

# Chapter 6

## Wearing Our Gender Lens in Research Design and Development



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### 6.1 Introduction

The phrase ‘wearing gender lens in research’ is an informal expression that connotes integrating or mainstreaming a gender perspective during the development, implementation and evaluation of a research. This means that the research should have a gender-responsive content, by not only identifying gender issues (or biases) but also proffering solutions to them. To learn how to properly wear a gender lens or mainstream gender in research, it will be better to first understand what gender, gender responsive and gender mainstreaming in research mean (AWARD, 2014).

### 6.2 What Is Gender?

The word ‘gender’ has sometimes been erroneously attributed to *only* women, but in the real sense, it has to do with the relationships and roles played between and among men and women (Udry, 1994; AWARD, 2014). A commonly accepted definition for ‘gender’ refers to ‘the roles, behaviors, activities and attributes that a given society at a given time considers apt for men and women’ (AWARD, 2014). According to UNESCO Gender Lens (2003), the gender designations were socially created and their roles are still evolving!) and generated based on the beliefs and social constructs about manhood and womanhood. These gave rise to the men and women roles, responsibilities, activities, access to and control over

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resources and decision-making opportunities that have established resilient norms regarding what is expected, allowed and valued for women, men, girls and boys, thus shaping their socialization and institutions such as the family, media, law and education system; how race, class, age, religion, disability and sexuality are lived; and the ways in which inequality is experienced. Therefore, both women and men 'experience relations of gender from radically different positions of personal, social, economic, and political power' – this often results in discrimination (UNESCO Gender Lens, 2003).

A history of discrimination and restraining roles is unconsciously written into everyday routines and policies. Gender is not only a socially constructed definition of women and men but also a socially constructed definition of the relationship between the sexes. This construction contains an unequal power relationship with male domination and female subordination in most spheres of life. Men and the tasks, roles, functions and values contributed to them are valued – in many aspects – higher than women and what is associated with them. It is increasingly recognized that the society is characterized by this male bias: that is, the male norm is taken as the norm for society as a whole, which is reflected in policies and structures that often unintentionally reproduce gender inequality.

Therefore, to distribute resources and responsibilities between men and women, it is pertinent to take into consideration the gender roles and relationships of a community. More so, to integrate gender in research and development, there is a need to look beyond the observed roles played by the different gender groups, but to explore the societal systems, structures and power relations that enforce them or form a barrier that may prevent a gender group from accessing the research outputs. For this reason, there is a need to understand what a gender-responsive research will entail.

### **6.3 Gender-Responsive Research**

Gender-responsive research is a study that addresses gender issues such as the differences in the conditions, needs, participation, access to resources and development, control of assets and decision-making powers between the assigned roles of males and females (AWARD, 2014). It explores the significance of the roles assigned to males and females in all areas and covers the analysis of priorities and potential outcomes of a given planned research or development project, subjects or samples selected for a given study and the gender dynamics in the participating institution(s) and among the project or study teams. This implies that for a research to be gender responsive, the researcher should be knowledgeable about gender, has identified key gender interest groups and the relevant gender issues both in the research questions and in the team implementing the research and is familiar with the tools used to collect and analyse gender-disaggregated data. That means the researcher should wear a gender lens.

## 6.4 What Is Gender Mainstreaming?

The United Nations Economic and Social Council, defines gender mainstreaming as ‘the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels’. It further stated that ‘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 programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated, with the ultimate goal of achieving gender equality’ (Hosein et al., 2020).

The term ‘gender mainstreaming’ was first used in 1985 at the Third World Conference on Women, which took place in Nairobi. It was later adopted in 1995 as a strategy to include a gender perspective in legislation, policies, programmes and projects by the Platform for Action at the Fourth World Conference on Women, which took place in Beijing. Later in 1997, the United Nations adopted the first resolution on gender mainstreaming to guide and support Member States in the implementation of global commitments related to gender equality and the empowerment of women. On that occasion, Member States agreed to assess the differentiated implications, for women and men, of any planned action, including legislation, throughout the entire cycle of policies and programmes from the design phase to the evaluation process (Hosein et al., 2020).

More recently, gender mainstreaming has gained a new stimulus with the adoption in 2015 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The new agenda emphasized the importance of systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective in its comprehensive implementation, since the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls will make a decisive and cross-cutting contribution to progress in all the goals and targets, in particular in this remaining decade to successfully implement this global agenda (Hosein et al., 2020; Gender mainstreaming, 1998; ECLAC, 2020).

Therefore, gender mainstreaming starts with the recognition that gender equality is a basic development goal and a key objective of research and development planning. It is therefore a strategy that ensures that there is an enabling environment for both women and men to have access to and control over resources, decision-making and benefits at all stages of the development process in ways that promote human rights, gender equality and gender equity.

## 6.5 Why Is It Important to Wear a Gender Lens When Designing and Developing Our Research?

As mentioned earlier, gender-responsive research looks beyond the observed roles played by men and women, but explores the societal systems, structures and power relations that enforce them, that is, the societal values and norms of a given time in the

history of a community (AWARD, 2014). The importance of integrating gender into research planning, implementation and evaluation has been highlighted by Odogwu (2020). According to Odogwu (2020), the four reasons why a researcher should wear a gender lens when designing and developing their research are as follows:

- (i) **Research design improvement and focus:** Putting on a gender lens or developing a gender-responsive research will enable the researchers to identify potential stakeholders and beneficiaries of their research value chain, identify their needs and research gaps and determine the possible research outputs that will meet these specific needs, thereby streamlining the research focus.
- (ii) **Ease of technology transfer from lab to the field:** Wearing the gender lens will make it easy for the researchers to predict the impact of their research outcomes, engender ease in adoption of technology and even ascertain the gender dynamics and barriers that can affect the uptake of the technology (this will be important for re-strategizing the research focus if the need arises) and where possible enhance the adaptive capability of the gender groups that less likely benefit from the technology but do not have access to it.
- (iii) **Network improvement:** When designing and developing a research, donning the gender lens will help the researcher identify potential collaborators that will enable him or her to expand their networks. These networks are invaluable during and after the research project.
- (iv) **Funders focus and access to funding for research:** Most funders and donors have target gender groups or SDGs linked to gender group(s) of interest! Designing a research project with a gender perspective will make it easier for a researcher to access these funds.

## 6.6 How to Properly Wear the Gender Lens?

During the research conceptual or planning stage, a researcher can integrate a gender perspective by conducting a gender analysis. After identifying the gender groups to be most impacted by the research, the researcher can engage the identified gender groups from the research planning stage to the evaluation stage. The involvement and participation of the gender groups at the beginning of the research process will make it easy for them to adopt the research outputs or technology (Assefa & Roo, 2015; Leong et al., n.d.).

## 6.7 Gender Analysis

Gender analysis is a study that examines the different roles and responsibilities of women and men and how these affect society, culture, the economy and even politics. For example, important differences exist between women and men in their

quality of life; in the amount, kind and recognition of work they do; in health and literacy levels; and in their economic, political and social standing. Women are too often marginalized in their families and their communities, suffering from a lack of access to credit, land, education, decision-making power and rights to work. According to Assefa and Roo (2015) and Leong et al. (n.d.), the main goals of gender analysis are:

- (a) To create a ‘gender looking-glass’ through which we examine and better understand the communities.
- (b) To provide evidence to make decisions and implement the project/programme that promotes gender equity.
- (c) To better understand the opportunities/problems in the community and plan interventions which are beneficial to both women and men.
- (d) To find the best strategies and solutions to address the different needs and dynamics of men and women living in poverty.

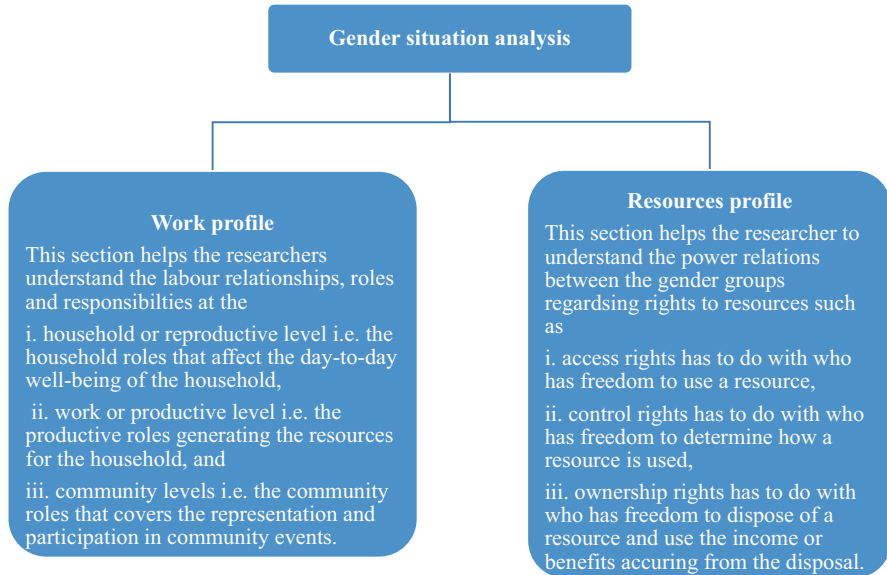
## 6.8 When Should Gender Analysis Be Used?

Gender analysis can be conducted any time a researcher is looking for ways to better understand and improve a community of interest. The best opportunities to do gender analysis are during the initial design of a project, before the implementation of a policy or during the evaluation of a project or policy (Assefa & Roo, 2015). To conduct an effective gender analysis, both traditional and non-traditional research methods can be used to collect data. The traditional method for data collection includes formal interviews and surveys, mapping and research through libraries and organizations, while the non-traditional method includes household interviews and focus group sessions, informal conversations, walking tours observing community practices and other methods where there is participation by a diverse group of people (Leong et al., n.d.). To make the process of collecting data easier and smarter, the use of gender analysis tools is recommended.

## 6.9 Gender Analysis Tools

There are four types of gender analysis tools that researchers can employ. They are:

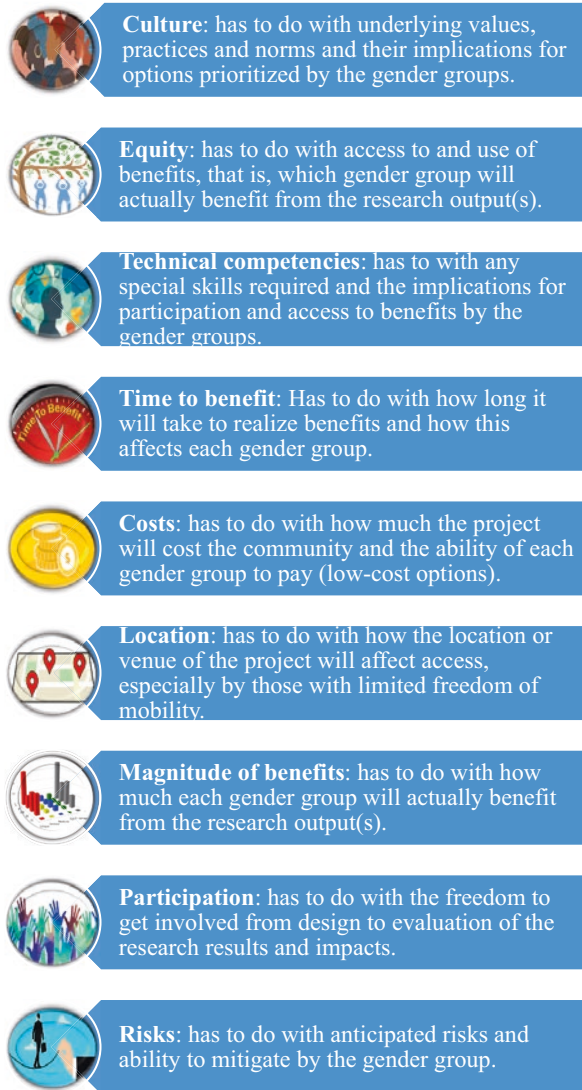
- (i) **Gender situational analysis (or Harvard model) framework:** It is one of the most commonly used gender analysis frameworks. It is developed based on the understanding that women and men are affected by development activities differently. This is a tool used for establishing the gender categories, relations and issues of a given community at a certain time and location. This framework helps researchers identify specific gender groups or issues, that is, identifying specific problems or opportunities for a specific gender. The tool consists of



**Fig. 6.1** The two sections considered in the gender situational analysis framework (AWARD, 2014)

two distinct sections, namely the work profile and resources profile that influence events (Fig. 6.1). The gender situation analysis often uncovers the challenges and opportunities that the researcher may wish to explore further in the research (AWARD, 2014; Assefa & Roo, 2015; Leong et al., n.d.).

- (ii) **Problem and opportunity analysis:** This analysis is usually a follow-up of the situational analysis. Among the different tools used in the analysis (Fig. 6.1), the most common tool is the preference ranking. This tool is based on the different issues identified that affect the different gender groups such as their perceptions or choices, problems and opportunities the gender groups would make or face independently. The choices of different gender groups are based on their roles and responsibilities (AWARD, 2014).
- (iii) **Gender analysis matrix (GAM):** The gender analysis matrix (GAM) is an analytical tool that is used to determine the differentiated impact that an intervention might have on women and men (Assefa & Roo, 2015). It assesses the impact with respect to the positive and negative changes that a given intervention has brought in terms of labour, resources, time and sociocultural factors. The tool comprehends the impact in terms of labour (whether the new technology is more (or less) labour demanding), resource (whether the new technology is more (or less) resource intensive as compared to the conventional), time (whether the new technology is time taking or time saving) and cultural perspective (the changes in social aspects of the people's life as a result of the intervention).



**Fig. 6.2** The nine variables used for the gender-feasibility analysis. (Photos: Culture (<https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/361793>), Equity (<https://counseling.ufl.edu/resources/bam/module1-3/>), Technical competence (<https://www.circularonline.co.uk/opinions/is-technical-competence-competent/>), Time to benefit (<https://www.dreamstime.com/illustration/benefit-opportunity.html>), Cost (<https://www.thedroidsonroids.com/blog/mobile-app-development-cost-in-2021>), Location (<https://www.indiatoday.in/information/story/how-to-correct-a-location-in-google-map-1736859-2020-10-31>), Magnitude of benefits (<https://pt.slideshare.net/GEMwrlld/calculating-costs-and-benefits-of-investing-in-retrofitting/6>), Participation (<https://dailynous.com/2020/10/27/counting-participation-philosophy-classroom/>), Risks (<https://www.projectcentral.com/blog/project-risk-management/>))

- (iv) **Gender-feasibility (or quick scan) analysis:** This tool helps the researcher to identify what works and the implication of the choice of a gender group. The purpose of this analysis is to access options to meet the priority needs identified and to determine which of the identified options is most feasible based on some variables. The process quickly explores nine variables to establish whether or not the expected results of the research have gender implications. There are nine variables to consider when choosing or using this gender analysis tool (AWARD, 2014). They are shown in Fig. 6.2.

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