

# Guidelines and Resources for GEI Considerations in Future of Work Research Proposals

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## Objective of this resource

To provide guidance to the applicants of the Future of Work Sub-Grant Program (FoW) on how to include gender equality and inclusion (GEI) in all the stages of their research projects, including the problem identification and background, the research design and methodology, and the engagement, impact and learning sections. This document is a collection of key questions researchers might ask themselves when designing the research project proposal. We encourage you to discuss them as a team, as well as with potential partners, local stakeholders, members of the research community and policy makers in order to achieve more gender-transformative research and program impact. This can be done along with reviewing the curated [resources](#) included in this document and reaching out to Gender at Work's Gender Support Lead, local GEI experts, and human rights activists from impacted communities.

## 1. Introduction

Integrating GEI in all stages of research projects is essential for producing research that is fair, equitable, and inclusive, and ultimately promotes equal opportunities and treatment for all people regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, or any other identity.

When a project integrates GEI considerations across its design, methodologies, outputs, outcomes and organizational practices, it is said that the project is **gender-responsive** or **gender-transformative** (see [IDRC's research project gender markers](#)). Such projects are core to the mission of IDRC, as illustrated by IDRC's Equality statement: "We support the generation of knowledge — including by individuals from diverse genders, communities, histories, and experiences — that **tackles the systems that perpetuate inequalities on the basis of identity**" (emphasis added).

There is no one right way of integrating GEI across the life cycle of a research project. However, certain considerations can help move the project forward from “gender-blind” to gender-responsive or gender-transformative.

## 2. Overarching considerations

The integration of GEI in Future of Work (FoW) programs, models, innovations, and approaches involves acknowledging the different experiences, needs, challenges and strengths of workers of different genders, and taking into account the power dynamics that may exist between people of different genders and at different levels in the labour market. Gender-responsive and inclusive FoW programs recognize and address the social, political, and cultural barriers that may prevent some workers from accessing quality jobs and inclusive labour markets.

It is crucial to incorporate such GEI principles across the research project proposal to demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the significance of GEI in promoting equitable and inclusive FoW programs. The inclusion of GEI principles only in one section of the proposal might indicate that it is not being considered as a fundamental component of the proposed project and may result in a missed opportunity to address GEI-related issues and promote equitable and inclusive FoW programs. The following questions are suggested as a starting point to ensure the cross-cutting integration of GEI in the proposal:

### 2.1. To what extent does your team understand and use gender-responsive and inclusive language consistently?

**Reviewing the select list of key terms below and IDRC’s Equality Statement can be a good starting point.** Discussion within the research team about concepts such as sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender equality, inclusion, intersectionality, can serve to (1) ensure the team shares a common understanding of the language, and (2) build team buy-in and commitment to GEI integration. Given the differences in cultural contexts, there may be additional or different GEI-related terms that you'll want to clarify. Build out the list with these terms and discuss and build consensus around what they mean to you collectively as a team.

### 2.2. How do GEI dynamics impact the lived experiences of FoW stakeholders differentially and how do they intersect with other aspects of identity such as age, ability, race, ethnicity, geographic location, sexuality, and wealth status?

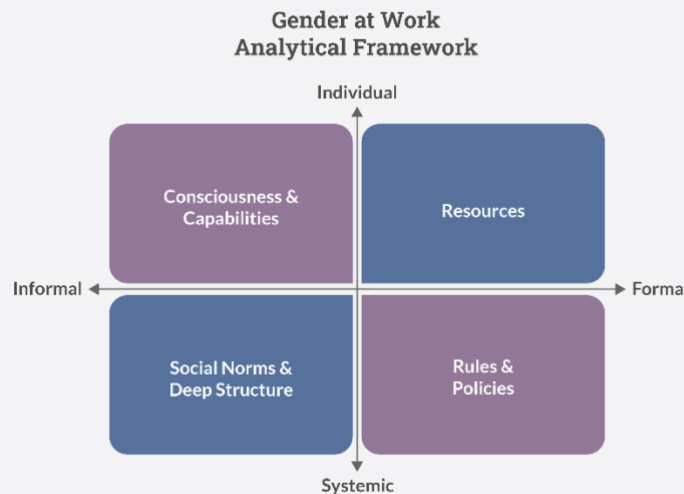
**If possible, include a local GEI and workers’ representative in the design of your proposal.** This could consist of a local workers’ organisation or a representative from a local gender equality or women’s rights organization that has expertise in GEI and also grounded knowledge of the local labour ecosystem. Ensure their equitable participation in decision-making and have a strong understanding of how GEI issues impact jobs and skills systems and stakeholders.

**2.3. To what extent are the needs and challenges of local stakeholders reflected in the context, problem, methodologies, and knowledge sharing?**

Local stakeholders might include not only the researchers and research participants, but also human rights activists from impacted communities, representatives from workers unions, policymakers from ministries of employment and other government ministries whose priorities might intersect with FoW, and representatives from local gender equality and women’s rights organizations. Ensure stakeholders have ample time to meaningfully contribute to the design and dissemination of the proposal and the implementation of the project if selected.

**2.4. To what extent does your proposal demonstrate an understanding that gender inequality and bias may be a factor in all aspects of the skills and work system and thus in the specific problem the research project wants to address?**

The **G@W analytical framework** might be helpful to reflect on the “formal” (resource allocation, laws, policies), “informal” (gendered social norms, power relations, stereotypes), individual (Minister for Employment, Director of a company, managers, workers) and systemic (families, communities, national employment plans) dynamics that exist.



For instance, access to the labour market can change gender norms, but entrenched gender norms in families and communities affect access to jobs, and workplaces can reinforce negative gender norms. Gender equality in the labour market requires changing entrenched gender norms

and understanding the link between gender norms and work is essential for creating gender-transformative employment systems that provide equal opportunities for all<sup>1</sup>.

**2.5. Did you commit to a rights-based protocol and consider pertinent ethical issues that may have significance with respect to gender/sex and inclusion?**

This includes obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, and protecting participants from harm. Where necessary, put in place safeguards to protect the safety of marginalized or protected groups.

### 3. Problem identification and background

Including GEI in the problem identification and background contextualizes the research problem within the broader sociocultural and historical context. It helps to explain how gender and inclusion-related challenges in the labour market have emerged and how they are perpetuated. These are questions that might be useful to the contextualization process:

**3.1. To what extent does the explanation/background on your FoW project discuss the contextual factors that contribute to gender and inclusion-related challenges?**

This can include factors such as cultural norms, social structures, and historical factors that have led to gender and inclusion-related disparities in the labour market, in your institution, community or country. This could include factors such as the types of GEI challenges that were present prior to IDRC's intervention and the challenges that continue to persist.

**3.2. If there is a literature review, does it include prior studies or preliminary observations and or fieldwork that take gender and inclusion into account?**

Adding references from academic papers, policy briefs from think tanks and NGOs, reports from international development agencies, or own observations from previous stages of the research serves to (1) illustrate with evidence the problem to be tackled; (2) frame the problem within a broader regional or global context; and (3) provide theoretical and conceptual rigor to the proposal as a whole.

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<sup>1</sup> See the resource “Strategic Issues and Key References on Gender Equality and Inclusion in Education October 2021” from IDRC-GPE Knowledge & Innovation Exchange (KIX).

**3.3. To what extent does the problem identification articulate clearly the specific GEI needs or challenges for your FoW project?**

This can be achieved by identifying the gender and inclusion-related challenges faced by researchers, workers and other stakeholders and highlighting the negative impact of these challenges on employment outcomes.

**3.4. Do you include an intersectional approach to understand how gender intersects with other aspects of identity, such as age, ability, race, ethnicity, geographic location, sexuality, and wealth status across the program?**

This can help identify the unique challenges faced by different groups of stakeholders and ensure that FoW programs are responsive to the needs of all stakeholders.

## 4. Research design and methodology

Including GEI in the research design and methodology helps to incorporate a diversity of perspectives, including those of marginalized groups who may be underrepresented in the research. The following questions can help to ensure that the proposed research design and methods are inclusive and representative of the research participants:

**4.1. To what extent do the research objectives and questions include a focus on gender and inclusion-related challenges in the future of work and how they impact labour markets?**

It is important to think about how the FoW proposal is concerned with workers of different genders, reflecting on the differences between them and the specific challenges that a worker of a certain gender or identity might have.

**4.2. What kind of methods are proposed to ensure inclusion and active engagement across the research process? Do you propose data collection methods appropriate for addressing gender and inclusion-related challenges in the labour market?**

This may include using participatory approaches, such as focus groups or community mapping, that allow for the inclusion of diverse perspectives and experiences. Include details about how questionnaires, surveys, focus groups, etc. will be designed to account for this diversity and to unravel potentially relevant sex and/or gender differences in the data.

**4.3. The data analysis should be conducted through a GEI lens to identify how gender and inclusion-related factors influence the future of work.**

This can help to ensure that the research findings are meaningful and relevant. Reviewing [Gender-based Analysis Plus \(GBA Plus\)](#) and [UN Women's Handbook on Gender Mainstreaming](#) might provide you a framework for the data analysis.

**4.4. To what extent do the outcomes of your research make explicit change in gender equality and social inclusion you expect to see?**

By articulating the anticipated changes in GEI, the research team can: (1) demonstrate the impact and value of the research for different populations; (2) align the research objectives and questions with broader social or policy goals and targets related to gender equality and inclusion in the labour market; and (3) hold themselves accountable for achieving these goals and continuously assess their progress towards achieving them.

**4.5. Are different groups involved in the research process in a meaningful, participatory way? To what extent do they represent the diversity of target groups, including the most marginalized? How does the design accommodate for the effective participation of all stakeholders?**

Consider how it may positively or negatively influence existing gender relations and structures as a result of the project.

## 5. Project team capabilities

Including GEI in the composition of the team of a FoW research project proposal is important for ensuring diverse perspectives and experiences, addressing gender and inclusion-related challenges, conducting ethical research, engaging stakeholders, and disseminating findings to diverse audiences. By including GEI principles in the composition of the research team, FoW research can promote gender equality, inclusion, and diversity in the labour market and contribute to improving employment outcomes for all. It will also help to avoid blind spots that could come about if a team is not representative of diverse lived experiences and backgrounds.

**5.1. Do you have a person responsible for leading gender and inclusion integration?**

Ideally, this should be a GEI and labour markets expert, but if there is no one in the team with this specific expertise, someone should be appointed to lead and keep track of this.

**5.2. Does the project team include a balanced mix of people of different genders? What roles do they have?**

Take into consideration other factors in the team composition including age, ability, and nationally relevant factors such as language and ethnicity. Ensure that everyone has a voice in the project and that the decision-makers are also from diverse backgrounds.

**5.3. How might you strengthen the capacities of the research team with regard to GEI?**

This can include providing gender and inclusion training or hiring experts or consulting local partners who understand the gender and inclusion context. If the research team is culturally sensitive and aware of the potential impact of their own identities on the research process, it could ensure that the research is conducted in a respectful and inclusive manner.

**5.4. Have you highlighted the expertise within the team needed to conduct rigorous gender analysis and to analyze data by sex and other relevant indicators?**

Conducting rigorous gender analysis requires specialized knowledge and skills related to gender theory, feminist research methodologies, and intersectional analysis. Highlighting the needed expertise helps to ensure that the research is conducted using best practices and that the results are reliable, valid, and impactful.

## 6. Engagement, impact, and learning

Including GEI in the monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL), as well as the knowledge sharing of a FoW research project proposal is important for tracking progress and impact, identifying areas for improvement, promoting knowledge sharing and dissemination, ensuring accountability, and promoting sustainability.

**6.1. To what extent are gender and inclusion principles and indicators integrated into your MEL plan? Does the proposal outline mechanisms to monitor and report on gender equality and inclusion related results?**

The monitoring, evaluation and learning plan should capture the impact of the FoW program on diverse groups of workers, taking into account their gender, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and other intersecting identities.

**6.2. Are you considering involving relevant key stakeholders or change makers (government, NGO, and others) that work and influence gender-based discrimination and inequalities in the monitoring, evaluation, and knowledge-sharing process?**

This can help ensure that the research findings are relevant and applicable to the context and that recommendations are practical and actionable. Additionally, involving stakeholders can help build ownership and commitment to the research outcomes and increase the likelihood of uptake and sustainability of any changes or interventions that result from the research.

**6.3. Do you use participatory methods?**

Using participatory methods can help to ensure that the monitoring and evaluation process is inclusive and empowering for all stakeholders. This includes involving them in the design and implementation of the monitoring and evaluation activities and ensuring that their feedback and perspectives are taken into account in the analysis and reporting.

**6.4. Do you include GEI principles in your plan for knowledge translation and knowledge sharing?**

Choosing who attends events, who presents, how the communications plan and activities are framed are decisions with GEI implications.

**6.5. Are mechanisms to document learning on gender equality and inclusion in research practice and findings proposed?**

Developing policy briefs, fact sheets, reports, webinars, training resources, case studies / success stories, or other knowledge products that synthesize the GEI research findings and recommendations in an accessible and user-friendly format helps ensure that the knowledge gained from the research is captured and shared for future use and helps build a body of evidence on best practices and lessons learned in integrating gender and inclusion considerations in FoW research projects.



## Resources

- Advancing Learning and Innovation for Gender Norms Platform
- Assessing the employment situation in five countries and promoting a gender responsive structural transformation
- CGIAR - Gender transformative approaches
- Design Justice Network Principles
- Gender At Work Analytical Framework
- Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus)
- Gender equality and inclusion for a just transition in climate action: A practical guide
- Gender equality, labour and a just transition for all
- Girl's Education Roadmap
- IDRC's Equality Statement
- IFAD - The potential and unknowns of gender transformative approaches
- Sex and Gender Equity in Research: rationale for the SAGER guidelines and recommended use (Heidari et al. 2016)
- SIDA Brief on Gender Equality and Education
- The quest for social justice: The role of research and dialogue
- 'Top 10' GEI priorities for AI4D partners
- UNDP 2023 Gender Social Norms Index (GSNI)
- UNESCO's Gender Reports
- UNGEI-INEE Guidance Note on Gender
- UN Women's Handbook on Gender Mainstreaming for Gender Equality Results

## IDRC's Research Project Gender Markers

Gender-blind or limited	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At the start, the project has a treatment of gender that could potentially cause harm (blind) or adversely affect outcomes (limited).</li> </ul>
Gender aware	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gender is considered in the research project's rationale, but is not an operative concept in the design and methodology</li> </ul>
Gender sensitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At the start, the project has a fitting gender lens.</li> <li>Awareness of intersectional issues, root causes in program areas of research or field.</li> <li>By the end of the project, there is a minimal indication of a gender lens.</li> </ul>
Gender responsive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At the start, the project is <b>clear about gendered outcomes</b> in the rationale for issues and targeting. Gendered (intersectional) relations are considered and <b>built-in</b> to call/concept note, grant contract, proposal and/or evaluation grids (pre and post).</li> <li>By the end of the project, in addition to the previous marker, the project has addressed gendered intersectional relations in the research. This may include, depending on the intervention, <b>sex-disaggregated (and other relevant intersections)</b> instruments, data collection and meaningful participation of targeted marginalized groups. There have been gender considerations related to <b>legitimacy</b> (team composition and gender expertise) and support for <b>capacities in gender and relevant analyses</b>.</li> <li>Results of gender analysis are used to inform implementation strategies and influence outreach, communication and policy strategies.</li> </ul>
Gender transformative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At the start, in addition to the previous term, the project aims to address the <b>root causes of gender inequality and underlying power dynamics and norms</b> that perpetuate gender inequalities relevant to the research.</li> <li>By the end of the project, in addition to the previous marker, there is <b>evidence of gendered outcomes</b> achieved or well-positioned to be achieved. Gender was <b>well-considered throughout the research cycle</b> including legitimacy (team composition and broader governance including advisors, links to gender experts) and <b>positioning for use</b> (forms of meaningful engagement, dissemination, forums, networking, authorship, co-authorship, knowledge translation).</li> <li>As part of addressing underlying dynamics and root causes, the project has led to changes in social norms and social relations <b>and gendered power dynamics at different levels</b>. How that is done will vary depending on research and intervention but there is related evidence of change or progress toward change.</li> </ul>

## Key terms

### Gender

Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, responsibilities, and relationships that society considers appropriate for women and men. It also has implications therefore for individuals and groups who identify as gender non-conforming. Gender is upheld by political, economic, social, and cultural institutions. Gender is context and time-specific, and thus changeable as well.

### Sex

The sum of biological and physiological characteristics that typically define men and women, such as reproductive organs, hormonal make-up, chromosomal patterns, hair-growth patterns, distribution of muscle and fat, body shape and skeletal structure.

### Gender equality

Represents the goal of equal access, resources, opportunities, benefits and rights for women and men, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, queer, and two-spirit (LGBTQ2S+1) persons. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men.

### Intersectionality

The cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (including but not limited to racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect.

### Inclusion

The aim of inclusion is to embrace all people irrespective of race, gender, disability, medical or other needs. It is about giving equal access and opportunities and eliminating discrimination and intolerance (removing barriers). It affects all aspects of public life.