

The Gender Financing Project

Brief literature review

This study will examine gender equality financing data. Our main focus lies on traditional aid, Official Development Assistance (ODA), an essential source of financing for gender equality and women's empowerment globally.¹ However, this study will also attempt to examine other funding flows that play an increasingly important role in financing progress towards SDG 5, including development finance², philanthropic funding³, and partner governments' own national budget allocation's towards gender equality.⁴

The decision to focus on multiple sources of gender equality financing is inspired by the work of the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID). AWID's report, 'Toward a Feminist Funding Ecosystem'⁵, outlines the importance of a holistic understanding of how different funding actors, sectors, and resources interact to achieve social change. With this in mind, our project tracks how much funding is targeted towards gender equality, and how such funding flows between the top funders and their partners, including local women's rights organizations and movements, to help paint a more complete picture of gender equality financing. The focus is on three focus countries: Kenya, Nepal, and Guatemala.

Two of the biggest open data platforms are the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) and the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI). Both platforms have gender policy markers, which allow various stakeholders to indicate whether their aid targets gender equality. The OECD-DAC gender marker allows publishers to assign their financed projects one of three scores⁶:

1. **Not targeted (0):** The project/programme has been screened against the marker but has not been found to target gender equality.
2. **Significant (1):** Gender equality is an important and deliberate objective, but not the principal reason for undertaking the project/ programme.
3. **Principal (2):** Gender equality is the main objective of the project/ programme and is fundamental in its design and expected results. The project/programme would not have been undertaken without this gender equality objective.

IATI takes a similar approach, allowing publishers to apply the gender marker in one of three levels of significance matching the OECD-DAC levels — 0, 1, and 2.⁷

In addition, various donor agencies have developed and applied their own respective gender markers to their projects, such as the World Bank⁸ and different UN agencies.⁹ Some partner

¹ OECD (2020), [Putting finance to work for gender equality and women's empowerment: The way forward](#).

² Ibid., page 6.

³ OECD netFWD (2019), "Insights on philanthropy for gender equality." OECD Development Centre, Paris.

⁴ Birgit Moser and Sanja Korac (2020), "[Introducing Gender Perspectives in the Budgetary Process at the Central Government Level](#)." International Journal of Public Administration.

⁵ AWID (2019), [Toward a feminist funding ecosystem](#).

⁶ OECD-DAC GenderNet (2016), [Handbook on the OECD-DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker](#).

⁷ IATI (2020). [Policy Significance](#).

⁸ Charles Kenny and Megan O'Donnell (2016). "[Do the Results Match the Rhetoric? An Examination of World Bank Gender Projects](#)." CGD Policy Paper 077. Washington DC: Center for Global Development.

⁹ United Nations Development Group (2013), [Financing for Gender Equality and Tracking Systems](#).

governments mark incoming aid with their own gender marker on their aid information management systems. An example is Nepal's Ministry of Finance's AMIS platform, which includes a gender marker that indicates the ratio of women benefiting from a particular development project.

Together, these different platforms provide different data on gender equality financing, including aid disbursements and commitments, and programmatic information of gender equality projects, such as project descriptions, objectives, sub-national locations, and results.

Nevertheless, considerable challenges remain in tracking funding towards gender equality. The OECD-DAC and IATI gender markers are useful in understanding trends in aid over time, the distribution of aid allocation across sectors and programs in country and enhancing awareness of gender equality in program planning and results.¹⁰ However, the data generated by the DAC gender marker only provides an *estimate* of funding for gender equality.¹¹ The United Nation's Development Group points out that gender markers are usually applied at the planning stage of a project, meaning that these markers are better equipped to track *planned* gender aid instead of *actual* gender aid. The OECD-DAC gender marker is also not intended to measure outcome and impact must therefore be accompanied by monitoring and evaluation assessments.¹²

Moreover, a recent Oxfam research report suggests that projects may be incorrectly marked with gender policy markers.¹³ Both the OECD-DAC and IATI data rely on the self-reporting of countries and organizations, and their (correct) use of the gender equality markers. However, the Oxfam research found that about 25% of the sampled projects did not meet the conditions for their significant or principal gender equality scores. This finding calls into question if a significant proportion of the reported gender aid can truly be considered gender aid at all. Alternatively, the gender markers may be underreporting on some flows of gender aid. Some notable large donors of gender aid, including UN Women and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), do not report all of their outflows against the OECD-DAC or IATI gender markers.¹⁴ The starting point for this research automatically poses a barrier: there are significant obstacles to painting a clear picture of gender aid.

Despite these limitations, this study believes it is vital to assess the current availability and quality of gender equality financing data, particularly relating to stakeholders' ability to promote gender equality in country. The findings from this research will form the basis for targeted recommendations to improve the publication of gender equality financing data to meet stakeholders' information needs. By extension, this should also help stakeholders make more informed decisions about their resource allocation and hold donors and governments accountable to their gender equality commitments.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ OECD (2020), [Putting finance to work for gender equality and women's empowerment: The way forward](#).

¹² OECD-DAC Network on Gender Equality (GENDERNET) (2016), [Handbook on the OECD-DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker](#).

¹³ Aria Grabowski and Parker Essick (2020), [Are They Really Gender Equality Projects?](#)

¹⁴ Ibid.