evaluation reports and learning briefs.

In some cases, there was a degree of overlap between the two, for example where a guidance document primarily presented an organisation's thinking on how best to mainstream GESI but also referenced evidence it has drawn on. However, it was common among the guidance literature identified for thinking on GESI mainstreaming to be presented without an explicit link to the evidence base.

Initially, 22 of the 60 sources were selected during the inception phase for inclusion in the Stage 1 review. This was subsequently expanded to 36 sources. These sources were selected from the wider sample using the following exclusion criteria:

- o **Publication date: documents published earlier than 2015**. A primary objective of the review is to tap into current thinking and evidence on GESI mainstreaming. We therefore chose to prioritise literature with more recent publication dates.
- o **Relevance and purpose: documents which lacked a practical focus on mainstreaming approaches.** We sought to prioritise literature which focused on the practical realities of mainstreaming, either by outlining specific guidance or presenting evidence on approaches which had been tried. This was in contrast to literature which simply stated broad organisational commitments to GESI mainstreaming.

Annex 3 lists the 36 documents which were included in the sample for the global literature synthesis, which are also referenced in the findings section (Section 4) of this report. It is important to note that this reflects an increase in sample size from the planned 22 documents which were identified in the inception report. The sample size was increased in order to include sources which could help to triangulate emerging findings and to ensure there was not an overreliance on just a handful of sources. The final sample is described in further detail in Section 3.

Review and coding

Based on an initial review of the sample, a draft conceptual framework was developed based on emerging themes (see Inception Report for further detail). Using an Excel spreadsheet, this conceptual framework was used to code the data extracted from each source. Once the spreadsheet was fully populated, a column-by-column analysis was conducted to identify further themes. This analysis confirmed that the elements which had been included in the original conceptual framework were found in the literature to be important aspects of GESI mainstreaming. However, the literature placed greater emphasis on some aspects of the original conceptual framework compared to others. This is explained in further detail in Section 3.

Limitations and bias

The following limitations of potential bias should be noted when reading the findings which have emerged from the global literature synthesis:

- **A disproportionate focus on gender mainstreaming.** A number of the most useful documents identified in searches focus solely on gender mainstreaming and not on GESI more widely. Many of these documents have been included in the final sample, despite the fact that they have a narrower scope than this research. This decision not to treat a sole focus on gender as one of the exclusion criteria was made given the potential for transferrable learning from gender to GESI mainstreaming. It was also found that much of the gender-specific literature included at least some degree of focus on intersectionality, which meant that a wider GESI focus was sometimes apparent in the main text of the document, if not in the title. Nevertheless, these sources do reflect a greater emphasis on gender mainstreaming and less of a focus on learning in relation to other marginalised groups.

- **A focus only on English sources which were easily accessible online.** Given the search strategies used, sources are limited to those which have been published in English and by organisations whose material would be easily identified online. This means that unpublished material or documents published in other languages have not been included. Learning from smaller organisations which might not come up at the top of online searches has also been omitted from the review. This bias has been emphasised by the fact that sources from well-known organisations with a reputation for GESI mainstreaming have intentionally been prioritised. The review has also not captured learning and evidence which may have been captured in material other than written resources, such as videos, seminar discussions or podcasts.

- **A focus on evidence related to programmes rather than wider organisational mainstreaming.** Given that the evidence synthesis is intended to inform the framing of a review of the BEK portfolio, a deliberate focus has been placed on literature related to GESI mainstreaming in programmes. Literature related to organisational-wide mainstreaming approaches has generally not been included, unless there was clear relevance to programme level efforts. It is arguably the case that there is considerable scope for transferable learning from organisation-wide practice which would be relevant to programme-level mainstreaming. However, given the scope of this review, wider literature, for example on GESI mainstreaming in organisational recruitment, has not been included.

3. Description of the Sample

This section provides a description of the sources in the sample for the global literature synthesis. This includes an explanation of the types of documents and their scope as well as a summary of the organisations represented, publication dates and sector and geographic spread. An overview of the quality of evidence within the sample is also provided.

The global literature synthesis was based on a total sample of 36 sources. There is intentionally a considerable degree of diversity among these sources in order to enable the synthesis to capture a range of perspectives and evidence. The sample is described in further detail below.

Types of literature

Within the sample, sources can broadly be separated into two categories: those which presented current thinking on GESI mainstreaming and those which presented actual evidence related to GESI mainstreaming generated through studies, evaluations and reviews.

Among sources which presented *current thinking* on mainstreaming, with the exception of guidance related to the United Kingdom (UK)-funded Partnership for Accelerated Climate Transitions (PACT) programme and a workbook for USAID, all sources provided more general policy statements, strategies, guidance or toolkits. These were usually intended for use across sectors and contexts.

Literature which presented *evidence* on GESI mainstreaming included some sources which focused on individual programmes, for example learning papers. However, most sources provided portfolio-level evidence or were based on evaluations of entire organisations or organisational strategies. In these documents, valuable programme-level evidence was often included in specific sections or as case studies. The majority of these sources included some form of recommendations or reflections on future practice, which have also been included in the findings presented in Section 4.

Organisational spread

The sample included literature from the following organisations:

- **Bilateral donors:** HMG (UK PACT/FCDO/DFID), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Global Affairs Canada (GAC), Agence française de développement (AFD)

- **United Nations (UN) agencies:** UN Women, UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS), UN High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR), International Labour Organisation (ILO), World Health Organisation (WHO)

- **Development banks:** World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB), African Development Bank (AfDB), Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)

- **International organisations, institutes, think tanks, and practitioners' groups:** European Union (EU), Council of Europe, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Gender Practitioners Collaborative (GPC), Centre of Excellence for Development Impact and Learning (CEDIL), Gender & Development Network (GADN), ODI

- **Donor-funded programmes:** FCDO International Climate Finance (ICF), Decision Support Unit (DSU) of DFID's Private Sector Development (PSD) programme in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

- **Academia:** Journal of International Humanitarian Action (Gupta et al., 2023)

Publication dates and geographical focus

The publication dates of documents in the sample spanned from early 2015 to 2023, with nearly 60% having been published from 2020 onwards. Given that the sampling strategy for the review meant there was a focus on literature of direct relevance to development programming, all sources focused on developing and/or middle-income countries. The majority of documents were global in scope, while some focused on particular geographies. This included sources with a regional focus, including Asia, Africa, Southeast Asia, the Middle East, the Indo-Pacific region and Pacific Island Countries. Others focused on specific programmes or country contexts. Beyond a focus on developing and middle-income contexts, literature was not deliberately sampled

from certain countries. Country specific sources have largely been added to the sample through a snowballing approach where they have been referenced in global documents. This is also the case for sector specific documents, for example those which focus on the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) sector or on PSD programmes.

Focus on certain types of inequality or marginalisation

Table 2 details the varying areas of focus among sampled organisations. Asterisks indicate the number of sources where more than one was included from the same organisation. As noted above, there is a heavy weighting of documents with a stated focus on gender (or women and girls / women's empowerment) (21) as opposed to broader social inclusion (14) or other areas of inclusion such as disability (1).

While the scope of this research is GESI, those sources focusing specifically on gender or other characteristics have not been excluded as much of the content of these sources is intersectional in nature, often explicitly so (see e.g. UN Women, 2022). There nevertheless remains a disproportionate amount of thought and evidence pertaining to gender rather than other socially excluded groups.

Table 2 Areas of focus within the global literature sample

Focus	Organisation	Count
GESI / diversity / equity	FCDO, UK PACT, USAID, GAC, UNOPS, ADB, DFID*, DSU, ODI, ICF, CEDIL, UNHCR, WHO, IDB	14
Gender / women and girls / women's empowerment	EU***, DFAT**, UN Women, Gates Foundation, GPC, EIGE**, GADN., DFID*, EBRD, World Bank Group, AFD, AfDB**, UNDP, Council of Europe, Gupta et al., ILO	21
Disability	DFAT*	1

Quality of evidence

Using FCDO guidance on assessing the quality of evidence, the global synthesis we have considered and described the quality of each individual study or evaluation reviewed. Each study or evaluation has been categorised by type (primary/secondary) and design (quantitative, qualitative, mixed method). Primary studies were then assessed according to the following seven principles of quality:

- Conceptual framing
- Transparency
- Appropriateness
- Cultural sensitivity
- Validity
- Reliability
- Cogency

Annex 4 details the associated questions for each principle of quality. In line with FCDO guidance, the table below indicates the questions we will consider in relation to each of these seven aspects. The results show that the vast majority of evidence we've drawn on is high quality as outlined in Table 3**Error! Reference source not found.** The one exception where quality was deemed medium was on a summary report, and it is therefore likely that some of the aspects missing from the summary are included in the full evaluation report.

Table 3 Quality of evidence

#	Organisation	Document	Date	Quality
1	EU	Evaluation of the EU's External Action Support to Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment	2020	High
2	World Bank Group	World Bank Group Gender Strategy Mid-Term Review	2021	High
3	AFD	Evaluation of Gender Mainstreaming in AFD Projects	2022	High

4	AfDB	Evaluation Synthesis of Gender Mainstreaming at the AfDB: Summary Report	2020	Medium[1]
5	EU	Evaluation of EU Support to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Partner Countries Final Report	2015	High
6	FCDO	Prosperity Fund Year 3 Gender and Inclusion Evaluation	2021	High
7	DFAT	Ending Violence against Women and Girls: Evaluating a Decade of Australia's Development Assistance	2019	High
8	UNDP	Evaluation of UNDP Contribution to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment	2015	High
9	Council of Europe	Evaluation of Gender Mainstreaming in Cooperation	2015	High
10	AfDB	Gender Mainstreaming in Climate Change Projects: The Case of FORM Ghana Ltd. in Ghana	2019	High
11	Gupta et al., 2023.	Beyond Gender Mainstreaming: Transforming Humanitarian Action, Organizations and Culture	2023	High
12	CEDIL	Gender and Social Outcomes of WASH Interventions: Synthesis of Research Evidence	2023	High
13	ILO	High-level Independent Evaluation of ILO's Gender Equality and Mainstreaming Efforts, 2016-21	2021	High
14	UNHCR	Longitudinal Evaluation of the Implementation of UNHCR's Age, Gender and Diversity Policy	2022	High
15	WHO	Evaluation of the Integration of Gender, Equity and Human Rights in the Work of the World Health Organization	2021	High
16	IDB	Evaluation of the Bank's Support for Gender and Diversity	2018	High

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[1] Because this source is a summary report it may not contain all of the elements of the full evaluation report. The quality criteria have only been applied to the summary report, and therefore the rating may not reflect quality of the full evaluation.

4. Findings

This section presents the findings from the global literature synthesis. This includes an overview, followed by findings related to specific approaches to GESI mainstreaming which feature most commonly in the literature reviewed.

The sub-questions under RQ1 have been kept in mind as cross-cutting areas of interest throughout the literature synthesis. This also applies to the presentation of findings in this section. Given the overlap between them, the sub-questions have not been used to structure the findings. Instead, the findings are presented according to the main themes which have emerged from the literature.

A note on terminology

Although 'GESI' is the term used by BEK to define the scope of their work in this area, and therefore the focus of this research project, a range of different terms are used across the literature. Whilst 'GESI' is therefore the default term used throughout this report, the findings in this section have been written in a way which reflects the language used in the documents they come from.

A clear message which has come through the literature is that the array of gender and GESI-related terminology and jargon used in the development sector is confusing and off-putting in terms of encouraging people to engage. With this in mind, effort has been made throughout this section to use clear and accessible language when describing approaches to GESI mainstreaming and to be as precise as possible, avoiding vague terms, whilst remaining true to the sources reviewed.

Overview of findings

Key findings

- There is a lack of clarity about what mainstreaming actually entails and is ultimately trying to achieve and there is no standard framework that can be used to categorise or describe mainstreaming approaches.

- There are perceived weaknesses in GESI mainstreaming as an approach, with widely acknowledged challenges in moving from commitments to practice – and on to outcomes.

- Intersectionality (see definition in Annex 5) is considered a fundamental and crosscutting aspect of good practice in GESI mainstreaming, providing a more realistic understanding of the social processes which underpin inequality and exclusion. However, there can be challenges in translating a conceptual understanding of intersectionality into a practical reality.

- It is important for funders to include attention to GESI mainstreaming in procurement processes and throughout programme design and delivery.

- Three areas of work emerge as enabling effective and meaningful GESI mainstreaming: leadership and accountability; GESI capacity and team culture; a results-focused and ongoing adaptation. These 'essential elements' of GESI mainstreaming are heavily interconnected and required in combination.

Gender mainstreaming was officially adopted as a strategy at the UN International Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. Since then, it has been adopted by almost all development organisations as a way of contributing to gender equality and women's empowerment. This is evident in the large volume of mainstreaming-related literature, ranging from policy statements, strategies, guidance documents, toolkits, handbooks, reviews, and evaluations (see for example: Bond, 2019). Some organisations have also sought to explicitly mainstream gender alongside related concepts, such as 'inclusion', 'diversity' or specific aspects of people's identities such as 'age' or 'disability' (see for example: FCDO, 2021; IDB, 2018; UNHCR, 2022; DFAT, 2015).

Perceived weaknesses and a lack of clarity

Whatever way an organisation defines the scope of its 'gender' or 'GESI' mainstreaming, what emerges from the literature is perceived lack of clarity about what mainstreaming actually entails and what it is ultimately aiming to achieve. This is evident from earlier literature (see for example: GADN, 2015) and is also described in more recent reports (see for example: Gupta et al., 2023).

"The term "gender mainstreaming" is a confusing one – amounting to a sort of "black box" of activity taking place within development organisations to promote gender and women's and girls' rights..." (GADN, 2015)

A lack of common understanding among organisations about what constitutes GESI mainstreaming is reflected in the fact that there is no standard framework which can be used to categorise or describe mainstreaming approaches – or to assess the effectiveness of those approaches. It is also evident in the plethora of overlapping terms, which are sometimes used interchangeably in the literature to describe mainstreaming practice and sometimes used to distinguish and contrast approaches. This includes references to programmes being 'gender sensitive', 'gender aware', 'gender integrated', 'incorporating a GESI perspective', 'using a GESI lens', 'including GESI considerations', 'being gender balanced', 'being GESI transformative', 'gender intentional' and so on (see for example: Gupta et al., 2023).

"[T]here is very often a significant gap between organisations' rhetorical commitment and the day-to-day reality of their programmes and operations." (Bond, 2019)

Beyond a lack of clarity, the literature also highlights perceived weaknesses in GESI mainstreaming as an approach, with widely acknowledged challenges in moving from commitments to GESI mainstreaming in practice – and then on to tangible outcomes. Differing views come through the literature in terms of the potential of GESI mainstreaming to meaningfully contribute to inclusion and equality. Some sources present varying degrees of distrust in GESI mainstreaming, with a sense that it rarely leads to anything other than token efforts. Illustrating the longstanding criticism GESI mainstreaming has faced, these concerns span the earliest (GADN, 2015) and most recent (Gupta et al., 2023) sources in the sample. Some sources touch on the idea that this perceived disappointment or even hostility towards mainstreaming as an approach may – at least in part – be symptomatic of the grand ambitions attached to GESI mainstreaming, without clearly explained pathways for how mainstreaming will contribute to these ambitions at a more practical level. An article by the UK NGO network, Bond, illustrate some of these differing positions based on experience and evidence among its members:

"Some feminist practitioners disavow "gender mainstreaming", feeling it has become a weak, technocratic term drained of any real political bite. Others still hold out hope for its potential, or pragmatically advance a gender mainstreaming agenda while recognising its challenges." (Bond, 2019)

An intersectional lens

According to the sampled sources, intersectionality is considered a fundamental and crosscutting aspect of good practice in GESI mainstreaming. All the examined documents address intersectionality in some capacity, with the majority emphasising its adoption as "essential", "critical", or a "requirement". The prevailing rationale presented in these sources underscores that intersectionality recognises the complex social dynamics and patterns of exclusion that exist in all societies. Consequently, any endeavours aimed at enhancing inclusion, whether for women and girls or any other marginalised group, must incorporate an intersectional lens in order to be impactful. For instance, UN Women asserts that these processes "contribute to interdependent systemic bases of privilege and oppression derived from colonialism, imperialism, racism, homophobia, ableism and patriarchy" (UN Women, 2022).

Sources explain that an intersectional lens provides a more realistic understanding of the social processes which underpin inequality and exclusion and highlight that gender cannot be considered in isolation from other social characteristics. For instance, statistics demonstrate that disabled women generally face a less favourable position compared to disabled men (EIGE, 2016). In the same spirit, a woman born into a dominant caste family may, in certain contexts, experience greater advantages than a man from a marginalised caste, who in turn may experience unequal privileges in other contexts relative to a woman. The key message reiterated across these documents is that the categories of "men" and "women" cannot be viewed as monolithic groups due to the multitude of coexisting and overlapping social identities that shape their experiences and treatment within societies. There is a strong consensus that successful GESI mainstreaming necessitates the integration of intersectional awareness and analysis, along with its downstream implications.

Some sources highlight the challenge of translating a conceptual understanding of intersectionality into a practical reality (see for example: ILO, 2021). Nevertheless, as a starting point, there is an emphasis

in the gender mainstreaming literature on moving away from a focus on "women and girls" as a homogenous category.

Procurement and the role of funders

A clear message coming through many sources was the need for funders to include attention to GESI mainstreaming in procurement processes for the selection of programme implementers (see for example: DFID, 2019; EIGE, n.d.; ICF, n.d.; UNHCR, 2022). Here, emphasis was placed on the importance of selecting organisations which demonstrate a wider organisational commitment to GESI mainstreaming, have GESI policies in place and a track record in prioritising GESI. An emphasis on GESI mainstreaming at the bid stage was described in some sources as helping to set clear expectations about the type of leadership commitment to GESI that would be required.

Several sources traced areas of weak performance on GESI back to insufficient attention to gender equality mainstreaming when proposals were being assessed (see for example: ILO, 2021). However, it was also noted in some sources that meaningfully embedding GESI into the assessment process for bids could be resource intensive in terms of staff time. An evaluation of the FCDO-funded Prosperity Fund also found that insufficient requirements related to gender and inclusion during the procurement process resulted in a lack of gender and inclusion expertise among delivery partners (FCDO, 2021). Nevertheless, they found that despite not giving clear direction to bidders, some programmes still integrated gender and inclusion into their designs from the start. Crucially, what these programmes had in common were strong programme leads who were clearly committed to supporting gender and inclusion.

"It is helpful to be explicit about DFID/HMG's ambitions and to be specific in terms of reference, tender documentation, scoring and evaluation criteria. This helps set HMG's expectations and requirements for suppliers and delivery partners…" (DFID, 2019)

Some sources, most notably a mid-term review of the World Bank Group's Gender Strategy, emphasised the importance of ongoing attention to GESI by funders after the initial procurement process, including through ongoing monitoring requirements (World Bank, 2021). Here clear incentives for projects were found to be an important motivating factor, with projects which provided evidence of a substantial effect on gender gaps having been given a higher project score in reviews. In addition, corporate awards had been used to provide bonus payments to those who demonstrated that priority had been given to gender (World Bank, 2021). This was something which was also referred to in a review of gender mainstreaming practice in the humanitarian sector, which argued that payment by results should be used to motivate the achievement of gender-related outcomes (Gupta et al., 2023).

"Humanitarian professionals, like development professionals, are also motivated by getting the funds they need to meet the needs of the communities they serve and as a result, a powerful way to incentivize humanitarian workers is by having donors link funding to achieving specific results to close gender gaps. It is important to not reduce those results to processes completed but to actual outcomes such as reductions in the incidence of child marriage or increases in women's economic participation as compared as men." (Gupta et al., 2023)

Three essential elements of effective GESI mainstreaming

Despite a lack of clarity on what GESI mainstreaming entails, and an absence of a common framework to categorise GESI mainstreaming approaches, what emerges from the literature is a relatively consistent focus on three areas of work or 'Essential Elements' which can enable effective and meaningful GESI mainstreaming by ensuring:

- **Essential Element 1:** A systematic approach through strong **leadership and accountability** to motivate and enable a focus on GESI within programmes.

- **Essential Element 2:** GESI being integral to programme teams through the development of **GESI capacity and an inclusive team culture**.

- **Essential Element 3:** An outcomes focus, with an emphasis on GESI **results and ongoing learning and adaptation** within programmes.

Although distinct, these areas are also presented in the literature as being heavily interconnected and required in combination. There is no suggestion in the literature that a sole focus on any of one of these

areas is sufficient in itself, but rather that all three areas need attention as part of an overall approach to GESI mainstreaming. Within each of the three areas, the literature consistently points towards commonly used approaches to GESI mainstreaming which are either confidently promoted, for example through guidance, or which have been identified as valuable through reviews and evaluations. These 'essential elements' and common approaches are presented as a conceptual framework in Figure 1 below.

Based on the crosscutting importance of intersectionality which has emerged from the literature, this is included at the centre of the diagram. The wider social and political context, funding environment and broader organisational culture have also been emphasised in the literature as playing an important enabling or constraining role. They have therefore also been included in the diagram.

Figure 1 Essential Elements and Common Approaches for GESI Mainstreaming [2]

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[2] This diagram replaces the draft conceptual framework which was included in the inception report. The draft version was based on a quick review of a limited number of sources. This version is based on a more in-depth review of the entire sample.

Table 4 below summarises the approaches commonly identified in the literature related to each of the identified 'essential elements' of GESI mainstreaming.

Table 4 Essential Elements & Common Approaches to GESI Mainstreaming

Essential Elements	Common Approaches to GESI Mainstreaming
Leadership and accountability to motivate and enable a focus on GESI within programmes.	1. Establishing programme GESI strategies 2. Budgeting for GESI mainstreaming within programmes 3. Motivating programme teams to work on GESI
GESI capacity within programmes and an inclusive team culture.	4. Diversifying programme teams 5. Including GESI experts within programmes 6. Establishing GESI-focused partnerships within programmes 7. Training programme teams on GESI
A focus on GESI results and ongoing learning and adaptation within programmes.	8. Using intersectional GESI analysis within programmes 9. Strengthening participation and the reach of programmes 10. Incorporating GESI-focused interventions within programmes 11. Addressing additional risks associated with work on GESI 12. Tracking progress on GESI by programmes

Each of these three essential elements and 12 commonly used approaches to GESI mainstreaming are described in the subsections below.

Essential Element 1: Leadership and accountability to motivate and enable a focus on GESI within programmes.

This section presents a synthesis of the literature related to programme leadership and accountability that support GESI mainstreaming. This includes current thinking and evidence on the value of programme policies and strategies, the allocation of resources for GESI mainstreaming within programmes and the motivation of teams through accountability measures and reward.

Key findings

- Programme leadership is consistently underlined as a crucial element of effective GESI mainstreaming, with a lack of progress on GESI often blamed on insufficient or inconsistent leadership. There is also a perceived link between organisational leadership on GESI mainstreaming and scope to address GESI through projects and programmes.

- The need for programme leads to demonstrate and elevate commitments to GESI mainstreaming through programme strategies and/or action plans is emphasised. This includes giving these documents clear status and positioning GESI as being central to achieving a programme's primary purpose.

- Some sources stress the fact that GESI mainstreaming is often complex, requires a dedicated investment of resources and is accompanied with a degree of risk. There is a consistent emphasis on leadership ensuring GESI mainstreaming commitments are backed with sufficient resources and that these budget allocations are explicit and visible.

- There is value in programme leads intentionally motivating their teams to address GESI through their work. A lack of accountability, especially of managers, was identified as a factor which had hindered progress on mainstreaming.

- Literature suggests a mix of staff performance assessment against GESI targets, sharing of learning on GESI mainstreaming approaches and outcomes, and integration of GESI reflection into reporting templates and meetings help encourage and drive GESI mainstreaming, although evidence confirming the impact of this is limited.

Programme leadership comes through clearly in the literature as an overarching theme, which is consistently underlined as a crucial element of effective GESI mainstreaming (see for example DFAT, 2016; UNOPS, 2022; Gates Foundation, n.d.**)**. Indeed, much of the literature positions programme leadership and management support as a prerequisite for a meaningful and sustained focus on GESI. For example, in an evaluation of the integration of gender equity and human rights in the work of the WHO, interviewees often pointed to 'supportive leadership' as one of the main facilitating factors in enabling mainstreaming to take place (WHO, 2021).

Within the literature, a lack of progress in GESI mainstreaming is often blamed on insufficient or inconsistent leadership, which was found to act as a barrier. Whilst there are examples in the literature of GESI mainstreaming being implemented in programmes despite a lack of leadership support, these have tended to rely on personal motivation among individuals, with limited reach and sustainability as a result (GADN, 2015).

"The attitude and commitment of management and senior staff to gender equality and women's rights is critically important. If the management…[of] programmes…consider gender equality and women and girls' rights to be a priority, staff will take these issues seriously. On the other hand, if management is not on board, promotion of gender equality and women's rights tends to be confined to individuals with a personal interest." (GADN, 2015)

The literature also commonly draws a link between organisational leadership on GESI mainstreaming and scope to address GESI through projects and programmes. This highlights the need to consider the broader organisational environment which team leaders and managers are operating within and the incentive structures they are responding to (WHO, 2021).

"Although it may be a more complex area to assess and tackle, awareness and ownership of gender equality, equity and human rights principles at all levels and especially by the senior management and leadership is crucial to the meaningful integration of gender, equity and human rights in the external facing work of the Organization." (WHO, 2021)

More recent sources tend to emphasise that GESI mainstreaming is often complex, requires a dedicated investment of resources and is accompanied with a degree of risk (see for example: Bond, 2019; Gupta et al., 2023). These sources also include recognition of the value of taking a more strategic approach to mainstreaming, targeting efforts within a programme where they matter the most and where they have the greatest potential to contribute to equality and inclusion (Bond 2019; Gupta et al., 2023). The implication of this, pointed to by some sources, is that programme leadership needs to be prepared to grapple with the complexity, costs and risks associated with GESI mainstreaming, especially on large scale, long-term programmes which may include multiple components (Bond, 2019; Gupta et al., 2023). This requires programme leads to take responsibility for what AfDB has referred to as the 'inward-and outward-looking gender-related efforts' which make up GESI mainstreaming (AfDB, 2020).

"[It] must be recognised that gender mainstreaming is, and should be, a substantive undertaking… NGOs and donors need to resist the temptation toward quick wins and easy answers and recognise that gender mainstreaming can't be accomplished simply …[g]ender mainstreaming …requires grappling with the contentious and thorny power dynamics embedded within every organisation and context. Without this difficult, often uncomfortable, reckoning, gender mainstreaming is likely to remain a tokenistic gesture." (Bond, 2019)

The following subsections present the approaches which most commonly feature in the literature as having been used by programme leadership to engage with the complex realities of GESI mainstreaming.

Common Approach 1: Establishing programme GESI strategies

The literature consistently emphasises the need for programme leads to demonstrate and elevate commitments to GESI mainstreaming through programme policies, strategies and/or action plans (Bond; Prosperity Fund; ILO). In doing so, programme leads have been able to provide some degree of conceptual clarity, an overarching ambition, and a practical plan for implementation of GESI mainstreaming in a way which is directly relevant to a programme, the sector it is operating in and the context in which it is being delivered. An evaluation of WHO's work identified challenges in gender, equity and rights mainstreaming when teams were unclear what they should be working towards. This evaluation and another of gender

mainstreaming in the ILO also underlined the value of providing clarity on GESI ambitions and approaches early on in a programme (ILO, 2021; WHO, 2021). Similarly, an evaluation of FCDO's Prosperity Fund found that such clarity provided a useful underpinning for future programme decision making (FCDO, 2021). In line with this, a review of gender mainstreaming efforts in the humanitarian sector identified barriers to addressing GESI when there was a vagueness about what actions teams should take (Gupta et al., 2023).

"Investing in G&I from the start and establishing the G&I vision, ambition and approach early on are necessary for well-designed programmes that aim to reduce poverty through inclusive growth. This clarity also enables strategic targeting of G&I support and advice during implementation."
(FCDO, 2021)

References were also made in the literature to leadership being able to use programme GESI policies and/or strategies to provide clarity on what was meant by an 'intersectional approach'. In contrast, the absence of a written explanation about how various concepts link together and relate to programmes has been associated with less effective, fragmented efforts with numerous separate planning processes operating in silos (see for example: ILO, 2021; WHO, 2021).

"[T]he absence of a clear narrative on gender, diversity and inclusivity presents risks of competing priorities, dispersed efforts, and approaches in silos." (ILO, 2021)

"In the absence of a clear conceptual framework reflected in strategy/ies that envisage how each one of the dimensions in to be operationalized, there is a risk that gender, equity and human rights remain abstract concepts…" (WHO, 2021)

The importance of positioning GESI as being central to achieving a programme's primary purpose comes through clearly in the literature. Specific references were made to the challenges posed when GESI mainstreaming was considered to be an 'add on' or 'nice to have' rather than part of the core objectives of a programme (see for example: WHO, 2021). An evaluation of the Prosperity Fund, for example, concluded that weaker results than had been expected were partly due to a lack of clarity on the importance of gender and inclusion as part of the primary purpose of the Fund from the start. The evaluation concluded that performance on gender and inclusion would have been stronger if objectives had been clearer from the outset (FCDO, 2021). The evaluation also noted that establishing a distinct strategy on gender and inclusion, which in the case of the Prosperity Fund included a set of gender and inclusion minimum standards, had mandated a technical process which had helped to address gender and inclusion in design as well as in ongoing monitoring. However, the authors noted that having a distinct strategy and a set of minimum standards risked creating processes which ran alongside the main programme rather than being integrated into it (FCDO, 2021).

"The technical processes mandated by [Prosperity Fund gender and inclusion (G&I)] minimum standards also appear to work well to help programmes design and monitor progress on G&I. However, they carry a risk of creating parallel processes for G&I that are not well integrated with core programme management planning, reporting and monitoring processes." (FCDO, 2021)

Some sources emphasised the importance of any GESI policy or strategy having clear status within a programme. Here, visibility, formal endorsement and regular reporting against GESI policies or strategies was emphasised, as were explicit links to wider programme strategies (Bond, 2019). In setting out clear links to overall programme strategy and operational plans, some sources also emphasised the benefits of being able to practically map out a clear action plan for GESI mainstreaming (see for example: AfDB, 2020; EIGE, n.d.; WHO, 2021).

"The presence of a well-grounded and comprehensive strategy that drives the operational gender agenda and links commitments on gender to implementation is critical for effective GM, to avoid a piecemeal approach to GM and for sustainable and far-reaching results." (AfDB, 2020)

Common Approach 2: Budgeting for GESI mainstreaming within programmes

The literature included a consistent emphasis on leadership ensuring GESI mainstreaming commitments were backed with sufficient resources for effective implementation (see for example USAID, 2020; GPC, 2017; EU, 2020a). This included sources which stressed that programme leadership

needed to recognise that GESI mainstreaming could not simply be absorbed into programmes without resources being allocated to it. The literature repeatedly underlined the need for leadership to acknowledge that GESI mainstreaming must have resources allocated to it and to run budgeting processes in a way that realistically costed them and allocated resources accordingly (see for example: Gupta et al., 2023). In a 2018 evaluation of IDB's support for gender and diversity, a staff survey found that 43 percent of specialists highlighted the high transaction costs associated with work on gender and diversity and reported lack of funds had been an issue (IDB, 2018). The need for dedicated resources was often directly linked to the need to fund GESI expertise within the team (see for example: WHO, 2021) but also a range of other internal and programme activities (see for example: ICF, n.d.). An independent evaluation of the ILO's gender mainstreaming efforts found that to increase progress towards gender outcomes, it was essential that more funding was mobilised (ILO, 2021).

Conversely, there were also numerous references in the literature to the barriers created when GESI mainstreaming commitments were made but not backed with necessary financial resources to implement them (see for example: UNESCO, 2020, WHO, 2021).

"[T]he failure to support the operationalization of those concepts [gender, equity, human rights] through consistent leadership, dedicated human resources, and stable financial allocation for gender, equity and human rights across programmes…has been reflected in poor performance on monitoring mechanisms." (WHO, 2021)

Similarly, a longitudinal evaluation of the implementation of UNHCR's age, gender and diversity policy found that inadequate financial resourcing was arguably the most important constraint which had hindered progress (UNHCR, 2022). Likewise, the evaluation of the FCDO-funded Prosperity Fund found that it was likely programmes could have performed better on gender and inclusion if leadership commitment had been stronger and reflected in resources allocated (FCDO, 2021). Although focused more at an organisational level, evaluation of IDB's work on gender and diversity concluded that the availability and allocation of resources was a key factor in determining whether gender was integrated (IDB, 2018).

"The divisions that have made the most progress in mainstreaming gender have made good use of…funds to support gender mainstreaming…In divisions where progress in mainstreaming has been slower, many specialists report that they regularly lack resources to properly analyze gender gaps for their sectors and projects and to prepare gender components." (IDB, 2018)

The evaluation of the Prosperity Fund concluded that a key ingredient for effective mainstreaming was adequate resourcing being prioritised throughout the life of a programme, not only in the early analytical stages (FCDO, 2021). A mid-term review of the World Bank's efforts on gender mainstreaming also found that while resources tended to be available at design stage, resource constraints frequently led to challenges during implementation. The review also found that having resources allocated to gender-related efforts helped to reassure staff that gender mainstreaming was doable and realistic (World Bank, 2021). There were also some references in the literature to the value of having flexible pots to allow for adaptation and the ability to follow up on learning as they emerge during the life of a programme. There was also at least one reference to the value of GESI experts having control over resources themselves, with the ability to use these flexibly, as needed (see Common Approach 5 for more detail).

As well as emphasising the importance of budgets being allocated to efforts to mainstream GESI in programme interventions, a number of sources also emphasised the value of ensuring resource allocation to internal GESI mainstreaming efforts, for example to ensure teams were equipped with the skills and competencies they needed to work on GESI – and to enable learning as they worked (GADN, 2015; EIGE, 2016; FCDO, 2021; UNESCO, 2020; UNHCR, 2022) (See Common Apporaoch 7 for more detail).

"Resources: sufficient resources need to be made available; effective gender mainstreaming requires budget and time. Think about resources for awareness-raising and capacity-building initiatives…" (EIGE, 2016)

"For technical mainstreaming processes to be promoted [there needs to be] a sufficient flow of resources for staff awareness raising, skills development, monitoring and accountability processes." (GADN, 2015)

Elsewhere in the literature, an emphasis was placed on the importance of making budget allocations for GESI mainstreaming visible and transparent (see for example: FCDO, 2021). The evaluation of gender,

equity and human rights work in the WHO noted the difficulty of tracking how much is being spent on these aspects when they are fully integrated into other programme activities. Nevertheless, the evaluation still concluded that there was value in doing so (WHO, 2021). In part, the importance placed on visibility of allocations related to strengthening accountability for GESI mainstreaming (see for example: AfDB, 2020). In an evaluation of UNESCO's work to support gender equality, it was identified that setting aside specific budget lines for gender would help teams identify entry points and would prompt them to think about where inputs from gender experts were needed (UNESCO, 2020).

Although not widely discussed in the literature, some sources touched on the importance of factoring GESI in to how 'value' was defined within a programme and therefore how resources were allocated. Without this clarity, there was a perceived risk that GESI mainstreaming efforts were viewed not only as more expensive – and potentially unaffordable – but also distracting attention away from core business. An evaluation of the integration of gender, equity and human rights in WHO's work identified a tension between programmes achieving broad reach and the more specific targeting of resources needed to benefit the most marginalised. This links back to the importance of spelling out how the GESI ambition for a programme relates to overarching objectives.

"In general, both WHO and UN partner respondents highlighted that there is a tension between the most cost-effective way of achieving the progressive realisation of [universal health care] and its set target of 80% coverage and the focus on gender and rights issues concerned with how and for whom this target is achieved." (WHO, 2021)

GESI mainstreaming and VfM

Although VfM was included as a specific sub question under RQ1, very few sources within the sample have included information on the topic. In order to address this, a DFID guidance note on including the equity dimension in VfM was added to the sample.

The guidance emphasises that a complete VfM analysis must go beyond a narrow focus on minimising costs. It asserts that in UK programming, the "[b]est impact does not necessarily mean a programme that reaches the highest number of people or reaches people at the lowest cost". It is important to unpack *who* will benefit from costs incurred and whether specific populations will require additional support to access the same benefits. In other words, programme resources should be expended fairly in order to reach those most at risk of extreme poverty, exclusion, stigma, violence, and discrimination.

DFID advises that implementors "not assume that the cost of developing an inclusive programme will be prohibitively high. Instead, gather the evidence on how the investment will impact all groups." To do this, implementors should:

1. Unpack assumptions and quantify impacts: Develop a realistic understanding about who will benefit from a programme, intervention, or procurement and explicitly state and quantify the effects according to various factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, ability, geography, etc. This enables a basis for comparison and analysis of costs and benefits.
2. Assess relative needs and returns: What are the true costs and benefits of investing in marginalised versus easier to reach populations? Aim to capture the full range of benefits in the analysis to compare options effectively.
3. Consider economic impacts of equal access: Recognise that ensuring equal access to programme benefits can have positive economic impacts. Assess how equitable delivery can contribute to economic growth and address social and economic inequalities.
4. Prioritise marginalised groups: Acknowledge that the most marginalised or poorest individuals tend to gain the highest value from programme outputs or outcomes, as they have fewer means of meeting their needs.
5. Consider counterfactual and alternative pathways: When measuring outcomes, consider the counterfactual scenario of what would happen if certain groups are not reached by the programme. Assess the likelihood of alternative pathways for achieving intended outcomes.

This guidance is particularly relevant to findings presented under Common Apporach 8 on 'using intersectional analysis to understand the needs of marginalised groups and to address barriers to their participation in programmes' and Common Apporach 11 on 'tracking and reporting programme results through disaggregated data and GESI-specific outcomes'.

Source: DFID (2019). "VfM Guidance: The 4th E Equity".

Authors of a gender and inclusion evaluation of the Prosperity Fund anticipated that a lack of disaggregated or gender and inclusion-specific indicators at outcome level would limit programmes' ability to factor equity into their VfM calculations (FCDO, 2021). Programmes which were supported through the fund were expected to have a VfM strategy in which gender and inclusion were mainstreamed, including a set of clear equity indicators. However, the evaluation found that most (almost 60 percent) of the programmes did not have these. For those which did have VfM strategies in place that sought to capture equity considerations, it was considered too early to gauge their usefulness.

Common Approach 3: Motivating programme teams to work on GESI

There were numerous references in the literature to the value of programme leads intentionally motivating their teams to address GESI through their work. This included motivation through a varying mix of accountability measures, explicit requirements and sanctions, as well as softer encouragement through incentives, recognition and reward (see for example: GADN, 2015; ILO, 2021; Gates, n.d.). Linked to this, a longitudinal evaluation of UNHCR's work highlighted the importance of leadership taking practical steps to champion gender and diversity mainstreaming, which went beyond simple messaging about its importance (UNHCR, 2022).

> *"Incentives and accountability mechanisms are important, particularly when they operate at management level and create an improved enabling environment for motivated staff to promote gender equality and women's and girls' rights through their work." (GADN, 2015)*

A lack of accountability, especially of managers, was identified as a factor which had hindered progress on gender, equity and human rights mainstreaming in an evaluation of WHO's work (WHO, 2021). An article on gender mainstreaming by the UK NGO network, Bond, emphasised the importance of putting in place strong accountability mechanisms to motivate work on gender. This included incorporating gender into key performance indicators (KPIs) which could be regularly tracked and reviewed at senior levels in order to strengthen accountability for results (Bond, 2019). The tracking of performance on gender and inclusion in order to strengthen results was also given emphasis in the evaluatiosn of the Prosperity Fund and in AfDB. (FCDO, 2021; AfDB, 2020)

Specific attention was placed on performance appraisals in several sources, although in each case there was a lack of evidence to demonstrate the value of doing this (IDB, 2018; WHO, 2021; GADN, 2015). The evaluation of WHO's work on gender, equity and human rights highlighted the untapped potential to use performance reviews to motivate mainstreaming to be prioritised (WHO, 2021). Although focused on IDB staff rather than external programme teams, an evaluation of gender and diversity work in IDB found that the Bank had begun to motivate staff by including gender goals in their performance appraisals. However, the evaluation could not establish whether this had made a difference. Whilst they found that gender goals had progressively been incorporated into annual performance exercises, this had been patchy and inconsistent. Crucially, staff who reported that gender-related goals had been in included in their performance reviews explained that even where they did successfully meet targets, they did not count towards higher performance ratings or promotions. This limited the extent to which they acted to motivate mainstreaming efforts (IDB, 2018).

Sources also underlined the need for leadership to promote ongoing learning and to ensure programme results on GESI were made visible. In particular, the value of using programme results to visibly demonstrate what is being achieved was found to be helpful in further stimulating and sustaining motivation among teams (see for example: FCDO, 2021; Gupta et al., 2023; IDB, 2018; ILO, 2021; UNHCR, 2022). Similarly, an evaluation of ILO's work on gender mainstreaming identified that a lack of visibility in what was being achieved in relation to gender was demotivating for teams (ILO, 2021). With this in mind, an article by Bond stressed the importance of programme leadership integrating gender into routine agendas and reporting templates in order to give regular space for collective reflection on progress (Bond, 2019). This was given similar emphasis in an evaluation of WHO's work on gender, equity and human rights (WHO, 2021).

There was also a specific emphasis in the literature on the need for programme leadership to actively recognise and reward individual contributions to GESI mainstreaming. The evaluation of UNHCR's work on gender and diversity specifically underlined the benefit of individual contributions being recognised in examples of good mainstreaming practice (UNHCR, 2022). An evaluation of gender and diversity work by IDB found that public recognition was an important motivating factor (IDB, 2018). In line with this, the evaluation of ILO's gender equality and mainstreaming work found that there was often an insufficient emphasis on finding ways to make work in this area fun and innovative through an emphasis on learning and knowledge sharing in order to encourage staff to make their best contribution (ILO, 2021). In particular, the

evaluation team found that various methods such as elevator pitches, GED-X talks, and fishbowl exercises had been using in sharing examples of good practice in gender mainstreaming (ILO, 2021).

"64 percent of the survey respondents reported that public recognition of superior work in the promotion of gender equality motivated them to include gender elements in the design of their operations." (IDB, 2018)

Essential Element 2: GESI capacity within programmes and an inclusive team culture

This section presents a synthesis of the literature related to the development of team capacity and team cultures which support mainstreaming. This includes current thinking and evidence related to the recruitment of diverse programme teams, investments in GESI expertise, working with partners and developing team competencies and skills.

Key findings

- Literature highlights that addressing GESI in the internal workings of programme teams makes them better equipped to address GESI through programming. This includes recruiting diverse teams and encouraging diversity to be valued so that alternative perspectives were listened to and acted upon.

- Consistent emphasis was placed on the need to invest in some form of GESI expertise so that teams had access to the technical capacity needed to implement GESI mainstreaming. This was linked to evidence that GESI experts had strengthened mainstreaming efforts, and that performance was weaker when they were not in place.

- A number of sources underlined the value of GESI expertise being embedded in teams, being sector and context specific and being in place at the very start of programmes, before they are designed.

- Several sources highlighted the value of working with local partners in helping to bring contextually relevant innovation to programmes and access to marginalised communities. In particular, this was seen as enabling programmes to contribute to longer term processes of change.

- A lack of knowledge and skills among teams was identified in the literature as a considerable barrier to progress on GESI mainstreaming. Training is consistently highlighted as a valuable part of a wider approach to competency development.

- A common challenge emerging from the literature was that GESI guidance and tools were often difficult to apply in practice, especially if they were not programme specific.

- Several sources point to the importance of team members being personally convinced of the need and value of GESI mainstreaming in order to achieve anything other than token gestures on mainstreaming.

Common across much of the literature was a focus not only on mainstreaming GESI in external programme interventions but also an emphasis on mainstreaming GESI in the internal workings of programme teams. This is what Gupta et al. have referred to as the 'cultural and institutional context in which mainstreaming takes place' (Gupta et al., 2023). In particular, various sources place importance on GESI mainstreaming needing to influence both formal and informal aspects of how programme teams operate (see for example: GADN, 2015).

"Programmes can't be divorced from the staff and organisations that design and implement them. Mainstreaming gender in programming first requires attention to the ways of working and organisational culture that either support or inhibit staff from strengthening attention to gender in their work." (Bond, 2019)

Some sources placed weight on the need for internal team efforts related to GESI mainstreaming from the perspective of programme teams 'practicing what they preach'. This was described in terms of it being unhelpful and problematic if there was an apparent disconnect or contradiction between what programme teams expected from others and the types of changes they are prepared to make themselves (see for example: GADN, 2015).

Other sources placed a greater focus on the need for internal team efforts to mainstream GESI because it made them better equipped to address GESI through programming (see for example: Bond, 2019; GADN, 2015; Gupta et al., 2023; WHO, 2021). In some sources, most strongly in an evaluation of WHO's

work, there was a dual focus on the value of integrating gender, equity and human rights in team functions, both as an end in itself whereby staff benefitted from healthy and equitable workplaces and as a necessary condition for gender, equity and human rights to be addressed through externally facing work (WHO, 2021). Crucially, the team for the WHO evaluation found a causal relationship between internal team attitudes and practices in relation to equity, diversity and inclusion and the extent to which inequalities and rights issues were prioritised in externally facing work (WHO, 2021).

"Internal integration of gender, equity and human rights in the organizational culture and capacity is directly linked to performance in external facing work. Addressing gender, equity and human rights-related awareness, organizational culture and capacity is a prerequisite to progressing meaningful integration in the work of WHO, beyond having a value in its own right."
(WHO, 2021)

The following subsections present the approaches which most commonly featured in the literature as having been used to strengthen team capacities and cultures in order to support GESI mainstreaming.

Common Approach 4: Diversifying programme teams

Several sources stressed the benefits of recruiting diverse teams where individuals from marginalised groups brought a variety of lived experiences and perspectives into programme decision making (see for example: Gupta et al., 2023). Measures to promote diverse recruitment included making sure evaluation criteria for candidate selection and interview schedules were unbiased, including blind reviews of applications and incorporating GESI-related competencies into recruitment exercises (see for example: Bond, 2019; Gupta et al., 2023). Although related more to WHO as an organisation rather than individual programmes, the WHO evaluation identified efforts to strengthen the representation of women and geographically underrepresented groups in professional positions. This included investment in targeted outreach and recruitment campaigns to attract a greater diversity of candidates, making senior management and supervisors accountable for progress, requiring gender representation on recruitment panels and wording advertisements for positions in a way that encouraged applicants from diverse backgrounds (WHO, 2021).

Sources tended to place emphasis not only on increasing diversity but also on the importance of teams valuing diversity so that alternative perspectives were listened to and acted upon. In particular, some sources pointed to the value of policies which not only helped to attract and retain diverse teams, but which enabled people from marginalised groups to perform well in their roles (see for example: Bond, 2019). Crucially, WHO had combined efforts in relation to diverse recruitment with initiatives to promote a more respectful workplace (WHO, 2021). A staff survey as part of an evaluation of these initiatives found that some aspects of organisational culture were showing some slight signs of improvement. However, change was found to be slower than anticipated and the evaluators concluded that efforts to promote inclusion and diversity needed to be sustained over the longer term (WHO, 2021).

In a research article on gender mainstreaming in the humanitarian sector, three aspects of team culture were identified as hindering the promotion of equality: a saviour mentality, male dominated teams with a macho mentality and a focus on short term priorities (Gupta et al., 2023). The article drew on evidence from the fields of social psychology, evolutionary anthropology and behavioural and organisational science which focused on the importance of non-conscious bias. A key message from this literature was that team decision making tends to be subconsciously driven by established patterns of behaviour and social norms which reflect the wider environment in which they are operating (Gupta et al., 2023). Similarly, a briefing paper by the UK Gender and Development Network highlighted the fact that development organisations often reflect the negative stereotypes and discriminatory norms found in the wider contexts in which they are located and that this has an impact on the enabling environment for GESI mainstreaming in programmes (GADN, 2015). In several sources, specific emphasis was placed on the importance of teams operating in a way which encourages discussion and debate so that differences of opinion could be discussed (see for example: Bond, 2019; Gupta et al., 2023).

"The need for change in the macho culture was a major theme raised by key informants." Macho saviour mentality – "protectionism and paternalistic attitudes that often drive this can be harmful to women. It perpetuates the focus on women's and girls' basic needs for food, shelter, and health and their vulnerability to gender-based violence, noted in the findings, with less attention to providing livelihood opportunities or appointing women to decision-making positions in humanitarian programs." (Gupta et al., 2023)

Common Approach 5: Including GESI experts within programmes

Almost all sources in the sample underlined the need to invest in some form of GESI expertise so that teams had access to the technical capacity needed to implement GESI mainstreaming (see for example UN Women, 2022). This tended to range from having GESI experts as permanent team members to bringing technical capacity in at key moments through the use of consultants. A number of sources clearly point to challenges when it is assumed that GESI mainstreaming is equally everyone's responsibility. Rather, a clear message from the literature was that investing in GESI expertise is a crucial aspect of enabling GESI mainstreaming (see for example: Bond, 2019; DSU, 2019; FCDO, 2021; Gupta et al., 2023; World Bank, 2021).

"One of the fundamental challenges about gender mainstreaming is that you do need someone with technical expertise, and it is more successful when we have those colleagues who are focal points or have that expertise within an operation, rather than it being everyone's responsibility." (Gupta et al., 2023)

"To be effective, gender equality advisors need to be integral proactive members of the project team, who are involved early in the planning stage and consistently throughout the initiative." (GAC, n.d.)

Some sources provided evidence that GESI experts had strengthened mainstreaming efforts, and that performance was weaker when they were not in place. An evaluation of IDB's work on gender and diversity found that resources spent on hiring gender specialists and consultants had enabled deeper integration of gender in operations (IDB, 2018). Likewise, an evaluation of gender mainstreaming in ILO found that projects which had received support from Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion experts were more likely to have incorporated gender-responsive objectives in their projects than those which had not (60 percent compared to 28 percent) (ILO, 2021). Conversely, a gender and inclusion evaluation of the FCDO-funded Prosperity Fund found that the scale of results was likely to be lower than expected, in part due to a lack of gender and inclusion capacity within programmes supported through the fund. An evaluation of gender mainstreaming in AfDB found that the use of gender specialists in operations had advanced progress in gender mainstreaming (AfDB, 2020).

"Performance would have been stronger if resourcing in terms of human capacity and expertise had been greater" (FCDO, 2021)

A number of sources underlined the value of GESI expertise being sector and context specific. The Prosperity Fund evaluation nuanced its findings to explain that although gender and inclusion capacity proved to be critical to success, it had taken time and only been modestly successful, with insufficient access to sector-specific gender and inclusion expertise a particular issue (FCDO, 2021). The evaluation team concluded that more sector-specific and in-country gender and inclusion support within programmes could have improved interventions (FCDO, 2021). In line with this, in an evaluation of IDB work on gender and diversity, sector specialists noted the need for more sector-specific gender expertise to provide useful input (IDB, 2018). Evaluation synthesis of gender mainstreaming at AfDB also found that gender experts had a positive effect but that their varying depth and breadth of sectoral knowledge had been a challenge (AfDB, 2020). Although focused more on Bank staff at an organisational level, a gender mid-term review for the World Bank Group also highlighted the value of GESI experts not only knowing about GESI but also the sector and local contexts to be able to meaningfully input to project design and delivery (World Bank Group, 2021).

"Programmes need to have clear guidance and evidence on pathways to women's economic empowerment for the specific sector within which they work, so they can design their interventions around these pathways. This requires access to appropriate sector-level G&I expertise." (FCDO, 2021)

Several sources described the importance of GESI experts being in place at the very start of programmes, before they are designed. A learning brief on PSD programmes in DRC and the Prosperity Fund evaluation highlighted the importance of GESI expertise being available from the start. The brief emphasised the importance of what it called 'deep and early preparation' by GESI experts. Likewise, an evaluation of gender mainstreaming in AfDB concluded that the involvement of a gender specialist at the very start – from concept note stage would improve programme's gender responsiveness (AfDB, 2020). The Prosperity Fund evaluation found by the time gender and inclusion expertise was available, many programmes

were well into their design phases. The evaluators concluded that sector-specific gender and inclusion expertise at an earlier stage would have been valuable (FCDO, 2021).

> *"[E]arly programmes went into design and implementation without the benefit of the G&I guidance and expertise that later programmes had. As a result, G&I responsiveness needed to be designed in retrospectively. This has been only partially successful." (FCDO, 2021)*

> *"The results were strongest where the programme prioritised GESI mainstreaming before implementation (commissioning GESI analyses and appointing expert personnel to drive the mainstreaming process forward at design stage). Where this activity happened later, key opportunities were missed to build GESI into programming." (DSU, 2019)*

Several sources emphasised the value of GESI experts to be embedded in programme teams, noting limitations with short-term inputs (Gupta et al., 2023). Findings from the Prosperity Fund evaluation also placed an emphasis on gender and inclusion specialists being available at country level, embedded in programme teams and closely involved in all stages of programme management and delivery (FCDO, 2021). The evaluation concluded that more of this type of support might also have improved gender and inclusion interventions. The evaluation team noted that programmes that relied on specialists who were based remotely had been less successful (FCDO, 2021).

> *"This remote model may mean that delivery partner gender and inclusion specialists lack the contextual gender and inclusion knowledge needed to advise country implementation teams to ensure that design and implementation is appropriate to the context. It may also mean gender and inclusion expertise is not actively drawn on throughout programme delivery." (FCDO, 2021)*

Other sources discussed the value of injecting GESI expertise into programmes through consultancy inputs. The gender mid-term review of the World Bank Group found that by working with a gender consultant, staff had become more comfortable with identifying and addressing gender issues in projects (World Bank, 2021). Similarly, an evaluation of gender and diversity work in IDB found that gender specialists hired as consultants had been valuable in helping to integrate gender and diversity into the design and delivery of projects (IDB, 2018). Several sources also identified the value of programme GESI experts being supported by specialist external expertise, when needed (see for example: EIGE, n.d.). A learning brief on GESI mainstreaming in DFID-funded PSD programmes in DRC highlighted the value of having a sector specialist strengthen the capacity of a national GESI expert. A women's economic empowerment (WEE) specialist was appointed specifically to strengthen the capacity of the programme's GESI adviser. However, beyond describing the process, the learning brief does not capture the extent to which this approach was successful (DSU, 2019).

> *"Headquarters says we need to have a protection strategy including gender elements, so we'll call a consultant. A consultant will write a strategy without really understanding, and we'll have something that sits on a shelf, and that's where it will stay" (Gupta et al., 2023)*

Several resources also placed an emphasis on GESI experts having control of at least small budgets which they can use flexibly as needed during programme design and delivery (see for example: UNESCO, 2020 and Bond, 2019; UN Women, 2022). In addition, the Prosperity Fund evaluation also noted that programme experience had demonstrated that the most effective model of resourcing gender and inclusion mainstreaming was to have a gender and inclusion specialist with adequate resources and decision-making power and influence (FCDO, 2021).

Other sources underlined the importance of GESI experts being equipped with tangible results and the skills to influence the generation and use of evidence. A review of gender mainstreaming in the humanitarian sector underlined the value of gender experts being equipped with relevant evidence and concrete solutions with which to influence colleagues, something which the review noted was not commonplace (Gupta et al., 2023). With a similar emphasis on gender experts being able to use and generate relevant evidence, the gender mid-term review of the World Bank Group highlighted the value of gender experts also having measurement expertise (World Bank, 2021).

There was a suggestion in one source that there may be value in GESI experts who are working on individual programmes being able to network with others in similar roles in order to share ideas and lessons. Although focused more on an organisational level, an evaluation of work to support gender equality within UNESCO found that gender focal points expressed concern that a 'critical mass' of gender experts was

lacking which meant they were often working in isolation, in teams which were not conducive to gender mainstreaming (UNESCO, 2020).

Common Approach 6: Establishing GESI-focused partnerships within programmes

In addition to identifying individual team members or consultants to provide GESI expertise, a number of sources also pointed to the value of bringing GESI capacity into programmes through strategic partnerships (see for example: World Bank, 2021; USAID, 2020). A key finding from an evaluation of the ILO's gender mainstreaming efforts was that partnerships had been used to good effect, helping to improve the implementation of gender mainstreaming efforts in projects (ILO, 2021). In line with this, an evaluation of the Prosperity Fund found that delivery partners were the main source of sector- and context-specific gender and inclusion expertise for programmes (FCDO, 2021).

"The evaluation work has identified numerous examples of how partnership with other organizations has improved delivery of ILO …projects. In many respects, this is not surprising, as typically partnering will seek to access capabilities, reach, or context-specific or other technical knowledge of a partner to complement the assessment of the weaknesses of one's own organization in a specific project delivery context." (ILO, 2021)

Several sources highlighted the value of working with local partners in helping to bring contextually relevant innovation to programmes and access to marginalised communities (see for example DFID, 2019a). An evaluation of the implementation of UNHCR's work on age, gender and diversity found that GESI expertise brought in through partnerships had helped to strengthen innovative practices on mainstreaming. They found that teams had been able to select technically competent and highly committed partners, including NGOs and NGO networks, who specialised in working with marginalised groups (UNHCR, 2022). This included local NGOs who brought strong community linkages into the programme, helping to extend reach to marginalised groups (UNHCR, 2022). Learning drawn from climate change projects in Ghana identified the importance of building strategic alliances with national partners working on gender issues, which helped find ways to overcome challenges faced during implementation (AfDB, 2019). Linked to this, an evaluation of the Prosperity Fund also underlined that part of the value of bringing GESI expertise in through downstream partners was that it helped to ensure this expertise was closer to programme delivery (FCDO, 2021).

"Procurement of high-quality delivery partner sector- and context-specific gender and inclusion expertise is critical to programme success" (FCDO, 2021).

A number of sources described the benefits of working with local GESI-focused organisations in terms of programmes being able to contribute to longer terms processes of change (see for example: GADN, 2015; FCDO, 2021; ICF, n.d.; ILO, 2021). With an emphasis on sustainability, local partnerships with rights-based civil society organisations were identified as a way for programmes to feed into change which could extend beyond programme timeframes (see for example: FCDO, 2021; ICF, n.d.; ILO, 2021). A briefing by the UK Gender and Development Network placed considerable emphasis on this, with a strong view that it was crucial to support women's rights organisations through mainstream programmes (GADN, 2015). This was presented as a way of connecting programme interventions to locally owned processes of social change being driven by local women's rights movements. Linked to this, programmes could also help create entry points and opportunities for local organisations to influence change, for example through engagement with government.

"[O]ur experience is that gender mainstreaming is most likely to be effective and sustained when it is grounded in, and driven by, local movements for change, with external and internal champions of women's and girls' rights and gender equality working together…" (GADN, 2015)

One source highlighted the importance of setting clear expectations with delivery partners early on (FCDO, 2021). The Prosperity Fund evaluation identified the need for programme teams to have sufficient expertise and available time to be able to hold delivery partners to account for work on gender and inclusion. The evaluation team identified weaknesses where programmes had not requested that delivery partners should have specific gender and inclusion expertise. As a result, some programmes had faced resistance from delivery partners, who viewed retrospective gender and inclusion requirements as an unfair change in scope. In contrast, they found that some programmes had more successfully integrated gender and inclusion into bidding processes and contracts. This had helped programme teams to establish suitable delivery partners who had gender and inclusion expertise without this needing to be negotiated later (FCDO, 2021).

A lack of knowledge and skills among teams was identified in the literature as a considerable barrier to progress on GESI mainstreaming (see for example USAID, 2020; UNOPS, 2022). A DFID 'How To' Note on Gender Equality identified teams not understanding at a practical level how to apply GESI mainstreaming to their work as being a particular challenge (DFID, 2019). Similarly, an assumption in the Prosperity Fund's gender and inclusion theory of change highlights a lack of capacity and knowledge as being one of the main constraints to making programmes responsive to gender and inclusion (FCDO, 2021). This concern underpinned the thinking behind a range of sources within the literature which emphasised the need for knowledge and skills development across programme teams in order to strengthen capacity for GESI mainstreaming (see for example: Bond, 2019; GADN, 2015; DSU, 2019; EIGE, n.d.; IDB, 2018; ILO, 2021; WHO, 2021).

Training is consistently highlighted in the literature as a means to strengthen knowledge and skills for GESI mainstreaming, although only as part of a wider approach to competency development (see for example: WHO, 2021; EU, 2020a; Council of Europe, 2015; AFD, 2022; UN Women, 2022). A learning brief on private sector development programmes in DRC described how cross-programme training was provided to staff working on the ÉLAN programme in order to introduce them to basic concepts and to strengthen their understanding of GESI mainstreaming. However, there is no detail provided on how valuable this training was (DSU, 2019). An evaluation of gender mainstreaming in the ILO did find evidence of what they termed 'positive movement' where training had taken place (ILO, 2021). However, the evaluation also underlined that whilst one-off training might make a helpful contribution, it would only ever have limited impact. This chimed with a Bond article on gender mainstreaming which explained the limitations of relying on one-off training to strengthen mainstreaming capacity and underlined the need for it to form just one part of a broader process of professional development to foster the attitudes and skills which are needed for work on gender (Bond, 2019).

"[A] half day mandatory training would not resolve the issue of gender, equity and human rights capacity and awareness by itself." (WHO, 2021)

Some sources suggested that GESI training needed to focus on developing specific competencies and be tailored to local context (see for example UN Women, 2022). This part of the literature emphasised the need to move beyond training which provides general information on GESI mainstreaming to thinking more carefully about the skills and competencies which various team members needed based on the practical realities of their daily work (see for example: EIGE, n.d.; WHO, 2021). In line with this, an evaluation of UNHCR's work on age, gender and diversity found that staff in country offices had emphasised the need for training which was tailored to the local context rather than generic off-the-peg training (UNHCR, 2022). This was also picked up in a review of gender mainstreaming practice in the humanitarian sector which found that generic training which focused on raising team awareness about gender tended to be more commonplace than training which focused on the development of specific mainstreaming skills. This was coupled with a perspective that the latter would be more effective (Gupta et al., 2023).

"Efforts to build capacity among staff have, by and large, focused on increasing general awareness about "gender" rather than on the technical skills and knowledge needed to impact outcomes in and across sectors." (Gupta et al., 2023)

The evaluation of gender mainstreaming in the ILO also recommended that a more systematic approach to assessing and strengthening specific skills related to gender mainstreaming was needed within programmes (ILO, 2021). Similarly, a lack of capacity assessments and structured skills developed to support cultural change within teams was also picked up in the evaluation of WHO's work on gender, equity and rights (WHO, 2021). Insufficient focus on development specific skills was also highlighted in a learning brief on GESI mainstreaming in PSD programmes in DRC. A review of strategic GESI priorities within the Essor programme identified that the integration of GESI in certain workstreams (for example one that had a more institutional focus) required specific up-skilling of the project team (DSU, 2019).

"[A] more systemic, programme-based approach and delivery system for capacity development and training within the ILO relating to gender equality and mainstreaming [is needed]. This should include a comprehensive structuring of needs relating to gender equality and mainstreaming competencies, using a gender equality and mainstreaming capacity development

framework that describes how capacity development will be managed, implemented and monitored…" (ILO, 2021)

This emphasis on more tailored and ongoing support for capacity developed also underpinned several references within the literature to on-the-job learning which moved beyond fixed training sessions (see for example: GADN, 2015; Gupta et al., 2023; IDB, 2018). For example, resources on gender mainstreaming from EIGE emphasised the value of team members being coached by a gender expert (EIGE, 2016). Likewise, an evaluation of IDB's work on gender and diversity found that collaborations between gender and diversity experts and colleagues to support on-the job learning had worked to increase staff capacity (IDB, 2018). This was strongly supported by findings in a review of gender mainstreaming practice in the humanitarian sector which included a review of organisational change literature (Gupta et al., 2023). The review found that the literature suggested that capacity building efforts designed to bring about change in humanitarian organisations had not proved to be 'the magic bullet' they had hoped to be (Gupta et al., 2023). They concluded that in part this was because humanitarian professionals tended to prefer more hands-on social learning approaches, including on-the-job training and mentoring (Clarke and Ramalingam 2008 in Gupta et al., 2023).

"A "learning by doing" approach, such as through before- and after-action reviews, has the potential over traditional gender training methods to deepen impact by demonstrating the "what" and the "how" of addressing gender inequalities in real time, with practical examples." (Gupta et al., 2023)

One source highlighted some value in teams using practical guidance and tools to help mainstream GESI in their work (FCDO, 2021). The evaluation of the Prosperity Fund, for example, found that a package of guidance had been developed to provide clarity to programme teams and delivery partners on how to implement the Fund's gender and inclusion vision in practice. These tools were found to have been useful in helping programmes integrate gender and inclusion into their designs. However, the late introduction of these tools was in many cases found to have hindered their utility (FCDO, 2021).

A common challenge emerging from a number of other sources was that GESI guidance and tools were difficult to apply in practice. An evaluation of the WHO's work on gender, equity and human rights found that several equity-focused guidance documents and tools had been developed and noted that little was known about the extent to which these tools had actually been used and implemented as they had not been systematically evaluated. However, the evaluation team found that current guidance was often overly theoretical and highly technical which hindered its use. A finding was that teams wanted guidance that was simplified and practical so it could be put into use (WHO, 2021). This was echoed in a review of gender mainstreaming practice in the humanitarian sector where key informants from humanitarian organisations reported that, despite having access to tools to support gender mainstreaming, teams tended to struggle to translate them into practice because they were either too generic and vague or too specific and detailed and therefore difficult to digest (Gupta et al., 2023). In a gender mid-term review of the World Bank Group, a consistent theme that emerged from interviews and focus groups with World Bank and IFC staff was that they tended not to read gender-related knowledge products if they did not appear immediately relevant to the specific sector and geographic contexts they were working in. They explained that they tended to rely on gender specialists with relevant geographical and sectoral expertise to help translate guidance to the sector and local context in which their programme was operating (World Bank, 2021).

Several sources point to the importance of team members being personally convinced of the need and value of GESI mainstreaming in order to achieve anything other than token gestures on mainstreaming (GADN, 2015). As noted in the evaluation of the integration of gender, equity and human rights in WHO's work, this underlines the need to recruit team members who express commitment – or at least an openness - to GESI mainstreaming in their work. The evaluation team noted, however, that this had yet to be fully used as an approach (WHO, 2021). A Bond article also emphasised the need for training to not only focus on transferring knowledge to teams, but on encouraging and enabling a degree of self-reflection in order to shift mindsets (Bond, 2019).

"The selection of gender and rights-aware candidates as part of the standard recruitment process constitutes an important strategy for ensuring a common ground on gender, equity and human rights principles that has yet to be leveraged." (WHO, 2021)

"Projects should incorporate not only initial training, but ongoing capacity development of all partners and staff on gender throughout the project lifespan. Training and reflection sessions

should focus not only on knowledge, but should aim to enable critical reflection on gender relations and foster a transformation in staff's own attitudes." (Bond, 2019)

A review of practice in the humanitarian sector presents a far more in-depth assessment of what works to motivate action than other sources. The article draws on existing literature to explore the importance of both cognitive and motivational biases which influence staff decision-making (Gupta et al., 2023). They explain that much of the effort in the humanitarian sector to-date which has sought to equip teams with the capacity to undertake gender mainstreaming has been focused on reducing cognitive bias. This has led to a focus on providing information, expert advice and technical support on gender mainstreaming. However, the article asserts that gender mainstreaming has failed because efforts have not been sufficiently focused on tackling motivational biases. Efforts in this regard would focus more on the intrinsic motivation of humanitarian professionals to reduce suffering and prevent harm and on the results that can be achieved through GESI mainstreaming.

"Demonstrating the value of gender equality and the empowerment of women in reducing suffering and preventing harm is more likely to be effective than the mere provision of technical information and guidance, especially because success begets success and may also help override motivational biases." (Gupta et al., 2023)

Some sources emphasise the value of peer learning in supporting GESI mainstreaming. The review of efforts in the humanitarian sector goes on to argue that peer effects are important, outlining the need to identify influencers within teams who are not gender experts, but who are well positioned to provide hands on support to colleagues and to promote a focus on gender (Gupta et al., 2023). This links to some of the literature on GESI champions and focal points, who tend not to have GESI expertise but who advocate for and support GESI mainstreaming practice. Much of the literature on focal points and champions is related to organisational mainstreaming rather than programmes but some of the sources did provide programme-related findings (see for example: DRC, 2019). An evaluation of UNESCO's work on gender equality found that the majority of respondents thought that interactions with gender foal points had been helpful in supporting gender mainstreaming, especially in relation to problem-solving and experience sharing, including across sectors (UNESCO, 2020). In a similar vein, an evaluation of the Prosperity Fund found some success promoting cross-programme learning on gender and inclusion. Although levels of engagement by programme teams was found to be mixed, the sharing of learning through a gender and inclusion community of practice had been found to help increase awareness of gender and inclusion issues (FCDO, 2021).

"Networks of programme G&I champions work well to overcome knowledge and capacity constraints and disseminate G&I policy and guidance across a portfolio of programmes. The G&I Champions have proved their worth in helping build basic programme team G&I capacity." (FCDO, 2021)

A few sources emphasise the need to invest in specific skills development of GESI champions or focal points. It is noted as an assumption in the Prosperity Fund's gender and inclusion theory of change that gender and inclusion champions who represent their programmes would themselves have the right skills and capability to influence change among others (FCDO, 2021). The ÉLAN project, which provided learning for a brief on GESI mainstreaming in PSD programmes in DRC also developed a system of GESI champions early in the mobilisation of the project. The approach used by the ÉLAN project involved training a member of staff from each provincial team specifically so they could support colleagues in monitoring GESI mainstreaming activities (DRC, 2019).

Essential Element 3: A focus on GESI results and ongoing learning and adaptation within programmes.

This section presents a synthesis of the literature related to a results-focus and ongoing adaptation in order to contribute to GESI outcomes. This includes the use of intersectional analyses to enable programme participation by marginalised groups as well as more ambitious efforts to promote empowerment and transformative change. It also outlines the need to anticipate and manage risks related to work on GESI and to track and report on progress in order to enable ongoing adaptation.

- Within the literature, the ultimate purpose of GESI mainstreaming is to make tangible contributions to GESI outcomes, rather than the emphasis being just on the process itself.

- Mainstreaming efforts include enabling marginalised groups to be reached and to benefit from programmes, as well as seeking to identify opportunities to maximise the potential for empowerment and transformative change. Some sources underline the value of an adaptive approach in which GESI ambitions grow throughout the life of a programme based on ongoing learning.

- Operationally focused GESI analyses can improve programme's GESI objectives and strategies and provide a vehicle for reflecting beneficiaries concerns.

- The literature also highlighted the importance of programme leads seeking to understand and address potential risks associated with GESI mainstreaming, especially where efforts seek to challenge the status quo.

- Addressing GESI through programme M&E was consistently recognised in the literature as a vital aspect of mainstreaming, including the use of disaggregated indicators to identify who was accessing and benefiting from programmes.

- Within the literature there was also an emphasis on the value of looking beyond disaggregation of programme indicators to also develop GESI-specific outcomes and indicators.

- The need to locate GESI outcomes within broader pathways of change was highlighted in the literature as an important aspect of pitching indicators at a realistic level.

Across the literature, the ultimate purpose of GESI mainstreaming is framed in terms of enabling programmes to make tangible contributions to GESI outcomes (see for example: WHO, 2021). This is evident in definitions of GESI mainstreaming, which position mainstreaming firmly as a means to an end, rather than an end in itself (GADN, 2015).

This focus on results is often coupled with a caution in the literature that the focus of GESI mainstreaming should not become entirely focused on internal processes and that efforts also need to be outward looking and ultimately focused on what programme interventions are achieving. A review of gender mainstreaming in the humanitarian sector took this perspective much further than other sources and argued for the need to move on from mainstreaming to a focus entirely on results (Gupta et al., 2023). This view was informed by experience which the authors believe showed that due to a disproportionate focus on internal process, mainstreaming at best leads to raised awareness and superficial tweaking of programmes at the margins. The authors conclude that as a bureaucratic tick box exercise, gender mainstreaming tends not to transform programme approaches and produce meaningful outcomes which contribute towards equality. In contrast, they argue that a results-focused approach would move away from a blanket view of needing to integrate GESI into 'everything, everywhere' to helping to prioritise actions which would lead to more meaningful change (Gupta et al., 2023).

> *"[We need u]nswerving attention to the identification and prioritization of concrete and measurable results—without the clutter of processes and systems that obscure what changes or fails to change—is needed. It is time to let go of gender mainstreaming and experiment with new ways of doing business." (Gupta et al., 2023)*

Elsewhere in the literature, rather than a call to abandon GESI mainstreaming, there is an emphasis on ensuring mainstreaming efforts are focused on contributing to positive change for women and marginalised groups (see for example: Gates Foundation, n.d.; UN Women, 2022).

This focus on results includes approaches which enable marginalised groups to be reached and to benefit from programmes alongside others, as well as seeking to identify opportunities to maximise the potential for empowerment and transformative change within the scope of programmes. A broad range of sources also evidences the need to maintain a focus on results through programme M&E, including an attention to tracking backlash and unintended consequences so that risks can be effectively managed.

The following subsections present the approaches which most commonly feature in the literature as having been used to strengthen a focus on GESI outcomes and on enabling ongoing learning and adaptation to strengthen ambition over time.

Common Approach 8: Using intersectional GESI analysis within programmes

Considerable emphasis is given within the literature to the need to conduct GESI analysis as a critical part of GESI mainstreaming. In particular, emphasis was placed on the value of in-depth intersectional analysis (Bond, 2019; Gupta et al., 2023; UN Women, 2022; WHO, 2021; UNOPS, 2022; GAC, n.d.; GPC, 2017). A DFID 'How To' Note on promoting gender equality described the need for Senior Responsible Owners (SROs), programme managers and advisers to ensure gender analysis is conducted at the outset of programme design and to require implementing partners to conduct further analysis when designing the details of programme delivery (DFID, 2019a).

"The results were strongest where the programme prioritised GESI mainstreaming before implementation (commissioning GESI analyses and appointing expert personnel to drive the mainstreaming process forward at design stage). Where this activity happened later, key opportunities were missed to build GESI into programming." (DSU, 2019)

"This seemingly obvious first step is so often missed. We must systematically and routinely invest the time and resources in gender analysis to better understand the gender norms and power relations embedded in every community that inevitably impact every project. This analysis must be meaningfully intersectional, recognising the ways in which gender inequalities may be exacerbated by other axes of identity and marginalisation." (Bond, 2019)

The literature described GESI analyses as either being standalone or integrated into wider programme assessments (see for example ICF, n.d.; GPC, 2017). Following on from this, sources also referred to the use of analyses either to inform GESI-specific theories of change or action plans for programmes or to be integrated into overall programme design and planning processes (FCDO, 2021). While standalone GESI analyses and plans were noted as allowing dedicated space for GESI, there was some caution in the literature that this approach risked establishing parallel processes which ran alongside the main programme but essentially remained detached from it (FCDO, 2021).

"The action plans have…contributed to creating parallel work planning, implementation and monitoring systems even in programmes with strong [gender and inclusion] designs... In these programmes it has been challenging to align and integrate G&I action plans, general workplans and logframes." (FCDO, 2021)

An overwhelming perspective within the literature is that GESI analysis is only valuable to the extent that it is actually used to inform the design and target programme interventions (see for example: DSU, 2019; Gupta et al., 2023; WHO, 2021). The focus in much of the literature is on using GESI analysis to ensure more equitable access to programme benefits (GADN, 2015; DSU, 2019). An evaluation of the Prosperity Fund found that programmes that had carried out context- and sector-specific gender and inclusion analysis early on in programme planning had ended up having stronger designs (FCDO, 2021).

"Carrying out high-quality assessments of the G&I issues at an early stage is key to understanding the nature of problems to be addressed so that effective solutions can be designed. Programmes that did this have typically produced stronger designs from a G&I perspective." (FCDO, 2021)

The literature also revealed that despite being conducted, GESI analysis does not always get used and may not be reflected in subsequent design and implementation (Bond, 2019; Gupta et al., 2023). For example, the Prosperity Fund evaluation found that the scale of results from programming was likely to be lower than originally envisaged in large part because there had been inadequate consideration of gender and inclusion in some programme designs (FCDO, 2021). The evaluation also found that in some instances, gender and inclusion analysis had come too late, representing a missed opportunity to inform initial concepts and business cases. Some sources explained that the way GESI analyses had been conducted led to them not being used (FCDO, 2021; Gupta et al., 2023). This included criticism that analyses had not been conducted properly or had been too generic, high level and vague. An evaluation of WHO's work highlighted the challenge of technical analysis often being too theoretical and complex, making it difficult to translate into implementation (WHO, 2021). Likewise, several other sources reiterated the importance of GESI analysis not being an

academic exercise but a practical one which is focused on being diagnostic and identifying concrete actions for programme design and planning (Gupta et al., 2023; World Bank, 2021).

"[T]hough evidence has been produced in relation to gender gaps, it does not always translate into practice because operations staff find the evidence inaccessible, overly technical, and of limited operational relevance." (World Bank, 2021)

One source highlighted the potential for GESI analyses to help strengthen buy-in and political will for GESI-related efforts (FCDO, 2021)**.** An evaluation of the Prosperity Fund recommended that gender and inclusion analysis be used as an opportunity, as early on in programme design as possible, to engage with government partners in order to connect gender and inclusion interventions to their priorities (FCDO, 2021). The value of following up with joint action planning with government on the back of gender and inclusion analyses in order to ensure sufficient political will is also highlighted. The evaluation cited an example from the Global Future Cities Programme, in which gender and inclusion action plans were designed by delivery partners without consultation from city counterparts, which ultimately led to unrealistic plans which needed to be adjusted further down the line (FCDO, 2021).

"The quality of G&I assessments is key to understanding the nature of problems to be addressed, and thus for effective solutions to be designed. G&I assessments need to take into account not only relevant evidence, but also include consultation with end beneficiaries, government partners and wider stakeholders to identify the right entry points and ensure G&I action plans can be implemented in practice." (FCDO, 2021)

Common Approach 9: Strengthening participation and the reach of programmes

A number of sources emphasised the importance of GESI analysis in helping to understand the needs of marginalised groups and the challenges, barriers and opportunities they may face in accessing and benefiting from programme interventions and resources (see for example: FCDO, 2021; ICF, n.d.). This included understanding the broader social and political context while designing programmes so that marginalised groups could participate in a realistic and meaningful way (UNHCR, 2022). An evaluation of the Prosperity Fund provided examples to illustrate pitfalls when GESI analysis had not been adequately used to inform design (FCDO, 2021).

"The ASEAN Economic Reform Programme has encountered some resistance to gender-equitable participation where this was not perceived to bring together the right people – in terms of seniority, for example – needed to solve a particular problem or take decisions. While ensuring equitable participation is important, unless specific barriers or constraints to inclusion are identified and addressed the approach will not necessarily tackle G&I-related problems." (FCDO, 2021)

Some sources also highlight the value of GESI analyses in enabling teams to look ahead to anticipate how different groups may interact with programme interventions and to assess and differentiate implications of the programme for marginalised groups (EIGE, 2016; Gupta et al., 2023). Through a learning brief on GESI mainstreaming in private sector development programmes in DRC, the ÉLAN programme shared that they had undertaken a series of rapid GESI analyses during the design phase which had enabled them to strategically identify where their GESI mainstreaming efforts may have greatest value (DSU, 2019). Similarly, gender and inclusion impact assessment studies had been used in the Prosperity Fund to help programmes understand potential distributional impact of proposed interventions on different social groups (FCDO, 2021).

"Gender-sensitive analysis... has a double focus. On the one hand, it should aim at understanding the present situation for the groups concerned by the public intervention and how this situation would evolve without public intervention. On the other hand, the analysis should include, to the extent possible in measurable terms, a prospective dimension: how is the planned intervention expected to change the existing situation." (EIGE, n.d.)

Although the potential for GESI analyses to draw on existing data and evidence sources was repeatedly referenced in the literature, so too was the importance of using analysis as an opportunity

to engage directly with programme stakeholders, including members of marginalised groups and organisations which represent them (see for example: GADN, 2015; DFID, 2019; EIGE, n.d.; ICF, n.d.; World Bank, 2021; UN Women, 2022). In particular, this was cited as a way to recognise and value the expertise of girls' and women's rights organisations (Bond, 2019). Resources shared by EIGE also underlined the value of stakeholder engagement to validate initial findings from secondary analysis and initial programme designs (EIGE, 2016). Guidelines developed by ODI on implementing the Leave No One Behind agenda acknowledged that there can often be considerable data gaps in relation to marginalised groups which can hinder GESI analysis which is based on secondary review. Despite this, the guidelines go on to caution that a lack of data should not inhibit action in terms of analysis and planning and that it was important to both identify existing sources as well as generate additional evidence to inform programming (ODI, 2021).

Sources also underlined the value of programmes engaging with marginalised groups so they can share their experiences and perspectives (see for example, FCDO, 2021). An evaluation of the Prosperity Fund identified good examples of meaningful beneficiary engagement, with programmes carrying out consultations as part of feasibility studies (FCDO, 2021). These consultations had enabled them to understand the needs and issues facing women and other excluded groups and to use this to inform their design of interventions. It was also noted that some programmes had used this experience to influence the way other agencies approached their planning and design processes, including how they engaged with women and excluded groups. In contrast, the Prosperity Fund evaluation also found that some global programmes implemented by multilateral organisations had not engaged with beneficiaries to the same extent and as a result those projects did not address barriers or constraints faced by women and excluded groups (FCDO, 2021).

Common Approach 10: Incorporating GESI-focused interventions within programmes

The literature highlighted efforts to expand the scope of mainstream development programmes to maximise opportunities to contribute to empowerment and wider transformative change (see for example: Bond, 2019; UK PACT, 2021; UN Women, 2022). This represents a greater level of ambition than limiting mainstreaming efforts to ensuring women, girls and marginalised groups have equal access to development interventions. In this way, rather than simply seeking to understand and overcome the barriers which hinder women, girls and marginalised groups' participation, mainstream programmes can also aim to address the root causes of these barriers (ICF, n.d.).

Sources described this more ambitious approach being reflected in GESI-focused interventions and workstreams and additional components of work within mainstream programmes (see for example: GADN, 2015; WHO, 2021). Such efforts were based on the idea that GESI-targeted work does not need to be the preserve of standalone GESI-focused programmes and that it can also be integrated into mainstream programmes. Crucially, the literature underlined the importance of ensuring such expansions of scope remained firmly in line with overall programme objectives and indeed were designed to reinforce them rather than being seen to divert attention away from them (see for example: CEDIL, 2023).

Some sources emphasised the value of GESI-focused objectives within programmes in terms of their potential to strengthen individual empowerment as well as challenge the social norms and power structures that underpin marginalisation and inequality (ICF, n.d.). These included programmes seeking to identify opportunities to strengthen people's autonomy and ability to exercise choice (see for example: ICF, n.d.). Specific emphasis was also placed on programmes breaking away from and challenging gender-stereotypical norms which narrowly view women as mothers and caretakers and men as providers (see for example: Gupta et al., 2023).

> *"GESI analysis and objectives used to help identify and seek to address the prevailing power relations and tackle discriminatory practices that hold back individuals and groups. It involves challenging social norms and breaking stereotypes for women, men and marginalised people."*
> *(ICF, n.d.)*

A systematic review of over 500 studies from the WASH sector underlined the potential for mainstream interventions to not only meet the basic needs of different groups, but to also challenge unequal power relations in society (CEDIL, 2023). The authors of the review provided the example of sanitation and hygiene facilities in schools having a disproportionate benefit for girls and other marginalised groups, not only in meeting needs in terms of access to WASH facilities, but also in terms of enabling them to participate in school and strengthen their sense of dignity and self-esteem. Similarly, they described WASH interventions which disproportionately impacted on the amount of time marginalised groups of women had as having potential to increase their engagement in economic activities (CEDIL, 2023). Crucially, the review highlighted that the extent to which

these more empowering and transformative outcomes were realised was dependent on wider norms and relations, which WASH programmes had the potential to engage with. The review also drew implications for future practice, in particular highlighting the value of GESI-focused components in strengthening overall programme outcomes (CEDIL, 2023).

"[T]here is a need for wider use of GESI components in WASH intervention design. This is in line with findings from the broader development sector showing that incorporating gender equality and women's empowerment components in sector intervention design is associated with improvements in those development and health outcomes." (CEDIL, 2023)

Several sources also underlined the value of GESI-focused efforts within mainstream programmes to strengthen the collective voice of women and marginalised groups. This included an emphasis on programmes seeking to create opportunities to raise the visibility of women and marginalised groups, including through right-based civil society organisations, to strengthen their voices and influence in decision-making processes (GADN, 2015; Gupta et al., 2023; ICF, n.d.). Linked to this, a DFID 'How To' Note on gender equality also described the value of mainstream programmes providing support for women's rights organisations in terms of strengthening their leadership and collective action (DFID, 2019).

Some sources described the need for targeted GESI interventions to be based on research and an in-depth analysis of the root causes of disempowerment and marginalisation (DFID, 2019). This included understanding the cultural norms, attitudes, behaviours and overlapping forms of discrimination which maintain inequality and privilege (DFID, 2019). At a practical level, it was highlighted that research on the root causes of inequality and exclusion could also help to identify tangible entry points in workstreams for targeted efforts by programmes which relate specifically to the local context (GADN, 2015; DSU, 2019).

"Successfully mainstreaming gender equality and social inclusion in development programming requires an understanding of context. Understanding the context, and in particular the structural and cultural barriers that may limit the transformative potential of GESI mainstreaming work, is crucial, because this knowledge allows programme managers and technical teams to decide not only where GESI mainstreaming is needed (entry points) but where it will be viable, effective, and less risky." (DSU, 2019)

A number of sources stressed the value of an adaptive approach in which GESI ambitions could grow throughout the life a programme based on ongoing learning (see for example: FCDO, 2021; ILO, 2021; SDU, 2019). This was something which was explicitly recognised in the Prosperity Fund's theory of change, with an assumption that programmes could be re-scoped to increase the focus on gender and inclusion over time, during implementation (FCDO, 2021). This point did not contradict emphasis elsewhere in the literature that early attention to GESI within a programme was critical to ensure equal participation and access to programme resources. Rather, the emphasis on an adaptive approach underlined the importance of building on initial efforts and being alert to opportunities to support wider change as they arise, developing an understanding of root causes and entry points over time (DSU, 2019). In line with this, a learning brief on GESI mainstreaming in PSD programmes in DRC provided examples of programmes being able to respond when changes to national legal frameworks provided new entry points for GESI-focused efforts. The learning brief also pointed to the value of being able to pilot GESI-focused interventions and to scale them up over time, with programme budgets being able to support this (DSU, 2019).

"In keeping with the design philosophy of the PSD programme as a whole, the ÉLAN project employed an adaptive approach, involving (i) identification, through research, of viable and useful GESI entry points in workstreams, (ii) piloting of GESI-focused mainstreaming at these points, and (iii) scaling up of 'what worked'. The net result was that the project was able to hit targets that went beyond simply ensuring equal access for women, moving into the territory of WEE programming, with a potential for transformational change. This is a considerable achievement in a project focused on general market systems." (DSU, 2019)

Common Approach 11: Addressing additional risks associated with work on GESI

The literature highlighted the importance of programme leads seeking to understand and address potentially heightened risks associated with GESI mainstreaming (see for example: Bond, 2019; DSU, 2019; DFID, 2019a). This learning was based on an acknowledgment that whilst risks exist in all projects and

programmes, efforts to engage with particularly marginalised and vulnerable groups may increase risks, including of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH). It was highlighted that increased risks of SEAH may result from marginalised groups being less likely to know how to report concerns and often less like to be believed when they do (see for example: EBRD, 2020). Groups who are usually excluded from the benefits of mainstream development programmes may also be in greater need of accessing programme resources and therefore less likely to risk making a complaint. This could apply to community level beneficiaries as well as those working in downstream grassroots organisations (see for example: EBRD, 2020).

Several sources also underlined an increase in risk which can result from GESI mainstreaming efforts seeking to challenge the status quo. Programme interventions which aim to support the empowerment of marginalised groups, or promote more transformative change, for example through challenging norms or championing policy or legal change, can face some degree of resistance. As a result, efforts which threaten to disrupt current power dynamics can – and often do – face backlash (see for example: Bond, 2019; EBRD, 2020; Gupta et al., 2023; GAC, n.d.). For example, UNICEF in its Gender Mainstreaming Strategy for South Asia highlights the risk of violent backlash against those who attempt to challenge gender norms. It is also increasingly understood that incorporating women's economic empowerment in programmes can trigger risks of increased domestic violence when male partners feel their status as breadwinner is being threatened (see for example: Gupta et al., 2023).

It was underlined in parts of the literature that increased risks are something which it is important for programme teams to anticipate and mitigate (see for example: Bond, 2019; DSU, 2019; EBRD, 2020). In particular, it was emphasised that risks associated with addressing GESI could have implications for the skills and competencies which teams needed to develop, and the ways unintended consequences are tracked through programme monitoring (see Common Approach 12 for further detail). A learning brief on PSD programmes in DRC for example highlighted the need for GESI mainstreaming to consider safeguarding measures and duty of care and to factor these in to programme risk mitigation strategies (DSU, 2019). This linked back to programme leads needing to map out resource implications of GESI mainstreaming and to factor this in to budgeting processes (see Common Approach 2 for further detail). An article by Bond highlighted lessons for programmes in taking an intentional approach to identifying and mitigating gendered risks associated with mainstreaming efforts, actively taking steps to address increased risks of violence, for example (Bond, 2019).

"Any project carries the risk of unintended consequences, and transformative work, in particular, has a particular risk of backlash. In all projects, careful, intentional monitoring conducted by trained female and male staff is needed to identify and respond to shifts in community dynamics and changes in protection risks." (Bond, 2019)

Common Approach 12: Tracking progress on GESI by programmes

Addressing GESI through programme M&E was consistently recognised in the literature as a vital aspect of mainstreaming. This included being able to draw clear and explicit links between GESI programming efforts and intended results (see for example: DRC, 2019; Gupta et al., 2023). Reflecting GESI in M&E was also presented as a prerequisite for accountability for mainstreaming commitments (see for example: AfDB, 2020).

"Project logframes…indicators with gender dimensions…are an important feature of the overall mainstreaming landscape because they establish concrete targets to which the projects can be held accountable and force reflection on sector selection and intervention design." (DSU, 2019)

The literature underlined that a critical aspect of GESI mainstreaming through programme M&E was the use of disaggregated indicators to identify who was accessing and benefiting from programmes. Emphasis was placed on the importance of making sure diverse perspectives and experiences were made visible and counted (see for example: GADN, 2015). A consistent message coming through the literature was that the true value of disaggregated data lay in the comparative analysis it enabled and in its eventual use. This was described in terms of enabling programme teams to conduct comparative analysis to understand differential reach and effects between various groups during implementation (EIGE, 2016).

Several sources emphasised the value of disaggregated indicators at different levels but noted that there was often a lack of disaggregation at outcome level. The Prosperity Fund evaluation, for example, found a concentration of effort in terms of disaggregating output level indicators, with far less disaggregation at intermediate outcome and outcome levels. As a result, the evaluation noted that much of the disaggregated

data that had been generated by programmes related to tracking participation in activities rather than capturing differential changes experienced by women and other excluded groups (FCDO, 2021). This resonated with other sources, including GESI guidance for international climate finance programmes, which emphasised the need for disaggregated indicators to go beyond counting numbers to capturing the quality of results (ICF, n.d.). Likewise, a review of gender mainstreaming in the humanitarian sector identified a tendency for indicators to focus on processes and outputs (Gupta et al., 2023). The authors provided the example of the UN System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP 2.0) in 2018 which focused on monitoring gender mainstreaming by using a set of process indicators. The authors explained that the focus on process rather than results was characteristic of the programme's response to gender mainstreaming overall. They went on to outline that this limited focus meant that sex and age disaggregated data was available on the number of beneficiaries of services and activities implemented but not on any difference these interventions had made to their lives. This had made it difficult to compare results (Gupta et al., 2023). This gap in disaggregated indicators which capture programmatic results was also noted in an evaluation of WHO's work on gender, equity and rights (WHO, 2021).

"Given the lack of technical sector expertise, monitoring and evaluation of gender mainstreaming mostly focuses on the implementation of the approach, rather than on the results achieved…insufficient reporting of results from the field makes it difficult to learn from challenges or successes." (Gupta et al., 2023)

Sources also emphasised the importance of considering which groups were given visibility through disaggregation. Despite an emphasis in guidance documents on the value of disaggregating based on numerous contextually relevant aspects of people's identity (ICF, n.d.), several sources pointed to the challenge of taking an intersectional approach to disaggregation (see for example: DSU, 2019; FCDO, 2021). It was noted that practical challenges related to resources, timeframes and samples sizes often meant that disaggregation was limited to a focus on sex and in some cases, one other characteristic (see for example: DSU, 2019). It was also noted in the Prosperity Fund evaluation that programmes often experienced challenges when they relied on existing government sources of data to track indicators if these sources were not disaggregated (FCDO, 2021). Giving an example from Brazil, the evaluation highlighted the potential for programmes to work with government partners to strengthen their commitment and capacity for disaggregation where there was scope to do so (FCDO, 2021).

"A more holistic social inclusion approach would require the scope of indicators to cover a broader spectrum of disempowerment and vulnerability, including, for example, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and men and boys. The challenges of disaggregating monitoring data along these multiple channels would, however, be significant". (DSU, 2019)

Similarly, a systematic review in the WASH sector, found that among the studies that provided disaggregated information (just over half of the sample), the majority focused only on sex disaggregation and only a small percentage disaggregated by other characteristics such as caste or class, age, ethnicity, religion, or disability (CEDIL, 2023).

"[D]isaggregated outcome-related information across gender, as well as other social categories, was rarely provided. Where disaggregated outcome-related information was provided, most of the evidence was related to women. Very little data on GESI outcomes were reported for other social categories, including disability status or ethnicity." (CEDIL, 2023)

One source referred to the implications of only disaggregating indicators by sex in terms of incentivising a programme focus on gender rather than social inclusion more broadly. A learning brief on PSD programmes in DRC described a programme which only focused on sex disaggregation within its logframe, which was then reflected in a narrow focus on gender within programme interventions. For this reason, the programme went on to introduce a far more ambitious strategy for measuring change which moved away from 'off-the-rack' disaggregation toward more bespoke metrics (DSU, 2019).

"Measuring and attributing a programme's impact on GESI presents challenges for programmes that are not principally focused on this area. The traditional approach is to use sex-disaggregated monitoring data to report on impact, outcome, and output indicators wherever possible…There is certainly value in this method. If done well it offers coherence, comparability, and consistency. However, it is inherently limited and lacking in nuance." (DSU, 2019)

Within the literature there was also an emphasis on the value of looking beyond disaggregation of programme indicators to also develop GESI-specific outcomes and indicators. These focused indicators were considered especially beneficial in terms of tracking and encouraging a focus on empowerment and transformative change (see for example: CEDIL, 2023; ILO, 2021; World Bank, 2021). However, despite their perceived value, the literature noted that GESI-focused outcomes and indicators were often lacking within mainstream programmes. Indeed, the ILO's evaluation of gender mainstreaming described gender-related impact in country programmes and projects as having been limited by a lack of systematic impact monitoring to inform interventions (ILO, 2021). A systematic review in the WASH sector also found that studies often tended to narrowly measure access to facilities rather than wider transformative outcomes, for example related to power relations, despite their potential to do so (CEDIL, 2023). There was a sense from the authors that in such cases, there was a risk that the true value of programmes was being rendered invisible by a lack of outcome indicators which would capture wider effects. Nevertheless, the review did find that just over 40 percent of the evidence base did include transformative outcome themes. These largely related to time use, participation, education, and economic opportunities, although there was less attention to outcomes related to attitudes and norms, self-confidence and self-efficacy, psychosocial and mental health, and violence reduction (CEDIL, 2023). Crucially, the authors of the systematic review underlined that insufficient focus on capturing more transformative GESI outcomes within mainstream WASH programmes resulted in there being limited evidence of what interventions were most effective (CEDIL, 2023).

"[I]t is important to understand what kinds of interventions are most often associated with better or worse GESI outcomes. A lack of attention to monitoring and evaluating changes in GESI outcomes, including a lack of attention to developing validated methodological approaches for evaluating GESI outcomes has translated into gaps in understanding which intervention components contribute to the greatest positive impacts on GESI outcomes, as well as which interventions may lead to or contribute to negative impacts that reinforce inequalities." (CEDIL, 2023)

The literature provided some insight into why GESI-focused outcomes may have been used less frequently within mainstream programmes, including that they were seen as difficult to measure (see for example: GADN, 2015). A mid-term review for the World Bank Group, for example, explained that outcomes related to voice and agency and gender-based violence were considered hard-to-measure and required additional human and financial resources which were not always available to programme teams (World Bank, 2021). Similarly, a systematic review of mainstreaming efforts in the WASH sector explained that limited efforts to evaluate GESI outcomes could be due to challenges associated with measuring complex social change, which was often slow, non-linear and difficult to interpret (CEDIL, 2023).

"As with the impact of development policy and practice on any complex issue of long-term institutional change, the impact of gender mainstreaming on women's lives is not a direct or linear process of change and attribution. Impact depends on the inter-relationship between programmes to promote change and many complex contextual factors influencing women's and men's opportunities, choices, and expectations." (GADN, 2015)

The authors of the WASH sector review also drew specific attention to the challenge of GESI outcomes often relying on cross-sectoral efforts and being dependent on contextual factors, which could make it challenging to map out clear causal pathways within mainstream programmes (CEDIL, 2023). This linked with the findings of the World Bank Group mid-term review which also identified the importance of motivating connections between projects within a portfolio in order to achieve combined effects on GESI, especially within a particular sector or policy area (World Bank, 2021).

"Task team leaders, investment officers, and project leads stressed that closing country gender gaps is beyond the scope, budget, and timeline of a single project. Fully addressing gender gaps takes sustained effort, spans multiple projects. (World Bank, 2021)

The literature also picked up some concerns that committing to specific GESI outcomes could be perceived as a risky approach for mainstream programmes. It was explained that even where programmes may have been contributing to wider empowerment and transformative change, they could be hesitant to be held to account for progress in these areas (see or example GADN, 2015; DRC, 2019). Sources suggested that because contributions to more complex social change processes were often heavily

dependent on contextual factors, teams may be reluctant to frame programme success around types of change where they felt less confident (see for example: GADN, 2015). This issue was also picked up in a learning brief on mainstreaming in PSD programmes, which highlighted a potential nervousness among programme leadership to be held to account for progress on GESI (DSU, 2019).

> *"With the exception of ÉLAN's Outcome Indicator 2, the indicators are generic economic indicators disaggregated by gender rather than more targeted indicators that specifically measure the project's impact on gender equality. This may signal a reluctance on the part of logframe developers to hold either project accountable for independent gender impacts, outcomes, or outputs." (DSU, 2019)*

The value of GESI-focused outcomes in holding programmes to account for GESI mainstreaming was potentially a reason why teams may be cautious about including them. The importance of using GESI outcome indicators to support accountability for GESI mainstreaming was picked up in an evaluation of the Prosperity Fund. The evaluation team noted that as logframes determined what was tracked and reported and therefore drove programme prioritise and performance, they played a crucial role in GESI mainstreaming. However, the evaluators noted that in some programmes, delivery partners had been concerned about committing to specific gender and inclusion indicators and targets and had in some cases housed them in separate GESI-specific monitoring plans. This meant they were not held to account for progress against them in the same way they would have been, had they been included in the main programme logframe (FCDO, 2021).

The need to locate GESI outcomes within broader pathways of change was highlighted in the literature as an important aspect of pitching indicators at a realistic level (see for example: GADN, 2015). The Prosperity Fund evaluation highlighted the value of having a GESI-specific theory of change to set out how programme contributions to GESI fit within wider processes of change (FCDO, 2021).

> *"[Gender and inclusion] results are being achieved in the ways anticipated in the Fund Theory of Change…This suggests that benefits for women and excluded groups will ultimately be achieved as a result of economic development to which [Prosperity Fund] programmes have contributed. In many cases these benefits will materialise only after programmes have completed their work – in line with the expectation set out in the [theory of change] that impacts will usually emerge over the medium to long term." (FCDO, 2021).*

A DFID 'How To' Note on gender equality presented similar caution, stressing that shifts in social norms could takes years, generations even. Acknowledging that transformative change could extend over lengthy timeframes, the Note emphasises the need to use proxy indicators which were realistic given programme timeframes (DFID, 2019).

> *"All too easily, gender mainstreaming appears to have failed…Defining achievable and meaningful [gender-related] results is about understanding not only what is desirable, but also what is possible and achievable in a specific context." (GADN, 2015)*

A number of sources emphasised the importance of taking a mixed-method approach to measuring GESI outcomes (AfDB, 2020; DFID, 2019; DSU, 2019; FCDO, 2021; WHO, 2021; UN Women, 2022). For example, a DFID 'How To' Note on gender equality explained that methods not only needed to be appropriate given the type of data being collected, but also appropriate given the people it was being collected from (DFID, 2019). This highlighted the need to adapt data collection methods to the needs of specific marginalised groups (FCDO, 2021). In addition, resources from EIGE stressed the importance of having GESI experts on evaluation teams to ensure GESI outcomes were appropriately measured (EIGE, 2016; EIGE, n.d.). A systematic review from the WASH sector also highlighted the importance of having sector-specific tools for measuring GESI outcomes and the value of cross-sector learning to help with this (CEDIL, 2023).

> *"…by complementing numerical data with qualitative accounts, you can produce a more nuanced picture of programme-driven improvements for women, which helps to provide more meaningful lessons for future GESI activity." (DSU, 2019)*

Throughout the literature on GESI mainstreaming in relation to M&E, consistent emphasis was placed on the importance of data actually being analysed and used (AfDB, 2020; DSU, 2019; ICF, n.d.; UNHCR,

2022; EU, 2020a; ADB, 2022; DFAT, 2016; GAC, n.d.; AFD, 2022). Within sources, this is often linked directly back to programmes being held to account for progress in relation to GESI mainstreaming. This included an emphasis on making sure disaggregated and GESI-specific data was analysed, shared, reported, and discussed, with implications and lessons drawn. Some sources also underlined the importance of teams having the skills they needed to understand how to interpret disaggregated data and conduct GESI analysis and to be able to use it in their work (UNHCR, 2022).

"GESI objectives should be integrated into all progress reporting and the programme's Monitoring & Evaluation plan from the start. This includes annual reviews (ideally both considered throughout and with a bespoke section). Reporting should build on the challenges, barriers and opportunities identified through GESI analysis, as well as the programme's GESI objectives, to consider whether the programme's benefits are equally distributed; any challenges encountered in taking an empowering/transformative approach; and how/whether these have been or can be addressed." (ICF, n.d.)

The literature also placed a clear emphasis on using GESI-related data and analysis to inform programme adaptations, allowing GESI mainstreaming approaches to be fine-tuned during programme delivery (see for example: DSU, 2019; EIGE, 2016; Gates Foundation, n.d.). This included ongoing analysis to identify entry points to scale up ambition (see for example: AfDB, 2020). Linked to this, an evaluation of WHO's work on gender, equity and human rights highlighted the challenge of their being a disconnect between efforts to track progress and planning and accountability processes (WHO, 2021). An evaluation of the Prosperity Fund highlighted that whilst the tracking of indicators could help inform programme adaptations, as adaptations were made, indicators then needed to be aligned with them. This was especially so if GESI-focused components or workstreams were added or expanded part way through a programme (FCDO, 2021).

"In keeping with the overall adaptive programming philosophy of the PSD programme... [the] ÉLAN [programme] incorporated a 'what works' approach in its GESI mainstreaming activities. This comprised a series of pilots designed to test different approaches and understand their relative strengths and weaknesses, the idea being to subsequently integrate lessons learnt more widely into programme activities." (DSU, 2019).

Annex 1: Research Questions and Sub-questions

Table 5 Overarching research questions and sub-questions

Overarching research questions	Sub-questions
RQ1: What evidence is there of what works well in GESI mainstreaming (and what doesn't), from the international experience and literature?	What is the current thinking among development agencies on what makes GESI mainstreaming meaningful and effective?
	How does 'success' in relation to GESI mainstreaming tend to be defined in international literature?
	What evidence have development agencies generated on the effectiveness of GESI mainstreaming approaches?
	What does global evidence suggest are the main enablers and constraints to GESI mainstreaming?
	What does global literature suggest is good practice in addressing GESI in VfM analyses?
RQ2: How do BEK-funded programmes mainstream GESI into their work?	Do the approaches to GESI mainstreaming used in BEK align with those that the international evidence suggests are effective? Where are the gaps, what isn't being covered?
	Are the same GESI mainstreaming approaches used consistently across the BEK portfolio, or are a diverse range of approaches being used?
	Are GESI mainstreaming approaches used by BEK programmes sensitive to the situation of people in Nepal so they consider multiple and overlapping forms of discrimination and exclusion?
	Are there GESI mainstreaming approaches which have been used in BEK programmes which appear to have worked well / less well?
	To what extent do BEK programmes consider their GESI mainstreaming approaches to represent good value for money
	To what extent, and how, do BEK programmes' VfM strategies consider the value of benefits reaching various marginalised groups?
RQ3: How does GESI mainstreaming in documents such as business cases and annual reviews translate into real delivery and observable outcomes?	Are there examples of GESI mainstreaming approaches in BEK-funded programmes which have translated into outcomes for women and girls and excluded groups?
	What factors appear to enable or constrain effective GESI mainstreaming in BEK programmes?
	To what extent are GESI mainstreaming approaches and evidence of their effectiveness captured in programme documents?
	How well do the BEK GESI mainstreaming approaches relate to and co-ordinate with other objectives of the interventions? Are they complementary or in competition?
	Are trade-offs being made in how GESI mainstreaming is balanced with other intervention priorities, how are these managed?
	To what extent have VfM analyses informed decision making by programmes about which GESI mainstreaming approaches to use?
	What type and level of resources have GESI mainstreaming approaches required?
	Which approaches appear to be most effective and contribute the greatest value to programmes?
	Are GESI mainstreaming approaches being used by BEK programmes likely to be resourced and maintained over time?
	Are GESI outcomes being achieved by BEK programmes likely to be sustained?
	Do the GESI mainstreaming approaches used by BEK-programmes address risks to the safety, security, and dignity of participants from excluded groups?

Annex 2: Search Terms Used to Identify Global Literature

Based on RQ1, a list of search terms was developed in order to identify online documents. These search terms are listed in Table 6 below. For the searches of electronic databases, search strings were used (AND, OR, *) and searches were limited to the first two pages of results.

Table 6 Search terms used to identify global literature

GESI		Mainstreaming	Evaluation		
GESI	Disab*	Mainstreaming	Evaluation	Review	Impact
Gender	Women	Mainstream*	Eval*	Assess*	VFM
Social inclusion	Diversity	Integrat*	Effectiv*	Evidence	Value for money
Social exclusion	"Leave no one behind"	Framework	Disag*		

Annex 3: Documents Included in the Global Literature Synthesis

Table 7 Sample of documents for the Stage 1 Global Literature Synthesis

#	Organisation	Document	Date
1	ADB	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Framework	2022
2	AFD	Evaluation of gender mainstreaming in AFD projects	2022
3	AfDB	Evaluation Synthesis of Gender Mainstreaming at the AfDB: Summary Report	2020
4	AfDB	Gender Mainstreaming in Climate Change Projects: The Case of FORM Ghana Ltd. in Ghana	2019
5	CEDIL	Gender and Social Outcomes of WASH Interventions: Synthesis of Research Evidence	2023
6	Council of Europe	Evaluation of Gender Mainstreaming in Cooperation	2015
7	DFAT	Ending Violence against Women and Girls: Evaluating a Decade of Australia's Development Assistance	2019
8	DFAT	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy	2016
9	DFAT	Strategy for Strengthening Disability-Inclusive Development in Australia's Aid Program	2015
10	DFID	'How To' Guidance Note on Gender Equality	2019a
11	DFID	VfM Guidance: The 4th E Equity	2019b
12	DSU	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Mainstreaming in DFID's Private Sector Development Programme in the DRC	2019
13	EBRD	Addressing Gender-Based Violence and Harassment: Emerging Good Practice for the Private Sector	2020
14	EIGE	Institutional Transformation Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit	2016
15	EIGE	What is Gender Mainstreaming?	n.d.
16	EU	Evaluation of the EU's External Action Support to Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment	2020
17	EU	Evaluation of EU Support to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Partner Countries Final Report	2015
18	EU	Gender Action Plan (GAP) III	2020
19	FCDO	Prosperity Fund Year 3 Gender and Inclusion Evaluation	2021
20	GAC	Feminist International Assistance Toolkit for Projects	n.d.
21	GADN	Untangling Gender Mainstreaming: A Theory of Change Based on Experience and Reflection	2015
22	Gates Foundation	The Gender Equality Toolbox	n.d.
23	GPC	Minimum Standards for Mainstreaming Gender Equality	2017
24	Gupta et al.	Beyond Gender Mainstreaming: Transforming Humanitarian Action, Organizations and Culture	2023
25	ICF	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Guidance	n.d.
26	IDB	Evaluation of the Bank's Support for Gender and Diversity	2018
27	ILO	High-level Independent Evaluation of ILO's Gender Equality and Mainstreaming Efforts, 2016-21	2021
28	ODI	'Leave No One Behind' – Five Years into Agenda 2030	2021
29	UK PACT	Guidance on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)	2021
30	UNDP	Evaluation of UNDP Contribution to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment	2015
31	UNHCR	Longitudinal Evaluation of the Implementation of UNHCR's Age, Gender and Diversity policy	2022
32	UNOPS	GESI Mainstreaming in Projects Strategy	2022
33	UNW	Handbook on Gender Mainstreaming for Gender Equality Results	2022
34	USAID	Gender Equity & Social Inclusion in Project Management Workbook (Climate)	2020
35	WHO	Evaluation of the Integration of Gender, Equity and Human Rights in the Work of the World Health Organization	2021
36	World Bank Group	World Bank Group Gender Strategy Mid-Term Review	2021

Annex 4: Quality Assessment Criteria

To assess the quality of evidence, sources were coded 'yes' or 'no' for the criteria questions in Table 8. Each source was then scored with one point given for each 'yes'. Sources that scored between 15-22 were categorised as high quality, while those with 10-15 medium, and 0-10 low.

Table 8 Assessing the quality of primary studies

Principle of Quality	Associated question
Conceptual framing	• Does the study situate itself within an existing evidence base? • Is the study based on a conceptual framework? • Did the study seek to answer research questions or test certain hypotheses?
Transparency	• Does the study draw clear links to the data it analyses? • Is it clear what the purpose of the study is? • Is it clear who commissioned/funded the study?
Appropriateness	• Is the study based on a clear research design? • Is the methodology clearly explained? • Is it clear why the design and methodology were selected?
Cultural sensitivity	• Does the study acknowledge any context-specific factors that may bias the findings? • Have the data collection instruments been adapted for use with excluded groups so they are accessible and do not cause harm?
Validity	• Does the study use valid measures to assess GESI mainstreaming or GESI outcomes? • To what extent is the study able to establish cause and effect? (internal validity) • If quantitative, does the study use representative samples? (external validity) • Does the study acknowledge how the research itself may have biased findings? (ecological validity)
Reliability	• Is it clear that efforts were made to ensure consistent use of data collection instruments across teams? • Do different measures used within the study suggest the same findings? • Do different analytical techniques used within the study suggest the same findings?
Cogency	• Is the report well written with clear signposting? • Does the report acknowledge the study's limitations? • Does the study consider alternative interpretations of the data? • Are conclusions based on the study's findings?

Annex 5: Glossary

Disability: Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities defines persons with disabilities as including 'those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others'. The full inclusion of people with impairments in society can be inhibited by attitudinal and/or societal barriers (such as prejudice or discrimination), physical and/or environmental barriers (such as stairs), and policy and/or systemic barriers, which can create a disabling effect. (UN, 2006)

Empowerment: A process where people gain greater voice, increased decision making and choices in the social, political and economic spheres, with an ability to exercise increased control over their own lives. (Gaventa and Oswald, 2019)

Gender: The socially constructed roles, attributes, opportunities, and relationships that a given society considers appropriate for men and women. These expectations differ from society to society and change over time. In many societies, it has been recognised that there are more than two genders. (IFC, 2020)

Gender Equality: The absence of any discrimination based on gender with equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for everyone without any distinction. Everyone has equal access to socially, politically and economically valued goods, resources, opportunities, benefits and services. (UK PACT, 2021)

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI): A concept that addresses unequal power relations experienced by people on the grounds of social characteristics including gender, wealth, ability, location, caste, ethnicity, language, agency or a combination of these dimensions. It focuses on the need for action to re-balance these power relations, reduce disparities and ensure equal rights, opportunities and respect for all individuals regardless of their social identity. (International Development Partners Group Nepal, 2017)

GESI Mainstreaming: The process of assessing implications of for everyone (including people of all gender identities, sexual and gender minorities, as well as any excluded groups, on the basis of any factor), of any planned action, including policies and programmes, in all areas and at all levels. GESI mainstreaming contributes to more responsive programming and better service provision because it considers the needs of all relevant groups. GESI mainstreaming is a necessary component in achieving equality and inclusion, which are essential elements of sustainable development. (UK PACT, 2021)

Intersectionality: Is a concept developed by Professor Kimberle Williams Crenshaw. It is based on the idea that multiple oppressions based on social categories co-exist and are interlinked within individuals and groups. It is the acknowledgment that everyone has their own unique experiences of discrimination and oppression, and we consider anything and everything that can marginalise people based on gender, sex, class, physical ability, literacy, economic status etc. These unique differences have complex relationships with one another and have interdependent advantages and disadvantages. Gender cannot be targeted alone without considering inclusion. (Crenshaw, 2017)

Intersex: An umbrella term that refers to people who have one or more of a range of variations in physical sex characteristics that fall outside of traditional conceptions of male or female bodies. Some intersex characteristics are identified at birth, while other people may not discover they have intersex traits until puberty or later in life. Note that intersex is not synonymous with transgender. (IFC, 2020)

Leave No One Behind: A pledge by United Nations (UN) members states, linked to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to eradicate poverty in all its forms, end discrimination and exclusion and reduce the inequalities and vulnerabilities that leave people behind and undermine the potential of individuals and of humanity.

Sex: The biological, anatomical and physical differences in a species. In humans, this traditionally refers to the male/female binary.

Social Exclusion: A process where certain disadvantaged groups are systematically excluded based on social characters such as gender, caste, ethnicity, sex, age, disability, migrant status, housing status, literacy status, economic status, which results into social, political and economic inequalities and they are denied recognition and resources. (UK PACT, 2021)

Social Inclusion: A process of improving the ability, opportunity and dignity of people disadvantaged based on their identity to take part in the social, economic and political development activities in the society. It is an inclusive approach to development. (UK PACT, 2021)

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Headquarters
16-18 New Bridge Street
London
EC4V 6AG
United Kingdom
T: +44 20 7735 6660

Europe
Adam Smith Europe B.V.
Keizersgracht 62,
1015 CS Amsterdam,
Netherlands
T: +44 20 7735 6660

Africa
West End Towers
Wayaki Way/Muthangari Drive
PO Box 26721-00100 Nairobi
Kenya
T: +254 20 444 4388

Asia Pacific
Suite 103
80 William Street
Woolloomooloo
Sydney NSW 2011
AustraliaT: +61 2 8265 0000

North America
1629 K Street NW,
Suite 300
Washington, DC
20006
United States of America
T: +1 (202) 873-7626

Adam Smith
International