Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office/
British Embassy Kathmandu

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Mainstreaming Research

Final Report

28 March 2024

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Acronyms & Abbreviations

AIIN	Accelerating Investment and Infrastructure in Nepal	**M&E**	Monitoring and evaluation
AFD	Agence française de développement	**MEAL**	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning
AfDB	African Development Bank	**MoFAGA**	Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration
ASI	Adam Smith International	**NCCSP2**	Nepal Climate Change Support Programme
BEK	British Embassy Kathmandu	**NGO**	Non-governmental organisation
CEO	Chief Executive Office	**NHSSP3**	Nepal Health Sector Support Programme III
CEDIL	Centre of Excellence for Development Impact and Learning	**NREP**	National Renewable Energy Programme
CSD	Climate Smart Development for Nepal	**NURP**	Sudridh-Nepal Urban Resilience Programme
CSO	Civil society organisation	**ODI**	Overseas Development Institute
D4D	Data for Development	**PCUs**	Project Coordination Units
DFID	Department for International Development	**PEA**	Political economy analysis
DNH	Do No Harm	**PFM**	Public financial management
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo	**PFM-MDTF2**	PFM Multi Donor Trust Fund - Phase II
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction	**PLGSP**	Provincial and Local Governance Support Programme
DSU	Decision Support Unit	**PRO**	Programme Responsible Owner
E4D	Evidence for Development	**PSD**	Private sector development
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality	**Purnima**	Post-Earthquake Reconstruction in Nepal
EPI	Economic Policy Incubator	**RAP3**	Rural Access Programme 3
ESG	Environmental, social and governance	**RQ**	Research question
EU	European Union	**RWEPP**	Resilient Water Sanitation and Hygiene and Emergency Preparedness Programme
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office	**SDA**	Social Development Advisor
G&I	Gender and inclusion	**SDG**	Sustainable Development Goal
GAC	Global Affairs Canada	**SEAH**	Sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment
GADN	Gender and Development Network	**SEP**	Skills for Employment Programme
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion	**SRO**	Senior Responsible Owner
GESI-M	GESI Mainstreaming Research Project	**SSI**	Semi structured interview
GoN	Government of Nepal	**TA**	Technical assistance
GPC	Gender Practitioners Collaborative	**TAF**	The Asia Foundation
GRB	Gender-responsive budgeting	**UK**	United Kingdom
HS	Hamro Samman Programme	**UN**	United Nations
ICF	International Climate Finance	**UNDP**	UN Development Programme
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank	**UNHCR**	UN High Commissioner on Refugees
IDPG	International Development Partners Group	**UNOPS**	UN Office for Project Services
ILO	International Labour Organisation	**USAID**	United States Agency for International Development
KPI	Key Performance Indicator	**VfM**	Value for Money
LAPA	Local Adaptation Plan of Action	**WASH**	Water, sanitation and hygiene
LNOB	Leave No One Behind	**WHO**	World Health Organization

Executive Summary

Purpose of the research

The Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Mainstreaming research project is a one-year qualitative study which was commissioned by the United Kingdom (UK) Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)/ the British Embassy Kathmandu (BEK). The research has been undertaken by Adam Smith International (ASI) with the purpose of generating learning on how to include a meaningful focus on GESI within 'mainstream' development programmes. The research was commissioned to answer the following three overarching research questions (RQs), with the overall intention for the research to practically inform future work and promote higher standards in GESI mainstreaming:

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?

This final report presents an analysis of findings from the GESI Mainstreaming Research Project.

Conceptual framework

The research team developed a conceptual framework which could allow space for different mainstreaming approaches to be explored, whilst also enabling a degree of consistency in the way that data was collected, analysed, and presented. It was evident from the global literature that an intersectional lens needed to be placed at the centre of the conceptual framework. A relatively consistent focus on three 'Essential Elements' which enable effective and meaningful GESI mainstreaming also emerged from the literature:

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.

Through the literature review, the research team also identified a set of 12 Common Approaches to GESI mainstreaming, which were mapped to the three Essential Elements.

Three-stage research methodology

The research methodology was divided into three interlinked stages:

Stage 1: Global literature synthesis. The research began with a synthesis of global literature on GESI mainstreaming. The focus here was on answering RQ1 through the review of a sample of 36 documents.

Stage 2: BEK portfolio review. Following the Stage 1 Global Literature Synthesis, the research moved on to a review of the BEK portfolio of programmes. The focus here was on seeking to answer RQ2 through interviews and a review of a selection of documents for a sample of 15 programmes in the BEK portfolio.

Stage 3: Deep-dive case studies. Following the Stage 2 BEK Portfolio Review, the research team took a closer look at a sub-set of four BEK programmes using semi-structured interviews to answer RQ3.

Findings on Leadership & Accountability

GESI strategies:

- The need for programme leads to demonstrate and elevate commitments to GESI mainstreaming through programme GESI strategies was consistently emphasised in the global literature.

- In contrast, there was considerable inconsistency across the BEK portfolio in terms of whether programmes had developed GESI strategies.

- Where GESI strategies had been used by BEK programmes, teams appeared to value these, especially where they were linked to practical action plans.

- Some BEK programme GESI strategies were weakened by coming too late to influence design or by a lack of conceptual clarity and a limited focus on intersectionality.

Budgeting for GESI:

- Sources within the global literature review stressed that GESI mainstreaming requires a dedicated investment of resources with budget allocations for GESI needing to be explicit and visible.

- It was common for programmes across the BEK portfolio to have budgeted for GESI mainstreaming, at least to some extent.

- Budgeting for GESI within BEK programmes tended not to be visible and transparent and only a minority of BEK programmes had explicitly earmarked resources for GESI and tracked how much they were spending on GESI mainstreaming efforts.

- BEK programme teams underlined the importance of donor expectations on GESI spend in terms of influencing budgeting and spending by implementing partners.

Motivating teams:

- The global literature emphasised the value of programme leads intentionally motivating their teams to address GESI through their work.

- BEK programmes had tended to concentrate on general messaging about the importance of GESI as a value, rather than programme leads taking intentional steps to motivate their teams to address GESI through their work.

- There was little evidence of accountability mechanisms being used by implementing partners within the BEK portfolio to hold programme teams to account for progress on GESI. Although GESI mainstreaming had sometimes been incorporated into job descriptions, it was often unclear whether this had fed through to performance appraisals.

- In the absence of concrete accountability or reward mechanisms it appeared that GESI mainstreaming efforts within the BEK portfolio tended to depend on an individual's interest and initiative.

Findings on Capacity & Culture

Diverse recruitment:

- Sources in the global literature not only underlined the importance of recruiting diverse teams but also the need to encourage diversity to be valued so that alternative perspectives are shared, listened to and acted upon.

- Almost two thirds of the BEK programmes were able to point to some degree of diversity within their teams, although it was often unclear how proactively this had been prioritised or whether the diversity that had been achieved by implementing partners was incidental.

- Diversity that had been achieved tended to be considered valuable by programme teams, who believed the lived experience of marginalisation led to strengthened programming and was an immediate way of bringing diverse voices and perspectives into meetings and events.

- An emphasis on diverse recruitment within programme teams had sometimes been driven by BEK with an understanding that diverse recruitment takes time and would sometimes mean that implementing partners needed to take a chance on candidates who were not always the most obvious choice.

GESI expertise:

- Within the global literature, consistent emphasis was placed on the need to invest in some form of GESI expertise so that teams have access to the technical capacity needed to implement GESI mainstreaming.

- The use of GESI experts was relatively common across the BEK portfolio, with the majority of programmes having brought at least some GESI expertise into their teams.

- BEK programmes which had embedded full time GESI experts in their programme teams often described the value this had added to programmes, especially where programmes had employed multiple GESI specialists.

- A lack of professional development support for GESI experts within BEK programmes was underpinned by an unrealistic expectation that GESI experts would be automatically equipped to work across every aspect of a programme without the need for any upskilling.

GESI-focused partnerships:

- Global literature highlighted the value of working with local partners in helping to bring contextually relevant innovation to programmes and to enable access to marginalised communities.

- Although BEK programmes had engaged with civil society organisations, including those with GESI expertise, as part of consultations, few had actually established partnerships to enhance GESI capacity within programmes.

- Where BEK programmes had actually partnered with GESI-focused organisations, these collaborations appeared to have added value, including enabling interventions to strengthen collective voice.

- Several GESI experts within BEK programme teams thought that partnering with GESI-focused organisations would have been beneficial but rarely had the authority, budget, or flexibility within BEK programmes to bring in partners themselves.

Team training:

- Within the global literature a lack of knowledge and skills among teams was identified as a considerable barrier to progress on GESI mainstreaming.

- Few BEK programmes had made concerted efforts in this area, although several implementing partners had delivered their own organisational training on GESI which was generic rather than tailored to specific programmes.

- In some cases, 'GESI training' or orientations simply communicated GESI as a value and something which team members should be aware of, rather than fostering a sense of commitment to GESI or building the skills that are needed to mainstream GESI.

- Programmes lacked clarity about whether BEK-funded programmes should use budgets to train programme teams, with several BEK colleagues explaining that implementing partners should come already equipped with GESI knowledge and mainstreaming skills.

Findings on Results & Adaptation

Intersectional GESI analysis:

- Global sources highlighted the potential for operationally focused GESI analyses to strengthen GESI mainstreaming within programmes by enabling barriers to be identified and understood.

- Most programmes within the BEK portfolio had conducted some form of GESI analysis at some stage, with varying degrees of depth and focus on intersectionality.

- BEK programmes tended to find GESI analysis most valuable when it was conducted on an ongoing basis and was built into programme processes, rather than in the form of one broad GESI analysis at the start.

- In some programmes, a lack of GESI analysis for specific interventions meant important GESI issues had been overlooked. This led to some interventions being far more simplistic than it is common to see in standalone GESI projects and programmes.

- Limited and inconsistent use of intersectional analysis by BEK programmes meant they were often unable to consider multiple and overlapping forms of discrimination and exclusion.

Participation and reach:

- Global literature emphasised the importance of programmes addressing the challenges and barriers marginalised groups face in accessing and benefiting from programme interventions and resources.

- It was common for BEK programmes to have made some effort to address barriers faced by particular groups. In many cases, these efforts had a strong emphasis on addressing the practical needs of women to enable their participation under government provisions.

- Examples within the BEK portfolio suggested that despite the inclusion of women and some marginalised groups in programme activities, they faced ongoing barriers to their meaningful participation.

- Some BEK programmes had adopted very broad terms such as 'vulnerability' and 'disadvantage' rather than focusing specifically on particular groups of marginalised people. These were preferred by some teams as they allowed space for looser definitions and reduced pressure to engage with more thorny issues around power and historic marginalisation.

GESI focused interventions:

- Global literature underlined the importance of efforts to expand the scope of mainstream development programmes to maximise opportunities to contribute to empowerment and wider transformative change.

- Most BEK programmes reviewed had included some form of GESI-focused activities or interventions, most commonly with a focus on women. BEK programmes that stood out here tended to have also invested in GESI expertise and had conducted analysis to better understand GESI issues.

- A number of BEK programmes had also included GESI-focused efforts through their work with government, usually at provincial and municipal levels. This included technical assistance (TA) to support standalone GESI policies, although with little explicit emphasis on implementation, and on training or orientation to provincial and municipal officials and/or elected representatives.

- BEK programmes provided data on the numbers of people trained but tended to provide only anecdotal evidence of any shifts in knowledge or decision making as a result. Contrary to the global literature, a focus on norm change, shifting mindsets beyond government, and efforts to strengthen collective voice were uncommon within the portfolio.

Additional risks:

- The global literature highlighted the importance of programme leads seeking to understand and address potential risks associated with GESI mainstreaming, especially where efforts seek to challenge current power dynamics and resource distribution.

- This research did not look at safeguarding practice. Nevertheless, there was little evidence of BEK programmes seeking to identify or address any unintended consequences of GESI mainstreaming.

- Few BEK programmes could describe potential unintended repercussions of their work on GESI, including intra-household tensions and community backlash triggered by efforts to challenge the status quo or target resources at certain groups.

- Some government officials highlighted contextual factors which meant BEK programmes were being delivered in areas with risks related to violence against women and girls. This included the prevalent harassment of women by men and widespread suspicion of work perceived as pushing a feminist agenda.

Tracking and reporting:

- Addressing GESI through programme monitoring and evaluation (M&E) was consistently recognised in the global literature as a vital aspect of mainstreaming, including the use of both disaggregated and GESI-specific indicators.

- The tracking of results through disaggregated data was the most commonly used approach to GESI mainstreaming within the BEK portfolio. However, there was considerable variation in terms of levels and types of disaggregation being conducted, not only across the BEK portfolio but even within individual programmes.

- Disaggregated data had enabled BEK programmes to track reach, although often with a lack of attention on intersectionality. In some cases, programmes had collected sizable volumes of disaggregated data but with little

evidence that the datasets were being analysed and used to inform learning and decision making.

- Several BEK programmes were using GESI-focused indicators to track progress. However, these were often vague and open to interpretation, with an emphasis on mainstreaming efforts rather than GESI results. Overall, it was difficult to get a sense of what programmes had achieved in relation to GESI.

Recommendations

Based on the research findings, a set of 19 recommendations have been identified.

Overarching recommendations

1. Establish a clear description of what GESI mainstreaming means for BEK programmes and a vision of what it is intended to achieve, framed around the three Essential Elements.
2. Establish consistent use of the 12 Common Approaches Framework to GESI mainstreaming efforts within programmes.
3. Incentivise SROs and PROs to mainstream GESI in the programmes they are working on, establishing it as an expected aspect of their role on which they are appraised.

Recommendations related to specific Common Approaches

4. Require all new programmes/phases of programmes to develop a GESI strategy during their inception phase, which they update during the life of the programme.
5. Require programmes to calculate how much they will spend on GESI mainstreaming and to track this spend as part of existing financial reporting.
6. Recognise and reward programmes or individuals within implementing teams for their efforts and achievements in relation to GESI.
7. Expect and support programmes to recruit diverse teams, which goes beyond the recruitment of women as a homogenous group.
8. Require new programmes/phases of programmes to have a GESI Lead who is a GESI expert in a senior role.
9. Establish a Community of Practice to support and strengthen GESI experts working within BEK programmes.
10. Encourage and enable programmes to work with government institutions mandated to support GESI as part of the constitution.

11. Encourage implementing partners to establish partnerships with GESI focused organisations in order to strengthen programmes' capacity to work on GESI.

12. Support implementing partners to provide programme-specific GESI training to their teams so they are equipped with the competencies to mainstream GESI.

13. Expect programmes to conduct ongoing intersectional GESI analysis to inform more detailed design and delivery of interventions as programmes adapt and evolve.

14. Clarify which groups are intended to be reached by BEK programmes – and how they are expected to benefit – as a result of GESI mainstreaming.

15. Require programmes to demonstrate a clear link between GESI-focused interventions and the design of the main programme.

16. Commission an evaluation of TA for municipal, provincial, and federal government GESI policies and GESI trainings provided to government officials in order to inform future support by BEK.

17. Expect programmes to identify risks related to work on GESI, including as a result of backlash.

18. Ensure GESI ambitions are set at outcome level within programme logframes.

19. Expect programmes to not only collect but also analyse disaggregated data with an intersectional lens and with a clear purpose to inform and improve programming for groups intended to benefit from GESI mainstreaming.

1. Introduction

Purpose of the research

The Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Mainstreaming research project is a one-year qualitative study which has been commissioned by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)/ the British Embassy Kathmandu (BEK). The research has been undertaken by Adam Smith International (ASI), designed and delivered by an international team of GESI and research experts based in Nepal, India, the UK, and the Netherlands (see Annex 6 for further information on the team). Research design began in early 2023 and, following a two-month inception, the research has been conducted over the course of a year.

The study was commissioned with the purpose of generating learning on how to include a meaningful focus on GESI within 'mainstream' development programmes i.e. those where GESI is not the main focus. This has included synthesising evidence and current thinking from global literature as well as gathering and analysing primary and secondary data from the BEK portfolio of programmes (see Section 2 for a full list of research questions). The research provides an opportunity for BEK to reflect on how well mainstreaming approaches are working across its portfolio to inform future efforts to improve the lives of women, girls, and excluded groups.

This research is timely for the FCDO and specifically for BEK. FCDO has recently launched its International Women and Girls Strategy 2023-30 (FCDO, 2023) and is currently working to develop a range of practical guidance to encourage and enable the strategy's implementation. This research will be well-timed to contribute both a synthesis of global evidence on GESI mainstreaming and learning from within the BEK portfolio. BEK has also recently conducted a forward-looking portfolio review to identify specific sectors and programmes to prioritise in future efforts. Although this research was not intended to inform decisions about which sectors or programmes to target, the learning it has generated will help the Embassy identify which approaches to prioritise so that GESI is effectively mainstreamed across its development portfolio.

The overall intention is for the research findings to practically inform future work and promote higher standards in GESI mainstreaming. The primary users of this research are therefore intended to be 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, there is also a potential wider target audience of 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 (see Annex 6 for further details on research dissemination).

Context

GESI mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming was officially adopted as a strategy almost 30 years ago at the United Nations (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). This broader focus is reflected in this research, which looks at GESI, rather than 'gender' alone.

Despite the widespread use of gender or GESI mainstreaming, there has also been longstanding criticism of mainstreaming as an approach, with widely acknowledged challenges in moving from commitments to GESI mainstreaming to actual changes in practice – and then on to tangible outcomes. This has led to some degree of distrust in mainstreaming among many researchers and development practitioners, with a sense that it rarely leads to anything other than token efforts (see for example GADN, 2015; Gupta et al., 2023). 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. Nevertheless, GESI mainstreaming remains the most used approach to contributing to GESI through development programmes, underlining the importance of better understanding what makes it as effective as possible.

GESI in Nepal

The BEK portfolio and this research project are set against the background of GESI in Nepal, which is highly complex due to multiple diverse and overlapping social identities and dynamics present across the country. These identities include, but are not limited to, sex, caste, ethnicity, age, class, disability status, geographic origin, religion, and sexual orientation. The intersectionality of these identities determines the experience and power relations of different social groups, often exacerbating the unequal development of historically marginalised communities. In order to understand GESI in the context of Nepal, it is important to note that intersectionality of a complex group of multiple identities forms the basis of unequal power relations that leads to multiple layers of exclusion and discrimination. These vary according to provinces and sectors.

There have been recent attempts to move toward more intersectional analyses of inequality and exclusion in Nepal. Historically, male members of the Hill Brahmin/Chhetri groups (approximately 27 percent of the population) determined legal, political, and socio-economic structures and defined all other social groups in terms of their difference to this normative identity (Gurung et al., 2020). The Nepal Social Inclusion Survey conducted in 2018 showed that differences from this identity in terms of language, region, caste, ethnicity, religion, and sex continue to exclude people from economic, political, and social arenas. (Gurung et al., 2020)

The Government of Nepal (GoN) has set it as a priority to build an inclusive state, guaranteeing the right to dignity, equality, social justice, and rights against untouchability, discrimination, and exploitation for all citizens, as fundamental rights in the Constitution of Nepal (2015). In particular, GoN has identified two key elements that are key to realising the envisioned inclusive state:

- The demonstration of government commitment to GESI
- Practical guidance on what to do to support GESI

Nepal is a signatory to a range of international conventions and agreements that commit it to GESI, including the 2015 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) framework. The SDGs include a focus on ending poverty, promoting gender equality, reducing inequality within and among countries, and are underpinned by three universal principles of human rights-based approach, leave no one behind (LNOB), and gender equality and women's empowerment. Various forms of gender and social discrimination, exclusion, and inequality are addressed in dedicated pieces of legislation, components of laws, or as GESI provisions within policy documents. Examples of GESI provisions include that at least 40 percent of local elected representatives must be women and 20 percent must be Dalit women; 45 percent of all civil service positions must be set aside for women and marginalised groups; at least 33 percent of user committee members have to be women and at least one in three committee leadership positions has to be held by a woman. Various GoN rules, regulations, policies, and guidelines exist for the implementation of these legal commitments, including standalone GESI policies at federal, provincial, and local government levels. However, gaps in legislation and weak implementation of existing laws and GESI provisions continue to be a challenge.

At the federal government, while the Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens is the line ministry for most GESI issues, the Ministry of Finance leads on gender-responsive budgeting, and the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration is key to mainstreaming GESI in a federalised context. In addition to these, other line ministries have GESI sections, GESI staff, or GESI focal persons. The Constitution also mandates the establishment of various commissions to monitor progress on the status of women and historically marginalised groups. At the provincial government level, GESI issues come under the purview of various ministries, including Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Sports and Social Welfare, and the Ministry of Social Development and Health. Additionally, there have been efforts to nominate GESI focal persons within other line ministries. At the local level, Women and Children Departments are often assigned responsibility for GESI-related efforts.

GESI mainstreaming in BEK

To support the GoN in building a more inclusive state, development partners in Nepal, including BEK, have convened the GESI Working Group under the Social Cluster of the International Development Partner Group (IDPG). The GESI Working Group has collectively produced A Common Framework for GESI (GESI Working Group, 2017). This paper sets out the complexities of intersectional social exclusion patterns in Nepal, including establishing a definition of disadvantaged groups as including: women and girls, low castes (particularly Dalits), certain ethnic minorities (for example indigenous groups such as Janjatis), regional minorities (for example Madhesis), people with disabilities, and religious minorities (for example Muslims).

The Paper draws a distinction between experiences of exclusion versus vulnerability specifically in relation to the Nepali context.

In 2022, BEK developed a GESI Mainstreaming Strategy which outlined how the Embassy intended to weave GESI into its interventions, projects and programmes. This included a theory of change for GESI mainstreaming (see Annex 11 for further information), which was developed to provide a simplified overview to motivate action by programme teams, setting out expected outcomes as well as the process for getting there. By spelling out the four stages of the programme cycle, it was specifically intended to raise awareness of the need for GESI mainstreaming efforts to extend beyond initial analysis to inform design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation (M&E). Guided by the GESI Mainstreaming Strategy, BEK set its aspirations on taking GESI mainstreaming beyond minimum compliance and legal duties set out through the UK's International Development Act (2002), Gender Equality Act (2014) and the Public Sector Equality Duty (2011). The promotion of girls' education and the rights of women and girls are included as one of five goals within BEK's Country Plan 2021-2025, with work across all other goals intended to be underpinned by a cross-cutting focus on equality and inclusion.

Purpose and structure of this report

This final report presents an analysis of findings from the GESI Mainstreaming Research Project, incorporating feedback from BEK on previous interim reports (Inception, Stage 1, Stage 2, and Stage 3). Based on a request from BEK that this report be comprehensive but as succinct as possible, findings have been summarised, with less detail than there would be room for in a longer report.

Additionally, this report includes a set of conclusions and recommendations for BEK as well as a set of lessons, which are of broader relevance to those in the development sector. Individual BEK-funded programme teams agreed to participate in the research on the basis that they would only be named in relation to learning drawn from promising examples. Beyond that, all findings have been presented at portfolio level. The research team has intentionally written the findings in a way which does not risk identifying individual programmes or individual interviewees. This has not only dictated the way the findings are presented, but also the way the team have referenced and have avoided using quotes.

Due to the practical nature of this research, the amount of methodological content in the main body of the report has been kept to a minimum. Instead, considerable detail on the methodology has been included in Annexes 1-3.

The report is structured as follows:

Section 2 outlines the research questions and the conceptual framework for GESI mainstreaming, which have underpinned the research.

Section 3 presents the research design and methodology used to conduct the research.

Section 4 presents a brief overview of the research findings and explains the structure of findings in subsequent sections.

Sections 5 to 7 present the research findings in greater detail, structured around the conceptual framework.

Section 8 presents the conclusions, recommendations, and lessons emerging from the research.

The annexes contain further detail on the methodology for the three stages of the research project, ethics and safeguarding considerations and protocols, research management including team composition and dissemination plans, a project-specific confidentiality policy, and the original terms of reference.

Of particular note is **Annex 9**, which presents a GESI Mainstreaming Checklist. This has been developed based on the research findings and recommendations. It is intended for use by BEK and its implementing partners but is likely to be of interest to funders and programme teams more widely.

Box 1: A note on terminology

A plethora of overlapping terms is used in the development sector to describe GESI mainstreaming practice. 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', being 'inclusive' and so on (see for example: Gupta et al., 2023). Similarly, terms such as 'marginalisation', 'exclusion', 'discrimination', and 'vulnerability' are often used interchangeably within the literature and within BEK programme documents.

A clear message which has come through the literature reviewed for this research 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 report to use clear and accessible language when describing approaches to GESI mainstreaming and to be as precise as possible, avoiding vague terms. However, in some cases it has been important for this report to reflect the terminology that had been used by programme teams, government officials, or BEK colleagues.

It is also important to note that the findings in this report sometimes refer to programme teams led by implementing partners, and sometimes to BEK staff who work with them. Where references are made to 'programme teams' this is referring to teams led by implementing partners (IPs). Specific references may then be made to 'BEK', 'BEK staff', or 'BEK colleagues'.

2. Research Questions & Conceptual Framework

This section sets out the questions which this research was designed to answer, including a set of detailed sub questions under each one. It then outlines the conceptual framework which the research team developed to underpin the research.

Research questions and scope

This research was commissioned to answer 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?

Following a feasibility assessment, key decisions on the scope of the research questions were made during the inception phase, most notably that:

- RQ1 would not only look at evidence from evaluations but would also seek to capture current thinking on GESI mainstreaming from a range of major organisations working in the development sector.

- RQ2 and RQ3 would focus on BEK-funded programmes but would not include the Embassy's influencing or diplomacy initiatives, or FCDO's centrally managed programmes delivered in Nepal.

- RQ3 provided a valuable opportunity to look more closely at the practical realities of GESI mainstreaming within BEK programmes. Even if GESI-related outcomes were not observable, it would be important to capture information about the real-world delivery of GESI mainstreaming.

With this scope in mind, the research team developed a set of sub-questions in relation to each of the three overarching research questions. These are presented in Table 1 below. A number of these sub questions were included in the original terms of reference, although some were refined, reworded, or added during the inception phase.

Table 1 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 value for money (**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 **VfM**
	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?

Conceptual framework

Existing literature and experience of GESI mainstreaming have shown that it is not one single definable thing which consistently takes the same form. Rather, GESI mainstreaming is a complex, often iterative process, which can be approached in different ways and be motivated by varying levels of ambition (see for example: GADN, 2015; Gupta et al., 2023). A lack of common understanding among development organisations about what constitutes GESI mainstreaming was reflected in the fact that there was no existing standard framework the research team could use to categorise or describe mainstreaming approaches. It was therefore important for the research team to develop a clear conceptual framework which could allow space for different approaches to be explored, whilst also enabling a degree of consistency in the way that data was collected, analysed, and presented. Based on a review of existing literature, the research team developed a conceptual framework for GESI mainstreaming, which is presented in Figure 1 below. A complete set of findings from the global literature review is presented in a separate report entitled GESI Mainstreaming: Global Literature Synthesis.

An intersectional lens

It was evident from the global literature that an intersectional lens needed to be placed at the centre of the conceptual framework for this research. Across sources, intersectionality was consistently highlighted as a fundamental and crosscutting aspect of good practice in GESI mainstreaming. The prevailing view within literature was that an intersectional lens provides a more realistic understanding of the social processes which underpin inequality and exclusion and that it is insufficient for gender to be considered in isolation from other social characteristics.

Figure 1 GESI Mainstreaming Framework

Three Essential Elements of effective GESI mainstreaming

The diverse range of approaches to GESI mainstreaming which were presented in the literature could be categorised under three broad areas, which the research team identified as 'Essential Elements' of effective and meaningful GESI mainstreaming within programmes:

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 'Essential Elements' were presented in the literature as being heavily interconnected and required in combination. There was no suggestion in the literature that a sole focus on any of one of these areas was sufficient in itself, but rather that all three areas needed attention as part of an overall approach to GESI mainstreaming.

Common Approaches to GESI mainstreaming

Under the three Essential Elements, sources consistently underlined the value of certain approaches to GESI mainstreaming. These were either confidently promoted, for example through guidance, or were those which had been identified as valuable through reviews and evaluations. The approaches identified across the literature could be clustered into a set of 12 Common Approaches to GESI mainstreaming. These have been mapped to the three Essential Elements in the conceptual framework, as outlined in Table 2 below.

Table 2 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

Wider contextual factors

The wider social and political context, funding environment and procurement processes, and broader organisational culture were also emphasised in the literature as playing an important enabling or constraining role. These were therefore included in the framework and reflected in Figure 1.

3. Research Design & Methodology

This section describes the three-stage methodology which was developed and used by the research team. This begins with an overview, which is followed by three sub sections which explain each stage in turn, followed by a list of limitations and potential forms of bias. Annexes 1-3 provide further detail.

Overview of the three-stage methodology

During the inception phase, the research team further developed the proposed methodology for this research which was outlined in the original terms of reference (see Annex 11). Throughout design and delivery, the research team have maintained a focus on ensuring all three overarching RQs and related sub-questions could be explored. The methodology was divided into three interlinked stages:

Stage 1: Global literature synthesis

Stage 2: BEK portfolio review

Stage 3: Deep-dive case studies

Figure 2 below outlines the three stages of the research methodology.
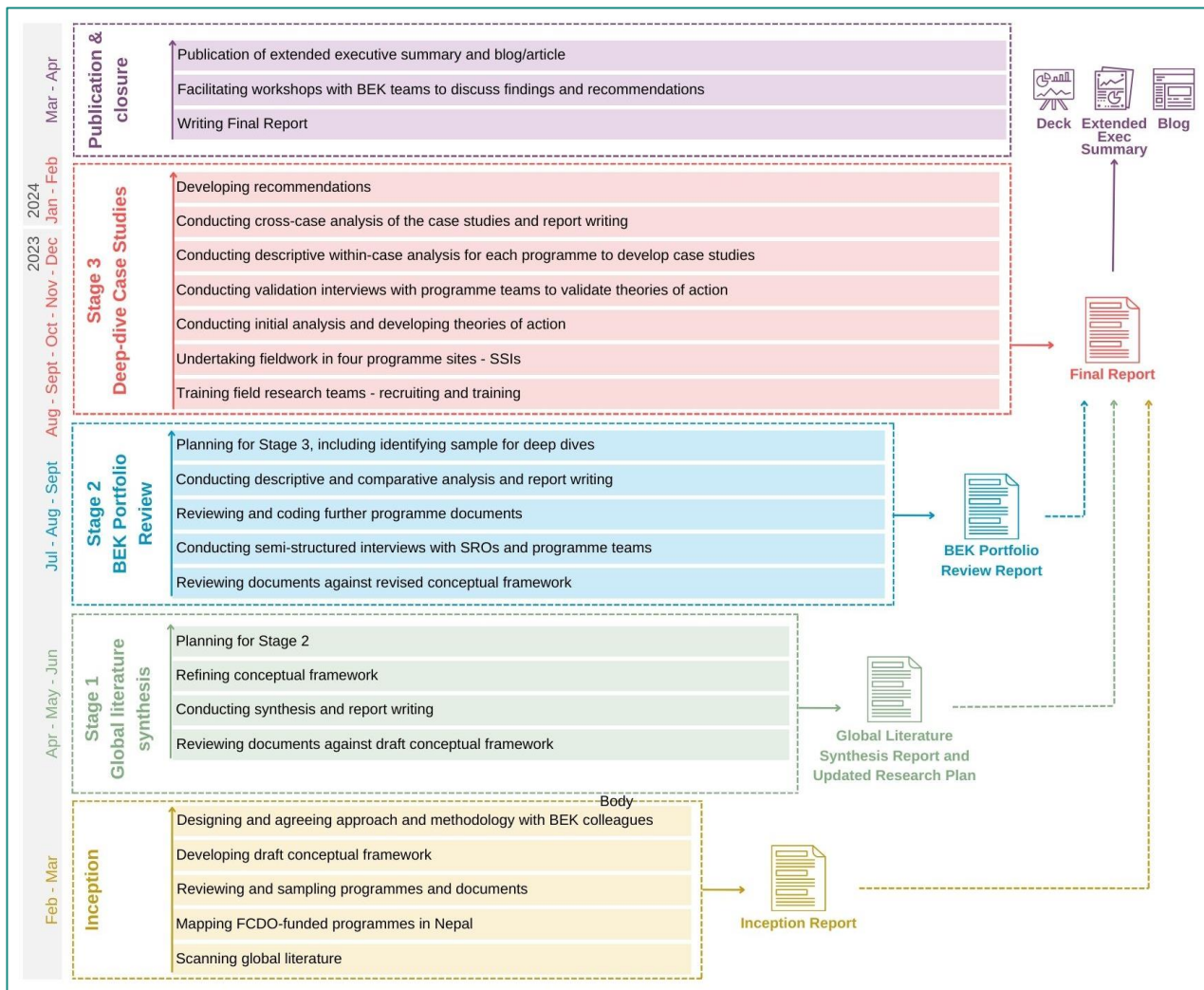
Figure 2 Overview of the Research Methodology

The three-stage methodology was designed with an emphasis on it being:

- **Sequenced:** Ensuring each stage of the research had value in its own right, generating outputs which could be used by BEK/FCDO as soon as knowledge was generated, rather than relying on just one final report. The sequencing of the stages was intentional with each one informing the next. This meant that

the BEK portfolio review was informed by the findings of the global literature synthesis and the deep-dive case studies were designed to enable a more detailed exploration of findings from the portfolio review.

- **Valuable:** In line with ethical principles (see Annex 5 for further detail), the research was designed to add to the evidence base and to further understand what makes GESI mainstreaming worth investing in. This included ensuring the research picked up at the point where current evidence left off.

- **Qualitative:** Although the portfolio review included some existing quantitative evidence provided by BEK programmes, the research was almost entirely qualitative, and all primary data collection was qualitative rather than mixed method. The research provided an opportunity to explore the nuanced, iterative, and evolving processes which are part of the reality of mainstreaming GESI in programmes. Qualitative research was best suited to this.

- **In-depth:** The design of the methodology sought to achieve a balance between breadth and depth. The former came through the Stage 2 BEK portfolio review, which provided an opportunity to look across BEK-funded programmes to better understand what GESI mainstreaming approaches were (and were not) being used and to get a sense of the spread of efforts across the portfolio. Depth then came from the Stage 3 deep-dive case studies. These were crucial in terms of better understanding programme realities.

- **Realistic:** The research methodology was developed so that it was proportionate and realistic. In planning each stage of the research process, this meant considering what was reasonable in terms of requests on stakeholders' time. Unlike a programme evaluation, participation in this research was not an anticipated or expected use of programme teams' time. This has continued to inform decision making throughout the research process, with adjustments made to plans, as needed.

Methodology for Stage 1: Global literature synthesis

Following inception, the research began with a synthesis of global literature on GESI mainstreaming. The focus here was on seeking to answer RQ1 and the related sub questions under it. A more detailed description of the methodology for the global literature synthesis is presented in Annex 1.

A sample of 36 documents were included in the sample for the global literature synthesis. A distinction was found between literature which presented 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 had drawn on. However, it was common among guidance for thinking on GESI mainstreaming to be presented without an explicit link to the evidence base. 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 sample included literature from the following organisations:

- Bilateral donors
- UN agencies
- Development banks
- Donor-funded programmes
- Academic institutes, think tanks, and practitioners' groups.

Using FCDO guidance on assessing the quality of evidence, the global literature synthesis considered the quality of each individual study or evaluation reviewed. The results showed that all but one of the 36 sources were found to be of high quality. Further detail assessing the quality of evidence can be found in Annex 1.

Methodology for Stage 2: BEK portfolio review

Following the Stage 1 Global Literature Synthesis, the research moved on to a review of the BEK portfolio of programmes. The focus here was on seeking to answer RQ2 and the related sub questions under it. It was

important to ensure the process for the BEK portfolio review was not too onerous on BEK staff and programme teams and that the amount of time requested from them was realistic. As a result, a relatively light touch methodology was necessary.

During inception, a mapping of FCDO-funded programmes in Nepal was conducted, resulting in a final list of 44 programmes identified. This included 14 programme directly funded by BEK, of which several were portfolios of programmes. Given the sectorial diversity, size and maturity of the BEK programmes, it was agreed that the focus of the research would remain on these programmes.

Taking into account the sub-programmes within this portfolio, a sample of 15 BEK-funded programmes was identified for inclusion in the Stage 2 review, which is presented in Table 3 below. These programmes were selected with BEK colleagues, prioritising those which:

- BEK knew had made efforts to mainstream GESI and where there was greater potential for learning.
- Were still live and where programme team members would be available for interview.

Table 3 BEK Programme Sample for Stage 2

#	Programme/Component	Sector	Budget (£)
1	Sudridh-Nepal Urban Resilience Programme (NURP)	Urban/Economic Development	43.6m
2	Rural Access Programme 3 (RAP3)	Infrastructure	72.4m
3	Accelerating Investment and Infrastructure in Nepal (AIIN)	Infrastructure	46.3m
4	Post-Earthquake Reconstruction in Nepal – Building Back Better (Purnima)	Infrastructure	45.2m
5	Climate Smart Development for Nepal (CSD) – NCCSP2 Component	Climate	58.5m (CSD total)
6	CSD – National Renewable Energy Programme (NREP) Component	Climate	
7	Evidence for Development (E4D) – Data for Development (D4D) Component	Evidence	26m (E4D total)
8	E4D – Census Component	Evidence	
9	Resilient Water Sanitation and Hygiene and Emergency Preparedness Programme (RWEPP)	WASH	19.7m
10	Nepal Health Sector Support Programme III (NHSSP3)	Health	107.5m
11	Hamro Samman Programme – Countering Trafficking in Persons in Nepal (HS)	Social Protection	4.5m
12	Skills for Employment Programme (SEP)	Employment	29.5m
13	Public Financial Management (PFM) Multi Donor Trust Fund - Phase II (PFM-MDTF2)	PFM	3.2m
14	Project Coordination Units (PCUs)	PEA	4m
15	Provincial and Local Governance Support Programme (PLGSP)	Governance	26m

Given the size and scope of programmes included in the sample, it was not possible to comprehensively review all available programme documents for each one. Instead, BEK colleagues were asked to share four documents which they believed best showcased efforts within the programmes to mainstream GESI. Using a snowballing approach, a total of 48 interviews were then conducted across the 15 programmes. Further detail on the Stage 2 methodology is presented in Annex 2.

Methodology for Stage 3: Deep dive case studies

Following the Stage 2 BEK Portfolio Review, the research team sought to take a closer look at a sub-set of programmes to better understand how GESI mainstreaming had been delivered in practice. The focus here was on seeking to answer RQ3 and the related sub questions under it. This was achieved through a 'deep dive' case study approach using qualitative semi-structured interviews (SSIs) to gather a range of perspectives from those who had delivered or engaged with the programmes. Interviewees included BEK

staff, IPs, government partners, other partners, and beneficiaries. It was observed that programmes tended to work with and through government, rather than directly with beneficiaries. As such, there was only one programme (NCCSP2) for which the research team interviewed direct beneficiaries.

Four programmes were selected from within the BEK portfolio for deep-dive case studies, which are presented in Table 4 below. The sampling approach was intentionally designed to focus on programmes with the greatest potential to generate learning in relation to GESI mainstreaming. Given the level of input that was required by programme teams to enable data collection for these case studies, it was also imperative that programme leadership were available and willing to participate. A more detailed description of the Stage 3 methodology is presented in Annex 3.

Table 4 Sample for Stage 3 Deep Dive Case Studies

#	Programme	Description	Sector	Fieldwork Location
1	Data for Development (D4D)	The D4D initiative operates within the broader E4D program, aimed at supporting government and non-governmental entities in generating and utilising evidence for informed policy and decision-making.	Evidence	Lumbini
2	Nepal Climate Change Support Programme Phase 2 (NCCSP2)	Implemented through the Government of Nepal with a TA component, NCCSP2 targets four key climate risks: safeguarding infrastructure, ensuring water quality/quantity, enhancing agricultural yield/food security, and preserving biodiversity/natural resources.	Climate	Karnali, Lumbini
3	Nepal Health Sector Support Programme III (NHSSP3)	NHSSP3 combines financial and technical aid to strengthen Nepal's health system governance, enhance care quality, and optimise data utilisation for decision-making.	Health	Madhesh
4	Provincial and Local Governance Support Programme (PLGSP)	PLGSP provided training, technical assistance, and other capacity building services to the new provincial and local governments recently established in Nepal. It aimed to enable the new governments to play a constructive and meaningful role in Nepal's new federal political structure.	Govern-ance	Lumbini

Box 2: Structure of the SSI guides used in Stage 3

Questions were designed and sequenced in order to encourage interviewees to describe:

- Any successes in relation to GESI which they had experienced or observed through their engagement with the programme.
- Why they believed the achievement(s) they had identified mattered/were important.
- The GESI mainstreaming approaches and mechanisms through which they believed achievements had been made.

In Stage 3, SSIs were conducted in two rounds: an initial set which was analysed and draft case studies were written up, and a subsequent round used to fill any gaps and clarify information which was unclear. The numbers of SSIs conducted for each of the four deep dives are presented in Table 5 below.

Table 5 Initial Sample Size for the Deep Dive Case Studies

Programme	# of people who participated in initial SSIs in Stage 3	# of people who participated in a final round of SSIs in Stage 3	Grand total
D4D	14	3	17
NCCSP2	17	7	24
NHSSP3	14	4	18
PLGSP	22	4	26
Total	**67**	**18**	**85**

Following the final round of SSIs, the research team developed a GESI mainstreaming theory of action for each deep dive. Through a diagram and an accompanying narrative these theories of action were designed to explicitly describe the approaches which programmes had used to mainstream GESI. They sought to map out the logic behind the sequencing of various approaches and the relationships between them. These were then validated with one or two representatives from each of the four programmes. The research team coordinated with BEK colleagues to invite them and implementing partner team members for validation meetings. Either BEK colleagues or implementing partner team members participated, depending on availability and/or programme status.

Box 3: Types of analysis conducted, with an emphasis on triangulation

Overall, three types of analysis have been used in this research in order to generate findings:

- **Within case:** Analysing findings within individual programmes as part of the Stage 2 and Stage 3, exploring where interviewees either reinforced or challenged each other's perspectives.
- **Cross-case:** Analysing across multiple programmes for the Stage 2 review and the Stage 3 deep dives, comparing and contrasting findings emerging from each of the programmes in order to identify similarities and differences across the BEK portfolio.
- **Comparative:** Analysing findings emerging from the BEK portfolio against those from the Stage 1 literature synthesis, identifying where findings from the BEK portfolio confirm or challenge existing thinking and evidence related to GESI mainstreaming.

Discussion between the team members sought to surface differing interpretations and emphasis, which fed into the analysis and write up of the findings.

Research limitations and potential bias

The research team was fully independent of FCDO/BEK and any live BEK-funded programmes. Overall, the research methodology was effective in generating findings in response to the RQs. Nevertheless, there were a number of limitations and vulnerabilities within the methodology which could have created bias. These are listed below and explained in greater detail in Annex 4.

Limitations and potential bias in Stage 1: Global literature synthesis

- A disproportionate focus on gender mainstreaming over other aspects of social inclusion.
- A focus only on English sources which were easily accessible online.
- A focus on evidence related to programmes rather than wider organisational mainstreaming.

Limitations and potential bias in Stage 2: BEK portfolio review & Stage 3: Deep dive case studies

- Focusing only on English sources
- Using only a limited sample of documents
- Experiencing caution among interviewees
- Asking interviewees to recall experiences and decisions from some time ago
- Placing greater emphasis on positive practice
- Speaking to those with the most positive experiences
- Focusing on larger multi-year programmes
- Being unable to assess quality or alternative approaches
- Lacking evidence from evaluations
- Identifying little information about VfM

In order to ensure rigour and to minimise some forms of bias, the research team placed an emphasis on quality assurance. In particular, this included the Team Leader and Deputy Team Leader working closely together to ensure any varying interpretations of the data were discussed and reflected in the findings. A senior technical adviser was also identified from inception phase and engaged throughout the research process. This adviser was not part of the core research team and provided quality assurance of all of the main research outputs, including reviewing draft findings.

4. Research Findings Overview

This section provides a snapshot of GESI mainstreaming efforts across the BEK portfolio based on the Essential Elements and Common Approaches included in the conceptual framework. It then explains how the findings have been presented in subsequent sections under each of the Essential Elements.

Use of GESI mainstreaming approaches across the BEK portfolio

The GESI mainstreaming Framework, which included three Essential Elements and 12 Common Approaches was used to review efforts within the BEK portfolio. Figure 3 below captures the use of the Common Approaches across the sample of BEK programmes. The Essential Elements are noted in the centre of the figure and the numbered Common Approaches are clustered around each of these. The other numbers within the figure indicate the number of BEK-funded programmes which were found to have used each Common Approach. The numbers in white in the darker shaded areas represent programmes which had made considerable effort to use the approach. The numbers in black within the lighter shaded areas represent programmes which had used the approach but only to a limited extent.

Figure 3 GESI Mainstreaming in BEK Programming

As shown in Figure 3, GESI mainstreaming approaches across all three Essential Elements had been used within the BEK portfolio. If programmes which had only used the Common Approaches to a limited extent are included, there appears to be greater consistency across the portfolio. However, when focusing only on the programmes which had made clear and concerted efforts to use the Common Approaches, there is a far greater degree of variability across the portfolio. This suggests there is no standard way in which BEK programmes have approached GESI mainstreaming. Rather, programmes have been using a variety of approaches to varying degrees and some have been doing far less than others.

Concerted efforts by programmes to use Common Approaches were largely concentrated around Essential Elements 2 (capacity & culture) and 3 (results & adaptation). Approximately half of the portfolio had invested in GESI expertise within programme teams (Common Approach 5) and conducted GESI analysis to inform programme design (Common Approach 8). The same proportion had sought to track progress on GESI through disaggregated data and/or standalone GESI indicators (Common Approach 12). Approximately a third of programmes had developed GESI strategies and the same proportion had expanded the scope of their programmes to include targeted work on GESI (Common Approaches 1 and 10).

Some mainstreaming approaches had been used far less often across the portfolio. Far fewer had intentionally established dedicated budget lines for GESI mainstreaming (Common Approach 2) and only one programme clearly articulated that leadership had proactively sought to motivate their team to work on GESI (Common Approach 3). Under Essential Element 2, only a small minority of programmes had intentionally recruited diverse teams (Common Approach 4), had partnered with organisations with GESI expertise (Common Approach 6), or had clearly invested in developing the knowledge, competencies, and skills of teams to work on GESI (Common Approach 7). Very few programmes had documented or clearly articulated efforts to consider and address backlash and other risks related to GESI mainstreaming (Common Approach 11). This is in contrast to the global literature which placed an emphasis on each of these approaches.

What 'GESI' means within BEK programmes

There did not appear to be one consistent definition of GESI used across the BEK portfolio. Rather, each programme seems to have focused its GESI-related efforts on various groups of marginalised people, not always with a clear rationale. The one constant across programmes was a focus – at least to some extent – on women, likely due to requirements under the UK Gender Equality Act. When other forms of discrimination or exclusion were considered alongside gender, with some exceptions, they tended to be addressed as separate, distinct groups with little mention of overlapping identities and multiple experiences of exclusion and marginalisation. Whilst the word 'intersectionality' was noted in a number of BEK programme documents, particularly in business cases and GESI strategies, as well as in interviews with programme teams, it was rarely articulated how the concept of intersectionality was translated at a practical level into programme design and delivery. Further, rather than focus explicitly on GESI, some BEK programmes instead framed their work with marginalised groups in relation to LNOB or in relation to 'vulnerability' frameworks. As explained in further detail in Section 5 below, doing so did not necessarily address the unequal power structures and dynamics which underpin inequality and exclusion.

Structure of the findings in subsequent sections

The following sections present more detailed findings in relation to the Common Approaches under each of the three Essential Elements. The research questions and sub-questions under RQ1, RQ2, and RQ3 have been kept in mind as cross-cutting areas of interest throughout the analysis. However, in discussions with BEK it was agreed that it would be more useful if the findings were structured around the conceptual framework, rather than the RQs.

In presenting the findings, a distinction has not been made between findings which emerged from Stage 2 or Stage 3 of the research. Given Stage 3 included a small sample – just four programmes – presenting separate analysis from Stage 3 would have meant that individual programmes – and individual interviewees – would have been easily identifiable. From an ethical perspective, this was deemed risky, with interviewees who shared frank and sometimes critical views on programme approaches to GESI mainstreaming being put in a potentially difficult position within their teams. For this reason, findings have been presented at the portfolio level rather than being focused on individual programmes. Woven into the findings from Stages 2 and 3 are comparisons to findings which emerged from the Stage 1 global literature synthesis.

Considering the above, BEK programmes have only been identified when linked to specific examples of good or promising practice. These are captured in boxes which punctuate the findings with tangible examples of how BEK programmes have used certain GESI mainstreaming approaches. It is important to note that the

inclusion of these boxed examples should not be taken as an indication of positive GESI mainstreaming practice across an entire programme. Rather, the boxed examples helps pinpoint specific areas in which a BEK funded programme has used an approach to GESI mainstreaming which appears to be promising.

5. Findings for Essential Element 1: Leadership & Accountability

This section presents findings related to programme leadership and accountability to support GESI mainstreaming. This includes findings related to the use of programme GESI strategies, the allocation of resources for GESI mainstreaming within programme budgets and the motivation of programme teams to mainstream GESI through accountability measures, incentives and rewards.

Overview of findings related to leadership and accountability

Programme leadership was consistently underlined in the global literature as a crucial element of effective GESI mainstreaming, with a lack of progress on GESI often blamed on insufficient or inconsistent leadership.

GESI strategies

- The need for programme leads to demonstrate and elevate commitments to GESI mainstreaming through programme GESI strategies was emphasised across the global literature.

- In contrast, there was considerable inconsistency across the BEK portfolio in terms of whether programmes had developed GESI strategies.

- However, where GESI strategies had been used by BEK programmes, implementing teams often valued these, especially where they were linked to practical action plans.

- BEK programmes that had GESI strategies had used more GESI mainstreaming approaches than others. However, some programmes had developed GESI strategies after inception phases, reducing their influence on programme design. This chimed with global literature which underlined the value of providing clarity on GESI ambitions and approaches early on in a programme.

Figure 4 Leadership & Accountability in BEK Programming

- Some BEK programme GESI strategies were also weakened by a lack of conceptual clarity and a limited focus on intersectionality. In addition, the status of programme GESI strategies was often unclear, with a lack of evidence that they had been used and implemented.

Budgeting for GESI

- Sources within the global literature review stressed the fact that GESI mainstreaming requires a dedicated investment of resources, with budget allocations for GESI needing to be explicit and visible.

- It was common for programmes across the BEK portfolio to have spent some resources on GESI mainstreaming. However, any budgeting for GESI within BEK programmes tended not to be visible and

transparent. Resources for GESI-related work tended not to have been consistently allocated or spent throughout the programme cycle.

- Only a minority of BEK programmes had explicitly earmarked resources for GESI and/or had tracked how much they were spending on GESI mainstreaming efforts. Those that had indicated that it was far easier to budget for and track spend on GESI-focused interventions than it was for GESI efforts which were woven into wider programmes interventions. BEK programme teams underlined the importance of donor expectations on GESI spend in terms of influencing budgeting and spending by IPs.

Motivating teams

- The global literature emphasised the value of 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 suggested 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 to help encourage and drive GESI mainstreaming, although evidence confirming the impact of these was limited.

- There was considerable inconsistency in terms of BEK programmes seeking to motivate their teams to work on GESI through some form of recognition or reward. The programmes which had made efforts in this area had tended to concentrate on general messaging about the importance of GESI as a value, rather than programme leads taking intentional steps to motivate their teams to address GESI through their work.

- There was little evidence of accountability mechanisms being used within the BEK portfolio to hold programme teams to account for progress on GESI. In the absence of concrete accountability or reward mechanisms, it appeared that GESI mainstreaming efforts within the BEK portfolio tended to depend on individual interest and initiative. Whilst there was some mention of GESI mainstreaming being incorporated into programme team members' job descriptions, it was often unclear whether these had gone on to be included in any meaningful way in performance appraisals.

Common Approach 1: Establishing programme GESI strategies

The global literature consistently emphasised the need for programme leads to demonstrate and elevate commitments to GESI mainstreaming through programme policies, strategies and/or action plans (Bond, 2019; FCDO, 2021; ILO, 2021). Global sources highlighted that doing so enabled programme leadership to provide greater conceptual clarity, an overarching ambition, and a practical plan for implementation of GESI mainstreaming in a way which was directly relevant to a programme, the sector it was operating in and the context in which it was being delivered.

Only six of the 15 BEK programmes had established some type of GESI strategy to clarify and elevate commitments. Five of them had developed programme wide GESI strategies, whereas one programme had developed separate GESI strategies for various components. Some of these GESI strategies had been developed following requests from BEK. In fact, one programme specifically said that they only sought to mainstream GESI at all because FCDO had asked them to. In contrast, some BEK colleagues appeared not to consider programme GESI strategies to be a necessary aspect of GESI mainstreaming, whilst others did not know whether the programmes they were working with had established them. Explaining this variation across the portfolio, several BEK colleagues indicated that whether or not GESI had been incorporated into programme design depended greatly on whether BEK and/or programme leadership was convinced about the importance of GESI.

For some BEK programmes, the impetus to develop a GESI strategy came from the implementing partner's own organisational requirements. In one programme, even though the original business case stated that there was no need for detailed consideration of equality, the implementing partner had nevertheless incorporated gender and social inclusion into the programme as it was required by their own organisational practices. There were several examples where the wider organisational culture and systems of IPs were motivators for GESI mainstreaming even when BEK expectation or guidance had been limited. Some BEK programmes that had not established GESI strategies had still developed action plans to outline their GESI commitments. In the absence of programme GESI strategies, some programmes drew on wider organisational gender or GESI policies or strategies, or those which focused on women and girls and/or marginalised groups.

Box 4: Using strategy to guide and coordinate GESI mainstreaming efforts in TA to government

PLGSP established a GESI strategy, which provided a clear outline of GESI commitments. The development of the GESI strategy was led by MoFAGA with extensive input from UNDP and other development partners. UNDP underlined that the team had incorporated a GESI strategy into PLGSP even though it was not initially part of the programme because they believed it would help in the sharing good practice and learning from other programmes.

The GESI strategy outlined the intention to incorporate an intersectional approach within PLGSP. As part of this, it placed an emphasis on tailoring approaches based on differing contexts within Nepal. A development partner representative noted that the GESI strategy was a foundational document, providing a helpful framework and a strong starting point for how GESI mainstreaming would work in PLGSP.

The GESI strategy also committed PLGSP to a twin-track approach so that in addition to targeted GESI interventions at outputs, GESI was also meant to be thoroughly mainstreamed across the programme. This included an intention to reflect GESI considerations across local government policies and plans, as well as supporting the development of GESI-focused policies.

BEK programmes which had GESI strategies had tended to use more GESI mainstreaming approaches than others. To varying degrees, this included a greater focus on both internal GESI mainstreaming efforts as well as those concentrated on programme design and results. In contrast, BEK programmes that had not established GESI strategies appeared to use fewer GESI mainstreaming approaches. It also appeared that, in the absence of a GESI strategy, actual delivery of GESI mainstreaming was limited, with intentional coordination on GESI across outcomes or workstreams happening in less of a planned, structured, coordinated manner.

Some BEK programme teams described their GESI strategies as important steering documents for programme implementation. These strategies had presented a clear outline of GESI commitments and had presented concrete approaches and actions to be adopted by the programme to ensure GESI sensitivity and responsiveness in all programming. They also included specific objectives and explicitly described how a GESI lens would be applied to programme activities. Programmes GESI strategies were also described by some programme teams as having helped set out a clear link between GESI and the programme's primary purpose. This was in line with some sources in the global literature which emphasised the importance of GESI strategies drawing explicit links to wider programme objectives (Bond, 2019). In contrast, some BEK programme GESI strategies were vague offering little clarity on how GESI mainstreaming would be operationalised.

Some BEK programmes had developed action plans to operationalise their GESI strategies. Practical plans for implementation helped enable ambitions in GESI strategies to be incorporated into programme implementation. For one programme, GESI action plans linked to the programme's overall annual workplan, which was helpful in ensuring that GESI mainstreaming work did not pull in a different direction to the programme's other work. Crucially, in a staff survey for one programme, the vast majority of the programme team thought action plans were the most useful approach in helping them know how to mainstream GESI. However, in other programmes, when action plans were developed later in the programme when activities were already underway, programmes faced challenges in implementing them. This was in line with the global literature which emphasised the value of providing clarity on GESI ambitions and approaches early on in a programme (ILO, 2021; WHO, 2021). At least two BEK programmes had treated GESI strategies as living documents rather than being part of a one-off exercise and had therefore reviewed and revised their GESI strategies during implementation. This had meant that the GESI strategies remained relevant and useful.

The timing of when GESI strategies were established varied across BEK programmes. Even when GESI intentions were included in original business cases, programmes did not necessarily follow through with developing GESI strategies at the inception or design phase, or even at the beginning of implementation. In some cases, this was because other programme requirements were considered to be more immediate, or because the mindset among programme leadership did not prioritise GESI mainstreaming efforts. Several programmes developed GESI strategies later in the programme, for example, after the team realised that they needed clear tracking mechanisms and indicators for GESI.

When GESI strategies were established after the design or inception phase, they tended to be too late to influence the logframe and therefore the programme outputs and outcomes. Some GESI experts

working within programme teams mentioned that it was difficult to convince other colleagues to reflect GESI ambitions in outcomes after they had already been agreed. This was also the case in a few programmes where the GESI expert had joined after the GESI strategy was developed, thus inheriting both the GESI strategy and the lack of ownership around it. This chimes with global literature that underlined the value of providing clarity on GESI ambitions and approaches early on in a programme (ILO, 2021; WHO, 2021).

It was not always clear what status GESI strategies had within BEK programmes and whether they had been used. Within some BEK programmes, only GESI experts within the implementing team appeared to be aware of what was in them. In these cases, programme leadership and broader programme teams were unable to describe GESI strategies or their use in any detail. There was also a lack of evidence that the GESI strategies had been implemented as intended to influence the design and delivery of interventions. Across the BEK portfolio, there was an overall tendency to see better content in GESI strategies than was actually being delivered in terms of programme interventions. Some programme GESI strategies simply indicated broad aspirations in relation to GESI, rather than a clear set of commitments which could form the starting point for GESI mainstreaming.

Box 5: Using GESI assessments and strategies to guide GESI mainstreaming efforts in an Economic Policy Incubator (EPI)

Within BEK's AIIN programme, EPI had a promising practice of revisiting and reviewing GESI strategies during implementation. They made an iterative effort to incorporate GESI mainstreaming efforts as projects were added to their portfolio with an ambition towards mainstreaming GESI across interventions.

EPI completed an assessment during the inception phase in late 2016 that examined the GESI context in relation to EPI's work and how to mainstream GESI broadly across the programme. Based on this, it developed a Gender and Investment Climate Strategy. EPI then commissioned a review of EPI projects from a GESI perspective and developed a strategy and an action plan which identified areas for GESI mainstreaming into specific project components. EPI went on to develop a third strategy that covered all the projects that had been added to EPI's workstreams, which included a set of recommendations which were subsequently set out in an action plan.

Varying understanding of GESI mainstreaming among BEK colleagues and programme teams appeared to be reflected in some GESI strategies. This included some degree of conceptual confusion about the scope and ultimate aim of GESI mainstreaming, with it being described by some programme teams as a vague concept which was not helpful in terms of practical programme delivery. Some distinctions made by programme teams between gender inequality and social exclusion were inconsistent and confusing, with the relationship between the two misunderstood. In addition, some strategies would begin with a broader focus on GESI but would slip into a narrower focus on gender and women part way through. There was also an evident lack of clarity about linkages between GESI and poverty, with them sometimes portrayed as separate areas of work.

Within GESI strategies and beyond them, there appeared to be a lack of conceptual clarity among BEK programmes about how GESI related to other frameworks such as LNOB and Do No Harm (DNH). Some BEK colleagues and programme teams used GESI, LNOB, and DNH interchangeably as though they were the same whilst others emphasised a distinction between them but could not clearly explain what that was. Some programme teams, even in written documents, used GESI or LNOB as though they in themselves represented a particular group, for example 'GESI people' or 'LNOB group'. Several BEK colleagues thought this confusion could stem from a lack of consistency in the concepts and frameworks used by BEK and FCDO more widely, and the resulting requirements BEK placed on implementing partners at the time of programme design. Programme teams also referred to the use of LNOB in the context of aligning with GoN policies and UN SDGs.

Within BEK programmes, the use of LNOB had tended to dilute the focus on marginalised groups. At least four programme teams had interpreted LNOB to mean that *no one* - including those with relative privilege - should be left out of development programming, meaning they needed to focus on generally being inclusive of 'everyone' rather than targeting specific groups. They explained that LNOB provided them with a broader framework than GESI, making it far easier to deliver 'inclusive' programming compared to a focus on specific marginalised groups. This perspective was echoed by at least one BEK colleague. One programme team explained that for them, LNOB was an umbrella term which enabled them to 'include everybody whilst GESI was a subset within LNOB which required a more challenging focus on unequal power, discrimination, and

marginalisation. This interpretation of LNOB stands in contrast to descriptions set out by FCDO and the UN (FCDO, 2019; UNSDG, 2022).

Whilst several BEK programmes had GESI strategies that indicated a commitment to an intersectional approach, others referred to women and marginalised groups as distinct groups, with a tendency for programmes to focus more on women. A number of programmes also focused on caste/ethnic identities, and a smaller minority on disability. This conceptual starting point went on to be reflected in programme interventions and in the reporting of results, where activities across BEK programmes often treated women and various marginalised groups as distinct but homogenous categories, with very limited consideration for the diversity that comes with multiple, overlapping identities and experiences of exclusion (see Common Approaches 8, 9, and 11 for more detail). This ran counter to sources within the global literature that pointed to the value of programme GESI strategies in providing clarity on what was meant by an 'intersectional approach'. Several sources underlined that the absence of a written explanation about how various aspects of inequality and exclusion link together and relate to programmes had been associated with less effective, fragmented efforts (see for example: ILO, 2021; WHO, 2021).

Whilst 'intersectionality' was referred to in some BEK programme documents, including original business cases and GESI strategies, there was often little explanation of what this meant at either a conceptual or practical level. It was common for BEK colleagues and implementing partners, when promoted, to indicate a general awareness and commitment to intersectionality, but less of an ability to articulate how it had been applied to programming. Additionally, some programmes had been given predefined target groups to focus on by BEK. Whilst this appeared to motivate the intended focus on these groups, it also appeared to create a disincentive for the implementing team to take a more complex look at overlapping forms of discrimination.

Common Approach 2: Budgeting for GESI mainstreaming

The literature included a consistent emphasis on leadership ensuring GESI mainstreaming commitments were backed with sufficient resources for effective implementation (see for example EU, 2020a; GPC, 2017; USAID, 2020). 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). The global literature also highlighted that having resources allocated to gender-related efforts helped to reassure staff that gender mainstreaming was doable and realistic (World Bank, 2021).

Across the BEK portfolio, budgeting on GESI was rarely visible in programme documents. Many BEK programmes did not have a dedicated budget allocated for GESI mainstreaming, for example as a separate category or line item. As a result, some of the analysis in this section is based on inferences on spending on certain GESI mainstreaming approaches, rather than clear evidence that budgets were visibly or explicitly set aside for GESI mainstreaming.

Nevertheless, most BEK programmes (11 out of 15) had clearly needed to allocate at least some resources for work on GESI. Given that all the programmes were using at least one of the Common Approaches for GESI mainstreaming, it could be argued that in fact all had invested some resources in work on GESI to some extent. However, in four of the programmes there was little or no evidence of whether this was done. In the global literature, the need for dedicated resources was often directly linked to the need to fund GESI expertise within the programme team (see for example: WHO, 2021) but also a range of other internal and programme activities (see for example: ICF, n.d.). Similarly, in BEK programmes, one of the most visible ways of spending on GESI mainstreaming was through the use of GESI experts, either as permanent team members or as short-term consultants for specific tasks. Another visible spend on GESI was through programming which targeted – or at least aimed to include - women and marginalised groups.

Across the BEK portfolio, opinions varied on whether it was necessary to budget for GESI mainstreaming. At least one BEK colleague pointed to the need for significant funding for programmes to be able to effectively mainstream GESI. In contrast several BEK colleagues explained that it was not practical for programmes to have budgets for GESI mainstreaming because the system would not allow for such detailed tracking. Instead, some BEK colleagues and implementing partner team members explained that if women or marginalised groups were included within a programme, it was reasonable to consider that the

entire programme budget had been allocated for work on GESI. Conversely, some implementing partner teams said their programmes did not have a dedicated budget for GESI because they were not a GESI-focused programme. This is in contrast to an emphasis in the global literature, which stressed the importance of making budget allocations for GESI mainstreaming visible and transparent (see for example: FCDO, 2021).

In addition to allocating resources to GESI, an important point raised during interviews with BEK programme teams was the importance of tracking actual spending for work on GESI mainstreaming. At least two BEK programmes appeared to have intentionally tracked spending on GESI. In at least one of these cases, this had been driven by another donor who required an earmarked budget for GESI and reporting on the GESI spend. Indeed, several team leaders and GESI experts within BEK programmes explained that GESI tended to be budgeted for when donors expressed a clear expectation on GESI spend. This chimed with the global literature's consistent emphasis on leadership ensuring GESI mainstreaming commitments were backed with sufficient resources for effective implementation (see for example EU, 2020a; GPC, 2017; USAID, 2020). In addition, some implementing partners within the BEK portfolio had also responded to internal requirements within their own organisations for gender-tagging in their annual financial statements which enabled them to know how much was allocated and actually spent on gender.

Where spending on GESI had been tracked, colleagues from BEK, other donors, and implementing teams all agreed that having budget earmarked for GESI was helpful. They felt it had helped establish GESI as an agenda item for regular check-ins and made it more visible. Requiring the GESI spend to be tracked had also enabled development partners to put GESI on the agenda amidst prevalent GoN mindsets which did not view GESI as a priority. In one BEK programme, the implementing partner described specific budget lines set out for each downstream partnership, so spending, including on GESI, could be tracked. Here, partners received payments quarterly on a reimbursement basis and had to forecast/undergo frequent audits, so spending was tracked closely by the implementing partner and by BEK.

Box 6: Earmarking budget for GESI and tracking spend to strengthen accountability

PLGSP had specific budget resources earmarked for GESI from the start of the programme in 2019, due to requirements of the Government of Norway. This ensured that GESI activities were funded and that spending on GESI activities were tracked and reported. It is important to note here that the business case and interviews indicated that BEK focused more on women and girls than on GESI, while interviewees pointed to a clear focus on GESI by the Government of Norway.

PLGSP also did a retrospective calculation of spending on activities under targeted outputs as GESI spending, which means that these do not include spending on GESI mainstreaming in other outputs, if there was any. A Government of Norway representative noted that they like to think that earmarking funds for GESI really helped given the comparatively lower awareness around GESI in 2019. Now, with an increase in awareness, they expect a certain percentage of the funds will continue to be spent on GESI even if they do not earmark it in the future.

The earmarking of budget for GESI has meant that resources have been allocated for GESI throughout the programme cycle. Resources were invested in recruiting GESI expertise as permanent staff, i.e., a total of eight GESI experts at the federal and seven provincial levels, as well as short-term GESI experts who served as resource persons for trainings, GESI audits, and policy development. In addition to this, there were dedicated resources for GESI programming that included input into GESI policy/strategy development, GESI trainings for government and elected officials, and conducting GESI audits. There was also initial investment to internal GESI mainstreaming efforts – after the initial recruitment, programme staff received GESI training as part of their induction training.

Where GESI spend had been tracked by BEK programmes, it was not clear how these spends were calculated. It was also not explicitly clear how spending on GESI compared to the overall programme budget. This linked to a wider perception among BEK staff and implementing teams that it was difficult to calculate spending on GESI when efforts had been made to integrate GESI across a programme. This chimed with the global literature which highlighted that it was more difficult to track spend on GESI mainstreaming when it was fully integrated into other programme activities (WHO, 2021).

It appeared that it was easier for BEK programmes to budget for targeted GESI interventions. Most of the budget spent for GESI mainstreaming within BEK programmes had been for dedicating resources to GESI programming, including funding GESI expertise to provide TA. BEK programmes had also tended to spend

some resources on GESI capacity building of government representatives and other stakeholders. Several programmes had also spent resources on GESI research and or learning pieces or had commissioned assessments to see how programme interventions would impact on - or had benefited - target groups. Programmes that had worked with government counterparts had also worked with various levels of government to prioritise public spending on GESI, through both policy and capacity building efforts. A BEK colleague noted having a budget for GESI TA as part of TA to government was a way to leverage GESI mainstreaming on the wider financial assistance of the programme. This points to a potentially strategic use of GESI TA component within TA to government - that if implemented effectively - could mainstream GESI across technical and financial assistance to governments.

Even with the above-mentioned spending on GESI, it appeared that BEK programmes generally tended to be under-resourced in terms of GESI mainstreaming given the scale and scope of programmes. Several GESI experts within programme teams explained that they had needed to deliver GESI-related activities such as team and community GESI orientations or government training sessions with no budget. They felt this had affected the quality and scope of what they were able to deliver.

Even when there was spending on GESI within BEK programmes, resources for GESI-related work had not been consistently allocated or spent throughout the programme cycle. For example, in terms of funding GESI expertise, some programmes had GESI experts throughout the programme in the form of permanent roles, and others only had them for specific inputs as and when needed (See Common Approach 5 for more details). Additionally, in the context of COVID and budget cuts, several programmes mentioned that GESI activities and outcomes were removed or no longer required by BEK. For some programmes that were in transition, continuation of GESI expertise and GESI programming were not prioritised. Several BEK colleagues also explained that GESI had already been covered in previous stages or iterations of certain programmes. This indicated that some BEK colleagues may not have viewed spending on GESI mainstreaming as a continuous process which needed to be resourced throughout the life a programme. This stood in contrast to the global literature which highlighted that a key ingredient for effective mainstreaming was adequate resourcing being prioritised throughout a programme, not only in the early analytical stages (FCDO, 2021).

In contrast to spending on efforts to mainstream GESI in programme interventions, few BEK programmes had dedicated resources to internal mainstreaming efforts. At least in part, this appeared to stem from implementing partners not viewing investments in internal processes, such as GESI trainings for programme teams, as a legitimate and expected use of programme budgets. Although very limited, spending on internal mainstreaming efforts within BEK programmes included GESI sessions during staff orientations or inductions, GESI trainings for the programme team, support for downstream delivery partners to formulate organisational GESI policies and for GESI capacity development. As with budget cuts around GESI programming, budget cuts also affected spending on internal mainstreaming efforts, with BEK specifically discontinuing internal trainings in one programme, including on GESI, because they no longer represented good value for money (VfM). This linked to a wider perception among some BEK colleagues that implementing partners were selected on the expectation that they already had GESI mainstreaming capacities internally (see Common Approach 7 for more detail).

Information on whether GESI was included within programme VfM strategies was very light both in BEK programme documents and in interviews with programme teams. This chimed with the limited availability of information on VfM in the global literature. The most common place to see VfM mentioned within BEK programme documents was within the 'equity' section of business cases or annual reviews, with little detail included about any equity indicators used. Some attempts to include GESI in VfM analyses within BEK programmes included calculating costs per component that were related to GESI results or targeted GESI interventions, a disbursement-linked indicator on reducing inequity, and targets to reach specific historically marginalised groups. However, it appeared that VfM calculations in some programmes had not explicitly included GESI considerations. Conversely, some BEK colleagues underlined the limitations of calculating VfM using cost per capita given the complexity of some programmes and the remote areas they operated in. Although not widely discussed in the global literature, some sources touched on the importance of factoring GESI into how 'value' was defined within a programme and therefore how resources were allocated (WHO, 2021). Without this clarity, sources cautioned that 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.

Common Approach 3: Motivating 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; Gates, n.d.; ILO, 2021).

Team leads in seven of the 15 BEK programmes had attempted to motivate their teams to prioritise GESI through the use of a combination of performance review, reward and recognition. However, the team lead of only one of the seven programmes had done so explicitly, while others have used the approach to a lesser degree. For the BEK programme which had evidently done the most to encourage and motivate GESI mainstreaming, supportive and knowledgeable female leadership, which included a Team Leader with GESI expertise, seems to have played an important role.

These seven programmes tended to be those that had also used a variety of other GESI mainstreaming approaches. This included having invested in GESI expertise, in developing team GESI competencies, and tracking and reporting results. Since the motivating of teams was often to linked to internal human resource practices and wider organisational cultures, the use of this approach might not have been included in programme documents, especially if implementing partners were not clear on whether they were allowed to spend part of programme budgets on the internal aspects of GESI mainstreaming. Additionally, there was less information on internal practices within BEK programmes which had closed or were operating with a leaner team during a transition period.

Most commonly, leadership within BEK programmes had focused on general messaging of the importance of GESI as a value, rather than taking intentional steps to motivate teams to address GESI through their work. This stood in contrast to global literature which highlighted the importance of leadership taking practical steps to champion GESI mainstreaming, which went beyond simple messaging about its importance (UNHCR, 2022). While BEK and programme leadership had provided messaging to teams, it was often difficult to identify what actual steps had been taken to motivate programme teams to prioritise GESI.

In contrast to the global literature which emphasised intentionality, it was more likely for BEK colleagues and team leads to take it for granted that work on GESI would happen naturally on the basis of messaging about its importance alone. What this appeared to have resulted in were general statements by BEK and implementing partner teams that equality and inclusion were important values, without much intentionality or investment on taking practical steps to champion GESI mainstreaming or build competencies around GESI mainstreaming.

Even with the messaging of the importance of GESI as a value, there was variability across BEK programmes in terms of how regularly messaging occurred. In some programmes, Team Leads messaged that GESI was important by consistently talking about it in all meetings and including GESI as a standing agenda for all review meetings. For other programmes, the messaging appeared to be limited to Team Leads relaying that GESI was a priority for BEK.

Several BEK colleagues, team leads, and GESI experts stated that BEK's interest in prioritising GESI was important in setting the expectations of a programme team. At the same time, some implementing partners noted that BEK's commitment to GESI and related issues like LNOB, disability inclusion, and a focus on specific groups, varied over time (possibly linked to wider agendas within FCDO). it was evident that the extent of BEK colleagues' emphasis on GESI mainstreaming was crucial in ensuring GESI mainstreaming within programmes. This chimed with global literature which described an emphasis on GESI mainstreaming at the bid stage as helping to set clear expectations about the type of leadership commitment to GESI that would be required (see for example: DFID, 2019; EIGE, n.d.; ICF, n.d.; UNHCR, 2022). However, what comes through clearly from the research is that while there was a general sense among implementing partners that GESI mainstreaming was expected by BEK, the expectations were often vague. The degree of emphasis placed on GESI mainstreaming by BEK staff appeared to depend on the personal interest and commitment of the individuals involved. This was coupled with clear appetite among some BEK programme teams from greater direction on GESI mainstreaming from BEK. However, in some cases, Team Leads had responded to wider organisational mechanisms to drive a focus on GESI. One implementing partner organisation required their staff to undergo a certification process that incorporated GESI aspects before they could serve as team leads.

It appeared that GESI experts within BEK programmes, rather than programme leadership, tended to be looked to regarding progress on GESI. This was in contrast to global literature which emphasised the importance of putting in place strong accountability mechanisms to motivate work on gender/GESI at senior levels (Bond, 2019). The sentiment that GESI was seen as the responsibility of a GESI expert or GESI focal person rather than everyone's responsibility was evident in interviews with some programme teams. At the same time GESI experts within programmes and some of their colleagues stressed that GESI could not sit with just one person (see Section 5 for more detail). Several GESI experts within programme teams noted that their colleagues had limited time to take on GESI related activities. This indicated a sense that GESI mainstreaming efforts were viewed as an additional responsibility rather than integral to core responsibilities.

There was little evidence of accountability mechanisms which held BEK programme teams, especially managers, to account for progress on GESI mainstreaming. In contrast, the global literature identifying that a lack of accountability was a factor that hindered progress on GESI mainstreaming (WHO, 2021). Some degree of accountability was evident through the need for some BEK programmes to report against specific GESI outcomes or reporting requirements related to GESI targets. However, no examples were identified of programmes being held to account by BEK for not meeting GESI targets. Rather, there were examples of BEK staff and implementing partner teams regularly meetings to review progress against GESI plans, sometimes as part of wider review meetings. However, these tended to be activity rather than results focused (See Common Approach 12 for more detail). The global literature on the other hand stressed the importance of putting in place strong accountability mechanisms to motivate work on gender, including 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).

In the absence of concrete accountability mechanisms, it appeared that GESI mainstreaming efforts within BEK programmes often depended on an individual team members' own interest and initiative. Overall there was a sense of a reliance on individual commitment rather than accountability mechanisms or concrete steps to motivate BEK programme team to prioritise GESI. Some implementing teams expressed the view that GESI mainstreaming was not relevant to certain programmes, and it was unclear whether this had gone unchallenged by others in their team or by BEK. It appeared that this belief that some aspects of BEK programming were GESI-neutral was also held by some BEK colleagues and was underlined by others as a view commonly held by government officials.

A specific challenge which was highlighted by implementing partners around accountability mechanisms for GESI results was the gap in commitment and buy-in on GESI from some senior government officials. Without senior government officials being on board with the GESI commitments, progress on GESI had been extremely challenging to achieve. Several BEK colleagues and programme teams mentioned that scope for GESI mainstreaming depended on which individuals were in government leadership positions. Several also noted that which individuals were in leadership positions within TA teams mattered too. They noted that when leadership tended to be women or those from historically marginalised groups, they had often been more open to work on GESI, possibly as a result of their own lived experiences.

Whilst there was some mention of GESI mainstreaming being incorporated into programme team members' job descriptions, it was often not clear if this was then linked to performance appraisals. One BEK programme had incorporated GESI responsibilities in the terms of references of consultants, including at least one point on GESI under key tasks. This was partly in response to a mid-term review finding which concluded that the programme team was too male and risked gender bias. One implementing partner explained that it was their organisational practice to include GESI goals in everyone's role descriptions and in performance appraisals, which were tied to performance bonuses. However, this was not evident in a sample document shared forla a senior position, which did not have any specific GESI goals included. For one BEK programmes, a GESI assessment recommended that GESI responsibilities should be incorporated into job descriptions and performance reviews of staff within the central programme team and partner organisations. However, it was not clear whether this recommendation was ever followed through. Whilst some sources in the global literature stress the importance of including GESI in performance appraisals, there is a lack of evidence to demonstrate whether doing so helps to motivate a focus on GESI (GADN, 2015; IDB, 2018; WHO, 2021).

Box 7: Using GESI indicators in performance appraisals to motivate work on GESI

BEK's PCUs required staff to have at least one personal performance objective to be GESI-related. The World Bank had mandatory requirements on ESG aspects that are embedded in the workflow and therefore

as part of annual appraisals of team leads in BEK's PFM-MDTF. The programme team also shared that the World Bank require staff to undergo a certification process that incorporated GESI aspects before they could serve as team leads.

Additionally, motivation to work on GESI came through strongly in interviews with NCCSP2 TA team members. A sense of personal commitment to making a contribution to an inclusive society was evident, with GESI described as being at the core of the NCCSP2 programme. A programme team member explained that if GESI was not addressed as a crosscutting issue, it would be impossible to meet the programme's overall goal. Senior leadership explained that even more important than incorporating GESI into the design of the programme was the team having the mindset that without a focus on GESI the programme could not achieve results.

Senior leadership within NCCSP explained that although GESI was reflected in the programme approach, the motivation to mainstream GESI was also driven by a wider organisational commitment within the implementing partner. In their performance appraisal system, everyone has around 15 areas of goal setting, including equity, diversity and inclusion, health, safeguarding and wellbeing, and social outcomes. These goals are reviewed quarterly with the line manager with more extensive annual appraisals. The performance appraisals are linked to bonuses. They also believed that a focus on GESI and LNOB was an expectation in all FCDO programmes. In this way, they described a combination of organisational commitment, direction from FCDO, and the nature of the programme itself combining to drive a focus on GESI.

Source in the global literature 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 was 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). Across the BEK portfolio, there was limited evidence of efforts to promoting ongoing learning on GESI mainstreaming within programme teams (See Common Approach 7 for more detail). The most common way for BEK programmes to have made GESI results visible appeared to be through integrating some reporting on GESI, for example, in annual reviews or during regular meetings. Among BEK programmes, GESI results tended to be presented in the form of disaggregated data, although to varying degrees and with limited consistency, or in response to specific GESI outputs or outcomes if the programme had any (see Common Approach 11 for more detail). Some BEK programmes had conducted GESI reviews or developed learning briefs or other knowledge products which focused on or featured GESI.

With programmes that had produced GESI-focused learning documents, there was little consistency in terms of whether they then incorporated GESI results in other programme documents. Where this had not happened, it ran the risk of GESI results only being visible to those who sought out GESI-focused learning. With both the reporting of GESI results and learning briefs, it was often not clear if and how these were used to promote ongoing learning across the BEK portfolio. However, there were exceptions and at least one BEK programme had made a considerable effort to make GESI activities visible through programme reporting and had encouraged learning through compiling GESI lessons from review meetings followed by regular meetings to learn from one another's successes and brainstorm solutions to challenges.

Across the BEK portfolio, there were no obvious examples of programme leadership recognising and rewarding GESI mainstreaming efforts/results within the programme as a way to motivate their teams to prioritise GESI. One implementing partner explained that their organisation had annual global awards that staff could be nominated for, some of which were for innovations in relation to gender and social inclusion, but they did not appear to have used this to recognise efforts within the BEK programme they were working on. This was in contrast to the global literature which placed a specific emphasis on the need for programme leadership to actively recognise and reward individual contributions to GESI mainstreaming (UNHCR, 2022, IDB, 2018, ILO, 2021).

6. Findings for Essential Element 2: Capacity & Culture

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

Overview of findings related to capacity and culture

Global literature highlights that addressing GESI in the internal workings of programme teams makes them better equipped to address GESI through programming.

Diverse recruitment

- Sources in the global literature not only underlined the importance of recruiting diverse teams but also the need to encourage diversity to be valued so that alternative perspectives are shared, listened to and acted upon.

- Almost two thirds of the BEK portfolio were able to point to some degree of diversity within their teams, especially in terms of the recruitment of women. However, in most of these programmes it was unclear how proactively this had been prioritised or whether the diversity that had been achieved was incidental. Overall, there was a degree of inconsistency across the portfolio in terms of whether and to what extent diverse recruitment has been prioritised by programmes.
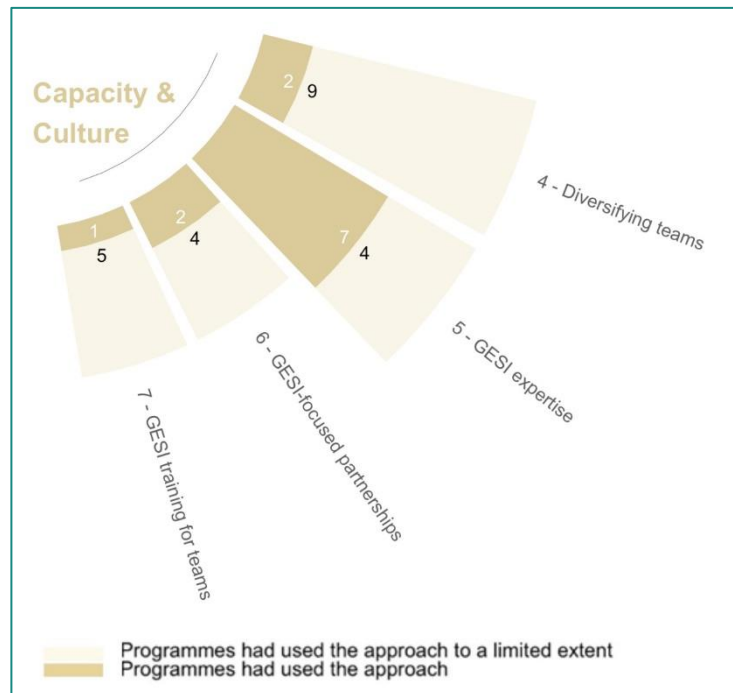
Figure 5 Capacity & Culture in BEK Programmes

- Diversity that had been achieved tended to be considered valuable by programme teams, who believed the lived experience of marginalisation led to strengthened programming. Limited diversity in some parts of government also meant that including women and people from marginalised groups in programme and TA teams was an immediate way of bringing diverse voices and perspectives into meetings and events.

- For BEK programmes that had taken a more proactive approach to promoting diversity, challenges in recruiting candidates from marginalised backgrounds had prompted them to re-evaluate recruitment criteria and seek to widen applicant pools. Programmes highlighted challenges in recruiting candidates from marginalised groups who had necessary expertise for roles with programmes. For several programmes, a lack of candidates from diverse backgrounds led to what they perceived as a tension between promoting diversity and merit-based recruitment.

- In several cases, an emphasis on diverse recruitment within programme teams had been driven by BEK as well as wider organisational commitments of implementing partners. It was helpful to have a mutual understanding that diverse recruitment takes time and would sometimes mean taking a chance on candidates who were not always the most obvious choice.

- Despite being emphasised in the global literature, very few efforts were identified within the portfolio which aimed to influence team culture to embrace and value diversity.

GESI expertise

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

- In line with this, the use of GESI experts was relatively common across the BEK portfolio, with a majority of programmes having brought at least some GESI expertise into their teams, either through permanent roles or for discrete inputs. However, a few programmes appeared to have had no input from GESI experts at all. Chiming with the global literature, these programmes appear to have done far less to mainstream GESI overall. In contrast, programmes which had embedded full time GESI experts in their programme teams often described the value this had added to programmes and the pivotal role they played in advocating for and helping to deliver mainstreaming approaches.

- Where programmes relied on inputs from GESI experts outside programme teams, this often resulted in GESI experts being too far removed from the details of design and delivery to meaningfully input and shape GESI mainstreaming. BEK programmes which had meaningfully invested in GESI expertise had tended to bring them into their core teams in full time dedicated roles with a clear set of responsibilities.

- Whilst the global literature highlighted the role which GESI focal persons can play within GESI mainstreaming, there appears to be some confusion within the BEK portfolio where GESI focal persons who had little or no previous GESI experience were considered interchangeable with GESI experts.

- Programmes employing multiple GESI specialists within their wider teams highlighted the benefit of this enabling a more nuanced understanding of contextual complexities and more tailored approaches to GESI mainstreaming. These experts also appeared to be able to work collectively as a team, rather than being a lone voice on GESI within the programme, something which was highlighted as valuable in the global literature. Having a GESI 'team' within BEK programmes was especially valued given a lack of cross-programme networking or collaboration among GESI experts.

- The difficulty of recruiting GESI experts with combined expertise in gender inequality *and* social exclusion was raised as a challenge among BEK programmes, potentially impacting the scope of GESI approaches across programmes and resulting in limited use of an intersectional lens. A lack of professional development support for GESI experts within BEK programmes appears to be underpinned by an unrealistic expectation that GESI experts will come automatically equipped to work across every aspect of a programme without the need for any upskilling.

GESI-focused partnerships

- Several sources within the global literature highlight the value of working with local partners in helping to bring contextually relevant innovation to programmes and to enable access to marginalised communities. This was also framed within the literature as enabling programmes to contribute to longer term processes of change in support of GESI.

- In contrast to the global literature, the BEK portfolio demonstrated limited use of partnerships to enhance GESI capacity within programmes. Approximately a third had made some effort in this area but only two appeared to have actively engaged in strong collaborations with GESI-focused organisations. Working with partners to strengthen GESI capacity within programmes was in fact one of the least used approaches within the BEK portfolio, perhaps surprising given the number of programmes seeking to mainstream GESI in their work.

- More commonly, however, BEK programmes had engaged with civil society organisations, including those with GESI expertise, as part of consultations. Others had also supported various levels of government to engage with civil society organisations and seek their inputs, for example during policy or strategy development. Where BEK programmes had actually partnered with GESI-focused organisations, these collaborations appeared to have added value to programmes, including enabling interventions to strengthen collective voice. Several GESI experts within BEK programme teams thought that partnering with GESI-focused organisations would have been beneficial. They also felt that such partnerships could have helped to strengthen the understanding and capacity of programme team

members to work on GESI. However, it appears that GESI experts rarely had the authority, budget, or flexibility within BEK programmes to bring in local or international partners focused on GESI.

Team training

- Within the global literature a lack of knowledge and skills among teams was identified as a considerable barrier to progress on GESI mainstreaming. Training was consistently highlighted as a valuable part of a wider approach to competency development. Several sources pointed to the importance of team members being personally convinced of the need for – and value of – GESI mainstreaming in order to achieve anything other than token gestures within programmes.

- Despite the widespread emphasis within the global literature on the importance of strengthening the knowledge, competencies and skills of programme teams to mainstream GESI, surprisingly few BEK programmes had made concerted efforts in this regard. Several had made at least some investments in this area, and only two to a considerable extent, whilst others had not prioritised GESI training for their teams. Several implementing partners had delivered their own organisational training on GESI which was generic rather than tailored to specific programmes. This meant that GESI trainings were not necessarily timed to fit the programme timeframe and were delivered to different team members at different times, instead of at the beginning of the programme. This had meant that programme delivery started without team members having been trained on GESI mainstreaming.

- A reliance on company-wide GESI trainings contrasted with the global literature which placed an emphasis moving beyond using training to provide general information on GESI. In some cases, 'GESI training' or orientations simply communicated GESI as a value and something which team members should be aware of. With few exceptions trainings lacked a focus on fostering a sense of commitment to GESI mainstreaming and crucially building the skills needed to deliver it. Programmes appeared to lack clarity about whether BEK programmes could use budgets to train programme teams. Several BEK colleagues appeared to subscribe to the notion that implementing partners should come equipped with GESI knowledge and mainstreaming skills and should not need to be trained using BEK resources.

Common Approach 4: Diversifying teams

Several sources in the global literature 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).

At least ten of the 15 BEK programmes had made at least some effort to promote diverse recruitment within their teams. Two of these programmes had focused on this to a considerable degree. Given that internal mainstreaming efforts such as these are less likely to be written down in formal programme documents or be widely known by team members, it is possible that other BEK programmes may also have made efforts to promote diverse recruitment which were not detected by the research. Nevertheless, there did appear to be a degree of inconsistency across the BEK portfolio in terms of whether and to what extent diverse recruitment has been prioritised by programmes.

All but one of the programmes that have – at least to some extent – focused on diverse recruitment had also worked to incorporate GESI into their programme designs and have sought to track GESI results. In some cases, BEK programmes drew an explicit link between team diversity and the strength of GESI programming. Here, the emphasis tended to be on diverse teams enabling different perspectives and understandings to be brought into the team through a variety of lived experiences. This included having a first-hand experience of challenges faced in areas where the programme was being delivered. Where this was described, it was not described as additional asset to the team but as fundamental to effective delivery. In particular, team diversity was seen as a vital way of enabling programmes to be designed and implemented in a way which was aware of local social and political realities in which programmes were operating, especially in the context of federalisation. This was in line with global literature which stressed the benefits of recruiting diverse teams, with individuals from marginalised groups strengthening work on GESI (see for example: Gupta et al., 2023).

Some BEK programmes which worked closely with or through federal, provincial or municipal government underlined the importance of ensuring diversity within programme teams. Given the limited diversity in some parts of government, ensuring women and people from marginalised groups were brought in through programme teams was described as an immediate way of bringing diverse voices and perspectives into meetings and events. This was considered to be especially valuable where BEK programmes were providing embedded TA within government and was described as an important way to ensure that marginalised groups were not only represented as programme beneficiaries. Some implementing partners explained that diversity within their own programme teams was a way to role model diversity with new provincial and local governments.

Some programmes within the BEK portfolio had concentrated efforts specifically on increasing numbers of women, both in staff positions and as consultants. This appeared in part to be driven by GoN legal provisions that require at least 33 percent representation of women in public positions. In some cases, it appears that reaching 33 percent was seen as sufficient, with little emphasis on striving to go beyond it. This was in contrast to some BEK programmes which had made efforts to increase numbers of women in the team but had also emphasised a broader social inclusion lens to their work on diversity, being mindful of class, ethnicity, geographical location, and language too. In the case of one programme, a specific focus on was placed on the recruitment of youth, with the intention of bringing young people's experiences and perspectives into the programme team's thinking. No examples were found among the programmes of any effort to specifically recruit people with disability. There were also no examples of tracking diversity with an intersectional lens. Instead, programmes tended to describe the diversity they had achieved in terms of distinct social groups.

Several programmes had focused efforts on ensuring diversity in particular roles or in certain areas within a programme. This included a particular emphasis on prioritising representation of women and people from excluded groups among GESI experts and in M&E functions within programmes. This was felt to be beneficial in terms of bringing an understanding of complex social and political contextual factors, which would strengthen collection and interpretation of the data.

Programme teams that had achieved some degree of success in ensuring greater diversity within their teams described this as exceptional and not the norm. They believed that the efforts they had made in relation to diverse recruitment meant they stood out from others. In a few cases, team members within the same programme also had differing views on whether their programmes had been successful in diverse recruitment. Whilst there was a general agreement around success in recruiting women, some interviewees pointed out the predominance of women from dominant caste groups and underlined the need to improve diversity in terms of caste/ethnicity. For another BEK programme, whilst there had been an effort for diverse recruitment among permanent staff, it was pointed out that their short-term consultants continued to be mostly men from dominant castes. This highlighted the need for an intersectional lens within diverse recruitment as well as looking at the broader programme team.

The importance of presenting a more detailed and nuanced picture of diversity within programmes was also underlined. For example, one review of a BEK programme highlighted the importance of programmes not only being able to present disaggregated information about the composition of their teams but to be able to track this over time in order to check whether efforts to promote diversity were working and being maintained. This linked to a wider point that within some BEK programmes there appeared to be a degree of inconsistency in terms of diversity. This included programmes which had successfully recruited at least 50 percent women within their core programme team but lacked diversity in other areas, such as among field teams. Here BEK programmes cited challenges in recruiting women to positions in remote areas. Conversely, in one BEK programme, progress had been made in terms of increased diversity at district level but senior positions within programme teams remained dominated by men and those from dominant castes. One BEK programme described the relative ease with which they had recruited women at the local level in lower-skilled roles. However, rather than being part of an intentional drive to promote diversity, this had been prompted by out-migration of men from certain rural areas, which had created opportunities for women to be employed, for example as social mobilisers. This example underlined the importance of programmes presenting a nuanced picture of diversity, broken down by programme area, location, and levels of seniority as overall percentages could be misleading.

In several cases, an emphasis on diverse recruitment within programme teams had been driven by BEK. This had sometimes been rooted in original business cases, even if this included only a narrow focus on gender diversity. However, the clearest examples of diversity being encouraged by BEK was when SROs

and PROs set out specific expectations and played an active role in ensuring follow up. Interestingly, this was perhaps most clearly evident for the two BEK programmes which placed the greatest emphasis on diverse recruitment. For one of the programmes, this emphasis on diversity by BEK had been informed by a scoping study which underlined the importance of having local people with local knowledge within teams, as well as the views of younger people. In some cases, messaging on the importance of team diversity by BEK had been stressed during the procurement phase. It had also been reflected in business cases, invitations to tender, terms of reference, and programme documents as well as the approach to scoring of proposals and contracts. Some BEK colleagues stated more generally that implementing partners were expected to recruit diverse teams, without clarity on whether they were held to account if they did not.

In some cases, a wider organisational commitment to diversity among implementing partners appeared to play an important role. This included organisational diversity and inclusion policies having helped motivate action by programme teams. This was evident with programmes led by UN agencies, but also some non-governmental organisations and private sector consultancy firms. Depending on the emphasis within organisational policies among implementing partners, in some cases this encouraged a focus on diversity in terms of particular groups, most commonly women. Linked to this, in several BEK programmes, it was clear that programme leadership played a pivotal role in encouraging and enabling a focus on diversity.

Crucially, emphasis was also placed on the need for BEK and implementing partners to accept that diverse recruitment took time and had sometimes meant taking a chance on candidates who were not the most obvious choice. A lack of time in the early stages of a programme was identified as a hindering factor to ensuring diversity. For example, the Team Lead for one BEK programme pointed out that they had felt rushed during programme start up, meaning they focused on recruiting whoever they could instead of being able to focus on diversity. For some BEK programmes, it took time to understand the value which a diversity would bring to their team and time to identify which groups were underrepresented. For some BEK programmes, ambitions around diversity were initially broad brush but over time, especially in subsequent phases of a programme, more specific ambitions had been defined based on an understanding of which groups were underrepresented. In one programme, a mid-term review identified that all senior experts in certain parts of the programme were male, highlighting a risk of gender bias and exclusion of the voice of female experts. Since the programme team was already in place, they then established a policy that if they were hiring more than one consultant for a task, at least one had to be a female. Another programme described their approach to recruitment as one that was 'patient and deliberate'. They had found it beneficial to hold off on recruiting until they found the right candidates, from both a skills and diversity perspective. Here, they placed an emphasis on not rushing to recruit, especially when trying to recruit women for senior positions. This had included advertising vacancies for extended periods and moving to another recruitment round if needed.

> **Box 8: Using diverse recruitment to mainstream GESI in programme delivery**
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> **In the first phase of the D4D programme, the team noted that they had not had time to reflect on the types of inclusion they wanted to prioritise within the team.** Instead, they felt they had needed to focus on recruiting as quickly as possible, based on whoever was shortlisted. However, by the second phase they established a clearer ambition to strengthen team diversity, especially in terms of gender, caste, and class.
>
> The programme team described that because low numbers of women and people from marginalised communities worked in the data and technology sectors, it was particularly important for the programme to have a diverse team. This was not only because they felt it was something they should do, but also because it was important for the success of the programme. In this way, diverse recruitment and programme delivery were viewed as heavily interconnected. In particular they highlighted the importance of the team including members who brought a contextual understanding of different areas within Nepal and those who brought a lived experience of marginalisation.
>
> In order to achieve increased diversity, TAF focused on strengthening the recruitment process. This included categorising candidates and prioritising those from excluded groups. Only when women or those from Dalit or Madhesh communities were not available did they then look to recruit from other groups. The team explained that an important aspect of this approach was that where they identified a female candidate from a marginalised group who had less experience than others, they had still recruited them but on a short-term contract and provided them with support until they could move them over to a more permanent role. As a result of these efforts, D4D colleagues believe they have managed to strengthen diversity within their

relatively small programme team and among field coordinators. They have also brought the same focus on diversity when seeking to identify consultants.

All but two of the programmes within the BEK portfolio which had sought to recruit people from diverse backgrounds had done this alongside investing in GESI expertise within their teams. Indeed, one programme had drawn an explicit link between team diversity and the role of the programme's GESI Lead. Brought on at the start of the implementation phase, the GESI Lead, supported by a Team Leader who herself had GESI expertise, played a central role in the recruitment of other team members, including technical experts such as engineers. Beyond a focus on diversity among the candidates themselves, the GESI Lead's involvement in the recruitment process also provided an opportunity to bring in colleagues who demonstrated support for diversity and an openness to GESI mainstreaming. (See Common Approach 5 for more detail).

BEK programmes highlighted challenges in recruiting candidates from marginalised groups who had necessary expertise. This tended to be framed as part of a wider systemic problem based on historical marginalisation which had impacted on levels of education and opportunities to gain qualifications and experience. This was emphasised especially by BEK programmes which had needed to recruit technical specialists in particular in fields such as engineering and climate change as well as those in senior positions. For example, one BEK colleague stated that they had challenged an implementing partner to recruit women in leadership positions, but also acknowledged that it was difficult to do so because candidates needed to have a certain minimum set of skills. However, both the BEK colleague and Team Lead could not clearly state what efforts (if any) the programme had taken to recruit more women in senior leadership. This was true for several other programmes where BEK colleagues and Teams Leads were asked specifically about diverse recruitment efforts. Other programmes described competition for experienced candidates from a relatively small pool of diverse candidates. This was particularly emphasised in terms of recruiting women to take up positions outside Kathmandu.

For several BEK programmes, a lack of candidates from diverse backgrounds led to what they perceived as a tension between promoting diversity and merit-based recruitment. However, a few implementing partners pointed out that the challenge was not that there were not enough qualified candidates, but that there was a need for better recruitment strategies that were not only Kathmandu-focused or led.

In response to challenges in identifying candidates from marginalised groups, some BEK programmes had targeted strategies. For example, one of the implementing partners for a BEK programme described the value of requiring candidates to speak local Nepali languages as a way of encouraging applicants from certain marginalised groups. Although this was focused on the short-term staff needed for programme implementation rather than the core programme team, they believed that requiring certain language skills had been an important aspect in successfully diversifying recruitment. In another programme, the challenge of people from marginalised groups not hearing about opportunities was highlighted, as was the issue of educational qualifications and experience. Within one of the programmes, for example, several approaches had been simultaneously used to overcome systemic challenges which hindered diverse recruitment. This included:

- Advertising roles through organisations and groups which were connected to underrepresented groups
- Having diverse networks to reach out to potential candidates and inform them of upcoming vacancies
- Moving away from having English language skills as a default requirement for all roles
- Focusing on skills rather than qualifications or numbers of years of experience

Crucially, all these approaches were set out in the original business case and appeared to have been taken forward into implementation. This had resulted in what senior leadership of the programme described as one of the most diverse teams in terms of gender, geographic location, castes, and people speaking different languages. The SRO for this programme emphasised the value of having tried various approaches and not just accepting that diverse recruitment is a challenge.

Beyond examples of diverse recruitment, there was far less evidence that BEK programmes had taken steps to ensure diverse voices were valued, listened to, and acted upon within programme decision making. This was despite the fact that some programmes within the BEK portfolio explicitly recognised the value of diversity in strengthening team's thinking and decision making. Examples which were identified included a business case which referred to the intention that the management of the team would allow flexible working arrangements which would take different needs into account, especially those of women. However,

there was little information available from the programme team on whether and how this had been taken forward during implementation. Within another BEK programme, the GESI Focal Person led a presentation on inclusive behaviour within the workplace during a quarterly sectoral review session. A GESI Strategy for one BEK programme stood out in terms of underlining 'valuing diversity' as one of three guiding principles for the programme (along with DNH and local ownership). Guided by this principle, the strategy commits the programme to creating a culture within the programme which actively celebrates diversity and equality, and promotes openness and trust. The programme leadership described actively seeking out views from individuals from diverse backgrounds in order to strengthen the quality of their work. A staff survey within the programme team found that 81 percent of respondents considered 'internal recruitment processes which actively seek individuals with diverse social identities' to be part of GESI mainstreaming. Despite these examples, the overall lack of evidence from across the BEK portfolio on valuing diversity was in stark contrast to the global literature. Several global 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), combining efforts in relation to diverse recruitment with initiatives to promote a more respectful workplace (WHO, 2021).

Common Approach 5: Working with GESI experts

Almost all of the global literature reviewed underlined the need to invest in some form of GESI expertise so that programme teams had access to the technical capacity needed to implement GESI mainstreaming (see for example UN Women, 2022). A number of these sources pointed to challenges when it was assumed that GESI mainstreaming was equally everyone's responsibility. Rather, a clear message from the literature was that investing in GESI expertise was a crucial aspect of enabling GESI mainstreaming (see for example: Bond, 2019; DSU, 2019; FCDO, 2021; Gupta et al., 2023; World Bank, 2021). Several global sources provided evidence that GESI experts had strengthened mainstreaming efforts, and that performance was weaker when they were not in place (IDB, 2018; AfDB, 2020; FCDO, 2021).

This emphasis on the use of GESI experts within programmes was reflected across much – but not all – of the BEK portfolio. Out of 15 BEK programmes, 11 had invested in GESI expertise, at least to some degree. Seven of these programmes had made considerable investments in this area, with clear roles for GESI experts marked out within programme teams. Crucially, the four programmes which had not invested in GESI expertise in any visible way were also those which had used the fewest approaches in relation to GESI mainstreaming overall. For example, these programmes also had no GESI strategy and did not appear to have worked to develop team competencies and skills for GESI mainstreaming. This could indicate that GESI experts tend to motivate the use of these approaches within programmes. It could also highlight that programmes which do not invest in GESI expertise tend not to recognise the value of investing in internal GESI mainstreaming efforts more broadly. Overall, it appears that GESI expertise is needed in order to think strategically about the complexity of mainstreaming and to develop a strategy for it. Nevertheless, three of the four BEK-funded programmes which lacked any GESI expertise had still attempted to address GESI – albeit to a very limited extent – in their programming. This appeared to be rooted in a view among some Team Leaders of BEK programmes that GESI expertise was not necessary for GESI mainstreaming. In some cases, Team Leaders felt they were already sensitised to GESI issues, or that time spent studying abroad meant they had sufficient insight into equality and inclusion. It is not clear that this view had been challenged by BEK colleagues.

In some cases, the need for a GESI expert within programmes had been identified and requested by BEK. This was sometimes outlined in programme business cases or had been explained to implementing partners at the outset. In contrast, some business cases made no reference to the need for GESI expertise within teams and BEK colleagues were not always sure whether programmes had GESI expertise available to them. There does not appear to have been consistent messaging from BEK about whether GESI expertise was expected within programme teams. In some cases, BEK colleagues assumed that international organisations which were managing BEK programmes would automatically provide access to GESI expertise. However, BEK programmes which had relied on inputs from colleagues elsewhere in their organisation had often received only light touch inputs. Unless they had a dedicated role within a programme, or were supporting someone who had, there was little to suggest that wider GESI expertise within implementing partner organisations was sufficient for GESI mainstreaming.

Especially in global organisations, experts within central GESI teams were too far removed from the details of BEK programme design and delivery to meaningfully input and help shape GESI

mainstreaming. Interviewees at field level tended to stress the value of having someone who was continuously available within the programme to provide ongoing support for GESI mainstreaming in order to help establish new ways of working. This chimed with an emphasis in the global literature on GESI expertise being located within programme teams (FCDO, 2021).

Similar challenges were evident in BEK programmes which had relied on inputs from GESI consultants rather than having a GESI expert permanently within their programme team. Whilst there were examples of these specific technical inputs being valued within BEK programmes, this approach had effectively reduced GESI mainstreaming to a series of discrete inputs rather than an ongoing process which was steered by an expert. A lack of an ongoing role in programme teams meant GESI consultants had relied on programme teams knowing when to pull them in. Where GESI experts had been established as permanent members of BEK programme teams they tended to describe identifying where GESI efforts were needed and their role in convincing colleagues this was the case. In BEK programmes where team members who did not have GESI expertise decided when and what type of GESI inputs were needed from consultants, it is likely that opportunities were missed to apply a GESI lens to less obvious aspects of the programme. Notably, although not all BEK programmes which had invested in GESI expertise had gone on to expand the scope of their programmes to include GESI-focused interventions, all of the programmes that had done so had GESI experts in permanent positions within their teams. These findings chimed with the global literature in which several sources noted limitations with approaches which relied only on short-term inputs from GESI experts (Gupta et al., 2023).

In contrast, BEK programmes which had meaningfully invested in GESI expertise had tended to bring them into their core teams in full time dedicated roles with a clear set of responsibilities. This reinforced findings from the global literature, which 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).

Some programmes within the BEK portfolio which did not recruit GESI experts had instead identified a GESI focal person. These tended to be colleagues who did not have any pre-existing knowledge or experience in GESI mainstreaming, but who took on the role of GESI focal person alongside their main job. There were examples within the BEK portfolio of GESI experts and GESI focal persons working together within programmes to support GESI mainstreaming. However, the global literature pointed to focal persons being insufficient in themselves for effective GESI mainstreaming. Despite this, some programmes within the BEK portfolio had used GESI focal persons rather than GESI experts within their teams. A tendency within some programmes and among some BEK colleagues to use the terms 'GESI expert' and 'GESI focal person' interchangeably seems to have led to some degree of confusion about the distinction between the roles, and the view that a focal person is sufficient. In one programme, early programme documents committed to establishing a dedicated GESI specialist or adviser within the team but then during implementation this switched to a GESI focal person without any clear rationale or explanation.

The nature of a GESI focal person's main job has influenced how they have approached the role within BEK programmes. In the absence of experience related to GESI mainstreaming, GESI focal persons have tended to focus in on existing skillsets. In one BEK programme for example, the role of GESI focal person was given to a M&E Officer. Perhaps unsurprisingly given their area of expertise, the only GESI mainstreaming approach used by the programme focused on the tracking of results. In another BEK programme, the GESI Focal Person's role had been given to one of the most junior people in the team, who focused their efforts entirely on the implementation of GESI-related activities. This mirrored the type of role they were used to performing and meant that being a GESI Focal Person became an operational role rather than one with a more strategic focus on shaping and overseeing GESI mainstreaming across the programme. A more strategic role of this kind would have involved being part of management discussions and influencing colleagues and resource allocations – something they would not have had experience in doing and which would have been beyond their current skillset and status within the team hierarchy. Others in the team reflected the GESI Focal Person's lack of status, describing their inputs in terms of optional guidance, which they could choose whether or not to take on board.

A lack of status or influence by GESI Focal Persons within BEK programme teams appears to have been compounded by a lack of additional training or skills development in relation to GESI mainstreaming. In some cases, GESI Focal Persons had received no formal capacity strengthening on GESI and instead relied on 'on the job' training, despite having no experience in GESI before taking on the role. In reality, in some BEK programmes this has meant that, despite a commitment to – or enthusiasm for

– GESI mainstreaming, Focal Persons have had no additional skills or experience in GESI mainstreaming to anyone else on the team. This means they have had limited ability to bring in learning from elsewhere or to identify when GESI mainstreaming efforts were too limited in scope to be effective. Unlike experienced GESI experts, they are unable to identify the possibility of shaping programmes so that GESI is incorporated into every aspect. Instead, there appears to have been a tendency to focus on specific additional GESI related or women-focused activities which effectively operate as GESI projects within an overall programme.

Challenges related to minimal experience in GESI mainstreaming and a lack of clout were not limited to Focal Persons. Some BEK programmes had recruited GESI experts who were early in their careers and who were relatively junior compared to other colleagues. This has led to a lack of influence within teams and had limited their ability to increase GESI ambitions by drawing on experience from other programmes. In some BEK programmes this lack of status among GESI experts had been formally reflected in their role titles, for example where a GESI expert had been given the role of GESI Officer rather than GESI Adviser or Lead and were not members of the senior programme team. In contrast, more experienced and senior GESI Leads within BEK programmes had been able to demonstrate examples of influencing colleagues, programme interventions and ways of working in order to strengthen GESI mainstreaming.

The GESI Lead of one BEK programme felt that having been brought in from the start of the programme had been crucial to establishing her status within the team and influencing early design and recruitment processes. Indeed, it appears BEK programmes that there was value in bringing GESI expertise into the team from the start. Yet there were examples within the BEK programme of GESI experts being brought in part way through implementation, meaning they had to find a way to influence already established ways of working and to attempt to unpack aspects of the programme which have already been designed and have begun to be delivered. Where this is the case, it undoubtedly reduced scope for GESI mainstreaming. This reinforces findings from the global literature, with several sources describing the importance of GESI experts being in place at the very start of programmes, before they are designed (FCDO, 2021).

Some BEK programmes had drawn on the expertise of international GESI specialists, often from within their own organisations, during bidding, partnership development, design, and inception phases. Many then moved to recruiting Nepali GESI experts at the start of implementation. The value of having GESI knowledge and expertise which is specific to Nepal was stressed by interviewees from a number of programmes, which resonates with findings from the global literature. Although it is unclear whether opportunities had been missed to bring Nepali expertise into BEK programmes at initial bidding and design stages, it is logical to assume that if this was believed to add value during programme implementation, it would also have added value in the very earliest stages of programme design.

Challenges faced by GESI experts within BEK programme teams appear to have been compounded when they have been the sole GESI expert within their team. GESI experts in this situation tended to describe a sense of isolation and of being a lone voice on GESI. The breadth of their role was also in some cases clearly beyond the scope of what one person could realistically cover. GESI experts have needed to cover the geographical reach of BEK programmes, in some cases having oversight of GESI mainstreaming efforts across a large number of municipalities. In such cases, it was difficult to see how any level of seniority or depth of experience in GESI mainstreaming would have made the breadth of the role manageable. Within BEK programmes with only one GESI expert, they have needed to choose to either spread their inputs thinly across the programme or to concentrate their efforts on certain interventions or geographical areas, meaning that attention to GESI appears patchy and inconsistent as a result.

Some BEK programmes had sought to supplement GESI expertise within their team with additional consultancy inputs for specific tasks. This has included hiring GESI consultants with specific skills or areas of expertise at specific points within programmes, for example to conduct GESI analysis, to help develop GESI strategies, to input to specific policies or regulations, or to conduct GESI trainings. This appears to have been especially useful when programmes have worked to assist the GoN with work in specific policy areas. Similarly, within the global literature, several sources also identified the value of programme GESI experts being supported by specialist external expertise, when needed (see for example: EIGE, n.d.). However, it was noted by some GESI experts within BEK programmes that they tended to lack control over resources, limiting the extent to which they could bring in additional support for GESI mainstreaming. There was only one clear exception to this. This stands in contrast to the global literature in which several sources highlight the value of GESI experts having control of at least small budgets within

programmes which they could use flexibly as needed during programme design and delivery (see for example: UNESCO, 2020 and Bond, 2019; UN Women, 2022).

GESI experts working on BEK programmes tended to describe the importance of having more than one GESI expert in order to better reflect the scale and scope of GESI mainstreaming efforts needed. Several BEK programmes had invested in multiple GESI specialists as well as an overall GESI Lead. Within these programmes, a team of GESI specialists had been able to bring in a nuanced understanding of the social, economic and political contexts in which the programmes were operating. They were also well placed to assess and strengthen the capacity of government and other stakeholders in GESI mainstreaming in a way which one lone GESI specialist would have been unable to do. For programmes which had established these multiple – often provincially-based – GESI roles, an ongoing challenge was to ensure post were filled. Recruitment and retention of GESI specialists, especially outside Kathmandu, was cited as a difficulty with high turnover and at times vacant posts.

Box 9: Equipping programme teams with GESI expertise in every municipality

NURP's GESI strategy committed to GESI experts being involved in overall programme design, monitoring and decision making. This was followed through to implementation, with input from an international GESI expert at bidding stage and during inception. At the start of programme implementation, NURP's Team Leader, who herself has GESI expertise, brought in a Nepali GESI expert as the programme's Lead GESI Adviser. Bringing her in at this point meant she was able to influence fundamental ways of working within the team, to shape programme interventions and to play a role in the recruitment of colleagues.

The GESI Lead brought considerable experience to the role, having worked on GESI issues in Nepal and beyond and was placed in a senior role within the team to reflect this depth of experience. Crucially, the GESI lead had worked across a number of sectors, including infrastructure. She described this sector-specific experience as enabling her to consider innovative ideas about how GESI could be integrated into NURP. In addition to her sectoral experience, she also emphasised the value of having programme management experience which equipped her with an understanding of operational realities related to budgeting, planning and delivery. She believed that this had enabled her to apply a GESI lens in a way which was practical and realistic, which was reassuring for colleagues.

Additionally, the GESI Lead recruited three municipal level GESI specialists who were based in the three municipalities in which the programme was working. These specialists developed a more nuanced contextual understanding of how GESI mainstreaming was working at a local level, something which would not have been possible with just one GESI expert based in Kathmandu. The specialists fed back insights on programme delivery to the GESI Lead so she could tailor GESI mainstreaming approaches to each context. This was helpful in moving away from a blanket approach to true GESI mainstreaming. Given NURP's focus on providing demand-driven TA to municipalities, relationship building was paramount, and it was viewed as important that the three GESI specialists were not seen as superior to the municipal officials they were working with. Time was invested in them playing a helpful role so that municipal colleagues wanted input from them, rather than feeling intimidated or like they were being told what to do. The GESI Lead was keen to stress that everything she had worked on in relation to GESI mainstreaming had been done as a team. This was based on a two-way exchange of knowledge, with the GESI specialists providing insights from the local context and the GESI Lead feeding back guidance based on her experience and expertise.

Having a GESI 'team' within BEK programmes was especially valued given a lack of cross-programme networking or collaboration among GESI experts. In BEK programmes where multiple GESI specialists were in place, this provided some scope for GESI colleagues to work together as a team. This tended to be viewed as particularly valuable in programmes in which GESI was not seen as having a natural fit and where other colleagues needed to be persuaded of the relevance of GESI to their work. There was a sense from programme GESI experts that further opportunities or spaces for learning among GESI experts would be welcome. Beyond teamwork among GESI colleagues within individual programmes, no examples were identified of GESI experts collaborating with their counterparts in other programmes within the BEK portfolio. This was despite the fact that many had been undertaking similar tasks within programmes and were likely to have faced similar challenges. Within the global literature, at least one source highlighted that the potential value of GESI experts working on individual programmes being able to network with others in similar roles in order to share ideas and lessons (UNESCO, 2020).

GESI experts working on BEK programmes described the challenge of working in sectors where the GESI angle was less obvious than in others. Here, they had relied on reading, their own networks and on the job learning to get up to speed. In contrast, GESI experts who had sectoral knowledge and experience which was directly relevant to the programme they were working on felt it had been an asset to them. In part this related to being able to hold their own with other colleagues with technical expertise and to be taken seriously in a role which was very different to others they were working with. Previous experience of working in a particular sector had also enabled them to pinpoint the specific relevance of GESI both to overall programme objectives and to specific activities the programme was delivering. Despite examples of BEK programmes recruiting GESI experts with existing knowledge of specific sectors, this does not appear to be consistent across the portfolio. Where sectoral knowledge among GESI experts was lacking, with few exceptions, programmes had not sought to strengthen their capacity to apply GESI expertise to programming in a sector-specific way. This contrasted with the global literature which highlighted the value of strengthening the sectoral knowledge of GESI experts (see for example FCDO, 2021).

There appears to be a widespread expectation that GESI experts would join BEK programme teams fully equipped with all of the competencies they would need, without the need for upskilling. GESI experts within BEK programmes described the broad range of areas they were required to work across, form budgeting, analysis, technical assistance, policy development, capacity building, programming, indicator development, and M&E. They did not always feel equally well equipped to work across all of these. Some GESI experts working within BEK programme teams had benefited from professional development opportunities within their own organisations, especially where established systems of support were already in place. In contrast, other GESI experts working within BEK programme teams described having received no professional development support in relation to GESI mainstreaming.

It also appears to have been assumed among some BEK programmes that GESI experts could automatically work across all aspects of exclusion and marginalisation. However, interviewees from several BEK programmes highlighted that it had been a challenge to find GESI experts who could focus equally on both gender inequality *and* social exclusion. It was not possible within the scope of this work to map the skills and specific areas of expertise of GESI experts working on BEK programmes against the social groups their work had focused on. Nevertheless, it was evident that many programmes had focused more narrowly on specific aspects of inequality and exclusion without necessarily having a clear logic for this. In some cases, a prescriptive steer had come from BEK for programmes to focus on certain groups, for example people with disabilities. It was not always clear that programme GESI experts had any previous experience of working in disability and had attempted to do so without any further knowledge or skills development.

Common Approach 6: Establishing GESI-focused partnerships

Within the global literature, 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). Several sources described the particular 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).

In contrast, working with partners to strengthen GESI capacity with programmes was one of the least used approaches within the BEK portfolio. Six BEK programmes had worked with GESI-focused partners to some extent but just two had done so in a considerable way. Lead implementing partners for both of these programmes had formed partnerships with Nepali organisations to bring in specific forms of GESI expertise with an intention to support wider processes of change. This chimed with the global literature in which sources stressed that it was crucial to support women's rights organisations through mainstream programmes as a way of connecting programme interventions to locally owned processes of social change. Linked to this, sources underlined that programmes could also help create entry points and opportunities for local organisations to influence change, for example through engagement with government (see for example GADN, 2015).

Several GESI experts within BEK teams underlined that partnerships with GESI focused organisations would have added value to GESI mainstreaming efforts. In particular they noted that partnering with GESI-focused organisations would not only have benefitted programme design and delivery but would also have helped strengthen the understanding and capacity of programme teams to mainstream GESI. However,

across the BEK portfolio it appeared that GESI experts tended not to have the authority, budget, or flexibility to bring in local or international partners to strengthen the GESI capacity of the programme.

> **Box 10: Partnering with women's rights organisations and survivor-led organisations for context- and sector-specific GESI expertise**
>
> Hamro Samman has been intentional and strategic about selecting partners to work with the programme, including women's rights organisations and survivor-led organisations which brought a solid understanding of issues related to trafficking. A learning brief for the programme identified that this had contributed to the integration of GESI at the institutional level within the programme. The value of having a number of national and local organisations who could engage with federal, provincial, and local governments was underlined here. So too was the fact that the organisations did not work broadly on GESI but were instead focused on specific issues, and crucially brought in the voices of people with a lived experience who could speak about issues first hand.
>
> BEK colleagues underlined this point and explained that because survivor-led organisations were run by people who had experienced the impacts of being trafficked, they were able to have different types of conversation and get the attention of government authorities, and influence negotiations.

A further four BEK programmes had made at least some effort to work with partners on GESI mainstreaming. This included training local implementing partners on GESI expectations, partnering with UN agencies to work on issues related to disability and senior citizens, partnering with local and international partners to address gender-based violence, or bringing local organisations in to help troubleshoot when specific issues came up with a particular group. This type of support was sometimes very practical, for example supporting women in communities to use sanitary towels when menstruating in order to enable their consistent participation in programme activities. In at least one programme, partnerships with local organisations appeared to have been established on a largely voluntary basis with the logic of not creating dependency and ensuring sustainability. However, although not explicitly addressed by the programme, tit is not clear whether – and to what extent this might have discouraged the most marginalised and under-resourced organisations from being able to partner with them.

More commonly, BEK programmes had engaged with a range of civil society organisations, including those with GESI expertise, as part of consultations. Some BEK programmes had also supported various levels of government to engage with civil society organisations and seek their inputs during policy or strategy development. However, these tended not to be in the form of actual programme partnerships. A number of programmes also worked with local Nepali organisations during implementation, but the organisations they worked with did not necessarily have GESI expertise or networks. There were very few examples of programmes bringing GESI expertise in through partnerships with regional or global organisations. The exceptions here tended to be programmes which had worked with UN agencies to support work with specific groups such as women, people with disabilities or older people.

The apparently small number of partnerships with GESI-focused organisations within the BEK portfolio was perhaps surprising given the number of programmes seeking to mainstream GESI in their work. This included programmes which had committed to reaching certain excluded groups, such as people with disabilities, with apparently no disability expertise within the programme or partnerships with organisations which have experience of reaching people with disabilities or mainstreaming disability into programming. There was at least one BEK programme in this position which had missed its targets on disability.

Several programmes had worked to strengthen the capacity of GESI-focused partner organisations and delivery partners, who do not have GESI expertise, to institutionalise GESI in their work. In some cases, this included organisations which had received funding through challenge funds. Within one of the BEK programmes, the implementing partner conducted organisational capacity assessments of partner organisations. They initially found that most of the organisations did not have a GESI policy. In response, the programme provided six months of consultancy support to work with partners and help them develop GESI policies, with a focus on contributing to greater inclusion in the technology sector. In this case, capacity building extended beyond GESI policy development to include follow up support to encourage and enable implementation, with the programme noting some proactively doing that.

Similarly, another BEK programme provided GESI-focused capacity building in the form of technical support and continuous mentoring to the 20 organisations the programme had partnered with, including to help them develop GESI policies. This included a range of civil society organisations (CSOs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that provided services. The programme went on to conduct a partner survey to assess results of its GESI capacity building efforts. Although limited in scope, the survey found that 83 percent of partners had components and activities in their project document which clearly included GESI activities and that 88 percent of them had a GESI policy and 75 percent had a dedicated GESI focal person. The survey also checked for 'gender balance' and 'balance of social inclusion' in the executive committee and staffing of partner organisations. Just over half were found to have good gender balance and 38 percent had a good balance of social inclusion. It was not clear how social inclusion was defined here but it is likely to have focused on caste/ethnicity.

Common Approach 7: Training programme teams on GESI

A lack of knowledge and skills among teams was identified in the global literature as a considerable barrier to progress on GESI mainstreaming (see for example USAID, 2020; UNOPS, 2022). This included sources which found a lack of understanding among teams of how to apply GESI mainstreaming to their work at a practical level as being a particular challenge (DFID, 2019). 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).

Only six of the 15 BEK programmes had clearly taken steps to develop team competencies, commitment, and skills for GESI mainstreaming. Only one of these have done so to a considerable extent. All of the programmes which had – at least to some extent - worked to strengthen their team's understanding and ability to work on GESI had also invested in some form of GESI expertise within their team. They had also all – to some degree – expanded the scope of their programmes to include GESI-focused interventions.

In contrast, it was evident that in a number of BEK programmes efforts had not been made in training teams in how to work on GESI. In interviews with some implementing partner teams, it was clear that there were gaps in basic knowledge related to GESI, including among senior team members. Four of these programmes had not only not sought to strengthen wider team capacity for GESI mainstreaming but had also made little or no investment in GESI expertise or in bringing in expertise through GESI-focused partnerships.

In several cases, BEK had identified gaps in programme teams' understanding of GESI and had sought to help them expand their understanding. For example, in one programme the implementing partner believed their work had 'no scope' to address GESI and therefore set only modest ambitions to ensure representation of women and other excluded groups in training interventions. However, BEK colleagues (then DFID Nepal) ran several brainstorming sessions with the implementing partner. The programme credited these sessions with increasing GESI awareness within the team and being able to actively identify opportunities for GESI interventions. Crucially, BEK colleagues underlined the importance of having a GESI focus in programme outcomes which helped create space for and motivate discussions about GESI with the programme team. In the case of another programme, BEK colleagues shared gender equality training materials used by FCDO colleagues. These materials were based on a gender equality guidance note developed by FCDO centrally, which had been the focus of refresher training received by BEK. These training resources, along with others from USAID were shared with the implementing partner, who went on to use them in training to downstream partners.

Several BEK colleagues appeared to prescribe to the notion that implementing partners should come equipped with GESI knowledge and mainstreaming skills and should not need to be trained using BEK programme resources. The perspective here appeared to be that due diligence processes during procurement would ensure that implementing partners had the capacity to deliver safe and effective programming, including in terms of GESI. The implication of this was that implementing partners therefore did not need further GESI competency development. However, what comes through from the research is that while the selection of implementing partners who already have a wider commitment to work on GESI is important, it is only a starting point. In several BEK programmes, an evident commitment to GESI mainstreaming among implementing partner organisations was insufficient in itself to ensure that GESI was integrated into programme design and delivery.

There were several examples of implementing partners with wider organisational commitment to GESI delivering their own organisational GESI training which was generic rather than tailored to the specific BEK programme. Within BEK programmes, this included accreditation and certification training for team leaders working on programmes, which had GESI aspects incorporated. Another implementing partner described compulsory all-staff GESI training delivered by the company's corporate GESI Lead on a rolling basis as part of a wider package of approximately 17 other organisation-wide trainings. Positively, in one BEK programme the implementing partner organisation had extended organisational GESI training to the programme's field team, despite them being engaged on a short-term basis rather than being staff.

As well as not being directly focused on the sector and interventions a particular programme was delivering, these organisation wide GESI trainings were not necessarily timed to fit programme timeframes. This sometimes meant that GESI training had been delivered to different team members at different times, instead of at the beginning of the programme, and that programme delivery had started without team members being trained in GESI. This stood in contract to global literature which emphasised the need for GESI training that was tailored to the local context rather than generic and off-the-peg training (UNHCR, 2022)

In some cases, GESI trainings delivered to BEK programme teams simply communicated GESI as a value and something which team members should be aware of. The term 'GESI training' was used to describe very different approaches within the BEK portfolio. Whilst in some cases, BEK programmes had delivered more comprehensive GESI training to their teams (see Box 11 for an example), in others 'GESI training' simply referred to a one to two hour long basic orientation. Within these short sessions there was often only time for simple messaging about the importance of being inclusive and not discriminating.

With few exceptions there was a lack of emphasis on using trainings and other team capacity building approaches to foster a sense of commitment to GESI mainstreaming and crucially – building the skills that are needed to deliver it. This appeared to be especially so where short GESI sessions had been delivered within a broader training. Whilst some GESI sessions could have provided a helpful starting point in terms of introducing programme teams to the principle of GESI, they were not sufficient to equip teams with the knowledge and skills needed for GESI mainstreaming. The limitation of these sessions was not something which was widely recognised by programme teams or BEK colleagues. Indeed, there appeared to be a tendency for teams, including programme leadership, to have overestimated what could be achieved in a one-off training session. Even in GESI orientation sessions which had been up to an hour long, there appeared to be an assumption that staff were now trained to use a GESI lens and mainstream GESI in their work. This was in contrast to the global literature in which sources emphasised the value of GESI training which focused on the development of specific mainstreaming skills rather than those that focused on raising team awareness on GESI (Gupta et al., 2023; UN Women, 2022). This part of the literature emphasised the need to move beyond training which provided 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 (EIGE, n.d.; WHO, 2021).

Across the portfolio, evidence of programmes following up to check what GESI training had achieved was minimal. where there have been GESI trainings for programme teams, efforts to track whether GESI training is actually achieving anything in terms of programme teams' knowledge, competencies and skills for GESI mainstreaming and actual application to their work appear to be lacking. In some cases, BEK colleagues and programmes which had sought to deliver some form of GESI training to their teams had identified that insufficient attention was being paid to post-training monitoring and follow-up to understand whether the thinking, attitudes or behaviours of participants had changed at all.

Box 11: Building GESI capacity widely within programme teams

NURP went beyond simply delivering one-off GESI trainings to the team. Instead, packages of ongoing support were delivered to the programme team. Within this programme, a focus on GESI competency development started long before training was delivered and was rooted in the recruitment process. The requirement to attend GESI training was included in every job description within the programme team. Early on, the programme's GESI Lead identified that there was a limit to what GESI training could achieve if participants were resistant to absorbing the information they were being given and opposed to the idea of incorporating GESI into their work. As a result, the GESI Lead and Team Leader were involved in the recruitment interviews for all other team members. Rather than ensuring every team member they recruited had knowledge or experience on GESI, during interviews they checked whether candidates had an

openness to learning more about GESI and prioritised them in the final selection. This included those who were applying for specialist roles such as architects and engineers. However, a challenge has been that in some cases, although candidates expressed an openness to learning more about GESI during a recruitment process, this interest waned once they were established in their roles.

The interview process also provided an early opportunity to make an initial assessment of candidates' knowledge and competencies in relation to GESI so they knew how much support they would need if they took on the role. Following the recruitment phase, the GESI Lead informally tested team members to better understand their level of knowledge and understanding of GESI. Another crucial element of the programme's approach to GESI training is that it was linked to the programme's action planning process to encourage practical application of what participants had learnt. The emphasis here was on ensuring the training was not abstract or conceptual but practical and tied to the realities of programme delivery. The GESI Lead also developed training sessions specifically for senior management and their role in the mainstreaming process.

The success of this approach is reflected in a survey of the programme team, in which all respondents said that 'all staff are responsible for understanding what GESI means and how to embed it in their work'. When asked what had been most useful to them in understanding GESI and how to mainstream it into their area of work, 75 percent of respondents said it was internal staff training.

There was some acknowledgment among BEK programmes of the limitation of GESI training, especially if teams were not open to learning about how to mainstream GESI. This largely came through interviews with one programme, which had made considerable effort to invest in GESI training for its team. They had found that at least some personal interest, openness or basic commitment to GESI provided a valuable starting point for GESI training. In contrast, colleagues who were closed to – or even against – the idea of prioritising GESI mainstreaming were far harder to engage in training sessions. This experience underlined the importance of incorporating attention to GESI in recruitment processes and to pitching GESI training at the right level for participants. In this programme, during interviews they had checked whether candidates had an openness to learning more about GESI and prioritised them in the final selection (see Box 11 above for further detail). Beyond this one example, interviewees from several other implementing partners suggested that women and those from marginalised groups tended to be more open to and supportive of GESI.

Within BEK programmes, where GESI tools and guidance had been developed there was mixed experience in terms of whether or not they had been used. One programme's GESI strategy set out the intention to develop tools and procedures targeted at programme staff in order to increase their technical skills and knowledge so they are equipped to embed GESI across programme operations and work streams. This has included a concept note template which had GESI aspects integrated into it. It was accompanied by a guidance note on GESI which team members had used as a checklist of questions when developing concept notes. A staff survey for the programme showed that the majority of the programme team felt that tools and guidance on GESI mainstreaming had been useful, although a GESI review and reflection session held with the team suggested an appetite for more. Another programme had also developed GESI-related tools, which included a checklist to ensure inclusive participation across programme activities and a GESI monitoring checklist on different components of the programme which was designed to regularly assess the quality of GESI mainstreaming throughout the programme. However, while the GESI expert mentioned that these tools were designed to enable the programme team to mainstream GESI, they noted that programme teams needed incentives to use them. At the same time, programme team members either could not recall the GESI tools and checklists or stated that they were only for the GESI experts. It was possible that the GESI guidance and tools were difficult to apply in practice, a common challenge noted in the global literature (see for example Gupta et al., 2023; World Bank, 2021; WHO, 2021).

Few examples were provided in relation to peer learning across BEK programmes to support GESI mainstreaming. This stood in contrast to global literature which emphasised the value of peer learning in supporting GESI mainstreaming (DRC, 2019; FCDO, 2021; Gupta et al., 2023; UNESCO, 2020). GESI experts across BEK programmes rarely had opportunities to engage with other GESI experts on other programmes or with wider GESI networks. Additionally, whilst some BEK programmes had created opportunities to review and share GESI activities with others, an intentional focus on the sharing of learning around GESI mainstreaming across programmes was generally lacking.

7. Findings for Essential Element 3: Results & Adaptation

This section presents findings related to a results-focus and ongoing adaptation in order to contribute to GESI outcomes. This includes the use of intersectional analyses to address barriers to the participation of marginalised groups in programme interventions, as well as efforts to expand the scope of programmes through targeted work in GESI. The section also presents findings related to the need to anticipate and manage additional risks related to GESI mainstreaming efforts, including the risk of backlash, and to track and report on progress in order to enable ongoing adaptation.

Overview of findings related to results and adaptation

Within the global literature, the ultimate purpose of GESI mainstreaming was often framed in terms of making tangible contributions to GESI outcomes, rather than an emphasis on the process of GESI mainstreaming in itself.

Intersectional GESI analysis

- Global sources highlighted the potential for operationally focused GESI analyses to strengthen GESI mainstreaming within programmes, in particular by enabling barriers for marginalised groups to be identified and understood.

- In line with this, most programmes within the BEK portfolio had conducted some form of GESI analysis at some stage, with varying degrees of depth and detail. It was especially commonplace for some form of GESI analysis to have been included in the business cases for BEK programmes. These early analyses were often fairly broad-brush and whilst in some cases they had helped to broadly establish that GESI was within the scope of a programme, they were often not fine grained enough to inform specific activities or interventions.
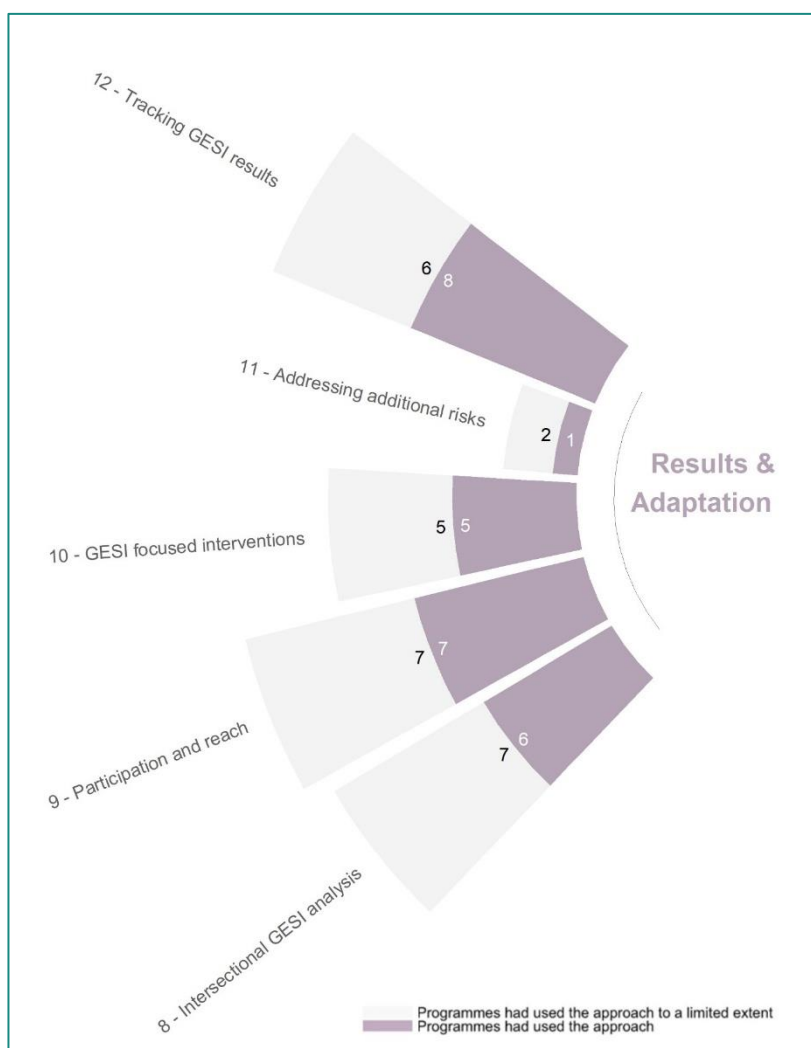
Figure 6 Results & Adaptation in BEK Programmes

- Limited and inconsistent use of intersectional analysis by BEK programmes meant they were often unable to consider multiple and overlapping forms of discrimination and exclusion. In some cases, BEK programmes described their GESI analyses as having been intersectional, although it was clear that perspectives varied about what using an 'intersectional lens' really meant.

- Despite an emphasis in the global literature on the need to ensure GESI analysis is used, the connection between GESI analysis and its influence on programme design was not always explicit. Where GESI

analysis had been used to inform BEK programme design, it was common for this to have led to GESI-focused interventions or minimal efforts to tweak mainstream interventions, rather than fundamentally reshaping them in order to benefit marginalised groups. In line with the global literature, programmes tended to find GESI analysis most valuable when it was conducted on an ongoing basis for specific activities and interventions and was built into programme processes, rather than in the form of one broad GESI analysis at the start. Notably, the programmes which did this were those who had GESI expertise within their teams or access to ongoing support from a GESI expert.

- In contrast, some programmes within the BEK portfolio viewed GESI analysis as a one-off activity. Here, the classic programme cycle which positions GESI analysis as an initial activity may have been unhelpful. Whilst some BEK programmes had gone on to do more specific GESI analyses to inform their targeting and planning, in others a lack of analysis for specific interventions or components has meant important GESI issues have been overlooked. This has led to some interventions which are far more simplistic than it is common to see in standalone GESI projects and programmes.

Participation and reach

- Global literature emphasised the importance of programmes addressing the challenges and barriers marginalised groups face in accessing and benefiting from programme interventions and resources. In line with this, it was common for BEK programmes to have made some effort to address barriers faced by particular groups. In many cases, these efforts had a strong emphasis on addressing the practical needs of women to enable their participation under existing government provisions.

- In only a minority of BEK programmes, interviewees also referred to adjustments made to enable participation of people with disabilities. These tended to focus on basic interventions to address physical barriers rather than more complex work to address social barriers to meaningful participation. In some programmes, efforts to address barriers to participation appeared to be reactive rather than anticipated, with some quite obvious barriers only identified quite far into programme implementation.

- Some programmes within the BEK portfolio had created spaces for certain groups to participate in, for example women, without consideration of intersectionality. Some programme teams reflected that adopting an intersectional lens would have added considerable value. Examples within the BEK portfolio suggested that despite the inclusion of women and some marginalised groups in programme activities, they faced ongoing barriers to their meaningful participation. There was often a lack of evidence of approaches being used to go beyond ensuring women and people from marginalised groups were 'at the table' in order to work towards meaningful participation and influence.

- Most notably, some BEK programmes had adopted very broad definitions of terms such as 'vulnerability' and 'disadvantage' rather than focusing specifically on particular marginalised groups. These were preferred by some teams as they allowed space for looser definitions and less specific categories of people they were attempting to target. In contrast a more specific focus on certain groups required programmes to engage with greater complexity, identifying and addressing multiple barriers and to engage with issues related to power, entrenched norms and discrimination. Some interviewees from programmes implementation teams therefore expressed some relief when BEK was comfortable with broader definitions as it reduced the pressure to target harder to reach groups and to engage with more thorny issues around power and historic marginalisation.

GESI-focused interventions

- Global literature underlined the importance of efforts to expand the scope of mainstream development programmes to maximise opportunities to contribute to empowerment and wider transformative change. These were often described as GESI-focused interventions and workstreams and additional components of work within mainstream programmes.

- Most BEK programmes reviewed had included some form of GESI-focused activities or interventions, most commonly with a focus on women. BEK programmes that stood out here tended to have also invested in GESI expertise and had conducted analysis to better understand GESI issues. However, it was not always evident that BEK programmes had designed GESI-focused interventions on GESI analysis, especially where programmes had responded to opportunities presented in the wider context.

- A number of BEK programmes had also included GESI-focused efforts through their work with government, most commonly at provincial and municipal levels. This included TA to support standalone

GESI policies, although with little explicit emphasis on implementation. All BEK programmes which had invested in supporting GESI policies had also provided some form of GESI training or orientation to federal, provincial, and municipal officials and/or elected representatives. However, whilst programmes were able to provide data on the numbers of people trained, they tended to provide only anecdotal evidence of any shifts in terms of knowledge or decision making as a result. Overall, it was unclear whether the delivery of GESI trainings and work to establish separate GESI policies represented a first step in a longer-term process of influencing change or whether these efforts would only ever have minimal effects. What also came through strongly was a lack of coordination among BEK programmes working with governments to develop GESI policies and deliver GESI trainings. Contrary to the global literature, a focus on norm change, shifting mindsets beyond government and efforts to strengthen collective voice were uncommon within the BEK portfolio.

- In contrast to the global literature, it was often unclear whether/how GESI focused interventions connected with other programme interventions and outcomes. There was a sense among some implementing partners that it was more straightforward to include discrete GESI interventions within programmes compared to the complexity of weaving them into broader programme interventions and processes.

Additional risks

- The global literature 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 and challenge current power dynamics and resource distribution.

- It is important to emphasise that this research did not look at safeguarding practice within BEK programmes, but instead looked more specifically at whether BEK programmes had sought to identify and address risks which might stem from – or be exacerbated by – GESI mainstreaming approaches being used. In contrast to the global literature, addressing additional risks related to GESI mainstreaming appeared to be the least used approach. There was little evidence that BEK programmes were seeking to identify or address any unintended consequences of GESI mainstreaming.

- Whilst it is possible that a review of programme safeguarding approaches would reveal that potential additional risks related to GESI mainstreaming were being addressed, few BEK programmes teams could describe potential unintended repercussions of their work on GESI, including intra-household tensions and community backlash triggered by efforts to challenge the status quo or target resources at certain groups. This was set against the backdrop of some government officials in interviews highlighting contextual factors which meant BEK programmes were being delivered in areas with risks related to violence, especially against women and girls. This included what they described as the prevalent harassment of women by men and widespread suspicion of work perceived as pushing a feminist agenda.

Tracking and reporting

- Addressing GESI through programme M&E was consistently recognised in the global literature as a vital aspect of mainstreaming, including the use of disaggregated indicators to identify who was accessing and benefiting from programmes. There was also an emphasis on the value of looking beyond disaggregation of programme indicators to develop GESI-specific outcomes and indicators.

- Tracking of results through disaggregated data was the most commonly used approach to GESI mainstreaming within the BEK portfolio, even where few other GESI mainstreaming approaches had been used by programmes. However, there was considerable variation in terms of levels and types of disaggregation being conducted, not only across the BEK portfolio but even within individual programmes. Whilst several BEK programmes had disaggregated at both outcome and output level, most commonly disaggregation was focused on outputs and in some cases, only at activity level. In addition, within some logframes certain indicators had been disaggregated and others had not, without a clear logic or explicit rationale.

- Sex disaggregation was the most common form of disaggregation, although where programmes had disaggregated by other social groups, it was not always clear how and why these had been selected. There was also a noticeable tendency among some BEK programmes to refer to broad categories of people when disaggregating, rather than specific groups. Disaggregated data had most commonly enabled BEK programmes to capture information about programme reach, although it was common for

programmes to present disaggregated data as distinct, separate groups with a lack of attention to intersectionality. Some programme teams explained that the more complex disaggregation of programme data which looked at groups within groups would have better revealed who was benefiting from development programming – and who was not.

- Despite the emphasis in the global literature on the importance of disaggregated data being used, it was often unclear within the BEK portfolio why certain forms of disaggregated data were being collected and whether they were being analysed and used with a clear purpose. In some cases programme teams and government systems had collected sizable volumes of disaggregated data which were ever expanding but with little evidence that the datasets were being analysed and used to inform learning and decision making. This lack of analysis made disaggregated data far less useful to programme teams. The limited analysis and use of disaggregated data was a gap which was acknowledged by some interviewees from programme teams.

- Several BEK programmes were, at least to some extent, using a mix of both disaggregation and GESI-focused indicators to track progress. Some programmes which had used GESI-focused indicators felt they not only gave status to GESI but had enabled regular discussion about GESI mainstreaming. However, a strong emphasis in the global literature on GESI results was not consistently evident within the BEK portfolio. Instead, GESI indicators were often vague and open to interpretation, with an emphasis on mainstreaming efforts having been made rather than GESI results having been achieved. Overall, it was difficult to get a clear sense of what programmes had achieved in relation to GESI. Missed opportunities were evident in terms of using GESI-focused results indicators, both to elevate GESI ambitions and to capture the potential true value of programme interventions.

Common Approach 8: Using intersectional GESI analysis

The global literature placed considerable emphasis on GESI analysis as a critical aspect of GESI mainstreaming. (Bond, 2019; Gupta et al., 2023; UN Women, 2022; WHO, 2021; UNOPS, 2022; GAC, n.d.; GPC, 2017).

In line with this, most programmes within the BEK portfolio (13 out of 15) had conducted some form of GESI analysis. This included six programmes which had made considerable efforts in this regard and seven which had at least made some effort to conduct analysis and reflect GESI in programme design. In one programme it was unclear whether they had conducted GESI analysis or made efforts to incorporate GESI into design. Two programmes appeared not to have explicitly conducted GESI analysis. These two programmes had also not invested in GESI expertise, not delivered GESI training to their teams and had not partnered with organisations with a GESI focus. They were also not investing in GESI-targeted activities.

It was relatively commonplace for some form of GESI analysis to have been included in the business cases for BEK programmes. How extensive or light touch this analysis was varies considerably across programmes. These early analyses were often fairly broad brush and tended to set out GESI or gender related issues in Nepal in the sector in which the programme would be delivered. In some cases these early GESI analyses had helped to broadly establish that GESI was within the scope of a BEK programme and to signal the types of GESI issues which could have been reflected in programme design. However, in some cases they were often not fine grained enough to inform specific activities or interventions.

An overwhelming perspective within the global literature was that GESI analysis was only valuable to the extent that it was actually used to inform the design of programme interventions (see for example: DSU, 2019; Gupta et al., 2023; WHO, 2021). The focus in much of the literature was on using GESI analysis to ensure more equitable access to programme benefits (GADN, 2015; DSU, 2019). The literature also revealed that despite being conducted, GESI analysis was not always reflected in subsequent design and implementation (Bond, 2019; Gupta et al., 2023). 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 (Gupta et al., 2023; World Bank, 2021).

With some exceptions, connections between GESI analysis and efforts to integrate GESI into the design of BEK programmes tended not to be explicit. In some BEK programmes it was possible to see that GESI analysis had been conducted and that alongside this teams had attempted to integrate GESI in at least some of their workstreams or interventions. However, it was not always clear what the relationship was – if any – between the two. Interviewees from programme teams were not always able to articulate

whether/how GESI analysis had been used to inform decisions about programme design and delivery. Where programmes had developed GESI workplans or action plans on the back of analysis, the linkages were easier to identify. Nevertheless, where BEK programmes shared examples of GESI analysis being used to inform design it was common for this to have led to GESI focused interventions within the programme or minimal efforts to tweak mainstream interventions, rather than fundamentally reshaping them in order to benefit marginalised groups.

Some sources within the global literature underlined the need not only for initial GESI analysis early on in the design phase, but also for ongoing GESI analysis as programmes evolve. 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 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 arose, developing an understanding of root causes and entry points over time (DSU, 2019).

There was a mixed picture across the BEK portfolio with some programmes having conducted GESI analysis on an ongoing basis to inform their thinking and planning and others which viewed GESI analysis as a one one-off activity. Some BEK programme GESI strategies set out intentions for further, ongoing GESI analysis to inform programme design and implementation. However, it was often unclear whether these planned analyses had gone ahead. This includes interesting ideas identified early on in some BEK programmes to further explore power dynamics and to analyse ways to engage with decision makers as allies. It appears that in some cases these ideas for analysis came from GEI experts as early as bid stage but did not materialise. Indeed, in some BEK programmes it was unclear if any further GESI analysis had been conducted after the initial business case. In some cases, there is a sense that initial GESI analysis had not been returned to since it was first conducted and that it had long since been forgotten by programme teams. Here, the classic programme cycle which positions GESI analysis as an initial activity may have been unhelpful.

In some BEK programmes, a lack of analysis for specific interventions or components of work has meant important GESI issues have been overlooked. BEK programme designs have often developed in ways which very early GESI analysis had not anticipated. In some programmes, opportunities to integrate GESI have arisen during implementation. In these cases, there is considerable variation across programmes in terms of whether any specific GESI analysis was conducted to better understand the needs of particular groups, inequality and exclusion in a particular context or GESI issues related to a specific area of work or type of intervention. Some BEK programmes have gone ahead with work with a particular group, for example people with disabilities, or on a particular area of work, for example economic empowerment without first exploring GESI issues and risks through targeted analysis. In such programmes, this lack of GESI analysis relates to both existing literature and evidence on GESI issues in Nepal and elsewhere, as well as a lack of primary data collection and analysis. In some cases, this has led to weak programme design and delivery from a GESI perspective. This has led to some interventions which are far more simplistic than it is common to see in standalone GESI projects and programmes.

In contrast, several programmes underlined the importance of ongoing analysis, which they had built into programme processes so that GESI could be considered as further activities were developed. Notably, the programmes which did this were those who had GESI expertise within their teams or access to ongoing support from a GESI expert. Several programmes conducted further GESI analysis which included assessing government capacity to work on the GESI issues identified. Some implementing partners also underlined the importance of analysis of specific local contexts which help to avoid a uniform 'cookie cutter' approach across programmes with broad geographical reach.

Some programmes had also gone on to do more specific GESI analyses in order to inform their targeting and planning of programme activities, for example in the form of GESI assessments or audits and exercises to map out target populations and plan programme reach. Through these analyses, some BEK programmes had identified target numbers of women and other marginalised groups to be reached through interventions. Although these analyses tended to be used to inform targeting, there was little to indicate that programmes had used these analyses to anticipate differential programme effects on women and marginalised groups. There was also little evidence that GESI has been included in other programme analyses, for example political economy analyses.

NURP's GESI Lead identified the need for more detailed and context-specific analysis to inform the design and delivery of programme activities. This led to separate municipal GESI assessments being conducted which included a practical focus on capacity within each municipality and implications for future technical support. The GESI assessments were conducted in close collaboration with the municipal governments, with a focus on providing a picture of the current situation in relation to GESI, needs and issues that marginalised and excluded groups face, but also of the current understanding and capacity of municipal governments to address them and mainstream GESI considerations. As well as analysing access to resources and services and barriers and constraints vulnerable groups face, the assessments also identified measures that had previously been successful. The analyses helped identify issues which should be prioritised by the governments and how these could be addressed through their service delivery and institutional arrangements, as well as ways the programme could work to support the recommendations they were making. The GESI assessments also included consultations with women and individuals from excluded groups. Each workstream within the programme also built in opportunities for target groups to be consulted at key points. In a staff survey of the NURP team, 75 percent of respondents said they considered the active participation of marginalised and excluded groups in all stages of the programme cycle to be part of GESI mainstreaming. In a GESI review and reflection session the programme held with staff, identifying ways to engage with marginalised groups at the onset of activity planning and the development of concept notes was identified as a key programme.

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).

It was relatively common for GESI analyses conducted by BEK programmes to include some degree of consultation with marginalised groups. This echoed some sources in the global literature which underlined that the process of conducting GESI analysis could have value in itself, for example if it included engagement with marginalised groups who have an opportunity to share their experiences or perspectives (FCDO, 2021). Where BEK programmes had conducted consultations with women, youth and marginalised groups, both during initial design and during implementation, they tended to underline the value this added by ensuring a range of perspectives and experiences were taken into account. However, there were exceptions to this where BEK programmes had consulted generally with 'citizens' or 'communities' and appeared to have assumed that would automatically include those who were marginalised. In a number of BEK programmes, a commitment to consult with marginalised groups was outlined in business cases or programme GESI strategies but it was not always clear whether these had gone ahead, especially where there has been changes in programme personnel.

The NCCSP2 TA team described consultations conducted with women, youth, and marginalised groups in order to ensure projects (known as Local Adaptation Plan of Action [LAPA] schemes) addressed their needs. It was underlined by the TA team that they felt this has contributed to the overall success of projects by ensuing a range of perspectives and experiences were taken into account. Here, the team drew direct links to project purpose, with an emphasis on needing to tap into the knowledge, skills and experiences of women, indigenous peoples and marginalised groups so that high risk areas could be identified and the root causes of environmental issues such as landslides could be better understood.

Limited and inconsistent use of intersectional analysis by BEK programmes meant they were often unable to consider multiple and overlapping forms of discrimination and exclusion. In some cases, BEK programmes described their GESI analyses as having been intersectional, although it was clear that perspectives varied about what using an 'intersectional lens' really meant. Some programme GESI analyses

made references to the importance of intersectionality, but actual intersectional analysis was minimal. Most commonly within the portfolio, data was collected on several distinct social groups, which were presented alongside each other rather than analysis exploring the intersections between various overlapping forms of marginalisation. Across programmes there tended to be a sense that the use of an intersectional lens in GESI analysis could be strengthened. This was a marked difference to the global literature which consistently underlined 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).

Within some BEK programmes analysis was conducted which more narrowly focused on specific social groups. In some cases, this stemmed from priority groups having being identified in the original business case. In others, programmes appeared to default to focusing on women, and in some cases caste/ethnicity. In others, however, the rationale for a focus on certain groups (and not others) was unclear and unexplained. It is possible that some of these more narrowly focused analyses were intended to highlight certain forms of marginalisation which were getting less attention within a programme, or which colleagues needed to be convinced were relevant. There was also some sense within the BEK portfolio that the diverse forms of marginalisation in Nepal meant that a fully intersectional approach would be too lengthy and complex, necessitating a focus on certain priority groups in order to make GESI analysis more manageable. Interviewees from one programme linked this to a lack of space within BEK reporting templates, explaining that there would be no space to include a fully intersectional analysis.

Common Approach 9: Strengthening participation and reach

Global literature emphasised the importance of programmes addressing the challenges and barriers marginalised groups face in accessing and benefiting from programme interventions and resources (see for example: FCDO, 2021; ICF, n.d.). This included responding to the broader social and political context while designing interventions so that marginalised groups could participate in a realistic and meaningful way (UNHCR, 2022).

It was common (14 out of 15) for BEK programmes to have made some effort to address barriers faced by particular groups. In many cases, these efforts had a strong emphasis on addressing the practical needs of women to enable their participation in spaces such as training sessions, workshops, user committees, consultations, and employment activities. BEK programme team members gave examples of adaptations made to activity planning in order to address barriers related to the timing, location and language used in materials for events. In a minority of BEK programmes, interviewees also referred to adjustments made to enable participation of people with disabilities. These tended to focus on basic intervention to address physical barriers rather than more complex work to address social barriers to meaningful participation.

In some programmes, efforts to address barriers to participation appeared to be reactive rather than anticipated. This could be a positive sign that programmes have remained alert to the needs of marginalised groups during implementation and have been prepared to adapt design of activities to address barriers. However, in some cases, quite obvious barriers had been identified quite far into programme implementation and it is likely that adaptations were only necessary part way through delivery because they had not been sufficiently identified in analysis and in initial design activities. There were also programmes within the BEK portfolio which had created spaces for certain groups to participate in, for example women, without consideration of intersectionality. Sometimes the inclusion of other groups or particular groups of women was subsequently recognised as a gap which needed to be addressed. Some programme teams reflected that adopting an intersectional lens when initially creating spaces would have added considerable value to their interventions.

There were also examples within the BEK portfolio of programmes promoting requirements under existing government provisions. This included an emphasis on reaching 33 percent of women in committees. Ambitions tended not to exceed these provisions but at least supported encouraged implementation of them. This ranged from simple messaging by members of BEK programme teams to raise awareness that the provisions existed and were important to more proactive steps to encourage and enable women's participation – and in some cases participation by historically marginalised groups. This included work with social mobilisers with GESI experience or training to conduct targeted outreach. In these cases, government provisions on GESI appear to be the driving force around various aspects of GESI mainstreaming, for example GESI provisions that include requirements for the representation of women in various groups and committees. At the same time, by starting from the government GESI provisions, BEK

programmes are supporting the implementation of these provisions that are already in place. However, in some cases, women's participation appeared to have been more a result of the context rather than of the design of the targeting. For example, participation of elected women, including Dalit women, local representatives was enabled because they formed a ready group who had been elected through quotas mandated by election legislation. Similarly, the recruitment of female workers was possible in some rural areas by out-migration of men.

Box 14: Diversifying community user committees to meet government provisions

In addition to participation in project activities, the NCCSP2 programme has also sought to encourage women and members of marginalised communities to play a role in project implementation. These efforts focused on enabling them to take on roles within user committees. Interviews with user committee members also noted that there had been an emphasis on inclusion. TA team members explained that encouraging and enabling women's participation and leadership in user committees had often required proactive efforts by the programme. Although provisions in Nepal have required 33 percent of committee members to be women, the GESI/LNOB Officer explained that in some cases communities had tried to form a user committee without meeting this provision. In these cases, she explained that the TA team facilitated a transparent process when committees were formed. This included a focus on information dissemination about the formation of user committees and about potential projects, not only to government stakeholders and local leaders but also to entire local communities. The emphasis here was on raising awareness among under-privileged people and explaining the importance of their participation. It was noted that relying solely on local leaders for information dissemination was insufficient and that specific efforts were needed to promote public participation and encourage the active involvement of all community members.

Despite positive examples, negative attitudes to women's leadership persisted in many communities, which meant their abilities were often still being underestimated. The TA team were aware of gendered power dynamics within user committees which meant that men often continued to dominate project decision making. This was explained in terms of a range of factors, including women's limited time and mobility as well as the cultural mindset. A government official echoed these concerns, explaining that male community members often accuse programmes like NCCSP2 of 'brainwashing' women in their families. She felt this limited the extent to which GESI could be explicitly focused on within projects. It was evident that women had also faced practical challenges in balancing participation in user committees – especially in leadership roles – with their domestic and caring responsibilities. The TA team had encouraged committees to be as flexible with timing as possible to accommodate women's limited availability. The GESI/LNOB Officer explained that what might seem like the tiniest details made a fundamental difference to whether women had the time to participate in projects and in committees.

Examples within the BEK portfolio suggested that despite the inclusion of women and some marginalised groups in programme activities, they faced ongoing barriers to their meaningful participation. Members of user committees for example highlighted a range of issues which limited the extent to which they could fully engage with programmes. This included challenges in balancing domestic responsibilities with programme activities as well as a lack of education and experience hindering their ability to undertake tasks and prevailing attitudes influencing how others treated them. The extent to which BEK programmes sought to engage with these more systemic barriers was limited. This was despite global literature pointing to the fundamental importance of addressing such barriers in order to enable women and other groups to benefit from programme interventions (see for example FCDO, 2021).

Given the nature of TA provided by some BEK programmes, they had sought to influence the extent to which government officials enabled the participation of women and marginalised groups. In these cases, although TA teams did not always have direct control of efforts to address barriers and ensure participation, they could at least encourage government and others to do so. This included BEK-funded TA teams encouraging government partners to address needs and barriers for particular groups across their policy consultations and planning, as well as prioritising or targeting women and marginalised groups in the selection criteria for funding and other opportunities with programmes. However, there was often a lack of evidence of other approaches being used to go beyond ensuring women and people from marginalised groups were 'at the table' in order to work towards meaningful participation and influence.

GESI experts within The Asia Foundation's (TAF) central GESI Task Force provided a three-day inclusive leadership workshop for D4D field coordinators based in municipalities. The workshop had a focus on diversity, inclusion, equity, and accessibility, with the aim of enabling field teams to bring a focus on these issues into their everyday work. It aimed to help field coordinators to unpack power dynamics and identify strategies for navigating them in order to ensure the voices and opinions of marginalised groups were integrated into programme interventions and municipal gatherings. The workshop was framed in terms of identifying 'open and closed spaces', which either enabled or constrained participation by various groups. For example, the session explored the potential role of field coordinators if they encountered a closed space where women and people with disabilities were not allowed.

Following a reflection session, field coordinators were supported to develop action plans to tangibly identify spaces they engaged in at municipal level and ways to make them more diverse and open to various stakeholders. This included consultations, discussions and policy making processes. Through feedback they have received from field coordinators, TAF believes that the workshop has enabled them to bring an inclusive perspective to their engagement and discussions, something which they believe has added value to their role. Field Coordinators explained that they now felt able to raise GESI issues in conversations with government officials. This had included asking questions about who was and was not represented in government consultations and law drafting committees.

Some BEK programmes had adopted very broad definitions of terms such as 'vulnerability' and 'disadvantage' rather than focusing specifically on particular groups of marginalised people. This included programmes framing their reach in relation to LNOB, 'vulnerable groups, 'situational marginalisation' and 'disadvantaged groups'. In some cases terms such as LNOB and GESI were used interchangeably, suggesting no specific conceptual distinction between the two, but rather an attempt to keep pace with prevailing terminology used by donors. In some BEK programmes, however, certain terms were preferred as they allowed space for loser definitions and less specific categories of people they were attempting to target. Here, terms such as 'LNOB' had been interpreted in the broadest sense to essentially mean the programme should attempt to reach 'everyone'. At a practical level this had resulted in broad messaging to encourage 'everyone's' participation. In some cases, this had led to an overrepresentation of Brahmin and Chhetri in programme activities, even in higher numbers than their proportion in the national population.

Interviewees form BEK programmes explained that anyone can potentially be 'left behind' or experience some form of disadvantage or be vulnerable, especially in a country prone to natural disasters. In this way, even people with relative privilege could be regarded as left behind if they were not included in a programme intervention, categorised as vulnerable to the impact of earthquakes, or disadvantaged if they lived in an area with relatively few services. In contrast a more specific focus on, for example women from historically marginalised groups, indigenous communities, people with disabilities, and so on required programmes to engage with greater complexity, identifying and addressing multiple barriers and to engage with complex issues related to power, entrenched norms and discrimination. Some interviewees form BEK programmes had expressed relief that BEK was comfortable with these broader definitions as it reduced the pressure to target harder to reach groups and to engage with more thorny issues around power and historic marginalisation. It therefore made targets easier to reach. In some cases BEK programmes had sought to identify 'vulnerable communities', for example those which contain female headed household and people with disabilities. This had led to the targeting of certain geographical areas but not necessarily specific groups within them.

Common Approach 10: Incorporating GESI-focused interventions

Global literature underlined the importance of 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). Such efforts were presented as having a greater level of ambition than mainstreaming efforts which only sought to ensure women, girls and marginalised groups had 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 could 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 (CEDIL, 2023).

One-third (10 out of 15) of the BEK programmes reviewed had included some form of GESI-focused activities or interventions. These were intended to elevate GESI mainstreaming ambitions beyond a focus on participation**.** Of the ten, half of the programmes stood out as having invested in GESI-focused efforts to a greater degree. These programmes were ones that had also invested in GESI expertise within their programme teams, had conducted analysis to better understand GESI issues and were – at least to some extent - tracking and reporting GESI results. In contrast, some BEK programmes had intentionally kept ambitions related to GESI-focused efforts relatively modest. For example, one implementing partner stated that they were trying to be gender-friendly, not gender transformative. It was common for business cases and programme GESI strategies to present higher aspirations for GESI-focused efforts than actually translated into design and implementation within BEK programmes. For some teams, this was an accepted limitation of GESI mainstreaming: that more GESI issues would be acknowledged than could be addressed.

Overall, there tended to be a greater focus on women within targeted interventions, often treated as a homogenous category, rather than with an intersectional lens. Beyond this, as a portfolio, there does not appear to have been a clear and coordinated focus on certain targeted groups.

Box 16: Targeted programming to expand access for health services through support for NHSSP

NHSSP used the approach of targeted programming to reach women, disadvantaged, and vulnerable groups. Elements of the programme were designed to support the provision of health services to specific women, children, underserved and at-risk populations, through a combination of mainstreaming them into basic health services and well as targeted programming. The programmes supported policy work, awareness raising among service providers and users, and capacity development of service providers. These were mainly done through the lenses of universal healthcare access and LNOB.

An implementing team member described GESI achievements they were proud of as the targeted services supported through the OCMC, which provides services to survivors of gender-based violence, as well as the SSU, which provides free basic health services to the poor. Former GESI TA staff agreed that the OCMC was their flagship achievement, and the one that they were most proud of. They highlighted that health workers at OCMC sites report that since the GESI capacity building trainings supported by the programme, they have started using a GESI lens in identifying gender-based violence, e.g., in the case of poisoning related to GBV. There appeared to be a consensus among the programme team members and government officials that service delivery through OCMCs and SSUs would continue since HMIS provides evidence that these are working. Additionally, they have been institutionalised into the health system such that they receive federal budget allocation.

Several sources within the global literature 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 (see for example, 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).

It was not always evident that BEK programmes had designed GESI-focused interventions on GESI analysis. This was especially so where programmes had responded to opportunities presented in the wider context, which were not anticipated in initial design stages. It seems that an inconsistent use of GESI analysis to inform the selection and design of GESI-focused interventions may have led to missed opportunities for more intersectional approaches to be used, strategic partnerships with GESI-focused organisations to be established, potential wider value of efforts to be identified, and risks to be spotted.

Crucially, the global literature also underlined the importance of ensuring any expansions of scope to focus on GESI 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). There was some caution in the literature that separate GESI interventions risked establishing parallel

processes which ran alongside the main programme but essentially remained detached from it (FCDO, 2021).

It was not always clear whether/how GESI focused interventions within BEK programmes connected with other interventions and programme outcomes. There often appeared to be limited interaction between GESI-focused aspects and the wider programme. It was common for them to either be described by implementing partners and other programme stakeholders as being separate from the main programme or running in parallel to other interventions. Original intentions to weave GESI-focused efforts with other aspects of programme were often acknowledged by programme teams but had not always translated into actual delivery. In some cases, it was clear that if GESI focused interventions had been commissioned as separate GESI targeted projects or programmes they would likely have been based on more detailed analysis, been delivered with GESI expertise or by organisations focused on GESI and had more ambitious outcomes they were working towards. There was a sense among some implementing partners that it was more straightforward to include discrete GESI interventions within programmes compared to the complexity of weaving them larger programme interventions and processes.

Table 6 below outlines the types of GESI-focused interventions identified within BEK programmes. These typically fell into one of four categories: empowerment; shifting mindsets; formal change, for example related to government policies and services; and collective voice. Three BEK programmes had not explicitly made any efforts in any of these areas and did not include any GESI-focused interventions.

Table 6 Targeted GESI Efforts Across the BEK Portfolio

Targeted Area	Empowerment	Mindsets	Formal change	Collective voice
Number of BEK programmes	11	8	7	4

It is important to underline that these figures do not indicate that BEK programmes had made achievements in these areas. Rather, they illustrate which programmes had made at least some effort to expand the scope of their programmes into these areas. In many cases, BEK programmes were providing TA rather than being directly in control of the delivery of interventions. In such cases, implementors were often keen to stress that they were unable to directly influence outcomes in relation to GESI – or any other area – but instead responsibility for that sat with government. In contrast, some examples of expanded programme scope to include GESI-focused efforts had stemmed from implementing partners responding to opportunities in the local context, including requests from local government. These examples emphasised the value of programme teams remaining alert and responsive to opportunities to work on GESI during programme implementation.

Empowerment

Most commonly, BEK programmes (11 of the 15) had attempted to strengthen empowerment, most often women's economic empowerment. Some had also provided support to strengthen the knowledge and skills of women in certain professions and elected positions, often through training. In a minority of cases, there was also some emphasis on the economic empowerment of people with disabilities. Programmes had rarely sought to fully capture the potential value of this work, with possible wider effects, for example on confidence, self-esteem or autonomy either absent or rendered invisible. This stands in contrast to the global literature which placed an emphasis on programmes seeking to identify opportunities to strengthen women's autonomy and their ability to exercise choice (see for example: ICF, n.d.). Indeed, even beyond explicit efforts to strengthen women's empowerment, it is possible that some interventions within BEK programmes were having an indirect impact on empowerment, but this was not being captured (see Common Approach 12 on tracking results).

Box 17: Supporting women's economic empowerment in practice

As well as trying to diversify participation in projects known as LAPA schemes, NCCSP2 TA has also placed an emphasis on raising awareness among women, promoting women's income opportunities and encouraging women's interactions with government officials.

To capture successes in terms of increased income, the programme has collected qualitative evidence in form of stories. These include examples of increased economic opportunities for vulnerable groups, income generation, a sense of ownership of community infrastructure and reduced burdens in terms of manual labour. Examples demonstrated that women had participated in technical and vocational trainings through which they had learnt skills which challenged existing gendered norms about what women were

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capable of. Examples also noted that women who were active in income generating projects had gained greater respect from their husbands, in-laws, and communities, and had become more involved in family and community decision-making by contributing financial resources. Examples underlined that this was linked to reshaping narratives about women's ability to earn their own incomes.

The positive impact of projects was echoed by user committee members, who described the pride they felt growing and selling produce in areas where previously nothing had grown because of a lack of water supply. This had included an increased sense of motivation after selling their initial yield and the ability it had given them to purchase their own cooking ingredients without having to rely on their husbands' incomes.

As noted in Section 6, quite unusually for empowerment-focused interventions, implementing partners had rarely established partnerships with GESI-focused organisation such as WROs or OPDs to support their design and delivery. Perhaps systematic of this, some programme interventions designed to strengthen empowerment were rather simplistic and programme teams were rarely able to articulate potential risks associated with such work, including an increased risk of intimate partner violence associated with women's economic empowerment (see Common Approach 11 for more detail).

Box 18: Using partnerships to provide mentorship to women in underrepresented sectors

Within D4D, the Tech2Empower Project has involved a partnership with an American-based organisation called the WAKE. Through the project, 22 women working in large tech companies have been brought to Nepal to provide mentorship to six young women-led social enterprises or not for profit organisations. The CEO and Founder of WAKE explained that they wanted to identify any social enterprises that would come under the umbrella of gender equity and women's issues, including those that were focused on women's rights, girls' education, gender-based violence and women in STEAM. The mentors worked on a voluntary basis but D4D resources covered the cost of expenses. The primary emphasis of the mentoring was on running and expanding businesses.

As explained by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Founder of WAKE, the six mentee organisations were asked to describe what type of support they needed, so the mentoring was demand driven and based on what organisations themselves thought would be helpful to them. This included specific support needs being identified, including in the need to develop a digital strategy, to build a new database and to develop storytelling and pitch decks. The Executive Director of Smart Cheli explained that they were one of the six organisations who took part in the mentoring, including a three-day workshop. Five mentors from global tech companies guided them on how to move their organisations forward using technology. This included helping Smart Cheli and others identify organisational challenges and ways to address them. The in-person workshop was followed up with up to six weeks of virtual collaboration.

In addition to practically helping mentees, TAF colleagues believe that Tech2Empower has also led on to further opportunities for them to access funding from tech firms and opportunities to attend further events overseas. This view was supported by the CEO and Founder of WAKE, who explained that the mentoring, as well as transferring knowledge and skills, also helped the mentee organisations to connect with global companies and also with each other, strengthening their networks in Nepal and beyond. The Executive Director of Smart Cheli described the Tech2Empower project in a similarly positive light, explaining that the skills they developed had helped them present themselves in the market more efficiently.

Formal change: Policies, budgets, and services

Approximately half of BEK programmes had included GESI-focused efforts through their work with government, most commonly at provincial and municipal levels. Almost equal numbers had focused on formal change to policies, budgeting processes or services (7 out of 15) and on more informal change focused on shifting mindsets (8 out of 15). In almost all cases, these sat alongside each other, with programmes making efforts on both fronts.

Most commonly BEK programmes had provided TA to provincial and municipal government in order to support the development and approval of standalone GESI policies. With an emphasis on TA being demand led, this had often involved considerable work with government officials and elected representatives to stimulate interest in GESI ahead of policy development and approval. The general intention was for these GESI policies – whether general or sector specific - to then feed into mainstream policies and through to

implementation in terms of budgets, programmes and services. In some cases, this had included TA to develop gender-responsive budget guidelines. With some exceptions, BEK programmes had placed less of an explicit focus on the implementation of GESI policies or the translation of them into sectoral policies. This perhaps reflects where programmes were in terms of sequencing these efforts but for the most part the focus appears to have been on breadth in terms of coverage of provinces or municipalities rather than more focused efforts to support policy implementation.

Box 19: Supporting health outcomes at the municipal level through TA

NHSSP has provided technical assistance to support the integration of GESI in government health sector planning, encouraging needs-based service provision. This has included working with health policy makers from municipals' health offices and provincial health departments to review their action plans on health and strengthening their competencies in integrating GESI in health sector planning. NHSSP supported policy development, capacity building, and service delivery for improved GESI outcomes at the local level can be seen with the example of Dhangadhimai Municipality in Madhesh Province.

The Deputy Mayor of Dhangadhimai Municipality spoke of the programme's technical support to raise awareness and disseminate information to diverse communities who previously did not have access to hospital services. These services included vaccination for children and health and nutritional support for malnourished children. As a result, people from Dalit and Madheshi communities have become the most frequent users of these services. Programmes support had also enabled services to reach women with uterine problems in the Madhesi community, who had tended not to go outside their community due to restrictive social norms around mobility. The Deputy Mayor described how the municipality was now allocating budget and coordinating with other organisations to support such women's health issues.

Municipal health officials from Dhangadhimai Municipality explained the importance of NHSSP3's technical support in terms of strengthening planning and budgeting, enhancing quality of care and generating and using data for decision making, and advancing a focus on GESI. These policies, along with advocacy with political leaders, had helped better allocate budgets and plan service delivery with a focus on equality. They gave a specific example of the programme's support for a policy on confidentiality which had led to women coming forward to access services.

With the programme's support, the municipality established eight Health Facility Operation and Management Committees as per the federal government guidelines. The programme also provided orientations and trainings to the committees and health workers on their roles, including how to address GESI issues in relation to service delivery. This has contributed toward timely and better-quality service provision which has also increased women's use of services.

Informal change: Mindsets

All BEK programmes which had invested efforts in supporting GESI policies had also provided some form of GESI training or orientation to provincial and municipal officials and/or elected representatives. These sessions took a variety of forms in terms of their nature and length. Some were embedded in wider trainings, and some had been designed and delivered as standalone GESI trainings. Whilst programmes were able to provide data on the numbers of people trained and, in many cases, to disaggregate this, at least by sex and caste/ethnicity, they tended to provide only anecdotal evidence of participants having engaged with the information they were given or any shifts in terms of knowledge or decision making as a result. It was therefore generally not possible to understand how effective these sessions had been. Nevertheless, it was clear that basic orientations and sessions embedded in wider trainings were too light touch to have had any real potential and ability to influence government officials. Government officials who had participated in a number of trainings found it difficult to decipher what types of training they had received and whether it had included GESI-related content. Standalone GESI training sessions which were more comprehensive appeared to have greater potential to communicate information on GESI but there was still little evidence these had shifted mindsets and encouraged new ways of working.

Overall, it was unclear whether the delivery of GESI trainings and work to establish separate GESI policies represented basic – but necessary – first steps in a longer-term process of influencing formal and informal change or whether these efforts would only ever have minimal effects. Their potential value was less clear when they were framed as an end in themselves, rather than part of a broader ambition which would be followed by dedicated efforts focused on policy implementation and attitude and behaviour

change. With some exceptions, evidence of these wider ambitions tended to be found in programme GESI strategies, but not necessarily articulated by programme teams more widely.

What also came through strongly was a lack of coordination among BEK programmes working with governments to develop GESI policies and deliver GESI trainings. In some cases, the risk of duplicated efforts had been picked up by SROs. Beyond this, there were no clear examples of BEK programmes - and the GESI experts working within them – coordinating or collaborating to maximise the impact of their work and reinforce GESI-related messaging.

> **Box 20: Strengthening policy as a starting point for creating an enabling environment for GESI**
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> PLGSP has worked closely with government to support the use of inclusive analysis and consultations to inform the drafting of laws, policies, plans and budgets. While identifying the programme's GESI achievements, stakeholders noted the work on GESI policies, GESI audits, GESI trainings, and identification of GESI focal points at provincial and local government bodies. These output level achievements are in part due to the fact that GESI ambitions have been included at the output level of the programme design. A donor representative noted PLGSP's results framework includes targeted activities such as local government capacity development plans, GESI strategies, and GESI audits. These efforts were recognised as an important first step to ensuring GESI was placed on the agenda of newly formed governments within the context of federalisation. Stakeholders also saw the policies as starting points in creating an enabling environment for promoting GESI.
>
> PLGSP supported the development of GESI policies/strategies and gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) guidelines at the provincial and local levels. A PLGSP GESI expert supported MOFAGA to develop a model GESI mainstreaming guideline for local governments which they could adapt to their context. GESI experts highlighted that based on these strategies, PLGSP was able to encourage the identification of GESI focal points at provincial ministries as well as municipal governments. The programme also provided trainings and technical support to the GESI focal points to ensure GESI mainstreaming across government programmes.
>
> Based on these, there have been further achievements such as municipal budget allocation for GESI audits, skills training for income generation for women and excluded groups, establishment of vending machine for sanitary napkins at a government office. While these seem like very small-scale examples for a programme of this size and scope, they do hint at the potential of GESI mainstreaming approaches in PLGSP to translate into outcomes for women and marginalised groups.

What stood out as absent among BEK programmes was a focus on norm change and shifting mindsets beyond government. Whilst there were some examples of BEK programmes engaging with communities and private sector companies, this had tended not to include concerted efforts to encourage attitude, behaviour or norm change in relation to GESI. It was also difficult to see how BEK programmes would have had the capacity to do this type of work in the absence of partnerships with GESI focused organisations with specialist skills in influencing this type of change. This was in contrast to global literature, which emphasised the value of GESI-focused objectives within programmes which challenged the social norms and power structures that underpin marginalisation and inequality (ICF, n.d.).

Collective voice

Several sources within the global literature 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 (DFID, 2019).

Examples of BEK programmes expanding their scope to strengthen the collective voice of marginalised groups were uncommon within the BEK portfolio. Those which were evident tended to focus on women rather than other marginalised groups. Whilst business cases and GESI strategies sometimes mentioned activities or processes to encourage support for collective voice, it was often unclear whether these had gone ahead. For example, some programme documents referred to the importance of ensuring women and marginalised groups' participation and influence in in government decision-making processes given the composition of senior government positions being mostly men from dominant groups. With programmes that supported civil society consultations, especially during policy formulations, it was not

clear whether and to what extent these consultations, beyond immediate participation, sought to more strategically strengthened the voices of women and marginalised groups to hold government to account.

Box 21: Bringing women together through the Women in Data (WiD) efforts in BEK's D4D

D4D partnered with four organisations working in data and technology to establish the WiD Steering Committee. These founding member organisations included: Girls in Tech Nepal (GiT), Women in STEAM (WiSTEAM), Open Knowledge Nepal (OKN) and Women Leaders in Technology Nepal (WLiT). The Executive Director of WLiT explained that they decided that forming a committee within D4D could better facilitate their reach within the sector and would provide an independent platform for advocacy and policy influence to address barriers to women's participation in data, science and technology initiatives in Nepal.

The WiD Steering Committee has gone on to deliver four WiD conferences, with a focus on equipping girls and young women with the practical skills they need to work in the technology sector. One of the key achievements identified by TAF colleagues and WiD Steering Committee members has been the ability of the WiD conferences to provide young women with information about the types of careers they could pursue in data and technology-related fields. This has included creating space for conversations among girls and young women about how to navigate careers in these sectors. TAF team members described the potential impact of these efforts, both in terms of the lives and empowerment of the individual women and girls they reach as well as a contribution to a wider cultural shift in Nepal around the generation and use of data which includes women.

Members of the WiD Steering Committee described what an important platform the conferences had been, especially in terms of building of a network of data and technology focused organisations, both in Nepal and also internationally. They explained that conversations about issues such as open data and digital rights had been ongoing for several decades, the WiD conferences had created space for CSOs to specifically discuss the gendered aspects of these issues, both at a local and global level.

The independence of the Steering Committee appears to have been given intentional emphasis so that it was not simply seen as part of the D4D programme, which would then automatically end when the programme does. However, perhaps linked to an emphasis on the independence of the WiD Steering Committee, was also a sense that it was not closely linked to other 'mainstream' aspects of the D4D programme. Although WiD clearly fits within the overall thematic focus of D4D, it appeared to be quite separate to the other parts of the programme. In addition, although some WiD Steering Committee members brought an intersectional lens to their work, it did not appear that any organisations have been included in the committee which specifically represented women from historically marginalised ethnic groups or castes, or women with disabilities.

Common Approach 11: Addressing additional risks

The global literature highlighted the importance of programmes proactively seeking to understand and address risks associated with GESI mainstreaming (see for example: Bond, 2019; DSU, 2019; DFID, 2019a). This 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 underlined in parts of the global literature that increased risks were something which it was 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 were tracked through programme monitoring (see Common Approach 12 for further detail).

Within the literature, heightened risks were linked to the wider context in which programmes were being delivered and the types of interventions they were promoting within them (see for example EBRD, 2020). It was emphasised that development programmes could inadvertently cause harm, in particular through backlash against progress made in relation to equality and inclusion (GEC, n.d.).

In interviews, some government officials highlighted contextual factors which meant BEK programmes were being delivered in areas with risks related to violence, especially against women and girls. This included the harassment of women by men in local communities where male family members had moved abroad for work. Some officials explained that men in villages were often suspicious of work on

GESI and what they viewed as the potential brainwashing of their female relatives by feminists. In addition, some municipal government officials gave examples of community members having questioned the targeting of Dalit communities through BEK programmes interventions. In these cases, programmes appeared to have gone ahead without explicitly factoring in efforts to track whether/how this pushback continued and to track any risks of backlash against those who wider community members felt were being unfairly prioritised.

It is important to emphasise that this research did not look at safeguarding practice within BEK programmes, including the safeguarding policies, trainings and reporting mechanisms they may have in place. Instead, the focus here was specifically on whether programmes had sought to identify and address risks which might stem from – or be exacerbated by – GESI mainstreaming approaches being used. Three BEK programmes had at least committed to reflecting GESI-related risks in their safeguarding approaches in initial business cases. However, it was not clear whether/how these had translated into practice. The business cases of two programmes drew links between GESI and safeguarding. Another programme's business case not only recognised safeguarding as a high-risk area for the programme but also explicitly linked this to the fact that the programme was working with some of the most vulnerable communities in Nepal and was operating in a context where gender inequality and caste and ethnic discrimination were part of life.

Box 22: Recognising the fundamental connections between GESI and safeguarding

NURP's GESI strategy underlined the importance of recognising the connection between GESI and safeguarding. Crucially, this included spelling out a fundamental connection between the power imbalances which were at the root of gender inequality and social exclusion and those which were at the root of the abuses of power which created safeguarding risks. The strategy explained that factors such as age, gender, caste, religion, and other factors that lead to social exclusion or marginalisation play out across all facets of NURP's activities, operations, and relationships. It went on to outline that the programme ensured its safeguarding policies and mechanisms recognised and addressed theses drivers of gender-based discrimination and other forms of discrimination in order to reduce the risk of safeguarding efforts failing to offer equal protection to all.

Other BEK programmes drew no explicit link between GESI mainstreaming and programme risks. However, this does not mean that these programmes did not have safeguarding measures in place. Indeed, in interviews many programme staff outlined standard safeguarding practices which they had established. It is possible that the safeguarding policies and protocols in place within BEK programmes had considered and sought to address risks related to GESI mainstreaming. However, what this research does indicate is that risks related to GESI mainstreaming were not routinely included in GESI-related programme documents and senior team members were not automatically making the link between the two.

Box 23: Addressing additional risks in programme delivery

GESI mainstreaming and safeguarding against SEAH tended to be placed together within SEP programme documents, framed as two interlinked aspects of dismantling social barriers. Within the programme, safeguarding against SEAH was viewed as a prerequisite for marginalised and excluded groups' employment in projects, based on the idea that working environments needing to be made safer for women and people with disabilities before they were encouraged to enter them. This has included factories and other employers needing to have sexual harassment policies in place and to have thought through practical measures such as separate accommodation, bathrooms, and changing facilities for women workers. In some cases, this had required a significant shift in culture and operating practice within companies, something which had taken longer than the programme team had initially anticipated. These delays were something which the team judged were necessary and represented better value for money than taking the risk that not all private sector partners had adopted such safeguarding measures. An annual review of SEP identified that although risk management related to safeguarding within the programme seemed satisfactory overall, continued attention was required, especially for young female, disadvantaged, and disabled beneficiaries, who may be more vulnerable.

Sources in the international literature underlined an increase in risk which can result from GESI mainstreaming efforts seeking to challenge the status quo. Sources explained that programme interventions which aimed to support the empowerment of marginalised groups, or promote more

transformative change, for example through challenging norms or championing policy or legal change, could expect to face some degree of resistance. As a result, efforts which threatened to disrupt current power dynamics could – and often did – face backlash (see for example: Bond, 2019; EBRD, 2020; Gupta et al., 2023; GAC, n.d.).

Some interviewees noted a sense of disinterest in or sometimes pushback from government officials to work on GESI. This was most commonly described in terms of a lack of support or interest, or a sense of indifference.

Despite references to standard safeguarding practices, it was not clear whether BEK programmes had considered the risks of challenging the status quo. Risks related to pushback or backlash from partners, families, communities or colleagues tended not to be noted in documents or raised through interviews. For the most part, BEK programme teams were unable to describe any mitigation measures for potential unintended consequences, including backlash from families, communities and colleagues. Nor did they explain whether an analysis or understanding of GESI-related risks had informed decisions about programme design.

For BEK programmes which had engaged directly with communities there was often little articulated by programme teams in terms of them having been alert to or noticing any risks related to women taking on new roles, the targeting of resources towards historically marginalised or indigenous groups or efforts to encourage shifts in people's thinking. For example, several programmes had encouraged the employment of women, in some cases for the first time, but did not highlight the potential for this to impact on intra-household dynamics and the need to monitor and address risks related to intimate partner violence. This was despite it being well documented in the global literature that in the early stages of women gaining employment outside the home for the first time, domestic violence can become more frequent or severe as male breadwinner roles are challenged. This can be especially so where women are prioritised over men in income generating projects (see for example ADB, 2023). Similarly, BEK programmes tended not to highlight the risk of family, community or workplace-related backlash as a result of efforts to prioritise certain groups for training, leadership positions, decision making roles or services.

It was also highlighted in the global literature that increased risks of SEAH may result from marginalised groups being less likely to know how to report concerns and often less likely to be believed when they do (see for example: EBRD, 2020). This included evidence that groups who were 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. As a result of GESI mainstreaming, many BEK programmes had sought to bring marginalised and vulnerable people into activities. However, among BEK programmes there tended to be little mention of whether marginalised groups who were encouraged to participate in programme activities would find safeguarding mechanisms to be as accessible as others, or whether additional safeguarding measures were needed as stigma and existing power dynamics may mean they are less likely to be listened to and believed. Especially if a focus on targeting specific groups through GESI mainstreaming was introduced part way through a programmes, after initial safeguarding measures and DNH risks assessments were in place.

Common Approach 12: Tracking progress on GESI

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).

Disaggregation

Much of the global 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).

In line with the global literature, all but one of the 15 BEK programmes included in the portfolio review had attempted to use some form of GESI-related disaggregation of data. This included six programmes which appeared to be relying solely on disaggregation to track progress on GESI, without any GESI specific

indicators. Several programmes that appeared to have used few - or in one case no – other GESI mainstreaming approaches had still attempted to disaggregate at least some of their monitoring data. The collection of disaggregated data was therefore the most common approach to GESI mainstreaming used by BEK programmes. There was also a sense among some programme teams that disaggregation was more in-keeping with 'mainstreaming' rather than standalone GESI indicators.

Despite the collection of disaggregated data having been established as a norm within the BEK portfolio, there was considerable variation in terms of how this was approached by BEK programmes. In particular, a mix of approaches was noted in terms of:

- The level at which disaggregation took place within programme logframes.
- How consistently indicators were disaggregated.
- Which social groups were included in disaggregation.

Whilst several BEK programmes had disaggregated their monitoring data at both outcome and output level, most commonly, disaggregation was focused on outputs and in in some cases, only at activity level. This chimed with the global literature in which several sources emphasised the value of disaggregated indicators at different levels but noted that there was often a lack of disaggregation at outcome level (FCDO, 2021; Gupta et al., 2023).

In several BEK programmes, GESI had been given a more explicit emphasis by being 'built in' to the wording of outcomes and/or outputs, for example through an emphasis on changes being 'inclusive' or 'equitable'. This necessitated disaggregation in order to understand if progress was being made. However, it was relatively common for attention to disaggregation to disappear at outcome level, without any clear rationale. However, in some programmes, although disaggregation of outcomes was not obvious from programme logframes, intended forms of disaggregation were listed in separate GESI-focused M&E documents. Whilst this approach carved out space for greater detail about disaggregation, it also appeared to reduce the visibility and status of disaggregation within programme M&E.

Within several BEK programmes it was not as clear cut as disaggregation being evident in outputs but not outcomes and was instead a more mixed picture. In these logframes certain indicators had been disaggregated and others had not, without a clear logic or explicit rationale. Whilst some outcome and output indicators noted the forms of disaggregation that would be conducted, others within the same logframe referred generally to 'policies', 'officials', 'people', 'staff', 'communities', 'committees' and 'households' generally. In explaining an inconsistent approach to disaggregation, some programme teams highlighted challenges in terms of the practical realities of collecting disaggregated data in relation to certain areas of programming and against certain indicators. They also believed that it was less relevant to track GESI mainstreaming against some aspects of a programme, for example around wider policy influencing. However, in some cases, this variation in the use of disaggregation was not always based on an analysis of where disaggregation was best placed but instead appeared to be more arbitrary

It was often unclear why BEK programmes had adopted certain forms of disaggregation. This was despite global literature which emphasised the importance of considering which groups were given visibility through disaggregation. For some BEK programmes these decisions appeared to trace back to the original business case and targets for certain beneficiary groups, for example for women and people with disabilities. In these cases, forms of disaggregation identified in business cases appeared to be more generic, based on FCDO's global priorities rather than having been based on a GESI analysis of the forms of disaggregation specifically relevant to programme delivery in Nepal. In response to this, in some BEK programmes where GESI mainstreaming was stronger, teams had gone beyond the forms of disaggregation stipulated in original business cases, in particular to bring in a focus on caste/ethnicity.

Sex disaggregation appeared to be the default and most consistent form of disaggregation across the BEK portfolio. In some cases, a focus on sex disaggregation in programme M&E logically mirrored a focus on 'women' as a general target group within programme interventions. In other cases, a wider focus on multiple groups in programme design and implementation narrowed down to a focus on just on women when it came to tracking results. Conversely, some programmes had been disaggregating by a wider variety of social groups than their logframes and progress reports suggested.

In several BEK programmes, forms of disaggregation varied from indicator to indicator. Where this was the case, this did not always follow intentional decision making about which forms of disaggregation were best suited to individual indicators. However, in some BEK programmes this variation in disaggregation

stemmed from pragmatic decisions, for example, based on the availability of disaggregated data from existing government sources or perceived difficulties in collecting data on certain groups. Data on people with disabilities was considered by several BEK programme teams as being especially difficult to collect.

Within the BEK portfolio, there was a tendency among some programmes to refer to broad categories of people when explaining how indicators would be disaggregated, for example referring to 'vulnerable households', 'rural poor', 'disadvantaged people' or 'LNOB communities'. One programme explained that they preferred committing to this type of disaggregation as it made it easier to meet targets given the flexible ways in which these terms could be defined. This links back to an earlier finding about a preference among some BEK programmes for a broad targeting, which is inclusive of 'everyone', rather than more specific targeting of historically marginalised and indigenous groups (see Section 5).

Disaggregated data have most commonly enabled BEK programmes to capture information about programme reach, including diversity among training participants, among those involved in income generation activities, those accessing services or participating in groups such as user committees. This often meant programmes could monitor whether government provisions, especially for women, were being met, missed or exceeded. One programme team explained that targets in relation to disaggregated indicators had created dedicated space for dialogue with government to discuss progress in relation to GESI. Some BEK programmes also referred to being able to use the disaggregated data they were collecting to inform programme decision making and to focus future targeting of interventions, for example through feeding disaggregated findings through to programmes' annual planning processes. This included an emphasis on programmes working with government partners to strengthen their capacity to understand and use disaggregated data to strengthen their targeting and planning.

It was common within the BEK portfolio for programmes to present disaggregated data as distinct, separate groups with a lack of attention on intersectionality. A minority of BEK programmes had disaggregated in a way which enabled them to look at specific groups within groups, for example women from particular ethnic groups or women with a particular socio-economic status. More commonly, however, where programmes had disaggregated by more than one social group, they tended to list these groups alongside each other, with minimal use of intersectional analysis that would have considered multiple, overlapping identities. Rather than this being rooted in an intentional decision, some BEK programme teams appeared to have simply not considered the possibility of using an intersectional lens to analyse and present data. This seemed to be linked to a lack of experience by some programme team members in the use of an intersectional approach but they appeared open to learning more and strengthening the approach they were using.

In some programmes there was a suggestion, however, that a lack of intersectional disaggregation had been a more intentional decision, to present aggregated data, for example for all women reached by a programme, rather than to bring this down further by subgroups. This was coupled with a sense that some BEK programmes had reached relatively more privileged women from dominant caste groups and that an intersectional approach to disaggregation would have highlighted inequalities which then needed to be addressed. Some programme teams explained that the more complex disaggregation of programme data which looked at groups within groups would have better revealed who was benefiting from development programming – and who was not.

This linked to a broader issue of a lack of analysis of disaggregated data by BEK programmes. In some cases, programme teams and government systems had collected and stored sizable volumes of disaggregated data which were ever expanding but with little evidence that the datasets were being analysed and used to inform learning and decision making. This lack of analysis of made disaggregated data far less useful to programme teams, who could, for example, often list numbers of people from certain groups who had been reached but could not then interpret what this meant and what the implications were for future programming or TA efforts. The limited analysis and use of disaggregated data was a gap which was acknowledged by some interviewees from programme teams.

There also appeared to be a gap among BEK programmes in terms of comparative analysis between programme data and wider population data in order to draw out meaning and to identify achievements and weaknesses. For example, programmes could commonly cite the percentage of participants in training for elected representatives and government officials who were women but rarely framed this in terms of how this compared to the overall percentage of women elected or in government positions who could have potentially taken part. This sometimes made it difficult for programme teams to

articulate whether disaggregated data for training participants simply reflected the composition of the local government staff and elected representatives, or whether it indicated something about programme efforts to reach participants from certain groups. Interpretation of programme data would be different depending on whether women made up a small or large percentage of elected representatives and government officials overall. For example, if a BEK programme reported that 20 percent of training participants were women it would have been important to know whether women made up just 5 percent of government officials in that municipality, so the programme had done especially well to reach this higher percentage, or women represent 50 percent of officials in that area, in which case the programme had happened to include them but in fact could have been expected to reach far more. This type of comparative analysis does not appear to be conducted as standard across the BEK portfolio and was only apparent among a minority of programmes.

More generally, some BEK programme teams struggled to explain the purpose of the disaggregated data that had been collected. Among a number of BEK programmes it was not clear why they were collecting disaggregated data and whether and how it was even intended to be used. Indeed, in some cases it seemed that the main reason for disaggregated the data was because BEK expected it or because it was part of wider contributions to strengthening government data systems. Several programmes highlighted challenges in presenting disaggregated data in BEK reporting templates, meaning they believed that programme documents did not always do justice to the work they were doing on GESI or the disaggregated data they had collected. Overall, there appeared to have been a clearer message communicated by BEK about the importance of collecting some disaggregated data but less clarity in terms of expectations relation to analysis and use of the data.

This was in contrast to the global literature which included consistent messaging that the true value lay of disaggregated data lay in comparative analysis which enabled its eventual use (see for example EIGE, 2016).Global sources repeatedly underlined the importance of disaggregated 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 was often linked directly back to programmes being held to account for progress in relation to GESI mainstreaming. 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.).

Programmes which had more prescriptive targets set by BEK for particular groups emphasised the need to ensure these were realistic. This linked back to the need to base them of analysis of wider population data, for example on the number of people with disabilities in a particular area or numbers of people from a particular case/ethnicity employed as government staff. For example, programmes that provided technical assistance and capacity strengthening support to the government often found it challenging to ensure women's representation in meetings, workshops and trainings, such that a programme team noted how they learned that their targets for women's participation were unrealistic given the percentage of women employees in the government in certain positions or departments. In such cases the government's composition contracted the ability of programmes to ensure inclusive participation. In other cases, there was a sense that targets had been guided more by global or national averages rather than in a way which was specific to certain provinces, municipalities or sectors. There was perhaps some indication that targets for certain groups which were perceived to be unrealistic were demotivating for programme teams and fed into a more dismissive attitude about GESI mainstreaming. One programme, which had attempted to integrate GESI into its design but had used few other GESI mainstreaming approaches, explained that indicators and targets for women and marginalised groups had been unrealistic. In addition, they felt the targets had unhelpfully narrowed the focus and had disincentivised more innovative efforts to contribute to system-wide change related to GESI.

Standalone GESI indicators

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.

Seven BEK programmes were, at least to some extent, using a mix of both disaggregation and GESI-focused indicators to track progress. This suggested a far greater degree of inconsistency across the portfolio in terms of whether or not standalone GESI indicators had been used compared to whether some form of disaggregation had been conducted. Perhaps unsurprisingly, BEK programmes which were using fewer GESI mainstreaming approaches overall were also less likely to be using GESI-focused indicators. In some cases this is likely to have been because they knew they were have fewer achievements to capture in terms of GESI, but it also raises a question about whether a lack of GESI focused indicators could disincentivise efforts to focus on GESI mainstreaming. In at least one programme, a mid-term review had picked this up, flagging the need to introduce GESI-focused indicators, both to better capture what the programme might be achieving and also to incentivise further work on GESI.

The global 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). 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. 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).

Nevertheless, some programme teams, and in particular GESI advisers working within them, explained that it would have been a helpful motivator for colleagues if BEK had set GESI-specific indicators, especially at outcome level. This was accompanied by a sense that GESI-focused indicators at output level tended to set GESI-related ambitions at a more modest level within a programme. GESI advisers in particular were keen to emphasise that insufficient focus had been placed on tracking actual outcome-level results in relation to GESI. In some programmes this was exaggerated by the fact that GESI-focused output indicators had been worded in a way which was open to interpretation, with potential ambiguity about whether or not sufficient progress had been made. This included those which focused on 'mainstreaming GESI' as an output. Some BEK programme indicators sought to track the number of 'GESI interventions' or 'GESI focused initiatives'. Such outputs appeared to motivate GESI-related efforts but not necessarily a focus on actual results. Some BEK colleagues suggested that a greater emphasis on results and potentially linking these to programme budgets and payments could have been a helpful motivator in programmes.

It was also evident from programme documents that where GESI-focused outcomes had been included in programme logframes, this gave dedicated space for programmes to describe the progress they were making in relation to GESI. However, on the flip side, this also tended to mean that progress on GESI was largely placed in these sections of programme reports, rather than being reflected across other outcomes too. This was also the case with GESI-focused outputs where there was sometimes little or no mention of how GESI was being tracked in relation to other programme outputs. For some programmes, standalone GESI documents provided additional space to present progress in relation to GESI-focused indicators. These tended to take the form of learning briefs, but it was often unclear whether and how they had been used or what their status was in relation to programme reporting.

Some programmes which had used GESI-focused indicators felt they not only gave status to GESI but had enabled regular discussion about GESI mainstreaming. This included conversations within programme teams and among partners, as well as between implementing partners and BEK. In several cases, the inclusion of GESI-focused indicators appeared to have been motivated by BEK wanting to carve out time for meaningful discussions about how GESI was being included within programmes. Several programmes had also used dedicated GESI indicators at output or outcome level to help maintain a focus on GESI within their teams and to prompt regular discussion about what was and was not being achieved.

> **Box 24: BEK's Data for Development (D4D) programme: Adding a GESI-focused output to the logframe**
>
> D4D sits under the wider Evidence for Development (E4D) programme. The BEK SRO for E4D identified a gap in terms of GESI in the E4D logframe and in discussion with implementing partners, a GESI-focused output was added to the phase 2 logframe:

The need to look beyond 'GESI' as a single group and to use an intersectional lens to disaggregate progress in relation to GESI-focused indicators was acknowledged by some programme teams and BEK colleagues. However, it was not always clear what types of disaggregation BEK programmes had conducted in the case of GESI-focused indicators. For example, it was not evident whether specific groups such as people with disabilities were being included at output or outcome level. In some programmes, GESI focused indicators were being disaggregated by wealth quintile or by geographical region, for example by province rather than by types of marginalised group.

To overcome a lack of 'space' for GESI in programme logframes, some BEK programmes had included a more comprehensive set of GESI-focused indicators in their GESI strategies. However, it was often unclear whether/how these indicators were actually being used. In some cases, separate GESI progress reports were produced by programmes. These tended to be written with a more explicit focus on learning rather than on a programme being held to account for progress in contributing to GESI results. This resonated with the global literature, which identified that 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. Some sources noted a tendency among programme teams to house gender and inclusion indicators and targets 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 (see for example FCDO, 2021).

It was apparent across several BEK programmes that collaboration between GESI advisers and M&E leads was minimal. This had limited GESI mainstreaming across programme M&E, both in terms of disaggregation and the use of GESI-focused indicators, not only in terms of informing their selection but engaging with the data once generated and influencing how it was analysed. Some GESI advisers within BEK programmes identified a lack of understanding of GESI and an intersectional approach among colleagues with responsibility for M&E and pointed to the importance of having team members with GESI expertise – or at least experience – within a programme's M&E team.

A number of sources in the global literature emphasised the importance of programmes taking a mixed-method approach to measuring GESI outcomes (AfDB, 2020; DFID, 2019; DSU, 2019; FCDO, 2021; WHO, 2021; UN Women, 2022). In addition to quantitative data, some BEK programmes had also collected qualitative data in an attempt to further capture what they have been delivering and achieving in relation to GESI. This qualitative data commonly took the form of stories which, for example, captured the experiences of people from marginalised groups. Qualitative methods had sometimes been introduced part way through programme implementation when teams realised they were not fully capturing the value of their work in relation to GESI. However, it tended not to be clear whether this qualitative evidence linked to programmes' main M&E frameworks and indeed how the qualitative stories were actually used. This lack of

clarity about the utility of qualitative data being collected by programmes was especially pronounced when teams appeared not to have analysed the stories to draw out findings. Beyond selecting some of the stories to showcase examples in programme reports, there was a sense among some programme teams that they were not sure what to do with them. As with disaggregated quantitative data, a clear plan for how qualitative data would actually be used was often lacking.

Capturing GESI-related achievements

Across the portfolio, it was difficult to get a clear sense of what programmes had achieved in relation to GESI. Missed opportunities were evident in terms of using GESI-focused results indicators, both to elevate GESI ambitions and to capture the potential true value of programme interventions. Given a concentration of GESI-focused indicators at output level, BEK programmes tended to be able to articulate what efforts had been made in relation to GESI rather than what results had actually been achieved. This was especially so where GESI mainstreaming ambitions had increased over the life of a programme and had not necessarily been anticipated at the start when M&E frameworks were being developed. This stood in contrast to some of the wider global literature which underlined the importance of indicators needing to be aligned with any programme adaptations, for example if GESI-focused components or workstreams were added or expanded part way through a programme (FCDO, 2021).

Challenges in being able to fully capture and articulate GESI results had been noted in some BEK programme documents, although often quite late on into programme delivery. Some programmes which provided TA had indicators which were directly linked to government indicators in various sectors. This effectively placed responsibility for outcome level change with government rather than with TA teams. In these cases, there was often a lack of indicators which specifically capture what TA was achieving in relation to GESI, for example in relation to stimulating government demand and interest or shifting mindsets of officials.

In terms of policy change, BEK programmes had tended to capture some progress in terms of work with government partners. This included the development and adoption of GESI policies, action plans, and budget guidance, often achieved through GESI-focused technical assistance at federal, provincial and municipal levels. A minority of programmes could also cite examples of governments beginning to allocate budgets for GESI targeted interventions and services, as well as capturing some progress in relation to access to resources or services by particular target groups. Programmes had also tended to track how many GESI training sessions or orientations they had provided to government and other stakeholders and to give breakdowns of who had participated.

GESI achievements in other areas were less evident across the portfolio, despite the fact that in interviews programme team members sometimes believed they had witnessed wider changes taking place. This inability to fully evidence change in relation to GESI applied to some programmes which had GESI-specific indicators in place, as well as those which solely relied on disaggregation. For example, at the policy level, BEK programmes had tended not to monitor actual implementation of GESI policies by various levels of government. As a result, it was often unclear what efforts in relation to GESI policy development and GESI audits has actually led to in terms of planning, spending and service delivery. Similarly, beyond their participation in training or attendance at an orientation session, with few exceptions, programmes tended not to capture whether these activities were leading to any shifts in mindsets and decision making, or the framing of issues in discussions. Programmes commonly stopped short of tracking progress in terms of empowerment among women and marginalised groups. For example, beyond individual qualitative stories or anecdotal examples, BEK programmes tended not to have captured whether certain groups had gained a sense of confidence or autonomy, increased influence or control over resources.

Box 25: BEK's Sudridh-Nepal Urban Resilience Programme (NURP): Wider empowering effects?

NURP team has invested in developing strong working relationships with municipal governments over a number of years. The team noted that at the start of the programme there was no demand for GESI TA among government officials. As a result, NURP's GESI specialists who are based in three municipalities, have worked to encourage interest and engagement in GESI over time, with the ultimate aim of increasing demand to integrate GESI into municipal policies, plans and budgets.

The NURP team believe they have successfully managed to stimulate demand for GESI-focused TA among municipal officials, which has extended beyond social development divisions. They also think they have been able to build the capacity of municipal officials to work in a way which actively supports GESI.

This has in part been captured in self-assessment ratings conducted by municipal officials in which scores related to GESI have gone up.

The programme also believes that through the consistent use of GESI analysis and the application of a GESI lens, for example in relation to procurement, infrastructure design, conservation, and the redevelopment of municipalities, they believe they have witnessed a transfer of GESI capacity to municipalities.

8. Conclusions, Recommendations & Lessons

This section presents the research team's conclusions based on the findings which have emerged from a combined analysis of all three stages of the research. It also presents a set of detailed recommendations for BEK to either take forward directly, or through implementing partners. Finally, a set of lessons are presented which are of relevance to the development community more widely, both in Nepal and beyond.

Conclusions

The conceptual framework for GESI mainstreaming which emerged from the global literature has proven useful for this research. Research findings have underlined the value of the framework in identifying which GESI mainstreaming approaches have been used by BEK programmes – as well the gaps where more could be done. The findings of this research underline the relevance of the framework, not only at a conceptual level, but as a practical tool to define the scope of GESI mainstreaming and the range of approaches it encompasses.

All 12 of the approaches included in the GESI mainstreaming framework have been used somewhere within the BEK portfolio. These yield plenty of examples of promising practice where specific efforts can be showcased and used to inspire others. However, what is also evident is a considerable degree of inconsistency across the portfolio, both in terms of whether approaches have been used at all by a programme – and in terms of how they have been used.

The nature of GESI mainstreaming means it cannot be a uniform process, applied wholesale across an entire portfolio. Some variation should always be expected. Nevertheless, the research has highlighted considerable gaps which have weakened GESI mainstreaming within BEK programmes. Rather than being based on conscious decisions about the mainstreaming approaches which would best suit individual programmes, this inconsistency appears to be underpinned by a lack of clarity about what GESI mainstreaming means and looks like in BEK programmes and what BEK's expectations and ambitions are in this regard. In the absence of this clarity, programmes have taken GESI mainstreaming in different directions: some taking a more meaningful and considered approach, others in a way which is far more superficial and potentially token.

A lack of conceptual clarity is perhaps most evident in terms of the terminology being used and the types of groups being targeted by BEK programmes. A range of different terms has been used interchangeably, feeding into a sense of confusion. In some cases, programmes would have liked clearer direction from BEK to set out expectations and ambitions which they could work towards. In others, vague, loosely defined terms have been actively preferred as they have enabled programmes to almost guarantee targets will be met. This has included misinterpretations of 'LNOB' to essentially bring in a focus on 'everyone', regardless of relative privilege.

The UK Gender Equality Act and GoN provisions have both motivated a focus on women within BEK programmes. Yet the global literature and the nature of inequality in Nepal underlines the limitations of approaches which assume women to be a homogenous category. Although the term 'intersectionality' frequently appeared in BEK programme documents and during interviews, a truly intersectional approach appeared to have rarely been used. Doing so would have required programmes to engage with the complex, challenging and messy realities of how various forms of discrimination and marginalisation overlap, intertwine and compound one another. The use of an intersectional lens in programming would have necessitated far greater use of ongoing analysis to really understand existing power dynamics and patterns of disadvantage to inform programme interventions.

More ongoing analysis focused on intervention design and delivery would also have helped programmes to identify potential risks related to GESI mainstreaming. Deeply entrenched power dynamics – either explicit or implicit – act to maintain discrimination and inequality. Challenging these power dynamics and disrupting the status quo tends to be accompanied by some degree of pushback - or in some cases - backlash. Yet, few programmes within the BEK portfolio could articulate the risks which might accompany their mainstreaming efforts or describe ways they had sought to mitigate them through programme design and delivery.

As with any technical aspect of programming, GESI mainstreaming requires GESI expertise. The importance of this has come through strongly in the research, not only in the global literature but in the findings from the

BEK portfolio. The research has also underlined that a GESI expert is not the same as a GESI Focal Person who has been allocated particular responsibility for work on GESI. Similarly, a GESI Officer will not have had the same level of influence within a programme as a GESI Lead in a senior role. Although these roles may all be GESI-focused, there has been considerable variation in terms of what they could bring to a programme and what they could achieve. The scope for GESI mainstreaming has also been dependent on whether the GESI expertise within a programme team has been proportionate to the size and scope of the overall programme. Where one person's expertise has needed to cover an entire programme, a patchy approach has been inevitable. For programmes providing demand led TA, it is clear that appetite for GESI-focused assistance has needed to be stimulated, with considerable work over a period of time.

The crosscutting nature of mainstreaming means GESI experts have needed to understand and be confident to engage with every aspect of a programme – ideally with considerable knowledge and expertise in all areas and a realistic understanding of the sector. Some BEK programmes have successfully managed to recruit GESI experts who combine these elements, but that has not always been possible. The global literature highlighted the importance not only of upskilling entire teams so they can play a role in GESI mainstreaming, but of upskilling and supporting GESI experts so they can apply their expertise in the most effective way. This touches on a wider issue about implementing partners believing they are not allowed to spend part of programme budgets on the internal aspects of GESI mainstreaming, including the training of their teams. A perception that implementing partners should come fully equipped to mainstream GESI within a programme without any need for upskilling among team members seems to have resulted in gaps in team capacity.

At the same time as underlining the importance of GESI training, the research also highlighted a tendency for teams to overestimate the value of basic messaging on GESI communicated through an orientation or a short session added to a wider training. Nothing in the global literature or the findings from this research suggests it is possible to change mindsets, develop competencies or shift ways of working in a one-off session. Yet, this type of approach is evident within the BEK portfolio, sometimes in the form of orientations delivered within programme teams and even more commonly as part of TA to various levels of government. It would be more reassuring if these sessions were described by implementing partners as an initial step in a broader process of change, but more often than not this was either unclear or basic GESI orientations were described as an end in themselves. Another approach underlined by the research findings was the importance of diverse recruitment, bringing in perspectives which people cannot be trained to have but which are based on a lived experience of marginalisation and exclusion. The research suggests this is an asset to programme teams which is worth investing in and adjusting timeframes to ensure.

By its nature, GESI mainstreaming takes place in programmes which are led by implementing partners who rarely have GESI as their main area of focus or expertise. A common solution to filling this gap identified in the global literature was for implementing partners to establish partnerships with GESI focused organisations: those who already understand the complexity of issues, are familiar with interventions and the risks associated with them and who have access to marginalised communities. Yet few of these types of partnerships were evident within the BEK portfolio.

With a concentration of GESI mainstreaming efforts on formal policy change and attempts to shift mindsets within government, partnerships with GESI-focused organisations may have helped programmes widen their GESI mainstreaming to other areas. Little was found within the portfolio in terms of shifting social norms to support equality and inclusion, on more comprehensive approaches to empowerment, or on strengthening collective voice among marginalised groups. If BEK's ambitions lie in these areas, then implementing partners having GESI-focused partnerships are likely to be necessary.

The global literature cautions against organisations being too focused on GESI mainstreaming as a process rather than a means to an end. The research highlights a risk of this within the BEK portfolio, with a concentration of GESI-focused indicators at output level and disaggregated data collected – often in huge volumes – with no clear purpose and plan for analysis and use. If linked to clear GESI ambitions set by BEK for its programme portfolio, a results focus to GESI mainstreaming could helpfully fix attention not just on what has been done in terms of mainstreaming but what has actually been achieved in terms of equality and inclusion.

Recommendations

Based on the research findings, a set of 19 recommendations have been identified. These are split into overarching recommendations, which BEK could take forward internally, as well as more specific recommendations related to the Common Approaches framework which BEK could take forward with implementing partners. Table 7 summarises the recommendations being made, which are then described in further detail below. A suggested sequencing of the recommendations is indicated in the final column, highlighting those which could be focused on in the short term as part of initial efforts over the next six months, medium term priorities which could be taken forward over the next 12-18 months and those which would require further planning over the longer term, but ideally within the next 18-24 months. Under some of the medium and longer term recommendations, there are some shorter-term next steps which BEK could take forward in order to lay the foundations for future efforts. For ease of reference, these next steps, along with the short term recommendations are listed together in Annex 8.

Table 7 Recommendations to BEK

#	Recommendations	Timeframe
	Overarching recommendations	
1	Establish a clear description of what GESI mainstreaming means for BEK programmes and a vision of what it is intended to achieve, framed around the three Essential Elements.	Short term
2	Establish the consistent use of the 12 Common Approaches Framework to GESI mainstreaming efforts within programmes.	Medium term
3	Incentivise SROs and PROs to mainstream GESI in the programmes they are working on, establishing it as an expected aspect of their role on which they are appraised.	Medium term
	Recommendations related to specific Common Approaches	
4	Require all new programmes/phases of programmes to develop a GESI strategy during their inception phase, which they update during the life of the programme.	Short term
5	Require programmes to calculate how much they will spend on GESI mainstreaming and to track this spend as part of existing financial reporting.	Longer term
6	Recognise and reward programmes or individuals within implementing teams for their efforts and achievements in relation to GESI.	Longer term
7	Expect and support programmes to recruit diverse teams, which goes beyond the recruitment of women as a homogenous group.	Medium term
8	Require new programmes/phases of programmes to have a GESI Lead who is a GESI expert in a senior role.	Short term
9	Establish a Community of Practice to support and strengthen GESI experts working within BEK programmes.	Short term
10	Encourage and enable programmes to work with government institutions mandated to support GESI as part of the constitution.	Longer term
11	Encourage implementing partners to establish partnerships with GESI focused organisations in order to strengthen programmes' capacity to work on GESI.	Longer term
12	Support implementing partners to provide programme-specific GESI training to their teams so they are equipped with the competencies to mainstream GESI.	Medium term
13	Expect programmes to conduct ongoing intersectional GESI analysis to inform more detailed design and delivery of interventions as programmes adapt and evolve.	Medium term
14	Clarify which groups are intended to be reached by BEK programmes – and how they are expected to benefit - as a result of GESI mainstreaming.	Medium term
15	Require programmes to demonstrate a clear link between GESI-focused interventions and the design of the main programme.	Medium term

16	Commission an evaluation of TA for municipal, provincial and federal government GESI policies and GESI trainings provided to government officials in order to inform future support by BEK.	Medium term
17	Expect programmes to identify risks related to work on GESI, including as a result of backlash.	Medium term
18	Ensure GESI ambitions are set at outcome level within programme logframes.	Medium term
19	Expect programmes to not only collect but also analyse disaggregated data with an intersectional lens and with a clear purpose to inform and improve programming for groups intended to benefit from GESI mainstreaming.	Medium term

Table 25 in Annex 8 outlines how each of these recommendations are rooted in the global literature reviewed in Stage 1 and evidence from the BEK portfolio gathered in Stage 2 and Stage 3.

Overarching Recommendations

The following three recommendations seek to establish a foundation upon which BEK could strengthen GESI mainstreaming within its programme portfolio.

Recommendation 1: Establish a clear description of what GESI mainstreaming means for BEK programmes and a vision of what it is intended to achieve, framed around the three Essential Elements. This is something which can be incorporated into the forthcoming cross-embassy GESI strategy and action plan. In order to have practical relevance, rather than being based on generic definitions, the description and vision for GESI mainstreaming should relate specifically to delivery of the BEK Country Plan and should clarify BEK's expectations in terms of:

- The internal aspects of GESI mainstreaming within programme teams, ensuring GESI mainstreaming is sufficiently resourced and capacity is in place.
- The external aspects of GESI mainstreaming related to programming, with a focus on GESI results through a dual emphasis on inclusion in terms of programme reach as well as targeted GESI efforts.

Recommendation 2: Establish the consistent use of the 12 Common Approaches Framework to GESI mainstreaming efforts within programmes. Rather than being presented as a 'conceptual' framework, based on the findings from this research, this should be used as a practical framework for GESI mainstreaming. This can be achieved through the use of a checklist (see Annex 9) which SROs and advisers can use from procurement stage onwards, including to:

- Structure initial and ongoing discussion with implementing partners about GESI mainstreaming.
- Conduct a light-touch annual stocktake to track progress on GESI mainstreaming across the BEK portfolio based on an annual self-assessment by BEK-funded programmes as part of the annual review process.

Recommendation 3: Incentivise SROs and PROs to mainstream GESI in the programmes they are working on, establishing it as an expected aspect of their role on which they are appraised. This should be accompanied by skills development for SROs and PROs in relation to GESI mainstreaming. A structured approach is likely to be most effective here, with sequenced workshops with SROs and PROs from sectoral portfolios to take them through each of the 12 Common Approaches. It would be beneficial to include advisers in these sessions too. The main aim of the workshops would be to ensure:

- Conceptual clarity about the ambitions of GESI mainstreaming and how this relates to other terms such as LNOB, vulnerability and disadvantage.
- A more tangible understanding of what good (and bad) GESI mainstreaming looks like, specific to the sector(s) they are working in.

Recommendations related to each of the Common Approaches

In addition to the overarching recommendations outlined above, listed below are a set of more specific recommendations which relate to each of the 12 Common Approaches. These are reflected in the checklist which is included in Annex 9.

Recommendation 4: Require all new programmes/phases of programmes to develop a GESI strategy during their inception phase, which they update over the life of the programme. These should outline what the programme intends to achieve in relation to GESI and how they intend to achieve it. The strategies should not outline potential interventions or ways of working in the sector but more directly link to actual programme design. Programmes need routinely revisit their GESI strategy so that it remains fit for purpose as interventions are implemented and adapted. In addition, they should:

- Be structured around the Common Approaches framework, both to ensure they are comprehensive and to ease review by BEK so it is possible to identify which aspects are insufficient or missing.
- Have a clear results focus, linked directly to programme outcomes as set out in the programme logframe. Commitments in the GESI strategies should also link to programme workplans so they are carried forward to implementation.

BEK SROs and advisers should require regular reporting by implementing partners against programme GESI strategies as part of their annual review in order to ensure programmes are held to account for their use and delivery. Programme GESI strategies need to be living documents, with review and discussion between BEK and programme teams leading to ongoing revisions and adaptations, as necessary. This should provide space for GESI mainstreaming approaches to explicitly keep pace with any changes to the programme and the wider context.

Recommendation 5: Require programmes to calculate how much they will spend on GESI mainstreaming and to track this spend as part of existing financial reporting. This should include BEK resources invested by implementing partners to:

- Equip the programme team with sufficient skills, competencies and expertise to deliver GESI mainstreaming.
- Design and deliver efforts to mainstream GESI across programme interventions, including to expand reach.
- Design and deliver GESI-focused interventions within the programme.

These calculations should be presented separately for each of the three areas listed above, as well as in one single combined total in order to track overall spend on GESI. This spend should be presented as a percentage or proportion of the total programme budget. For spending on the design and delivery of efforts to mainstream GESI across programme interventions, programmes should be able to clearly explain how they have made these calculations so they are as accurate as possible.

Recommendation 6: Recognise and reward programmes or individuals within implementing teams, for their efforts and achievements in relation to GESI. This could also be extended to BEK colleagues. This would need to be visible to others within programmes and beyond in order to incentivise a focus on GESI. This could be in the form of:

- Commending GESI achievements at cross-programme events and regularly showcasing GESI mainstreaming efforts in reports, newsletters and the Embassy's social media.
- Either using any existing Embassy awards or certificates or creating a specific award for exceptional individual or programme level efforts in relation to GESI mainstreaming.

Recommendation 7: BEK should expect and support programmes to recruit diverse teams, which goes beyond the recruitment of women as a homogenous group. This should be based on an explicit recognition of the value of having people with a lived experience of marginalisation and inequality within teams, including at leadership level. It should not be assumed that implementing partners will automatically ensure diversity within programme teams because they can demonstrate diversity at a global level within their organisations. In order to support these efforts, BEK should:

- Provide guidance to programmes based on an analysis of the barriers to diverse recruitment in Nepal. This would need to look at barriers for specific groups but with a clear intersectional lens so

that the impact of multiple barriers is clearly assessed. It would be valuable to also include an assessment of barriers to diverse recruitment in relation to specific roles, including leadership positions and field teams based outside Kathmandu. The analysis and guidance should also identify effective HR practices which have enabled diverse recruitment and retainment within programme and field teams in Nepal.

- Place an emphasis on the value of diverse recruitment from procurement onwards, framing it not as just a 'nice to have' but as an essential element of effective programme delivery, especially in the context of federalisation. This will require BEK to ensure programmes have sufficient time for diverse recruitment. This may mean providing some flexibility where sufficient diversity has not been achieved in initial recruitment rounds and, for example, further targeted outreach is required to broaden the pool of applicants.

Common Approach 5: Programme GESI Expertise

Recommendation 8: Require new programmes/phases of programmes to have a GESI Lead who is a GESI expert in a senior role. This person should have status within the team to enable them to play a strategic role with crosscutting influence. Further GESI specialists may be needed within the programme team and at field level depending on the scale and scope of programme and the number of locations it is working across. The overall GESI capacity within the programme should be proportionate to the overall programme.

Recommendation 9: Establish a BEK GESI Community of Practice to support and strengthen GESI experts working within BEK programmes. This should be accompanied by explicit acknowledgement that GESI experts may not come to BEK programme teams with the sectoral expertise and a full range of skills sets which cut across all programme functions. In many cases GESI experts will need professional development support to expand their knowledge and skills in ways which are directly relevant to the BEK programme they are working on. Whilst implementing partners can provide this themselves, BEK could play a cross portfolio role by convening a working group which would be resourced in order to:

- Provide and facilitate a space for GESI experts working on BEK programmes to regularly network and share experiences, challenges and ideas. This would need to be a safe space in which difficulties can be openly discussed and could also promote greater coordination in areas where programmes overlap (for example in terms of TA to provincial or municipal government).
- Provide mentoring opportunities for GESI experts working on BEK programmes, where needed. This could be peer mentoring within the community of practice, or through the pairing of programme GESI leads with national and international sectoral GESI experts and those with specific expertise in certain areas of programming, for example M&E. These experts could also be available for inputs in terms of troubleshooting advice and guidance. Having an identified pool of GESI experts, ready to provide support through a call down arrangement would help ensure such support was responsive and timely.

As well as being of immediate value in terms of upskilling within current BEK programmes, the working group could also be linked to the wider strategic ambition of strengthening the pool of experienced GESI experts in Nepal. Through the IDPG GESI Working Group, BEK could also consider longer term aspirations to connect these efforts with other donors.

Common Approach 6: Partnerships to strengthen GESI mainstreaming

Recommendation 10: Encourage and enable programmes to work with government institutions mandated to support GESI as part of the constitution. At the federal level, this could include BEK further developing relationships with the Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens, the line ministry for most GESI issues, in order to collaborate on programmes. It could also involve working with, and in the process supporting, various constitutionally mandated commissions to monitor the progress on the status of women and historically marginalised groups. These commissions include including the National Women Commission, National Dalit Commission, National Inclusion Commission, Indigenous Nationalities Commission, Madhesi Commission, Tharu Commission, Muslim Commission, and the National Human Rights Commission.

Recommendation 11: Encourage implementing partners to establish partnerships with GESI focused organisations in order to strengthen programmes' capacity to work on GESI. This could include organisations focused on women's rights, people with disabilities and indigenous and historically marginalised groups. Such organisations, at both the national and grassroots levels could strengthen the

design and delivery of BEK programmes, both in terms of expanding reach and GESI-focused interventions. Such partnerships could also help to expand BEK programming into areas such as empowerment, social norm change and collective voice/influence.

BEK could play a particular role in:

- Emphasising the importance of such partnerships in ITTs and other procurement documents. This would need to include an emphasis on such partnerships being based on mutual respect and on a meaningful two-way interaction and exchange of knowledge, ensuring they are not tokenistic, exploitative or purely transactional.
- Inviting GESI-focused organisation to early market engagement events in order to encourage networking with those bidding as lead implementing partners. This would give GESI-focused organisations early insight into programme scope and potential bidders.
- Reminding implementing partners to include additional GESI focused organisations as partners, as needed, during design and implementation.

Common Approach 7: Strengthening team competencies for GESI mainstreaming

Recommendation 12: Support implementing partners to provide programme-specific GESI training to their teams so they are equipped with the competencies to mainstream GESI. To ensure sufficient resource is allocated to this, it will be important for BEK (especially SROs, PROs and BEK's Social Development Advisers) to clearly communicate that this can be covered using programme budgets. It will be important that GESI training for programmes:

- Goes beyond basic messaging about the need for a general commitment to GESI and instead focus on equipping teams with the knowledge and skills they will need to play a role in GESI mainstreaming within the programme. This will need to include ensuring teams understand how to use an intersectional approach to disaggregated data. It should be clear to all team members the distinction between their own roles and responsibilities within the GESI mainstreaming process and that of GESI experts within the team.
- Is viewed as a bare minimum and the starting point to a GESI mainstreaming capacity development plan within BEK programmes which should be led by the programme's GESI Lead.

Common Approach 8: Conducting intersectional analysis to inform programme design

Recommendation 13: Expect programmes to conduct ongoing intersectional GESI analysis to inform more detailed design and delivery of interventions as programmes adapt and evolve. This means that GESI analysis conducted for the business case or early in the inception phase to develop a programme GESI strategy would be viewed as a necessary first step but insufficient to last the length of the programme. It will be important that GESI analysis is built into programme milestones and deliverables. BEK would need to clearly communicate that:

- Intersectional analysis is not the same as simply reporting data or stating issues for various social groups. Instead, the true value of intersectional analysis lies in looking at the overlapping and compounded nature of marginalisation, so looking at groups within groups.
- GESI analysis is not something which programmes can tick off as a one-off activity at the start. Rather, every programme intervention, whether designed at the start or identified part way through will require some degree of GESI analysis, even small scale.

Common Approach 9: Ensuring participation and expanding programme reach

Recommendation 14: Clarify which groups are intended to be reached by BEK programmes – and how they are expected to benefit - as a result of GESI mainstreaming. This could come under the description of GESI mainstreaming under Recommendation 1. Although some flexibility will be needed to allow for more specific targeting within programmes, for example in relation to certain geographical locations, sectors and intervention types, it would be helpful for BEK to broadly define which groups it is referring to in relation to GESI in Nepal. In particular this clarification should help to:

- Encourage a more consistent focus on certain groups and an intersectional approach to GESI mainstreaming within programmes
- Avoid misinterpretations through the interchangeable use of a range of terms and an unhelpfully broad definition which encourages a focus on 'everyone'.

Recommendation 15: Require programmes to demonstrate a clear link between GESI-focused interventions and the design of the main programme. It should not be sufficient for GESI focused interventions to simply be relevant to the sector or some geographic locations. Rather:

- There should be a clear logic between them and other programme interventions.
- Where a clear link between a GESI intervention and the rest of the programme cannot be made, BEK should consider commissioning it as a standalone GESI project or programme in order to ensure they are robustly designed and resourced in order to maximise their potential impact.

Recommendation 16: Commission an evaluation of TA for municipal, provincial and federal government GESI policies and GESI trainings provided to government officials in order to inform future support by BEK. Given the number of GESI policies that have now been developed within federal, provincial and municipal government and the number of GESI trainings which have been delivered to government officials, across a range of BEK programmes, it is now timely to take a step back to evaluate how best to further invest in these areas. The emphasis here should be on drawing out learning in terms of whether and in what circumstances:

- TA has effectively supported implementation of standalone GESI policies at municipal, provincial and federal level, including whether GESI policy commitment have gone on to be reflected in other sectoral policies and in budget allocations and services. The findings from this could be of value across a wide number of BEK programmes supporting the development of GESI policies.
- GESI training sessions provided to government officials through BEK programmes has had any lasting effect in terms of knowledge, mindsets and ways of working. This could explore any differences between standalone GESI training and GESI sessions embedded in wider trainings.

Recommendation 17: Expect programmes to identify risks related to work on GESI, including as a result of backlash. It is important that as part of wider risk assessments programmes are alert to unintended consequences of GESI mainstreaming efforts to ensure they Do No Harm. This is especially important where GESI mainstreaming may encourage programmes to focus resources on certain groups, to prioritise the participation of marginalised groups and to challenge existing power dynamics. In order to identify risks and mitigation measures:

- Attention to risks should be included in ongoing programme GESI analyses (see Recommendation 12).

- BEK should develop a succinct 2-pager which explains the types of additional risks which can be triggered or exacerbated by GESI mainstreaming. This would help raise awareness among BEK colleagues and implementation partners. This should include concrete examples which directly relate to the type of programming BEK funds and should outline possible steps to manage and mitigate risks.

Recommendation 18: Ensure GESI ambitions are set at outcome level in programme logframes. This should avoid efforts being limited to output or activity level and could have a dual effect of both raising ambitions and capturing outcome-level change already being contributed to by programmes. It is important that:

- GESI outcomes are set at individual programme level, not just in overarching logframes for wider programmes or portfolios they might come under.

- GESI outcome indicators should be well defined and specific, with a clearly articulated approach to tracking progress. Targets should be based on GESI analysis of what a programme can realistically achieve.

Recommendation 19: Expect programmes to not only collect but also analyse disaggregated data with an intersectional lens and with a clear purpose to inform and improve programming for groups intended to benefit from GESI mainstreaming. This should avoid disaggregated data being collected without a clear purpose and applies to both quantitative and qualitative data collected by programmes. This will require programme GESI advisers to work closely with M&E colleagues. Comparative analysis with any

relevant population data should be conducted wherever possible to aid interpretation (for example comparing the proportion of Dalit women reached through municipal government training compared to the number of Dalit women elected at municipal level). Disaggregated targets for programme outputs and outcomes should be based on an analysis of what it is realistic for the programme to achieve given programme scope and geographic areas where interventions will be delivered. More specifically, BEK should:

- Ensure all disaggregated data is collected with a clear purpose and intention for it to be analysed and used. Programmes should be expected to explain whether they will or will not collect data in relation to a list of aspects of people's identities – with an explanation of how and why. This list should be based on the definition of GESI which BEK develops (see Recommendation 1), and could include (but not be limited to):
    - Sex
    - Caste/ethnicity
    - Age
    - Disability
    - LGBT+ (where deemed safe)
- BEK should require all programmes to ensure data is sampled, collected, stored, analysed and presented to enable intersectional disaggregation. This means programmes should be able to present data in a way which combines each of the above in multiple ways, enabling analysis of who is – and is not – benefiting in order to inform programme adaptations.
- BEK should ensure programmes are clear on current thinking about the best approaches to the collection of disability-related data according to the Washington Group. Wherever possible, this should encourage a standardised approach across BEK programmes and scope for aggregation of data sets should be explored.

In considering and taking the above recommendations forward, BEK is likely to find the documents listed in Table 8 below particularly helpful.

Table 8 Sample of Documents for the Stage 1 Global Literature Synthesis

Organisation	Document	Date	Description
DFID	'How To' Guidance Note on Gender Equality	2019a	This is an internal rather than public document but for FCDO colleagues, it is one which sets out practical guidance on supporting gender equality.
EBRD	Addressing Gender-Based Violence and Harassment: Emerging Good Practice for the Private Sector	2020	This guidance is targeted at the private sector but provides useful information on considering risks related to gender based violence and harassment across various sectors. **Link**
EIGE	Institutional Transformation Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit	2016	This document, although from 2016 provides useful guidance, especially on the more internal aspects of mainstreaming, for examples related to Essential Elements 1 and 2 of the GESI mainstreaming framework. **Link**
FCDO	Prosperity Fund Year 3 Gender and Inclusion Evaluation	2021	This evaluation provided many useful insights in the Stage 1 literature review, including practical examples from programming. **Link**
GADN	Untangling Gender Mainstreaming: A Theory of Change Based on Experience and Reflection	2015	Although from 2015, the thinking which underpins this document still has relevance and provides important insights for mainstreaming practice. **Link**
Gupta et al.	Beyond Gender Mainstreaming: Transforming Humanitarian Action, Organizations and Culture	2023	This document provided thinking and evidence which was used in the Stage 1 review and in the development of the GESI mainstreaming framework. Of particular value is its emphasis on results. **Link**
UNW	Handbook on Gender Mainstreaming for Gender Equality Results	2022	This document presents valuable guidance on gender mainstreaming which informed many aspects of the GESI mainstreaming framework. **Link**

Lessons

The GESI Mainstreaming Framework provides a practical tool to define the scope of GESI mainstreaming within development programming. The following lessons have emerged from the research which are of broader relevance to the donor community in Nepal and beyond. They are structured around the 12 Common Approaches in the GESI Mainstreaming Framework.

1. **Programmes can helpfully demonstrate and elevate commitments to GESI mainstreaming through the use of programme GESI strategies, especially where they were linked to practical action plans.** It is important that these are developed with an intersectional lens, providing conceptual clarity about what the programme means by GESI mainstreaming and what its ambitions are in this regard. It is also important that GESI strategies are timed in order to meaningfully influence programme design, developed initially during the inception phase and then revisited throughout the life of a programme.

2. **GESI mainstreaming requires a dedicated investment of resources, with budget allocations for GESI needing to be explicit and visible.** Donors need to set clear expectations on GESI-related budgeting by implementing partners, with actual spending being tracked throughout programme implementation. This is usually easier with GESI-focused interventions within programmes, rather than efforts to weave GESI into programme interventions. Calculations need to be explicit to ensure that spending on GESI has not been overstated.

3. **It is important for programme leadership to intentionally motivate their teams to address GESI through their work**. This needs to go beyond general messaging about the importance of GESI as a value, and instead focus on programme leads taking intentional steps to motivate their teams to address GESI through their work. Internal accountability mechanisms can be used to support GESI mainstreaming but it is important that efforts such as including GESI responsibilities in job descriptions is carried through to performance appraisals.

4. **Recruiting diverse programme teams and encouraging diversity to be valued so that alternative perspectives are shared, listened to and acted upon is an important aspect of GESI mainstreaming.** Diversity can help to bring a lived experience of marginalisation into implementing teams and can help strengthen programming. Given a common lack of diversity among government officials, ensuring diversity in programme teams can be an immediate way of bringing diverse voices and perspectives into meetings and events. It is important that donors understand that diverse recruitment can take time and sometimes means taking a chance on candidates who were not always the most obvious choice.

5. **GESI mainstreaming requires GESI expertise. This is most effective when GESI experts are embedded in full time roles which give them status within programme teams.** Programmes may need to employ multiple GESI experts to ensure that their GESI capacity matches the scale and scope of the overall programme. It is unrealistic to expect that GESI experts will automatically be equipped to work across every aspect of a programme without the need for any upskilling. GESI experts may therefore need some professional development support, accessed through programme budgets as an essential part of ongoing learning and development, so they can work effectively across programmes.

6. **Partnerships with GESI-focused organisations can enhance GESI capacity within programmes and add value to the design and delivery of interventions.** As well as encouraging and enabling GESI focused organisations to participate in consultations, it can be helpful for implementing partners to establish partnerships with organisations such as WROs and OPDs, as well as those who represent historically marginalised and other excluded groups. This can help programmes have the capacity and expertise to integrate GESI into programme interventions as well as GESI-focused interventions. Emphasis needs to be placed on ensuring these partnerships are not tokenistic, exploitative, or purely transactional, but rather based on mutual respect and a two-way exchange of knowledge.

7. **As well as a commitment to GESI, programme teams need to be equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to play a role in GESI mainstreaming.** Organisation-wide GESI training provided by implementing partners is likely to be insufficient and too generic to equip teams with the skills they need. GESI trainings need to be tailored to the specific programmes which teams are working on. Donors can provide helpful reassurance and clarity to implementing partners about the use of programme budgets to deliver such programme-specific training. GESI trainings for programme teams can be effectively led by

programme GESI leads. Inputs from external organisations which specialise in GESI and/or which represent or work with particular marginalised groups could also add value.

8. **Intersectional and operationally focused GESI analyses can strengthen GESI mainstreaming within programmes by enabling barriers to be identified and understood.** This will be most valuable when it is conducted on an ongoing basis and is built into programme processes, rather than in the form of one broad GESI analysis at the start of a programme. GESI analysis for specific interventions can help ensure their design reflects the complexity of inequality and exclusion and the barriers which need to be addressed.

9. **Programmes need to address the challenges and barriers marginalised groups face in accessing and benefiting from programme interventions and resources.** Clearly identified and defined categories of people can help reach those at risk of being left behind and who experience multiple forms of discrimination. In contrast, broad and loosely defined terms may mean programmes avoid engaging with thorny issues related to unequal power relations and historic marginalisation, leaving barriers unaddressed.

10. **Mainstream development programmes should identify opportunities to include GESI-focused activities or interventions, drawing on GESI expertise, analysis and GESI-focused partnerships to help them do so.** It is important that these aim to work towards results, for example GESI policy implementation, shifts in mindsets and norms to support GESI, empowerment of women from marginalised communities and collective voice.

11. **It is important that programme seek to understand and address potential risks associated with GESI mainstreaming, especially where efforts seek to challenge current power dynamics and resource distribution.** This includes being alert to the unintended consequences of GESI mainstreaming, including intra-household tensions and community backlash triggered by efforts to challenge the status quo or target resources at certain groups. An assessment of potential risks should be built into ongoing GESI analysis which takes into account both contextual and programmatic risk factors. These GESI-related risks and mitigation measures should be reflected in programme risk registers and reviewed on an ongoing basis.

12. **Addressing GESI through programme M&E is a vital aspect of mainstreaming, including the use of both disaggregated and GESI-specific indicators.** Disaggregation should enable intersectional analysis of how multiple, intersecting identities determine who is – and is not – benefitting. Disaggregation needs to have a clearly stated intended purpose and plan for analysis which will enable it to be used for accountability and to inform learning and decision making. GESI-focused indicators are helpful in terms of tracking progress, not only in terms of mainstreaming efforts but at outcome level with a focus on capturing GESI results.

Annex 1 | Detailed Methodology for Stage 1: Global Literature Synthesis

The main phase of the research began with a synthesis of global literature on GESI mainstreaming. The focus here was on seeking to answer RQ1 and the related sub questions under it. The methodology and draft report from Stage 1 underwent quality assurance review by the research team's Senior Technical Adviser ahead of submission to BEK/FCDO.

Document selection

Sources were identified for the synthesis through a combination of:

- Online searches using Google and Bing. A list of search terms used is presented in Table 9 below.
- Hand searches of specific targeted websites. These were selected based on the relevance of their work to FCDO programming and/or organisational reputation for their work on GESI.
- Snowballing through searching the bibliographies of identified sources.

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 9 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 9 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
Social exclusion	"Leave no one behind"	Framework	Disag*		money

A total of 60 documents were identified for potential inclusion in the synthesis. 36 of the 60 sources were selected for review using the following exclusion criteria:

- **Publication date: documents published earlier than 2015.** A primary objective of the review was to tap into current thinking and evidence on GESI mainstreaming. We therefore chose to prioritise literature with more recent publication dates.
- **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.

Table 10 below lists the 36 documents which were included in the sample for the global literature synthesis, which are also referenced in the findings sections (Sections 5-7) 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.

Documents included in the global literature synthesis

Table 10 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	UN Women	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

Description of the sample

The sample of 36 documents for the Stage 1 literature synthesis is described in further detail below.

Types of literature

A distinction was found between literature which presented 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.

Among sources which presented *current thinking* on mainstreaming, almost 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 Sections 4-7.

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)

- **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), Overseas Development Institute (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 percent 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. Any country specific sources were added to the sample through a snowballing approach where they have been referenced in global documents. This was also the case for sector specific documents, for example those which focused on the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) sector or on private sector development (PSD) programmes.

Focus on certain types of inequality or marginalisation

While the scope of the research was on GESI, sources which focused specifically on gender or other specific aspects of people's identify were not excluded from the sample. Even when not reflected in the title, much of the content of these sources was found to be intersectional in nature (see for example UN Women, 2022). Nevertheless, a disproportionate number of sources within the sample had a stated focus on gender (or women and girls/women's empowerment) (21) rather than on GESI more broadly (14) or other areas of inclusion such

as disability (1). Table 11 below details the varying areas of focus of the 36 sources. Asterisks indicate where more than one source was included from the same organisation.

Table 11 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 literature synthesis considered the quality of each individual study or evaluation reviewed. The results showed that all but one of the 36 sources were found to be of high quality. The one exception where quality was deemed medium was on a summary report, where there was insufficient methodological detail. However, it is likely that some of the aspects missing from the summary were included in the full evaluation report. Further detail on the approach used to assessing the quality of evidence can be found in the sub section below.

Review, coding and analysis

Using an Excel spreadsheet, the three Essential Elements in the conceptual framework and the sub questions under RQ1 were used to code the data extracted from each of the 36 sources. Each source was given its own row. Once the spreadsheet was fully populated, a column-by-column analysis was conducted to identify emerging themes across the sample. From this analysis, a set of 12 Common Approaches emerged from the literature. These findings were written into a Stage 1 report, which was shared with BEK for feedback and approval.

Assessing Quality of Evidence in Stage 1

Using FCDO guidance on assessing the quality of evidence, the global synthesis considered and described the quality of each individual study or evaluation we reviewed. We held a working assumption that the evaluation reports we review within the BEK portfolio had already undergone a formal quality assessment. Where this was the case, we did not repeat an assessment of quality. Where this was not the case, and we drew findings from an evaluation, we assessed quality in the same way as we have the global evidence.

Each study or evaluation was categorised by type:
- Primary studies (experimental, quasi experimental or non-experimental)
- Secondary reviews (systematic or non-systematic)

In each case, they were then further categorised by design:
- Quantitative
- Qualitative
- Mixed method

Primary studies were assessed according to the following seven aspects of quality:
- Conceptual framing
- Transparency
- Appropriateness
- Cultural sensitivity
- Validity
- Reliability
- Cogency

In line with FCDO guidance, Table 12 below indicates the questions we considered in relation to each of these seven aspects. Ideally, with a high-quality study, the answer to each of these questions would be yes.

Table 12 Assessing the Quality of Primary Studies

Principle of quality	Associated questions
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?

Secondary reviews were not assessed using the seven aspects outlined above. Instead, for these, we used the following questions as an indication of quality:

- Does the report outline search strategies used and the approach to selecting studies?
- Does the report explain how quality and strength of evidence has been assessed?
- Are clear links made between the review's findings and the studies that have been included?

In each case, whether for a primary study or a secondary review, an overall quality rating of high, medium, or low was identified and used to caveat findings. These are briefly described in Table 13 below.

Table 13 Quality Ratings for Individual Studies

Quality rating	Description
High	Comprehensively addresses multiple aspects of quality.
Moderate	A lack of attention to certain aspects of quality.
Low	A lack of attention to most aspects of quality.

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

The results show that the vast majority of evidence we've drawn on is high quality, as outlined in Table 14. 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 14 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.

Annex 2 | Detailed Methodology for Stage 2: BEK Portfolio Review

Following the Stage 1 Global Literature Synthesis, the research moved on to a review of the BEK portfolio of programmes. The focus here was on seeking to answer RQ2 and the related sub questions under it. It was important to ensure the process for the BEK portfolio review was not too onerous on BEK staff and programme teams and that the amount of time requested from them was realistic. As a result, a relatively light touch methodology was necessary. As with Stage 1m the methodology and draft report from Stage 2 underwent quality assurance review by the research team's Senior Technical Adviser ahead of submission to BEK/FCDO.

Programme selection

During the inception phase, the research team conducted a mapping of FCDO-funded programmes in Nepal. This was achieved using the search function in DevTracker and applying filters for organisation and geography (i.e. FCDO and Nepal). However, some of the information provided on DevTracker was found to be out of date and incomplete (updates to the DevTracker were temporarily paused due to an update to FCDO's financial systems). It was therefore necessary to liaise directly with BEK colleagues to verify and fill gaps.

A final list of 44 programmes were identified as being currently funded by FCDO in Nepal which were mainstream programmes rather than those primarily focused on GESI. This included 14 programmes funded directly by BEK and a further 29 regional or centrally managed programmes. Given the sectoral diversity, size and maturity of the portfolio which was being directly funded by BEK, it was agreed that all 14 programmes would be included in the Stage 2 review. As previously noted, this meant that none of the regional or centrally managed programmes were included in this research.

At the start of Stage 2, it became clear that many of the 14 programmes were in fact portfolios of programmes, with numerous programmes under them and that within the scope of the research, it would not be possible to include all programmes within the original set of 14. Based on discussion with individual SROs, where a programme was in fact a portfolio, individual programmes were identified to be included in the final sample. In line with the sub questions under RQ2, the focus was on identifying and understanding what programmes *have* done and achieved in relation to GESI mainstreaming, not evaluating what they have not. A final sample of 15 programmes was identified in consultation with BEK colleagues, prioritising programmes which:

1. They knew had made efforts to mainstream GESI and where there would be greater potential to generate learning.
2. Were still live and where programme team members would be available to share documents and be available for interview.

Description of the sample

The final sample of 15 programmes is presented in Table 15 below. This shows the sectoral spread across the sample, with ten sectors or sub sectors represented within the sample. However, a weighting towards programmes focused on infrastructure and climate change is noticeable. This was not intentional but is perhaps reflective of the overall composition of the live BEK portfolio at the time when sampling took place.

Table 15 Final BEK Programme Sample for Stage 2

#	Programme/Component	Sector	Location	Start Date	End Date
1	Resilient Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and Emergency Preparedness Programme (RWEPP)	WASH	Provinces 1, 4, 5	Jul-21	Jun-26
2	Public Financial Management Multi Donor Trust Fund - Phase II (PFM-MDTF2)	PFM	Federal/subnational levels	Dec-17	Jan-26
3	Sudridh-Nepal Urban Resilience Programme (NURP)	Infrastructure	All 7 provinces with focus on 2 and 4-7	Sep-16	Mar-25

4	Climate Smart Development for Nepal (CSD) – NCCSP2 Component	Climate	All 7 provinces	Oct-16	Mar-25
5	Climate Smart Development for Nepal – NREP Component	Climate	All 7 provinces	Oct-16	Mar-25
6	Evidence for Development (E4D) – Data for Development (D4D) Component	Evidence	All 7 provinces	Oct-15	Dec-23
7	Evidence for Development (E4D) – Census Component	Evidence	All 7 provinces	Oct-15	Dec-23
8	Project Coordination Units (PCUs)	PEA	All 7 provinces	Oct-18	Dec-23
9	Rural Access Programme 3 (RAP3)	Infrastructure	Karnali & Sudurpashchim Provinces	May-13	Oct-23
10	Provincial and Local Governance Support Programme (PLGSP)	Governance	All 7 provinces	Dec-19	Jul-23
11	Nepal Health Sector Support Programme III (NHSSP3)	Health	All 7 provinces (and focused TA to Madhesh, Lumbini and Sudurpaschim)	Jul-17	Jul-24
12	Accelerating Investment and Infrastructure in Nepal (AIIN)	Infrastructure	Provinces 2-6	Aug-18	Jun-24
13	Skills for Employment Programme (SEP)	Employment	Provinces 2 and 5	Aug-15	Mar-24
14	Hamro Samman Programme – Countering Trafficking in Persons in Nepal (HS)	Social Protection	Provinces 3, 5 and 7	Nov-18	Mar-23
15	Post-Earthquake Reconstruction in Nepal – Building Back Better (Purnima)	Infrastructure	Districts of Rasuwa, Dhading, Nuwakot (Province 3) and Gorkha (Province 4)	Jun-16	Dec-22

Document selection

Given the size and scope of programmes included in the sample, it was not possible to comprehensively review all available programme documents for each one. Instead, the SRO for this research requested that SROs and PROs for all selected programmes shared four documents which they believed best showcased efforts within the programmes to mainstream GESI. Emphasis was placed on these being documents which were not already publicly available via DevTracker. In some cases, BEK colleagues forwarded requests directly to programme teams who followed up with GESI-related documents. Where more than four documents were submitted, the research team conducted a rapid scan of the documents, including using word searches, to quickly identify those of greatest value to the research. Those which provided little or no information related to GESI mainstreaming were excluded. Where more than four documents were identified as being directly relevant to GESI mainstreaming, the research team attempted to review more than four, wherever possible. In cases where fewer than four documents were shared, the research team sought to include relevant documents that were available on DevTracker, most commonly the business case and logframe. A full list of documents reviewed across the 15 programmes is included in Table 16 below.

Table 16 List of Documents Reviewed in Stage 2

#	Document
	AIIN
1	Landell Mills - EPI Mid Term Review (MTR) Report revised 11.07.2018
2	Landell Mills - FSSP MTR Report revised MASTER 11.07.18
3	Landell Mills - MTR AiiN Main report 240718
4	End Term Review (ETR) GESI findings
	CSD – NCCSP2

5	Draft LNOB report (Nepal Climate Change Support Programme, NCCSP)
6	GESI strategy (NCCSP)
	CSD – NREP
7	GESI strategy (National Renewable Energy Programme, March 2021 (NREP)
8	NREP Quarterly Progress report, 2023 (NREP)
	E4D – Census
9	Project Completion Report: Support for the Preparatory Phase of the 2021 Population and Housing Census of Nepal
10	E4D Annual Review 2021*
11	E4D Business Case**
	E4D – D4D
12	Mainstreaming GESI – D4D
13	E4D Annual Review 2021*
14	E4D Business Case**
	Hamro Samman
15	GESI Mainstreaming in Hamro Samman Project (GESI Learning Brief)
16	Innovative and Evidence-based preventive practices adopted by Hamro Samman to reduce TIP Risks in Nepal (Learning Brief)
17	Experiences of Project Participants at their Workplaces (Learning Brief)
18	Annual Review 2021
19	Business case - Countering Trafficking in Persons in Nepal, support to the USAID Hamro Samman Programme
	NHSSP
20	Business Case (2015)
21	Annual Review 2 (2018)
22	Annual Review 4 (2020)
23	Institutionalising Gender Equality and Social Inclusion into the Health System: A Case Study from Nepal at a time of transformational change, 2010-2022
24	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Strategy of the Health Sector (2022)
25	GBV and OCMCs in Nepal: Technical Brief (2022)
26	Assessment of the Value for Money of Social Service Units: A rapid case study of four hospitals (2022)
27	GBV and OCMCs in Nepal (2022)
28	Assessment of the Value for Money of Social Service Units: A Rapid Case Study of Four Hospitals
	NURP
29	GESI review and reflection session
30	NURP GESI strategy (reviewed in 2021)
31	GESI assessment conducted in inception/beginning of Y1 for Butwal
32	GESI assessment conducted in inception/beginning of Y1 for Janakpur
33	GESI assessment conducted in inception/beginning of Y1 for Pokhara
34	Report on the role of caste and gender in urban contexts
35	GESI Action Plans is in pp. 29-30 of Y4 Q3 Milestone report.
36	Guidance note on implementing NURP's twin-track approach
37	10 things to know about GESI
38	NURP concept note template
	PCUs
39	Annual Review 2022
40	Logframe
41	Business Case
	PERP
42	Purnima: UK Support to Post-Earthquake Recovery in Nepal: Eighteenth Quarterly and Final Project Report
43	The Political Economy of Rural Infrastructure Selection in Nepal: A Purnima Learning Exercise
44	Purnima: Transformative Change for Women and Girls Approach and Intervention Strategy
45	PERP – Logframe
46	Purnima: UK Support for Post-earthquake Recovery in Nepal Strengthening Economic Inclusion through the Challenge Fund
47	Summary of Vulnerability Assessment
48	https://purnimanepal.com/
	PFM-MDTF
49	Project Development, Unified Guideline for Selection and Prioritisation, 2079
50	Business Case and Summary

51	Annual Review 4
52	FY2021-22 Logframe
	PLGSP
53	GESI Strategy 2021-2023
54	Business Case
55	Annual Progress Report 2022
56	Logframe
	RAP3
57	Briefing Note 058 – GESI & Disability in RAP
58	Midline Impact Assessment Report 2016
59	Logframe
60	Annual Review 9
	RWEPP
61	Business Case (2021)
62	Annual Review (2022)
63	Improving Federalization of WASH Sector Governance in Nepal (2023)
64	GWT (N) RWSP Guideline for Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) in Schools and Community
65	LNOB and GEDSI (Date not available)
66	Resilient Concept and Value for Money PPT (2022)
	SEP
67	GESI analysis – skills component 2018
68	GESI analysis – migration component 2018
69	Annual Review 2021
70	Logframe
71	Lessons for the future: Key takeaways from learning, impact and evaluation, July 2023 learning document (incl. GESI),
72	GESI and safeguarding strategic communication GESI and Safeguarding Strategic Communication
73	Annual Review 2022

Semi-structured interviews

In addition to identifying documents for review, SROs and PROs were also invited to be interviewed as part of the Stage 2 portfolio review. They were also asked to identify colleagues within programme teams who would be best placed to participate in an interview given their involvement in GESI mainstreaming. Following these initial interviews, interviewees sometimes identified other colleagues who they thought could also provide helpful perspectives and insights. Using this snowballing approach, a total of 48 interviews were conducted across the 15 programmes. In all cases, a semi-structured interview guide was used which included questions intended to explore each of the Essential Elements in the conceptual framework and the sub questions under RQ2. These interview guides were tailored to individual interviewees. Efforts were made to encourage interviewees to go beyond what was already written down in programme documents, in order to reflect on details about GESI mainstreaming approaches and to background information which had already been captured. Interviews were either recorded and automatically transcribed using Microsoft Teams or handwritten notes were taken by the interviewer, which were typed up after the interview.

Review, coding, and analysis

A coding frame was developed in Excel for the Stage 2 portfolio review. This was based on the three Essential Elements in the conceptual framework and the 12 Common Approaches under these Essential Elements which were identified in the Stage 1 analysis. All information drawn from the documents and notes or transcripts from the interviews were coded against this frame.

Once all of the data had been coded, within-case descriptive analysis was conducted, looking individually at each programme to identify which of the 12 Common Approaches to GESI mainstreaming they appeared to have used. Having each document on a separate row within the coding sheet helped to identify what type of evidence was being presented, for example an intention in the original business case, a finding from an annual review or the write up of a lesson from a reflection session. Based on interpretive analysis of the coded data, for each programme, a rating was given to each of the 12 Common Approaches as follows:

| **Yes'** | The programme had clearly used the approach in a substantial way. |
| **'Somewhat'** | The programme had used the approach to some extent but only in a limited way. |

'Not clear'	There was no evidence that the programme had used the approach but there was also insufficient evidence to definitively say they had not.
'No'	There was sufficient evidence to suggest that a programme had not used the approach.

Cross-case analysis was then conducted, looking at each of the 12 Common Approaches in turn. This involved looking across the analysis for all 15 programmes in the sample so that it was possible to develop a picture at portfolio level. With a focus on the sub questions under RQ2, the cross-portfolio analysis considered:

- How consistently each of the Common Approaches tended to be used across programmes

- How the use of the Common Approach compared to findings from the global literature in Stage 1

- Whether the use of the Common Approach included an intersectional lens

- Whether there was any evidence that the use of the Common Approach has worked well/less well

A report for Stage 2 was written based on this analysis and shared with BEK for feedback and approval.

Annex 3 | Detailed Methodology for Stage 3: Deep Dive Case Studies

Following the Stage 2 BEK Portfolio Review, the research team sought to take a closer look at a sub-set of programmes to better understand how GESI mainstreaming has been delivered in practice. This was achieved through a 'deep dive' case study approach using qualitative semi-structured interviews (SSIs). The focus here was on seeking to answer RQ3 and the related sub questions under it. Fieldwork took place during a fixed window between mid-September and mid-October 2023 when weather conditions improved enough to enable programme sites to be safe and accessible, and before interviewees became unavailable due to the Dashain festival. As with Stages 1 and 2, the methodology and draft final report, which included findings from the deep dive case studies underwent quality assurance review by the research team's Senior Technical Adviser ahead of submission to BEK/FCDO.

The field team

Preparation for the fieldwork also included recruiting and training a field research team of eight people. These field researchers were selected primarily for their qualitative data collection skills and experience, but also to ensure a necessary mix of:

- Male and female team members, and at least some representation of people from historically marginalised castes and indigenous groups
- Language skills
- Sensitivity and commitment to GESI
- Previous experience in work/research on GESI and/or relevant sectoral expertise

The eight-person field team undertook the SSIs, largely working in pairs. Field team members were put into pairs in order to complement each other based on their strengths and weaknesses, experience of conducting interviews with various types of stakeholders and how well they seemed to work together based on initial interactions.

A bespoke four-day training was delivered to the field research team to familiarise them with the four programmes, the data collection tools, ethical and safeguarding protocols and notetaking, translating and capturing researcher reflections.

Programme selection

Four programmes were selected from within the BEK portfolio for deep-dive case studies. In some cases, given the size and complexity of programmes, it was necessary to select specific components of these programmes to focus on. Programmes/components were purposively sampled from the wider BEK portfolio included in Stage 2. The sampling approach was intentionally designed to focus on programmes with the greatest potential to generate learning in relation to GESI mainstreaming. Given the level of input that was required by programme teams to enable data collection for these case studies, it was also imperative that programme leadership were available and willing to participate. The nature of data collection in this phase also required a degree of reflection, which programmes needed to be comfortable with. Table 17 below sets out the sampling criteria which were used to select the deep dives for stage 3.

Table 17 Primary and Secondary Sampling Criteria for the Deep Dive Case Studies

Level	Criteria
Primary	**Evidence of GESI outcomes:** those which had made some progress towards GESI outcomes or appeared to have the potential to do so.
	Strong mainstreaming practice: those which had invested in GESI mainstreaming across the programme cycle. This included those where interviews with programme staff in Stage 2 suggested more was being done in terms of GESI mainstreaming than was evident from the documents.

Secondary	**Interested in engaging:** those which expressed a willingness and interest in engaging with the research process to a greater extent than they already had in Stage 2.	
	Sectoral spread: Those which, in combination as a set of four, provided diversity in terms of sectors.	
	Geographical location: Those which, in combination as a set of four, provided diversity in terms of geographical spread across Nepal.	
	Excluded groups: Those which, in combination as a set of four, provide diversity in terms of excluded groups targeted as well as women and girls, for example Dalit, Janajati, Madhesi, Muslims, people with disabilities.	

Description of the sample

The final selection of four deep dives case studies is presented in Table 18 below. It includes a spread across four sectors of evidence, climate, health and governance. In line with the sampling criteria, all four programmes appeared to be making considerable efforts to mainstream GESI, with the potential for positive outcomes. All four were also prepared to give time for further interviews and engagement. However, we still needed to be mindful that their time was limited. The programmes tended to have a wide footprint across Nepal so it was necessary to identify specific sites for data collection, in addition to federal level interviews. These were identified in consultation with programme teams in order to focus on areas where the programme felt there was greatest potential to learn about their mainstreaming practice. Practical considerations were also factored in here, in particular the need to ensure that project sites were safe and accessible to the research team.

Table 18 Final Programme Sample for Stage 3 Deep Dive Case Studies

#	Programme	Component	Sector	Fieldwork Location
1	Evidence for Development (E4D)	Data for Development (D4D)	Evidence	Lumbini
2	Climate Smart Development for Nepal (CSD)	Nepal Climate Change Support Programme Phase 2 (NCCSP2)	Climate	Karnali, Lumbini
3	Nepal Health Sector Support Programme 3 (NHSSP3)	N/a	Health	Madhesh
4	Provincial and Local Governance Support Programme (PLGSP)	N/a	Governance	Lumbini

Semi-structured interviews

SSIs were used in Stage 3 to gather a range of perspectives from those who had delivered or engaged with BEK programmes. It was initially anticipated during the inception phase that some focus group discussions (FGDs) might also be conducted alongside SSIs. However, it was agreed early on in Stage 3 that given the need for stakeholders to speak frankly about strengths and weaknesses in GESI mainstreaming practice within programmes, individual – or in some cases joint interviews in pairs – would be a more appropriate method and the only one that would be used.

The approach to SSIs used in Stage 3 was inspired by Outcome Harvesting[2]. This meant that rather than identifying what programmes intended to achieve in relation to GESI and asking them whether they had done so, the interviews took the reverse approach. Interviewees were asked to identify aspects of the programme which they were most proud of in relation to GESI. Interview guides were then designed to work back from these identified achievements, asking interviewees to explain why they thought the achievements mattered

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[2] For more information on Outcome Harvesting, see **here**.

and what the programme had done to enable them to take place. This provided a valuable opportunity for the research to draw learning from programmes which delivered GESI mainstreaming in a way which differed to original plans and whose ambitions in relation to GESI mainstreaming evolved over time.

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Box 26: Structure of the SSI guides used in Stage 3

Questions were designed and sequenced in order to encourage interviewees to describe:

- **Achievements in relation to GESI.** Interviewees were asked to identify any successes in relation to GESI which they had experienced or observed through their engagement with the programme. Interviewees could choose any type of achievements, whether at outcome level or related to programme outputs, or even activities and ways of working.
- **Why identified achievements are important**. Interviewees were then asked to explain why they believed the achievement(s) they had identified mattered.
- **Mechanisms through which interviewees believe achievements have been made.** Finally, interviewees were asked to describe the GESI mainstreaming approaches and processes through which they believed had helped contribute to GESI-related achievements. This included probing questions to explore the roles of any identified enablers and constraints.

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Using evidence from the document review and semi-structured interviews conducted in Stage 2 for the BEK portfolio review, the research team identified potential achievements in relation to GESI mainstreaming for each of the four programmes. This information was used to develop tailored semi-structured interview guides for each interviewee, including probes to help participants recall and to provide greater depth and detail, where needed. The guides were then translated. Given that the interview guides were tailored to individual programmes and stakeholders, they could not be pre-tested in advance. However, questions were adapted or added, during fieldwork as issues emerged.

Selecting interviewees

The original intention had been to start Stage 3 data collection with participatory workshops with programme teams. However, given the need to reduce the burden placed on teams and to ensure the short window for the fieldwork was not missed and to allow space for more detailed discussions, it was agreed with BEK that instead of workshops, a series of exploratory interviews were conducted with team members from each programme. These focused on further understanding information collected in the Stage 2 portfolio review and identifying a list of stakeholders to interview. Given this approach, programmes had a considerable degree of control over who was identified for interview (see limitations and biases below for further detail on the implications of this). Interviewees were purposively selected through discussions between the research team and an identified focal point for each programme. In some cases, specific individuals were selected, for example the only programme GESI Adviser. In other cases, the research team and focal point identified types of people who could provide a perspective on GESI mainstreaming efforts within the programme. For example, municipal government officials who had received GESI-focused technical assistance. In such cases, the programme focal point was asked to liaise with their colleagues and identify people who they considered well-placed to share their experiences and perspectives and who were also willing to be interviewed.

The target sample size for each of the deep dives was a minimum of ten SSIs. For each deep dive, this minimum sample was exceeded, as outlined in Table 19. Although names have not been included in order to protect confidentiality, a breakdown of the types of interviewees who participated in these Stage 3 SSIs is included in Table 20 below.

Table 19 Initial Sample Sizes for the Stage 3 Deep Dive Case Studies

Programme	Number of people who participated in initial SSIs in Stage 3
D4D	14
NCCSP2	17
NHSSP3	14
PLGSP	22
Total	**67**

Table 20 List of Interviewees in Stage 3

#	Programme/ Component	Position	Organisation
1	D4D	Deputy Mayor	Tulsipur Sub-metropolitan City
2	D4D	Beneficiary	N/a
3	D4D	CEO/Founder	Wake International
4	D4D	Deputy Project Director	The Asia Foundation

5	D4D	MEAL Director	The Asia Foundation
6	D4D	Executive Director and Co-founder of Women Leaders in Technology	Women Leaders in Technology (WiLT)
7	D4D	Executive Director	Women in STEAM
8	D4D	Executive Director	Smart Cheli
9	D4D	Statistics Head	Tulsipur Sub-metropolitan City
10	D4D	Chief of Women and Children Section	Tulsipur Sub-metropolitan City
11	D4D	IT Officer	Tulsipur Sub-metropolitan City
12	D4D	Provincial Field Coordinator	The Asia Foundation
13	D4D	Statistics Adviser / SRO	BEK
14	D4D	Project Director	The Asia Foundation
15	NCCSP2	Secretary	Water User Committee
16	NCCSP2	Member	Water User Committee
17	NCCSP2	Deputy Chairperson	Chaukune Rural Municipality Office
18	NCCSP2	Deputy Mayor	Rajapur Municipality Office
19	NCCSP2	GESI/LNOB Officer	Mott MacDonald
20	NCCSP2	Mayor	Sharada Municipality Office
21	NCCSP2	Officer	Science Technology Environment and Climate Change Division, MoITFE
22	NCCSP2	Provincial Climate Change Coordinator	Mott MacDonald
23	NCCSP2	Team Leader	Mott MacDonald
24	NCCSP2	Senior Climate and Water Adviser	Mott MacDonald
25	NCCSP2	Treasurer	User Committee
26	NCCSP2	Member	User Committee
27	NCCSP2	President	User Committee
28	NCCSP2	Member	User Committee
29	NCCSP2	Member	User Committee
30	NCCSP2	Treasurer	User Committee
31	NCCSP2	Ward Chairperson	N/a
32	NHSSP3	Acting Director	Provincial Health Directorate
33	NHSSP3	Deputy Mayor	Dhangadhimai Municipality
34	NHSSP3	Undersecretary	GESI Section, Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP)
35	NHSSP3	Provincial Lead	UNFPA
36	NHSSP3	Director	Madhesh Institute of Health SciencesSciences
37	NHSSP3	Equity-based Planning Lead	Options Consultancy
38	NHSSP3	Provincial Coordinator	USAID Adolescence Reproductive Health
39	NHSSP3	Community Nursing Administrator, cum Chief of Geriatric and Gender-Based Violence Management Section	Geriatric and Gender-Based Violence Management Section, Nursing and Social Security Division, DoHS
40	NHSSP3	Divisional Chief, Hospital Development and Medical Services Division	Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP), Madhesh Province
41	NHSSP3	Senior Consultant	Curative Services Division, Department of Health Services (DoHS), MoHP
42	NHSSP3	Former GESI Advisor	Options Consultancy
43	NHSSP3	GESI Officer	Options Consultancy
44	NHSSP3	Health Adviser / SRO	BEK
45	NHSSP3	Team Leader	NHSSP3
46	PLGSP	GESI Consultant	PLGSP
47	PLGSP	Advisor Good Governance	Royal Norwegian Embassy
48	PLGSP	Councillor - Governance	Royal Norwegian Embassy
49	PLGSP	E-Governance Specialist	Programme Coordination Unit, MoFAGA/PLGSP
50	PLGSP	State Building Advisor	Embassy of Switzerland
51	PLGSP	Team Leader, Coherence Programme	International IDEA

52	PLGSP	Municipal GESI Focal Point	Yashodhara Rural Municipality
53	PLGSP	Head of Women and Children Department	Rapti Rural Municipality
54	PLGSP	Under Secretary/Provincial Programme Manager, OCMCM	Office of the Chief Minister and Council of Ministers (OCMCM)
55	PLGSP	Under Secretary (Former ED at Provincial Centre for Good Governance (PCGG))	Office of the Chief Minister and Council of Minister, MoFAGA
56	PLGSP	Team Leader	Provincial Centre for Good Governance
57	PLGSP	Team Leader & Governance and Legal Expert	Provincial Programme Implementation Unit (PPIU)
58	PLGSP	Portfolio Manager	UNDP Kathmandu
59	PLGSP	Deputy Mayor	Lumbini Cultural Municipality
60	PLGSP	GESI Specialist	Provincial Centre for Good Governance (PCGG), PLGSP
61	PLGSP	Senior Women Development Officer	Ministry of Social Development
62	PLGSP	Deputy Mayor	Rapti Rural Municipality
63	PLGSP	Provincial Programme Director	Provincial Programme Implementation Unit, OCMCM
64	PLGSP	Former GESI Specialist	Provincial Centre for Good Governance (PCGG), PLGSP
65	PLGSP	Former GESI Specialist	PLGSP
66	PLGSP	PRO	BEK
67	PLGSP	Federal Governance Specialist & Development Partner Coordinator	Programme Coordination Unit (PCU), MoFAGA/PLGSP

Coding and initial analysis

SSIs were either audio recorded and transcribed, or handwritten notes were taken by the interviewer, which were then typed up after the interview. Working in pairs meant that one member of the field team could lead on interviewing while the other focused on taking notes. This not only meant that there was a backup to the audio recording in case of an error, but also that the interviewee could be given the choice about whether they were comfortable with audio recording.

Following data collection, qualitative data from the interview transcripts were coded in Excel. The coding sheet was structured around the conceptual framework: the three Essential Elements, the 12 Common approaches, and the three wider factors. A basic descriptive analysis was conducted for each programme, which was written up into four separate case studies. These case studies were shared with BEK for review and feedback. They included a proposed list of final interviews for each case study, with a list of specific questions to ask them.

Final data collection and validation interviews

Following feedback from BEK on the four case studies, the research team worked with BEK colleagues and with programme teams to arrange final interviews. These were targeted at specific individuals whose additional perspectives were valuable in order to complete the case studies, or who were in a position to clarify information which was unclear, or which had been contradicted by other interviewees. As with the first round of interviews for Stage 3, in some cases, interviews were requested from specific individuals, for example a programme's M&E Lead. In others, programme teams were again given freedom to identify individuals who they felt were best placed to participate. In these cases, the research team provided a broad request to programme teams, for example to identify 'a municipal government official who had participated in GESI training through the programme'.

The number of interviews conducted in this final round were fewer than in the first round. The numbers are outlined in Table 21 below.

Table 21 Final Sample Size for the Deep Dive Case Studies

Programme	Number of people who participated in initial SSIs in Stage 3	Number of people who participated in a final round of SSIs in Stage 3	Grand total
D4D	14	3	17
NCCSP2	17	7	24
NHSSP3	14	4	18
PLGSP	22	4	26
Total	**67**	**18**	**85**

Following this final round of SSIs, the research team developed a GESI mainstreaming theory of action for each deep dive. Through a diagram and an accompanying narrative these theories of action were designed to explicitly describe the approaches which programmes have used to mainstream GESI. They sought to map out the logic behind the sequencing of various approaches and the relationships between them.

The original intention had been to discuss and validate these theories of action with programme teams through a participatory workshop for each of the four deep dives. However, given the amount of time programmes teams had already given to the research, it was agreed with BEK that meetings with one or two representatives from each of the four programmes would be a more appropriate light-touch approach to validation. Following these validation interviews, the four case studies and accompanying theories of action were expanded, nuanced and finalised.

Cross-case analysis

Once all four case studies and theories of action were finalised, the research team looked across them to conduct a cross-case analysis. This analysis was structured around the 12 Common Approaches and wider contextual factors, with an emphasis on drawing out key findings and lessons from each of the four case studies. Similarities and differences were then noted across all four, identifying ways in which findings each case study could be built on, nuanced, reinforced or contradicted by the other three. With the sub questions under RQ3 in mind, the cross-case analysis included reflection on the extent to which:

- GESI mainstreaming approaches appeared to have translated into outcomes for women and girls and excluded groups – or if not outcomes, then other types of potentially positive change;
- GESI mainstreaming approaches had been – and could continue to be – maintained over time;
- Trade-offs had been made to balance GESI mainstreaming with other programme priorities and how these had been managed;
- External factors had played a role in enabling or constraining effective GESI mainstreaming; and
- Resources had been required to implement GESI mainstreaming approaches and how this had been factored in to programme decision making.

Annex 4 | Research Limitations & Potential Bias

Overall, the research methodology was effective in generating findings in response to the RQs. Nevertheless, there are a number of limitations which it is important to acknowledge, as well as certain vulnerabilities within the methodology which could have created bias.

Stage 1: Global literature synthesis

A disproportionate focus on gender mainstreaming. Several of the most useful documents identified in searches focused solely on gender mainstreaming and not on GESI more widely. Many of these documents were included in the final sample, despite the fact that they had 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 did 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 were limited to those which had been published in English and by organisations whose material would be easily identified online. This meant that unpublished material or documents published in other languages were not included. Learning from smaller organisations which might not have come up at the top of online searches would 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 were intentionally been prioritised. This will have skewed the sample towards literature from organisations who have a more active interest in GESI mainstreaming and are likely to have invested more resources towards it. Search strategies will have excluded thinking and evidence potentially generated by smaller, Southern organisations, which may not have been formally written up or published online. 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.

Stage 2: BEK portfolio review & Stage 3: Deep dive case studies

A focus only on English sources. Although the research team included Nepali and Maithili speakers, the coding and analysis were all in English, with no scope for translation. As a result, all programme documents included in the Stage 2 sample were limited to those in English. This means that any documents in Nepali, such as those used by downstream partners or to capture information about GESI-related technical assistance to government would not have been included. Similarly, while Stage 2 and Stage 3 interviews were conducted in Nepali, Maithili, and English, the coding and analysis was carried out using transcripts that were translated into English. Since there are limitations to translations based on the content, context, and speakers, there was an effort to be as accurate as possible with the translations. Note-takers who were also in the interviews did the first round of translations, which were then spot checked for accuracy of meaning along with cross-verification with audio recordings. Where translations appeared to be lacking, the transcripts were retranslated by another person as needed.

Using only a limited sample of documents. Although in Stage 2 some programmes chose to submit more than four GESI-related documents, some may have had more documents to send but prioritised only four. This means that the review may have missed approaches which were being used by programmes but which did not feature in the documents they had selected. It is likely that programmes will have selected more strategic and programme-wide documents rather than documents which recorded more operational programme activities related to GESI mainstreaming. This means that some of the detail and nuance about how approaches have been implemented may not have been captured. In order to minimise this risk, efforts were made in subsequent Stage 2 and Stage 3 interviews with programme teams to go beyond information available in written documents.

Caution among interviewees. Given that the Stage 2 and Stage 3 samples only included programmes which were live rather than closed, implementing partners may have been cautious about the information they gave the research team in case this impacted future funding for the programme. Although reassurance was given to programme teams, in the climate of recent cuts to some programme budgets, teams may have still been reticent. This means that the review may not have fully captured the challenges and limitations programmes have encountered in using GESI mainstreaming approaches. However, the range of perspectives sought, including those outside programme teams, should have reduced this risk.

Incomplete recollection. Although the Stage 2 review and the Stage 3 deep dives focused on the current phase of live programmes, some of them had been running for a number of years with GESI analysis, early design work, recruitment of programme teams and initial training having taken place some time ago. Especially for mainstreaming approaches where little had been written down, programme teams may have found it difficult to recall exactly what had and had not happened and why. This could also mean that they may have misremembered some decisions and activities related to GESI mainstreaming. The range of perspectives sought and the space created for final validation of the deep dives theories of action should have helped to minimise this risk.

Greater emphasis on positive practice. As this is research rather than an evaluation, there has been an intentional gravitation towards programmes which have made efforts to mainstream GESI and have the greatest potential to generate learning. This was reflected in the Stage 2 and Stage 3 sampling approach in which BEK colleagues were asked to help identify programmes which they knew had made efforts to mainstream GESI. This has been accompanied by an emphasis on understanding the mainstreaming approaches which programmes have used, rather than seeking to understand what they have not done and why. Given that programme teams had the choice about whether or not to engage with the research, it is likely that those that have invested more heavily in GESI mainstreaming may have been more willing to give us time because they wanted to showcase their work. This means the research, especially in Stage 3, will have been skewed away from programmes which may have struggled the most with GESI mainstreaming and/or had not prioritised it at all. However, this aligns with the overall focus of the research, which seeks to explore and understand the realities of GESI mainstreaming, rather than evaluating effectiveness.

Speaking to those with the most positive experiences. The sampling approaches used in Stages 2 and 3 meant that programmes were asked to signpost the research team to individuals who were best placed for interviews and who were considered to have the most valuable information to share. However, these may also have been people who have had the most positive interactions with the programme and programmes may have avoided suggesting people for interview if they knew they had move negative perspectives to share. Nevertheless, it appears that interviewees, especially in the SSIs used in Stage 3, were quite candid about sharing information on challenges, gaps, and weaknesses.

A focus on larger multi-year programmes. The nature of the BEK-funded portfolio means that Stages 2 and 3 focused on GESI mainstreaming approaches within larger, multi-year and relatively well-resourced development programmes. This potentially limits the wider value of the findings to those working on smaller scale programming.

Inability to assess quality or alternative approaches. Given the scope of Stages 2 and 3, it was not possible to assess the quality of approaches that had been used. Instead, the emphasis in the analysis was on describing what approaches had been used, how consistently and in what ways. It was beyond the scope of the review to assess, for example, how well qualified GESI individual experts were, whether issues were missed in GESI analyses that had been conducted, whether alternative programme designs would have been preferable or whether programmes had collected monitoring data in a robust way. The research team was reliant on what programme documents and programme team members have described. Nevertheless, we found that interviewees were open and candid and interviews questions were phrased in order to encourage reflection.

Lack of evidence from evaluations. Very few programmes shared evaluation documents to be included in the sample in Stage 2 or referred to evaluations in interviews in Stages 2 or 3, even those which were nearing completion or had closed since being selected for the sample. This may be due to GESI tending not to be picked up in programme evaluations or that programmes chose not to share evaluation reports with the research team. This limitation will have been exaggerated by the fact that only live (at the time of sampling)[3] programmes were chosen for the sample and few may have had mid-term evaluations. Had closed programmes been included, endline evaluations may have been

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[3] Several programmes selected at the time of sampling were set to close during the research period or had just recently closed. The experience with these programmes reinforced the approach of focusing on live programmes, as there were some challenges with getting documents and/or interviews where programmes had already closed, even very recently.

available for inclusion in the review. This may have revealed more about what programmes had achieved through GESI mainstreaming. The positive side to focusing on live programmes was that programme teams were largely available for interviews and to share documents.

Little information about VfM. Very little information was available from the document reviews and interviews about GESI mainstreaming in relation to programme VfM analyses. Programmes were given complete choice about which documents they submitted for inclusion in the Stage 2 review and were not specifically asked to send their VfM analyses. Although the 'equity' sections of programmes' VfM analyses would have been a relevant document to include, few programmes chose to do this. It is also possible that those who were interviewed in Stages 2 and 3 were not best placed to speak about VfM within the programmes on which they were working. The lack of information on VfM could also indicate that GESI was rarely considered in programme VfM analyses. In discussion with BEK, it was agreed that it was not a priority to focus on further targeted data collection specifically related to VfM in the final round of SSIs in Stage 3. Nevertheless, some additional questions were added to the final interview guides, which focused on whether concerns about costs had influenced decisions about which GESI mainstreaming approaches programmes did and did not use.

Annex 5 | Ethics & Safeguarding

Ethical considerations and protocols

Per section 13 of the terms of reference, no approval was required from a Research Ethics Committee or Institutional Review Board, due to the nature of the research as intended to improve a specific practice (i.e. GESI mainstreaming). The research team therefore did not seek a formal ethical review, however we maintained a strong commitment to ensuring adherence to best practices in research ethics, as set out in this section.

All aspects of this research were rooted in an ethical approach, which has informed our thinking and decisions, including on the scope of the research, the methods used and the composition of the research team. A set of ethical protocols was developed during the inception phase for this research, which align with best practice in ethical research, as outlined in **FCDO Ethical Research, Evaluation and Monitoring Guidance**.

The ethical protocols are framed around the following four principles for ethical research and evaluation, which have underpinned our work:

1. Seek to maximise benefit and minimise harm;
2. Respect people's rights and dignity;
3. Act with honesty, competence, and accountability; and
4. Deliver work of integrity and merit.

These principles overlap and reinforce each other. Table 22 below outlines our understanding of each of these principles at a theoretical level and then goes on to detail what this meant at a practical level throughout design and delivery of the research. This practical detail was discussed and agreed as a team to ensure it was specifically relevant and appropriate to the Nepal context.

Table 22 Adherence to Ethical Principles

Ethical principles	What this means in theory	What this meant in practice in terms of how we delivered the research
Principle 1: Seek to maximise benefit and minimise harm.	The research needs to be of value, conducted for a reason and in a way that has the potential to inform positive change. The research process should do no harm and should prioritise safety and reduce risks for participants and researchers.	• Attention was focused on generating findings and developing recommendations which are of specific value to BEK, as well as to FCDO more broadly. • Research outputs have been developed to targeting defined audiences, clearly communicating findings in an accessible way to non-GESI expert where needed. This included thinking more imaginatively about the format of research outputs and ways to target audiences in ways they were more likely to absorb the information. • Messaging to all implementing partners and beneficiaries made it clear that their participation in the research would have no direct impact on decisions about access to future BEK/FCDO resources. • Where needed, time was taken to initially build rapport with participants so they felt comfortable and understood the research and the types of questions they would be asked. • Participants and researchers were asked through use of a standard script to provide consent to take part in the research and it was made clear that ongoing consent meant they could withdraw consent at any time.
Principle 2: Respect people's rights and dignity.	The welfare of people who have a role in the research – whether as researchers or as participants is more important than the research itself. The research process needs to be empowering and not just a means to	• Consideration was given to how various methods, timeframes, and approaches might impact on participants and researchers in different ways. This included recognising that research activities could have unintended consequences. • The research team was open to listening to feedback from participants and others in the research team. This included being prepared to pause and/or adapt the research process whenever necessary.

	an end in terms of extracting data from people. The aim is to develop a research process which gathers the necessary data but, in a way that is respectful, safe and enjoyable for all of those involved.	• The research team made sure questions, methods, and sampling approaches were appropriate to the local context and that they did not risk embarrassing or degrading people. For example, no participants were asked to discuss personal or sensitive issues in front of others in a group setting. • Warm up and warm down questions where used in interviews so that more challenging topics were carefully approached. Efforts were made not to embarrass or intimidate participants or to make them feel they needed to give more information than they wanted to. • Assurances were given to interviews that the information they gave would be treated as confidential and would be anonymously presented in all research outputs. This underpinned decisions not to use direct quotes in the final report and not to quantify programmes in the findings or specify which programmes findings were drawn from.
Principle 3: Act with honesty, competence and account-ability.	The process of selecting people to take part in the research needs to be fair and the burden placed on individuals and groups should be reasonable. All relevant social groups should be actively included in the research so that the process does not – even unintentionally – act to further discriminate against and exclude marginalised groups.	• Sampling for each of the deep-dive studies was mindful of diversity among women and marginalised groups. • Necessary adaptations to interview questions, timings and venues were made during data collection in order to enable all participants to take part in the research in a meaningful way. • The research team worked in a way which valued participants' time, and recognising that by taking part in the research they are being generous with it.
Principle 4: Deliver work of integrity and merit.	The research team need to have appropriate competences and skills to conduct the research to a high level of quality. The purpose of the research needs to be clearly reflected throughout the research process, with a clear logic between the research questions and the methods being used.	• The team recognised that in order for the research to be relevant and tailored to local contexts, regardless of team hierarchy, research team members who were not from Nepal needed to defer to colleagues from Nepal who were more familiar with local cultures and norms. • All researchers stated a commitment to GESI and understood not only what data they needed to collect, but why they needed to collect it and how their work fitted with the broader purpose of the research. • All researchers had strong qualitative skills. Training was provided to field researchers, so they were able to meaningfully engage and felt confident asking probing questions and did not simply stick to pre-defined scripts. • Throughout the research, the focus was on depth rather than breadth, and primary data was only collected where it was needed. . This avoided wasting people's time and generating an unmanageable and overwhelming amount of data to analyse.

Safeguarding in relation to data

The research followed ASI's safeguarding approach, which comprises four pillars (the first three being most relevant for the purposes of the research project): **social safeguarding** (for example, preventing exploitation and harassment); **internal programme safeguarding** (including team and supplier conduct); **environmental safeguarding**; and **land safeguarding** (for example, preventing land-based conflict and displacement). Accordingly, our research team was committed to maintaining a highly ethical culture with zero-tolerance to breaches of **ASI's Safeguarding Policy** and a robust grievance redress mechanism supported by ASI's internal safeguarding resources (in-house team, policy, and tools) as well as FCDO's reporting mechanisms (**reportingconcerns@fcdo.gov.uk** / +44 1355 843747).

Confidentiality & GDPR

Everyone has rights with regard to the way in which their personal data is handled. During the course of the research project, the research team collected, stored, and processed personal data with the recognition that the correct and lawful treatment of this data is of fundamental importance both intrinsically and to give confidence in the research process. Anyone on the GESI-M research team processing personal data is required to comply with the eight enforceable principles of good practice as set out in ASI's Data Protection Policy (see **ASI Code of Conduct**) and in compliance with the UK Data Protection Act.

Additionally, the research team is bound by the Confidentiality Policy (Annex 10), developed specifically for the research project in consultation with BEK and FCDO counterparts, which details requirements related to confidentiality, data protection, and ethics. During the course of the research, programme-related data as well as interview transcripts and coding/analysis documents containing identifiable information have been stored on a secure Microsoft Teams channel accessible only to team members behind the ethical wall as defined in the Confidentiality Policy. Upon approval of the final contract deliverables this data will be security deleted.

Annex 6 | Research Management

This section provides information on the research team, stakeholder engagement, research use and influence strategy, as well as independence and conflict of interest considerations.

Roles and responsibilities of the research team

The Core Team is composed of the Team Leader, Deputy Team Leader, National Research Lead and Research Manager & Communications Lead. The Team Leader (Sally Neville) is responsible for the overall design and delivery of the research project, working closely with the Deputy Team Leader (Srijana Chettri), who plays a key role in analysis and deliverable production as well as leading on stakeholder engagement with the support of the National Research Lead (Bibhu Thapaliya). The Research Manager & Communications Lead supports the smooth delivery of the project and leads on the research use and influence strategy (detailed below).

The Core Team is supported by the Research Coordination & Support Unit, comprised of a team of eight Nepal-based field researchers as well as two international research analysts and a research coordinator.

The research project is overseen by the Contract Director (Bipin Basnet), who is responsible for ensuring the overall quality and timeliness of the deliverables and compliance with FCDO requirements.

Figure 7 below presents the organigram of the research project.
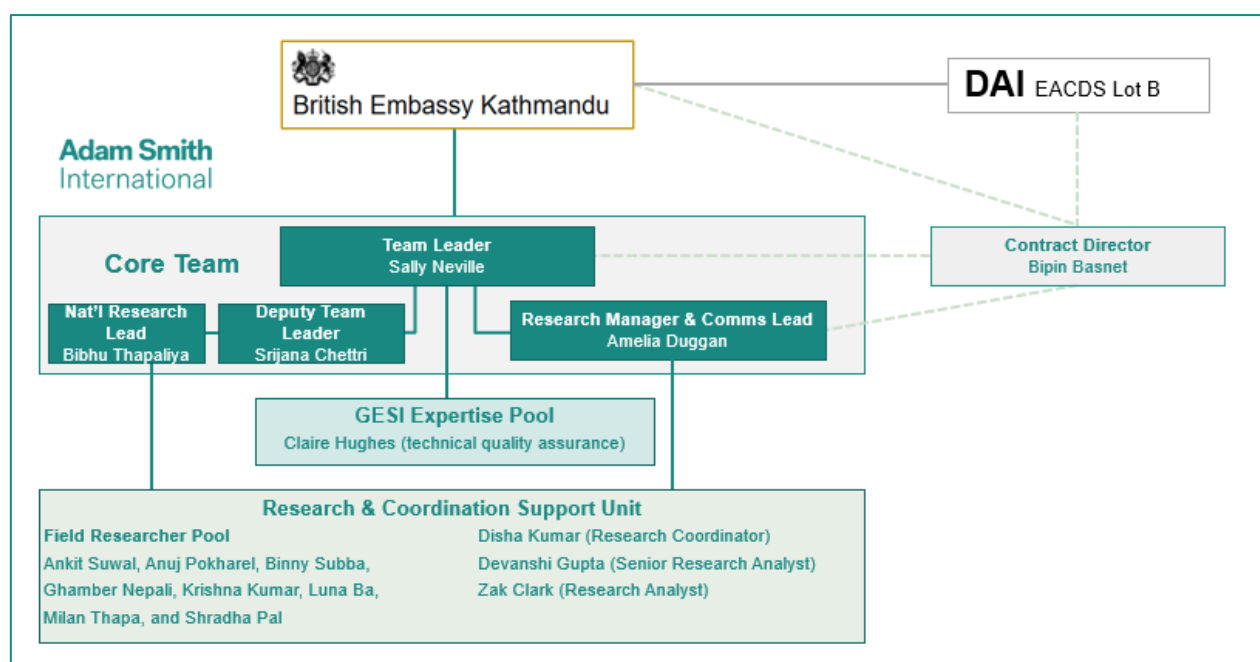
Figure 7 Organigram of the Research Project

BEK serves as the Evaluation Manager for the research project, with specific functions as follows:

- SRO: Sally Duncan (formerly Benjamin Zeitlyn)
- Evaluation Lead: Federica Di Battista (formerly Craig Irwin)
- Programme Manager: Kamlesh Yadav

Additionally, Kirti Thapa provides supportive oversight and advisory to the SRO and Core Team. Jo Abbotts is the HQ Lead Adviser within FCDO.

Lastly, DAI serves as the EACDS Lot B fund manager and holds the contract with ASI as the service provider. As the fund manager, DAI is responsible for financial management and ensuring contractual obligations are met by ASI, as well as providing light touch quality assurance where appropriate (with final approval of deliverables the responsibility of the SRO).

Stakeholder engagement

Effective stakeholder engagement was recognised as a critical success factor for the GESI-M research project from the outset, and the Core Team developed a clear, focused and strategic approach to engaging SROs/PROs, implementing partners, beneficiaries and other stakeholders to underpin the delivery approach.

The research team were cognisant of the constraints faced by busy SROs and implementing partners and endeavoured to be thoughtful and strategic about requests for input and engagement. A system of cascading introductions was adopted from inception, whereby referrals and introductions to the research team were initiated by the most senior BEK counterpart and were stepped down through each subsequent level as required, extending to external partner and beneficiary levels. As hoped, this approach helped to efficiently 'open doors' and ensure that adequate information and evidence was made available to the research team – and that BEK colleagues built awareness of and buy-in for the GESI research ahead of the dissemination activities.

In practice, the risk of lack of interest in engaging with the research team identified during inception was not borne out. As SROs and implementing partners were engaged in Stage 2 and Stage 3 of the research, the team found that respondents were with few exceptions responsive and willing to dedicate time to provide information via email, calls, and in-person meetings. In addition to the cascading introductions approach, the team produced a two page research brief document detailing the research purpose, goals, and process which further streamlined introductions and engagement.

Incorporating stakeholder feedback

The research team has made conscious efforts – proportional to need – to involve stakeholders and incorporate feedback at every stage of the research. Table 23 below details the type of engagement solicited by stakeholder through the research process.

Table 23 Stakeholder Engagement During the Research Project

Legend: If = informed, It = interviewed, Iv = involved, C = consulted, V = validated, A = approved					
Stakeholder	**Inception**	**Stage 1**	**Stage 2**	**Stage 3 / Final**	**Dissemination**
FCDO	A	If	If	A	A
BEK	A	A	A	A	A
EQUALS	C	n/a	n/a	n/a	C
SROs/PROs	n/a	n/a	It	It V	Iv
Development Partners (co-funders)	n/a	n/a	It	It	Iv
Implementing Partners	n/a	n/a	It	It	If
Beneficiaries	n/a	n/a	It	It	If [4]

As indicated above, FCDO and BEK as the commissioners of this research and primary points of contact have been involved and responsible for approval of deliverables throughout the research process. BEK has taken a lead role in oversight of delivery, while FCDO has been copied in all correspondence and solicited for feedback and input of deliverables. Due to the requirements of EQUALS, BEK and ASI agreed in the early stages of the research that the service would be consulted on quality assurance for the Inception Report and Final Report only, reflecting the interim nature of the reports for each of the three stages.

Recognising the limited 'currency' of the research time with SROs, the research team has made efforts to focus and consolidate requests. SROs were therefore only engaged from Stage 2 onwards, once the conceptual framework was developed during the global literature synthesis and the research team was in a position to analyse BEK programme information against it. During the course of carrying out Stage 2 interviews, the research team inquired with implementing partners regarding interest and availability to participate Stage 3, which would require a higher degree of input and engagement. As a result of this

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[4] Further engagement with beneficiaries is outside the scope of the research project, but will be taken ahead by BEK through programme teams.

approach, the team was able to seamlessly transition to Stage 3 evidence collection with programme teams already informed and thus no pushback was faced.

Once deep dive case studies were developed in Stage 3, the research team developed theories of action for each of the four case studies. To provide confidence in the accuracy of these theories of action – as well as ensure that there were no major oversights or misinterpretations – the research team planned to have validation meetings for each of the four deep dives in January and February 2024. Programme teams for three deep dives were available for these validation meetings which confirmed that the theories of action accurately reflected the four programmes' GESI mainstreaming achievement and efforts.

At the time of reporting, dissemination activities are yet to be carried out, however plans are in place to engage key agreed-upon (between the research team and BEK) stakeholders/audiences of the research, namely BEK SROs and the donor committee. Additional external audiences are intended to be engaged through the production and publication of an extended executive summary and blog. See Annex 7 below for more information on research use and influence.

Annex 7 | Research Use & Influence

The research use and influence plan has evolved as findings have emerged, which was deliberately provided for in the Inception Report due to the recognition that there may be sensitivity around amplifying the findings. Further, the dissemination deliverables have been adapted to better reflect the nature of the research, target audiences and intended use of the research. These decisions have been taken in close consultation with BEK counterparts, with agreement on the production of three key outputs to accompany the main report and strengthen dissemination and engagement:

1. Extended executive summary
2. PowerPoint (PPT) slide deck
3. Article/blog

Additional dissemination activities are planned, given the strong interest of both the research team and BEK in ensuring that findings and recommendations are thoroughly understood and able to be applied by BEK staff, and accessible to wider audiences. These additional dissemination efforts reflect the fact that too often, investments are made in quality research and knowledge production without corresponding attention paid to dissemination – where the latent potential of a particular research effort's impact can be realised. Detailed dissemination plans by deliverable are outlined in Table 24 below.

Table 24 Research Dissemination Plan

Output	Audience	Description	Type
Written Outputs			
Final Report	BEK	Presenting findings from Stages 1, 2 and 3. Written to meet EQUALS criteria.	Contract
Extended executive summary	FCDO / public	Adapted from the research digest specified in the TOR. A ~15 page public facing version of the final report which is edited down to increase readability and reduce the amount of methodological content, which was included for the EQUALS review.	Contract
PowerPoint slide deck	BEK / IPs / IDPG	A slide deck which outlines the research findings presented in the Final Report. The deck will emphasise findings from the global literature review and focus on practical application of those findings in programming. The deck will be used by the research team for dissemination presentation. It will be handed over for use/adaptation by BEK, particularly for future SDA cadre meetings.	Contract
Blog	FCDO internal	A short blog to describe the conceptual framework for GESI mainstreaming and lessons, and link to the research project resources depository. To be authored by Pippa Bird (Development Director) and posted to FCDO's intranet.	Contract
Newsletter	FCDO internal	A 3-4 page engaging article to be published in FCDO's quarterly 'Connecting the Dots' newsletter, for a global FCDO audience.	Additional
Blog	Public	A brief summary hosted on ASI's website summarising the research project and linking to public-facing research outputs.	Additional
Events			
Presentation to BEK staff	BEK	A 1.5h session with BEK SROs, PROs and advisers (25 min presentation + 35 min Q&A + 30 min networking). ASI to lead on the presentation and Q&A portions, while BEK to lead on networking.	Hybrid (contract + additional aspects)
Presentation to IDPG	IDPG	A 30 min presentation to the IDPG with a focus on findings from the global literature review and practical	Additional

		application of those findings in BEK programming as well as discussion on implications for Nepal's context.	
Presentation to implementing partner teams	IPs	A presentation to BEK implementing partner teams (Team Leaders, MEL Leads, GESI advisers).	Additional
Recorded presentation	Public	A recorded presentation of the research process, findings, and recommendations for a global, online-only audience.	Additional
ASI Thought Leaders Forum	FCDO / public	A public-facing session held online and available to a global audience, presenting the research findings with a focus on findings from the global literature review and practical application of those findings in BEK programming, and engaging participants in a discussion.	Additional

While the research project formally ends in April 2024, the research team and BEK remain committed to understanding how the research outputs are used and to monitor impact. This will begin with the presentations led by the research team and will subsequently be taken forward by BEK through the Embassy's GESI Strategy and Action Plan currently under development. Findings and recommendations from the research project will accordingly be leveraged in the development of this strategy and action plan. ASI staff remain available and committed to supporting the uptake of the research findings, where relevant.

Independence and conflict of interest

Independence and the mitigation of conflict of interest are fundamental principles in conducting high quality research. Central to this is the assurance that researchers can act freely and without interference, ensuring the integrity and credibility of the research process. This freedom allows researchers to pursue avenues of inquiry without external pressures that may compromise the objectivity or validity of their findings. Thus, maintaining independence underscores the commitment to unbiased exploration and analysis, essential for providing confidence in the research process and its ultimate findings.

Furthermore, in upholding the standards of independence, it was imperative that information sources and their contributions remained autonomous from external influences or vested interests. The research team thus took measures to ensure that data collection, analysis, and interpretation were conducted with transparency and impartiality, devoid of any undue influence from parties with a stake in the research outcomes. By upholding the independence of information sources, researchers uphold the integrity of their findings and safeguard against potential biases that could skew the results, thereby enhancing the reliability and validity of the study. Furthermore, due to the nature of the research, protecting anonymity was an important aspect of safeguarding, as detailed in Annex 5.

To fortify the independence and integrity of the research, a robust Confidentiality Policy was developed and agreed upon between ASI and FCDO during the inception phase of the research project. The policy serves to delineate clear guidelines and protocols for the handling and protection of sensitive information obtained throughout the research process. By adhering to a Confidentiality Policy from the outset of the study, the research team establishes a framework for maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of participants, data, and other proprietary information, thereby fostering trust and ensuring the ethical conduct of the research. Furthermore, it ensures that no conflict of interest arises by establishing clear boundaries on access to information through the ethical walls. Ultimately, the integration of measures to preserve independence and mitigate conflicts of interest serves as a cornerstone in upholding the credibility, rigour, and ethical standards of research endeavours. See Annex 10 for the full Confidentiality Policy.

Annex 8 | Next Steps for BEK to take the Recommendations Forward

Listed below are the short term recommendations as well as some next steps under the medium and longer term recommendations. These represent activities which BEK could take forward over the next six months (from April 2024). They duplicate recommendations made in the main body of the report, but are listed here for ease of reference.

Short term recommendations

- **Recommendation 1:** Establish a clear description of what GESI mainstreaming means for BEK programmes and a vision of what it is intended to achieve, framed around the three Essential Elements. This is something which can be incorporated into the forthcoming cross-embassy GESI strategy and action plan.
- **Recommendation 4:** Require all new programmes/phases of programmes to develop a GESI strategy during their inception phase, which they update during the life of the programme. Provide them with the 12 Common Approaches framework as a structure for their GESI strategy in order to ensure it is comprehensive and to enable future consistency across the portfolio.
- **Recommendation 8:** Require new programmes/phases of programmes to have a GESI Lead who is a GESI expert in a senior role.
- **Recommendation 9:** Establish a Community of Practice to support and strengthen GESI experts working within BEK programmes.

Next steps under medium and longer term recommendations

- **Under recommendation 2:** Begin to familiarise colleagues with the 12 Common Approaches Framework and the checklist which is based on it.
- **Under recommendation 7:** Commission an analysis of the barriers to diverse recruitment in Nepal. This would need to look at barriers for specific groups with an intersectional lens and be designed to inform practical guidance to programmes.
- **Under recommendation 17:** Develop a succinct two-pager which explains the types of additional risks which can be triggered or exacerbated by GESI mainstreaming. This should include concrete examples which directly relate to the type of programming BEK funds and should outline possible steps to manage and mitigate risks.
- **Under recommendation 19:** Commission or develop a short paper outlining current thinking on the best approaches to the collection of disability-related data.

Table 25 on the following pages outlines how each of the full set of 19 recommendations are rooted in the global literature reviewed in Stage 1 and evidence from the BEK portfolio gathered in Stage 2 and Stage 3. Within this table, evidence gaps are highlighted.

Table 25 How the Recommendations Link to the Global Literature & BEK Programmes

#	Recommendations	Global literature	BEK programmes
1	Establish a clear description of what GESI mainstreaming means for BEK programmes and a vision of what it is intended to achieve, framed around the three Essential Elements.	There was inconsistency and a noted lack of clarity in the global literature about what GESI mainstreaming means, with a range of varying continuums being used but no standard framework.	Evidence from BEK programme documents suggests a gap in terms of a consistent view of what GESI mainstreaming means and what it is trying to achieve. This was supported by interviews with BEK staff and implementing partners who would welcome further clarity. No specific description was found among BEK programmes which could be used at across BEK.
2	Establish the consistent use of the 12 Common Approaches Framework to GESI mainstreaming efforts within programmes.	As above	As above
3	Incentivise SROs and PROs to mainstream GESI in the programmes they are working on, establishing it as an expected aspect of their role on which they are appraised.	The global literature consistently emphasised the importance of funders motivating GESI mainstreaming efforts.	Evidence from BEK programme documents and interviews with BEK staff highlight varied understandings and levels of importance placed on GESI mainstreaming. Whilst there were some examples of SROs and PROs motivating GESI mainstreaming efforts by implementing partners, the research did not explore whether/how SROs and PROs were themselves motivated to mainstream GESI.
4	Require all new programmes/phases of programmes to develop a GESI strategy during their inception phase, which they update during the life of the programme.	The global literature was consistent on the need for GESI strategies to underpin mainstreaming efforts from the start of programmes. Sources did not point to a particular structure for GESI strategies but did consistently highlight the need for them to outline a clear ambition for GESI mainstreaming and to link this to the programme purpose.	Evidence from the BEK portfolio was mixed, with some GESI strategies having been used far less than others. However, where they had been used, there was evidence they had been useful. No specific example of a programme GESI strategy was identified which could be used as a template for others across the portfolio.
5	Require programmes to calculate how much they will spend on GESI mainstreaming and to track this spend as part of existing financial reporting.	The global literature was clear that resources needed to be allocated to both the internal (team) and external (programming) aspects of GESI mainstreaming. However, sources were less consistent in presenting how this should be achieved and tracked. Within the sample, there was a noticeable gap in terms of evidence related to GESI mainstreaming and VfM.	Interviews with implementing partners consistently underlined the importance of resource allocation for GESI but actual evidence of programmes tracking GESI spend were minimal. There was some evidence from interviews that implementing partners wanted a clear signal from BEK that they could spend programme budgets on internal (team) aspects of GESI mainstreaming.

6	Recognise and reward programmes or individuals within implementing teams for their efforts and achievements in relation to GESI.	The global literature emphasised the value of programme leads intentionally motivating their teams to address GESI through their work. Although sources highlighted the importance of reflecting GESI mainstreaming expectations in job descriptions and performance appraisals, there was minimal evidence that this was effective.	There was no evidence of BEK officially recognising and rewarding efforts by implementing partners to mainstream GESI but evidence from interviews with programme teams suggested that interest in GESI-related work by BEK colleagues had been a motivating factor. There was considerable inconsistency in terms of BEK programme team leaders themselves seeking to motivate their teams to work on GESI through some form of recognition, reward or accountability.
7	Expect and support programmes to recruit diverse teams, which goes beyond the recruitment of women as a homogenous group.	• Sources in the global literature not only underlined the importance of recruiting diverse teams but also the need to encourage diversity to be valued so that alternative perspectives are shared, listened to and acted upon. However, within the sample there was minimal evidence of the specific practices which could enable recruitment and retention of staff from diverse backgrounds.	Interviews with programme teams suggested they had found increased diversity within teams to be valuable in terms of programming. However, there were few tangible examples of recruitment and management practices which had enabled diversity, and even less on how programme teams had promoted working cultures which valued diverse perspectives. There was some evidence from interviews that messaging and timeframes set by BEK had influenced scope for diverse recruitment.
8	Require new programmes/phases of programmes to have a GESI Lead who is a GESI expert in a senior role.	The global literature placed a consistent emphasis on the need to invest in some form of GESI expertise so that teams have access to the technical capacity needed to implement GESI mainstreaming. Several 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	Clear evidence emerged from interviews with implementing partners about the value of having experienced GESI experts in senior roles, with the confidence and clout to influence programme design and implementation.
9	Establish a Community of Practice to support and strengthen GESI experts working within BEK programmes.	There were some references within the global literature to the need to ensure GESI experts have the support they need to perform well. There were also some sources which pointed to the importance of GESI experts working collaboratively rather than in isolation.	It was clearly evident from interviews with programme teams that GESI experts were often working in isolation, with little or no contact with counterparts on other BEK programmes. There was also some evidence that where GESI experts had been able to work together within a programme team, this had been beneficial.
10	Encourage and enable programmes to work with government institutions mandated to support GESI as part of the constitution.	There were some references to the importance of working with national gender machinery in order to support longer term processes of change. However, within the sample	There was very little evidence of BEK programmes having working with government institutions mandated to support GESI.

		there was limited evidence of how to effectively achieve this.	
11	Encourage implementing partners to establish partnerships with GESI focused organisations in order to strengthen programmes' capacity to work on GESI.	Several sources within the global literature highlight the value of working with local partners in helping to bring contextually relevant innovation to programmes and to enable access to marginalised communities. However, there was less evidence of how to effectively achieve this across sectors.	There were relatively few examples of BEK programmes establishing partnerships with GESI-focused organisations. There was therefore a gap in terms of learning on how to effectively achieve this. There was, however, evidence that the initial procurement stage was an important moment for BEK to start to establish exceptions.
12	Support implementing partners to provide programme-specific GESI training to their teams so they are equipped with the competencies to mainstream GESI.	Within the global literature a lack of knowledge and skills among teams was identified as a considerable barrier to progress on GESI mainstreaming. Training was consistently highlighted as a valuable part of a wider approach to competency development to enable GESI mainstreaming.	Overall, evidence of programme specific GESI mainstreaming was minimal across the portfolio but there were some examples of promising practice, which could be relevant to the others.
13	Expect programmes to conduct ongoing intersectional GESI analysis to inform more detailed design and delivery of interventions as programmes adapt and evolve.	Global sources highlighted the potential for operationally focused GESI analyses to strengthen GESI mainstreaming. Evidence was clear that analysis needed to be conducted on an ongoing basis and needed to be used.	Although some form of GESI analysis was common across programmes, the approach to this analysis was inconsistent. In particular, limited use of intersectional analysis by BEK programmes meant they were often unable to consider multiple and overlapping forms of discrimination and exclusion.
14	Clarify which groups are intended to be reached by BEK programmes – and how they are expected to benefit - as a result of GESI mainstreaming.	Global literature emphasised the importance of programmes addressing the challenges and barriers marginalised groups face in accessing and benefiting from programme interventions and resources. Consistent emphasis was placed on the importance of an intersectional approach.	There was considerable inconsistency across the portfolio in terms of which groups should be reached through GESI mainstreaming. This was underpinned by a lack of conceptual clarity.
15	Require programmes to demonstrate a clear link between GESI-focused interventions and the design of the main programme.	Global literature underlined the importance of efforts to expand the scope of mainstream development programmes to maximise opportunities to contribute to empowerment and wider transformative change. These were often described as GESI-focused interventions and workstreams and additional components of work within mainstream programmes.	It was evident that in some programmes there was a disconnect between GESI-focused interventions and the main programme. There was minimal evidence on how to ensure they mutually reinforced each other.

16	Commission an evaluation of TA for municipal, provincial and federal government GESI policies and GESI trainings provided to government officials in order to inform future support by BEK.	There was clear consensus within the literature that in order to achieve GESI results, GESI policies not only needed to be developed but also to be implemented.	Evidence of actual implementation of government GESI policies and efforts to support this was minimal. There was also little evidence of the actual value of GESI trainings which had been delivered to government officials and representatives.
17	Expect programmes to identify risks related to work on GESI, including as a result of backlash.	The global literature highlighted the importance of programme leads seeking to understand and address potential risks associated with GESI mainstreaming. However, within the sample, there was less evidence of how to ensure risks were identified and mitigated.	Evidence of identifying and mitigating risks related to GESI mainstreaming was minimal.
18	Ensure GESI ambitions are set at outcome level within programme logframes.	The importance of a results focus in GESI mainstreaming came through strongly, most notably in more recently published sources.	There was some evidence of GESI focused outputs but less in terms of GESI-outcomes. Approaches to the development and use of GESI indicators was mixed and inconsistent.
19	Expect programmes to not only collect but also analyse disaggregated data with an intersectional lens and with a clear purpose to inform and improve programming for groups intended to benefit from GESI mainstreaming.	Addressing GESI through programme M&E was consistently recognised in the global literature as a vital aspect of mainstreaming, including the use of disaggregated indicators to identify who was accessing and benefiting from programmes. No single approach emerged from the literature but an emphasis was placed on disaggregation being intersectional and context specific.	It was evident that the use of disaggregated data across the BEK portfolio was inconsistent. The intended use of disaggregated data was often unclear. No single approach was identified which could be replicated across the portfolio

Annex 9 | GESI Mainstreaming Checklist

This checklist is for use by SROs and implementing partners to assess gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) mainstreaming within development assistance programming. The checklist is based on a global literature review and examination of real GESI practice within FCDO programming in Nepal. It was developed as part of a year-long research study commissioned the British Embassy Kathmandu (BEK), carried out in 2023-24 by Adam Smith International. While the checklist was developed for the Nepal context, it is applicable to programmes globally.

Name of programme/component:

Checklist	Name	Role	Date
Filled by:			
Approved by:			
Next date for completion of checklist:			

Common Approach	Expected to have	Score	Notes, evidence and actions
Leadership & Accountability			
1. **GESI strategy**	• Does the programme have a GESI strategy – and for those developed from 2024 - is it structured around the 12 Common Approaches in the GESI mainstreaming framework? • Does the GESI strategy draw links to the outcomes in the programme logframe? • Have commitments in the GESI strategy been reflected in programme workplans and is the GESI strategy regularly reviewed and revised throughout the life of the programme?	Yes Somewhat No	
2. **Budgeting for GESI**	• Has the programme calculated how much they will spend on GESI over the life of the programme and in the year ahead? • Do calculations include internal aspects of GESI mainstreaming (e.g., GESI training for the team) and external aspects (e.g., programme interventions)? • Does the programme track spending on GESI and are calculations clear?	Yes Somewhat No	

3. **Team motivation**	• Does programme leadership intentionally motivate implementing teams to address GESI? • Is there accountability among leadership, management and implementors to support progress on GESI mainstreaming, for example through performance assessments against GESI targets? • Do programmes have systems in place to recognise and reward achievements in relation to GESI within the programme?	Yes Somewhat No	

Capacity & Culture	

4. **Diverse recruitment**	• Has the implementing partner managed to recruit a diverse programme team? • Have efforts been made by the implementing partner to establish a team culture where diversity is valued? • Has programme leadership ensured diverse perspectives within the team are heard?	Yes Somewhat No	
5. **GESI expertise**	• Has the implementing partner established an experienced GESI expert in a senior position within the team? • Are there other GESI experts in the team and in field teams in numbers which are proportionate to the scale and scope of the programme? • Have GESI experts within the team been provided with any capacity building support needed for them to work effectively, for example in relation to M&E or sectoral knowledge?	Yes Somewhat No	
6. **GESI-focused partners**	• Has the implementing partner established partnerships with GESI-focused organisations who work with marginalised groups? • Does the selection of GESI-focused partners match the types of marginalised groups the programme is trying to reach? • Beyond GESI-focused activities and interventions, are these partners strengthening a focus on GESI across the programme?	Yes Somewhat No	
7. **Team training**	• Has the programme team (including the field team and partners) received GESI training which is programme specific, and goes beyond organisation wide GESI training the implementing partner might provide as standard? • Is the GESI training delivered by someone with the right expertise, and is it practically focused, going beyond basic messaging to teach the team the skills needed to mainstream GESI? • Is GESI training regularly provided rather than just a one-off session, and does it form part of a wider capacity development plan to ensure the programme team is equipped to mainstream GESI?	Yes Somewhat No	

	Results & Adaptation			
8. GESI analysis	• Has the programme conducted intersectional and operationally focused GESI analyses to identify barriers and issues faced by marginalised groups? • Is GESI analysis conducted on an ongoing basis to inform individual interventions, rather than as a one-off piece at the start? • Has GESI analysis been used to inform intervention design and delivery, including through ongoing adaptation?	Yes Somewhat No	
9. Participation and reach	• Has the programme made efforts to reach marginalised groups by addressing their basic needs and the barriers to their participation? • Is the programme using clearly defined categories of people it intends to reach, including those who experience multiple forms of discrimination? • Has GESI analysis informed strategies to encourage participation and programme reach?	Yes Somewhat No	
10. GESI focused interventions	• Has the programme incorporated interventions specifically focused on GESI, which are based on GESI analysis? • Are the ambitions of these interventions focused on actual change, for example policy implementation, empowerment, shifts in mindsets, or collective voice and influence? • Can the programme demonstrate a clear link between GESI-focused interventions and other programme interventions?	Yes Somewhat No	
11. Additional risks	• Has the programme sought to understand potential risks associated with GESI mainstreaming, including intra-household tensions and community backlash triggered by efforts to challenge the status quo or target resources at certain groups? • Have adequate efforts been made within the programme to mitigate any identified risks related to GESI mainstreaming? • Have any risks related to GESI mainstreaming ben reflected and tracked as part of the programme's overall risk management processes?	Yes Somewhat No	
12. Tracking and reporting	• Have GESI ambitions been set at outcome level in the programme logframe and reflected in GESI-specific indicators? • Is intersectional analysis of disaggregated data conducted and presented in programme reports? • Is analysis of disaggregated data and data to track GESI-specific indicators used to inform programme adaptations?	Yes Somewhat No	

Agreed Actions

No.	Action	Accountable	Due Date
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Annex 10 | Confidentiality Policy

Introduction

The Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Mainstreaming Research Project (GESI-M), implemented by Adam Smith International (ASI), requires access to Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) programme data and reports in order to provide a full review of GESI mainstreaming within its diverse portfolio of Nepal programmes overseen by the British Embassy Kathmandu (BEK).

To assure FCDO Nepal Senior Responsible Officers (SROs), BEK staff, and Programme Managers, as well as implementing partners, that GESI-M will keep these documents confidential, we have set out a number of clauses (below) as part of the Confidentiality Policy. This is intended to improve the confidence of all concerned shareholders.

Definitions

Programme data and reports: Refers to data, information, and reporting related to programme delivery and results (activities, outputs, and outcomes) that are shared with GESI-M either via the Client or directly (e.g. Logframes, Monthly Reports, Quarterly and Annual Reports, information shared through interviews/surveys, any learning documents, etc.).

Ethical wall: An information barrier established within an organisation for the purpose of preventing conflicts of interest or the release of sensitive information. Ethical walls relate to certain identified information or categories of information. Depending on their purpose they consist either of total bans on communication outside a named group. GESI-M has developed a full set of rules around ethical walls and their implementation, which include holding electronic information and data on secure information and communications technology (ICT) systems with differing levels of access. GESI-M and ASI will operate the formal ethical wall procedures during implementation, as described in Section 6.

1. Data Collection / Requests

1.1. GESI-M will collect data and evidence already collected or being collected by programmes and external sources including PMEL Programme and international literature.

1.2. GESI-M will only ask for information relevant to programme delivery, results or necessary for portfolio-level learning.

1.3. GESI-M will not request commercially sensitive documents.

1.4. GESI-M will help ensure that FCDO/BEK meets all aspects of data protection and confidentiality under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

2. Data Storage

2.1. Printed and electronic records, active and inactive records, and records provided to GESI-M for the purpose of the review are governed by ASI's Associates' Records Management Procedure.

2.2. GESI-M will store all documents in the cloud on a secure SharePoint site with restricted access to limited GESI-M team members only. This access list will be reviewed continuously by the GESI-M Leadership Team as needed. Any confidential documents shared by FCDO/BEK (e.g. concept notes and business case draft documents, programme pipeline information, and financial/budgetary information) will not under any circumstances be shared outside of the core GESI-M team – i.e. will not be shared with ASI staff outside the established ethical wall (see Section 6).

2.3. GESI-M will store all data provided to the project in compliance with GDPR.

3. Data Use

3.1. GESI-M will generate new knowledge through the reuse of programme data and evidence for reasons other than originally intended.

3.2. Analyses undertaken by GESI-M are intended to provide FCDO/BEK an understanding of the extent to which GESI is (or is not) mainstreamed and the impact of various tactics on inclusion and empowerment.

3.3. All GESI-M team members, through their induction session, will receive guidance on the use and sharing of data, based on ASI's Data Protection Policy, which is compliant with FCDO terms and conditions.

3.4. Additionally, all GESI-M team members will receive guidance on cybersecurity and the correct use of ICT as part of their inductions.

4. Data Sharing

4.1. GESI-M will not share any reports or data shared with us by FCDO/BEK and programme partners to any external party. All shared documents will be used strictly for internal learning purposes.

4.2. GESI-M will not share any reports or data shared with us by FCDO/BEK with internal ASI staff and associates not affiliated with the GESI-M project. Those staff involved in technical support will not be able to access sensitive documents shared by BEK and will be firewalled from access.

4.3. Other partners associated with improved learnings across FCDO (e.g. the PMEL team in the UK) will be able to obtain GESI-M analyses only after sign-off from the FCDO/BEK Leadership Team.

4.4. Any large data files that GESI-M needs to share will be shared via secure platforms, such as SharePoint.

5. Contract Clauses

5.1. All ASI staff and associate contracts include Confidentiality and Data Protection & Data Security clauses to prevent sharing or disclosure of privileged information.

5.2. All GESI-M team members have reviewed and signed ASI's Conflict of Interest, Ethics, and Compliance Declaration, which confirms all staff and associates' strict adherence to the ASI Code of Conduct.

6. Conflict of Interest & Ethical Walls

6.1. Objectivity is a primary concern, and ASI seeks to avoid actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may arise by building on ASI's strict ethical standards through this Confidentiality Policy, supplemented through the use of targeted NDAs and establishing ethical walls.

6.2. Our Research Manager is responsible for establishing and maintaining ethical walls around individual work packages (research design, lines of inquiry etc.) under the GESI-M project. These walls are designed to limit access to potentially sensitive information related to future FCDO programmes, especially that which may provide unfair advantage on future procurements.

6.3. The Research Manager will be responsible for setting up secure IT structures (e.g. private Teams channels) to store sensitive information or programme documents, manage access by GESI-M team members, and securely dispose of information at project closure. Figure 1 below illustrates how ethical walls are constructed between different parts of the GESI-M project, including core, technical, administrative, and backstopping teams.GESI-M team members who fall under the ethical wall group will not take part in preparing future FCDO/BEK proposals for which they may possess privileged information as part of the GESI-M project. This applies to GESI-M team members that are ASI staff and associates for a period of a full year from contract signing.
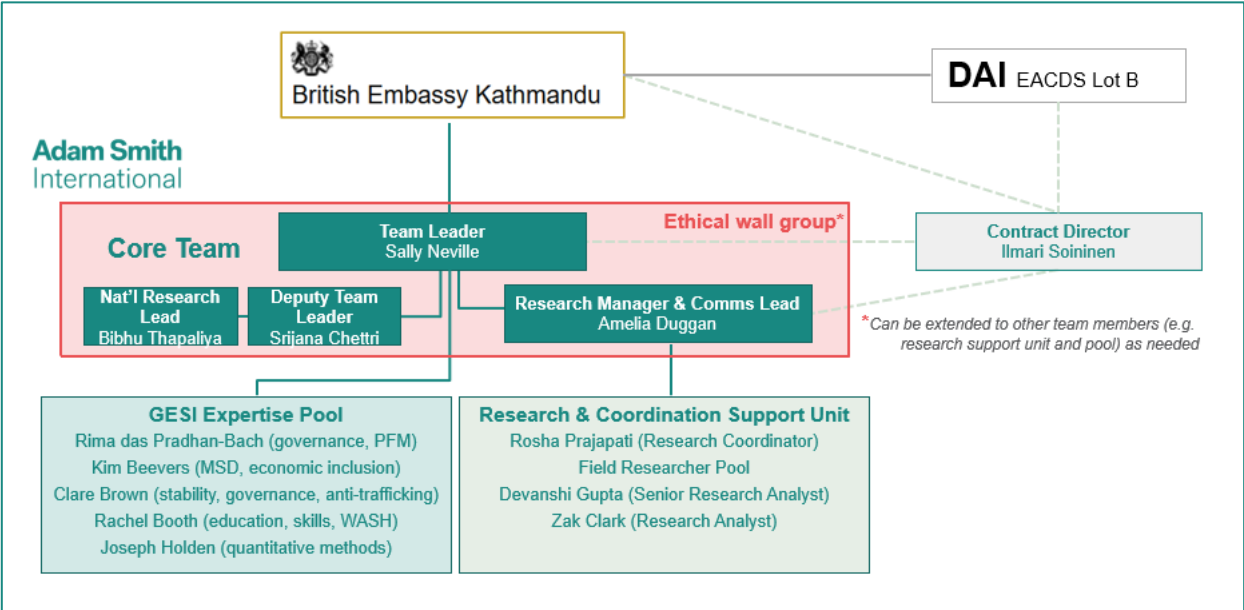
Figure 8 Ethical Wall Group

Annex 11 | Terms of Reference

British Embassy Kathmandu Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Research Project
Terms of Reference

1. Introduction

The British Embassy Kathmandu (BEK) leads the UK's relationship with Nepal including diplomatic engagement, defence co-operation, development support, and trade. The BEK Country Plan has five campaign goals for 2021-2025:

1. The UK, as a force for good, will support a more open and democratic society in Nepal resulting in more representative, inclusive and effective governance at all three levels of government.
2. Our recruitment of Gurkhas to the British Army will strengthen UK Security, and our support to capable security and rule of law institutions that protect the rights of all people, will strengthen Nepal's stability.
3. The UK's partnership with Nepal will support Nepal's transition to sustainable lower-middle income country (LMIC) status through facilitating inclusive and greener growth, increased investment and more open trade that provides opportunities for UK firms.
4. Through UK influence and support, Nepal will adopt ambitious climate targets at COP26 that will reduce emissions, build resilience and through green recovery support put Nepal on a path to reduce poverty through greener, resilient, and more inclusive growth.
5. The UK promotes girls' education and the rights of women and girls in Nepal.

Work in these five areas is underpinned by cross-cutting outcomes on federalism, inclusion, data partnerships and strategic learning.

Working on gender equality and social exclusion (GESI) is important for BEK, because it's the right thing to do, and because it's the smart thing to do.

It's the right thing to do, because it is part of how BEK delivers a set of agreements and commitments. The focus on GESI in Nepal supports the 2015 Nepal Constitution which sets out an ambitious and progressive agenda on inclusion and equality and guarantees all Nepalis a set of 31 constitutional rights. BEK's development work is set within the framework of the International Development Strategy, to work on poverty reduction (International Development Act 2002), and the UK government has a legal duty to reduce inequalities between men and women (International Development (Gender Equality) Act 2014) and groups protected under the Public Sector Equality Duty (2011). Finally, both Nepal and the UK have signed up to the framework of the 2015 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals which focus on eliminating poverty, gender inequality, inequalities within and between nations as well as leaving no one behind in the realisation of these goals.

It's the smart thing to do, because BEK's assessment of evidence on poverty reduction, well-being, and the political settlement in Nepal, shows that GESI considerations play an important role. The poor in Nepal are from excluded social groups. Without GESI mainstreaming, development in Nepal, economic growth, the political settlement, poverty reduction and improvements in well-being will systematically exclude women, girls, and certain social groups. Nepal is transitioning to being a middle-income country, but there are large groups within Nepal who will be excluded from this transition without proactive action.

BEK works on GESI issues throughout its portfolio of programmes and interventions. It does this by meeting UK legal requirements, through programming that focuses on gender and social inclusion issues, as well as through 'GESI mainstreaming' in programmes that are not about GESI. GESI features prominently in the BEK country plan *because the level of BEK ambition in these areas is far above compliance with legal minimum requirements. UK legal requirements are summarised below. The BEK approach to GESI mainstreaming with 'minimum standards' is intended to suppo*rt compliance with these pieces of legislation as well as promote more and better work on GESI throughout BEK with a clear and structured approach to mainstreaming.

BEK works with a range of partners on its programmes, and coordinates with other bilateral and multilateral partners in its work in Nepal. Other embassies like the Swiss and Norwegian embassies provide ODA and work on GESI issues. Multilateral agencies such as UNICEF and the World Bank are also partners for BEK programmes and influencing agendas, including on GESI issues. The International Development Partners Group (IDPG) is the coordination body for development partners in Nepal and has several sub-groups including a Gender Equality and Social Exclusion Working Group. This group is chaired by UN Women and a rotating chair (currently the EU) and provides a coordination mechanism and information sharing space for development partners. The Government of Nepal has a Commission for Women, commissions for other excluded groups, and a Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens at federal level, which is the line ministry for most GESI issues.

Defining and identifying disadvantaged groups in Nepal is not straightforward, as the situation is different in each province, for different sectors and there are multiple overlapping types of difference and discrimination. Based on the Constitution of Nepal, the International Development Partners Group, Gender Equality and Social Exclusion working group framework[5], evidence from recent analyses of poverty and economic development in Nepal[6], and previous practice in UKAid programmes, disadvantaged groups in Nepal are defined as including: Women and girls, low castes, and particularly Dalits, certain ethnic minorities such as indigenous groups (Janjatis), regional minorities (Madhesis), people with disabilities, and religious minorities (Muslims).

Legal requirements

There are two pieces of UK legislation that are relevant to UKAid programming and GESI mainstreaming. The 2014 International Development (Gender Equality) Act[7], and the 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)[8]. These are summarised below.

Gender Equality Act compliance requirements

- The Gender Equality Act (2014) is a legal requirement amending the 2002 International Development Act.
- All UK development assistance must meaningfully consider the impact of how it will contribute to reducing gender inequality and demonstrate that it has done so.
- The Senior Responsible Officer/business case owner should be confident that interventions will do no harm and will not worsen gender inequality.
- Business cases and humanitarian submissions must meaningfully yet proportionately consider the impact of interventions (benefits and losses) on women and men, girls and boys and the impact on the gendered power relationship between them.
- A clearly flagged statement (e.g., Gender Act Compliance) must be included in the "strategic case" of the business case. It should confirm and summarise how gender has been considered and whether and how the intervention will contribute to reducing gender inequality. Or explain why it will not.
- It should also summarise and clarify measures that will be taken to integrate a gender-sensitive approach across the programme cycle. These should be properly reflected in the appropriate sections of the business case, to avoid tokenism and risk of good intentions evaporating.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) (2010)

Requires all public bodies to give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance opportunities and consider the needs of all individuals in shaping policy, delivering services and in relation to their own employees – irrespective of sex, age, disability, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

GESI mainstreaming

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[5] GESI Working Group, (2017) Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Working Group, International Development Partners Group, Nepal. **https://www.undp.org/nepal/publications/common-framework-gender-equality-and-social-inclusion**
[6] World Bank (2016) Moving Up the Ladder, Poverty Reduction and Social Mobility in Nepal, World Bank, Nepal. **https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/25173**
[7] **https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/9/contents/enacted/data.htm**
[8] **Public sector equality duty - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)**

There are different ways that BEK programmes and interventions work on GESI. The BEK minimum standards on GESI mainstreaming are about GESI mainstreaming at each stage of the programme cycle.

Figure 1 GESI Minimum Standards Across the Programme Cycle
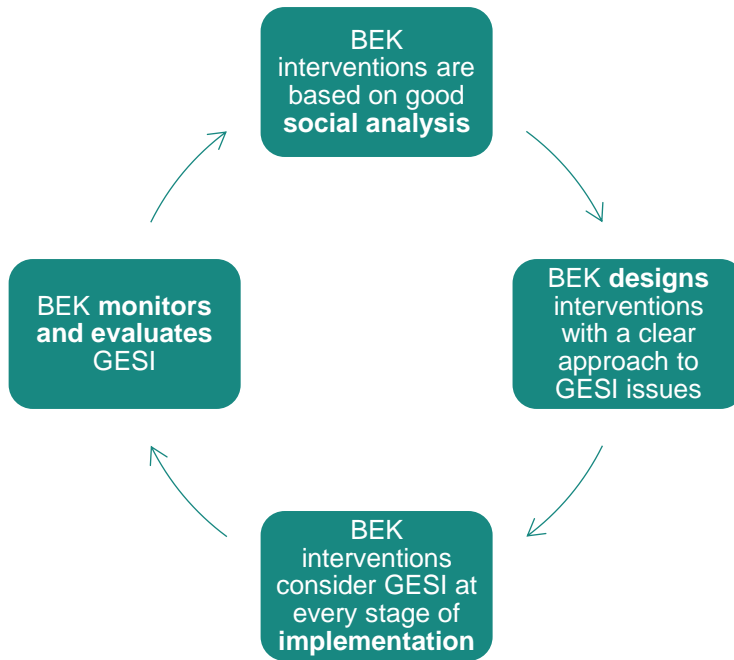
BEK's GESI mainstreaming theory of change includes these minimum standards and expresses how programmes and interventions deliver impact along four pathways to impact.

Figure 2 BEK GESI Mainstreaming Theory of Change
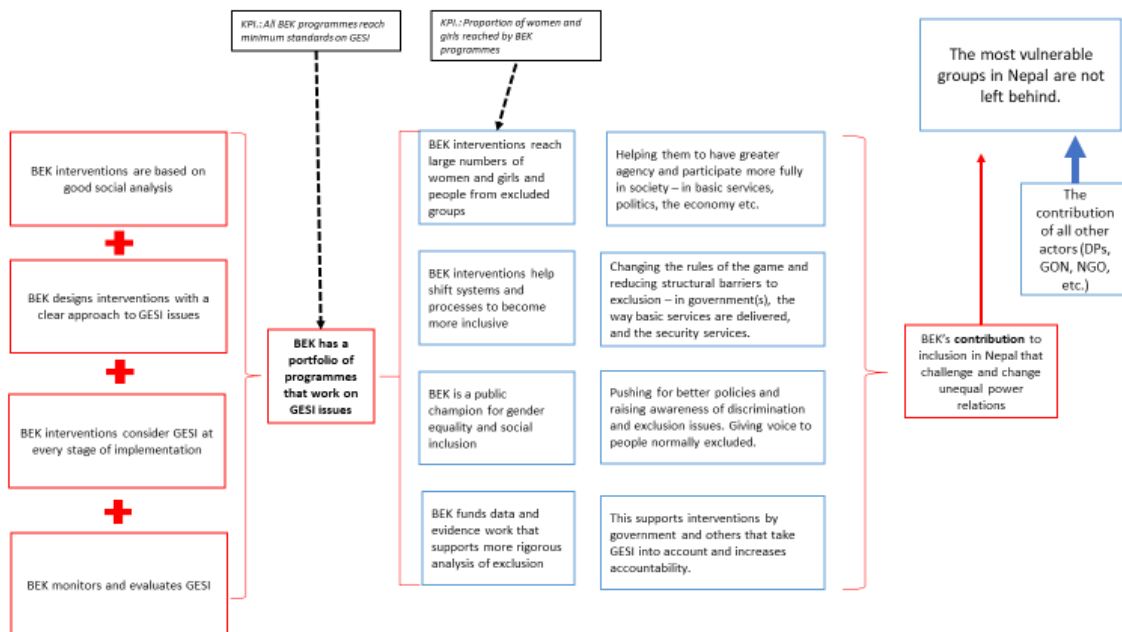
BEK interventions reach large numbers of women and girls and people from excluded groups – helping them to have greater agency and participate more fully in society – for example through access to basic services, greater participation in politics, or access to opportunities in the economy.

BEK interventions strengthen and improve systems and processes to become more inclusive and change harmful social norms – changing the rules of the game and reducing structural barriers to exclusion. Including women and girls and

people from excluded groups can change mindsets and attitudes and change social norms. For example, by working on how decisions are made in government(s), the way basic services are delivered, and improving capacity and processes in the police. BEK's work on governance and federalism is set up to promote the vision of the constitution and federalism of a fairer, more inclusive political settlement, as well as support sub-national governments to make decisions in a more inclusive way.

BEK wants to be a public champion for GESI – pushing for better policies and raising awareness of discrimination and exclusion issues. This is intended to bring together gender policy influencing, communications and development priorities into an influencing strategy on gender equality. The BEK Human Rights action plan has a focus on GESI issues. BEK's communications strategy focuses on GESI issues at key points of the year and aims to give voice to people who have traditionally been excluded from communications, profile, and media.

BEK funds data and evidence work that supports more rigorous analysis of exclusion. This includes funding the actual collection of data, and collection in ways that support GESI considerations, funding analysis of existing data focused on GESI issues, as well as promoting the use of data and analysis by partners and government for purposes related to GESI. This supports interventions by government and others that take GESI into account based on better evidence and increases accountability to excluded groups.

2. Objective

The purpose of this project is to help BEK, and The Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) understand what works in GESI mainstreaming. It is intended to flesh out how programmes and policy initiatives deliver GESI mainstreaming. What are the principal mechanisms, and what evidence is there for their effectiveness? How do statements on gender equality act, inclusion, VFM equity, and data disaggregation translate into delivery of outcomes for women and girls and excluded groups?

For BEK this evidence will be shared across the office but also with the Portfolio MEL function who will help ensure that it is used to inform the Embassies strategic learning. BEK is undergoing a forward look portfolio review which is expected to lead to a significant reduction in the number of programme interventions in the portfolio but will also consider changes in how we work. An important aspect of this will be how GESI mainstreaming is implemented through BEKs programmes and how staff can directly engage more effectively in this area of work.

Evidence from this research project will also be used more broadly across FCDO to promote higher standards in GESI mainstreaming through adding to the evidence base on GESI mainstreaming and informing new guidance to support FCDO leads to do achieve this.

3. The Recipient and Stakeholders

The Recipient will be FCDO, and BEK. In BEK the project will be led by the Social Development and Statistics advisers as 'the senior responsible owners' (SRO) with support from relevant programme managers and other advisers. The findings of the research project are expected to inform programme design and delivery in BEK. The team should share lessons with BEK 'evidence partners' who will take strategic learning into discussions around BEK portfolio management, these include:

- Portfolio MEL - Abt Associates
- Researching Nepal's Transitions (RENT) - Yale and School of Oriental and African Studies
- Project Coherence Units (PCU) - United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS),
- Coherence - International Idea Coherence Team.

The potential users of the findings from this project are FCDO staff and staff working for other development agencies. It is anticipated that the project will inform on going FCDO work on GESI. Across FCDO departments, embassies, and high commissions, GESI mainstreaming is often led by a cadre of social development advisers, who will therefore be one of the main stakeholders and users of the findings. The 'head of profession' for the social development cadre is therefore an important individual stakeholder for this work. The findings are also anticipated to be valuable for the Gender Equality Team and the broader Gender and Equalities Department in FCDO HQ. They lead GESI policy and develop guidance for FCDO. This project is anticipated to inform guidance and practice in FCDO through these groups.

The head of the Gender Equality team, social development advisers in the team, and the head of the Gender and Equalities Department are important individual stakeholders for the project.

It is also anticipated that the findings will be useful and relevant for other development donors, agencies and organisations working on GESI mainstreaming, such as the members of the IDPG Gender Equality and Social Exclusion Working Group in Nepal. BEK staff have discussed this project and approach to GESI mainstreaming with colleagues at the Swiss Embassy and they are interested in the findings.

4. Scope

The research questions are:

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

The scope of this research project covers live development programmes funded by BEK as well as diplomacy or policy influencing initiatives. There are currently 15 live programmes which are listed in Annex 1 below. The final list of programmes could be adapted to include other UKAid programmes managed by FCDO headquarters (known as 'centrally managed programmes'). The final list of programmes (no more than 20) can be co-developed and agreed with BEK leads during the inception phase.

The research project should draw on the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria to look for links and gaps between what programme documents say will happen in programmes and evidence found through the research project of Relevance, Coherence (internal to BEK), Effectiveness, Efficiency and Sustainability. However, this is a supportive formative research project rather than an impact evaluation or audit.

Relevance

Are the GESI mainstreaming approaches and methodologies sensitive to the situation of people in Nepal? Do they consider social inequalities relating to gender, age, disability, and other relevant identities? Are they based on analysis of which social groups are excluded? Are trade-offs being made in how GESI mainstreaming is balanced with other intervention priorities, how are these managed?

Do No Harm – Do the GESI mainstreaming approaches ensure mitigation for risks to the safety, security, and dignity of the participants in the interventions?

Coherence

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 they isolated examples of good practice or being used at scale? Descriptive statistics to illustrate the scale and coverage of different approaches should be included in the response to this question.

Effectiveness

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? What examples are there of effective GESI mainstreaming in UKAid interventions in Nepal? Is there evidence of GESI mainstreaming leading to a greater focus on equity in programmes which otherwise wouldn't be there? Are there examples of good work being done even where programme documents are not strong on GESI? Are there examples of programme documents that sound good, or promise good GESI mainstreaming, where the reality suggests that not much is really being done or the approach is tokenistic? Is there evidence of GESI mainstreaming approaches that appear not to work well?

Efficiency

Do the GESI mainstreaming approaches represent good value for money? Which GESI mainstreaming approaches appear to have the most impact with the least resource, or least opportunity cost to other objectives? Under what conditions are they able to provide better value for money? What are the trade-offs or gains being made in terms of GESI objectives compared to other programme objectives?

Sustainability
Are the GESI mainstreaming approaches able to be resourced and maintained over the medium term. Are they likely to have lasting impact?

5. Methods and approach
The supplier is expected to develop an appropriately rigorous research design and methodology set out in the proposal and refined during the inception phase based on the questions above. The approach should be *utilisation-focused*, ensuring that the findings are useful and used by stakeholders.

It is expected that this research project will be conducted through quantitative and qualitative analysis of data available on different approaches to GESI mainstreaming. Some reporting and monitoring data on FCDO funded programmes are publicly available, such as business cases, log frames, annual reviews, project completion reviews and evaluations, however, it is expected that the supplier will need to obtain further data from programmes included within the sample.

As the programmes and interventions included in the research project use a range of approaches to GESI mainstreaming in diverse contexts, it will be important that the research project sets its findings in the context of both the interventions and locations. The research project should make clear the **strength of evidence** supporting the findings. The team should balance need the need for analytical rigour with the need for a light touch approach to information collection from busy FCDO actors and partner organisations.

It is anticipated that there will be at least four stages to the research project (although bidders are encouraged to propose alternative approaches rather than simply following this framework).

Stage 1 (evidence synthesis) should include a review of relevant literature, guidance, and evidence on GESI mainstreaming. The supplier should summarise what GESI mainstreaming is, what types of activities it entails and what evidence there is for the effectiveness of different types of GESI mainstreaming. The supplier should review secondary evidence and insights from FCDO programmes using appropriate analytical frameworks (e.g., recognised data quality frameworks). The analytical framework used for the evidence synthesis should be informed by an appropriate framework for assessing data quality, for example, the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) Research Quality Plus Framework[9]. The analytical framework should also specify where evidence has been triangulated by different sources. There is a risk that some evidence from later stages will be self-confirmatory, as interviewees may also be authors of programme documentation. The evidence synthesis should produce a literature review on GESI mainstreaming synthesising global evidence and conceptual model or theory of change of GESI mainstreaming.

Stage 2 will describe and analyse approaches to GESI mainstreaming in UK development programmes and interventions in Nepal. Using the conceptual model from the evidence synthesis, this descriptive analysis will provide an overview of how GESI mainstreaming is delivered in practice in Nepal, how practice relates to proposals in documents, and how this relates to what global evidence suggests are the most effective approaches.

Stage 3 will select a smaller group of programmes and interventions for comparative analysis to understand patterns and approaches that appear to work well or have unintended consequences. Stage 3 is focused on cross-case analysis, using the data from Stage 2 and the theory and evidence from Stage 1. This analysis should include all the 15-20 relevant programmes and interventions. It should identify significant differences between programmes, in terms of contexts, interventions and outcomes, not ones that generate broad encompassing generalities.

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[9] https://www.idrc.ca/en/rqplus

Stage 4 will select a few programmes and interventions for deeper dive within-case analysis. Case selection should be based on the cross-case analysis in Stage 3, rather than an attempt to be representative. Stage 4 will explore likely causal mechanisms, and unintended consequences, of associations noticed in the cross-case analysis to understand the complexity and reality of how GESI mainstreaming plays out in programmes and interventions.

The project should use descriptive data to summarise information collected during Stage 1 and 2. The research will include qualitative interviews (during Stage 2, 3 and 4) with relevant key informants involved in design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes included. These should include FCDO staff, partners, and external actors at international and country level with relevant topic or country knowledge. This might involve 3-4 field trips within Nepal, 20-40 interviews with key informants, focus group discussions and / or other methods. However, this is not intended to be prescriptive, alternative stages, and methods will be considered. Bids should set out the proposed approach and methods.

The Team will work independently, and BEK will not interfere in terms of findings based on the data analysis and observations. BEK does not expect any influence from other development partners or government. However, BEK assumes this research project to be formative with a set of learning and recommendations for BEK for its work on GESI.

Data and evidence sources
Through the development of the BEK GESI Strategy and annual GESI stocktake the BEK SDA team have already brought together and reviewed a lot of the internal evidence for GESI mainstreaming in the office. These evidence sources are largely official documents that have gone through internal quality assurance processes, so although of mixed quality, they should provide ample credible data and evidence of sufficient quality to undertake the research project.

Sources of evidence for the project include but are not limited to:
- Programme business cases.
- Annual reviews and Programme Completion Reviews.
- Programme log frames.
- Implementing partner monitoring reports.
- Reports from independent reviews and evaluations of BEK work in Nepal.
- Reports from the PMEL and Resilience MEL facilities.
- BEK GESI mainstreaming strategy documents.
- BEK inclusion big change documents.
- BEK Campaign Goal 5 documents.
- Interviews with staff from BEK implementing partners and other stakeholders in Nepal.
- Interviews with staff from BEK evidence partners.
- Interviews with women and men from socially excluded and marginalized groups in Nepal.
- Interviews with BEK staff and selected SRO/PRO.
- Literature on GESI mainstreaming.

Many of the documents are already in the public domain. Others will be provided to the team by BEK or implementing partners.

New data collection through interviews and fieldwork will take the research project beyond what has already been done by BEK and the Portfolio MEL (who don't have the scope to collect new data). It is anticipated that the team will work with the existing Portfolio MEL team to identify sources of data, existing analysis, gaps, risks and identify stakeholders.

6. Performance Requirements
Performance requirements for the supplier focus on three aspects of performance:
- Timeliness

- Quality
- Social Value

Performance measures (KPIs) will therefore focus on the degree to which the supplier is able to meet the timeline, submit high quality outputs, and deliver social value. This includes both regular programme reporting (described in the next section) and project outputs. So, the first KPI will be on timeliness measuring the supplier's ability to meet the agreed deadlines.

The second KPI will be on quality. The payment structure will be hybrid, meaning that expenses will be paid in arrears based on actuals, but payment of fees relating to the delivery of research outputs will be on a milestone basis with payment subject to delivery of high-quality outputs (specified in the table below). Quality assurance of outputs will be the responsibility of the project SROs (BEK Social Development and Statistics Advisers), and FCDO's Evaluation Quality Assurance and Learning Service (EQUALS). Milestone payments will be withheld if work is submitted late or is not good quality. Ability to analyse, evaluate, compare, and communicate complex data in a portfolio of interventions is one of the KPIs, this will be measured by the quality assurance process, and through the successful bid's proposal of methods.

Social value will be defined as the ability of the supplier and project to generate useful recommendations on GESI mainstreaming in ODA programming and policy influencing work. The KPI will be how many useful and realistic ('implementable') recommendations the project can generate. This will be measured through the BEK quality assurance process (meaning review by the project SROs and EQUALS).

7. Reporting

There will be two types of reporting in this project: Monthly progress reports, and project outputs.

Monthly progress reports can be in email format. The template for these will be agreed in the inception phase. These should cover financial reporting and progress on project delivery. Project outputs will include reports, presentations, and communications products. Project outputs will be used to pay milestone-based payments. The FCDO policy is that all research and evaluation reports will be published. Reports from this project will be independently quality assured by EQUALS.

Output	Deadline
Inception meeting	By end of February 2023
A draft inception report including: - methods used in the review, - evaluability assessment, - budget and payment schedule, - work plan, - performance KPIs, - reporting templates, - stakeholder engagement plan (for engaging participants in the project as well as potential users of the findings), - risk register - Literature review and conceptual model of GESI mainstreaming.	End of March 2023.
Presentations of draft inception report to: BEK	Second week of April 2023
Approved inception reporting following BEK/FCDO review and feedback from presentations	Second week of May, 2023
Monthly progress meetings and reports	First week of each month
A draft report summarising the findings	Mid-November 2023
Two presentations of findings to: 1) BEK staff, and; 2) FCDO Social development network / gender Equality team	Mid-November, 2023

Final, approved report incorporating feedback from BEK/FCDO	Mid-December, 2023
Final presentation of findings (with focus on recommendations for uptake and implementation)	Mid-December, 2023
PowerPoint slide pack that BEK/FCDO can use to share through future presentations	Mid-January 2024
A 2-page summary ("research digest") of the final report using FCDO's template for publication on FCDO's website	Mid-January 2024
A blog summarising the findings of the project.	Mid-January 2024

8. Timeframe

This is a one-year project. It is expected to start in February 2023 with an inception phase until the end of March 2023. Delivery will be from April 2023 to December 2023 with communication of results in late 2023 and early 2024. The project is expected to end by February 2024. The timeline for delivery of outputs is set out in section 7.

If the project is delayed by unexpected events, or there is value in extending it, and funding available, the project and contract may be extended to get the best value for money from the project.

9. Budget

Maximum budget £288,000, excluding VAT but inclusive of the EACDS management fee and all other taxes and expenses associated, such as travel.

10. FCDO Coordination

The supplier will work to two SROs in BEK / FCDO, the BEK Social Development Adviser and Statistics Adviser. These are currently Benjamin Zeitlyn and Craig Irwin, but SROs will change in July 2023. Until July 2023, the overall coordinator will be Benjamin Zeitlyn. Kamlesh Yadav is the programme manager in BEK responsible for the project and he will be an important member of the team to ensure continuity and institutional memory as staff turnover.

The FCDO Evaluation Unit will be an important part of the FCDO management of this project and will receive monthly reports and all project outputs. EQUALS will support the project with quality assurance of project outputs.

11. The Requirements (Research project Team and others)

BEK expects bids to propose a diverse team led by a Team Leader who, in addition to project management skills and experience, should have knowledge and experience of leading research projects, reviews and/or evaluations of large organizations/development issues, knowledge of the themes of this project: GESI, data/results and previous work with FCDO (or exDFID / exFCO). The supplier should propose a diverse team in terms of international and national experts keeping a good balance of male/female and other groups reflecting the diversity in Nepal.

This assignment requires a team with the following attributes:
- Significant experience of evaluating development and policy influencing projects, programmes, and portfolios; Previous experience evaluating DFID or FCDO programmes is an asset.
- Proven experiences of relevant approaches and methods for collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data, formative research and evaluations.
- Significant experience of evaluating and/or working on GESI issues in Nepal. Understanding the range of GESI issues which exist in Nepal, and the diversity and complexity of Nepali culture and society.
- Have understanding of how donors, embassies, UN, and development agencies work on GESI, the reality of how these initiatives are implemented in practice and some of the risks and opportunities inherent in this practice including how they work with Government of Nepal institutions.
- Understanding of GESI mainstreaming in development programmes and interventions, what it means in practice, how it is implemented, and awareness of the evidence of effectiveness of GESI mainstreaming.
- Proven record of interpretation of analysis and findings in the form of high-quality reports.

Bidders should describe their proposed methods and approach in the bids. Bidders should also propose any amendments to the questions and stages set out above. Bidders should set out their approach to engaging stakeholders and communication and uptake of findings (meaning engaging programme suppliers and partners, engaging BEK and FCDO and other potential users of the findings, and engaging beneficiaries of BEK GESI mainstreaming findings). Bidders should also explain how they will address challenges and risks to the project (including ethical risks).

In the inception phase the supplier will be required to:
- Assess the availability and nature of existing evidence.
- Meet with stakeholders including the BEK Portfolio Monitoring Evaluation and Learning (PMEL) facility to identify evidence and develop ways of working.
- Refine the methods, questions, sampling, design and workplan set out in the initial bid.
- Present methods and workplan to BEK staff.
- Conduct an evaluability assessment to inform a decision to go ahead with the main research project.
- Deliver inception phase outputs:

At the end of the inception phase there will be a decision point about whether to progress from the inception phase to the main evaluation. This will be dependent on the evaluability assessment findings, and satisfactory performance from the supplier. In the main project, the supplier will be required to:
- Review literature on GESI mainstreaming, and develop a conceptual model or TOR on what GESI mainstreaming is and how it is expected to have impact (Stage 1)
- Deliver the project with the methods and workplan agreed in the bids and inception phase (Stage 2-4).
- Conduct fieldwork in Nepal with relevant BEK and programme staff, downstream partners, and beneficiaries (Stage 2-4).
- Meet with relevant stakeholders and experts in Nepal including staff from BEK 'evidence partners' (Abt Associates PMEL, Yale and School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) Researching Nepal's Transitions (RENT) Research Programme, United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) Project Coherence Units, and International Idea Coherence Team) (Stage 2-4).
- Meet regularly (monthly) with the BEK SROs (Benjamin Zeitlyn and Craig Irwin) and write up a short monthly progress report.
- Deliver the delivery phase outputs.
- Make recommendations, in the final report, on for example:
  o Recommendations on the content, structure, and audiences for guidance material on GESI mainstreaming and proposals for any training for FCDO or partner staff.
  o Recommendations for changes to the design or delivery approach of existing programmes.
  o Recommendations for desirable design features, requirements, or approaches for new programmes.
  o Recommendations of which GESI mainstreaming approaches BEK and FCDO more broadly should prioritise.
  o Recommendations on coordination and cooperation with other parties in Nepal.
  o Recommendations for issues that should be addressed by future research and evaluations of individual programmes or sets of programmes. Including areas where commissioning research may be appropriate.

Logistics and Field Visits:
The team will travel to Nepal to meet BEK teams and stakeholders and will travel outside Kathmandu. The BEK team will support the team by linking them with the project teams and providing up to date travel advice. Partners from selected projects will support the team by providing required data and key informant interviews. However, the team should be operationally independent of BEK and suppliers; planning and organizing field trips, logistics, and duty of care will be the responsibility of the supplier.

12. Submitting a proposal
Proposals should clearly set out the supplier's suggested approach to conducting the research project, in line with the requirements set out in this terms of reference, team skills and experience and proposed team composition. The final

research questions, scope, sample interventions and methodology will be agreed between FCDO and the selected supplier at the end of the inception stage.

The proposal should set out an approach to engaging stakeholders and communication and uptake of findings; and explain how they will address challenges and risks to the project.

Proposals should include the CVs for all project staff and clarify roles and responsibilities of each member of the project team(s) (including days required for each and the associated day rates). The total budget inclusive of all taxes should also include expected expenses. Bids should be a maximum of 10 pages in length (plus CVs), any material over this will not be considered in the evaluation of bids.

Bids will be assessed based on technical and commercial criteria by a panel including the project SROs from BEK and a representative from the FCDO Evaluation Unit.

13. Other requirements

The supplier will be required to have a solid approach to managing safeguarding risk **and follow the Ethical Guidance for Research, Evaluation and Monitoring Activities. The supplier and staff will also be required to abide by the FCDO Supply Partner Code of Conduct, to do no harm to the environment, and promote respect, participation and inclusion of vulnerable people during the project.** BEK anticipate that ethics approval from a Research Ethics Committee (REC) or Institutional Review Board (IRB) will not be required, but FCDO expects the planning of data collection and analysis to reflect active consideration of ethical principles and standards. The primary reason for exempting research projects or evaluations from REC/IRB scrutiny and approval is that evaluations are not seen as developing or contributing to generalisable knowledge, rather that they are undertaken to improve a specific practice or programme(s) (in this case GESI mainstreaming). FCDO will have unlimited access to the material produced by the supplier in accordance with **our policy on open access to data** as expressed in our general conditions of contract. All products from the project should use UK Aid branding in line with FCDO branding guidance. The supplier will be expected to comply with The Data Protection Act[10] governing the processing of personal data.

14. Duty of care

The supplier will have duty of care for their staff. BEK will pass on any relevant security or travel advice to the supplier. The supplier is responsible for the safety and well-being of their personnel and third parties affected by their activities under this contract, including appropriate security arrangements. They will also be responsible for the provision of suitable security arrangements for their domestic and business property.

15. Risk

This research project carries a level of risk. Delivery risks are about travel to Nepal and possible disruption caused by any future waves of Covid-19, uncertainty about UKAid budgets, and turnover of BEK staff, including the project SROs. The research project also carries safeguarding risk, as it may involve engaging with vulnerable people in Nepal. It also carries reputational risk for FCDO if it is, or is seen as, critical of FCDO programmes, interventions, staff, or approaches. Proposals should set out anticipated risks and mitigation strategies. Monthly updates (in progress reports) should be provided to FCDO on new risks and changes to risks already identified, along with appropriate mitigation strategies.

Live BEK Programmes

1	203186 - Rural Access Programme 3
2	203385 - Evidence for Development
3	203427 - Accelerating Investment and Infrastructure in Nepal
4	204857 - Skills for Employment Programme
5	204984 - Climate Smart Development for Nepal
6	205138 - Post-Earthquake Reconstruction in Nepal - Building Back Better
7	205145 - Nepal Health Sector Programme III

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[10] **Data protection: The Data Protection Act - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)**

8	300003 - Strengthening disaster resilience in Nepal
9	300006 - Improving Public Financial Management and Accountability in Nepal
10	300007 - Public Financial Management Multi Donor Trust Fund – Phase II
11	300009 - Provincial and Local Governance Support Programme
12	300607 - Hamro Samman Programme - Countering trafficking in persons in Nepal
13	300715 - Project Coordination Units (PCUs)
14	300955 - Integrated Programme for Strengthening Security and Justice Phase II
15	301013 - Resilient Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and Emergency Preparedness Programme (RWEPP)

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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

www.adamsmithinternational.com

Adam Smith International   @adamsmithint

Adam Smith
International