

OVERVIEW

Cross-organisational work

Project name:

IIED gender equality review and audit

Project leader:

Isilda Nhantumbo

Time frame:

November 2014–December 2015

Budget:

£50,000

Objective:

To strengthen capacity to put gender equality and equity at the centre of IIED's work and culture, and as a key part of our organisational mission.

PROJECT SUMMARY

Gender inequalities hinder IIED in its mission to help build a fairer and more sustainable world. In 2014, building on earlier reflections about gender-related issues, IIED launched a gender review and audit to examine both organisational processes and research programmes through a gender lens. The process, which involved the participation of staff in all areas of the organisation, produced a Gender Manifesto, an action plan and the political will to move forward. In 2016, IIED leadership took steps to integrate the recommendations into business planning and budget operations.

CHANGE IN ACTION

Gender increasingly plays a key role in much of IIED's work. Examples include research around land rights and large-scale, land-based investment treaties, analysis of the deforestation-commodities-gender nexus, evaluation of gender inequalities in national climate change policies and exploration of access to food in urban areas through a gender lens. But IIED wants to do more, and do it better. Through a gender audit, the Institute could hold up a mirror to its own policies. Enhanced awareness and knowledge of how IIED works internally can lead to meaningful action to promote

Holding up the mirror

IIED seeks to put gender equality and equity into the heart of its research, action and work culture

IIED has long striven to understand how inequalities between men and women affect sustainable development. But only recently have we begun to examine our own approach to gender. In 2013, IIED met Swedish institutions to share lessons on integrating gender into research programmes. In particular, the meeting explored how the Swedish International Development Agency supports gender equality objectives in its programmes.

A year later, researchers and development practitioners gathered at a larger event to look at how gender relates to environmental change – in climate change, land and natural resources, and urban planning. This larger meeting focused exclusively on the programmatic side of IIED. Encouraged by our trustees and donors, IIED launched a process to broaden the focus. The 2014 'gender review and audit' examined gender roles, relations and dynamics within all aspects of our operations – from research strategy and methodology to internal structures and systems.

Building internal capacity

Many development agencies, think tanks and multilateral organisations have embraced gender audits as an important tool. Such audits are often run by external consultants. While this allows for a more 'neutral' approach, it can also undermine ownership of the process.

For IIED, the gender audit was not simply about generating knowledge and formulating a plan of action: it was also about building internal capacity and ownership. A multidisciplinary steering

group shaped the process, guided by an external gender expert. The core team of IIED staff comprised different positions and skills to help participants consider various perspectives. It was supported by long-serving staff who brought their corporate memory of IIED and gender issues; as well as participants themselves, who brought expertise in research, facilitation, organisation, human resources and communication.

In this way, we began building capacity for the gender agenda through the process itself. We also paved the way for engaging leaders, identifying champions and getting buy-in from staff.

Dual-track approaches

The team tried to approach the gender review and audit holistically. The theory of change, for example, identified the need to change both how IIED embraces internal policies and processes that advance gender equality, as well as how it delivers its mission. And our analytical framework of rights, power and equity was applied across both 'tracks'.

The audit process itself also embodied several approaches. As a first step, the team took a 'snapshot' of the historical and current context for gender equality and equity in IIED's organisational structure, staff, operations, policies, cultures, projects, finance and programmes.

In parallel, the team interviewed leaders to elicit their views, expectations and commitment to the process and outcomes. It also analysed a selection of IIED's research

greater gender equality within the work environment, as well as in its research programmes. The transformation towards gender equality manifests through security of rights (claimed and realised), through power (representation, participation and influence) and through equity (of monetary and non-monetary benefits, and economic empowerment). This transformation is crucial for the meaningful participation of both men and women in sustainable development.

KEY LESSONS LEARNT & INNOVATIONS

- By appointing staff to lead the audit, with input from an external gender expert, the Institute took ownership of the process. Early engagement of leaders helped encourage buy-in from staff and identify champions to take the agenda forward.
- The combination of 'hard facts' and an inclusive consultation process gave the Institute a broad overview of the issues. This helped identify gaps in IIED's research, as well as its internal policies, tools, structures and systems.
- Consultation channels (including safe anonymous spaces) reflected the needs of different participants and captured diverse kinds of information. Communicating data and information in attractive, accessible and respectful ways helped fuel engagement.

PARTICIPANT VIEW

The values that we are promoting through our work in terms of equality via partners and projects should also be reflected internally in the policies of the institute. It's about being inward and outward looking, coherence and integrity.

Participant of the gender review and audit



Participants of a focus group in Mali.

Emily Polack

through the gender lens set out in the theory of change.

Building on this initial research, the team consulted groups and departments, organised focus groups (including with recent mothers and fathers), held an online survey and facilitated reflections on culture, behaviours and attitudes.

This combination of 'hard facts' and inclusive consultations enabled IIED to reflect deeply at both personal and collective levels. Participants examined how principles of equality articulated in IIED policies translate into practical opportunities for men and women, identifying gaps. They also reflected on how the make-up of our workforce, cultural norms and decision-making structures affect power relations.

Diverse communication channels

Throughout the process, we used communication to share progress and build momentum for change. By using diverse consultation channels, we encouraged greater participation. An anonymous online survey, for example, offered staff a safe space to voice sensitive issues. Other channels included e-mail updates and regular catch-ups with the institute's leaders.

The audit identified the need for IIED to find ways to bridge external and internal communication channels to provide coherent messaging and visibility on gender equality and equity.

Outcomes and next steps

Building on the audit's findings, the team developed an institutional '[Gender Manifesto](#)' to articulate our vision and ambition for putting gender into the heart of IIED. We identified two goals: 1. to build a diverse and fulfilled workforce that thrives in its career, family and personal life; and 2. to produce high-quality research that shapes gender equality and equity for sustainable development.

This manifesto was presented to staff in February 2016. At the same time, IIED's senior managers agreed to integrate a fully-costed action plan into our business planning and budgeting process, and implementation will continue throughout 2016 and beyond. We are on the road towards a gender transformative agenda.



Knowledge Products

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This research was funded by Danida, Irish Aid and Sida, however the views expressed do not necessarily reflect the views of the funders.