

INSTITUTIONALIZING GENDER IN EMERGENCIES

Global case study

This case study summarizes global learning from the project Institutionalizing Gender in Emergencies: Bridging Policy and Practice. The project, supported by ECHO Enhanced Response Capacity and Oxfam, was implemented by Oxfam in four pilot countries between September 2015 and March 2017. See case studies describing the work in Ethiopia, Pakistan, Dominican Republic and South Sudan.

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1 THE PROJECT

Globally, *policies* and international *standards* on gender in emergencies do exist. However, the implementation of humanitarian assistance with a strong gender perspective remains ad hoc, with limited accountability of implementing agencies.

This project: **Institutionalizing Gender in Emergencies: Bridging Policy and Practice** was designed to explore how to better institutionalize gender-related standards in humanitarian assistance. The project was built on an analysis of policy and practice both at a global level and at country level. The project was piloted in four pilot countries: Ethiopia, Pakistan, South Sudan and Dominican Republic from September 2015 to March 2017.¹

The project in these four countries focused on the following issues in which significant gaps were identified:

- Insufficient gender analysis and evidence to inform humanitarian response planning and practice;
- Low technical capacity in gender in emergencies across sectors and organizations;
- A lack of coordination on gender across different agencies to support sector programmes;
- Lack of accountability for implementation of gender-related standards within organizations and across the humanitarian system.

2 OBJECTIVE, STRATEGIES AND INTENDED RESULTS

The objective of this project was:

Enhanced capacity of humanitarian organizations to provide adapted assistance to meet the needs of women, girls, men and boys in emergency scenarios.

Two strategies were adopted by the project team to achieve this objective: (A) the institutionalization of gender mainstreaming in emergencies, and (B) the creation of more robust accountability mechanisms within humanitarian organizations.

The project aimed to deliver four results:

- Functioning Gender in Emergencies Working Group (GiEWG) established;
- Gender evidence base via a consolidated Country Gender Analysis for use by all actors, established;
- Technical capacity for gender in emergencies within humanitarian organizations enhanced;²
- Workable Accountability Framework in coordination mechanisms tested.

3 GENDER IN EMERGENCIES WORKING GROUPS (GIEWGS)

ISSUE

The analysis at global level revealed that gender issues are only addressed in a limited way in humanitarian coordination mechanisms, and are mostly confined to the gender-based violence (GBV) sub-clusters or working groups of the Protection Cluster. This limits the understanding and awareness of gender-related issues by humanitarian actors. It may mean that differential vulnerabilities, as well as the long-term social norms and underlying root causes of gender inequality are not examined or adequately addressed within programming. It also suggests that the discussion and integration of gender within humanitarian response may not benefit from the input of local actors, including women's rights organizations.

INTENDED RESULT 1

The project design included the establishment of a national Gender in Emergencies Working Group (GiEWG) in four countries. This collaborative venture was intended to bring together different actors in the humanitarian system to lead on the project activities and create sustainable change in the humanitarian system.

Important actors to involve in the GiEWG had been identified at global level as organizations leading and co-leading clusters, UN agencies and international non-government organizations (INGOs), government agencies as well as key local NGO partners and organizations/coalitions working on women's rights.

LESSONS

- Different countries and even regions within countries have varied humanitarian stakeholders and accountability structures. When seeking to understand the barriers to better gender-sensitive responses, the role of different actors/stakeholders working at both local and national levels in integrating gender should be understood/mapped out as early as possible in a response.
- Working with existing coordination structures is an integral part of institutionalizing better gender practice and results in stronger protocols and programme strategies by humanitarian actors.
- Working with a GiEWG can overcome (often 'hidden') barriers to addressing gender issues within coordination structures as it provides an informal and 'safe' space for networking and sharing experiences, learning and working together.
- The GiEWG can feed into and strengthen existing bodies such as a Gender Task Force, Consultative Group, Cluster Focal Group or it can be pivotal in reviving or starting these or other formal structures.
- A GiEWG can widen participation and diversity of voices and can improve the quality of discussions in Cluster meetings by building the confidence of individuals, bringing new and specific agenda items to those meetings, and presenting new evidence and research outcomes.

- A GiEWG can adapt new tools and gender guidance to a country context, including adapting tools to cohere with government guidelines and ratified treaties, which in turn is supportive of accountability for gender.
- A GiEWG can support the UN Office of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) or the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) to ensure accountability for gender-responsive programming and provide technical assistance to Clusters.
- The best way to develop a GiEWG is sequentially via a small platform garnering larger support over time, setting objectives that are context-specific among committed partners.
- Greater resources than are currently available are required for working at coordination level and resources are required to make the GiEWG sustainable at country level.
- Achieving sustainable change is affected by external factors including insecurity, evacuations, elections, changes in government personnel and policy.

4 IMPROVING THE EVIDENCE BASE – GENDER ANALYSIS

ISSUE

There is generally insufficient gender analysis and evidence to inform humanitarian response planning and practice.

INTENDED RESULT 2

The process entailed the consolidation of available data on gender issues in emergencies at a country level (desk review), in order to undertake a gap analysis of areas of deficiency, and to use this to conduct a field study. Put together, this would form a consolidated country Gender Analysis. The aim was to support humanitarian actors to develop proposals, design humanitarian programme strategies and contingency plans, and also to create links with long-term development projects.

LESSONS

- Gender Analyses within a response are crucial for effective and efficient emergency response.
- We can and should make a distinction between a Rapid Gender Analysis that is useful for a specific response and a Consolidated Country Gender Analysis that can influence policy and institutionalize different decision-making.
- Approaching a Consolidated Country Gender Analysis requires a different and elevated level of competency than a Rapid Gender Analysis.
- A Consolidated Country Gender Analysis is vital to engage Clusters and partners and set country-level objectives, standards and protocols. In the case of Ethiopia, an effective Country-Level Gender Analysis was able to influence changes in the Cluster system such as inclusion of specific issues into Cluster strategies, and increasing the designation of gender focal people.
- In all cases the desk review revealed there was a lack of gender-differentiated primary evidence at the country level and the Consolidated Country Gender Analysis was filling a major information gap.
- When planning a Country-Level Gender Analysis it is important to analyse certain questions:
 - What is the evidential requirement for the type of change we are seeking to make? For example, do we need to do a quantitative or qualitative study?
 - What resources (financial and human) do we have and do these match the expectation of change/influence we are seeking?
 - How can we reach out to other organizations to combine resources? Sharing methodologies and field data supports authoritative reports that enable stakeholders to make changes to their programme strategies.
- Consolidated Country Gender Analyses required a period of consultation to build an initial understanding of why gender is important or why current response practice may need to change, to

develop a terms of reference (ToR) and receive feedback from stakeholders, to undertake a study, to share a report in draft, to develop recommendations that need to be worked on by Clusters – this is a process that takes up to or more than a year.

- The development/implementation of a Consolidated Country Gender Analysis needs to engage with national policies on gender equality and accountability structures, as well as within organizations and programmes.
- Consolidated Country Gender Analyses need to become 'iterative', e.g., it is not a 'now in the emergency' activity, but rather an exercise that can be repeated every two to three years. These analyses can form the basis of Rapid Gender Analyses that need to be conducted very swiftly when a new emergency hits.

5 IMPROVING TECHNICAL CAPACITY FOR GENDER IN EMERGENCIES

ISSUE

The issue addressed was low technical capacity across sectors, organizations and coordination mechanisms on gender in emergencies.

INTENDED RESULT 3

The objective was to create a baseline of capacity on gender in emergencies for participating agencies. This exercise was designed to raise awareness of capacity gaps that could then be addressed through training courses, designed at global level and adapted at national level, focused on gender leadership in humanitarian action. The training would lead to the creation of a national-level action plan, with the aim of achieving concrete changes in internal guidance and policies, as well as follow-on training by participating organizations.

LESSONS

- Gender in emergency capacity gaps and awareness limitations of humanitarian actors can be addressed through the provision of gender leadership training to enhance the confidence, awareness, skills and attitudes of men and women humanitarian experts.
- There is a need to build technical capacity in gender in emergencies at all levels and across all organizations.
- The training workshop format is one possible method. Our experience shows that this can work to change attitudes.
- Training that encompasses individuals from different organizations can strengthen networks among different humanitarian actors.
- The involvement of co-trainers from other agencies, e.g., CARE International/UN Population Fund (UNFPA)/UN Women and other specialist agencies can help to develop connections between the project and other initiatives across multiple sectors.
- Training needs to be rolled out to partners and staff from national to regional and district levels. This is crucial to enhance the ground-level response and ensure that vulnerable women, men, boys and girls are effectively targeted throughout the period of the emergency response.
- Building leadership on gender at all levels has a positive impact on humanitarian organizations. Leadership goes beyond technical skills. It involves reflection on power structures within organizations as well as in communities. It includes the personal attributes and soft skills that create an enabling environment.
- The Gender Leadership in Humanitarian Action manual that has been piloted, reviewed and redesigned forms a lasting legacy of the project.

6 TRIALLING THE ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK

ISSUE

The issue addressed was the lack of accountability for implementation of gender-related standards within organizations and across the humanitarian sector.

INTENDED RESULT 4

The intended result was to trial a global Accountability Framework with Cluster organizations. This Framework was intended to support the Clusters to develop action plans that would improve accountability for gender in their sector coordination mechanisms.

LESSONS

- Developing and delivering the Accountability Framework with Clusters was an informative trial exercise and has helped the Clusters to gauge their performance against gender indicators.
- The Accountability Framework is useful for national-level Clusters and was also useful for regional-level Clusters, although more support may be needed at regional level.
- Effective introduction of the Accountability Framework requires that sufficient time (and resources) be allocated by all organizations involved. It may be necessary to develop a stronger process of implementation, for example, by first conducting a process of orientation in a Cluster meeting, then supporting initial self-assessment by the Cluster Lead, and finally, participation in monitoring and follow-up.
- Gender-specific measurable indicators can become part of the working methodology of Cluster organizations and accountability can be driven at country level within aid architecture.
- Self-assessment by Clusters indicates that it can be useful to reveal gaps and that it supports Cluster action-planning and encourages cultural change. However, the measures should be context-driven, connected to local laws and other context-specific factors, and resources are required to tailor policies and implement them.
- The Cluster Gender Monitoring Tool developed by the project can contribute to sustainable gender integration in Cluster plans if it is adapted to context and resources are made available for implementation.

7 CONCLUSION

The project has had a significant impact on the humanitarian system in four countries. As with any initiative that involved a change of culture, behaviours and working environments, there were a number of challenges, most specifically time: it took longer than planned to advocate for a need for change, to involve relevant actors, to build trust and capacity, and to create a platform on which to engage with agency decision-makers. However, overall, the project was successful in bringing about a change at policy and strategy level among humanitarian actors.

It is hoped that the learning from this project can reinforce advocacy efforts that support the continuous assistance of donors in their work to institutionalize gender working at the coordination and organization level. The sustainability of the initiatives studied was strengthened through the involvement and delegation of leadership to government and local actors, and this should remain a goal for gender institutionalization over time.

Context-specific successes and challenges are outlined in four country case studies. These, alongside four Consolidated Country Gender Analyses, the training manual 'Gender Leadership in Humanitarian Action' and the project evaluation are available at <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/our-work/humanitarian/gender-in-emergencies>.

The project has generated learning for the humanitarian system that was shared in a final learning review on 17 March 2017. It has also presented at the IASC Gender Reference Group Expert Meeting in February 2017.

NOTES

1 For global analysis see DARA (2011) 'Humanitarian Response Index: Addressing the Gender Challenge' (available at http://daraint.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/HRI_2011_Complete_Report.pdf) and DFID (2011) 'Humanitarian Emergency Response Review' (available at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67579/HERR.pdf).

2 To meet Oxfam minimum standards for gender in emergencies (2013), see <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/oxfam-minimum-standards-for-gender-in-emergencies-305867>

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For further information on the issues raised in this paper please email Tess Dico-Young at tdicoyoung@oxfam.org.uk

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