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UKRI Gender Equality Statement: Understanding the Risks of 'Gender Planning'
and
Suggestions towards Gender-sensitive, Locally-embedded Approaches

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Presentation structure

- UKRI Gender Equality Statement and guidance

- Relevance to gender and development paradigms and debates

- Epistemological, conceptual and ethical issues in international research contexts

- Suggestions towards a gender-sensitive but locally embedded approach

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Since 1 April 2019 researchers applying for funds to GCRF and Newton Fund calls are required to provide a gender equality statement that should ascertain that:

1) Inequality is not perpetuated
2) The different rights and needs of all genders are recognised and addressed
3) People of different genders share the benefits of research and innovation projects.

Background and catalysts
- Based on the International Development (Gender Equality) Act 2014
  - ➢ intervention must contribute to the reduction of poverty in ways that are likely to contribute to the **reduction of inequalities** between individuals of different genders
  - ➢ humanitarian assistance should be given **on the basis that gender-related differences in the needs** of those affected by the disaster or emergency are considered integrally.
- Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) review and criticisms

A closer look: definition

➢ Places females and males within power relations and draws attention to the reproduction of these relations through political, institutional and normative frameworks (SEI Report 2018; Oxfam, 2019).

➢ Simultaneously re-affirms the historical gender-sex binary and departs from rigid demarcations by suggesting fluid conceptualisations ("GCRF Gender Equality Statement Guidance")

➢ Suggests a departure from ideas of sameness: *"Women and others have the right to define for themselves the objectives of development and to seek outcomes which are not necessarily identical to those sought and enjoyed by men."* (UKRI, "What is Gender and Gender Equality?")

➢ Gender should be approached from an intersectional lens together with sexuality, race, ethnicity, age, economic, educational or other characteristics (Garcia Toolkit, 2019)

A closer look: scope

Researchers must:

➢ discuss the considerations, steps and measures they have taken throughout the research process to ensure equal opportunity and to reduce the likelihood of amplifying existing gender asymmetries

➢ consider gender relations and analyse impact, consequences and outputs in a gender-disaggregated manner

The guidance recognises that the extent and importance of gender-related considerations must be judged according to the nature of the project.

➢ However, even projects where gender is not a prominent factor need to justify why this is so in the specific areas of research.

Guidance cites toolkits combining organisational, institutional and international development contexts

Gender-sensitivity in Do No Harm principle

Gender-sensitivity in Do No Harm requires an in-depth understanding of gender dynamics. We recommend integrating the perspectives of women, men, and sexual and gender minorities into the analysis, by seeking out the relevant people, and by asking gender-specific questions where appropriate. Seek balance in representation and voice. Find contextual strategies to include hard-to-reach people, who often have unique and important perspectives.

Do No Harm & Gender Guidance Note, pg. 2

GENDER EQUALITY IN ACADEMIA AND RESEARCH

GEAR tool

Do No Harm & Gender
A Guidance Note

Current *lacunae*

1) Gender Equality statement not contextualised in gender and development debates – how does this fit in the **gender mainstreaming** paradigm and responds to its shortfalls?

2) The scope and way to achieve gender-sensitive research not clearly specified within **post-colonial contexts** with an understanding of the colonial underpinnings of development **('civilising mission')**

3) To demonstrate **ODA compliance** researchers need to provide pathways to impact using gender-sensitive language – complexity of development impact not recognised or dealt with

4) **Interdisciplinarit**y and **egalitarian partnerships** are anticipated to promote gender equality, and vice versa – limited recognition that teams are expected to be cross-cultural, diverse and imbricated in post-colonial power hierarchies

5) Guided by the SDGs, the GCRF and Newton Fund have not seemingly considered **ethical issues** that emerge in the mainstreaming of the SDGs abroad, with gender equality being one of the most controversial goals (Tomalin, Haustein, Kidy, 2018).

The paradigm of gender mainstreaming: lessons and risks

Context

WID	WAD	GAD

- Gender analytical and gender planning frameworks typically employed in the field in the 1980s and 1990s (for overview see UNDP 2001).
- Gender roles, gender-disaggregated analyses of labour, access to power/resources
- Gender trainings, 'consciousness-raising' interventions – empowerment, subversion of the status quo ('theory of change')

Criticisms/limitations of gender planning and gender mainstreaming
- Evaluating gender relations on divisions/differences between female and male persons continues the 'biological foundationalism' trend (Linda Nicholson 1994)
- Checklist approach, co-optation, bureaucratisation, neglect of men/masculinities
- Vehicle for promoting neo-liberal agenda, politicised 'development'
- Lack of reflexivity to cross-cultural differences in how gender relations are structured within and informed by local normative systems, requiring locally embedded approaches

Project Objectives:

	Labour	Time	Resources	Culture
Women				
Men				
Household				
Community				

Source: March, C, Smyth, I. Mukhopadhyay, M. (1999) A Guide to Gender-Analysis
Frameworks, Oxfam, Oxford.

Epistemological, ethical and practical issues from a decolonial perspective

➢ Gender equality is a **political objective** – whose gender equality, for what purposes, and where are the boundaries with research?

➢ The issue of **western Euro-centrism** in the definition of gender and conceptualisation of gender relations, by predicating gender on biology and visual indicators (Oyèrónkẹ́ Oyěwùmí, 1997; Ifi Amadiume 1987, Arnfred 2011)

➢ Mainstream gender theory underpinned by the assumption of **hierarchical gender** – ignores plurality in gender relations and status of women across the world (Nkiru Uwechia Nzengwu, 2006)

➢ Definitions of gender, gender equality and empowerment can be **incommensurable with local belief and knowledge systems**, especially those embedded in religious metaphysics (Istratii, 2017)

➢ **Intersectionality** does not eschew epistemological issues – identity vectors usually defined as inequalities "essentialising the oppressed subject" (Cramer 2015), while non-discursive or spiritual planes are often neglected (Istratii, 2017)

➢ Interventions that pursue gender equality in ways not attuned to local belief and value systems can appear **neo-colonial, causing backlash** (Oluwafunmilayo Para-Mallam et al., 2011; Mannell, 2012)

1) How to conduct gender-sensitive research without assuming hierarchies by the sole criterion of sex-marked/anatomically different bodies (Oyěwùmí,1997) and without predicating the concept of gender to an inherently hierarchical relationship (Nzengwu, 2006)

2) How to achieve gender-sensitive research in a way that recognises diversity of thought and worldviews around gender normativity, diverse gender realities and modes of gender subjectivity and that engages with this diversity throughout the process of research conceptualisation, implementation and diffusion (Istratii, forthcoming)

Guidance offered

- Numerous frameworks are listed that suggest how gender-sensitivity can be integrated within research projects

  ➢ Integrating Gender in Research Planning, Oxfam
  ➢ Garcia Toolkit for Integrating Gender-Sensitive Approach into Research and Teaching, EU-Framework 7
  ➢ Integrating Gender Analysis in Research (IGAR) Tool, Gender-Net
  ➢ Gender Equality in Academia and Research (GEAR) Tool, European Institute for Gender Equality
  ➢ Integrating Gender and Social Equality into Sustainable Development Research: A Guidance Note, Stockholm Environment Institute, etc.

- Gender-sensitivity is equally pertinent to the research process (design, implementation, dissemination, impact) and the research team's composition and modus *operandi vis-à-vis* local communities

- Gender-sensitive analysis that pays attention to intersectional identities requires trans-disciplinary and multidisciplinary theoretical perspectives and community-centred, participatory, multi-dimensional research methodologies

Gender-blind	Gender (the differentiated and intersectional experiences of women, men, and gender diverse groups) is *not* considered in the research project; not even in its conceptualization or its rationale.
Gender-aware	Gender is considered in the research project's rationale, but is not an operative concept in the design and methodology.
Gender-sensitive	Gender is considered in the research project's rationale, project design and methodology. Data is disaggregated by gender, and gender is also considered in the composition of the research team and reviewers. Gender-sensitive research does not (yet) extend to analysis and action to address gender inequalities.
Gender-responsive	Gender is considered in the research project's rationale, design, and methodology and is rigorously analysed with a view to inform implementation, communication, and influencing strategies. Gender-responsive research does not (yet) address the underlying structural factors such as norms and power relations that contribute to gender inequalities.
Gender-transformative	Examines, analyses, and builds an evidence base to inform long-term practical changes in structural gender power relations and norms, roles and inequalities. Gender-transformative research should lead to sustained change through action (e.g. partnerships, outreach, and interventions, particularly with women's rights organizations).

Source: Oxfam, 2019, p. 2.

Team composition and research partnerships
- Composition of the research team, recruitment, selection
- Distribution of work, responsibilities and opportunities
- Attribution, crediting and IP among team members, especially between UK-based and local researchers of different genders
- Knowledge-sharing, mutual contribution to conceptualisation, budgeting, decision-making, etc.

Community engagement
- Selecting team members and assigning roles/tasks carefully with cultural sensitivity
- Understanding how local power hierarchies influence participation in research and intervention
- Considering how identity/positionality of researcher/research participants informs data-sharing

➢ **Meets also the criteria of promoting co-production and egalitarian partnerships**

Bridging the guidance with the decolonial concerns and priorities

➤ Being grounded in the local context and conceptual repertoires/languages – not privileging gender as a vector of human subjecthood

➤ Understanding local norms and institutions from historical, ethnographic and people-centred perspective

➤ Using methodologies that are reflexive of researcher positionality and power inequalities between researchers and research communities (ethnographic/participatory methods not a *panacea*)

➤ Relying on local knowledge and wisdom by engaging diverse local researches (gender, ethnicity, career level, institution) from the initial stage of conceptualisation and design, not only at the stage of data collection

➤ Recognising that meanings of empowerment, gender equality or development and development impact differ across contexts, groups and individuals

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