

Step-by-step: A Roadmap to Gender and Youth Integration in Food Security and Resilience Programs

The [Gender and Youth Activity \(GAYA\)](#) hosted a Stakeholder Consultation (SHC) on May 24–25, 2023, to provide a forum to hear directly from USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) implementing partners (IPs). During this event, IPs worked to identify the ideal sequence of actions Resilience Food Security Activities (RFSAs) and emergency programs (EPs) should take to ensure gender and youth integration within their activities, as well as the attitudes or beliefs held by IP staff that either prevent or enable gender and youth integration.

Prior to the consultation, GAYA identified critical steps required for gender and youth integration via key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs). During the consultation, participants were invited to put a series of previously identified steps into an ideal sequential order, or suggest additions and adaptations. This document outlines the steps and sequence identified by IPs both prior to and during the SHC. The process and results of the SHC are further detailed in the [SHC Event Report](#).

Navigating this Document

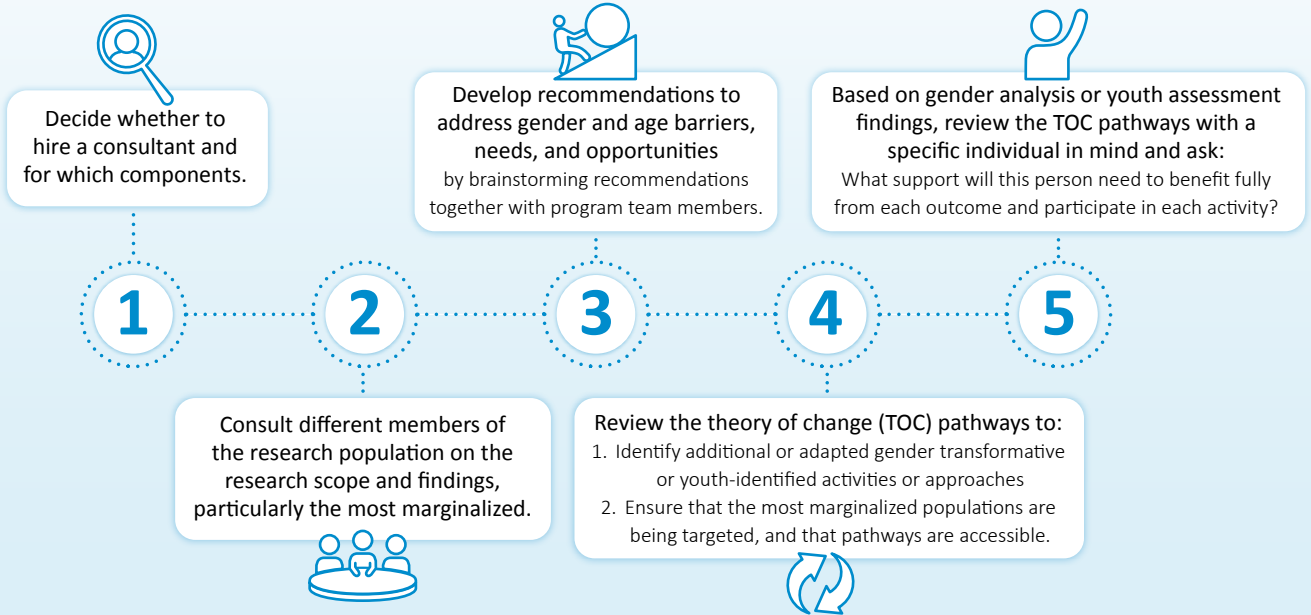
Steps contained in this document could be initiated or performed by a program’s leadership team, technical advisors (including gender and youth advisors), external research consultants, or other program implementation team members, depending on the staffing structure of the program and staff availability. Where IPs specifically mentioned positions that needed to be involved, those individual positions were called out. Where IPs identified multiple steps that needed to occur simultaneously, that is indicated.

Steps are presented in two program phases: **Gender Analysis or Youth Assessment and Program Adaptation**; and **Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning and Program Adaptation**. While the SHC and pre-consultation KIIs and FGDs also explored “Design and Implementation,” SHC participants saw value in integrating these steps within the other program phases.

Step-by-step: A Roadmap to Gender and Youth Integration in Food Security and Resilience Programs by Gender and Youth Activity (GAYA)

GAYA's Stakeholder Consultation on May 24–25, 2023, and pre-consultation interviews conducted in April 2023, aimed to identify the ideal sequence of actions implementing partners (IPs) should take to ensure gender and youth integration in food security and resilience programs. During the consultation, participants were invited to put a series of previously identified steps into an ideal sequential order. Participants were also allowed to nominate new steps or re-word steps. The process and results of the stakeholder consultation are further detailed in the [Stakeholder Consultation Event Report](#).

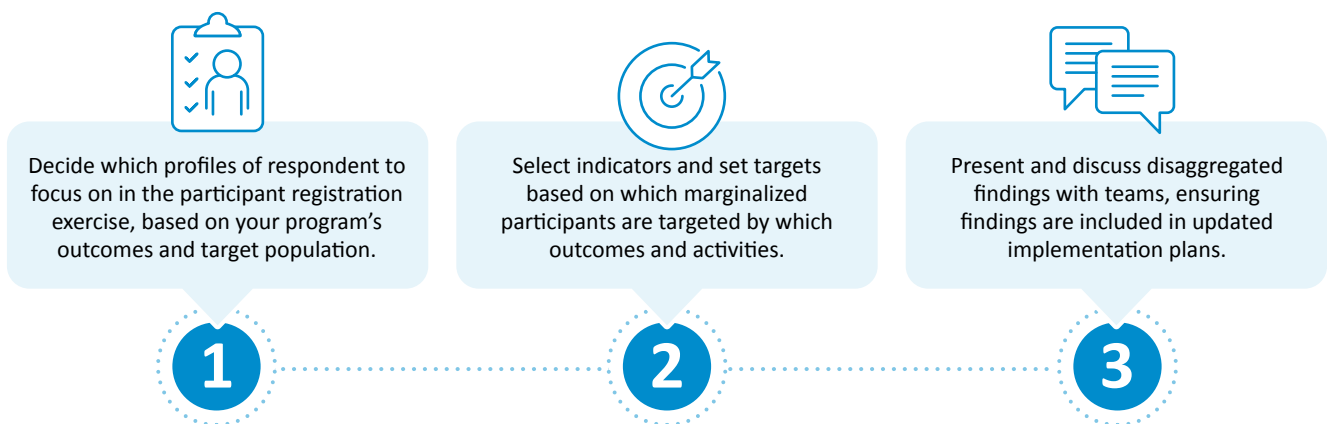
GENDER ANALYSIS OR YOUTH ASSESSMENT



Crosscutting Bright Ideas!

Involve the program team as observers or data collectors to strengthen their capacity and understanding of the gender and youth landscape.

MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND LEARNING



Crosscutting Bright Ideas!

Strengthen staff capacity and unpack unconscious bias among the program team, program partners, and program representatives.



Gender Analysis or Youth Assessment (and Program Adaptation) Steps

Scoping or Planning for Research

1. **Define the budget and timing for the research:** Defining the budget will inform the extent to which the research needs to be done internally (rather than through external consultants or enumerators), and the amount of time that can be devoted to the research. Budgeting should also consider the deadline for the research, or when it needs to be completed to adequately inform the program.
2. **Consult the program team on the research scope** to increase ownership and buy-in. Develop initial research questions or an understanding of where knowledge gaps might exist.
3. **Select a conceptual framework for the analysis or assessment:** Develop or select a conceptual framework to guide the analysis (ex: [ADS 205 domains](#), social-ecological framework, etc.).
4. **Make key decisions regarding the research.** The sequence of these sub-steps will depend on timing considerations and staff availability (see step 1 above):
 - a. **Decide whether to conduct youth and gender research as part of the same package, or as different studies.** BHA and GAYA recommend that youth and gender research be separated if significant questions in both areas exist, and if funding and time are available.
 - b. **Decide whether to hire a consultant and for which components:** Options include all or pieces of the following: writing the study scope of work; conducting the desk review; developing data collection tools and sampling strategy; conducting data collection; analyzing data; reporting; data validation; and action planning. Have a vision for what skills are most important in the selected consultant and how the consultant will be managed. Plan for regular coordination and contact and set clear expectations. As much as possible, include the external consultant as part of the team.
 - c. **Conduct a desk review:** Review secondary documents, including any assessments previously done in the target area, and any monitoring or evaluation data from previous programs. Use the desk review to understand what you know already and what remains unknown. Ideally, the desk review is done internally, before the scope of work and research questions are drafted, and is shared with external researchers (if using).
 - d. **Refine the scope of work (SOW) or terms of reference (TOR)** based on gaps in secondary data (from the desk review), and the program's theory of change (TOC). Research questions may include elements around specific behaviors that the program wishes to shift, for example, what is driving a behavior, who reinforces the behavior, etc.
 - e. **Decide which identities to focus on through research**, particularly considering gender, age, and other dynamics, based on who is the most marginalized and who each program component aims to reach. Identify which intersectional dynamics will be highlighted and prioritized, and the sampling strategy that will be used.

- f. **Create a data analysis plan** linking methods and data collection questions to the overall research questions and selected conceptual framework, to ensure all data collected falls within the research scope. Establish the expected use of the data that will answer each research question.
 - g. **Identify the roles that the internal team will play in the research process.** Ensure that their time is available and communicate expectations clearly.
 - h. **Identify intersectional elements that will be explored through other refine and implement studies** (RFSAs only) **and baseline studies or needs assessments** (all programs). Set up a data sharing, triangulation, and validation coordination plan between the different pieces of research.
5. **Participate in the gender and youth consultation** (RFSAs only) to narrow the study scope and decide whether to incorporate youth issues or do a separate youth study. Ensure that the desk review is done **before** the gender and youth consultation begins.
 6. **Refine the SOW or TOR based on the gender and youth consultation** (RFSAs only).
 7. **Obtain BHA approval on the SOW or TOR** (RFSAs only).
 8. **Consult different members of the research population on the research scope, particularly the most marginalized.** Ask them about their priorities for research questions and adjust to align with their priorities.

Data Collection

9. **Develop data collection tools, involving the program team,** that align with the research questions and the selected conceptual framework. Focus on qualitative data collection, such as FGDs, KIIs, asset mapping, and barrier analysis around key behaviors, as well as participatory methods like role playing and drawing. Involve the program team in developing data collection tools to ensure the tools are contextually and programmatically relevant. Ensure data collection tools contain the necessary fields to enable disaggregation of data.
10. **Translate data collection tools and ensure all tools are accessible:** Ensure the data collection tools are available in the languages spoken by community members and any participatory exercises are accessible for those participating. Verify and test the translated questions and have responses translated back to ensure that the translation carries the original meaning.
11. **Pilot data collection tools:** Ensure data collection tools are contextually appropriate by having individuals from different demographic groups (including different ages and genders) provide feedback on or inform the questions. Revisit the data analysis plan to ensure that tools are generating the types and depth of data needed.
12. **Gather data using the developed tools.**
13. **Debrief regularly with the program team and enumerators:** The program team should conduct iterative, ongoing sensemaking to track saturation (whether enough data has been collected to draw necessary conclusions), but more importantly, to ensure program team ownership over the results. Ask the data collectors and observers to reflect on what they heard and noticed, and how it might be relevant to the program. Debrief daily (or as often as feasible) to ensure data collectors are getting the right level of detail, and asking questions and probing correctly, and to track data saturation.

STEPS IN ACTION

During the *Sahel Youth Learning and Reflection Workshop*, Save the Children and ACDI/VOCA came together to unleash the power of collaborative learning. Program staff from three RFSAs met to share insights and identify successful approaches for [Positive Youth Development](#). [Read more here.](#)

Analysis and Reporting

14. **Analyze data based on the selected framework:** Apply qualitative coding, either from pre-existing codes (deductive) or iteratively generated list of codes (inductive). Use the selected analytical framework, the program TOC, or the research questions, to organize and understand results.
15. **Prepare findings** related to gender or age-specific barriers, needs, and opportunities related to the program's TOC. Findings should state major observations, differences between what was expected and observed, and cite the data source from which the finding was drawn. If quantitative and qualitative data are used, findings should triangulate between the data types.

16. **Share findings across coordinating programs or other ongoing research.** Pull disaggregated analysis from other ongoing studies. Triangulate findings between studies.
17. **Validate and share draft findings with the program team:** As a program team, decide whether to accept or reject each finding. Rejection should be clearly documented (why) for record-keeping purposes, as well as for the development of the [Gender and Youth Action Plan](#). The staff involved may vary but should at least involve key personnel, all sector leads, gender, youth, and social dynamics team, the monitoring, evaluation, and learning team, and the authoring consultant(s) or internal researchers.
18. **Validate and share draft findings with the research population:** Consult members of your research population, including community members, women, young people, and strategic team members, in validating findings and developing recommendations. Ensure that findings are sufficiently concise, understandable, and interesting for the target audience.
19. **Develop recommendations to address gender and age barriers, needs, and opportunities** by brainstorming recommendations together with program team members and consultants, and discussing recommendations together with the senior management team.
20. **Revise or develop the theory of change and program design to ensure that each objective, outcome, and activity are thought through from both gender and youth perspectives:** Bring together staff who are responsible for each objective or sector, as well as the MEL team. Discuss and review the findings according to the sector and the TOC. Identify whether the program’s pathways of change are reflected. Reflect on implications of the results on the program and identify what additional interventions are needed to design to address gaps.
 - a. **Review the TOC pathways and identify additional or adapted gender transformative or youth-identified activities or approaches** that may need to be added:
 - i. **Identify gender transformative models that have worked in other contexts:** Where they exist, contextualize and adapt prior models based on program scope and objectives. Contextualize, in terms of language and program design and based on findings. Sit with technical leads to figure out the entry points for various technical sectors and revise content to be more reflective of program goals and activities. Look beyond training to other kinds of activities.
 - ii. **Design accessible new activities and materials:** Using gender analysis findings, design new activities based on the program TOC. Ensure materials include images for nonliterate populations.
 - b. **Review and update the TOC pathways to ensure that the most marginalized populations are being targeted, and that pathways are accessible.**
 - c. **Revise the MEL plan and the participant selection criteria or targeting strategy:** Using the research findings, revise the MEL plan with the support of the collaboration, learning, and adaptation (CLA) advisor and MEL advisor. Strategically identify new indicators or adapt existing indicators based on new activities. Identify new target criteria considerations, including the selection of the household member(s) your program will work with and through.

STEPS IN ACTION

In Burkina Faso, the [Victory Against Malnutrition Plus \(ViMPlus\) Activity](#) identified unequal power dynamics that limited the impact of cash transfers, particularly for women. From there, the team was able to adapt programming to facilitate the cash transfers in a more equitable manner. [Read more here.](#)

STEPS IN ACTION

Upon completing Phase I of their initiative, Mercy Corps’ [AgriFin](#) team realized that their approach left room for improvement in creating gender intentional and transformative solutions. The team reviewed their TOC pathways and developed a [Gender Transformative Toolkit](#) to better support their partners to engage with women farmers. [Read more here.](#)

Tell Me How!

When designing accessible new activities and materials, try the following sub-steps:

21. Inquire about different groups' commitment to participating in the design and implementation of program activities. Raise awareness of the importance of their involvement in project implementation
22. Identify and work with those who constrain key behavior changes in activities, such as men, mothers-in-law, and religious or community leaders (elected or traditional). Enlist traditional leaders and gatekeepers as allies in driving gender equality.
23. Support participants to apply what they've learned. Include modules where participants prepare a final project (ex: household work plan, mini-gender analysis).
24. Ensure activities contain an element of celebration or graduation to reinforce and encourage positive change.
25. Design to scale up activities from the initial intervention communities: Support participants to transfer knowledge to other community members. Host joint monitoring visits of successful approaches for other activities to adopt.

When updating TOC pathways, try the following sub-steps:

26. Review the TOC pathways with a specific individual in mind, for example, a 20-year old widow with 3 children and a disability and ask: *How will this program help them? Are they reasonably going to be able to participate in each of these activities? What support will this person need to be able to benefit fully?* Do this for a variety of different types of individuals, based on the intersectional dynamics in your program.
27. Review the TOC pathways and ask: *If we only work with the populations stated in the TOC, who might we be missing to create the necessary change?*

28. **Write up the results of the analysis and the recommendations in the gender analysis or youth assessment report.**
29. **Share the report with the donor.**
30. **Share the research results** with the program team again and in different ways to ensure the full team understands what the findings mean. Get creative, and share results from multiple directions or platforms. Ensure that concise or tailored versions of findings are available.
31. **Create an [action plan](#) and prioritize:** Given the results of the analysis, create an action plan that summarizes the adjustments made to various program activities and approaches, responsible individuals, timelines, and MEL implications. Use action planning as an opportunity to introduce key programmatic gender and youth approaches to various teams. Prioritize items in the action plan based on urgency, significance, and level of effort. Add gender-sensitive and age-sensitive elements to existing activities. Support the sector leads to increase each activity's level on the gender continuum, moving closer to transformative.
32. **Develop sector or outcome-specific gender or youth strategies.** Incorporate the gender-sensitive and age-sensitive elements identified in action planning into each sector's strategy and work plan, for a coherent participant experience and to share accountability and ownership. Have sector leads report out quarterly on their gender or youth integration strategy and work plan components.
33. **Add the action plan to the gender analysis or youth assessment report** (RFSAs only).
34. **Hold a planning workshop** where gender and age dynamics are highlighted. Revise the work plan to ensure action plans and sector-specific gender and youth strategies are incorporated.
35. **Revise or develop activity manuals, standard operating procedures (SOPs), and curricula** based on research findings. Choose and tailor program modalities based on intersectional needs and constraints and youth priorities. Consider how modalities might be accessible (or not) for the most marginalized. Design activities based on disaggregated data and the needs of the target population. Embed these considerations in activity manuals and SOPs.
36. **Socialize participant selection criteria and program activities** with communities. Raise awareness about participant selection and program activities to reach those who might not be literate or have access to information channels.

STEPS IN ACTION

GAYA's [Gender and Youth Action Plans: Process Guidance and Templates](#) describes the steps needed to prepare Gender and Youth Action Plans and provides an example Management Response Template and an Action Plan Template to assist RFSAs in finalizing these steps and submitting their complete Gender Analyses and/or Youth Needs Assessments to USAID/BHA for approval.



Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (and Program Adaptation) Steps

STEPS IN ACTION

Mercy Corps' IDEAL-funded [Pause and Reflect Toolkit](#) builds on USAID's current CLA framework and offers a step-by-step process, resources, templates, and guidance on how to organize and implement a one-day, annual, or end of program (for programs less than 12 months) pause and reflect sessions.

1. **Decide which profiles of respondents to focus on in the participant registration exercise**, particularly considering gender, age, and other dynamics, based on who is the most marginalized and who each program component aims to reach. Identify which intersectional dynamics will be highlighted and prioritized.
2. **Define target participants by outcome and activity**, based on an understanding of the most marginalized populations relevant to each sector.
3. **Select indicators and set targets based on which marginalized participants are targeted by which outcomes and activities:** Start with standard indicators, then add additional custom indicators based on the program's design. Ensure a mix of qualitative and quantitative indicators and methods. Select indicators that measure behavioral shifts that are occurring, and what is driving those shifts (so that you can amplify those elements in your programming). If necessary, adapt indicator definitions and measurement tools. Include indicators focusing on decision-making, attitudes, participation, and social norms, where relevant.
4. **Decide how to disaggregate data**, prioritizing potential categories for disaggregation, which are realistic, usable, and useful, depending on the program objectives, as well as on BHA, coordination/cluster, and organizational requirements. Indicators that count the number of people or the number of people within a household should, at minimum, disaggregate by gender, age, and disability.
5. **Decide how to collect disaggregated data fields in monitoring tools.**

Tell Me How!

When deciding how to disaggregate data, don't forget to consider the following:

6. **Age:** Decide which age ranges to use in disaggregation based on what is contextually relevant and useful, and what is required by the donor.
7. **Disability:** Decide whether to disaggregate by disabled/not disabled or by type of disability. Disaggregating by type of disability is more informative and useful. Use the [Washington Group questions](#).
8. **Decide what other relevant categories of disaggregation are needed.** Other relevant categories might include: caste, HIV/AIDS, LGBTQIA+, ethnicity, religion, location, community role, education level, or income-level/socio-economic status, among other categories.

When deciding how to collect disaggregated data fields, don't forget to consider the following:

9. **Remember that sex and gender are not the same.**
 10. **Sex:** Allow fixed options (female, male, intersex, other) or leave the question open-ended. While open-ended will require data cleaning, it is the most flexible.
 11. **Gender:** Allow fixed options (woman, man, non-binary, other) or leave the question open-ended. While open-ended will require data cleaning, it is the most flexible.
 12. **Age:** Decide whether to ask about year of birth, date of birth, or age (in years) at the time of data collection. Date or year of birth will give the most accurate results, but in many contexts, is unknown.
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13. **Clarify expectations and roles for collecting, disaggregating, and using data:** Select responsible individuals, train them, and check whether they are collecting and disaggregating fields correctly.
 14. **Include disaggregation questions in monitoring tools.** Test and adapt monitoring tools.
 15. **Train team members in gender-sensitive and power-sensitive data collection.**
 16. **Provide disaggregated program dashboards for regular program team and leadership review:** Ensure that program dashboards are connected to real-time data, where possible. Ensure that dashboards show relevant disaggregation categories, per indicator, particularly for beneficiary registration and are set up to highlight discrepancies between different groups. Train partners and implementers on how to use and read program dashboards. Sit with program and sector leads on a regular basis to review data.
 17. **Present and discuss disaggregated findings with teams,** including with key personnel, all sector leads, gender, youth, and social dynamics team, the monitoring, evaluation, and learning team, and the authoring consultant(s) or internal researchers. Reflect on findings through regular reflections with the program team and with the senior management team. Organize ad hoc meetings where more urgent issues arise. Gender or youth-focused CLA sessions provide a larger chance to pause and reflect and accountability. If there are discrepancies between disaggregated categories, discuss why and brainstorm solutions.
 18. **Validate and share draft findings with the program team:** Treat validation as a multi-engagement opportunity. When disagreement with findings arises, involve disagreeing parties in community validation or MEL activities to ensure buy-in.
 19. **Revisit the gender analysis or youth assessment findings midway through the program and decide whether a secondary analysis or update is needed.**
 20. **Include disaggregation categories in evaluation sampling plans:** Ensure disaggregated data for evaluation indicators is from a representative sample.
 21. **Complement with qualitative data:** Where discrepancies between different intersectional groups exist, or where questions that existing indicators do not answer arise, do rapid qualitative data collection to better understand why these differences are occurring. Involve program participants in brainstorming solutions. Include open-ended questions in monitoring exercises.
 22. **Incorporate the findings and results from monitoring, evaluation, and learning into the program design** (starting with step 17 in [Gender Analysis and Youth Assessment](#) above).

STEPS IN ACTION

In Bangladesh, the [Strengthening Household Ability to Respond to Development Opportunities \(SHOUHARDO III\)](#) activity used data to analyze and reflect on the impact of crises on women and girls and to adapt interventions to address their needs. [Read more here.](#)

STEPS IN ACTION

GAYA's formative research identified that IPs collect data on different gender and age groups, but do not necessarily use their data fully to inform program activities. GAYA's [evidence brief](#) outlines some tips, tools, and resources that IPs can use to address this barrier.



Photo credit: Suzanne Lee / Save the Children

Crosscutting Steps

These steps were not put into the sequence that IPs identified during the SHC, and should thus be considered as general best practices.

Crosscutting Steps During the Gender Analysis or Youth Assessment

- **Coordinate with other programs conducting gender or youth research:** Where multiple programs are conducting gender analyses simultaneously, work together to decide which elements they will focus on (based on their target areas) to avoid duplicated data collection.
- **Involve the program team as observers or data collectors** to strengthen their capacity and understanding of the gender and youth landscape. This includes involving team members from each thematic area, as well as the Chief of Party or Deputy Chief of Party, in the data collection to increase accountability and to strengthen gender, youth, or research-related skills.
- **Use gender and power-sensitive data collection methods:** Collect data at a convenient time for respondents, consult different gender and life stage groups separately, and ensure staff are representative of the research population and are trained in protection referrals.
- **Engage women and young people as enumerators in the research**, where appropriate, feasible, and safe.
- **Make the business case for gender and youth integration**, in terms of program outcomes and sustainability. Ensure sensitization and messaging explains how gender and youth integration adds value to each sector's objectives, using the language of each sector. Avoid "you're the problem" framing and focus on collaborative solution brainstorming and mutual respect.

STEPS IN ACTION

GAYA's [*Gender and Youth Insights for Integration & Implementation: An Evidence-Based Guide to Action*](#) outlines the importance of having management and sectoral lead buy-in for gender and youth integration, and provides recommended resources to build ownership among managers and sectoral leads.

Crosscutting Steps Throughout Implementation

- **Hold regular planning workshops** where gender and age considerations are included within every session to sensitize gender and youth integration with the program team, program partners, and program representatives.

- **Plan out the most critical gender and youth support needs in advance:** Establish a practice whereby the gender and youth leads sit with technical leads at regular intervals to identify key issues where the gender and youth team needs to be consulted, informed, or responsible. Be concrete about the support needs and timelines for each activity, acknowledging that the gender and youth focal point cannot be everywhere at once.

Crosscutting Steps for Effective MEL

- **Select and set-up a minimum of three unsolicited feedback channels:** Ensure channels are accessible to both program participants and individuals outside of the program population. Ensure at least one channel is face to face. Socialize feedback channels beyond target participants and with partner organizations. Give program participants and partner organizations opportunities to report on whether feedback channels are working, and how to improve them.
- **Include close-ended questions in monitoring around frequently observed unintended outcomes:** Identify potential unintended consequences with the program team. Include questions asking about these consequences in relevant monitoring tools. Incorporate newly observed consequences into monitoring tools as they arise.
- **Conduct informal site visits** to observe potential consequences not included in monitoring tools.
- **Incorporate gender and youth in the program’s learning agenda and events.**

Crosscutting Steps for Staff Capacity and Organization

- **Strengthen staff capacity and unpack unconscious bias among the program team, program partners, and program representatives** (volunteers, community development agents, etc.).
- **Ensure the gender and youth focal point sits on the senior leadership team**, and has a title that reflects seniority (i.e., director).
- **Ensure there are gender and youth focal points (and preferably, teams) responsible for each program area.**
- **Ensure that the gender and youth teams have strong working relationships** with technical sector leads and the MEL team.
- **Ensure the necessary organizational policies are in place** to compel managers to be accountable for gender and youth integration.
- **Ensure teams reflect the diversity of program communities** and that there is a diversity of gender representation even in roles stereotypically thought of as being more appropriate for one gender group.
- **Ensure that leadership continues to drive conversations on inclusion topics** to demonstrate the importance of gender and youth integration with their program teams.

Tell Me How!

When strengthening staff capacity and unpacking unconscious bias, don’t forget to consider the following:

- **Facilitate team members to self-reflect on their own attitudes and biases as individuals** to begin a personal journey of transformation.
- **Contextualize training based on data from the gender analysis or youth assessment**, rather than shelf case studies.
- **Create post-event safe spaces for program team members to continue discussions:** Post-training safe spaces, such as all men’s WhatsApp groups for them to share their beliefs and discuss them (engage each other on gender equity).
- **Continue to provide opportunities for team-wide self-reflection, and adaptation of the gender and youth integration strategy**, as part of broader adaptive management strategies.
- **Engage with staff individually to see if their attitudes are changing.**
- **Allow this to take time, behavior change is a process.**
- **Reinforce the importance of gender and youth integration** by including elements on gender and youth in regular reporting, performance assessment, and planning.

Crosscutting Best Practices: Community Involvement

- **Make and maintain community connections:** Develop relationships and work with points of contact in the target area, such as community groups, women’s groups, youth groups, and community leaders.
- **Build relationships and trust with young people and young people’s circle of trust:** Build relationships and trust with young people and trusted adults.
- **Set-up or contribute to in-country gender and youth working groups.**
- **Decide the extent to which young people and other marginalized groups will lead or be consulted in research, program activity design, and program implementation:** Use the ladder of participation and develop specific plans for youth involvement and leadership at every phase.

STEPS IN ACTION

CARE’s IDEAL-funded [*Better Gender Outcomes in Food Assistance through Multi-Modal Programing and Promising Practices Tip Sheet*](#) presents common gender integration best practices.

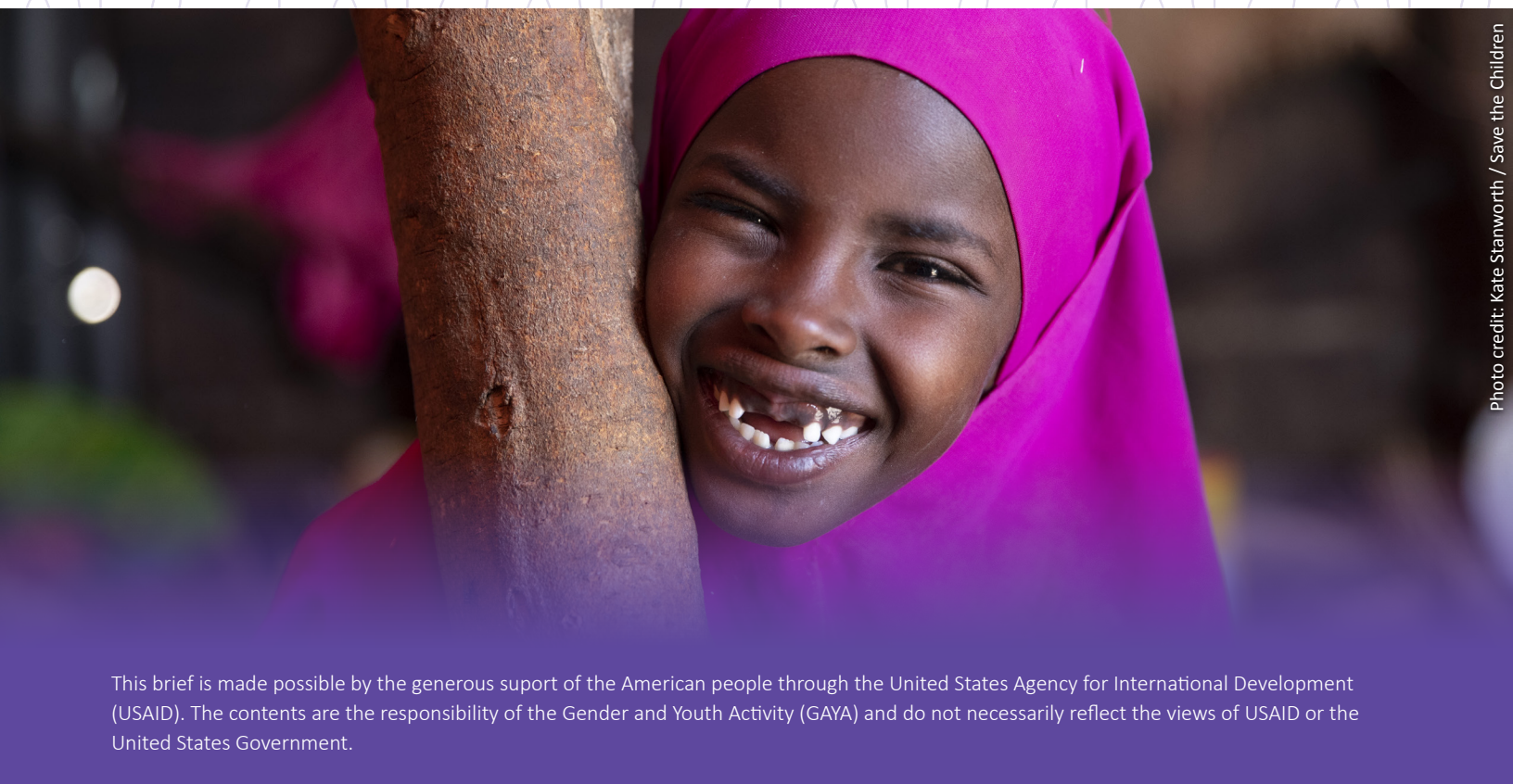


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