GESI MEAL Indicator Framework - User Guide

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Forward

Government buying accounts for an estimated one-fifth of global gross domestic product (GDP), which in 2018 was roughly USD$84.3trn.¹ Yet, women-owned businesses comprise only 1% of one-fifth of that figure (approximately USD$168.6mn).² And statistics about businesses owned by other socially excluded³ groups are nearly impossible to find.

In addition to helping countries meet the SDGs, there are also concrete economic and social benefits to inclusive procurement for the government. “An inclusive supplier portfolio enables supply chain and procurement professionals to leverage spending strategically in the supplier selection process.”⁴ Inclusivity in procurement can support jobs and help to manage unemployment. By procuring from a diverse supplier portfolio, the government has access to a wider choice of goods and services and can help foster competition and economic growth.

Benefits of inclusive procurement can be direct, when a service or good is designed to meet a particular equality requirement, such as elderly care or transport for disabled children They can also be indirect, where equality is not the main subject matter of the contract but is relevant because of the diverse end-users of a service. For example, a government procuring a web-based service should take reasonable steps to ensure that the end product caters to those who are visually impaired or do not speak the country’s primary language.⁵

Framework Use

All countries, despite differences in their legal frameworks, can take concrete steps to increase social inclusion in public procurement and subsequently decrease discrimination. However, to ensure that this is improved over time, the work that goes into making mainstreaming GESI in procurement needs to be measured, evaluated, assessed and learnt (MEAL) from. This is the purpose of the GESI MEAL Indicator Framework. It can be used to assess the ‘as is’ situation of GESI in procurement today and should then be used to conduct a MEAL assessment every two years to track progress.

Here we have compiled a list of tick-box categories that can be used as indicators to monitor and evaluate a country’s levels of gender equality and social inclusivity, both generally and in public procurement. The broad categories of data, policy, and government are the main areas where GESI initiatives are most visible and most important for the GDMP project. These have been broken down into categories of indicator type, and broken down further into sub-indicators.

² Ibid.
³ For a full definition, see the definitions section below.
We looked at international best practice, as well as context within each of the local countries to develop the framework. Definitions and reasons for including these indicators detailed below.

**NB:** While the framework focused on capturing quantitative data, it’s also important to emphasise the value of qualitative data, “qualitative data can reveal unexpected outcomes and intersecting inequalities.”6 UN Women have a resource here on why ‘Qualitative data is key to ensuring no one gets left behind by the coronavirus response’.

**Definitions of terms in the framework**

In terms of understanding GESI, “**Gender equality** is about transforming the distribution of opportunities, choices and resources available to women and men so that they have equal power to shape their lives and participate in the process. **Social inclusion** refers to the process of improving the conditions of disadvantaged individuals and groups - such as migrants, indigenous peoples, or other minorities.”7

**GESI in Procurement**

1. **Enacting GESI practices/policies throughout the procurement process:** GESI policies need to be implemented throughout the ICT procurement process so that all through the procurement life cycle buyers and suppliers are actively being sensitive to GESI issues. This includes looking at a supplier’s end-to-end supply chain. In practice, examples could include, ensuring to hire a diverse procurement team on the buyers side, employing the use of quotas to enable women owned businesses to more easily win tenders, require bidders to demonstrate commitment to GESI principles within their own organisations as well as in their supply chain, etc.

2. **Procuring ICT products and services which adhere to GESI standards:** this means these products or services need to be accessible to all. Examples of what this would look like in practice include, ensuring computers have all the accessibility requirements for users, onlines services can be used by all, including users with low literacy rates, users with disabilities such as dyslexia, etc.

Within the framework these below terms are used, for the sake of clarity they are defined below.

- **Gender**, which is defined as “a social construction relating to behaviours and attributes based on labels of masculinity and femininity; gender identity is a personal, internal perception of oneself and so the gender category someone identifies with may not match the sex they were assigned at birth.”8

- **Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI):**9 Sexual orientation refers to the capacity of each human being for affection, attraction and relationship with people of the same gender, the opposite gender or multiple genders. Gender identity refers to: “a person’s deeply felt individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth, and includes the personal sense of the body and other expressions of gender (that is, ‘gender

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6 Cookson, Tara Patricia, and Lorena Fuentes. UN Women, 2020, “Qualitative Data Is Key to Ensuring No One Gets Left behind by the Coronavirus Response”, data.unwomen.org/features/qualitative-data-key-ensuring-no-one-gets-left-behind-coronavirus-response?fbclid=IwAR0UuLMAs73Wo5WZJFT4zDc2036cUli7ddG651XDjmKc2K43hDzooa7IQ.


9 Although sexual orientation and gender identity are often grouped together by international organisations, the two are not necessarily inherently linked in any way.
expression”) such as dress, speech and mannerisms.”

The term SOGI is used by organisations such as the Council of Europe and the United Nations to recognise the ways in which sexual orientation and gender identity are fluid, evolving and may resist categorisation. Equally, the term SOGI is used for international contexts as opposed to the English ‘LGBTQ+’ phrasing: words such as ‘gay’, ‘lesbian’ and ‘bisexual’ may signify different things in different (cultural) contexts. We use both formulations in this report.

- **Race/ethnicity** for which “no internationally accepted criteria are possible” due to this dimension being highly specific to national or regional contexts. That said, “Some of the criteria by which ethnic groups are identified are ethnic nationality (i.e. country or area of origin, as distinct from citizenship or country of legal nationality), race, colour, language, religion, customs of dress or eating, tribe or various combinations of these characteristics.”

Race, even moreso than ‘ethnicity’, is an often highly politicised (and damaging) social categorisation “forged historically through oppression, slavery, and conquest.” There is little to no scientific or genetic basis for racial categorisation.

- **Disability**, which the UN proposes be understood broadly as “those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.” This definition of disability is thus sensitive to the ways in which an impairment itself is most disabling in a society or institution which create barriers for those with atypical behaviours, physicalities, psychologies and brains. The definition of ‘disability’ also calls to attention the concept of **neurodiversity**: the idea that neurological variations amongst people are an important and valuable part of human life. Conditions such as autism and dyslexia should be understood as less common and classified as ‘neurodivergent’, rather than less ‘normal’.

Why data is important
Collecting quantitative data around GESI issues allows stakeholders to measure and assess their levels of inclusivity. Without data, there’s no way to monitor whether or not initiatives are working, whether public procurement is benefitting women and minorities, and who is being excluded from the process.

12 Concepts of race and ethnicity can also further exclude groups who don’t neatly fall into certain categories, such as Irish travellers or Roma in the British and European contexts.
13 “United Nations Statistics Division - Demographic and Social Statistics.”
Defining ownership

It can be hard to determine who really owns a company and who is benefitting from the revenue. It is therefore important to ensure that your organisation or government has a clear understanding of what it means to have a women- or minority-owned business. Often the definition, for example, of a woman owned business is where a woman or women hold 51% of the shares. As ownership can be complex, it is recommended that users of this framework look at a number of factors that could affect who actually benefits from a company’s revenues.

A method that is commonly used to address this issue is certifying businesses as women- and/or minority-owned. UN Women have a good resource that focuses on procuring from women and goes into how certification of women owned businesses. It also provides further information on certifying organisations in other areas such as SOGI, minority and indigenous owned businesses. It is therefore recommended to determine if your organisation currently has a certification process and if not look to create one.

When it comes to preferential treatment of women and minority owned business in public procurement it is also important to consider the current marketplace. If there are very few women-owned businesses i.e. where a woman or women hold 51% of the shares, it may be worth still providing preferential treatment to organisations where women hold only 30% of shares for instance. However, at the same time, governments need to be working to create a larger database of women and minority owned businesses, so that the percentage can be increased overtime. This can be done through outreach and training programmes as well as reserving financial resources to support the creation of these businesses. Often these organisations lack access to financing options, it is therefore important that governments create initiatives that focus on these issues. For further information on the credit gap, UN Women have a great resource on ‘How to Source from women-owned businesses’.

Why SMEs are important

Women and socially excluded groups are more likely to own and operate SMEs than larger corporations. 35% of all SMEs are owned by women and the number increases as you take an intersectional approach.19

When giving preferential treatment to SMEs it is also important to define the term. We therefore suggest each procuring organisation/government define this term. The OECD gives clear guidance on how to do this.

Quotas and more

The framework focuses a lot on quotas for each group. While quotas can be used to increase representation it is also important to focus on other ways to empower socially excluded groups. It is therefore recommended that governments create training programmes focused on GESI issues in procurement. This training should be given to all employees associated with procurement, no matter the level of responsibility they hold. This will allow all employees to engage with GESI and feel empowered to make change. Where procurement is decentralised, governments can create working groups across departments to share GESI best practices, identify gaps in equalities provisions and areas for improvement.

**Sustainable roadmap**
Governments should create their own sustainable procurement roadmaps to trace how procuring entities will integrate a sustainable approach across all aspects of the procuring lifecycle. Governments should anticipate and mitigate against crises and develop strategies to protect high-risk suppliers from procurement exclusion. Governments must embed GESI principles throughout the procurement process to prevent further exclusion of marginalised suppliers. The UN provides a clear overview of sustainable procurement. The UK Government Digital Service along with Development Gateway have also produced a COVID Indicator Framework for buying during a crisis.

**Evaluation process**
It is important to create a process which evaluates the successes and failures of a policy, law or programme which is aimed at creating more inclusion in the procurement process. While this framework can give users an overall idea of success (i.e. there has been an increase in women owned businesses winning tenders), it cannot directly link these to specific policies, laws and programmes. Governments need to ensure these policies are properly evaluated using both quantitative and qualitative measures. When creating these, governments should write them with an evaluation framework in mind so that success and impacts can be measured easily.

**UN Guidelines**
The UN has created a set of indicators that can also be adapted to suit GDMP needs. This is an additional resource to understand how to best fit GESI into the procurement process.

**MAPS Initiative**
The Methodology for Assessing Procurement Systems (MAPS) is a great tool to help governments assess public procurement systems. This tool is recommended when looking to evaluate a procurement system in its entirety. However, in order to mainstream GESI concerns, it should be used in conjunction with this framework.