



Gender Indicators



Summary

Measurements of gender equality might address changes in the relations between men and women, the difference in impact of a particular policy, programme or activity on women and men, or changes in the status or situation of men and women. The lack of sex-disaggregated water data is a major obstacle to the production of scientific evidence on gender inequalities and to the formulation of gender-transformative policies. This Tool introduces how to identify, develop, and implement indicators that measure qualitative and quantitative changes towards gender equality in the water sector.

Defining Gender Indicators

An indicator can be described as a reference point against which changes over time can be assessed. Specifically, a gender-sensitive/responsive indicator is one that measures gender-related changes—that is the situation of men and women and the resulting gap between women and men—in a given society/setting over time. Gender-responsive indicators are an attempt at reflecting an understanding of gender roles and inequalities to encourage equal participation, including equal and fair distribution of benefits. The need for high-quality, timely and reliable disaggregated data, including by sex, and therefore the need for measuring the progress in achieving gender equality, is dictated by the evidence that sex-disaggregated data, especially in the water sector, are among the least available across the national-level indicators. Investing in “engendering” water would contribute to the strengthening of social inclusion, eradicating poverty, and advancing environmental sustainability.

Types of Gender Indicators

Gender indicators can be generally categorised into two groups: (1) **quantitative, sex-disaggregated statistical data** (facts and figures that provide separate measures for men and women); and/or (2) on **qualitative changes** (for example, increases in women's levels of empowerment or in attitude changes about gender equality). Given that gender indicators are not merely statistics on men and women, and should rather capture the contributions of men and women to the society, their different needs and problems, a set of both quantitative and qualitative indicators should ideally be devised that cover all relevant aspects. Whereas in isolation the interpretation of some indicators may be misleading, a rich set of combined indicators (as well as mixed-method approaches) could generate richer data and act as strategic levers for gender mainstreaming. Indicators can be used for advocacy and can help make the case for action by highlighting key issues, backed up with statistics and/or qualitative evidence; they enable better planning and implementation; help reveal barriers to achieving success; can be used to hold policy makers accountable for their actions, or lack of action; can provide vital information for adjusting programmes and activities so that they better achieve gender equality goals and do not create adverse impacts on women and men. They can also be used to measure the extent of gender equality within development organizations at all levels, including the gender-sensitivity of policies and programmes, as well as internal organizational structure, procedures, culture and human resources.

Measuring Change Across Scales

Measuring change is not a merely technical exercise, but also and primarily a political process. Therefore, the need to carefully consider what to measure, why, and how; and to tailor broad templates and frameworks, including for example international gender indicators, to regional and even smaller scale contexts—based on the assumption that gender inequalities play out in different ways depending on the social, cultural or political context. In the same vein, there is increasing awareness that, to be really meaningful, indicators should be derived in consultation with local people in order to effectively reflect the gender context of a particular region, country or community.

The need to monitor progress toward internationally agreed gender-related policy goals has led in recent years to the proliferation of indicators. The references of this tool provide good examples of gender indicators at the international level—in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Gender-related Development Index (GDI) ([UNDP, 2020](#)), the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) ([Adjei, 2015](#)), and international composite indices that complement and expand on the GDI and GEM, for example the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index (GGI) ([WEF, 2021](#)); at the regional level—for example, the Africa Gender and Development Index (AGDI) ([UNECA, 2017](#)); at the country level.

Disaggregated Data Approaches in Water Governance

Gender-responsive indicators for water assessment, monitoring, and reporting cover the following priority topics: gender-responsive water governance; safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene; gender-specific knowledge resources; transboundary water management; water for agricultural uses; water for industry and enterprise; human rights-based water resources management; water, migration, displacement and climate change; indigenous and traditional knowledge, and community water rights; and water education and training.

What role can sex- and age-disaggregated data (SADD) – as a key component of any gender analysis ([Tool B5.01](#)) – play in the water sector? In humanitarian response to emergencies of violent conflict or natural disaster, for example, using SADD to incorporate gender equality into WASH programming is critical ([IASC, 2017](#)). Both the collection, analysis and use of SADD to assess the needs and vulnerabilities of the affected communities as well as the use of indicators to clearly show if the specific objective of the operation has been achieved will make the delivery of assistance more effective and efficient ([Benelli, Mazurana and Walker, 2012](#)). In these contexts, specific objective indicators can be, for example, the “percentage of women, girls, men and boys, who report feeling safe while accessing sanitation services” or “a decrease in the percentage of back and joint injuries and pain among women and girls” ([IASC, 2017, 362](#)).

Another example from the water sector is the World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP) toolkit on sex-disaggregated water indicators and methodology ([UNESCO, 2019](#)), which has been tested within several areas of the [Groundwater Resources Governance in Transboundary Aquifers \(GGRETA\) project](#). The multi-regional project is currently using sex-disaggregated indicators for water assessment, monitoring and reporting in the field. The project aims to develop comparable sex-disaggregated data and contribute to the mainstreaming of gender-sensitive water monitoring in multiple country contexts ([UNESCO, 2019](#); [IW:LEARN, 2017](#)).

There are additional examples of indicators and tools included in the references which have been specifically developed for measuring gender performance and women’s empowerment in irrigation or agriculture projects. This includes the Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) ([IPFRI, 2021](#); [Malapit et al., 2019](#); [van Koppen, 2002](#)) or the Gender in Irrigation Learning and Improvement Tool (GILIT) ([Lefore, Weight and Rubin, 2017](#)).

Thematic Tagging

Gender

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