Gender, think-tanks and international affairs: a toolkit

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Contents

Introduction 2

Toolkit purpose and audience 4

Useful definitions 6

Organizational structures, activities and practices 8

Developing an organizational action plan 10

Convening and debate 14

Research and analysis 21

Communications and publishing 29

Five top tips 36

Resources 37

Limitations 38

About the authors 39

Acknowledgments 40

Introduction

This toolkit has been designed to encourage a more gender-sensitive approach across all areas of think-tank activities, including convening and debate, research and analysis, and communications and publishing. It provides think-tanks with a guidance on ways of adapting organizational structures, activities and practices in order to embed a greater awareness of gender issues and adopt gender-sensitive approaches in all areas of their work.

The work to develop the toolkit came as a response to the commonly gendered nature of think-tanks and their activities. The toolkit recognizes the discrimination and under-representation that women often experience within the sector, as well as the relative absence of women among executive leadership, governance structures and senior researcher positions in many think-tanks. It is important to note that the toolkit's focus on gender is a starting point for wider intersectional analysis and action within the think-tank community.

This is an important issue because think-tanks occupy an influential space in policymaking. Think-tanks produce research that influences policy, which in turn impacts people's lives. It is therefore vital that research does not entrench harmful practices or perpetuate biases and inequalities. Research must reflect people's lived realities and include diverse voices and experiences; otherwise, policies influenced by think-tank research will be ineffective and narrow-sighted, and will struggle to meet their objectives.

Think-tanks also convene policymakers and decision-makers from across governments, non-governmental organizations, academia and business. Research to date has demonstrated that most policy debates are overwhelmingly dominated by men, and that when women or non-binary people are invited to speak, it tends to be specifically on topics related to gender. Without a diversity of voices, such debates will capture only a limited range of knowledge and experience, thereby skewing the information that policymakers and decision-makers are hearing. In addition to being important in terms of the quality of the work, it is also a matter of fairness and accurate representation; women make up roughly half of the population, and therefore need to be involved in policy work at all levels.

Embedding inclusive research, convening and communication practices is not just 'the right thing to do'. It has positive implications for the business models of think-tanks and the way they operate. Research suggests that when diversity and inclusion initiatives work, organizations are more resilient, innovative and better at decision-making. However, making a commitment to a values-driven approach is equally as important as creating a business case for a diverse and inclusive workplace. While there has already been incremental change within think-tanks, it is the intention that this toolkit will build on the important body of research and practices that already exist by encouraging think-tanks to examine their own processes and develop practices that focus not only on women's representation, but on the structures and systems that perpetuate biases and inequalities. Furthermore, this toolkit takes an intersectional approach, recognizing the multiple ways women, men and non-binary people can be subject to discrimination. This allows a closer analysis of how gender intersects with and is impacted by other systems of power and their relation to characteristics such as ethnicity, race, age, social class, religion, disability and sexual orientation.

While the principal focus of the toolkit is to consider gender inequality in think-tanks, we recognize that understanding gender in isolation from other systems of power will yield incomplete and ineffective results. Discussions about gender equality are often inadvertently focused on straight, white, able-bodied women from privileged backgrounds, at the expense of women and non-binary people from backgrounds that have been marginalized. An intersectional approach to gender equality means that different power dynamics are more likely to manifest in different ways for different people, and we are not interested in perpetuating a static and binary idea of gender with this toolkit. With this in mind, we consider this toolkit to be a first step in what should be a far wider conversation around intersectionality in think-tanks.

Toolkit purpose and audience

This toolkit is designed for people working in international affairs think-tanks, regardless of position, experience or level of seniority. It is intended for the whole organization, and is applicable to all departments to ensure maximum engagement. It will be particularly useful for those think-tanks that are just beginning the process of raising greater awareness of gender issues internally, as well as for those that have already started to make changes but wish to expand this work further.

The toolkit has three aims:

1. To raise awareness within think-tanks about gender as a system of power (with an emphasis on an intersectional approach) and related best practices that will eliminate inequalities.
2. To provide a guide for think-tanks on how to begin adapting their processes to bring about lasting change.
3. To promote existing initiatives and collate relevant resources.

The toolkit begins with general guidance on organizational structures and practices, and on the necessary actions that are applicable across a think-tank in order to ensure efforts do not become siloed within specific parts of the organization – or are assumed to be of relevance only to parts of the organization. Subsequent sections then consider convening, research, and communications and publishing activities. All the sections are interlinked, but it is possible to focus on one area of activity independently of the others, according to organizational activities and needs.

Content development

The toolkit was developed by staff at Chatham House, the British American Security Information Council (BASIC) and the Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy (CFFP). It is based on a series of breakfast workshops convened in London in 2018 and involving experts and practitioners from a variety of sectors, including other UK-based international affairs and security think-tanks. The series aimed to foster knowledge-sharing on gender equality within the workplace and across the wider international affairs think-tank sector, as well as on inclusive research practices, by drawing on valuable experiences and insights from which think-tanks can learn.

There were four workshops in total, each covering one of the following broad themes: 1) the current status of women in think-tanks, and what needs to be done next; 2) convening and debate; 3) research and analysis; and 4) communications and publishing. These four workshops outlined the components necessary for a think-tank toolkit and contributed to its content.

Since then, a literature review and baseline assessment of existing resources have been carried out. The aim was to establish the extent of existing resources, so that this toolkit would fill a gap and any duplication of effort would be minimized. All the resources have been collated on the gender, think-thanks and international affairs dashboard.

The toolkit has benefited from an informal review of the first draft by members of Chatham House's Gender Working Group and workshop participants, as well as from a full double-blind peer review process by experts in the field.

Useful definitions

The toolkit is informed by various definitions from a range of sources, including the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), Stonewall UK and UN Women. The language used reflects that of organizations championing equality. We recognize these organizations as leaders in their fields, and as sources to which policymakers often look for guidance when developing policy. In order to ensure clarity of ideas in this toolkit, we centre our ideas on the following definitions. (Please note that definitions have been adapted for brevity.)

To view the full glossary, see the gender, think-thanks and international affairs dashboard.

Diversity and inclusion

'Diversity and inclusion' programming refers to the creation of a set of organizational policies to promote greater diversity within a given organization. It is important to note, however, that organizations' implementation of diversity and inclusion initiatives has historically fallen short of achieving gender-equal and anti-racist structural change. While we make mention of diversity and inclusion as one way of conducting this work, we encourage organizations to make sustainable structural changes to ensure that equity work is not undone as a consequence of staff turnover, for instance.

Gender

A system of power that is structural (embedded in social, political or economic structures) as well as cultural, and that is often expressed in terms of masculinity and femininity. Gender exists on a spectrum, and is largely culturally constructed and assumed from the sex assigned at birth. The word 'gender' is also often incorrectly assumed to be synonymous with 'women'.

Gender analysis

Gender analysis is a critical examination of structures and systems of power, and of how differences in gender roles, activities, needs, opportunities and rights/entitlements affect men, women, girls, boys and non-binary people in certain situations or contexts. It largely focuses on the relationships between men and women and their access to and control of resources, as well as the constraints they face relative to each other. Although policy research is slow to incorporate analysis of non-binary people, this too should be a priority. A gender analysis should be integrated as part of all sector assessments or situational analyses, to ensure that gender-based injustices and inequalities are not exacerbated by interventions, and that greater equality and justice in gender relations are promoted.

Gender equality

Equality means that a person's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on their gender.

Intersectionality

The term intersectionality emerged from Black feminist thought and was coined by Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) in her paper *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex*. The concept of intersectionality addresses the ways in which gender interacts with race to form multiple layers of discrimination. The use of this concept has since expanded to include other social categories, shedding light on the intersecting nature of multiple systems of power and the subjugation that people experience as a consequence.

Non-binary

An umbrella term for people whose gender identity does not fit into the gender binary of 'man' or 'woman'. Non-binary identities are varied and can include people who identify with some aspects of binary identities (man or woman), while others reject them entirely.

Sex

Assigned to a person on the basis of primary sex characteristics (genitalia). Sometimes the terms 'sex' and 'gender' are conflated to denote 'male' or 'female'; however, sex and gender are not the same.

Transgender

An inclusive umbrella term for anyone whose gender identity or gender expression does not fully correspond with the sex assigned to them at birth.

Organizational structures, activities and practices

This toolkit encourages think-tanks to consider the organizational structures, activities and practices that may hinder progress and change within specific departments or in different types of activities.

A think-tank must be viewed as a holistic organization in which all departments and activities are interlinked. Attempting to make changes within a single area, such as convening events, will not lead to tangible and institutional change in the long term across the entire think-tank.

Mapping how an organization's various departments, activities and practices interlink will provide a better understanding of where adjustments and new practices are required, and help to ensure that certain areas or departments are not missed. Taking a step back to consider the organization as a whole, and analysing its internal structures, will also encourage a wider cultural shift, as people adapt and change their own individual practices. The toolkit is organized in sections according to the diagram above, and will cover each area in detail.

Tip! EIGE has a comprehensive step-by-step guide on Gender Institutional Transformation.

It is important to ensure that organizational reform intentionally and continuously creates space for bottom-up exchange of ideas and experiences. As is often the case, women and people of colour tend to be disproportionately concentrated in junior roles, and their first-hand experience is critical in informing meaningful, institution-wide change. While those in positions of leadership need to take responsibility for driving change, the process of determining the direction and scope of the process should be holistic: it should involve the entire organization. Change can be uncomfortable, particularly for people who have historically held the most power.

It is, however, important to challenge practices and policies that perpetuate existing power structures. All staff must feel included and not alienated during the process, and it is essential to create opportunities for staff at every level to build ownership over organizational change.

Tip! The Inclusion and Diversity Policy of the Brookings Institution is a good working example of the approach outlined in this toolkit. Brookings has involved the whole organization in the process, and the strategy includes a literature review that might be helpful for other think-tanks in developing their own policy.

Developing an organizational action plan

An action plan should be developed to assess the organization's structure, activities, policies, practices and initiatives.

Developing such an action plan helps the implementation of specific objectives to make progress on equality across all areas and activities of a think-tank. It also assists with monitoring progress and holding people in positions of responsibility to account.

The process of developing a plan, as well as the plan itself, should involve everyone working in a think-tank, regardless of position, experience or level of seniority. Practical steps can be taken to ensure that tangible progress is made by sharing the workload and responsibility across an organization.

The starting point for developing an action plan will depend on the organization, and the suggestions below are made in no particular order of priority:

Checklist for developing an organizational action plan

The following checklist expands in more detail on the actions highlighted in the diagram on p. 10 – again, in no particular order of priority:

Gain commitment, support and accountability from senior management

- [ ] Engage with senior management to ensure they are part of the process throughout.
- [ ] Engage with board members and/or senior advisers to ensure they are aware of and involved in the development of the action plan, as well as being a further point of accountability.
- [ ] Ensure senior management are always represented at related meetings and discussions.
- [ ] Discuss and implement accountability and responsibility mechanisms – e.g. including specific objectives in staff reviews/appraisals.

Tip! Consult ActionAid's Ten Principles of Feminist Leadership to identify and discuss key leadership behaviours and values.

Conduct an audit of the organization and its structures, policies, initiatives and facilities

- [ ] Conduct an audit to map the organization's structures and activities, such as research, events, and communications and publishing.
- [ ] Map existing policies and practices, such as human resources policies (including on equal pay, parental leave and flexible working) and recruitment practices. As a result of what is currently in place, which employees have access to the most power within the organization? Which have the least?
- [ ] Identify existing gender equality initiatives within departments to share best practices and facilitate cross-learning.
- [ ] Map existing opportunities, policies or guidelines where the action plan can be integrated or referenced. This might include staff induction packs, staff handbooks and the organization's strategy documents.
- [ ] Make a list of the organization's facilities and the ways that these might be excluding some groups' needs. How can the facilities be changed to be more comfortable and accessible for all? For example, consider working with charities that provide workplace support for people with disabilities to ensure that the organization is an accessible workplace.
- [ ] Hire an external consultant to conduct an audit of the organization and its policies, and draw on the results of the audit when developing a strategy for the organization.

Assess available financial resources

- [ ] Can staff time requirements for developing an action plan be supported centrally?
- [ ] Is there a budget for travel to external meetings and conferences, to support networking?
- [ ] Is there a training budget? Do other departments have budgets that can be accessed? For example, an organization's human resources department will usually have a budget for training.
- [ ] Can research project budgets be adapted to include gender mainstreaming activities and/or staff time?
- [ ] Can a percentage of the organizational overhead be allocated to gender and inclusion work?
- [ ] Regularly scan for external funding opportunities from governments, multinational organizations or foundations specifically for gender mainstreaming activities – e.g. increasing women's representation at conferences, or providing support for managing organizational change.

Set up a forum or internal working group for regular meetings

- [ ] Create a space or establish a working group for regular meetings and discussions involving representatives from all departments, including senior management.
- [ ] Make meeting minutes and action points available for all staff to read, in order to promote engagement and transparency.

Engage all departments and identify representatives

- [ ] Building support is crucial, and all departments need to be engaged and consulted.
- [ ] Ask all departments to nominate a representative to attend regular meetings and to feed back to the team.
- [ ] Create multiple channels of feedback that are tailored to different staff roles and levels of seniority, in order to be inclusive when gathering perspectives and ideas from staff. For example, asking staff to complete a confidential survey online might elicit more honest feedback through anonymous responses, and might help to engage people who do not feel comfortable speaking at meetings, or who are unable to attend.

Tap into external networks for advice and support

- [ ] Engage with external networks, groups and initiatives for advice and support. For a list of networks and initiatives, consult the gender, think-thanks and international affairs dashboard.
- [ ] Identify staff members who already have relevant affiliations or who are part of existing networks with relevant experience; they may have best practices to share.

Establish an evidence base through data collection

- [ ] Collect baseline data to form an evidence base of who the organization employs; and who it is engaging with, and how. Relevant data points include: staff demographics, event speakers, chairs and participants, authorship of publications, and representation across multi-media outputs.
- [ ] Consider multiple ways to record experiences. Not all evidence will be quantitative, and it is important that qualitative feedback and experiences should also be captured.
- [ ] Create monitoring and reporting mechanisms to ensure that data is collected systematically and consistently, and that it is shared across the organization regularly. For example, create a table that lists who is responsible for collecting which data, and when.

Caution! Be sensitive with the data you collect and share – particularly on staff demographics – to ensure individuals are not identifiable. Data collection will also have to comply with relevant international/national legislation, particularly on protected characteristics.

Organize training opportunities for staff

- [ ] Conduct an audit of training requirements among staff.
- [ ] Research training options and providers carefully. Evidence suggests that poorly implemented initiatives can have negative impacts. This is particularly the case with unconscious bias training, which does not always challenge structural issues within an organization effectively.

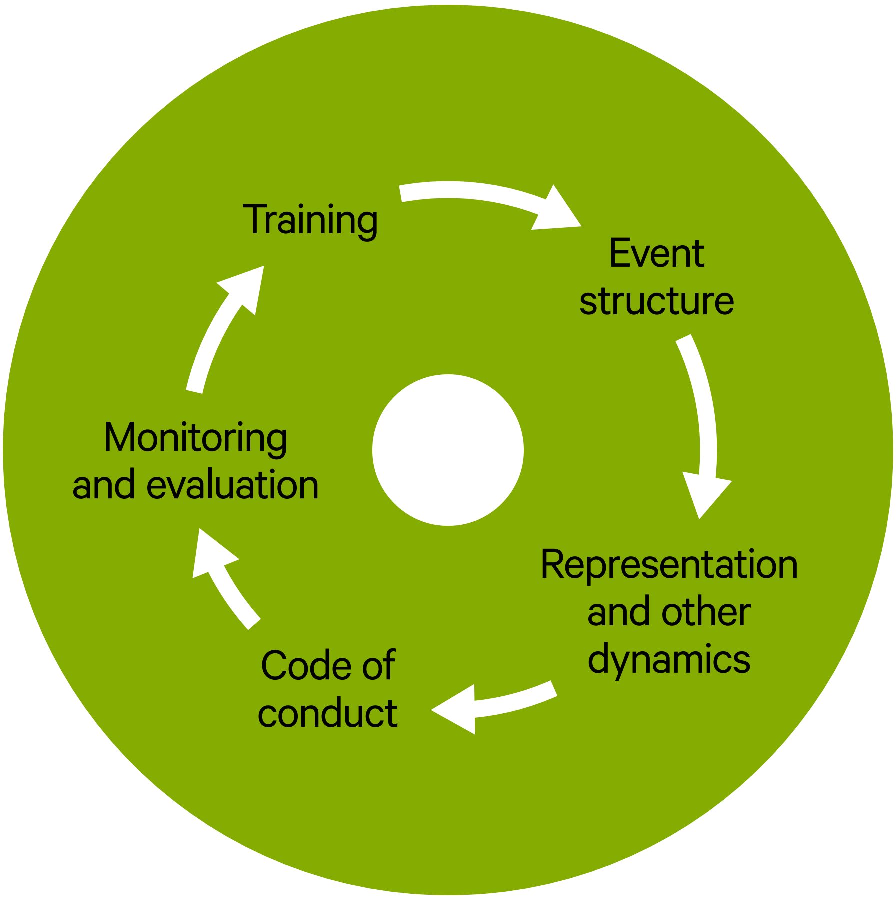
Tip! Consider hosting an internal event to launch the strategy, attended by all staff. This is an inclusive and transparent way to launch a cross-organization initiative, build support and celebrate everyone's involvement.

Convening and debate

Events are a public and visible way to demonstrate an organization's commitment to equality. Without a diversity of voices on a wide range of topics, events will capture only a limited range of knowledge and experience, thereby skewing the information that audiences receive.

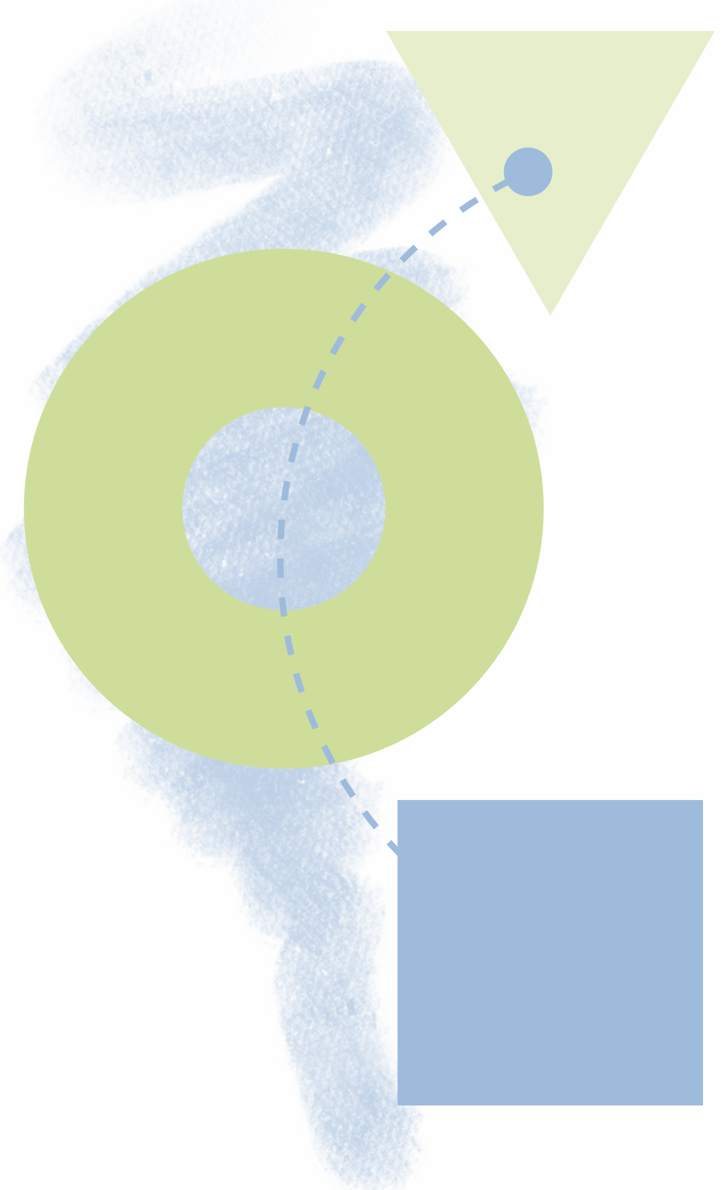
This toolkit outlines five areas of focus to help embed effective and lasting processes that foster diversity of thought, experience and background in professional gatherings, ranging from closed roundtable discussions to public panel events.

Hosting an event: five areas of focus



Event structure

Before approaching speakers or panellists, a variety of logistics should be considered in order to make each event as accessible as possible. To create an environment where all participants feel safe and comfortable, it is important to think through the following list, in no particular order of priority:



Accessibility

Is the event accessible to all?

- [ ] Choose a venue or room that is wheelchair-accessible, including the toilet access. Alternatively, consider hosting a webinar, or make it possible for some speakers/panellists to call in – but keep in mind that some participants might face restrictions in terms of internet and technology access.
- [ ] Does the room/venue have a hearing loop system or subtitling options? If hosting an online event, many videoconferencing applications, such as Zoom, Skype and Google Hangouts, have built-in captioning options.
- [ ] Make video and/or audio recordings of the event available online for those unable to attend in person. If hosting an online event, many videoconferencing applications, such as Zoom, Skype and Google Hangouts, have built-in recording options, as well as an option to disable video for those who wish to do so. Ensure that you have all attendees' consent before publishing any recordings.
- [ ] Share accessibility information on the event web page and in other relevant correspondence, and designate a contact person with whom attendees can get in touch for questions and feedback.

Room set-up, timings and location

Are the arrangements practical for all?

- [ ] Consider if the furniture is suitable for attendees wearing skirts or dresses.
- [ ] Some microphones can only be attached to pockets/lapels, which women's clothing often does not have. It is best to notify speakers in advance if alternatives cannot be provided.
- [ ] Ensure catering options take into account specific dietary requirements and include alcohol-free refreshments.
- [ ] For online events and webinars, and remote attendance at hybrid events, make sure organizers are familiar with the tech to be used, and consider arranging a test call with the chair and speakers prior to the event.
- [ ] Avoid events early in the morning and late in the evening, in consideration of attendees and audiences in different time zones and/or with caring responsibilities.
- [ ] Offer financial support, if possible, for care arrangements for speakers or panellists.
- [ ] Avoid convening events in isolated or otherwise hard-to-reach locations, and avoid networking opportunities outside of the venue for safety and accessibility reasons.

Costs

Are there costs that make the event restrictive?

- [ ] Speakers should be compensated for their time, and speaker fees should be incorporated into all event budgets. Not all experts are salaried, meaning that their time is not recompensed for unfunded speaking opportunities.
- [ ] Certain venues may be more expensive to access, for example, if they are not accessible by public transport. At a minimum, provide travel information on the event web pages and in other relevant correspondence, including details of the likely local costs of travelling to the venue. If the venue is unusually difficult to reach, it is important to budget for speakers' transport costs and to allow sufficient time for their travel. For example, if a taxi is needed to get from a train station to a venue, this can be booked and paid for in advance.
- [ ] Consider hosting an online event if costs make it difficult to engage a diverse group of speakers.
- [ ] People with caring responsibilities often need to hire a replacement carer in order to attend events. The event budget should include funding to mitigate this. For example, cover the cost of childcare for speakers, or provide childcare at the event for attendees.

Support for speakers

Do the speakers, chairs or panellists feel supported?

- [ ] Provide briefing notes well in advance of the event, with background information on the event and participants, an event schedule, notes on expectations, with a particular emphasis on gender equality and anti-racism considerations, and any other information necessary to promote an inclusive event for all participants. Do not assume someone is already aware of all these aspects.
- [ ] Briefing notes need to be supplemented for online events, to include, for example, instructions on how to use the software/ application, and establishing expectations on behaviour and online security during the event.
- [ ] Designate a contact person with whom the speaker can get in touch for questions or feedback.

Q&A logistics

Are Q&A sessions designed to mitigate structural and unconscious biases?

- [ ] At the start of the Q&A, the chair should call on a woman to ask the first question. Studies show that when a woman is the first person called on during a Q&A, more women are likely to then join the discussion than if a man is called on first.
- [ ] Provide a digital option for audience members to ask questions, either via an app (for example Slido, Padlet or Menti) or via social media, so that the event is more accessible.
- [ ] Most hosting applications for online events will have the option of including a virtual Q&A function and/or chat function, as well as a virtual 'raise your hand' function to help regulate a Q&A session.
- [ ] Provide guidance for the Q&A chair on how to handle unwanted situations, e.g. where an audience member asks an inappropriate question or takes up too much time.

Representation and other dynamics

It is important to include speakers from different backgrounds, cutting across gender, ethnicity, race, age, social class, religion, disability and sexual orientation. This is a priority, and it is important to avoid tokenism when designing events.

Tokenism is the practice of including a small number of marginalized people purely for the sake of looking 'inclusive', while making no effort to implement broader changes that will result in better institutional equality. Often, there is an expectation that one minority person can speak universally about the experiences of an assumed demographic.

- [ ] Set an internal minimum quota for how many women, non-binary people and people of colour should be included at every event. This quota may need to be variable according to the topic of the event. Assumptions about expertise on a particular topic should not be made based on gender, inferred background or any other identity.
- [ ] Include people from the countries or regions that the event is focused on, or people with direct experience of the topic that is being addressed. Is this better achieved by hosting an event online or organizing a hybrid event?
- [ ] Begin by engaging women, non-binary people or people of colour as speakers and panellists at the outset, rather than trying to add them at a later date. There are a number of resources available to help event organizers find suitable speakers from a range of different backgrounds, all of which are linked on the gender, think-thanks and international affairs dashboard under 'Directories'.
- [ ] Ask speakers, chairs and panellists what their pronouns are. If it is not possible to ask, check email signatures, social media accounts or published online bios. Further reading on use of pronouns can be found here.
- [ ] Ahead of the event, be sure you and the event chair know how to pronounce all speakers' or panellists' names correctly. If you are not sure, ask.
- [ ] Online events can assist with accessibility issues, reduce costs and in some situations allow a certain degree of anonymity; however, they also remove important and often subtle visual cues that aid interaction and conversation. Be aware, too, that anonymity can create a sense that there is less accountability. Further reading on this is available here.
- [ ] The topic of the event is just as important as representation, logistics and dynamics. Consider designing a mechanism to monitor what topics are covered, and who is invited to speak about them.

Code of conduct

Organizations should draft and adopt a code of conduct for events, to clearly define what is expected of all event participants.

> A **code of conduct** is a document that sets out expectations for all delegates, attendees, speakers, exhibitors, organizers and volunteers at an event, to ensure it proceeds safely and is free of harassment.
>
> This might include – but is not limited to – clearly defining the expected behaviours, defining unacceptable behaviour and outlining procedures to be followed in the event of such behaviour, signposting the organization's wider policies on harassment, providing a mechanism for reporting, and providing the contact details of a designated person at the organization to whom any issues can be communicated.

In order to ensure participants adhere to the code of conduct:

- [ ] It should be shared on the event web page and in other relevant correspondence.
- [ ] Training should be provided for event staff around code of conduct expectations, particularly on hosting online events and dealing appropriately with issues that might arise. This could include bystander intervention training, or best practices to handle 'Zoom-bombing' and other unwanted/inappropriate interventions.
- [ ] Mechanisms should be in place to report incidents before, during or after an event, as well as protocols for how to follow up on an incident in a meaningful way that is focused on supporting the person who has reported it.
- [ ] The reporting mechanism should also include putting procedures in place to ensure that event participants or speakers who behave inappropriately will not be invited back. Organizers should consider what further action might be needed, such as removing someone from invitation lists and communicating this with other relevant departments.

Monitoring and evaluation

Each activity area will have to be monitored and evaluated, but there is no single way of going about this. The aim is to measure progress, impact and performance of objectives set in relation to hosting inclusive events. Building in mechanisms to regularly gather, analyse and learn from feedback on participant experiences, and to adapt practices accordingly, is an important aspect of planning and hosting increasingly welcoming and safe events for all.

There are two main ways to do this:

1. *Providing opportunities for feedback after every event. For example, through:*

- [ ] Printed forms for participants to fill out at the event, including an option to respond anonymously.
- [ ] An emailed survey after the event, including an option to respond anonymously.
- [ ] A follow-up call with speakers and chairs.

2. *Ongoing internal monitoring of all events, including:*

- [ ] Building monitoring and reporting responsibilities into role descriptions.
- [ ] Identifying organization-wide baselines and setting targets (e.g. speaker quotas, event topics) with associated regular reporting cycles that provide opportunities to identify and learn from successes and challenges in reaching targets.

Training

Providing staff training on issues covered in this toolkit is critical to ensuring organization-wide buy-in. If an understanding of how to host gender-sensitive and inclusive events is not already built up within your organization, there are many others that can provide training: see the gender, think-thanks and international affairs dashboard for further details.

Research and analysis

Incorporating gender into research and analysis highlights the impact that gender as a system of power has on people's lived experience. It places equality as a key goal of policymaking, and develops policy processes that focus on the inclusion of a wide diversity of voices and ideas. It is important, then, that the research that informs policy does not entrench harmful practices or perpetuate bias and inequality.

Gender-sensitive research provides an essential layer of analysis that is grounded in and reflective of the realities of many different people. This means that research will be able to provide more detailed analysis and data to better inform policy. Because of this, policy will become more effective, and research projects will be able to meet their objectives in a more comprehensive way.

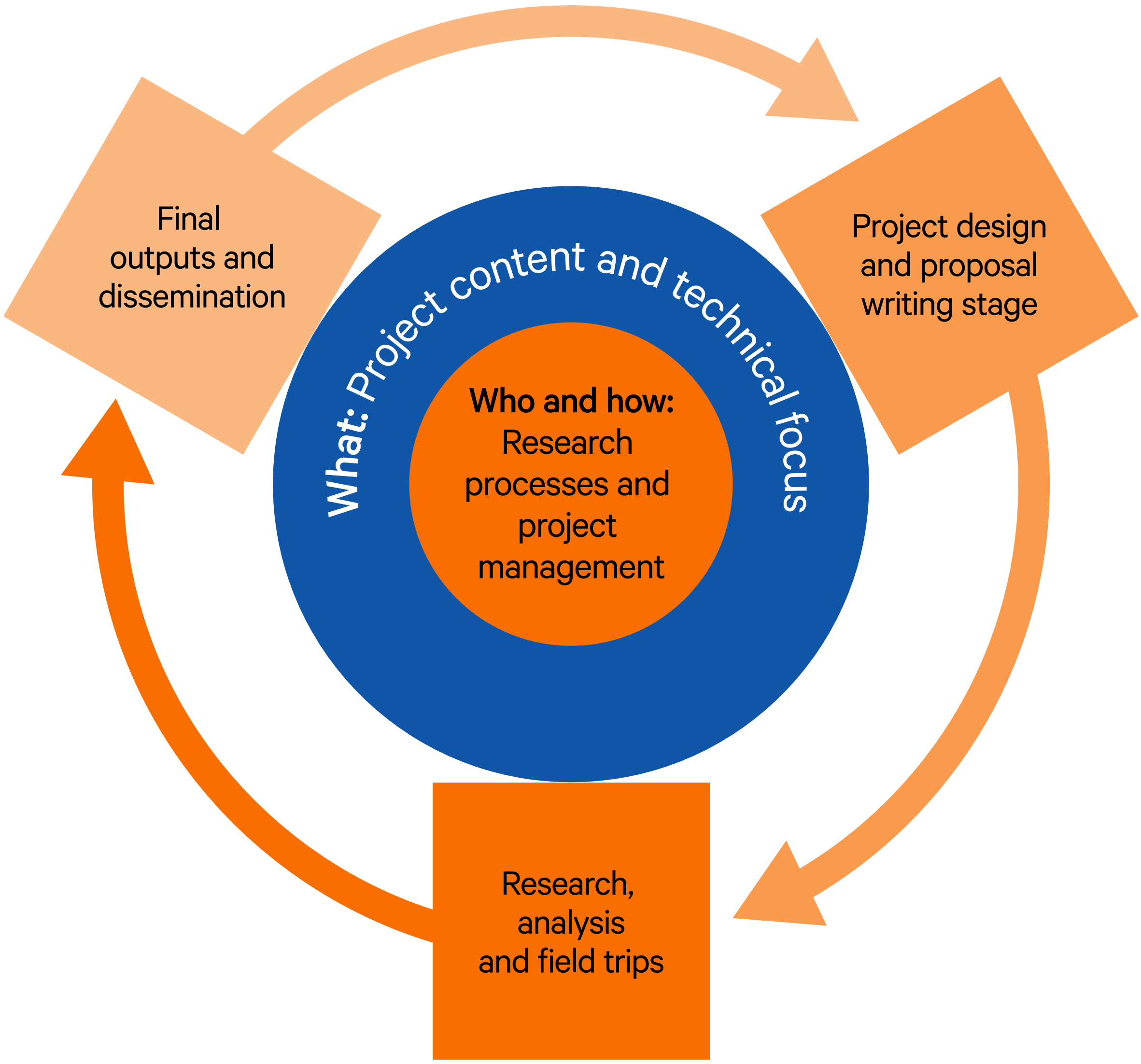
Preparation

A gender analysis (with an intersectional approach) is often overlooked in research. It may be missed completely, or added as an afterthought if requested by a funder. This section provides research teams with information on how to include a gender analysis before, during and after a project lifecycle.

Not least to avoid tokenism, the following approach is recommended:

- ☐ **Research processes and project management** cover **who** is involved in the project and **how** the research will be conducted.
- ☐ **Project content and technical focus** cover **what** the project will focus on through an intersectional gender analysis.

*Covering **who, how** and **what** throughout the project lifecycle encourages research methods that are grounded in equality, fairness and transparency. A comprehensive gender analysis needs to cover the following aspects:*



Checklist for research projects

The checklist here builds on the **who, how, what** approach outlined above, covering research processes and project management, and the project content and technical focus.

In many cases, a research project will not focus exclusively on gender. Conducting a gender analysis of the project does not mean changing the scope of the research. Rather, it involves including further layers of analysis that elicit more detail. Such analysis could reveal new perspectives or information, and could establish innovative approaches. Taking an intersectional approach also includes considering how gender intersects with other systems of power such as ethnicity, race, age, social class, religion, disability and sexual orientation.

The WHO Gender Responsive Assessment Scale is a useful tool produced by the World Health Organization (2011) to assess how a research project has considered gender. At the lowest point on the scale, 'gender-unequal' programmes or policies privilege one gender over another; at the highest point, 'gender-transformative' projects not only recognize differences in gender norms, roles and access to resources, but actively attempt to bring about change.

Research processes and project management

Team composition, dynamics and expertise

- [ ] Is the team (including project partners) gender-balanced and from a variety of backgrounds (racial, geographical, cultural, level of experience)? If not, what impact could this have?
- [ ] What are the power relations and decision-making roles of those involved in the research? Who is framing the questions and/or deciding what the key issues and challenges might be? Who is writing the analysis and other final outputs?
- [ ] What expertise and experience does the team already have? Can this be used for the project? If the team has no prior experience, is training required?

Management of the project

- [ ] Identify the person/people responsible for oversight and accountability.
- [ ] Identify key milestones in the project to measure progress and track activities.
- [ ] Consider risks and ethical aspects of the research.

Training and resources

- [ ] Identify the team's training needs and existing training resources (internal/external).
- [ ] What resources already exist that could be useful for the project and team? See the gender, think-thanks and international affairs dashboard for key resources.
- [ ] Maximize peer-to-peer learning where experience and knowledge already exists. However, where only one person has experience and knowledge, they should not be expected to be, nor should they be, solely responsible for training the team.

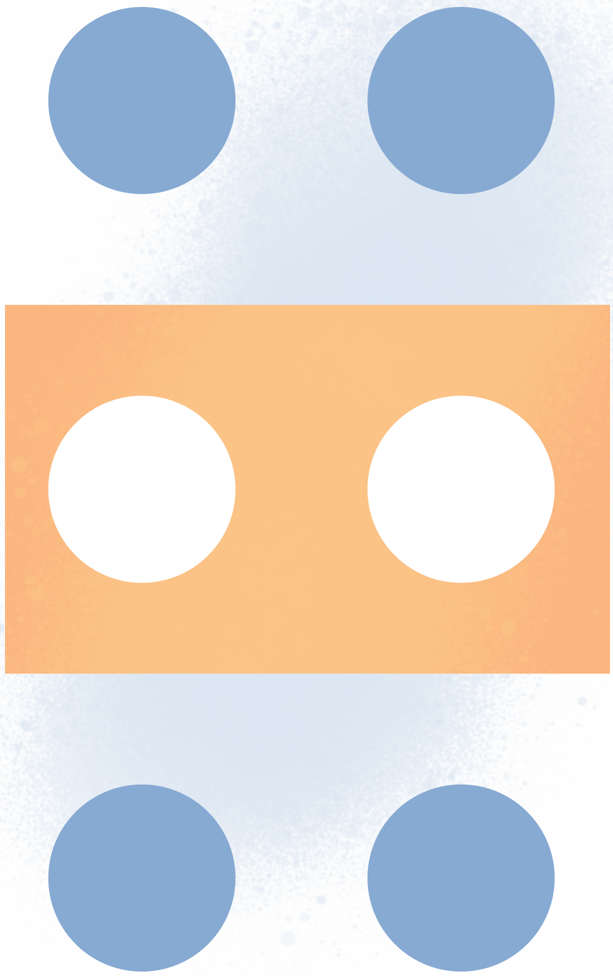
Tip! UN Women has a free eLearning campus for gender equality training.

External expertise

- [ ] Hire an external consultant (preferably a local in-country consultant or thematic expert) if additional expertise is required, but note that the project team will still need to be involved in the gender analysis, and that responsibility to ensure it is completed sufficiently still lies with the team.
- [ ] As an alternative to engaging a consultant, it might be worth considering bringing a partner organization (preferably a local in-country partner or a partner with thematic expertise) on board, but ability to do this will depend on the scope and size of the project.

Resources and budgeting

- [ ] Staff time for the gender analysis.
- [ ] Consultancy fees (if applicable).
- [ ] Training and materials.
- [ ] Additional project activities that are gender-related.
- [ ] Dependency care costs (broad term to cover costs of childcare and meeting other care-related responsibilities).



Project content and technical focus

Knowledge and sources of information

- [ ] Draw on past project experiences, outcomes and knowledge. What were the findings from previous projects? Might any of the work be used as a starting point? Could a previous project be assessed as to how it might be different if gender analysis had been included at the outset?
- [ ] Conduct a literature review using a diverse range of information sources that includes relevant material on gender, ethnicity, disability and socio-economic background as systems of power. Also consider relevant legislation, UN resolutions or key dates of meetings, forums, conventions and anniversaries that pertain to gender/women's rights/human rights/rights of other marginalized groups. Additionally, less formal, non-academic resources such as blogs can act as useful pointers for alternative avenues of research.
- [ ] If resources or literature are missing, what gaps exist, and how might this affect the research project?

Research methodology

- [ ] Consider who is involved in deciding the research questions, and if they need more training or support to conduct a rigorous gender analysis.
- [ ] Consider who the research questions are going to be relevant to, and how this will either sustain or challenge existing power dynamics.
- [ ] Include gender-related research questions, or adapt existing questions to include a gender dimension. Has the relevance of gender to the research topic been analysed? Consider, for example, the following gender analysis questions:

  – Who is involved in your analysis, and why? Is this reflective of the wider society?

  – Have you considered the micro, macro and meso levels of your context-specific/regional-specific analysis? For example: individual, household, community, national, regional and global levels.

  – Does your analysis consider gender relations? What are the gender norms governing the roles of men, women and non-binary people in the specific context that you are investigating? How does this differ according to ethnicity, race, age, social class, religion, disability and sexual orientation?

- In local and context-specific examples, how are the concepts of masculinity and femininity understood? How does this differ according to ethnicity, race, age, social class, religion, disability and sexual orientation? What impact does this have on the roles of men, women, non-binary people, power dynamics, structures and institutions?
- Is there a measurable point of change in the issue that you are researching? For example, where a conflict has taken place, does your analysis consider the gender roles/norms before, during and after the conflict?

☐ When developing a stakeholder mapping and engagement plan, consider who is involved and in what way, with the aim of ensuring it is not tokenistic and/or extractive. Research processes should allow all participants – gender experts, local people, representatives from women's organizations and other marginalized groups – to share their expertise and have full, equal and meaningful involvement in shaping policy that might affect them and the associated decision-making processes. When working with marginalized groups, ensure that they also benefit from the process, research and outcomes.

Tip! Use the Beyond Consultations Tool to assess current engagement/consultation practices, and follow the framework on how to include women in the project in a meaningful way.

☐ Gender-related ethical considerations and risk assessment must include considerations of participant safety and consent, mutual understanding of terminology, and staff safeguarding issues. For example, will LGBTIQ+ staff members be excluded or placed at risk from travelling to a location with hostile legislation?

☐ Beyond desk research, the research project might involve travel and in-country field research such as meetings, workshops, focus groups and interviews. A field trip plan should be informed by the research methodology, stakeholder mapping, and the ethics and risk assessment carried out at the beginning of the project. Issues to think about when engaging with local people might include:

- Who is able to participate? Are there any barriers that might hinder inclusive participation? Does including certain people put them at any risk?
- If you cannot include certain stakeholders, are there other ways of gaining access or of conducting the research?

- [ ] Where possible, data collected during the project will need to be disaggregated by sex, gender, age, income quintile, etc., as well as being appropriately analysed. In collecting data, have the gendered implications been considered to maximize the accuracy of the data? Are the data collected in a gender-sensitive way?

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E)

- [ ] There are many ways to conduct monitoring and evaluation. Funders might have specific requirements, but the simplest way is to include key performance indicators (KPIs) specifically related to gender in your M&E framework and/or the project's logical framework (logframe).
- [ ] Small projects with no detailed logframe or M&E framework can include bullet points/precise information in the M&E or results section of the proposal narrative, or even in the research methodology section. This should highlight which gender aspects will be monitored, and how progress will be measured.
- [ ] KPIs that are gender-specific could include (but are not limited to):

  – Gender representation targets for research events, stakeholder consultations and publication authors.

  – Research methodology that includes specific actions on gender, including interviews, consultations and research questions.

  – Research findings/research reports that are planned to include specific sections/discussions on gender.

  – Capacity- and knowledge-building efforts that include specific content or focus on gender.

  – Demonstrating increased awareness/knowledge of gender issues by project participants/stakeholders.

  – Research and policy recommendations that include gender aspects/targets.

- [ ] How progress and impact is reported to donors, project partners and within your organization will depend on the donor requirements and the scope and focus of the project. How you monitor the gender analysis during the project lifecycle will depend on the KPIs and targets, but this could include:

  – Event data and statistics, including gender-disaggregated data.

  – Participant/stakeholder feedback (qualitative and/or quantitative).

  – Contents of research findings, and related recommendations.

  – Content and focus of project outputs, including anything specific to gender findings and outcomes.

  – Outreach, engagement and uptake related to project activities and outputs, including statistics and analytics information.

Communications and dissemination

☐ The project communications strategy should include detail on how the gender analysis will be communicated throughout the project and in final outputs, as well as considerations as to the target audience (particularly in terms of access), and the language and imagery that will be used.

☐ The gender analysis findings should be integrated into final project outputs and reporting. Guiding questions for this could include:

- Have you reflected on your own research processes and methodology?
- Does the output highlight or integrate gender-specific findings? Or does it highlight its limits regarding a gender analysis? (This might relate to project KPIs.)
- Does the output highlight any intersectional dimensions?
- Have gender-disaggregated data and relevant analysis been included?
- Can lessons learned or experiences from the project be shared with other researchers in the organization and/or wider networks?

Tip! It might be useful to extrapolate gender-specific findings into a case study box, or produce infographics that highlight specific points related to gender.

☐ Any project-related dissemination events will also need to include the results of the gender analysis. Consideration should be given as to how these findings are presented, and who will present them. See the **Convening and debate** section of the toolkit for further information on organizing events.

☐ Consider holding an additional event to highlight gender-specific findings, and share lessons learned from the project with external stakeholders.

Communications and publishing

Communications and publishing are an integral part of a think-tank's mission and work, and a principal vehicle for shaping policy agendas, engaging with key stakeholders and informing wider audiences. Methods of communication, including language and imagery, that do not fully consider gender can reinforce systemic biases and harmful norms.

Language, imagery and design, and audiences

Language

- [ ] All staff should learn the difference between 'gender-sensitive', 'gender-neutral', and 'gender-transformative' language to understand how language can perpetuate bias and discrimination.
  - Gender-sensitive language ensures gender is appropriately discussed.
  - Gender-neutral language is not gender-specific.
  - Gender-transformative language changes biased thinking.
- [ ] Avoid using harmful stereotypes (usually associated with character, physical characteristics, roles and professions), including by learning to recognize and challenge them.
- [ ] Avoid using gender-discriminatory language that demeans or ignores women, men or gender non-conforming people.
- [ ] Ensure language does not become 'othering' by taking care to reflect nuances among groups.

Tip! Follow UNDP's 10 Principles for gender-responsive communications.

Imagery and design

Use of images and design are both powerful ways of communicating, and are influential in shaping perceptions, values and norms. Images and design used by think-tanks should be relevant to the research or event in question.

- [ ] Give the choice of visual content proper ethical consideration. Be sensitive and place human dignity at the centre when selecting or taking photographs or commissioning illustrations.

Gender in development imagery: humanitarian imagery overwhelmingly depicts Black women and children, and people of colour, as poverty-stricken victims without agency, while depicting white people in positions of power and influence as humanitarian workers. This is used to elicit feelings of guilt and sympathy from the (typically Western) viewer to encourage donations and present humanitarian organizations in a favourable way.

- ☐ If quotations are used throughout a publication design, ensure there is a balance of quotes from women, men and gender non-conforming people.
- ☐ Ensure the subjects of photographs understand the purposes for which their image is being used and have given informed consent. Consider the power dynamics at play between the researcher and the subject of their research – it goes without saying that this is particularly important in a research context.
- ☐ Use alt text (alternative text) when publishing images on websites and social media to ensure they are accessible to people who are blind or have visual impairments.
- ☐ Include subtitles on all video content.
- ☐ Credit all design and photography work appropriately.

Audiences

A well-designed communications strategy should consider the audience it intends to reach and influence:

- ☐ Audiences are not homogeneous. The way information is engaged with and consumed will differ among people of different genders and backgrounds. Consider the different needs, interests and priorities of your audience.
- ☐ Access to information will also differ significantly among, for example, women, men, girls, boys and non-binary people. Consider the barriers that might limit your reach and consider the different platforms and channels that might need to be used.
- ☐ Consider the stakeholders from whom researchers collected data as an audience, and communicate with this group about the outcomes of the research.

Peer review

The peer review process for publications needs to reflect the gender analysis undertaken during the research process. Bias in peer review has been documented across a range of disciplines, and although there is no failsafe way to eliminate such bias, there are several approaches that should be considered as ways of mitigating its impact:

- ☐ Ensure that there are at least two double-blind peer reviews per publication.
- ☐ Ensure that there is a diversity of peer reviewers in terms of demographics, background and geographical location.
- ☐ Provide the peer reviewers with guidance that includes specific gender-related questions they should consider.

Organizational support and guidelines

Roles and responsibilities

Mapping roles within a think-tank's communications and publishing teams is important in order to establish where responsibility should lie. The teams should have the agency to challenge content and practices that are not inclusive or that do not reflect the organization's values.

- [ ] Establish roles and responsibilities in line with other teams in the think-tank, as per the strategy or action plan created at the organizational level.
- [ ] Select a representative to attend meetings on the team's behalf, including a senior member of staff to report to other senior management.
- [ ] Discuss and identify team values that allow for and encourage transparency and participation from all.
- [ ] Create structures that ensure that the communications team is involved and consulted from the planning stage of new projects: this allows an inclusive communications strategy to be implemented in new projects from the outset.

Guidelines and resources

All decisions and agreed practices should be documented, easily accessible and clearly communicated across the think-tank. They should also align with the other activities of the organization, including convening and debate, and research.

- [ ] Create new documents or adapt existing ones to reflect any changes and to provide necessary guidance for all staff. These can include style, branding, image, publishing and peer review guidelines, social media guidelines and templates.
- [ ] Embed practices and guidance within any relevant meeting or committee protocols to ensure consistency.
- [ ] Include further resources for training purposes. For more information, see the gender, think-thanks and international affairs dashboard.

Training

Establish what knowledge and experience staff members already have, in order to better understand potential training needs and requirements.

- [ ] Maximize peer-to-peer learning by establishing what knowledge already exists.
- [ ] Work with experts and practitioners who are already active in the communications, media and publishing industries.
- [ ] Hire an expert consultant to provide any necessary training on the topics covered in this section.
- [ ] Assess how regularly staff should be trained, and when/how the training materials are updated, to ensure they meet evolving best practice standards.

> **Tip!** Do not assume prior knowledge or understanding of how gender inequality manifests in communications and publishing. Providing training, useful and accurate tools, and the necessary support is essential to bringing everyone on board and for building individual and organizational understanding and capacity.

Safeguarding

It is widely known that women face a disproportionate level of harassment and abuse online, with one abusive tweet being sent to a woman every thirty seconds on Twitter. This abuse is also disproportionately aimed at women of colour. Enshrining good safeguarding practices online should be a priority.

- ☐ Conduct regular online safeguarding risk assessments to establish the necessary measures, standards and practices for a policy appropriate for your organization.
- ☐ Ensure that the policy is well communicated and visible, enabling staff to promote transparency and build a supportive environment.
- ☐ Organize training for staff so that they can identify and prevent potential safeguarding issues.

Tip! For further resources on how to handle online harassment, this toolkit, published by Suomen Journalistiliitto (Finland's Union of Journalists), gives practical advice on what to do if you or a colleague receive abuse online.

Social media

Social media has changed the way we consume information, bringing as many advantages as disadvantages. Think-tanks and their staff are likely to use multiple social media channels to advertise events, share research, and communicate with stakeholders and wider audiences, and the same attention needs to be paid to representation and content, with the following being important considerations:

- ☐ Is the content being created (or cited) representative across gender, age, race, etc.? Does it perpetuate certain stereotypes and biases?
- ☐ Does the content align with other departments and activities within the think-tank?
- ☐ What language and imagery are being used? (See the guidance above for more detail.)
- ☐ Consider the audience you are trying to reach. Social media access and usage can vary greatly from person to person.
- ☐ What safeguarding issues need to be considered specifically for social media?
- ☐ Are there guidelines for staff using social media for work purposes? Consider developing a specific strategy for social media, if one does not exist, and organize training for staff.

Working with external organizations

A think-tank's practices and values should be reflected through its external interactions.

Media and journalists

One of the main ways a think-tank and its researchers build credibility and reputation is through working closely with the media. Think-tanks can play a pivotal role in promoting best practices, amplifying women's and minority voices and building a pipeline of talent:

Did you know? Women make up only around a quarter of subjects in the news. This needs to be addressed, as it entrenches stereotypes and perpetuates a skewed and unrealistic view of the world.

- [ ] Clearly define and establish guidelines as to which platforms the organization is willing to appear on and engage with.
- [ ] Collect data on media mentions, to monitor who is speaking and writing on behalf of the organization.
- [ ] Create an internal system to build up and amplify the voices of junior staff through publishing and speaking opportunities.
- [ ] Provide media training for all staff, particularly junior staff, and highlight and provide nuanced guidance for experiences that are unique for women, people of colour and other minority groups.
- [ ] Ensure that safeguarding policies and mechanisms are in place to facilitate the reporting of bad experiences and harassment. The policies themselves should be reviewed regularly to ensure that they remain effective and appropriate.
- [ ] Encourage colleagues to promote and recommend the work and ideas of other colleagues, particularly women at more junior levels. If expertise on a particular topic is not available within your organization, can you promote the work of women at other think-tanks by recommending them instead?
- [ ] Adopt internal policies to achieve specific goals, such as setting a minimum quota for contributions from women, and ensuring that experts from your organization do not participate in 'manels' (all-men panels).

Tip! Think-tanks should not place the burden of responsibility solely on women when it comes to driving change or holding people accountable. Opportunities and safeguarding policies need to be created by the think-tank to foster a genuinely enabling and inclusive environment.

Funders

Many funders already share the goal of wanting to fund projects that place gender equality at the heart of their practice, but this can sometimes be tokenistic, or might not be a formal requirement for funders.

- [ ] Consider the ways different activities – events, research, communications and publications – intersect, and how they should align, both to support one another and to maximize the potential to integrate an intersectional gender analysis into these activities.
- [ ] Highlight your think-tank's efforts to ensure gender equality from the outset, both in conversations with funders and in project proposals and budgets, as well as through mechanisms for reporting to funders.
- [ ] If a funder does not seem to give enough emphasis to gender equality in its assessment criteria, make the case for including an intersectional gender analysis clear in the proposal, and discuss with the funder ways of incorporating gender equality in its assessment criteria.

Research partners

Partnership working is common in the think-tank sector. It can be an effective way of sharing knowledge around gender-sensitive working practices:

- [ ] Introduce the subject of expectations around gender-sensitive research and working practices explicitly and at an early stage of a project partnership. If you already have established internal policies, this is a good time to share them. If your partner organization has not engaged with this topic before, you can share your experience and best practice. If a partner has engaged to a greater degree and has more experience and knowledge, ask if it is willing to share its practices.
- [ ] You can record specific ambitions in project agreements: for example, a goal to have women making up 50 per cent of speakers at events.
- [ ] If both organizations are already working on incorporating greater gender sensitivity into their work, this could be a good opportunity to discuss best practice and learn from each other's challenges.

Monitoring and evaluation

Data collection

Collecting data is crucial for building evidence, measuring progress and holding individuals accountable. Data can be collected and monitored across the following areas:

- [ ] Publications, including reports, papers, briefings, journal articles, magazine articles, and book reviews, as well as blogs and microsites.
- [ ] Multimedia, including publications (as above), videos, audio and podcasts.
- [ ] Media mentions.
- [ ] Citations and peer reviewers.

Did you know? Citation practices are often an overlooked area where severe biases can occur. Increasingly, evidence suggests that women, particularly women of colour and members of minority groups, are cited significantly less frequently than men. Citation practices are often inherently political, and signal whose voices are 'worth' listening to on which issues, which has material ramifications for who is afforded professional opportunities. More research is needed to understand the disadvantages for those at the intersection of race, gender and citation practices, but good practices can begin now: here's how.

Once you have the data, as mentioned above, with which to track progress and establish accountability with regard to consistently creating gender-balanced outputs, the data need to be analysed and shared within the organization on a regular basis. However, be sensitive with the data presented, and make every effort to ensure specific people are not identifiable. Set up a consistent and accurate data collection and monitoring system by:

- [ ] Establishing what data will be collected, how and when, including setting reporting deadlines. Collecting data retrospectively can result in delays, mistakes or inconsistencies, and so is best avoided where possible.

Tip! You might consider setting up a form to capture each author's details, such as name, gender identity (man, woman, other) and nationality, as well as details on the forthcoming publication. Be sure to follow best practice in establishing consent before collecting personal details.

- [ ] Analyse the data and compare with other data from across your organization, such as staff demographics and event statistics. What can you learn, and are there any similarities or gaps?
- [ ] Complement the quantitative data with qualitative data that you gain from experiences and other anecdotal feedback.
- [ ] Communicate the results by presenting the data at meetings, sharing it via email and make it accessible for others in a shared space.

Five top tips

These tips draw together the recommendations found throughout the toolkit. They are presented here as overarching concluding points to help guide a think-tank in developing successful practices to institutionalize gender equality.

1 **Involve the whole think-tank.** A holistic organizational approach is needed. Focusing solely on boosting visible representation, for instance, will limit progress and risks being tokenistic.

2 **Gender equality is everyone's responsibility.** Listen to, and hear from, all staff. Creating change needs to be an inclusive process: the burden should not fall on any individual or group to make change alone.

3 **Be intersectional.** Understand the nuances of people's lived reality and identities by focusing on gender in relation to ethnicity, race, age, social class, religion, disability and sexual orientation.

4 **Be consistent and persistent.** Change will be a slow process, but being consistent and persevering in pushing for change will embed good practice and create a culture shift.

5 **Collect data and share best practices.** Every think-tank has more work to do on gender. Closing the data gap in the think-tank sector will be instrumental in building an evidence base for creating change and monitoring progress.

If think-tanks work collaboratively and share best practices, this can help bring about sector-wide institutional change.

Resources

Our background research, resources shared during the workshop series and links in this document are all available online via the gender, think-thanks and international affairs dashboard.

If you have any additional resources that you want to contribute and share with the think-tank community, or you have any feedback, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Limitations

While the intention is that the content of the toolkit is broad in scope, the context within which the toolkit content was generated and written needs to be kept in mind. A number of limitations are acknowledged, based on feedback from participants in the series of breakfast workshops, comments by peer reviewers and the toolkit authors' own observations.

A diversity of experience was represented in the workshop series, but not all intersecting identities were present and/or represented, particularly across ethnicity, race, age, social class, religion, disability and sexual orientation. This means valuable insights were missing from people working to ensure that individuals or groups from backgrounds that have been marginalized are heard in the workplace.

Another constraint was the physical location of the workshops, which meant that there was a lack of geographical diversity among attendees. Furthermore, the limited time available for each workshop prevented participants from fully exploring the issues that were raised.

Since 2020, the context of the COVID-19 pandemic has, by necessity, accelerated the shift to greater adoption and use of online convening by organizations in the think-tank sector, and hosting of – and attendance at – online and hybrid events has rapidly become the norm. We are confident that this will continue to bring benefits in the future. Convening online and hybrid workshops will more easily allow for a far greater diversity of participants to come together, both nationally and internationally, to continue the discussions begun at the workshops in 2018.

Notwithstanding acknowledged and other constraints, our ambition is that the toolkit will serve as an important starting point for what will be an iterative and collaborative body of work. We intend that this toolkit will contribute to the wider discussions within the think-tank community on rectifying injustice and ensuring all its activities are representative of the diversity of the world we live in.

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Gender, think-tanks and international affairs: a toolkit

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