



## Experience with gender transformative evaluation by Grace Okonji

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**This experience explores how the approach by the Africa Gender and Development Evaluators Network (AGDEN) can be applied in a gender transformative evaluation.**

Between October 2019 and April 2020, AGDEN member, Grace Okonji was recruited as a senior gender and evaluation specialist for gender evaluation of the Whole of Government Approach (WOGA), Horn of Africa (HoA) strategy (2018-2021). The WOGA strategy executed by Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) had four thematic domains: governance; food security; health; protection and migration. The principal aim of the gender evaluation was to assess how far gender had been integrated in the relevant projects and the four thematic domains. The evaluator made recommendations on areas needing attention for the thematic domains to move from a “gender sensitive” towards a “gender transformative change” Recommendations were also made on how to hold senior management and all staff accountable to gender transformative results. A few extracts of findings are quoted in this experience but the detailed report is in Switzerland public domain available at:

[https://www.shareweb.ch/site/Gender/Documents/Gendernet%20Toolbox/Knowledge%20Sharing/RB\\_Gender%20Evaluation%20of%20the%20HoA%20Coop%20Strategy%202018%202020\\_G.A.Okonji\\_Dec19.pdf](https://www.shareweb.ch/site/Gender/Documents/Gendernet%20Toolbox/Knowledge%20Sharing/RB_Gender%20Evaluation%20of%20the%20HoA%20Coop%20Strategy%202018%202020_G.A.Okonji_Dec19.pdf)

### **Experience with the Terms of Reference (TOR)**

A clear statement of purpose and objectives in the Terms of Reference (TOR) provided the evaluator with the foundation for the gender transformative evaluation. The TOR included justification of why the gender evaluation was needed and why the domains needed to move from a “gender sensitive” towards a “gender transformative” approach as measured along a gender scale. The TOR added value by looking into accountability and commitment: Assess the overall SDC program staff “fit-for gender approach” in order to be able to influence/drive a gender transformative agenda

### Lessons learned from the TOR

- i. One lesson learned was that the TOR indicated that the WOGA adopted the approach of gender as a transversal theme in the Horn of Africa (HoA) strategy (2018-2021). Gender targeted/specific approach was not referred to in the TOR but it did emerge during evaluation as an important aspect that was addressed where inequalities were glaring and women were likely to be left behind.
- ii. When undertaking a gender transformative evaluation of projects/domains, the focus of the evaluation is not on evaluation of the objectives of the total projects/domain areas. It was only focused on the extent to which the **gender equality objectives** of the projects/domain areas were met, likely to be met or not.
- iii. The scope did not cover all projects of HoA. 15 flagship projects were identified and were at different stages of programming cycle. This is important not to generalise findings and

recommendations on effectiveness, as what is found not effective in a specific project in the evaluation, may be found in some projects not included as flagship.

### **Evaluation Methodology and Criteria- Built on SDG principle of 'leave no one behind'**

***Building on Knowledge from the Africa Gender and Development Evaluators network (AGDEN) approach, the evaluation was designed during inception with an aim of 'Make Sure Evaluation Leaves No One Behind' in line with the SDGs.***

The evaluation built on strong methodology of participatory, collaborative and empowerment methods (**AGDEN law**). The gender evaluation used constructive, participatory and reflective process. The evaluator mapped evaluation stakeholders thoroughly and in detail at the outset of the evaluation. The evaluator paid particular attention to meaningful participation and empowerment of SDC program staff and focal persons, men and women of the implementing partners' in the review process i.e., doing the review 'with' and 'by' program participants rather than 'of' or 'for' them. Participatory and collaborative approach was also used in validating findings, and agreeing relevant lessons learned or recommendations and developing follow up action plan.

In addition to the evaluation criteria provided in the terms of reference, the senior evaluator, added additional criteria drawn from her knowledge of the approach used by the AGDEN. These provided guidance and opportunity for in-depth analysis of how gender transformative change was taking place/likely to take place in the lives of women and men.

The additional Criteria based on AGDEN approach:

- Inclusion and participation in results: To what extent has the SDC supported project purposefully integrated measures to support participation of women/men and individuals/groups who are excluded and marginalized.
- Equality and non-discrimination- The extent to which the processes and results of the SDC supported project/ intervention have been able to break traditional discriminatory patterns (or has reinforced discrimination) among its stakeholders.
- Social transformation: The extent to which the results of the interventions led to actual transformations in power relations, exercise of rights, attitudes and behaviours and in the capacity of SDC and implementing partners to influence/drive a gender transformative agenda.
- Accountability and commitment: Assess the overall SDC program staff "fit-for gender approach" in order to be able to influence/drive a gender transformative agenda with partner organizations. The gender evaluation developed core parameters that would contribute to this effectiveness.

### **Evaluation findings-**

***Refer to detailed report stated in paragraph 1 of this report***

Some highlights of the critical issues that emerged in moving from gender sensitive to gender transformative change are:

### **Building on Evidence Based Gender Diagnostics for Programming**

***This is linked to the AGDEN Principle – gender based analysis of context and intervention populations***

"Use of gender sensitive evidence-based analysis in design is mixed, with some domains/projects addressing gender analysis in a systematic way throughout the programming cycle and others not at all. At Entry Proposal and credit proposal phase, there is clear intention that gender analysis/ assessments will be undertaken to inform design of projects. During implementation of projects, gender analysis/assessment was not undertaken in a systematic way to generate differentiated results'. SDC is contributing to qualitative evidence generation and gender analysis to inform its programming but there remains a significant capacity deficit for use of sex-disaggregated data and

gender analysis to inform results on a routine basis to identify different experiences, roles and relationships in relation results at outputs/outcome level and transformation changes. There is also limited sex-disaggregation of vulnerability, communities, people and disadvantaged groups in reporting results which may compromise the principle of inclusion. Programme staff and partners good understanding of context-specific gender inequalities and gender discrimination is needed if the principles of gender equality are to be systematically incorporated into the SDC's interventions."

### **Factors constraining move towards gender transformative change**

1. "Measuring progress of gender equality results within thematic domains becomes challenging because gender equality is not a discrete sector. As a transversal principle, it is intended that equality be integrated into and measured within the chain of contributions of results from project level to national level indicators of outcomes set in the HoA strategy. A coherent narrative to explain if, where and how the projects/interventions contribute to the higher level of the gender outcomes of the HoA domains remains a challenge, for example where women's income has improved within food security, it is still a challenge to establish whether women are now resilient or other factors are needed to make conclusive assessment. Better gender analysis and integration of the analysis into monitoring and reporting gender differential impact will improve the quality of development outcomes. In some areas, better attention has been paid to collection of sex disaggregated evidence but tracking gender equality has relied less on qualitative information."
2. "Gender related results require analysis beyond parity to show transformative change, for example how number of women with increased income in livelihoods projects have been able to improve nutrition in the households or voice and agency. Some projects' analysis stops at the biological differences – number of males and percentages of males. In this approach, the domains missed out on opportunities to go in-depth in addressing 'gender' as a socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society attributes to men and women. In response to the evaluator's question on 'to what extent did your project integrate gender? The term 'gender' was often interpreted to mean women's issues. There was majority response - 'of course in our projects we try to include at least 30 percent women, we try to involve women ....among pastoral communities women are most vulnerable'. This implied that projects approach was gender specific/targeted whether gender analysis was done or not. This was deemed rightly so, in the context of SDC supported projects in the HoA where gender inequalities were found to be more glaring and women were likely to be left behind.
3. "The SDC is supporting some projects within which documenting any gender transformative results could be hidden behind numbers – for example - reports reviewed by the evaluator state achievement by Multipartner Fund (MPF) as 'MPF portfolio is gender and conflict-sensitive with 75 percent of its projects being flagged for gender'. The gender evaluator did not review any of the 19 MPF projects or was not able to establish which of these directly could be attributed to SDC support and be further analysed for gender differentiated impacts. Attribution or isolating contribution of gender results at outcome level in a multi-partner project is difficult and is not always the intention of such a project with collective response being the most effective approach. SDC was only one of the levers of change in the 'gender flag' but the extent of this change is unknown in this evaluation."
4. **Accountability and commitment:** 'There is strong commitment by the SDC to gender equality, which resulted in gender equality becoming one of the seven strategic goals in the 2017–2020

Federal Dispatch. The gender evaluation finds the elevation of gender equality as a transversal principle demonstrates and secures commitment and accountability from senior and middle management but more work needed to secure commitment at some implementing partner's level. However, **Key areas needing attention were identified:** "There is still a gap between the SDC's gender commitments and the effective integration of gender in some SDC projects, though this gap has been reduced over time. There is also a gap among some staff on understanding of institutional commitments and approach to gender equality with some not actually clear what it is. There were some who saw the strategic goal 7 of the dispatch 2017-2020 for the first time when shared by the gender evaluator. The gender evaluation found an omission that would otherwise strengthen SDC's commitment and advocacy for gender equality. The Whole of Government Approach (WOGA), Horn of Africa (HoA) strategy (2018-2021)- section on 'Switzerland development policies objective for the region' does not categorically mention upfront at policy level that it will address gender inequality and empowerment of women and that gender will be transversal theme. It does not mention that the Switzerland's engagement will be closely aligned with the gender equality policy (2003). Pitching gender at this broad strategy level is important as this strategy is an 'advocacy tool' for programming and policy intension of the SDC. It is in this section where the approach of gender integration across all domains should have been stated as a policy. The SDC gender equality policy and related thematic gender priorities were not known by some implementing partners interviewed. To a large extent, partners relied on their own organisations policies to integrate gender. Although not within the mandate of this evaluation, the gender policy (2003) ideally should be updated to current reality and wave of change in the gender landscape across the globe including Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) priorities."

"There is commitment by SDC to ensure the gender policy marker is completed and annexed to Entry Proposals (EP). However, there is notable challenge with the gender policy marker that it represents intentions at the project/outcome design stage and does not link these directly to results achieved. It does not systematically and continuously rate the quality or type of gender results overtime. It implied, once scored 'not targeted' it stays thus for the duration of the project, making it not a true reflection if gender is addressed during implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Monitoring gender results throughout the EP implementation period requires more than merely one off period box-ticking arrangements to be annexed to the EP. All the projects reviewed for this evaluation scored significant and yet during implementation gender results were more visible for others and not all but they remained significant. Documenting where policy dialogue has complimented project results was not often captured in reporting."