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Challenges to Integrating Gender Equality Approaches into Evaluation[1]

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From 24 November to 23 December 2014 the UNDP International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG) hosted an online discussion on how to incorporate gender perspectives in the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) of national systems at the National Evaluation Capacities (NEC) Community .

The discussion was linked to NEC Commitment 18, and was based on the paper *Four steps to more gender-responsive evaluations* by Marco Segone of UN Women. The main question posed was: 'What do you think are the main challenges to integrating gender equality approaches into evaluation?' The key ideas shared by participants are presented here.

- Advocacy to mainstream gender equality is crucial, since gender is a key aspect to achieving inclusive and sustainable development, according to a participant from Madagascar. To achieve better gender equality-focused evaluations, governments should focus on national policies and commitment to gender issues. Projects should implement an M&E system with gender-sensitive indicators and disaggregated data. The participant also stressed how more M&E funds should be allocated to furthering gender equality, as well as the importance of promoting evaluation.
- In Mexico, gender equality is stated in the Constitution, but the production of gender-disaggregated data is neither mandatory nor collected evenly throughout the administration. According to a participant from Mexico, if an efficient system of sanctions were implemented, there would be more comparative studies, public policies would be more easily adapted, and evaluations would be of higher quality. Collection of disaggregated data should be encouraged, especially in Latin America and the Caribbean, where lack of information is an issue and makes it difficult to identify gaps and make comparisons.
- An insight from Spain has shown that there needs to be an upgrade as well as an increase in the support and development of gender equality policies globally, as well as consultations between advocates, practitioners and policymakers. Even though a rich and complex theoretical body of feminist research exists, resistance from evaluators still remains. Since gender issues are located within a political and ideological arena, resistance often does arise. There might be problems if evaluation is understood as a tool that contributes to redressing gender inequalities. However, if gender equality is ignored, evaluations may misrepresent the situations they seek to assess and further marginalise individuals and groups.
- Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) evaluation approaches must be focused on results and impacts, according to a participant from Egypt. There should be properly adjusted performance baselines, according to contexts, and all stakeholders should collaborate. The main challenge is to establish these baselines, and then evaluate their importance relative to a particular context.
- In Morocco, the Moudawana (the family code, according to Moroccan law) has been reformed to enhance women's role in society and open up many sectors to social change. In addition, the electoral, labour and nationality codes have also been reformed to favour gender issues. Furthermore, a Budget Sensitive to Gender (BSG) was institutionalised to promote human rights for both sexes. This has helped boost gender sensitivity within evaluations, especially since 2002, when analytical instruments and synthetic indicators sensitive to gender issues, which reinforce gender M&E mechanisms, were created. This has allowed governments to better understand challenges regarding access to the law.
- In Uganda, ministries regularly assess the extent to which sectors incorporate gender approaches in their budget framework papers and advise governments. The Uganda Bureau of Statistics regularly produces gender-disaggregated data, which are often used by research organisations, non-governmental organisations and government entities in their M&E systems. Gender has been effectively mainstreamed in government processes, both at the policy and implementation levels; officials from key sectors have received training on gender and equity budgeting; and every government entity is required to indicate the gender issues in their plans and budgets and ensure that they are implemented. The Uganda Evaluation Association (UEA) has produced evaluation standards that require evaluators to incorporate gender approaches, and is organising the Uganda Evaluation Week, where one of the key topics of discussion is gender.
- In Tunisia, a network of focal points was created to discuss and promote gender issues in every ministry. It was also mentioned that quantitative and qualitative data must be collected, to ensure gender analyses that reflect gender equality issues in every government domain. Gender-sensitive indicators must be implemented, allowing for gender evaluations that measure the impact on gender equality of every public policy.
- The Evaluation Society of Kenya (ESK) is very active; the government has implemented a National Gender Policy and has created a National Gender Equality Commission. The 2010 Constitution reinforces affirmative actions regarding women's participation in decision-making, but men still dominate, especially in critical decision-making such as national budgetary allocation, which is crucial to effective gender-responsive M&E. Gender is seen largely as a 'women's' and not a development issue. In this light, M&E is sometimes resisted, as it is perceived as a 'policing' rather than a management tool. There is a lack of capacities to implement gender-responsive M&E, and institutional linkages for data processes are weak in Kenya. Demand for evaluations, let alone from a gendered perspective, is low; most of the focus has been on monitoring. However, the momentum created by the declaration of 2015 as the International Evaluation Year may amplify the gender-responsive M&E cause.

The declaration of 2015 as the International Evaluation Year has helped boost evaluation capacities in many countries, but doing so in a gender-sensitive way remains an issue, especially the implementation of gender-responsive evaluations. To overcome these challenges, participants agreed that all stakeholders should engage in either advocating for more evaluation policies or demanding more evaluations to achieve better results in policymaking.

Reference:

Segone, M. (2014). *Four steps to more gender-responsive evaluations: The challenge of mainstreaming gender-responsive evaluations.* New York, UN Women, <https://www.unteamworks.org/fr/node/466372> (accessed 3 February 2015).

Notes:

1. This article summarises an online discussion of the NEC platform <www.unteamworks.org/NEC> and does not reflect the views of institutions and national governments mentioned. The views expressed are those of the discussion participants alone.
2. UNDP/IPC-IG.
3. UN Women Independent Evaluation Office.
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