

**Directorate of International Cooperation Iceland – UNDP Gender Equality Certification Programme**

**Feedback to Iceland Directorate IADC**

**for HQ and Uganda and Malawi missions**

**August 2020**

**Gender Equality Seal Team**

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1. Introduction.

This document has been developed by the UNDP Gender Equality Seal Team. It aims to:

* Provide a comprehensive feedback focused on the different areas, indicators and benchmarks assessed by the benchmarking matrix, and analyze the connections between them.
* Support overall on-going efforts of your organization in mainstreaming gender equality.

1. Overall results.

**IADC at a glance**

**The IADC has scored positively on 14 of the 46 benchmarks (30.4%) that were found applicable.** The above score is intended only to give the IADC a broad idea of where it stands as regards gender mainstreaming.

The online self-assessment tool is a basic tool and the benchmarks have been selected because they can be verified through secondary data. In addition, indicators and benchmarks do not accurately reflect country-level specificities such as the developmental stage of the country, or the nature of the political/social environment. **Despite the above caveats, the Gender Seal Team believes the score achieved by the IADC reflects its performance on gender mainstreaming,** and it can be used as a starting point to improve its performance.

1. Summary of findings.

Management systems

The IADC has shown progress in this dimension, with 25 per cent of benchmarks complied with (1 out of 4). The main achievements are related to the percentage of bilateral ODA that contributes to gender equality goals (85%) and the main gaps to the Gender Equality Strategy and the Gender Architecture (Gender Focal Team and Gender Focal Points).

* The percentage of ODA significantly contributing to gender equality is impressive (85%) and well above other donors (DAC member average is 35%).
* The IADC has developed a draft Gender Equality Strategy that addresses both programmatic and institutional concerns. Once this Strategy is formally approved, the organization will be able to move forward with the alignment/finalizing of several strategic documents (E.g.: Action Plans for missions, and Programme Strategies at headquarters and mission/field office level).
* The IADC does not have a Gender Focal Team or Gender Focal Point System in place yet. The COVID-19 crisis has delayed the achievement of these benchmarks. Once the respective offices are fully operational again, the organization should be able to move quickly move forward to address this.

Capacities

The IADC has obtained one of the lowest scorings in this dimension (0 out of 6 benchmarks). The main gaps/challenges are related to capacity assessment and capacity building of staff and the consolidation of the Gender Architecture. This should be addressed as soon as possible to avoid over dependence of partners and enable each team (HQ and field office level) to use its own expertise to tap on the gender transformative potential of the different programmes/initiatives and ensure sustainability of results.

* The IADC still needs to fully assess gender capacities of staff (both at HQ and field office level) and design a capacity-building strategy according to the needs and interests identified and the new context (COVID-19) in which it will probably be implemented (E.g.: recruitment, induction, training, etc.).
* The IACD does not currently have a full-time Gender Specialist. It should determine the viability of having one vs setting up a complimentary gender focal point system to support the current part-time specialist. This issue should be addressed as soon as possible once the offices are fully operational again, for it will be key to successfully implement the next phases of the certification process and to sustain the results once the process ends.

Enabling environment

The IADC scored 8 per cent in the benchmarks in this dimension (1 out of 13). The main achievements are related to the successful implementation of the Equal Pay Policy. The main gaps include the full rollout, at HQ and field office level, of the policies related to SH/PSEA, parity and work-life balance; and the addressal of key issues regarding the work environment such as transparency and conflict management.

* The IADC has successfully implemented the government’s Equal Pay Policy.
* It has undertaken initial actions to implement the corporate policies on Sexual Harassment and SEA, including informing staff about the policies, and is planning to continue as of September 2020.
* The IADC has a gender parity policy in place and regularly consults staff regarding this issue (general staff survey). However, it does not present data from the corporate data tracking system, to show whether it has achieved parity or not.
* The organization has not provided information to show whether they achieve or not the benchmarks related to open and participatory processes.

Communications and Knowledge management

The IADC has scored very good results in this dimension, with a total of 67 per cent benchmarks achieved (2 out of 3). The strongest results are related to external communications (partnership with Vísir and website) and the gaps to internal communications (Communications Plan, guidelines and training regarding gender-sensitive and non-discriminatory communication).

* The IADC has produced a steady offer of good quality articles on its work regarding gender equality through its partnership with the news outlet Vísir. It could expand/extend its work to develop other types of knowledge products such as “think-pieces” offering a conceptual or analytical framework on gender issues, research studies, training materials on gender and women's rights, tools for gender analysis, and/or data/information on relevant issues. This would support the capacity-building strategy and ensure both staff and partners are “on the same page” in complex issues such as gender-based violence (E.g.: domestic violence, child marriage, FGM, etc.).
* The website clearly shows the organization’s commitment towards gender equality.

Projects/ programmes

The IADC has obtained a low score in this dimension with one benchmark achieved (1 out of 7). Positive achievements include high equality external evaluations both at HQ and field office level. On the other hand, clear gaps remain in ensuring gender is effectively mainstreamed throughout the project cycle.

* The IADC does not have systems in place to ensure gender mainstreaming is mandatory within the project cycle (gender analysis, gender screening, portfolio reviews, etc.).
* Whilst the organization has presented high quality evaluation reports, it needs to work to ensure the knowledge regarding its results on gender equality from every aspect of its work (multilateral and bilateral cooperation and humanitarian work) is systematically used to inform/strengthen future programming (I.e. Evaluation strategy, training workshops based on good practices and results, etc.).

Partnerships

The IADC presents an outstanding performance in this dimension, being one of the two in which it has 71.4 per cent compliance (5 out of 7), showing solid, systematic and effective partnerships with a diverse range of stakeholders (fellow donors, UN Agencies, local governments and NGOs).

* The IADC has a clear approach for working with multilateral agencies (gender focused agencies or earmarked funding for other agencies) that has rendered strong results, in terms of gender equality and women’s empowerment, both at HQ and field office level:

“Iceland’s approach has focused on a clearly defined choice of multilateral agencies that either promote gender equality as their core mandate or have a clear gender equality policy. This has been the basis for Iceland ‘s screening of multilateral agencies and the main justification for their choice and selection”.

“With other multilateral organisations such as World Bank, UNICEF, UNDP and UNFPA, some of which Iceland supports with core funding and earmarked funding (including country programmes and humanitarian aid), Iceland consistently emphasises the importance of implementing their gender policies and strategies at board meeting level”.

(Evaluation of Gender Equality Policy 2013-2016 in Iceland’s International Development Cooperation developed by IPE Triple Line in 2017).

* The IADC has strong honest relationships with a diverse range of partners that generate favorable conditions for successful intiatives:

“Iceland actively co-ordinates with other donors, taking advantage of its membership of the Nordic donor group and the Nordic plus group to reinforce its messages to its multilateral partners. Iceland’s strategic focus on gender equality throughout its humanitarian and development programming helps create coherence between these different instruments”.

(DAC’s main findings and recommendations. Extract from: OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews, Iceland 2017)

“Iceland has come a long way in using a participatory approach in its development cooperation and distinguishes itself amongst donors for its ‘hands-off’ style, very much promoting full ownership at the local authority level. Such a participatory approach has been particularly praised both in Malawi and Uganda by the local authorities who feel they have a genuine partnership that allows them to fully own and further the development of their communities”.

(The Evaluation of Gender Equality Policy 2013-2016 in Iceland’s International Development Cooperation, developed by IPE Triple Line in 2017)

* The IADC needs to present more information regarding its partnerships with UN entities and women’s and grassroots organizations at the field office level.

Results and Impact

The outcomes of this dimension are very good, as the IADC met 66.7 per cent of the benchmarks (4 out of 6). Of relevance are the results and impact at the individual level regarding issues such as time saving for women and increased access to education for girls. Having said so, the Gender Seal Team identifies room to further expand the office impact at the field office level, by strengthening its alliances with partners, to address underlying causes of gender equality.

* The IADC has not presented enough evidence for the Gender Team to understand how its reporting system works, and how the information from its different lines of cooperation (Multilateral, bilateral and humanitarian aid) comes together in a report.
* The IADC has showed evidence of impressive results of its bilateral and multilateral cooperation, at the individual level (E.g.: political participation of women, access to sexual and reproductive services, prevention of GBV, time saving for women, and increased access to education for girls). However, these results will not be upscaled or sustained, unless certain underlying causes are addressed in a more systemic way, together with other partners.
* The IADC has actively supported advocacy on gender issues both at HQ and field office level. The campaigns regarding equal pay, participation of men and boys to promote gender equality and women’s political participation and representation, have included UN Agencies, other governments and NGOs. Evidence needs to be presented to demonstrate this across both field offices.
* The organization needs to make sure that gender equality issues and women’s voices and work, are recognized and highlighted in every event it organizes/attends (I.e. “Parity pledge”).

1. Good and innovative practices.

The Gender Team has identified several initiatives/practices that “stand out” for being powerful drivers of change/results within the organization. These practices include:

* A strong national legal framework of mandatory implementation for all governmental institutions (Equality Act, Equal Pay Policy and Certification);
* A very high percentage of ODA (85%) that contributes to gender equality in a significant way;
* Gender mandate/expertise as main criterion to choose partners in multilateral cooperation;
* A strategic collaboration with a news outlet (Vísir) that guarantees visibility of the organization’s work on gender equality and women’s rights;
* Strong and honest partnerships with donors, governments and NGOs.
* High equality external evaluations of policies and programmes that clearly reflect results and challenges.

The Gender Seal Team recommends that these good and innovative practices are sustained and expanded in the future.

1. Recommendations.

The Gender Equality Seal team would like to offer some suggestions that may be of use to the IADC as it seeks to move ahead with gender mainstreaming and strengthen its overall impact on gender equality:

* *Moving forward: Leading a new scenario for a gender-transformative agenda.*

Senior management’s current commitment and leadership on gender equality should be kept and well visible, as it has been key so far to the advances achieved on gender equality. Moving forward, this leadership should be expressed in the implementation of the following recommendations:

* **Approve and begin implementation of the new Gender Equality Strategy.** A GES will allow IADC to consolidate foundational elements of gender mainstreaming in the office: management and accountability systems, capacities, enabling environment, programming and institutional effectiveness. It will also allow the organization to align and begin implementation of the different programme strategies at HQ and field office level.
* **Debate and decide upon the “right fit” for an institutional Gender Architecture** (Full time gender expert vs Part time gender expert and a network of gender focal points). Being unclear or continuously changing the institutional arrangements might convey the message the “wrong” message that the issue in question is not a priority.
* **Sustain the levels of funding for gender equality** (ODA).
* *Strengthening gender mainstreaming capacities and programming.*

The current results will be difficult to sustain if the organization does not strengthen its capacities and systems to ensure gender is effectively mainstreamed in its programmes/projects. Key decisions as choice of partners or funding allocations for gender equality could be difficult to maintain if staff do not believe and stand behind them. This could be done by implementing certain initiatives:

* **Increase general and subject-specific technical capacities of staff at all levels through hands-on learning** (E.g.: induction and periodic workshops on general concepts regarding gender equality and gender mainstreaming, using concrete examples from projects and evaluations) **and regular engagement with experts on complex issues, including different manifestations of GBV, sexual and reproductive rights, to ensure that all staff are aware of the most current debates** (E.g.: webinars with experts from universities, CSOs and/or UN Agencies that could be held periodically and recorded to build a “library of resources” for staff and partners).
* **Develop mandatory systems to ensure gender is systematically mainstreamed within the project cycle** (E.g.: gender analysis, gender screening, portfolio reviews, evaluations).
* *Fostering discussion and promoting innovation within the organization.*

Organizations need to address gender inequalities within their own structures, in order to maintain its results and legitimacy with its partners and the communities they are serving. Some recommendations in this sense include:

* **Ensure every staff, partner and contractor knows where the organization stands regarding SH and SEA.** Train staff to effectively identify and address these issues. If possible, use “real case studies” to support the training processes, especially of those staff who might have direct responsibility/oversight on these issues.
* **Promote a culture of gender equality within the organization.** Strengthen spaces for internal dialogue, engage men, raise awareness and knowledge on key issues related to gender equality, especially those where more resistances could be encountered.
* *Leading and partnering for gender equality.*

Strengthening and extending strategic partnerships (HQ and field office level) is key to maintain results at the individual level and scale them up to the systemic level. Some recommendations in this sense include:

* **Continue the IADC key role as gender equality advocate amongst donors and UN agencies.**
* **Keep the current set of gender criteria to choose partners, for it has rendered impressive results.**
* **Increase outreach to, and engagement with, grassroots civil society and women’s movements and organizations in the countries of work.**