

Toward Bridging Gender Equality & Innovation

ABSTRACT

This paper provides a roadmap for practitioners, project officers, donors, innovators and others interested in sustainable development to begin to address gender equality and innovation in a more holistic manner—whether or not they are specialists in gender or innovation.



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Toward Bridging Gender Equality & Innovation

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Insights on SCALING INNOVATION

This paper on *Scaling Innovation – Good Practice Guides for Funders* was created by the IDIA Working Group on Scaling Innovation. It presents a high-level architecture comprising six scaling stages, eight good practices, and a matrix of influencing factors to help guide funders through the long and complex process of scaling innovation.



SCALING INNOVATION Good Practice Guides for Funders

This supporting document explores the eight good practices identified in *Insights on Scaling Innovation* in more detail, and provides funders with further guidance on tools and knowledge products that can help them start to operationalize these good practices within the context of their own agencies.



Insights on MEASURING THE IMPACT OF INNOVATION

The companion to *Insights on Scaling Innovation* looks at the key challenges for funders around measuring the impact of innovation, and presents an approach highlighting key impact domains and indicators to help focus funder approaches. It also includes a case study on projecting the future impact of innovation created by Grand Challenges Canada and Results for Development.

About the International Development Innovation Alliance (IDIA)

The International Development Alliance (IDIA) is an informal platform for knowledge exchange and collaboration around development innovation. Established in 2015 with a shared mission of “*actively promoting and advancing innovation as a means to help achieve sustainable development*”, including through the UN’s 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, it currently comprises the following entities investing resources in the development innovation space:



A key contribution IDIA seeks to make is to enhance the global evidence base and build understanding of the role of innovation within international development. Where possible members seek to collaboratively develop “common platforms for supporting innovation from idea to scale, shared learning and improved impact measurement.” To do this, IDIA establishes Working Groups that bring together experts from within and beyond IDIA member agencies who have relevant knowledge and experience. The insights and approaches outlined in this paper are drawn from gender and innovation specialists participating in the IDIA Gender and Innovation Working Group. This paper is one of the global public goods produced through the IDIA platform that we hope will further build the learning and experience of development agencies both within and beyond IDIA. For more information and related publications visit: www.idiainnovation.org.

This document presents insights and lessons learned that have been collected through a multi-disciplinary and collaborative process led by the IDIA Gender and Innovation Working Group. It does not represent the official policies, approaches or opinions of any single contributing agency or IDIA member, nor reflect their institutional endorsement or implementation of the approaches contained herein.

About this document

This paper in the IDIA Insights series focuses on the various approaches, lessons learned, and practices gleaned from gender and innovation specialists to more holistically address gender equality and innovation. It draws on the experience and learning of a range of bilateral, multilateral, philanthropic, and civil society actors who came together in the Gender and Innovation Working Group facilitated by the International Development Innovation Alliance (IDIA). It does not represent the formal strategy or approach of any single agency in the Working Group or IDIA itself. Instead, it provides practical approaches and key questions that can be used as a point of reference for interested stakeholders in reflecting on, and enhancing, their own approaches to embed gender strategies in innovation processes and embrace innovation in gender programming.

The paper provides an overview to address the nexus of innovation and gender equality. Given that scaling of innovation and advancing gender equality are both complex and dynamic processes, the paper should be seen as guiding rather than prescriptive, and will benefit from further evidence and case studies to capture advances in knowledge and lessons from the field.

The members of IDIA are committed to supporting the co-creation of tools and knowledge products such as

these Insights papers to inform and improve their own innovation-related work and that of others in the global innovation ecosystem. The exchange of knowledge, learning and expertise that has characterized the development of this paper is an essential part of ensuring innovations intended to help accelerate achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals can be pursued and supported.

Acknowledgments

The good practices outlined in this paper have been contributed through a collaborative process from individuals too many to name here. We are grateful for the insights and expertise of all the members of the IDIA Gender and Innovation Working Group, especially those who contributed to the review and testing of this resource, including: Lindsay Mossman and Julia Falco of the Aga Khan Foundation; Jennifer McCleary-Sills of BMGF; Rachel Grant of DFID; Karlee Silver and Natasha Cassinath of GCC; Benjamin Kumpf and Diego Antoni of UNDP; Patty Alleman of UNICEF; and Andrew Tarter of USAID. Special thanks go to the IDIA Principal Representatives for their guidance; Joshua Tabah and Lynsey Longfield of Global Affairs Canada for their leadership; and Felicia Khan at Results for Development for facilitation of the process and the creation of this report.

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Executive Summary

This paper presents a collection of insights that may be helpful for innovation and gender specialists, as well as funders and practitioners who are interested in more holistically addressing gender equality and innovation. It is built on the experience of innovation and gender specialists from a wide range of bilateral, multilateral, philanthropic, and civil society actors who came together in a Gender and Innovation Working Group facilitated by the Results for Development Institute under the **International Development Innovation Alliance (IDIA)**.

This *Insight Guide: Toward Bridging Gender Equality and Innovation* is one of a number of implementable, global public goods developed by IDIA, which serves as an informal platform for knowledge exchange and collaboration to further understanding around the complex practice of development innovation. It has been collated from the extensive learning and experience of development agencies both within and beyond IDIA, and builds on prior IDIA publications, including *Insights on Scaling* and *A Call for Innovation* to incorporate gender equality perspectives in innovation. For more information and related publications visit: www.idiainnovation.org.

The guide addresses an area where limited resources currently exist, namely the nexus of gender equality and innovation. It builds on the premise that gender equality and innovation are both critical drivers to achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It defines “gender equality as what is achieved when women and men, girls and boys and people of all genders have equal rights, life prospects and opportunities, and the power to shape their own lives and contribute to society.”¹ The assertion of this guide is that gender equality and innovation are cross-cutting and indispensable approaches to addressing challenges across the development spectrum. They are also complementary, insofar as a range of gender-related obstacles, such as discriminatory norms, power hierarchies, unconscious biases and other institutional structures and social arrangements may limit the utilization or scaling of innovations. The Working Group developed this resource to encourage active gender-responsive approaches—as compared to those that simply “do no harm” or are gender-sensitive—in order to better engage women and girls as change agents in innovation processes.

¹ Definition adapted from Grand Challenges Canada and SIDA, 2018.

This guide is meant to serve as an overview – a tool to promote reflection and provide guidance to embed gender strategies in innovation processes, to incrementally lead toward gender-transformative change. It is organized as follows:

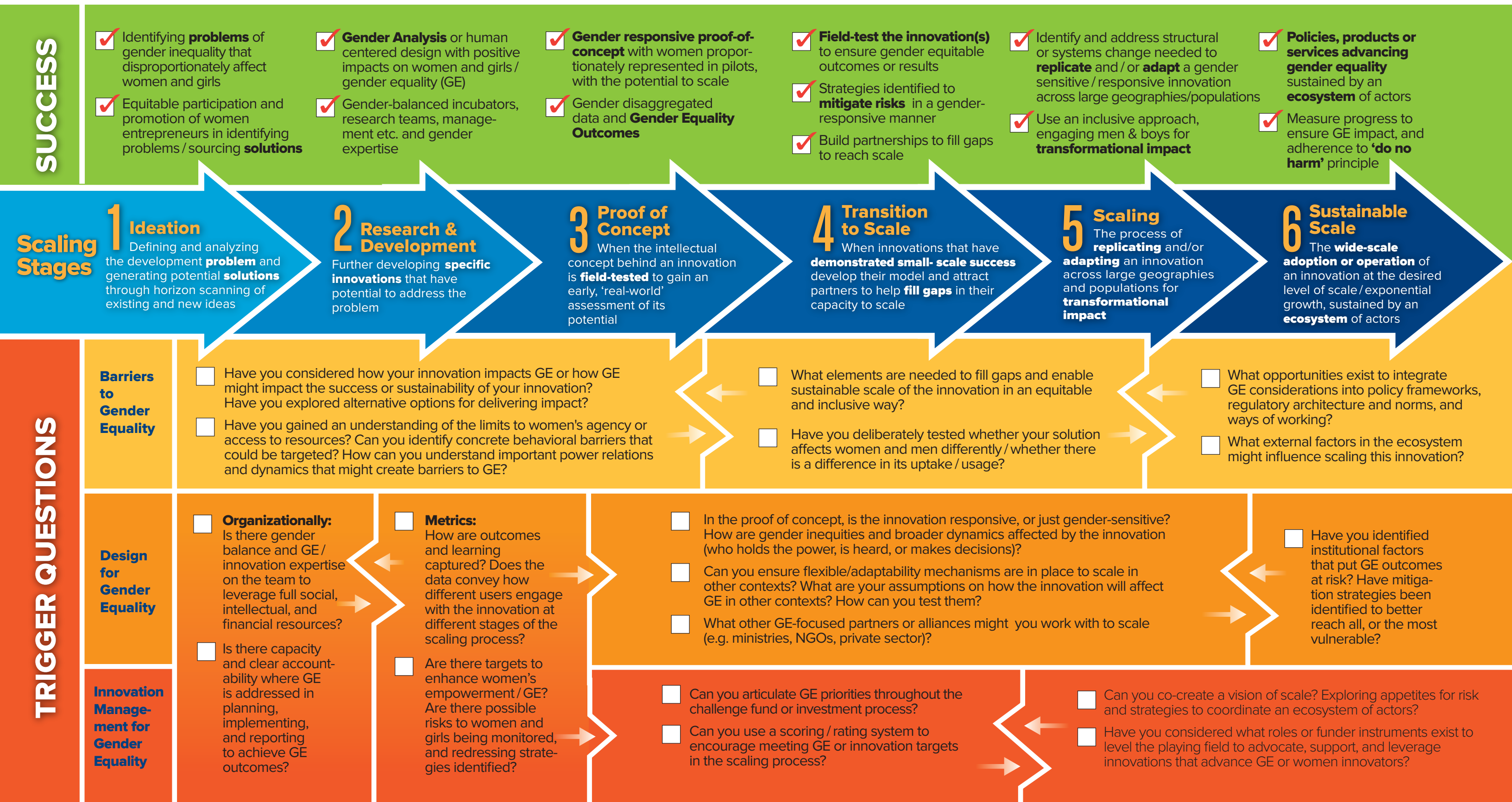
- **Part 1** outlines principles to applying a gendered lens to innovation, building upon the IDIA Innovation Principles.²
- **Part 2** describes what it means to integrate gender equality and innovation, drawing from IDIA members' experiences and approaches. It identifies gender-related barriers, or those related to design or innovation management processes that may limit the utilization or scaling of innovations.
- **Part 3** presents a framework or “tool” (located on the following page) with questions to trigger thought and action to support scaling innovations³ that advance gender equality. It outlines “what success may look like” at each stage of the scaling process (with a selection of resources included in the Appendix for further guidance).”

Given the many challenges and opportunities associated with bridging gender equality and innovation and the unique capacities and constraints of each organization and environment where an innovation may be deployed, users should not see this resource as prescriptive, but rather as a means to encourage exploration and reflection.

Lastly, it is important to note that this paper is closely linked to the accompanying *Insights on Scaling* (designed to be read in conjunction with this guide) and *Measuring the Impact of Innovation*. Together, these Insights papers represent an exciting opportunity for funders, practitioners, and others interested in sustainable development to further enhance their support and use of development innovation to accelerate the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

²The IDIA Innovation Principles were developed in a “Call for Innovation”, 2015 and endorsed within the “Whistler Principles to Accelerate Innovation for Development Impact” in June 2018 by the G7 Development Ministers in Canada.

³See “Insights on Scaling Innovation”, IDIA Insights, June 2017 if unfamiliar with IDIA’s six stages of scaling.



Note: Given the complexity of the scaling process and gender dynamics, users should be aware that the 'trigger questions' are not rigidly mapped to a particular stage, and users may need to revisit questions or do so in parallel.

Introduction

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) cite gender equality and women’s empowerment and innovation as driving forces to reach the 2030 objectives.

SDG 5 sets out to “*achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.*” Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are not only a human rights imperative; a growing body of evidence demonstrates that incorporating gendered perspectives in all aspects of development helps boost overall development outcomes, from quality education to inclusive growth. Stated succinctly, the crosscutting and intentional application of SDG 5 increases the likelihood that all other SDGs will be achieved. Gender equality, as defined by SIDA with adaptations by GCC, is as follows:

WHAT IS GENDER EQUALITY? Gender Equality (GE) is achieved when women and men, girls and boys, and people of all genders have equal rights. Equality between men, women, and people of all genders is a question of a fair and equitable distribution of power, influence and resources in everyday life and in society as a whole. A gender-equal society safeguards and makes use of every individual’s experiences, skills and competencies.

This paper focuses on embedding gender equality and women’s empowerment principles in innovation efforts (as partially captured in SDG 9⁴). The International Development Innovation Alliance (IDIA)⁵ defines innovation as follows:

WHAT IS INNOVATION? From a development perspective, an innovation is a new solution with the transformative ability to accelerate impact. Innovation can be fueled by science and technology, can entail improved ways of working with new and diverse partners, or can involve new social and business models, behavioral insights, or path-breaking improvements in delivering essential services and products. Innovation has been and will be pivotal for reaching sustained, scalable solutions to the world’s complex problems.

Innovation is widely recognized as a catalyst and accelerator of desired sustainable development outcomes and coupled with gender equality, is an indispensable, crosscutting approach necessary for achieving all SDGs.⁶ Addressing the nexus of gender equality and innovation is crucial because pervasive gender gaps and inequalities are inherent in some of the most persistent challenges across the development spectrum—from poverty alleviation, to climate change, to generating inclusive

⁴SDG 9 states “to build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.”

⁵For more information or IDIA publications visit the [IDIA website](#).

⁶If unfamiliar with concepts of innovation or gender, see the *Glossary*.

societies. Incorporating gender perspectives across both development processes and product development can lead to innovations that are socially transformative and have huge, positive economic implications. For example, it has been determined that achieving parity across products and services in just five sectors—water, contraception, telecommunications, energy, and child care—could unlock a market of more than US \$300 billion in incremental annual spending by 2025 leading to advancements in gender equality.⁷ Thus, while the human rights imperative to work toward gender equality is reason enough to engage, highlighting the business case for applying a gender-lens to innovation can unleash a range of additional drivers for change including engagement with the private sector.

IDIA believes that focusing on the interconnection of gender equality and innovation is crucial and presents a timely opportunity to accelerate momentum toward meeting the SDGs, particularly as current trajectories are anticipated to leave many targets unmet. Acknowledging both conceptual and practical gaps at the gender and innovation nexus, this paper draws upon the knowledge, expertise and skills of both gender equality and innovation specialists to begin to address these gaps, recognizing the different approaches these specialists bring to the table.

Created through the collaborative efforts of a dedicated Gender and Innovation Working Group convening experts from across IDIA member agencies as well as external actors, this paper seeks to support development practitioners and funders of innovation who seek guidance on how to embed gender equality principles in innovation.

Specifically, it provides a set of questions to trigger thinking, and provides guidance on how to:

- Embrace innovation in gender programming, and
- Embed gender strategies in innovation processes to effect gender-transformative change.

The main audience for this paper are gender and innovation specialists and development officers seeking to innovate, and who are keen to understand how these two often isolated sets of expertise are stronger together. At the same time, this paper provides a useful roadmap for practitioners, donors, innovators, and other broader communities who are interested in addressing gender equality and innovation in a more holistic manner.

The scope of this paper focuses heavily on integrating gender in innovation processes given the opportunities that scaling innovation presents, but this does not mean to minimize the importance of integrating innovation in gender programming or on local initiatives. It provides guidance on how to embed “gender in innovation”, given that using gender-responsive and innovative approaches is critical to achieving greater transformative change. It focuses on incremental change, however, rather than formulating guidance on how to conceptualize systems-change. The paper serves as an overview, building upon IDIA members’ insights and experience, and references additional resources for those who would like further guidance. Ultimately, we encourage the gathering of further evidence and case studies to identify more integrated gender equality and innovation strategies and accelerate progress toward the SDGs.

⁷ See: [Return on Empowerment](#), a UN Foundation publication.

Principles for Advancing Gender and Innovation

The following Principles were defined by the IDIA Gender & Innovation Working Group as important parameters to help frame how gender equality and innovation analysis and actions might be brought together for more inclusive development outcomes. We learned that formulating guiding Principles for Innovation can help steer discourses in our organizations and that such Principles can be meaningful guidelines for colleagues when conceptualizing innovation initiatives.⁸

These Principles build on an earlier set of principles produced by IDIA⁹, and the Whistler Principles endorsed by G7 Development Ministers¹⁰ in Canada. The ‘Whistler Principles to Accelerate Innovation for Development Impact’ include a more explicit focus on inclusiveness and gender, drawing on this Working Group’s efforts and IDIA members’ involvement from GAC, USAID, DFID, GCC, and GIF.

i. Invest in inclusive innovations that advance gender equality: Support locally-driven solutions that aim to have significant impact on gender inequities and empower women and/or girls in all their diversity, or that address unequal power relations or discriminatory practices that perpetuate gender inequalities. Embrace gender equality as a core objective in the process of sourcing, identifying, and investing in innovation. Design innovation processes to be inclusive and adaptable, rather than promote a

one-size-fits-all solution that may limit impact. Invest in having women and girls as lead users in co-designing solutions. Identify and reward innovators who embed gender diversity and inclusion in their internal structure and design processes. **Ask: Does the innovation contribute to greater gender equality and inclusion, with women/girls actively engaged in designing, testing, and scaling the innovation?**

“In our work, integrating gender and innovation involved adopting a gender equality strategy. Staff embrace this policy, and rather than relying solely on a gender advisor, gender becomes everyone’s business.”

— GCC Innovation Specialist

ii. Take intelligent risks, experiment, and persevere to achieve gender-transformative change: Understand that experimenting is the essence of progress. Tap into and leverage local knowledge and processes in developing and scaling innovations. Conduct a gender-based analysis to better understand power dynamics that are influencing success or failure of changing the status quo. Acknowledge failure as an opportunity for learning; changing systems and norms is difficult and takes

⁸ For practical guidance how to make innovation and technology work better for women in all industries of the private sector, see also [UN Women’s Gender Innovation Principles](#).

⁹ These Principles build on an earlier set of six “Principles to Facilitate Innovation in International Development” that were produced by IDIA in its 2015 “Call for Innovation”.

¹⁰ G7 Countries include Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the U.K., and the U.S.

time, and even those who stand to benefit may initially be resistant to change. Develop a process to identify internal and external factors that may undermine gender equality outcomes and identify redressing strategies, addressing backlash and resistance. **Ask: Does the initiative allow for experimentation and flexibility to most effectively enable gender-responsive innovation?**

iii. Collect and use evidence to drive gender-sensitive decision-making:

Acknowledge that evidence is critical to understanding the challenges, effective solutions, and how to improve impact and cost-effectiveness. Develop clear metrics early on and measure progress against milestones on an ongoing basis. These could include gender-sensitive indicators, and creative metrics and visualizations that go beyond sex-disaggregated data. Ensure programs, products, and innovation processes are informed by gender-based and human-centered design principles with a focus on inclusivity. As initial steps yield positive evidence, invest more broadly. Be prepared to reduce funding if a project or idea no longer shows promise or impact for gender equality. **Ask: Do the metrics, analyses, and data effectively and creatively convey the gender impact of the innovation?**

iv. Promote diverse women’s leadership and change agents to transform innovation culture:

Recognize that women are under-represented as leaders, innovators, and entrepreneurs due to structural factors (e.g. conscious and unconscious biases in organizations across

“We are moving from being gender-sensitive (or a ‘do no harm’ approach) to being gender-responsive in our programs. A gender-responsive approach can mean the difference between women acting as change agents and being perceived as vulnerable and immobilized.”

— UNDP Gender Specialist

sectors, in STEM¹¹ education and industries, financing, recruiting, promotion and evaluation). Acknowledge the transformative potential of women leaders and creative change agents—especially those from marginalized groups—in addressing the needs of women and girls towards sustainable and scalable outcomes. Promote women’s leadership and participation across the innovation culture—in initiatives that pertain to them and those that are not specific to them—to achieve and sustain significant impact. **Ask: Does the investment advance women and girls as leaders and creative change agents for sustainable and scalable results?**

v. Address gender equality barriers and leverage ecosystems for scalable solutions:

Consider the gender implications or broader dynamics that may limit scaling or impact in an ecosystem. Gain an understanding of gender-related obstacles or opportunities early in the scaling process and use your influence to advocate for institutional change and usher in a gender-responsive, innovation culture. Recognize that innovations affect people differently and an unconscious, gender-blind approach to innovation will not benefit all equally and will limit the impact and scaling of innovations needed for transformative change. **Ask: What are the points at which barriers to gender equality could be disrupted in this innovation process or ecosystem?**

vi. Facilitate collaboration and co-creation across sectors to leverage a diverse set of stakeholders to advance gender equality:

Ensuring a diverse set of stakeholders engaged in a co-creation process will uncover a range of unconscious biases and new information, which could dramatically shape innovative solutions. Coordinate the application of scientific, technical, social, and business innovations that could transform gender equality outcomes with partners across development sectors and industries. Leverage intellectual, financial, and social resources from all to address the urgent

¹¹ STEM = Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

“In a Yale study, scientists were given two versions of the same résumé for a job opening, identical except for the candidate’s first name. Results showed that the male candidate was judged to be more talented, experienced and was selected for the job more often, and at a higher salary.”¹²

— ‘Addressing Unconscious Bias’
Mckinsey Quarterly

need for gender equality in sustainable development and facilitate gender-sensitive innovations poised for scale. Disseminate results widely, good and bad, to accelerate learning. **Ask: Are we engaging an inclusive, leverage-able set of stakeholders in the co-creation process?**

vii. Address power and politics intersections with gender:

Recognize the differences between and among human experiences, accounting for marginalization based on gender identification, age, class, ability, religion, race, ethnicity, marital status, and sexual orientation. Acknowledge the inequity of existing power structures, social norms, as well as unconscious bias,¹² which affect access to and control over resources and decision-making for women and girls, men and boys. Work to understand the

environment—as well as your own personal biases—and commit to support levers and agents of change, challenging unequal power relations, systemic gender discrimination, and harmful norms and practices. Engage men and boys as champions of gender equality gains. **Ask: How can I better support innovators to address gender equality beyond only the binary of sex disaggregation, including broader power relations?**

“Interventions can range from the gender-blind, to gender neutral, to gender transformative. We strive for interventions that go beyond the gender-neutral to be gender-transformative.”

— GE Specialist

¹² Victoria L. Brescoli et al, “Science faculty’s subtle gender biases favor male students,” PNAS, Vol. 109, Number 41, Oct. 9, 2002, pnas.org, and McKinsey Quarterly, “Addressing Unconscious Bias,” February 2015.

Gender Equality and Innovation in Practice

Development practitioners engaged within the IDIA Gender & Innovation Working Group strive to build a nexus of gender and innovation that evolves beyond traditional gender mainstreaming/integration approaches in development.

The nexus is approached from two angles: i) bringing innovation to gender equality programming; and ii) bringing gender equality to innovation processes, particularly across the six stages of scaling innovation that were defined by IDIA in 2017.¹³ While there is greater focus on “gender in innovation” this does not imply that scaling is the only measure of success for innovation, nor does it diminish the value of innovating in local designed initiatives (which may be taken to scale if successful). Rather, it acknowledges that scaling innovations that advance gender equality offer the greatest opportunities to achieve the transformational changes needed to reach the SDGs.

Using the six stages of scaling as a reference, gender-related obstacles that may limit the utilization or scaling of an innovation are outlined. These impediments fall into three categories: a) barriers to gender equality; b) design-related aspects; and c) innovation management. This section introduces the idea of how one might use a “gendered-innovation lens” to better understand the broader dynamics limiting scaling or impact in an ecosystem.

What does it mean to integrate gender equality and innovation?

Gender mainstreaming is a commonly used strategy to intentionally integrate gender perspectives across the various components of a development program. In this section we look specifically at how a robust gender mainstreaming/integration approach might be applied to the methodology of innovation, with the aim to bridge the expertise of both gender and innovation specialists.

To IDIA gender and innovation specialists, addressing gender equality and innovation more holistically begins with seeing women and girls not only as beneficiaries but, more importantly, as creative change agents. Next, it involves recognizing the vital role that men and boys play, also as beneficiaries, partners, participants, and advocates for gender equality. It also recognizes that promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment leads to a potential redistribution of actual and/or perceived power and as such, might be opposed by various actors in a system. In addition, donors and investors committed to advancing gender equality are supporting women-led businesses¹⁴ and companies promoting gender and diversity in the workplace, but also moving beyond to invest in new social enterprises, business models, products and services that contribute to gender equality outcomes in both developing and developed markets. There is a growing interest among a range of actors—from donors to innovators to civil society leaders—in new processes and

¹³ See “Insights on Scaling Innovation”, IDIA Insights, June 2017.

¹⁴ Which typically may have less access to capital, finance, and markets.

practices (e.g. Fair Trade or certification, or gender lens investing¹⁵), new institutions (e.g. social enterprises), and new rules and regulations (e.g. gender budgeting laws) that also provide more supportive enabling environments for gender equality.¹⁶

Yet much work remains. The barriers to equality are deeply ingrained. A clear understanding of women and girls' empowerment is necessary to better develop gender-responsive solutions. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation¹⁷ define women's empowerment as follows:

WHAT IS WOMEN AND GIRLS' EMPOWERMENT? It involves: **i) Agency** or the capacity for women and girls to take purposeful action and pursue goals, free from the threat of violence or retribution; **ii) Resources**, or tangible and intangible capital and sources of power that women and girls have, own, or use individually or collectively in exercising agency; and **iii) Institutional structures** or social arrangements, including both formal and informal rules and practices, that shape and influence women and girls' ability to express agency and assert control over resources, which include the spheres of the family, community, market, and state.

Developing gender-responsive solutions, processes, or policies to support women and girls' empowerment will involve investigating issues of agency, access to resources, and institutional structures. It will require an environment that is inclusive of women's voices and ideas and involves supporting the development and deployment of new ideas, be it within organizations, communities or markets. This may also involve disrupting or deconstructing institutional

"Innovation needs diverse ideas—and ideas come from people. Diversity is a key success factor to make innovation effective and inclusive."

— IDIA Member

structures or social arrangements—or even traditional gender mainstreaming approaches themselves¹⁸ — within which the innovation is deployed, such as existing hierarchies, power structures, practices or policies that limit the success of the innovation.

The process of scaling an innovation may introduce new gender-related obstacles. An innovation that is successful in one context may run into new gender-related barriers in the process of scaling. For example, many innovations today are targeting commercial pathways for scaling, and more work is needed to address the range of barriers that currently hinder women's equitable participation in the private sector in many countries, and new ways of thinking about finance as a pathway for gender equitable change at scale are needed. This includes ensuring women have agency to lead or make decisions about resources within institutions and removing barriers to access and control over these resources. Women and girls are systematically excluded from leadership and decision-making positions in STEM and other areas of industry growth, both in academia and in the private sector. In addition, there are gender biases in lending and venture capital funding, standard recruiting, promotion, and evaluation processes, and the use of science and digital technologies, making it difficult for women to compete equitably in the information economy. For these reasons, funders and practitioners should recognize that scaling may be slower when taking gender into account, but can lead to greater overall development outcomes.

¹⁵ See Criterion Institute at <https://criterioninstitute.org/explore/gender-lens-investing-resources>.

¹⁶ For more detail see "Unequal Nation: The case for social innovation to work for a gender equal future", Young Foundation, July 2015.

¹⁷ See the full report Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation: [A Conceptual Model of Women and Girls' Empowerment](#).

¹⁸ E.g. An organization's gender mainstreaming processes may require a GE expert, where working with a local civil society organization may serve as an important innovation to uncover gender issues.

Scaling gender-sensitive innovations may require deeper changes or systems change to address these barriers and enable greater transformative change. This may involve understanding the local and national system dynamics at play with gender and identifying the root causes of biases to enable innovative solutions to take hold and succeed at scale. It will involve designing solutions, practices, and regulations to address these barriers. Funders and social enterprises seeking change beyond only a unit-/organization-level impact to system-level impact at a scale sufficient to address society’s most complex challenges define this as “transformative impact”.

Applying a gender lens to innovation involves intentionally bringing gender considerations into the processes currently used to source, design, implement and evaluate innovations, and recognizing the additional influencing

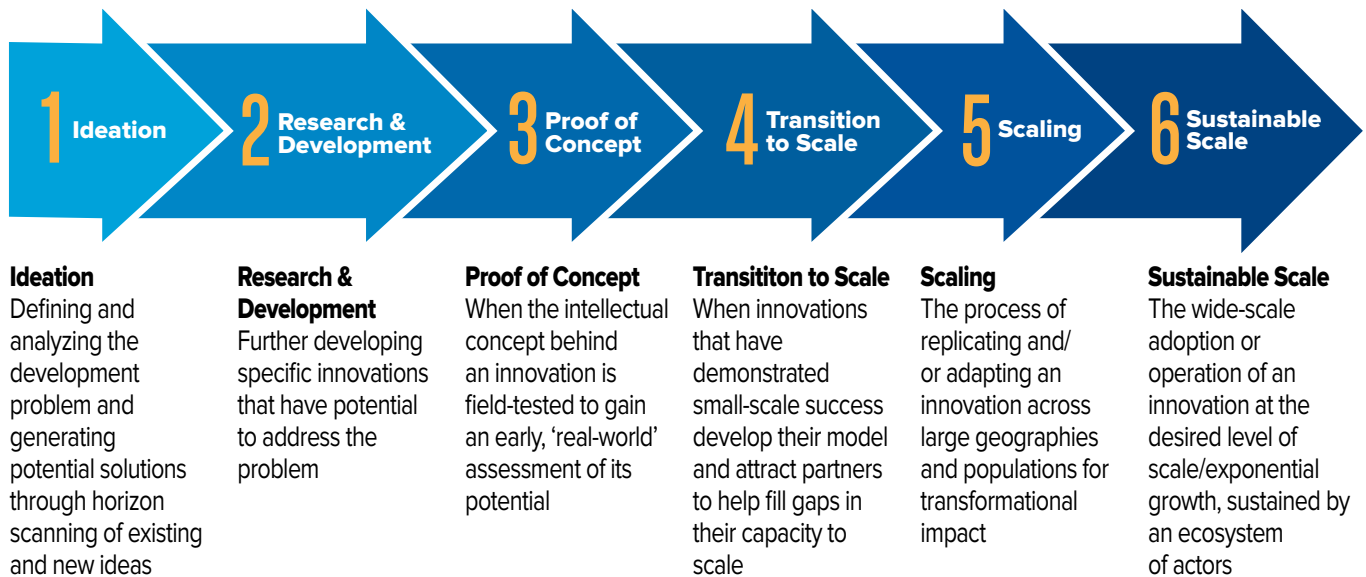
“In introducing an innovative bee-keeping technology, we had not expected that it would result in the men taking over this micro-business. We had neglected to look at gender outcomes early on.”

— IDIA Member

factors that may be operating within the larger innovation ecosystem. Thinking beyond an individual innovation to its broader ecosystem is important because a wide range of support (including technical, financial and political support) is typically required from local, national and sometimes international entities to successfully progress an innovation across the six stages of scaling identified by IDIA (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1: The six stages of scaling identified by IDIA

(Source: *Insights on Scaling Innovation, IDIA 2017*)



To understand and address gender-related barriers that limit the utilization of an innovation or the scaling of an innovation, one might think about them falling into three categories as follows:

a) Barriers to Gender Equality: Gender aspects that may make it more difficult to utilize an innovation. This can include understanding the local ecosystem that may inhibit the implementation of innovative solutions. For example, women and girls may face barriers due to cultural norms, literacy, technology ownership or access to resources. Addressing “barriers” (which is also inherently linked to issues around capacity) in the early stages of scaling involves targeting problems that tackle gender equality and testing for impediments that limit access to innovative solutions. At later stages of scaling, gender considerations may involve determining whether there are legal, financial, or other systemic barriers that may limit widescale adoption of the innovation. The lack of data on women and girls also serves as a barrier across the stages (and is also relevant to design and innovation management), because without data it is difficult to pinpoint development problems and create gender-responsive innovations.

b) Design: How the innovation is developed. This may include being user-centric, inclusive, locally-driven, sensitive to behavioral insights and working to understand drivers of behaviors before designing interventions, as well as the content, use cases, features and aspects of the innovation itself to make sure the innovation meets the needs of a diverse group of men and women equally. Women and girls should play a decisive role in the design, testing, learning, and adopting of innovative solutions. For example, gender-responsive considerations early in the design process might involve conducting a gender analysis or human-centered design process to ensure positive impacts on women and girls. Later stages of scaling may involve field-testing an innovation in other geographic locations or with other populations and collecting the necessary data (re-structuring quantitative/qualitative methods as needed) to ensure gender equitable outcomes. Across all stages, metrics should be identified to capture appropriate qualitative and quantitative data to measure impact.

c) Innovation Management: The methods of sourcing, funding and evaluating innovations. For example, in the early stages one may consider whether there is equitable participation of women in identifying problems/solutions or as entrepreneurs. At later stages, one may consider whether women are part of the executive teams funding innovation or making product-related decisions.

Addressing these issues may involve considering the type of organizational systems and culture needed to encourage gender equality and innovation within one’s own organization or with partners. Gain an understanding of the local capacities of partners/stakeholders to innovate and to address gender equality—if skills and budgets are limited, seek out best practices to bring innovation to gender experts, and vice versa. Consider, for example: instituting incentives that encourage both innovating and contributing to gender equality and empowerment; encouraging innovation, gender and program teams to collaborate, co-create and scale together rather than work in silos; or including a budget for experimentation with innovations that promote gender equality.

Process issues may also refer to running innovation competitions or challenge funds to source innovations, where one might consider articulating priorities of GE throughout the application process. This may include framing challenge competitions to encourage gender-responsiveness, especially in areas with widely acknowledged paucities, such as energy, infrastructure, water and sanitation. Publicizing challenges that highlight the importance of gender issues will also serve as a means to influence the field more broadly. Or it may involve addressing barriers within competitions to encourage diverse, gender-equitable participation, and expanding access to financing, mentorship, and incubation support. Lastly, it may involve developing “well-designed gender equality markers and coding systems”, which research has shown, “build sustained and meaningful institutional commitment to gender integration.”¹⁹

At different stages of the scaling process, donors, officers and innovators might want to think about gender equality in relation to these three categories, noting that barriers or obstacles will shift in the scaling process.

¹⁹ BMGF and Iris Group, “[Gender Equality Rating Systems](#)”, May 2017.

A Tool for Bridging Gender Equality and Innovation

Using the six stages of the innovation process as its foundation, the ***Tool for Bridging Gender Equality and Innovation*** (on pg. 8 of the Executive Summary) provides guidance and gender-focused “trigger questions” to consider at each stage. The tool outlines “what success might look like” from a gender equality perspective at each stage so that users of the tool have a sense of what they should be aiming for. The tool aims to serve as a helpful catalyst to encourage users to embrace both gender-responsive and innovative approaches.

Given the many challenges and opportunities associated with bridging the gender equality and innovation gap and the unique circumstances and capacity of different individuals and organizations, users of the tool are encouraged to view this paper as a guiding rather than prescriptive resource. Users interested in learning more about gender equality and innovation are encouraged to explore the selection of resources included for further guidance in the ***Appendix: Gender Equality and Innovation Resources***.

This tool may also be used in workshops, where users analyze an innovation familiar to them (e.g. gender budgeting²⁰) and think through the trigger questions at each stage of the scaling process addressing known or potential obstacles. In **Figure 2**, we have included several simple examples to illustrate the application of a gender lens in the scaling process. *LegWorks*, for instance, underscores how ignoring gender in the design process can be problematic

and limit progress towards achieving an organization’s mission, and highlights the role a funder may play in innovation management to encourage gender-responsive outcomes. The Aga Khan Foundation’s *Flexible Response Fund* illustrates the enabling of locally-driven solutions to address a range of barriers to gender equality related to education.

The gender issues and obstacles faced will be more complex than the examples presented, but they emphasize the importance of using a gender lens given that a gender-blind approach may exacerbate gender inequalities or limit the success or sustainability of an innovation. Overall, IDIA members have found that applying a gender lens or strategy can serve as an innovative tool itself. More broadly, the innovation process can lead to greater efficiency (e.g. cost-effectiveness), increased impact, or accelerated or enhanced achievement of development outcomes.

For more stories on innovation, please visit:

www.idiainnovation.org.

IDIA welcomes constructive feedback on the tool from any reader, including examples of how you have applied it in practice that may be useful in guiding approaches to innovation and gender equality. If you or your institution has insight or case studies to contribute to these conversations, we encourage you to consider becoming an active member of the conversation and help shape the direction of this exciting and crucial work.²¹ Together, we can achieve the gender equality Sustainable Development Goal of the United Nations.

²⁰ Gender budgeting serves as a legal or regulatory innovation that has been successfully implemented at the local level up to the national level. It entails using fiscal policies to promote gender equality and involves analyzing a budget’s differing impacts on men and women and allocating money accordingly, setting targets—such as equal school enrolment for girls or in public employment—and directing funds accordingly. Of the OECD Countries, 14 of 35 have adopted some form of gender budgeting. In India and Rwanda, gender budgeting has resulted in increased girls’ school attendance. In South Korea it has led to funding for programs that address women’s roles of caring after family, making it easier for women to join the workforce.

²¹ Contact Felicia Khan, Secretariat for the IDIA Gender & Innovation Working Group with feedback, case studies or resources at fkhan@r4d.org.

Figure 2: Examples of Applying a Gender Lens in Scaling

(Source: *Insights on Scaling Innovation*, IDIA 2017)



Gender Equality and Innovation Resources

The following resources are loosely grouped around gender-related barriers, the scaling process, or metrics, although many of the resources fall across categories.

Gender Equality Tools

- [Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy](#): Tools to support gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. (2017)
- [Why troublemakers should work together: Ten thoughts on innovation and gender equality](#): UNDP Blog. (2014)
- [A Conceptual Model of Women and Girls' Empowerment](#): This BMGF publication explains women and girls' empowerment in order to better set strategic goals, make investments with partners, and measure progress. (2018)
- [SIDA Gender Toolbox](#): Provides knowledge, tools and inspiration on how to operationalize gender equality.
- [Compilation of Gender-Tools and Resources](#): The BMGF summarizes gender tools used by multilateral banks, multilateral and bilateral organizations, as well non-governmental organizations, many with a programmatic focus. (2018)
- [What has gender equality got to do with social innovation?](#) Developed by the Young Foundation. (2015)
- [UNICEF's Gender Action Plan \(GAP\) Summary: 2018 - 2021](#): This plan specifies how UNICEF will promote gender equality across its work at the global, regional and country levels, in alignment with the UNICEF Strategic Plan.

Design for Gender Equality

- [GCC Gender Training Modules for Innovators](#): A suite of modules for innovators to better consider gender in their innovations. (2018)
- [World Bank — Gender Innovation Lab](#): Focuses on impact evaluations to close the gender gap in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- [Mapping the Innovation Terrain for Gender Equality](#): This Stanford Social Innovation Review outlines how to better harness social innovation ideas and methods to advance gender equality—and vice versa.
- [SIDA's Gender Analysis Tool](#): Used in the design of an innovation or initiative, a gender analysis is recommended before beginning design to understand the context and expected results. (2015)
- [UNDP How to Conduct a Gender Analysis](#): Outlines how and why to conduct a gender analysis in projects. (2016)
- [IDEO The Human-Centered Design Toolkit](#): This toolkit outlines why human-centered design matters.
- [Why Human-Centered Design Matters](#): Article by Dave Thomsen in Wired. (2014)
- [Collaborating, Learning and Adapting \(CLA\) Toolkit](#): This USAID resource provides approaches to improving organizational learning and how to operationalize adaptive management throughout the program cycle.
- [UNWomen Toolkits](#): Provides guidance to all industry sectors as to how to make innovation and technology work better for women. (2018)

Innovation Management

- ***Innovation Resources:*** IDIA recommends these additional resources, which are developed by individual IDIA member agencies or others in the innovation community.
- UNDP's ***Moonshots and Puddle Jumps – Innovation for the SDGs:*** UNDP's journey of innovation, with concepts, case studies, and initiatives that have tested or scaled in new ways to eradicate poverty, protect the planet, prevent conflict, and advance gender equality. (2018)
- ***UNDP's Spark, Scale & Sustain Innovation for the SDGs:*** UNDP's approach to innovation with 40+ case studies. (2017)
- ***NESTA Innovation for International Development:*** Advice from leading practitioners on funding, organizing, and scaling. (2016)
- ***Gender Equality Rating Systems:*** This BMGF and Iris Group paper reviews gender equality rating systems and the practices and criteria used by donors and international NGOs, which may be useful to organizations developing scoring systems.

Scaling Innovation

- ***IDIA Insights on Scaling Innovation:*** This guide describes the six stages of scaling innovation, and outlines good practices and influencing factors that will accelerate or constrain the process. (2017)

- USAID Gender Guides to facilitate scaling innovations: ***USAID Gender Guide – Product Development; USAID Gender Guide – Marketing; USAID HR Gender Guide:*** To incorporate gender in organizations to better reach women in the global consumer market; and ***USAID Gender Guide- Financial Products:*** Why/How facilitating women's access to finance makes sense.
- ***Foresight as a Strategic Long-Term Planning Tool for Developing Countries:*** A UNDP GCPSE paper to support policymakers in developing countries in encouraging innovation and evaluation to shape national foresight programs. (2014)

Monitoring, Evaluating & Learning

- ***IDIA Insights on Measuring the Impact of Scaling Innovation:*** Highlights challenges for funders around measuring the impact of innovation and presents key impact domains and indicators to help focus funder approaches. (2017)
- ***UNEP Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation:*** This handbook highlights the need for people-centered evaluation and serves as a tool to integrate human rights and gender equality into the practice of evaluation.
- ***Data2x:*** Provides resources and background on why gender data is critical.
- ***USAID Gender Guide – M&E:*** Integrating gender within monitoring and evaluation metrics.

Glossary of Key Terms and Concepts

Development practitioners have numerous frameworks and concepts regarding gender equality and innovation. We summarize a few key concepts to promote mutual understanding and agreement rather than draw or reinforce terminological barriers between gender equality and innovation spaces.

Innovation Concepts

The International Development Innovation Alliance (IDIA) defined the following concepts. For more information and publications visit the [IDIA website](http://www.idiainnovation.org) (www.idiainnovation.org).

- **Innovation Ecosystems** comprise: enabling policies and regulations; accessibility of finance; informed human capital; supportive markets; energy, transport and communications infrastructure; a culture supportive of innovation and entrepreneurship; and networking assets, which together support productive relationships between different actors and other parts of the ecosystem. [IDIA Insight Guide forthcoming].
- **Six Stages of Scaling:** See the IDIA guide [Insights on Scaling Innovation](#), or Figure 1 on page 16 for an overview.

Gender-related Concepts

- **Women and Girls' Empowerment** is central to achieving gender equality. Empowerment is defined as the expansion of choice and strengthening of voice through the transformation of power relations, so women and girls have more control over their lives and futures. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has developed a conceptual model of empowerment, which links women and girls' agency to resources and institutions, which may be useful in developing a gender strategy to inform systemic change, or as an organizing framework to measure empowerment as it leads to gender equality. [See BMGF [A Conceptual Model of Women and Girls' Empowerment](#), and also [SIDA Gender Toolbox](#)]
- **Gender Analysis**, also referred to as Gender-based Analysis (GBA), involves understanding the differences between and among women, men, girls and boys in terms of their relative distribution of resources, opportunities, constraints, and power in a given context. Performing a gender analysis allows us to develop responses that are better suited to remedy gender-based inequalities and meet the needs of different population groups. Before cooperation or planning begins, the gender equality situation in a given context must be analyzed and expected results identified. [As drawn from [SIDA's Gender Analysis](#); see also Canada's [Gender-Based Analysis +](#) on-line training]
- **Gender Mainstreaming** is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality. [UN ECOSOC Definition 1997 definition, see: [SIDA Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit](#)]
- **Gender Bias** is defined as "prejudiced actions or thoughts that affect a person or a group of people based on their perceived gender."²¹ It can lead to unequal and/or unfair treatment, such as gender-based discrimination in the workplace or gender

²¹ Informed by *USAID Paraguay Gender Assessment*, by A. Petrozziello, J. Menon, M. Greenberg, and S. Brucke, 2011.

stereotyping in the media, and unequal and/or unfair access to resources, including income, food, health care, land ownership, and education. Gender bias can be conscious or unconscious, and it can occur in the public sphere, such as in schools, as well as in the private sphere, such as within households. [BMGF definition]

- **Gender Lens** is defined as “A perspective that pays particular attention to how gender differences and relations are relevant for investments and projects.”²² Using a gender lens to observe and analyze power structures and roles within a specific context can provide important insights into whether an investment or project is supporting or exacerbating imbalances in gender-related power. Understanding a context through a gender lens can lead to better development interventions by revealing opportunities and helping to mitigate risks. [BMGF definition]

- **Gender Gap** is defined as “a disparity between women and men’s, girls’ and boys’ condition or position in society based on gendered norms and expectations.”²³ Gender gaps reflect the unequal distribution of opportunities, resources or outcomes, and are usually revealed through the analysis of gender data that illustrate the extent of inequalities. [BMGF definition]

- **Gender Equality Outcomes** are measurable changes that explicitly aim to reduce gender inequality, or improve equality between women and men, boys and girls. Gender equality outcomes contribute to one or more of Global Affairs Canada’s gender equality objectives: (i) enhance the protection and promotion of the human rights of women and girls; (ii) increase the participation of women and girls in equal decision-making, particularly when it comes to sustainable development and peace; and (iii) give women and girls more equitable access to and control over the resources they need to secure ongoing economic and social equality. [GAC Definition, see [Canada’s Feminist International Assistance Policy](#)]

²² Informed by *Gender in Education Network in Asia: A Toolkit for Promoting Gender Equality in Education*, by UNESCO, 2006; by *Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy*, USAID, March 2012; & by *Gender and Extreme Poverty*, by USAID, September 2015.

²³ Informed by *Informed by Gender Equality Policy and Tools*, by Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), 2010; by *Gender Equality Glossary and Thesaurus*, by European Institute for Gender Equality, n.d.; & by *ABC of women workers’ rights and gender equality*, by ILO, 2000, Geneva: ILO.