



Engendering USAID Evaluations

Citation

Faktorovich, Olga. 2020. Engendering USAID Evaluations. Master's thesis, Harvard Extension School.

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Engendering USAID Evaluations

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A Thesis in the Field of Sustainability

for the Degree of Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies

Harvard University

November 2020

Abstract

Giving voice and agency to women and girls around the world has been a stated priority of the international community for a half a century. And even as the intent is prominently interwoven through the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, a cursory review of the status on progress is sobering as women and girls around the world continue to face pervasive inequities (UN Women, 2018b). Feminist sociologists have argued that to understand the root causes of this seemingly un-addressable challenge, one must discard the notion that gender is equivalent to biological sex. Instead, gender is to be understood as a social construct, a relational social process that results in a hierarchy where that which is feminine is placed towards the bottom. This hierarchy, reinforced with spoken and unspoken gendered cultural norms, dictates access (or lack-there-of) to power, resources, ability to make decision, and yes, have a voice.

Official development assistance (ODA) holds the promise of delivering transformational change towards meeting the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, and the U.S Agency for International Development (USAID) is the largest contributor of ODA. In recent years, USAID has issued a number of policy and guidance documents related to female empowerment and gender equality. Yet, to date there has not been a comprehensive assessment of the state of practice of gender mainstreaming across USAID programming, and specifically the state of engenderment of USAID evaluations – the key mechanism to assess whether intended results were in fact realized. My research addresses this gap by conducting a meta-evaluation of USAID evaluations published in 2019.

Research questions and associated hypotheses were focused on engenderment qualities of evaluations and their statements of work. Hypotheses were tested via a criteria matrix developed and applied by a single coder. Descriptive statistical methods were then employed to analyze the results of the coding in excel.

The hypothesis that most evaluations do not present sex-disaggregated findings across all person-level results was supported, as less than a third of evaluations presented such findings. Although the hypothesis purporting that most evaluations did not discuss gender differential effects was refuted, the majority of these discussions were found to be anecdotal. The hypothesis that the majority of evaluations do not reference male roles or masculinity was supported, as 95% of the evaluations lacked any mention of male roles or masculinity, with only 46% mentioning men at all. Additionally, although women represented the minority on 43% of the evaluation teams (refuting a key hypothesis), projects focused on sectors commonly deemed less relevant to women (e.g., economic growth, energy and infrastructure) were more often staffed with all male teams. Applying the Gender Equality Continuum categorization to the sample revealed that 66% of evaluations were gender blind or accommodated gender norms and dynamics that retain women and girls at an inferior status.

Resulting recommendations for USAID include strengthening focus on transformation of processes, relationships, and social norms that perpetuate a hierarchy that places women towards the bottom, instead of the current focus on female participation. As well, USAID should explicitly address men and social norms of masculinity, and require a system-informed approach where layers of the enabling environment surrounding women and girls are intentionally engaged.

Acknowledgements

This research, and indeed my experience through the entire program, has been a real journey for me—a journey of persistence, evolution, and growth. I could not have completed it without the unyielding belief and encouragement my husband gave me every day; without the inspiration from my strong, smart, and stubborn (persistent) daughters; without the loving support of my brother and parents; and without my colleagues at Abt Associates, who challenge me to never stop learning or trying to change the world for the better. Finally, I want to express my deep gratitude to Mark Leighton, my thesis director and advisor, for the guidance, positivity, and patience he bestowed on me throughout this process.

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Definition of Terms

ADS	Automated Directives System
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DEC	Development Experience Clearinghouse
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GEM	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy Marker
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KII	Key Informant Interviews
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECC	Organization for European Economic Cooperation
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PRISMA	Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SOW	Statement of Work
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

Chapter I

Introduction

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represent a transformative agenda for 2030 that seeks to eliminate poverty and environmental degradation, while facilitating economic growth, peace and justice (United Nations, 2019). The notion of gender equality and women's empowerment underpinning sustainable development is evident throughout the agenda, as in addition to a dedicated goal (SDG 5), the intent is interwoven throughout the majority of the set of 17 SDGs. Yet with a third of the timeframe to achieve the SDGs already expired, significant challenges remain to realize this intent.

A 2018 report by UN Women takes stock of the challenges facing women today by noting that around the world, women are more likely than men to report food insecurity and live in extreme poverty (UN Women, 2018b). Globally, women represent only 13% of agricultural land holders, and serve on just 23.7% of parliamentary seats. Forty-nine countries lack laws protecting women from domestic violence, and nearly one in five women around the world have experienced physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner in the past 12 months. Around the world, 750 million women and girls were married before the age of 18, and at least 200 million women and girls have undergone female genital mutilation (UN Women, 2018b). The report urges action beyond rhetoric, and beyond just counting averages of women versus men to show progress.

Feminist theorists and sociologists have long studied the root cause of women's systematic discrimination, feminization of poverty and subordination to men. Scholars' writings through the decades argued that women's subordination is a result of a socially constructed hierarchy and is not predetermined by biology (Beauvoir, 1949; Friedan, 1963; Parpart, Connelly, & Barriteau, 2000; Connell, 2012). Strict social norms governing the social construct of gender, as opposed to biologically determined sex, place that which is masculine towards the top of the social hierarchy and that which is feminine towards the bottom (Heise et al., 2019). As gender intersects with other markers of differences, such as age, disability, caste, and ethnicity, a vulnerability multiplier effect occurs (Fletcher, 2015). These relational dynamics of power and access to resources and decision-making are often hidden in national and international statistics by the binary treatment of men versus women and accounting of progress through averages (UN Women, 2018b).

Applying a gender lens onto the grand challenges that the Sustainable Development Agenda aims to address uncovers the fact that strict gender norms are some of the key drivers of violence, morbidity, mortality, gender-based violence, child marriage, proliferation of sexually transmitted disease, resource depletion and poverty (Heise et al., 2019; Men Engage Alliance, 2016). Official development assistance (ODA) presents a significant opportunity to catalyze transformative sustainable development if it zeroes in on root causes not symptoms. Indeed, ODA donor governments committed USD 153 billion in 2018, with nearly USD 48 billion dedicated to programs designed with the intent to address women's empowerment (OECD-DAC, 2019). And although major donors have issued gender equality commitments, strategies, and even mandatory analyses to be included in tenders and procurement processes, the state of practice of

gendering international development programming is obscure. Policies, tender commitments and program design documentation present an aspirational prescriptive account of what a development program is intended to do. Program evaluations are some of the only documents that ascertain whether in fact the objectives of the program were met, and what intentional and unintentional effects were experienced by target populations. High quality, informed, and rigorous evaluations are critical to inform future program design, enable learning, and ascertain whether a donor's investment affected intended change.

The United States is the largest contributor of ODA, representing more than 20% of total ODA in 2019 (Donor Tracker, 2020). The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is the primary agency responsible for carrying out development policy and program implementation, and in the last ten years, USAID has emphasized the importance of both robust evaluation practice and gender equality and female empowerment (USAID, 2012; USAID, 2016b). Yet the state of implementation of these commitments and policies, and a synthesis of the state of development practice is difficult to ascertain. The last time a meta-evaluation was undertaken to take stock of the quality and coverage of USAID evaluations was in 2013. The state of gender integration within the evaluations studied was a minimal component of the effort, and even still showed that the large majority of USAID evaluations are gender blind and/or equate gender to biological sex without taking into systematic consideration the relational power dynamics of gender and its role in determining programming's effects (USAID, 2013).

To bring commitments and rhetoric closer to action and to affect the lived experiences of the most vulnerable around the world, a comprehensive stock taking is necessary to illuminate the extent to which intended commitments are implemented

through funded projects, whether the approaches employed are aligned with state of the art recommendations, and ultimately whether they generate positive outcomes.

Research Significance and Objectives

This research will establish the state of engenderment of USAID evaluations, and by proxy, will help define the state of practice in development pertaining to gender mainstreaming. This research will also highlight how systematic engendering focused on deconstructing strict social norms can catalyze the 2030 agenda for sustainable development. Specifically, the significance of this research is to empower a major donor like USAID to fund and design truly engendered programs and meaningful evaluations that serve to transform power dynamics and entrenched inequities affecting the success of the entire SDG agenda.

The objectives of my research are to:

- Evaluate the current state of engenderment of USAID evaluations
- Distill the most effective gendering approaches from USAID evaluations that have resulted in benefits to women, improved gender equality, and have led to improved overall development outcomes.

Background

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), ratified by 193 United Nations' member states in 2016, represent a number of firsts in the international cooperation and development arena. They are universal (applying to both developing and developed nations), they are integrated (explicitly addressing underlying causalities and spillover effects across challenges – i.e., can hunger be eliminated without depleting earth's finite

resources?), and they boldly aim to address inequality and “leave no one behind” (United Nations, 2019). This last “first”, although the spirit of it has been alluded to before (United Nations, 1948; United Nations General Assembly, 2000), has proven to be the trickiest to achieve beyond averages. Truly leaving no one behind entails addressing the entrenched inequities and imbalanced power dynamics brought about by centuries of coalesced value judgements on individuals’ worth and resulting social hierarchies (Fletcher, 2019).

Inequities pertaining to gender, and more specifically women and girls, are perhaps the most universal and pervasive across cultures and societies of the world. The UN Women (2018b) flagship report *Turning Promises into Action* unequivocally established women’s empowerment as foundational for achieving the SDG agenda, and yet the report’s evaluation of the status quo paints a grim picture of the reality faced by women and girls around the world. Women report experiencing more food insecurity than men in more than two thirds of 141 countries (UN Women, 2018b). In countries with high gender inequality, four times as many women as men perish in floods, and in certain natural disasters, women and children are fourteen times more likely than men to die (The International Network of Women's Funds and the Alliance of Funds, 2015). One in five women between the ages of 15-49 have experienced physical and/or sexual violence in the past 12 months around the world, with the figure rising to nearly one in two in the Oceania region (excluding Australia and New Zealand). Every year, 15 million girls under the age of 18 are forced into marriage, with Central and Southern Asia exhibiting the highest rate of child marriage. Two hundred million women and girls in 30 countries have undergone female genital mutilation (FGM), and only 52% of women married or in a union feely make their own decisions about sexual relations, contraceptive

use and personal health care (Heise et al., 2019). The legal systems within many countries continue to enshrine women's subordination in law. As of 2016, 18 countries have laws allowing husbands to legally prevent their wives from working, in 39 countries sons and daughters do not have equal inheritance rights, 49 countries lack laws to protect women from domestic violence, and in 37 countries rapists are exempt from prosecution if they subsequently marry the victim (UN Women, 2018b). Women's global labor force participation rate in 2019 was at 55%, compared to men's 78%, and the global gender pay gap is at 40%, with a World Economic Forum report stating that at this rate, women will not have equal pay to men for another 257 years (World Economic Forum, 2020).

Bringing about equality for women is far from a novel concept. Indeed, it has been an articulated priority for international organizations for decades, from the UN Decade of Women launching in the 70s, through to the 2000's Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-First Century conferences and the Sustainable Development Agenda of 2015 – and all of the political declarations and commitments in between (UN Women, 2020c). Yet as the above statistics portray, these efforts have yielded unacceptably limited results. So what is it about women's inequality that has proven to be quite so intractable? The answer lies in the social hierarchies embedded within culturally defined constructs of femininity, masculinity, and gender.

Feminist Theory and Development Challenges

“One is not born, but rather becomes, woman” (Beauvoir, 1949, p. 283). This emblematic quote is from Simone de Beauvoir's encyclopedic tome, *The Second Sex*, in which the French sociologist and philosopher disentangles biology from social constructs of femininity, from ancient history to modern-day western culture and through each stage

of a woman's lived experience. The ideas articulated in this mid-1900's work are considered by some as the feminist manifesto, influencing feminist theory and sociology, and continuing to reflect the reality women face today. In the above quote, Beauvoir refers to the iterative, powerful, incessant social process through which gender, and in this case femininity specifically, is imposed on the newborn girl – establishing firmly her place in society, her responsibilities, feminine attributes that she will be judged against and sanctioned for if not adhered to, and her obligations and inferiority to males (Beauvoir, 1949).

Although oft conflated, sex and gender are in fact not the same. While sex refers to the male and female biological indicators, such as sex chromosomes, internal reproductive organs and genitalia, gender is rooted in socially constructed norms associated with being female or male (Heise et al., 2019). These gender social norms are spoken and unspoken societal rules defining different roles, behaviors, and attributes for women and men. These norms not only contribute to differentiated identity, but they also fortify an institutionalized social hierarchy on the basis of that difference (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). Fletcher (2019, p. 10) synthesized the long established consensus by sociologists that inequality is the result of social hierarchies in which “those judged nearer to the top [...] have greater decision-making power and greater access to resources than those judged nearer to the bottom”. Social hierarchies reinforced through strict gender norms and systematic discrimination inflict cumulative harm on women and girls around the world, keeping no less than half of the world's population from meeting their full potential.

Though the hierarchy of power and privilege enshrined in gender norms typically favors that which is male and masculine over what is female and feminine, gender norms

around masculinity are also strict, and punishing. Standards of masculinity and manhood around the world often center on attributes of strength, dominance and need to subordinate, risk-taking, and sexual prowess. Those not conforming to these socially prescribed roles are often shamed and sanctioned, bullied and ridiculed (Heise et al., 2019). These standards of masculinity drive many of today's development challenges, fueling and sustaining violence, encouraging risk-taking behavior, driving "domination" over the natural environment and depletion of resources, and perpetuating systemic avoidance of health seeking, leading to premature death (Ragonese, Shand, & Baker, 2019; Men Engage Alliance, 2016). The World Report on Violence and Health places male violence as a major driver of morbidity and mortality for both men and women around the world (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi, & Lozano, 2002). Expected masculine standards of sexual dominance and prowess lead to behaviors including sexual relations with multiple partners, condom avoidance and sex coercion, driving the spread of sexually transmitted disease, unplanned pregnancies and trauma (Heise et al., 2019). Identification with masculine social traits of strength, toughness and risk taking is strongly associated with speeding and reckless driving (nearly 75% of all traffic fatalities globally occur in adolescent boys and men (Heise et al., 2019; Mast, Sieverding, Esslen, Graber, & Jancke, 2007). Pressures to be independent, tough, and a breadwinner have led to strong associations between suicide among male farmers and drought (WHO, 2014). Similarly, pressures for self-sufficiency and emotional control lead to increased avoidance of care seeking contributing to men being over-represented in the incidence of chronic and infectious disease, and a life expectancy 5.5 years lower than women (Ragonese, Shand, & Baker, 2019).

Likewise, strict gender norms around femininity reinforce numerous recalcitrant development challenges. Families see less economic value in educating daughters as they are perceived to bring less economic value and likely to become properties of the future husband's household. According to UN Women, 15 million primary-school age girls will never get the chance to read or write, compared to 10 million boys (UN Women, 2018b). Girls without primary education are more likely to get married at an early age, give birth to more children, more likely to die in childbirth and more likely to have children stunted from malnutrition (UNESCO, 2013). Women's lack of access to financial resources and lack of power to make decisions around their own healthcare contributes to low health seeking (Heise et al., 2019). The high value placed on feminine purity feeds families' fears of tainting family honor, leading to child marriage, female genital mutilation, and acceptance of rape as a part of suitor pursuit of marriage (Greene, Perlson, Hart, & Mullinax, 2018). Aggression and dominance enshrined within masculinity contributes to the drive to regulate and enforce "proper" feminine behavior thereby rationalizing gender-based violence (Heise et al., 2019). The trauma of abuse both physical and sexual has been documented to have a profound impact not only on the survivor, but on the infant that is born out of the abusive act. A study in the Democratic Republic of Congo documented that of all war-related stressors, individual experience of rape had the most profound impact on newborn health, accounting for a 31% variance in birthweight (Rodney & Mulligan, 2014).

Adding Women does not Equal Equality

These statistics are sobering, and organizations around the world have taken action to increase women's equality. A common approach employed is to simply increase

the number of women participating in a particular activity, which inherently assumes that an increase in the number of women participants in an intervention is the same as demonstrating gender impact (Fletcher, 2015). A look at the recent ranking of countries based on the number of women in parliament illustrates the flaws in this commonly taken approach. UN Women and the Inter-Parliamentary Union's 2020 ranking shows Rwanda at the number one spot, United Arab Emirates ranking third, Timor-Leste is at 30, Afghanistan is at 67, and the United States is 82nd (UN Women, 2020b).

A deeper look uncovers the flaws of merely increasing the number of women participants without re-evaluating gender relations on all levels – addressing the symptom rather than getting at the root cause. It is true that Rwanda leads the world in the number of women in parliament, at 61% in 2019 (The World Bank, 2019). Quotas and mandates set by President Kagame, spurred by the high male death toll from the 1996 genocide leaving the country 60 to 70% female, led to a push to leapfrog the rest of the world in women's empowerment. Yet, it has been documented that Rwanda's female politicians, along with the majority of Rwandan women, continue to face subordination, exploitation and oppression from their husbands. Uvuza's research uncovered "that most female politicians may fail to report abuse because of the traditional norms of submissiveness, appearing docile, and keeping family secrets that are traditionally associated with "good womanhood" (Uvuza, 2014, p. 131). Another telling example is Timor-Leste, although appearing 18th on the ranking mentioned above, it has some of the highest rates of gender-based violence and highest rates of child marriage in the world. In Timor-Leste, 59% of women report experiencing intimate partner violence in their life, and 46% report experiencing violence in the last 12 months, with one in five women between 20 and 24 years of age report being married before the age of 18 (UN Women, 2020a).

Clearly the add women and stir approach does not yield transformational equality for women, even when considering access to political office. Unless the underlying social norms are addressed, the only thing that increasing the number of women does is address the symptom without addressing the root cause, leaving development to repeat the cycle of commitments and appropriations that fail to transform the paradigm of gender inequity. The cumulative structural discrimination experienced by women is critical to address if the transformation promised through the SDG agenda is to be achieved.

The Promise of Official Development Assistance

Transformative change is exactly what the international community has committed to through the Sustainable Development Goals and bold policy commitments of key donors of official development assistance (ODA). The roots of ODA as we know it today date back to the mid 1940's when the grueling experience of World War II led to the formation of institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the United Nations (UN) (both began operation in 1945), and the launch of the European Recovery Program (commonly known as the Marshall Plan) and the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OECC - the predecessor to the OECD) in 1947 – focused on rebuilding and strengthening cohesion in Europe. In 1949, President Truman proposed an international development assistance program focused on less developed countries, and programs offering financial and technical assistance for developing countries became important components of U.S. foreign policy. With the signing of the Foreign Assistance Act in 1961, President Kennedy created the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) – the first U.S. foreign assistance organization with the primary goal of long-term socioeconomic development (USAID, 2019). In 1961 also, with the Marshall Plan

complete, Canada and the United States joined the OEEC, officially creating the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

When considering the historical evolution of gender approaches employed by the donor community, the 1950's and 1960's were dominated with interventions that aimed to help women in less-developed countries without challenging their status or prevailing patriarchal traditional structures (i.e., handouts). Through the following decades, the approach evolved to focus on alleviating poverty by increasing women's efficiency in whatever they were doing and later to one where a macro approach assumed that an improvement of the overall economic and political system within a country would address women's challenges and wellbeing as well. The notion of focusing on gender and intersectionality (the layering of markers of differences increasing vulnerability) in development did not appear until the 1980s, however it remained fringe and sparse in application (Podems, 2011).

In 2009, the Interagency Gender Working Group, funded by USAID, released the Gender Equality Continuum (Interagency Gender Working Group, 2009), a tool to guide classification of development policy and programs according to the approach taken to gender. The Gender Equality Continuum is a double layered categorization in which a program is first categorized as either blind or gender aware. Gender blind interventions exhibit an absence of any consideration to the larger gender environment or gender roles, while gender aware interventions deliberately examine and address anticipated gender-related outcomes during design and implementation of the intervention. Among the gender aware category of interventions, three additional sub-categories characterize the intervention further as either gender exploitative, gender accommodating, or gender transformative. Gender exploitative interventions are those that "take advantage of

existing inequalities, behaviors, and stereotypes in pursuit of program objectives”, while gender accommodating are those that “adjust to compensate for gender differences, norms, and inequities” (Interagency Gender Working Group, 2009, p. 11). Gender transformative interventions are those that “explicitly engage women and men to examine, question, and change institutions and norms that reinforce gender inequalities” (p. 11). Trainings on the Gender Equality Continuum are prolific, and a look across strategy and policy documents of the largest ODA donors reveals that gender equality and women’s empowerment is one of the most ubiquitously committed to goals of the top aid donors (Fletcher, 2019).

So how much of ODA actually flows to address gender, what is the predominant approach taken and what are the results? To answer the first question, the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) can shed some light. The DAC monitors the financial flows of ODA, including flows focusing on priority policy objectives. To monitor and facilitate coordination around specific DAC policy objectives for aid such as climate change and good governance, the DAC uses a marker system to qualitatively flag associated resource flows in the Creditor Reporting System. The gender equality and women’s empowerment policy marker (GEM) was first developed in 2008. The first guidance for the marker was released in 2016 with the goal of improving the understanding and effectiveness of application of the marker. DAC member governments are requested to indicate whether each of the intended funding activities targets gender equality as a policy objective.

Although the marker system is applied to bilateral aid only and excludes contributions to multilateral organizations, it nevertheless promotes transparency and represents one of the only common tools enabling tracking of bilateral aid focused on the

implementation of SDG gender equality commitments (OECD-DAC GENDERNET, 2016). According to data released by the OECD, in 2016-2017, the DAC committed an average of USD 44.8 billion per year on gender equality and women’s empowerment as either significant or principal objective – corresponding to 38% of bilateral allocable aid. Although higher than in the past, this percentage also means that 62% of committed aid remains gender blind (OECD-DAC, 2019). Notably, the marker is based on donor intentions at the design stage of the program. It is therefore forward-looking and “cannot and does not intend to measure the outcome or impact of a program or project” (OECD-DAC GENDERNET, 2016, p. 7), only evaluations can do that.

The OECD, as one of the primary vehicles for coordinating aid to developing countries, plays an important role in facilitating progress on the SDGs. In 2018, ODA from the 30 members of the OECD DAC totaled USD 153 billion. The United States, although falling significantly short of the UN recommended 0.7% of gross national income, is the largest contributor of ODA, issuing nearly a quarter of the ODA provided by all DAC countries, at USD 34.6 billion in 2019 (Donor Tracker, 2020). And although the volume of money committed is not always an accurate indication of impact achieved, it is rational to assume that the influence of the U.S. in development is mighty, as are the country’s guidance, policies and practice on engenderment in development.

USAID Engenderment Guidance, Policies and Practice

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is the U.S. primary agency responsible for carrying out development policy and program implementation. USAID has expressed commitments to improving women’s condition around the world throughout its history, and in 2012 USAID released a new comprehensive policy on

Gender Equality and Female Empowerment. The policy asserts that gender equality and female empowerment are “core development objectives” that are “key to effective and sustainable development outcomes” (USAID, 2012, p. 1). The policy directs gender equality and female empowerment to be integrated throughout USAID’s program cycle including program design and implementation, monitoring and evaluation (USAID, 2012). Indeed, high quality, informed, and rigorous evaluations are critical to inform future program design, enable learning, and ascertain whether a donor’s investment affected intended change. Stressing the importance of evaluations, the Agency published an Evaluation Policy in 2011 with a subsequent update in 2016. In addition to establishing deeper requirements for rigor and quality, USAID’s evaluation policy requires evaluation methods to use sex-disaggregated data and for evaluations to pay “attention to gender relations in all relevant areas” (USAID, 2016b, p. 8). Program evaluations are some of the only documents that ascertain whether in fact the objectives of the program were met, and what intentional and unintentional effects were experienced by target populations (Fletcher, 2015).

More details on USAID’s expected operationalization of both of these policies is provided in the Automated Directives System (ADS) which details USAID functions, policies and procedures that guide programs and operations (USAID, 2020a). ADS Chapter 201 is focused on Program Cycle Operational Policy and has specific reference to evaluations analyzing the extent to which “projects or supportive activities have transformed gender norms and reduced gender gaps for men and women across diverse groups” (USAID, 2020b, p. 71). ADS Chapter 205 is exclusively focused on Integrating Gender Equality and Female Empowerment in the USAID Program Cycle. In it, USAID states requirements that all evaluations must be gender-sensitive, meaning that they must

demonstrate (1) awareness of the degree to which program participation, results and sustainability are shaped by gender, (2) recognition that integration of gender issues must take place if gender equality objectives are to be realized, and (3) commitment to examining the extent to which gender equality was achieved through the project being evaluated (USAID, 2017). The *How-To Note Engendering Evaluation at USAID* published as a supplement to ADS 201, ADS 205 and the Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy, provides more detail and guidance on what is expected of an engendered evaluation at USAID. These include collecting sex-disaggregated data, using gender-sensitive indicators, and uncovering differentiated effects of development strategies, projects and activities on women and men. The note also advises evaluations to systematically assess whether the USAID funded activity in fact reduced gender gaps between men and women, and provides additional guidance on evaluation sub-questions, evaluation designs and methods, and gender competency and gender parity within the evaluation team (USAID, 2016a). A mandatory supplemental reference for ADS Chapter 201 titled USAID Evaluation Statement of Work Requirements provides additional detail as to what required elements an evaluation statement of work (SOW) must contain. In it, the document states that an SOW must stipulate “all evaluations questions requiring sex-disaggregated data, the use of gender-sensitive data collection methods, and analysis of differential impacts on males and females” (USAID, 2016c, p. 2).

Previous Assessments of USAID Evaluations

With abundant detailed guidance, it is clear that USAID has a strong intent to effect gender equality through its programs. Yet these documents paint an aspirational prescriptive account of what USAID intends for its development programs to accomplish. An assessment of the published independent evaluations would serve to ascertain the

state of engenderment within not only evaluation practice, but by proxy, the state of engenderment within USAID programming.

The last time a meta-evaluation was undertaken to take stock of the quality and coverage of USAID evaluations was in 2013, in an effort undertaken by a team of evaluators from Management Systems International, contracted by USAID (USAID, 2013). The *Meta-Evaluation of Quality and Coverage of USAID Evaluations* focused on a sample of evaluations published in USAID's Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC) between 2009 and 2012. The team analyzed 340 randomly selected evaluations using a structured systematic criteria matrix, coupled with interviews and engagement with USAID staff and evaluators. The criteria matrix was comprised of 37 elements, only two of which were concerned with gender. The authors note that “[a]mong factors rated weak, the most significant involve low levels of compliance with USAID’s ... expectation that, wherever relevant, data on the results of USAID evaluations will be documented on a sex-disaggregated basis” (USAID, 2013, p. ix). Specifically, results of this analysis showed that only 20% of the evaluations included sex-disaggregated data at all person-level result levels, and that only 32% of evaluations included at least some mention of gender differential aspects of a project. A post-rating qualitative content review indicated that in “most instances discussions of gender differential effects were based on limited data, including anecdotes, rather than on systematic data collection and analysis” (USAID, 2013, p. 18). This meta-evaluation did not assess the state of engenderment of evaluation SOWs, the level of gender expertise and gender parity on the evaluation team, whether development was noted by evaluators to advance development outcomes, or any other engenderment characteristic.

Looking beyond USAID, systematic reviews of gender mainstreaming in development programming are sparse. The field needs a taking stock moment to better understand the gaps in implementation that will help guide donor funding in a more targeted way. The reviews that have been published consistently point to uneven application of gender integration across sectors, donors and geographies, with varying results. A systematic review by Muralidharan et al. (2015) studied the impact of gender-integrated programming on health outcomes in low and middle income countries, primarily in South Asia and India. The review of program design documents, evaluations, and health and gender outcomes of the 145 gender-aware programs revealed that gender was most strongly addressed in HIV, gender-based violence prevention, and adolescent health programs, and weakest in programs related to tuberculosis and universal healthcare. One of the authors' key recommendations was the need to explicitly integrate a gender transformative approach in the programs' logic model and design (Muralidharan et al., 2015). This recommendation was echoed in a 2019 systematic review by Ruane-McAteer et al which focused on interventions addressing men and masculinities and gender equality in the field of sexual and reproductive health (Ruane-McAteer et al., 2019). Considering sectors other than health, a 2019 systematic review of gender and conservation agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa noted that the exercise highlighted the "relative neglect of gender issues" in the field. The authors noted that while a number of studies defined gender as a socially constructed concept, "the majority framed it in terms of the sexual categories of male and female" (Wekesah, Mutua, & Izugbara, 2019).

A systematic review published in 2019 evaluated impact evaluations published in peer-reviewed journals to ascertain the extent to which gender is incorporated in international development evaluations. While the study provided a good general

assessment of the extent to which peer-reviewed published evaluation literature incorporates a gender focus, it did not connect the evaluations to specific donors and associated stated priorities, nor did it apply a systematic ranking and categorization of approaches taken to clearly distinguish the approach employed in the evaluation (i.e., gender transformative, gender aware, or gender exploitative) (Lam, Dodd, Whynot, & Skinner, 2019).

Furthermore, focusing exclusively on impact evaluations published in peer-reviewed journals ignores the significantly larger universe of evidence contained within programmatic evaluations commissioned by donors and international bodies looking to inform policy and programmatic design. To ascertain whether USAID evaluations and programs similarly lack consistent and robust gender integration, or if rather the opposite is true – that USAID evaluations do rigorously incorporate the Agency’s engenderment policies and directives – a dedicated systematic meta-evaluation is needed. This meta-evaluation should not only provide an updated assessment of the state of engenderment compared to the 2013 assessment, but should dig deeper into the methods employed so that USAID can ultimately better target its programming and truly lead on realizing the promise of transformational change.

Research Questions, Hypotheses and Specific Aims

My research seeks to address two core questions and associated hypotheses:

1. What is the current state of engenderment within USAID evaluations?
 - H1: The majority (>50%) of USAID evaluations do not present sex-disaggregated data across all person-level results

- H2: The majority (>50%) of USAID evaluations do not discuss gender differential effects
 - H3: The majority (>50%) of USAID evaluations do not explicitly reference gender, women or girls in evaluation questions or evaluation sub-questions
 - H4: The majority (>50%) of USAID evaluations do not reference male roles or masculinity
 - H5: The majority (>50%) of USAID evaluations are conducted by evaluation teams in which women are in the minority
 - H6: The majority (>50%) of USAID evaluations are gender blind
2. What is the current state of engenderment within USAID Evaluations Statements of Work?
- H7: The majority (>50%) of USAID evaluations SOWs do not mention gender or women
 - H8: SOWs that mention gender or women even minimally (as a single reference) yield a larger number of transformative evaluations than SOWs that do not mention gender or women at all.

Specific Aims

This research included the following specific aims:

1. Using USAID's Development Experience Clearinghouse, identify the sample of Final Evaluation Reports to represent USAID's current state of evaluation practice.

2. Develop a detailed evaluation criteria matrix that will be used to systematically assess each evaluation in the selected sample.
3. Employ a qualitative assessment method using the developed evaluation criteria matrix to systematically analyze each evaluation within the selected sample and assess the level of engenderment across the study sample.
4. Distill the most effective gendering approaches from USAID evaluations that resulted in benefits to women, improved gender equality, and led to improved overall development outcomes.

Chapter II

Methods

In order to assess the state of engenderment of USAID evaluations, I conducted a meta-evaluation applying a structured criteria matrix on evaluations published in the most recent full year available. To identify and access the sample of evaluations to be studied, I used the USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC), accessing and downloading the study sample on February 8, 2020. The DEC serves as the primary repository for USAID-funded technical and program documentation, with more than 155,000 documents available for viewing and downloading (USAID, 2020c).

Within DEC's Document Advanced Search, users can search on a range of criteria, including authoring organizations, publication date, subject, geography, language, contract and grant number, and document type. That last criteria, document type, has more than 30 distinct codes, two of which identify evaluations as either "Final Evaluation Report" or "Special evaluation". The former represent evaluations conducted at the end of an activity or project to evaluate the project's impact or performance, while the latter represent mid-term evaluations conducted mid-project to guide course-correction that may be taken before a project ends. Finalized evaluations are to be posted on the DEC no later than three months after completion (USAID, 2020d).

Using the Document Advanced Search, on February 8, 2020, I selected for the following criteria: Document Type equals "Final Evaluation", Language equals "English", to generate 3,308 documents; these documents served as the evaluation universe for my analysis (USAID, 2020c). To further define my evaluation sample, I

applied the additional criteria of Year Published to equal “2019”. This year was selected because this was the most recent full year of evaluations available, and estimating that an average duration of USAID programs is historically five years, evaluations published in 2019 would have been focused on programs implemented approximately at, and shortly after, USAID’s issuance of the two relevant policy documents, namely the Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy (2012) and the Evaluation Policy (2016). Confirmation of the assertion regarding average length of USAID programs was included in this evaluation. The results of this search yielded 86 documents.

Upon further review of the documents, five were excluded because they were not in English, and 12 additional documents were excluded because they were either not evaluations or were duplicates. This yielded a count of 69 evaluations. Per USAID guidance, all evaluations must be uploaded to the DEC within three months of publication. To ensure capture of the full universe of 2019 evaluations, I re-ran the search criteria on May 10, 2020, generating an additional 17 documents. Upon review of these documents, six were excluded because they were neither impact nor final performance evaluations, yielding a final count of 80 evaluations for this analysis (Figure 1). Table 1 summarizes the reasons for excluding a total of 23 evaluations from my analysis.

Table 1. Reasons for document exclusions.

Reason for Exclusion	# of Documents
Not in English	5
Not an evaluation	6
Mid-line evaluation	7
Other evaluation type (e.g., design)	2
Duplicate	3
Total Number Excluded	23

The discrepancy between what DEC codes as “evaluations” versus what are actually evaluations has been well documented. The 2013 meta-evaluation (USAID, 2013) focused on quality and coverage of USAID evaluations noted that though the discrepancy has narrowed, there is still marked difference in the number of documents coded as evaluations while in fact being another type of document (USAID, 2013).

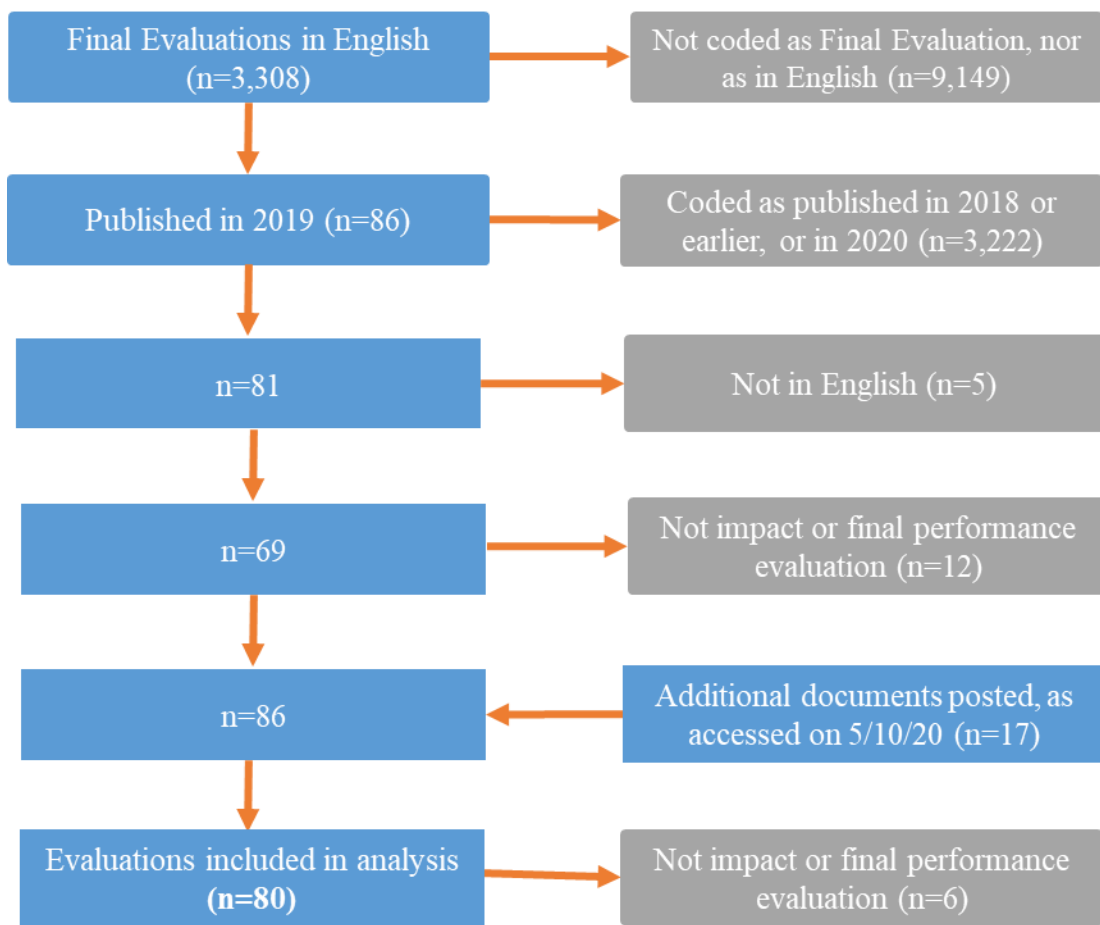


Figure 1. Study sample selection process, as selected from the USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse.

I downloaded the list of evaluations to be studied through the DEC download function, generating an excel spreadsheet containing all relevant codes implemented by

the DEC for the 80 original evaluations in my sample (full reference list in the Ancillary Appendix), including variables such as the DEC Document ID, USAID Geography, initials of the individual who uploaded the document, the distinct URL of the document, and so forth. Using the provided URL, I downloaded all 80 evaluations and randomly assigned a unique ID number for each, which I then used to track all following manipulations and analyses.

Evaluation Criteria and Variables

To systematically examine each evaluation, I developed a detailed evaluation matrix consisting of two primary parts (Table 2). The first was used to derive a general characteristic of the sample of study, consisting of 13 general descriptive criteria. The second portion consisted of criteria I developed to ascertain the level of engenderment of the evaluation sample.

Development of the criteria questions was informed by USAID policies, including the Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy and the Evaluation Policy (USAID, 2012; USAID, 2016b), and relevant USAID Automated Directives Systems (ADS) Operations and Development Policy chapters, including ADS 201: Program Cycle Operational Policy and ADS 205: Integrated Gender Equality and Female Empowerment in USAID's Program Cycle (USAID, 2020b; USAID, 2017). Development of criteria was also informed by additional guidance published by USAID to advance evaluation engenderment, including a 2014 USAID consolidation of best practices and recommendations for engendering evaluations report and a subsequent 2016 How-To Note published by the Bureau for Policy Planning and Learning to provide recommended

Table 2. Definitions for primary evaluation criteria used in the analysis.

OFID: Random ID assigned through this analysis
Doc#: DEC Document ID
Document Title: Title of the Evaluation Report
Objective of Program: The primary objective of the program as stated in the evaluation.
General Criteria
1. Country(ies): Country(ies) in which the project was implemented, as reported within DEC’s USAID Geography Name code, and supplemented by evaluation review.
2. USAID Region: Afghanistan and Pakistan, Africa, Asia, Europe and Eurasia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Middle East. Note that in several instances, programs partially implemented in Afghanistan were also implemented in Europe and Eurasia countries. In these instances associated evaluations were coded as part of the Europe and Eurasia region.
3. USAID Sector(s): Evaluations were distributed across 7 key sectors: (1) Democracy and Governance, (2) Health, (3) Agriculture and Natural Resource Management, (4) Economic Growth and Energy and Infrastructure, (5) Education and Human Capacity Development, (6) Disaster Preparedness, and (7) Integrated Development. These sectors were identified using the DEC’s “Topical Descriptors” and “Class” variables. Integrated development was defined as a program or project spanning more than one topic and sector, and most often included a combination of agriculture, nutrition, health and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH).
4. Project Scale: The project scale was identified as scale of implementation being evaluated, and was defined as either Global, Regional or Single Country.
5. USAID Sponsoring Organization Type: The USAID sponsoring organization was defined as either a Country Mission, a Regional Mission, or funded through USAID Washington DC or Global Bureau; as reported within DEC’s Institution of USAID Sponsor code, and supplemented by evaluation review.
6. Project Duration: Duration of the program or project evaluated, as noted in the evaluation reports and/or associated statements of work.
7. Evaluation Type: <u>Impact Evaluations</u> measure the change in a development outcome that is attributable to a defined intervention, often measuring cause and effect and require a credible and rigorously defined counterfactual to control for factors other than the intervention that might account for the observed change. <u>Performance Evaluations</u> encompass a broad range of evaluation methods and often incorporate before-after comparisons, but generally lack a rigorously defined counterfactual.
8. Evaluation Timing: <u>Final Performance Evaluations</u> are summative in nature, and conducted towards the end of the project. <u>Mid-line Evaluations</u> are formative evaluations generally conducted towards the beginning or in the implementation phase of the project. <u>Ex-Post Evaluations</u> are those that are started after the project has ended and USAID terminated its funding. The type of evaluation is generally explicitly stated in either the title, annex or statement of work of the evaluations. To more clearly discern between Final and Mid-line performance evaluations, I defined any evaluation published less than two years from project end date as a final evaluation, and excluded evaluations conducted more than two years away from the project end date, labeling those as mid-line.

9. Evaluation Team’s Affiliated Firm: As noted in the evaluation report.	
10. Evaluation Method: The description of the method as ascertained from evaluation report, usually in a dedicated Methods section.	
11. Primary Data Collection Methods: Generally disclosed in the Methods section and included: USAID performance data, document review, key informant interviews (KII), individual interviews, surveys, focus group discussions (FGD), structured interviews, etc.	
12. Primary Data Analysis Method: Generally disclosed in the Methods section and included: descriptive statistics (frequency, percent, ratio, cross-tabulations), inferential statistics (regression, correlation, t-test, chi-square), and content or pattern analysis (describes patterns in qualitative).	
13. Women and girls as primary target of project or program: If the evaluated project or program is exclusively focused on women’s and girls’ wellbeing, I coded this as “Yes”, otherwise as “No”.	
Engenderment Criteria	
1. What is the Gender Continuum Rating of this evaluation?	Transformative evaluation is one that <u>critically examines</u> gender norms and dynamics. An accommodating evaluation <u>acknowledges</u> existing differences in access and benefits across genders. An exploitative evaluation <u>takes advantage</u> of existing inequalities, behaviors, and stereotypes to justify evaluation findings. A blind evaluation shows <u>no awareness</u> of gender dynamics and resulting inequities
2. Does the evaluation treat gender as biological sex or a process?	Gender = Biological Sex: Gender is equated to biological sex (<u>i.e., categorical</u>). Gender = Process: Gender defined as a <u>relational process</u> of judgement and values related to socially constructed norms and expectations of what it is to be masculine or feminine, regardless of your born sex category.
3. Is sex-disaggregated data presented in evaluation findings?	Yes = sex-disaggregated data is provided in the evaluation. No = no sex-disaggregated data is provided in the evaluation. NA = no population-level data presented in the evaluation findings. Note: If women only data presented, then YES, but marked with unique identifier.
4. What level is sex-disaggregated data presented at?	Output = 1: Sex-disaggregated data provided at the output level only (e.g., number of men and women trained). Some Outcomes = 2: Sex-disaggregated data provided at the output and some outcome levels, but not across all population-level findings (e.g., adoption of new health, education, civic participation, or livelihood practices, as well as data on the participation of men and women in training programs about these practices).

	All Outcomes = 3: Sex-disaggregated data is provided at all output and outcome levels for all population-level findings.
5. Does the evaluation analyze if access/ participation and/or outcomes/benefits were different for men and women?	Yes= The evaluation explains whether access/ participation and/or outcomes/benefits were different for men versus women. No= The evaluation does not explain whether access/ participation and/or outcomes/benefits were different for men versus women.
6. Is women's access/ participation and/or outcome/benefits evaluated anecdotally or systematically?	ANC = Women's access/participation or outcomes/benefits are presented anecdotally. SYS = Women's access/participation or outcomes/benefits are evaluated and presented systematically.
7. Does the evaluation acknowledge men and masculinity specifically?	No Men = 0: Men are missing from the report, therefore no focus on relations between men and women. Men = 1: Men are acknowledged as a distinct group Masculinity = 2: Masculinity specifically and other aspects of the male and masculine gender norms are discussed.
8. Does the evaluation pose evaluation questions?	Yes = Evaluation questions are clearly stated. No = Evaluation questions are not clearly stated, instead evaluation is based on statements of issues or objectives.
9. Do the evaluation questions explicitly reference women or gender?	No = Evaluation questions do not reference gender or women. Women = Evaluation questions reference women. Gender = Evaluation questions reference gender.
10. Do the evaluation sub-questions explicitly reference women or gender?	NA = No sub-questions listed. No= Evaluation questions do not reference gender or women. Women = Evaluation questions reference women. Gender = Evaluation questions reference gender.
11. How many women and men are on the evaluation team?	Number of Women: Ascertained by common names and pronouns used. Note, a distinct flag was applied to mark whether the Team Lead is female. Number of Men: Ascertained by common names and pronouns used. Note, a distinct flag was applied to mark whether the Team Lead is male. Note: Characteristics of the evaluation team were often found in a section of the report presenting evaluation team profiles. This was either integrated into the body of the evaluation, included as an Annex, or missing altogether. The gender profile of the evaluation team, sex of the team lead, and gender expertise on the team was ascertained from this information.

12. Is a gender specialist included on the evaluation team?	No = 0: There is no mention of knowledge or experience with gender issues within the evaluation team bios. Mention = 1: Evaluation team has members whose bios mention experience with gender issues. Title =2: Evaluation team has a member with title of "Gender Specialist" or something similar. (See Note above).
13. Does the Evaluation Statement of Work mention gender or women?	NA = 0: SOW not included. No = 1: SOW included, with no reference to gender or women. Women = 2: SOW includes explicit reference to women (but not gender). Gender = 3: SOW includes explicit reference to gender. Note that even a single reference to the words women or gender received a 2 or 3, respectively.

steps in engendering evaluations (USAID, 2014; USAID, 2016a). My evaluation criteria were also informed by criteria tracked in two previous meta-evaluations focused on engenderment: the USAID 2013 Meta-evaluation of Quality and Coverage and the 2003 Review of Gender and Evaluation conducted for the DAC Working Party on Aid Evaluation (USAID, 2013; DCA Working Party on AID Evaluation, 2003). Finally, my evaluation criteria were informed by feminist theory, and the writings of gender specialist and leader in the field Gillian Fletcher (Fletcher, 2019; Fletcher, 2015), as well as the work of UN Women including the recently published evaluation guidance on inclusive systematic evaluation for gender equality, environments and marginalized voices (UN Women, 2018a).

It should be noted that getting to the final set of criteria represented in Table 2 was a highly iterative process. The criteria matrix was redesigned four times through pilot study of a sample of evaluations; these evaluations were re-reviewed to ensure consistency and completion, and to confirm that the categorical variables could be

assigned values unambiguously. This is not unlike the challenges of systematic reviews of effects in international development (Waddington et al., 2012). Although this meta-evaluation is not focused on effect nor effect size but rather on the state of practice, identifying and crystalizing the evaluation criteria nevertheless required regular and systematic reflection on emerging themes, characteristics, and approaches to make sure the most relevant and revealing characteristics are captured in this analysis.

A dedicated form, containing all identified criteria was developed for each of the 80 documents. To conduct the actual meta-evaluation, I reviewed each of the 80 documents in my sample individually using the form. I then transcribed results captured in the form into an excel spreadsheet that was set up to have evaluation documents as rows, and evaluation criteria as columns. Values for the different variables defined by the criteria were entered in the cells of the table.

This excel spreadsheet served as my primary tool to conduct an analysis using descriptive statistical methods. To supplement the coding described above, I performed an additional post-rating qualitative review to identify themes in methods and approaches that proved to be most effective in advancing gender equality.

Chapter III

Results

The results chapter is organized in two main sections. The first section describes the general characteristics of the 80 evaluations published in USAID's DEC in 2019. Results presented include distribution of the 80 evaluations by type, timing, scope, sector, USAID region, and other pertinent information. The second section presents the results for the gender-related criteria that assess the state of engenderment of evaluations, including the progress, if any, on the two metrics included in the 2013 meta-evaluation, gender parity of evaluation teams, and engenderment requirements within evaluations' statements of work, among others.

General Characteristics

Of the 80 final performance and impact evaluations published in USAID's DEC in 2019, 85% were performance evaluations and 15% were impact evaluations. Ninety-three percent of the final performance evaluations were end-line, conducted near the end of the program, and only 7% were ex-post, conducted after the program's funding ceased (Figure 2). These percentages are roughly in-line with past trends as noted in the 2013 meta-evaluation where 97% were performance evaluations, and two percent were impact evaluations (USAID, 2013).

The average project duration that was evaluated was 4.7 years (n=80), with the most common start year in 2014 and end year in 2019 (Figure 3). Nearly 40 firms were represented as evaluators in this sample, most conducting one evaluation. Judging from

this sample of 80, five firms appear to have dominated the evaluation market, including Social Impact, ME&A, Management Systems International (MSI), NORC at the University of Chicago, and ICF Inc. Each conducted more than five evaluations, with Social Impact conducting more than ten.

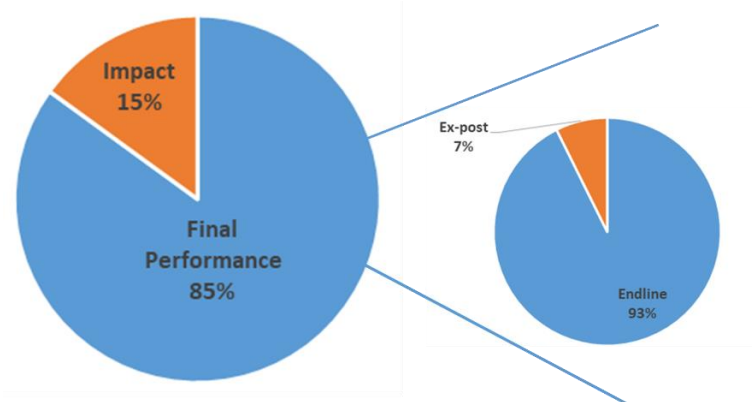


Figure 2. Distribution of evaluation types and timing.

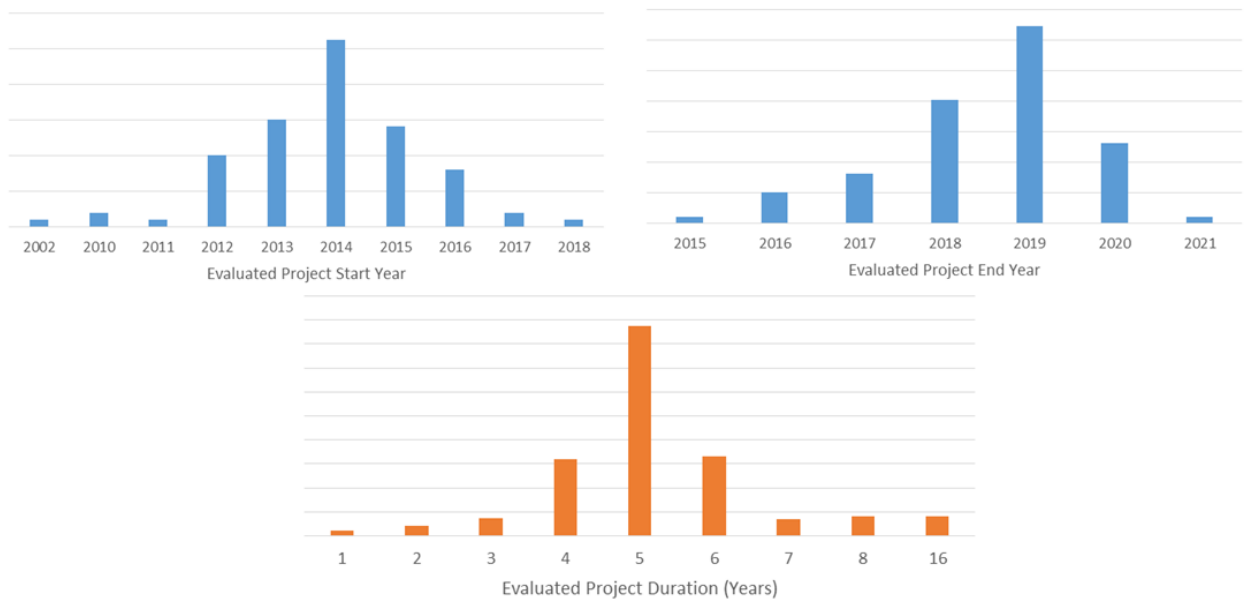


Figure 3. Distribution of project start and end years, and average duration.

Most of the 80 evaluations were from USAID’s Africa region (37%), followed closely by Asia (29%), with the two representing the majority of evaluations published in 2019 (66%) (Figure 4). While the proportion from Africa is consistent with that which was reported in the 2013 meta-evaluation, the proportion of evaluations from Asia rose, as the 2013 meta-evaluation reported just 16% coming from this region (USAID, 2013). Within regions, certain countries generated more evaluations. Specifically, in Africa, Ghana and Nigeria dominate, each representing 14%, and Ethiopia and Uganda following closely behind at 10% each. In Asia, Bangladesh (22%) and Philippines (18%) were the two most prominent countries in my evaluation sample, and in the Europe and Eurasia region, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Ukraine represent most of the evaluations generated (both at 29%). In the Latin America and Caribbean region, Guatemala represented a quarter of the evaluations, and in the Middle East region, Egypt was the only country represented in this sample.

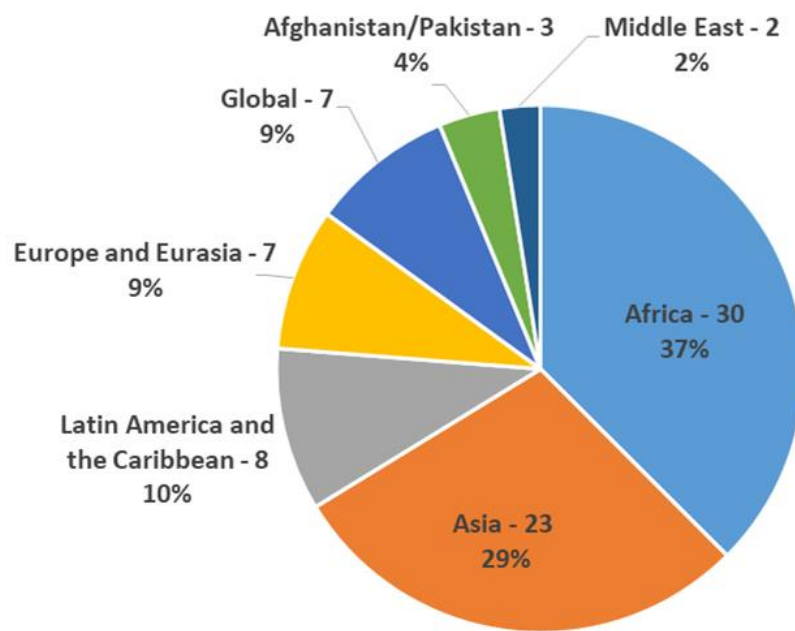


Figure 4. Distribution of evaluations across USAID regions.

The vast majority (77%, n=80) of the evaluations were focused on activities conducted within a single country (either within a single project, multiple projects within the country, or multi-sectoral projects with the country). Fourteen percent were regional activities (across countries within a USAID region), and 9% were of a global nature (spanning multiple regions) (Figure 5).

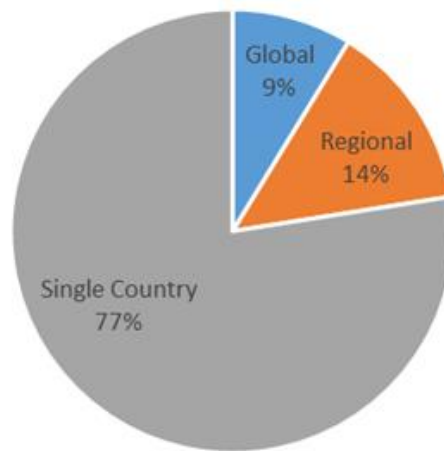


Figure 5. Distribution of evaluations across scope.

Similar to the findings of the 2013 meta-evaluation, though the projects focused on a diversity of sectors: democracy and governance (27%, n=80) and health (21%, n=80) dominated among the evaluations published in 2019 (Figure 6). Of note was the fact that democracy and governance represented a larger share than health, as in comparing to the results of the 2013 evaluation, that relationship had been converse. The majority of the health evaluations were from Africa (53%) with 23% coming from Asia, while democracy and governance evaluations were split between the Africa (41%), Asia (23%) and Europe and Eurasia (18%) regions. Most of the agriculture and natural resource management evaluations were from Asia (55%), and education and human

capacity development was evenly between Africa and Asia (37% each), with the rest divided evenly between Latin America and the Caribbean and the Middle East (13% each). Evaluations on disaster preparedness were divided equally amongst Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia, and most of the integrated development projects were in Africa (43%) with the next largest number coming from Latin America and the Caribbean (29%). Integrated development projects are defined here as spanning more than one topic and sector, and within this sample most often included a combination of agriculture, nutrition, health and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). The prevalence of evaluations by sector across USAID regions illuminates stark regional differences in priorities as suggested by the 2019 sample (Figure 7).

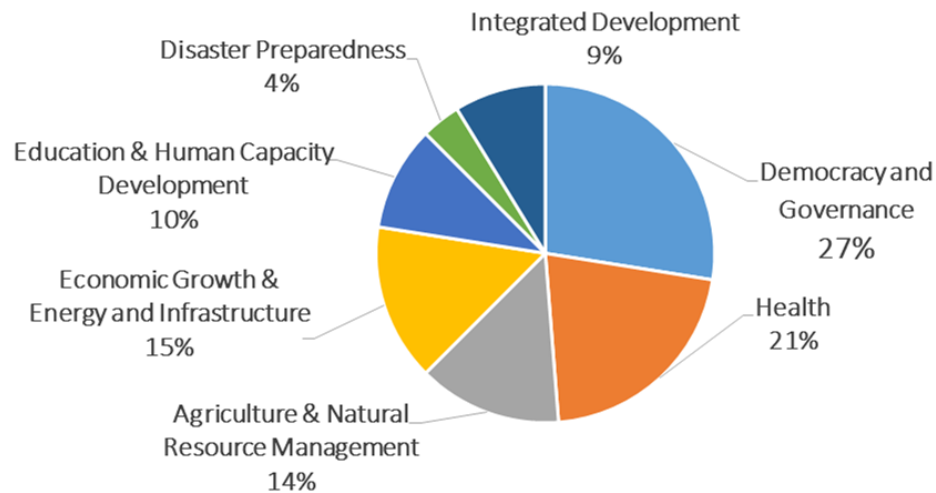


Figure 6. Distribution of evaluations across sectors and topics.

The majority of the performance evaluations used mixed methods (85%), including quantitative and qualitative data collection methods such as desk and document review, surveys, focus group discussions (FGDs), key informant interviews (KIIs), and structured and unstructured observations. Mixed method is generally the preferred

method of evaluation as it allows for triangulation of findings to generate evidence-based confirmation while mitigating limitations such as response bias. Randomized control trials and quasi-experimental design are the predominant methods employed in this sample of impact evaluations, with the former employed in half, and the latter employed in 42% of impact evaluations.

USAID guidance, as stated in ADS 201, advises evaluations to be focused on a specific set of questions, rather than a set of objectives, themes or issues (USAID, 2020b). The 2013 meta-evaluation noted that the prevalence of evaluation questions has been on the rise as 80% of evaluations published in 2012 included evaluation questions. My analysis confirmed this trend as 96% (77, n=80) of the evaluations published in 2019 included stated evaluation questions and sub-questions.

While most of the evaluated projects focused on a variety of topics and populations, 15% (12) of the set of 80 focused exclusively on targeting women and girls' wellbeing. The majority of these projects were in health (58%, n=12) followed by the education and human capacity development (17%, n=12) sector; and most were within the Asia region (50%, n=12), followed by Africa (25%, n=12).

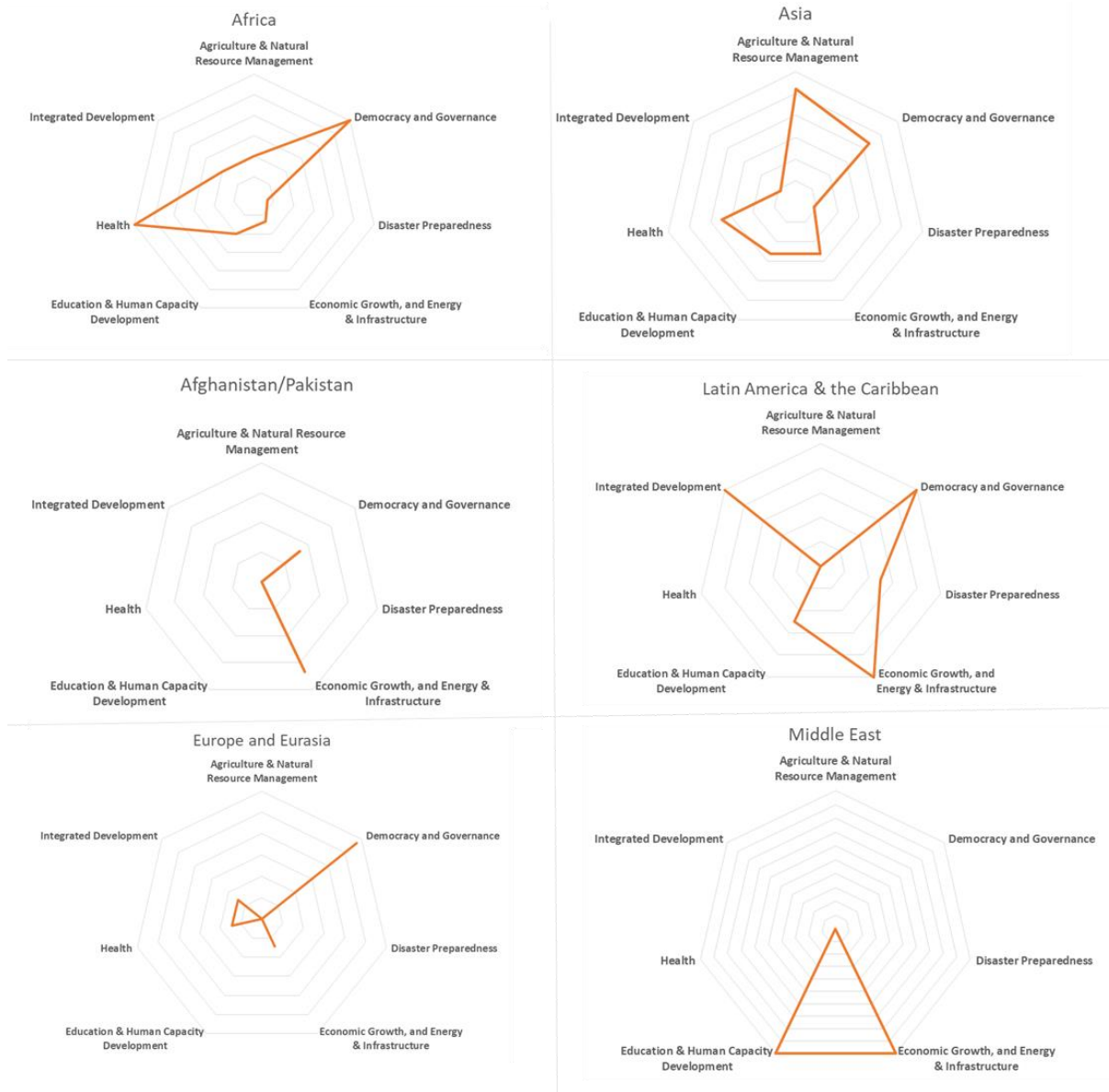


Figure 7. USAID regions, by sector distribution of evaluations.

State of Engenderment in Evaluations

Applying the Gender Continuum definitions to the 80 published final performance and impact evaluations –where a transformative evaluation is one that critically examines gender norms and dynamics, an accommodating evaluation acknowledges existing differences in access and benefits across genders, and a blind evaluation shows no

awareness of gender dynamics and resulting inequities– revealed that 66% were gender blind and/or fail to critically examine gender dynamics and resulting differential access to resources, power, and decision-making ability (Figure 8). No evaluations were rated as exploitative as none employed this approach for the entirety of their analysis, although exploitative interpretations were interlaced in some of the analyses (e.g., touting the targeting of women to be volunteer (non-paid) community outreach leads to combat tuberculosis (TB) as a success in women’s empowerment, where in reality this serves to not only perpetuate the stereotypical belief that women’s roles are in health and caretaking, but that women do not need to be compensated for their work) (Afanasyev & Kulikova, 2019).

In 83% (66) of the evaluations, the evaluation team’s understanding and definition of the term “gender” could be ascertained. Nearly half (47%, n=66) of these evaluations defined gender in categorical terms, equating gender to biological sex. Twelve (39%, n=31) of these were entirely gender blind.

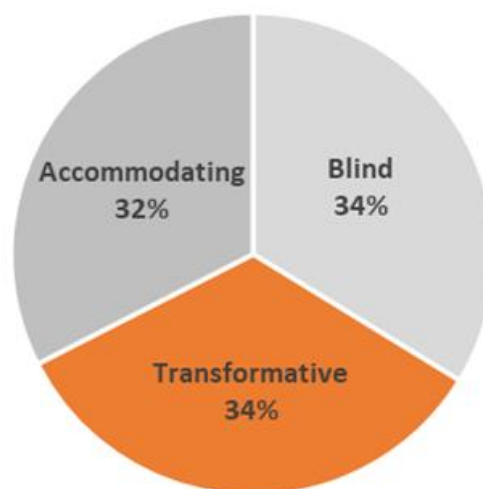


Figure 8. Gender continuum rating of final performance and impact evaluations published in 2019.

Disaggregating data by sex across the program life-cycle is a USAID requirement; this includes presenting sex-disaggregated data in evaluation findings as well (USAID, 2020b). Historically, however, as noted in the 2013 meta-evaluation, presenting sex-disaggregated data for all population-level data across outputs, outcomes, and impacts has been noted as a weakness, with only 22% of evaluations satisfying these criteria in 2012 (USAID, 2013). Out of the 80 evaluations published in 2019, 66 (83%, n=80) reported on population-level findings. Of these, only 20 (30% n=66) reported sex-disaggregated data at all relevant levels – marginally higher than in 2012, but still underwhelming for an additional seven years of progress. Table 3 summarizes the distribution of evaluations disaggregating data by sex across all population-level findings by USAID region. Although the Afghanistan/Pakistan and Middle East regions appeared to be sex-disaggregating their data in 100% of such evaluations, there was only one in each region. The Asia and Africa regions, representing the bulk of the evaluations, showed significantly smaller percentages, with only 27% of evaluations from Africa sex-disaggregating data at all relevant levels. Figure 9 presents the distribution of evaluations including sex-disaggregated data at all levels, by sector. The largest proportion of evaluations with sex-disaggregated data presented at all relevant levels was in the democracy and governance sector (30% n=20), while economic growth had the least (5%).

Health, although representing the near majority of published evaluations, only represented 15% (n =20) of the evaluations with population-level findings fully sex-disaggregated (Figure 9). Of the 17 health evaluations published in 2019, seven (41% n=17) were focused exclusively on women and girls, in areas such as family planning and reproductive health, and maternal and child health. Five of these evaluations presented

population-level findings, but only for females; male disaggregated data were entirely missing in 100% of the women-focused health evaluations. Three (43% n=7) did not mention men at all in the entire evaluation. In fact, out of the 11 evaluations exclusively focused on women and girls that report on population-level findings, 81% (n = 11) reported data on women only. Half of the twelve evaluations exclusively focused on women and girls did not mention men at all. Looking across the entire sample of evaluations published in 2019, 39 (49% n=80) did not mention men. Only four of the other 41 referred to social norms pertaining to masculinity, all of those in Africa and three of the four in health.

Table 3. Findings disaggregated by sex at all levels, by USAID region.

USAID Regions	A: Total Evaluations	B: Evaluations with population-level findings (n=80)		C: Findings Disaggregated by Sex at all Levels (n=66)	
	#	#	%	#	%
Afghanistan & Pakistan	3	1	33%	1	100%
Middle East	2	1	50%	1	100%
Asia	23	21	91%	10	48%
Africa	30	26	87%	7	27%
Europe & Eurasia	7	7	100%	1	14%
Global	7	3	43%	0	0%
Latin America & Caribbean	8	7	88%	0	0%
Total	80	66	83%	20	30%

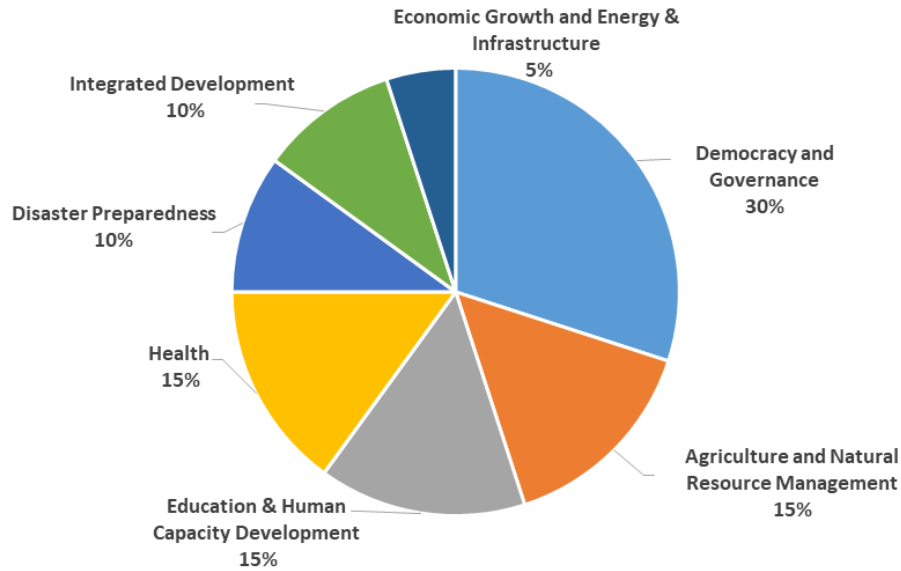


Figure 9. Distribution of evaluations that present sex-disaggregated data at all levels, by sector.

Analysis of differential effects between genders is also a USAID requirement for evaluations (USAID, 2016b), the adherence of which was assessed in the 2013 meta-evaluation. The authors found that 40% of the evaluations published in 2012 discussed differential access and benefits between men and women. The authors noted that the vast majority discussed these effects anecdotally, with no systematic analysis, but did not quantify the latter finding (USAID, 2013).

My analysis of the evaluations published in 2019 revealed marginal progress. Fifty-four (68% n=80) of the evaluations discussed gender differential effects while 26 (33% n=80) omit that discussion entirely, with the economic growth, energy and infrastructure sector and the health sector having the highest proportions of evaluations omitting gender differential effects (Figure 10).

Out of the 54 that discussed gender differential effects, only 21 (39% n=54) did so systematically. The majority 33 (61% n=54) mentioned differential effects in a limited manner, relying primarily on anecdotal evidence.

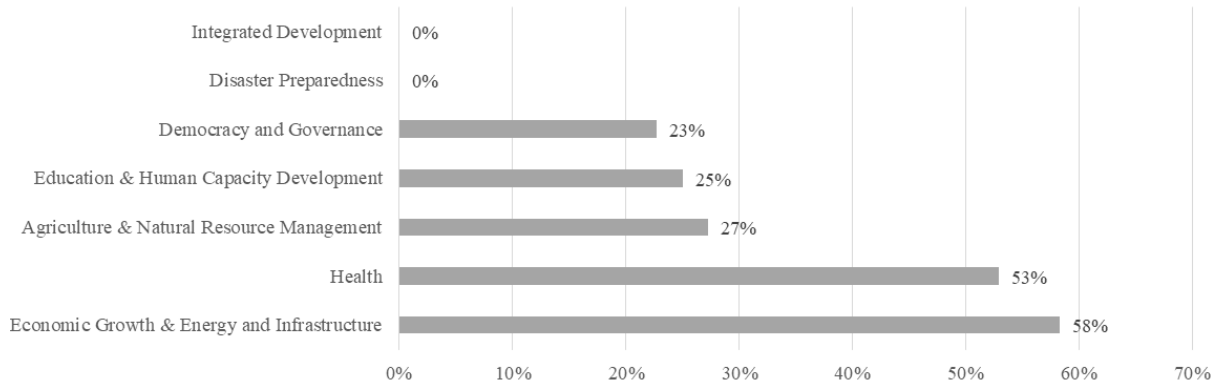


Figure 10. Percent of evaluations within sectors omitting gender differentiated effects.

Considering a regional basis, the Middle East (100%, n=2) and the Afghanistan/Pakistan (67%, n=3) regions had the highest proportion of evaluations omitting a discussion of gender differentiated effects (Figure 11). Incidentally, the two projects in the Middle East region were both in Egypt, one in the economic growth, energy and infrastructure sector, and the other in the education and human capacity development sector. The latter was exclusively focused on women, yet both evaluations were gender blind, and neither mentioned men.

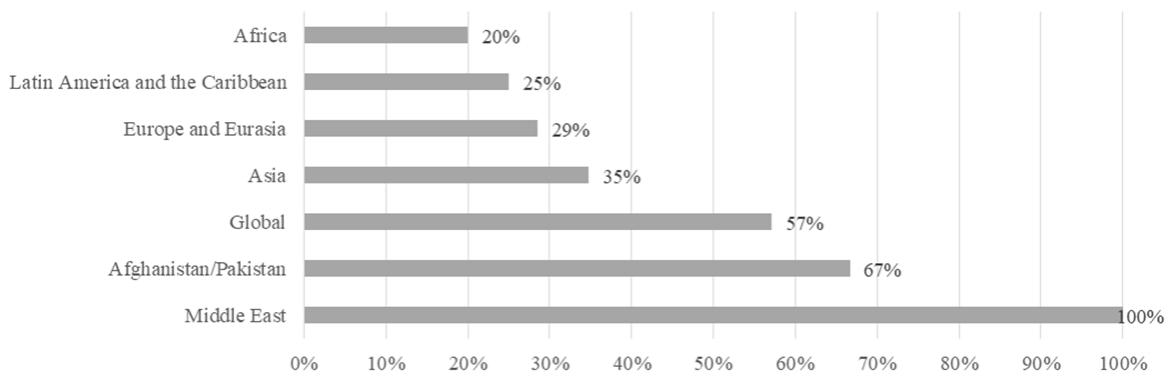


Figure 11. Percent of evaluations within USAID regions omitting gender differentiated effects.

Underlying Characteristics That May Support or Limit Engenderment of Evaluations

The 2013 Meta-Evaluation of Coverage and Quality identified various evaluation criteria as critical to a robust and effective evaluation, including presence of evaluation questions, inclusion of a statement of work in the annex, and various characteristics of the evaluation team (USAID, 2013). My analysis engendered these criteria to deepen understanding about what contributes to an effective engendered evaluation.

My analysis confirmed the trend asserted in the 2013 meta-evaluation that the number of evaluations posing evaluation questions is increasing. Ninety-six percent (77 out of 80) of the evaluations published in 2019 included stated evaluation questions and sub-questions, up from 80% in 2012 and 56% in 2009 (USAID, 2013). Thirty-nine percent (30 of 77) of these evaluations' questions explicitly referenced gender or women in either the main or sub-question.

Figure 12 presents the distribution of gender continuum rated evaluations across both those referencing gender or women in evaluation questions and those that don't. Out of the three evaluations with no evaluation questions, posing inquiries targeting objectives and themes, two reference gender or women.

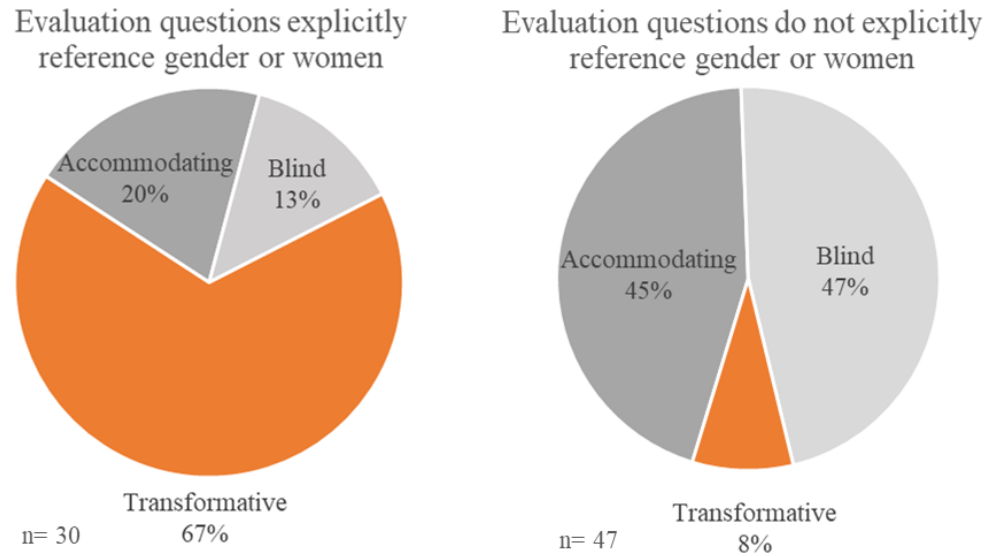


Figure 12. Distribution of transformative, accommodating, and gender blind evaluations across two groups, those explicitly referencing gender or women in evaluation questions, and those that do not.

Considering the evaluations published in 2019, the gender profile of the evaluation team could be ascertained in 53% (42). Of the 42 evaluations, 18 (43%, n=42) were conducted by evaluation teams in which women were in the minority. Thirty-nine percent of these teams had women as team leads. Of the 24 teams in which women represented at least 50% of team members, 71% had women as team leads. In total, the gender of the team lead could be ascertained in 48 (60%, n=80) of the teams. Twenty-eight (58%, n=48) had female team leads. Five of the teams had no women at all, 60% of these were in the Asia region. Sixty and 40% of the all-male teams were in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management and in the Economic Growth, and Energy & Infrastructure sectors, respectively.

Thirty-eight (48%, n=80) of the evaluations provided detailed enough biographies of the teams to ascertain technical specialty. Six of these had members with Gender

Specialist in their title. Of these, five (83%, n=6) evaluations were transformative. Eleven of the evaluations (29%, n=38) mentioned gender expertise in a team member's biography. Of these 11, three (27%, n=11) were transformative, six (55%, n=11) were accommodating, and two (18%, n=11) were blind.

Sixty-four evaluations (80%, n=80) were submitted with a statement of work in the Annex. Of these, twelve (19%, n=64) had no mention of women or gender. Perhaps not surprisingly, nearly 60% (7) of these were gender blind. In fact, when considering the majority of the criteria examined in this analysis, from presence of female team leads and team gender parity, to inclusion of comprehensive sex-disaggregated data and systematic analysis of differential effect, to transformative versus blind evaluations, those with reference to gender or women in the SOW score significantly higher (Table 4).

Table 4. Evaluation statements of work, with and without mention of gender or women, across engenderment criteria (n=64).

	SOW mentioned gender or women?			
	Yes		No	
	#	%	#	%
Total # of Evaluations	52	100%	12	100%
Female Team Leads	22	42%	2	17%
Women represent at least 50% of the team	21	40%	1	8%
Gender expertise on the evaluation team	14	27%	2	17%
Data sex-disaggregated at all levels	16	31%	2	17%
Systematic analysis of differential effects	12	23%	3	25%
Transformative	18	35%	2	17%
Blind	13	25%	7	58%

Chapter IV

Discussion

While the results of this meta-evaluation indicate improvement from results cited in the 2013 analysis of USAID evaluations, improvements are marginal indeed. Most (68%) of the evaluations did discuss gender differential effects refuting my prediction (Hypothesis 2) that the majority would not; however, most (61%) of them continued to be anecdotal and superficial.

Only 30% of evaluations with population level findings presented sex-disaggregated data across all person-level results, supporting Hypothesis 1. Furthermore, 61% of evaluations did not explicitly reference gender or women in evaluation questions or sub-questions, confirming Hypothesis 3, and an astounding 95% did not mention male roles or masculinity, as I predicted in Hypothesis 4, with only 46% mentioning men at all.

If USAID projects are to transform the processes and relationships through which men and women conduct gendered lives (by which women are often systematically disempowered and subjugated), ignoring men (i.e., half of the relationship paradigm) will doom the process from the start – as is evident in the majority of these evaluations, citing or implying ineffective, fleeting impacts of the projects evaluated (83% of evaluations).

Moreover, it is incumbent upon USAID to assess its own biases and gendered views within the SOWs it puts forth, and the evaluation teams it hires. Though women represented the minority on 43% of the evaluation teams, falsifying my Hypothesis 5, projects that are focused on sectors and topics believed to have less relevance to women (e.g., economic growth, energy and infrastructure) were more often staffed with all male

teams. Not surprisingly, discussion on gender dynamics and gender differential effects are often omitted from these evaluation discussions. On the other hand, health and most specifically reproductive, maternal and child health is most often considered more relevant to women, and so men are ignored or at least not substantively engaged – when in reality, men play a critical (and often singular) role in family planning decisions, contraceptive use, birth spacing, as well as other health seeking decisions concerning women.

Relatedly, sensitization of the enabling environment surrounding women and girls is critical to achieve lasting transformative effects towards equal power dynamics. Figure 13 presents an illustrative enabling environment through an adapted socio-ecological conceptual framework. In this framework, an intervention solely focused on one of the elements within the enabling environment (a single layer), will prove futile, unless adjacent layers are addressed and sensitized in a transformative way.

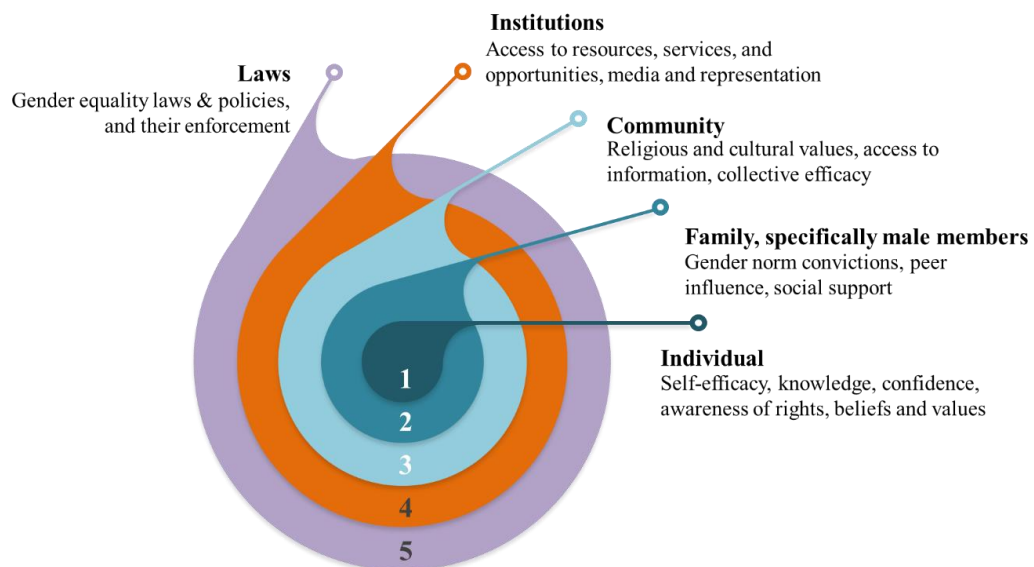


Figure 13. Socio-ecological model of an enabling environment for gender equality. Adapted from Bronfenbrenner (1977).

For example, the woman herself has to be sensitized to a dynamic of empowerment and autonomy that she may not be accustomed to through her lived experience (Glenski & Feenstra, 2019; Cruz, Wendt, & Ron, 2019). New economic opportunities and accessible activities will prove undue burdens for a woman whose husband would not assume child care taking responsibilities or share in home care activities to offset the time burden (Wilcox, et al., 2019). A mandated quota for female participation in local government will fail unless the husbands are sensitized to share in the household responsibilities in the wife's absence and to ensure he does not beat her for not performing her domestic duties in a timely manner. Similarly, her fellow community politicians must be sensitized so that they do not assume she is at the meetings to solely cook food for them, and so that they listen to her when she has something to say (Glenski & Feenstra, 2019). Employers, banks, and other institutions have to be sensitized so that the newly minted cohort of educated women in STEM or business graduates will be hired, heard, and have their skills applied to better their families, communities, and countries (Alexander et al., 2019). And so across evaluations spanning sectors, and regions, a recurring theme was the critical importance of reaching across the enabling environment beyond the immediate level of the intervention to effect real lasting change.

Indeed, as the issuer of tenders, USAID's guidance, the way that SOWs are written, and the extent to which they embody the intent of that guidance is critical to ensure consistently meaningful and systematic evaluation of gendered effects of USAID programming. Progress shows that although the majority (81%) of USAID evaluation SOWs do mention gender or women, refuting my Hypothesis 7, those that do yield more transformative evaluations than those that don't (Table 4), supporting my Hypothesis 8.

These findings do illustrate an improvement in USAID evaluation practice. And in fact, less than half of the evaluations are gender blind, refuting my Hypothesis 5. However, when considering that a total of 66% of these evaluations are gender blind or accommodate the norms and dynamics that retain women and girls at an inferior status, these results are hardly acceptable at this time.

Recommendations

Three key recommendations can be gleaned from this research. Firstly, USAID has to de-emphasize numbers (e.g., quantities of participants), and instead emphasize quality (of participation) and transformation of processes, relationships, and social norms that perpetuate a hierarchy that places women towards the bottom. Though guidance and rhetoric for this abounds, in practice, nearly half of the evaluations published in 2019 defined gender in categorical terms, equating gender to biological sex, and missing the relational nature of gender. Requiring gender-sensitive indicators and use of gender scales would enable projects and evaluators to systematically gauge the effect that USAID investment has on transforming power dynamics, access to resources, and decision-making abilities of women and girls around the world.

Related to this is the need to explicitly address men and social norms of masculinity in all interventions. Gender is all about relational social processes, and ignoring the masculine part of the equation inhibits the most well-intentioned programs from meeting their potential to effect lasting change. Furthermore, many aspects of masculine gender norms perpetuate deep inequities, resource depletion and violence, and exacerbate the burden of disease around the world. Perhaps instead of focusing primarily

on how to amend women's situations and alter their behavior, it is time to focus investment on transforming masculine gender norms.

Finally, USAID should require a system-informed approach to addressing gender inequality in projects and evaluations. Using a socio-ecological model to systematically identify and address the layers of the enabling environment surrounding women and girls at the center of an intervention, USAID would drive an informed and intentional approach that would ignite lasting change through the entire system, rather than be a mere flicker bound to fade upon termination of funding.

Research Limitations

The inferences possible from this research may be affected by several factors. Firstly, a single year may not be a truly representative sample, as there is precedent for peaks and valleys across gender-related characteristics within USAID evaluations. For example, the 2013 meta-evaluation uncovered significant variability in reporting on differential access and benefits for men and women (e.g., 42% in 2009, 23% in 2011, and a jump up to 40% in 2012) (USAID, 2013). A larger universe across several years of published evaluations would yield a more representative sample. Additionally, the larger sample would allow for a statistical regression analysis to be conducted to evaluate the strength of relationships between characteristics of evaluation teams and SOWs and gendered quality markers of the evaluations themselves, across sectors and USAID geographies.

Additionally, this research focused almost exclusively on gendered social norms and resulting social hierarchies. A similar analysis to capture effects of intersectionality,

where varying markers of differences are layered to result in degrees of marginalization and vulnerability, should be conducted.

The presence of a single coder (myself) for this systematic review may have hindered the ability to reduce bias, and may have increased the likelihood of inadvertently perpetrating a human error. On the other hand, presence of single coder ensured consistency in applying the codes.

Finally, no engagement or follow-up with evaluators was conducted as part of this research. Direct engagement and primary qualitative research would have allowed for triangulation of data and deeper insight into the state of engenderment in USAID evaluations.

Conclusions

USAID has made progress in advancing the practice of engendered evaluations; however, that progress is not nearly enough. What if every dollar of the \$34.6 billion that the United States spent on foreign assistance in 2019 was carefully informed by the most ubiquitous social norms that reinforce power dynamics, subjugating no less than half of the world's population? What if every one of those dollars contributed to transforming those social gendered norms, so that access to resources, decision-making, opportunity, and the very right to be free from violence and free to self-determine was available to all? These notions could become reality if USAID's approach to engendering development is systematized, enforced, and deepened. Women and girls hold the key to so many of today's development challenges, and bear the brunt of those challenges as well. By thoughtfully and systematically engendering every dollar, USAID would

advance all of its development objectives, and help catalyze the world towards realizing the vision of an equitable, just and peaceful world that truly leaves no one behind.

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Ancillary Appendix

List of USAID Performance and Impact Evaluations Included in Study Sample

- Abdul-Rahman, L., Abdulai, A., Sulemana, N., & Yao Mensah, D. (2019). *Final Report End Line Beneficiary-Based Survey (EBBS) of USAID-Ghana's Resiliency in Northern Ghana (RING) Project*. Report Prepared for USAID. Washington, DC: Saha Consulting and Services.
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