

Integrating and Mainstreaming Gender into Social and Behavior Change Programs: What Does it Take?

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Introduction

Gender mainstreaming was first defined in the United Nations Economic and Social Council Agreed Conclusions, 1997/2, as "...a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality" (UN Women, 2001).

Sustainable Development Goal 5 calls for achievement of gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls. Gender mainstreaming is the process of incorporating a gender perspective into policies, strategies, administrative functions and organizational culture. This process results in gender integration. Gender integration occurs when strategies to incorporate gender are applied in program design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. It takes gender considerations into account and compensates for gender-based inequalities. An intervention that uses group discussion among boys and girls about gender norms and their influence on careers and compensation is an example of integrating gender into the program design and implementation (Land O'Lakes International Development, 2015).

Background and Purpose

Gender norms often have an influence on access to information and services globally. These norms drive behaviors and power disparities that can lead to suboptimal health outcomes for women and girls. It is widely recognized that gender inequality affects development outcomes; approaches that do not integrate gender may be less likely to improve systems or norms that perpetuate inequality.

The purpose of the literature review is to gather evidence in gender mainstreaming and integration for NGOs, CBOs, Ministries of Health, and others that would like to incorporate gender mainstreaming and gender integration into their programming. This review will inform a set of lessons learned and best practices for global development professionals on how to incorporate these elements into their programming.

Results

Based on inclusion and exclusion criteria, 32 documents were included in the review. Ten themes in gender mainstreaming and gender integration were identified. Themes and main results are found below.

Themes	Result
1. Capacity building for participation in governance	Participation of women is minimal in governance at national, local, and community levels
2. Meaningful engagement of men and women	Meaningful engagement of men of all ages has shown to be effective in changing behaviors and beliefs
3. Improving economic growth	Gender inequality is costly to economic growth and can undermine productivity, trade performance and capacity
4. Community mobilization and engagement (CME)	CME takes into account communities' attitudes towards gender roles before transforming cultural norms when using behavior change programs
5. Reduction in power inequalities, gender-based violence, harmful practices	Unequal power over everyday events, especially for women, makes them vulnerable to harmful practices, e.g. domestic violence, STDs
6. Using gender throughout the program cycle to improve outcomes	Inclusion and participation of men and women as equal stakeholders and performing formative research before designing a program can identify social and gender dynamics
7. Gender integration in organizations and staff training	Staff trainings can ensure gender equitable policies, work practices, commitments, leadership and administrative accountability
8. Human resources for health and gender	There is disparity in pay, recognition, and promotion opportunities for women working in the global health force
9. Health inequality and gender	Health inequality in gender is sometimes dictated by biological and social factors
10. Areas for improvement in gender mainstreaming and integration	There are many areas in gender mainstreaming and integration that requires further attention

Methods

Gray literature, articles, and reports were collected from members of the CORE group. A search was conducted through Development Exchange Clearinghouse, Popline, PubMed, and Google Scholar using keywords associated with gender mainstreaming and integration. Inclusion criteria: articles or reports published between 2005-2015; any/all key words used. Exclusion criteria: documents focused on terms including gender sensitivity or gender awareness (the definitions of these terms are different from gender mainstreaming and gender integration); non-English documents, articles or reports not including keywords or terms.

Conclusion

Cultural norms can dictate gender inequalities, which are difficult to address and vary by community. Integrating and mainstreaming gender is a complex process that requires changes in attitudes and behaviors of individuals within a community, with equal cooperation and education of society. Social and Behavior Change (SBC) programs are important in addressing cultural norms, especially gender stereotyping. Gender needs to be integrated at all stages of SBC program design and implementation to ensure empowerment of women and to encourage meaningful participation of men and boys. Below are highlights from the conclusion by theme.

Conclusions Based on Ten Main Themes

1. Gender mainstreaming and integration through capacity building activities can ensure balance in participation, resulting in removal of structural and system barriers to participation in governance.
2. SBC programs should encourage involvement of men and boys to help address stereotypical issues and encourage uptake of positive behaviors.
3. Workplace equality among men and women should be promoted.
4. SBC programs should support programs that integrate gender roles at multiple levels, including: individual; family; and community.
5. SBC programs should aim to address the influence of social norms on gender-related harmful practices.
6. Integrating gender in SBC programming can be used to produce positive outcomes, such as increased trust on women's ability to perform a task and equal distribution of knowledge between men and women.
7. SBC programs need to address the quality and standards of their training programs to ensure equal representation of women and men.
8. SBC programs should recognize why disparities are present and address these issues.
9. Acute and chronic health conditions among men and women can be reduced by a large extent through addressing health inequality as a result of social and cultural norms.
10. Primary attention should be given to gender-related health bias, e.g., STDs, and equal access to health care for men and women.

Limitations

The web-based search resulted in innumerable peer-reviewed articles and reports. Due to time constraints, not all articles were reviewed. Ten web links were not accessible and were excluded from the review. The gray literature and reports provided more practical lessons for on the ground practitioners, therefore these represent the main papers included. The authors decided to keep the focus on practical guidelines for the purposes of the guidance to follow. Future literature reviews may want to review peer reviewed articles in more detail.

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