

NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL REPORTS: ANALYSIS

Gender Equality in a Changing World: Taking Stock and Moving Forward

Organisation: OECD

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(Please refer the link for complete report)

INTRODUCTION

With the increased impetus being given on sustainable growth and digital advancements, this report explores the ways in which integrating existing indicators such as equitable education, gender equality in labour market and, women safety in EU and OECD countries, can foster gender considerations through all stages of policy design, implementation and evaluation. Amidst the remarkable achievements that women have showcased over the past decades in various fields, there is a grave need to understand the challenges in the development of policies that support the gender equality to nurture women empowerment in the true letter and spirit. This report proposes suggestive measures to overcome these challenges. The report also suggests a unique conceptual model for guiding gender considerations in policy combinations. The framework supports policymakers with tools and methods to evaluate the impact of their decisions on women and men across sectors, policy areas and phases of the policy cycle while assimilating existing institutions and directives.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To understand gender gaps, assess policy effectiveness through the analyses of Gender-disaggregated data.
- To develop approaches towards policy combinations for advancement of gender equality.
- To leverage the insights and capacities of all actors through multi-Stakeholder engagement.
- To support issue specific policy recommendations.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

To understand how government policies and processes impact people differently, policy makers can undertake quantitative and qualitative gender and intersectional research and data analyses (see Section 2.1.8). This can include population-level statistical analyses, reviews of previous evaluations and expert advice from those targeted by the policy or programme as well as any service providers involved in delivery (OECD, 2023[8]) (see Section 2.1.7). This evidence can also inform prioritisation decisions (see Section 2.1.4).

KEY TERMS DISCUSSED IN THE REPORT

a) Gender Mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming is an approach that seeks to ensure that all areas of government, including government agendas, policies, programmes and practices, strategically tackle harmful gender norms, stereotypes and gaps between women and men. Gender mainstreaming helps governments make more inclusive decisions and achieve better outcomes for all. According to the 2015 OECD Recommendations on Gender Equality in Public Life, the OECD recommends a dual approach that:

- aims to level the playing field between women and men through actions that target specific forms of gender discrimination and enable progress in the areas affected and;
- promotes the assessment of gender impacts in all governance areas from the earliest stages through to monitoring and evaluation.

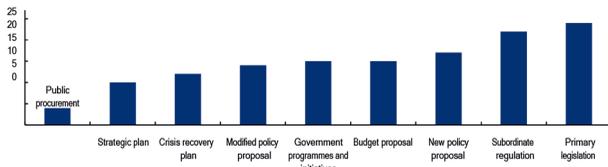
b) Gender Impact Assessments

Gender impact assessments (GIAs), sometimes also referred to as gender analysis, are a helpful tool for identifying the potential impacts of government decision-making on women and men from diverse backgrounds. Indeed, GIAs are increasingly being viewed as a key policy making tool for promoting gender equality and are one of the most widely used tools for gender mainstreaming in OECD countries (OECD, 2023[7]).

According to the 2021 OECD Survey on Gender Mainstreaming and Governance, 26 out of 34 respondent countries have a formal requirement for GIAs in place. There is, however, no one-size-fits-all approach. In some countries, GIAs are undertaken as a part of a broader regulatory impact assessment, while in other countries, they exist as a standalone exercise. Figure 2.1 shows the range of decisions that are subject to GIAs across the OECD.

Figure 2.1. Requirements for gender impact assessments (GIAs) are most common for laws and regulations

Number of countries indicating the existence of gender impact assessment (GIA) requirements, by type of document



Note: Data include responses from 27 OECD countries.

Source: OECD (2023[7]), *Joining Forces for Gender Equality: What is Holding us Back?*, based on 2021 OECD Survey on Gender Mainstreaming and Governance (<https://stat.link/9c15nu>).

c) Gender Budgeting

Government tax and spending decisions have powerful social, environmental and economic implications. Gender budgeting is a way for governments to ensure that decision-makers have information on how tax and spending choices impact gender equality. As with gender impact assessments, there is no one way to implement gender budgeting and countries tend to choose an approach that builds on the key features of their existing budgeting system. To do so, a range of tools exists, including ex ante gender impact assessment of policies, ex post gender impact assessment of policies, a gender dimension in performance setting, a gender dimension to resource allocation, and a gender needs assessment. Gender budgeting practices are also typically accompanied by standard guidelines from the central budget authority.

d) Strong Legal Foundation

A strong legal foundation can provide the basis for integrating a gender perspective into government action. These provisions can take various forms, including:

- general laws and binding decisions on gender equality and mainstreaming;
- general obligations for public servants to advance gender equality in all actions; and
- gender mainstreaming requirements enshrined in specific legislation (e.g. budget, impact assessment, procurement, planning, economic recovery, and emergency management laws) (OECD, 2023[7]).

e) Whole-of-Government Strategic Planning

Ensuring a strong commitment to gender equality among political leadership and at the highest levels of government is critical to making the topic a priority for the government’s agenda (OECD, 2016[6]). For this reason, many OECD countries have adopted gender equality strategies, frameworks and action plans

(hereafter, strategies) with the explicit purpose of advancing gender equality and reducing gender gaps.

Social cohesion plays a role in the formulation of effective public policy and whole-of-government strategic plans, requiring a commitment to inclusive public policies (e.g. gender-sensitive social protection systems, guaranteed access to healthcare) and continuous engagement with civil society stakeholders (e.g. involvement of trade unions, women’s associations, rights organisations).

f) Robust and Effective Co-ordination Mechanisms

Given the cross-cutting nature of gender inequality, ensuring co-ordination and coherency across policy areas and between related policy and legislative instruments and ministries is essential. This requires gender equality policies to be connected to national economic and social development plans, for legislation and regulation to take gender impact assessments into account and for government decision-makers to be briefed on the cross-cutting gender impacts of new policy proposals.

g) Adequate Resources and Capacities

Gender mainstreaming is only possible with adequate resources and capacities – both human and financial. Continuous training and capacity building for civil servants, for instance, is a useful method for developing and maintaining the necessary expertise in gender analysis required for gender mainstreaming and for supporting cross-agency capacity building for those involved in policy implementation, mid-cycle review and course correction.

h) Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder perspectives may be indispensable for understanding the success or failure of different policies and programmes. To ensure that stakeholder consultation is most effective, governments can target different groups of stakeholders via different methods – e.g. online, on the phone, or in person – while offering adequate time to respond. Governments can also ensure that they engage with representatives external to government from the outset, such as women’s and civil society organisations, academics and trade unions.

i) High-Quality Gender-Sensitive Data and Evidence

Gender-disaggregated data should be collected and analysed regularly and repeatedly over several years, allowing governments to track progress against set benchmarks or targets. Ideally, data should be collected to assess the effectiveness of specific policy interventions, for example through (randomised) experimental or quasi-experimental design and pre-and post-implementation assessment of a policy.

The capacity of governments to use such data is equally important. Governments can improve the quality and specificity of gender equality strategies, gender

impact assessments, stakeholder engagement tools and accountability and transparency mechanisms by investing in training and capacity building (see Section 2.1.6).

j) **Comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation With a Gender Lens**

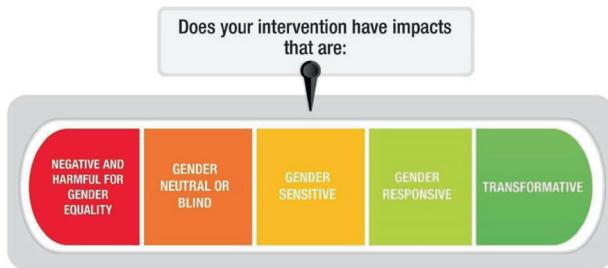
In the context of results frameworks, gender-transformative indicators, measures and benchmarks can reflect short-, medium- and long-term perspectives and can include a mix of process indicators and impact indicators. Using both can help to show which policy settings are working well and what needs to be adjusted and can ensure policies and policy combinations are on track to achieve longer-term outcomes, in line with a theory of change. Monitoring and assessment can also examine whether there are negative externalities, barriers to access and/or implementation or unintended consequences.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY THROUGH POLICY COMBINATIONS

Building on the policies identified in this report, this chapter provides a conceptual framework to guide policymakers in:

- designing and implementing coordinated policy combinations;
- assessing whether these policies are achieving gender equality outcomes; and
- identifying opportunities for policy improvement.

Figure 3.1. Gender equality continuum



Source: OECD (2022[2]), *Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls: DAC Guidance for Development Partners*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/0bddfa8f-en>.

The framework is built around six priority considerations for assessing the impacts of gender equality policy combinations, including:

1. defining what gender equality progress looks like;
2. clarifying scope and sequencing;
3. identifying the range of cross-portfolio policy and programme combinations (e.g. based on the various policy measures identified in this report);
4. establishing baseline measures through a gender audit or programme evaluation planning;

5. understanding and measuring gender equality impacts; and
6. interpreting and reporting results and using assessments to inform future strategies.

GENDER GAPS IN EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AND OUTCOMES REMAIN

Gender norms and stereotypes learned through socialisation processes at a young age combine with economic, structural and behavioural factors to translate into gendered choices regarding field of study and level of education. Gender gaps in tertiary educational attainment can be linked to several key factors that are economic, social, structural and behavioural in nature.

- Labour market opportunities and occupational segregation.
- Social norms and economic opportunities.
- Parental expectations.
- Educational systems.
- Degree requirements.
- Impact of low socio-economic status on academic achievement.
- Over-representation of women in education professions.
- Sense of belonging and achievement in academic environments.
- Behaviours associated with educational success.

POLICY COMBINATIONS

This section of the report is designed to assist policymakers in identifying the range of cross-portfolio policy and programme combinations (priority consideration 3) and planning for their evaluation (priority consideration 2). Work-life balance are policy combinations supporting gender equality not only across paid and unpaid work, but also leadership, health, educational attainment and skills and more.

CONCLUSION

Drawing on novel data and using a lifecycle approach, this report presents a comprehensive stocktaking of how women, men, girls and boys are faring across seven key policy areas – education and skills, paid and unpaid work, leadership and representation, health, gender-based violence, the green transition and the digital transitions. The challenges are significant. Recognising that closing gender gaps requires serious and co-ordinated policy commitments and actions, this report presents countries’ good practices in gender mainstreaming, encourages breaking down silos, and identifies useful policy combinations to advance gender equality. A conceptual framework is included for governments seeking to assess their own legal, policy and budgetary measures, to help countries transform gender equality commitments into action.

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