Toward Bridging Gender Equality & Innovation

This guide 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.

Presenting an extensive collection of insights drawn from the experience of gender and innovation specialists from a wide range of bilateral, multilateral, philanthropic and civil society actors who came together in a Working Group facilitated by the Results for Development Institute under the **International Development Innovation Alliance (IDIA)**, *Toward Bridging Gender Equality & Innovation* addresses the nexus of gender equality and innovation.

Offering cross-cutting, indispensable approaches to development challenges that may limit the utilization or scaling of innovations, gender equality and innovation are complementary, critical drivers to achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Designed to serve as a toolkit to promote reflection and provide guidance on how to embed gender strategies in innovation processes that will incrementally lead toward gender-transformative change. This paper includes:

PART 1. Principles for Advancing Gender and Innovation

PART 2. Gender Equality and Innovation in Practice

PART 3. A Tool for Bridging Gender Equality and Innovation (included on the next page)

This tool outlines questions to trigger thought and action to support scaling innovations that advance gender equality.

Download the full guide at: www.idiainnovation.org

The International Development Alliance (IDIA) is an informal platform for knowledge exchange and collaboration to further understanding around the complex practice of 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.

This *Insight Guide* is one of a number of implementable, global public goods developed by IDIA. It builds on prior IDIA publications and has been collated from the extensive learning and experience of the IDIA development agencies below, among others:

The International Development Innovation Alliance (IDIA)

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A TOOL FOR BRIDGING GENDER EQUALITY AND INNOVATION

SUCCESS

☑ Identifying **problems** of gender inequality that disproportionately affect women and girls

☑ Equitable participation and promotion of women entrepreneurs in identifying problems / sourcing **solutions**

☑ **Gender Analysis** or human centered design with positive impacts on women and girls / gender equality (GE)

☑ Gender-balanced incubators, research teams, management etc. and gender expertise

☑ **Gender responsive proof-of-concept** with women proportionately represented in pilots, with the potential to scale

☑ Gender disaggregated data and **Gender Equality Outcomes**

Scaling Stages

1 Ideation
Defining and analyzing the development **problem** and generating potential **solutions** through horizon scanning of existing and new ideas

2 Research & Development
Further developing **specific innovations** that have potential to address the problem

3 Proof of Concept
When the intellectual concept behind an innovation is **field-tested** to gain an early, 'real-world' assessment of its potential

TRIGGER QUESTIONS

Barriers to Gender Equality

☐ Have you considered how your innovation impacts GE or how GE might impact the success or sustainability of your innovation? Have you explored alternative options for delivering impact?

☐ Have you gained an understanding of the limits to women's agency or access to resources? Can you identify concrete behavioral barriers that could be targeted? How can you understand important power relations and dynamics that might create barriers to GE?

Design for Gender Equality

Innovation Management for Gender Equality

Organizationally:

☐ Is there gender balance and GE / innovation expertise on the team to leverage full social, intellectual, and financial resources?

☐ Is there capacity and clear accountability where GE is addressed in planning, implementing, and reporting to achieve GE outcomes?

Metrics:

☐ How are outcomes and learning captured? Does the data convey how different users engage with the innovation at different stages of the scaling process?

☐ Are there targets to enhance women's empowerment / GE? Are there possible risks to women and girls being monitored, and redressing strategies identified?

Note: Given the complexity of the scaling process and gender dynamics, users should be aware that the 'trigger

✓ **Field-test the innovation(s)** to ensure gender equitable outcomes or results

✓ Strategies identified to **mitigate risks** in a gender-responsive manner

✓ Build partnerships to fill gaps to reach scale

✓ Identify and address structural or systems change needed to **replicate** and / or **adapt** a gender sensitive / responsive innovation across large geographies/populations

✓ Use an inclusive approach, engaging men & boys for **transformational impact**

✓ **Policies, products or services advancing gender equality** sustained by an **ecosystem** of actors

✓ Measure progress to ensure GE impact, and adherence to **'do no harm'** principle

4 Transition to Scale
When innovations that have **demonstrated small- scale success** develop their model and attract partners to help **fill gaps** in their capacity to scale

5 Scaling
The process of **replicating** and/or **adapting** an innovation across large geographies and populations for **transformational impact**

6 Sustainable Scale
The **wide-scale adoption or operation** of an innovation at the desired level of scale / exponential growth, sustained by an **ecosystem** of actors

☐ What elements are needed to fill gaps and enable sustainable scale of the innovation in an equitable and inclusive way?

☐ Have you deliberately tested whether your solution affects women and men differently / whether there is a difference in its uptake / usage?

☐ What opportunities exist to integrate GE considerations into policy frameworks, regulatory architecture and norms, and ways of working?

☐ What external factors in the ecosystem might influence scaling this innovation?

☐ In the proof of concept, is the innovation responsive, or just gender-sensitive? How are gender inequities and broader dynamics affected by the innovation (who holds the power, is heard, or makes decisions)?

☐ Can you ensure flexible/adaptability mechanisms are in place to scale in other contexts? What are your assumptions on how the innovation will affect GE in other contexts? How can you test them?

☐ What other GE-focused partners or alliances might you work with to scale (e.g. ministries, NGOs, private sector)?

☐ Have you identified institutional factors that put GE outcomes at risk? Have mitigation strategies been identified to better reach all, or the most vulnerable?

☐ Can you articulate GE priorities throughout the challenge fund or investment process?

☐ Can you use a scoring / rating system to encourage meeting GE or innovation targets in the scaling process?

☐ Can you co-create a vision of scale? Exploring appetites for risk and strategies to coordinate an ecosystem of actors?

☐ Have you considered what roles or funder instruments exist to level the playing field to advocate, support, and leverage innovations that advance GE or women innovators?

questions' are not rigidly mapped to a particular stage, and users may need to revisit questions or do so in parallel.

7 Principles for Advancing Gender & Innovation

Defined by the IDIA Gender & Innovation Working Group as important parameters to help frame how gender equality and innovation can be brought together for more inclusive development outcomes, these 7 Principals can help steer discourses and serve as meaningful guidelines for conceptualizing innovation initiatives. **They build on Principals developed by IDIA in 2015** and later endorsed as the **Whistler Principals by the G7 in Canada** in June of 2018, drawing on the work of this Working Group to bring a more explicit focus to gender and inclusion.

1. **Invest in inclusive innovations to advance gender equality**

ASK: Does the innovation contribute to greater gender equality and inclusion, with women/girls actively engaged in designing, testing and scaling the innovation?

2. **Take intelligent risks, experiment, and persevere to achieve gender- transformative change**

ASK: Does the initiative allow for experimentation and flexibility to effectively enable gender-responsive innovation?

3. **Use evidence to drive gender-sensitive decision-making**

ASK: Do the metrics, analyses, and data effectively and creatively convey the gender impact of the innovation?

4. **Promote diverse women's leadership and change agents**

ASK: Does the investment advance women and girls as leaders and creative change agents for sustainable and scalable results?

5. **Address gender equality barriers and leverage ecosystems for scalable solutions**

ASK: What are the points at which barriers to gender equality could be disrupted in this innovation process or ecosystem?

6. **Facilitate collaboration and co-creation across sectors**

ASK: Are we engaging an inclusive, leverage-able set of stakeholders in the co-creation process?

7. **Address power and politics intersections with gender**

ASK: How can I better support innovators to address gender equality beyond only the binary of sex disaggregation, including broader power relations?

Download the guide to learn more about these 7 Principals and how to encourage active gender-responsive approaches

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