

# Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Mainstreaming in DFID's Private Sector Development Programme in the DRC

## A description of the programme's approach and lessons learnt

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### Learning Brief

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This is a 'learning briefing' produced by the UK Department for International Development's (DFID) Private Sector Development (PSD) programme in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

The briefing is one of a series that will be published by the programme's Decision Support Unit (DSU). The briefings are designed to share information that helps others learn from the experiences gained delivering this ground-breaking programme. You can download all the briefings here <http://bit.ly/PSDinDRC>



# Introduction

GESI is an increasingly important priority across development programming, including PSD. While programmes focused on women's economic empowerment (WEE), gender-based violence, adolescent girls' opportunities, women's livelihoods, and similar themes have, of course, long operated within the 'gender and social inclusion space', recent years have seen an intensifying prioritisation of GESI considerations in projects and initiatives that are not principally focused on GESI outcomes.

This paper aims to describe the way in which GESI mainstreaming was undertaken by DFID DRC's PSD programme, and to derive some key lessons and recommendations for others working on similar programmes.

# Background: the GESI imperative

The systematic incorporation, or ‘mainstreaming’, of a GESI perspective is increasingly a requirement for those delivering large-scale development programmes. At its simplest level this means that implementers must ensure opportunities for supporting GESI are leveraged wherever feasible. That might take the form of promoting equal access to programme benefits and activities, widening participation in decision-making processes, or allocating programme resources in an equitable way.

This ‘mainstreaming’ is not straightforward. It can add costs, and it is acknowledged that it can increase political or personal risk in some contexts. UNICEF, for example, states in its Gender Mainstreaming Strategy for South Asia that ‘those who attempt to challenge these (gender) norms often face backlash, including through violent means’.<sup>1</sup> This can also create additional duty of care challenges for projects. As Christina Fink, Director of International Development Studies at George Washington University, explains, ‘women’s economic empowerment projects often lead to initial increases in violence from male partners who feel threatened’.<sup>2</sup>

Notwithstanding these challenges the mainstreaming of GESI approaches is essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Mainstreaming, when done effectively and with rigor, can result in positive impacts at household, community, and country-level. GESI mainstreaming also helps ensure that no-one is excluded from accessing programme benefits.

These arguments are reflected across donor priorities. DFID’s March 2018 Strategic Vision for Gender Equality, for example, lays out a seven-point ‘call to action’, and notes that partners will be expected to support this vision.<sup>3</sup>

DFID’s Business Case for the DRC PSD programme, under discussion in this brief, makes the donor position clear: the PSD programme should adopt explicit WEE targets.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> UNICEF (2019) ‘Gender Mainstreaming Strategy, South Asia, 2018–2021’ <https://www.unicef.org/rosa/reports/unicef-south-asia-gender-mainstreaming-strategy-2018-2021>

<sup>2</sup> ‘Why include men and boys in the fight for gender equality’, Devex blogpost, May 2017 [www.devex.com/news/why-include-men-and-boys-in-the-fight-for-gender-equality-90245](http://www.devex.com/news/why-include-men-and-boys-in-the-fight-for-gender-equality-90245)

<sup>3</sup> DFID (2018) ‘DFID Strategic vision for gender equality’. [www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfid-strategic-vision-for-gender-equality-her-potential-our-future](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfid-strategic-vision-for-gender-equality-her-potential-our-future).

<sup>4</sup> DFID (2015) *Private Sector Development in DRC: Business Case* <https://devtracker.dfid.gov.uk/projects/GB-1-203161/documents>.

# Mainstreaming GESI in the DFID DRC PSD programme

## Overview of the programme

DFID has initiated an innovative PSD programme in the DRC. This is an ambitious, large-scale programme seeking to 'improve the incomes of the poor' in an extremely complex, conflict-affected environment.

The programme is split into three component parts with different delivery partners working together to achieve the cross-cutting impact and outcome statements:

1. An M4P project, **ÉLAN**, is a £50 million project that aims to realise a cumulative net income increase of £88.4 million for 1 million low-income beneficiaries by 2020, through work across a number of sectors including agriculture, finance, renewable energy, and transport.
2. A £35 million Business Environment Reform project named **Essor**. The initial portfolio of interventions included implementation of OHADA (a system of harmonised business laws adopted by 17 Francophone African countries), access to finance, access to electricity, and work to reduce corruption.
3. The **DSU**, a £3.5 million component ending in 2023, supports the ÉLAN and Essor projects with annual reviews, results verifications, evaluations, research, learning, and adaptation activities, intended to improve implementation and increase impact.

## The DRC context

Successfully mainstreaming gender equality and social inclusion in development programming requires an understanding of context. Understanding the context, and in particular the structural and cultural barriers that may limit the transformative potential of GESI mainstreaming work, is crucial, because this knowledge allows programme managers and technical teams to decide not only where GESI mainstreaming is needed (entry points) but where it will be viable, effective, and less risky.

In the case of the DRC, the structural and cultural barriers which entrench and reproduce inequality for women and working-aged adolescent girls are considerable: the DRC ranks 152 out of 160 countries on the Gender Inequality Index<sup>5</sup>. Women and girls face constraints in

<sup>5</sup> UNDP (2017) 'Gender Inequality Index' <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/gII>

access to basic human development services, economic assets, and participation in decision-making processes. Child, early, and forced marriage, as well as female genital mutilation and gender-based and sexual violence, are prevalent and increase the vulnerability of women and girls; meanwhile, at a policy level, where legislation is in place it is not uniformly implemented, access to justice is poor, and the reach of the formal state is limited.

Where women and adolescent girls are working, roles tend to be low-skilled, poorly remunerated jobs in the informal sector, with minimal prospects for beneficial role change. As is the case in many contexts, women and girls are also burdened by their roles as child carers and by domestic work within the household.<sup>6</sup>

While the general form of these contextual features is by no means unique to the DRC, it is critical to understand that their particular articulation is severe and that, taken together, they constitute a serious challenge to gender equality and social inclusion mainstreaming for DFID's PSD programme. At the same time, they demonstrate the highly justifiable need for programming that systematically addresses the inequalities and development challenges experienced by women and other vulnerable groups.

## Relevant programme indicators

Project logframes for both ÉLAN and Essor include indicators with gender dimensions. These are an important feature of the overall mainstreaming landscape because they establish concrete targets to which the projects can be held accountable and force reflection on sector selection and intervention design. Before outlining the indicators, it is important to note the following:

- These indicators address only the question of gender and do not engage with the objective of gender equality and social inclusion more broadly. While women and girls are almost always likely to be the largest constituency within the GESI frame, they are not the only one. A more holistic social inclusion approach would require the scope of indicators to cover a broader spectrum of disempowerment and vulnerability, including, for example, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and men and boys. The challenges of disaggregating monitoring data along these multiple channels would, however, be significant. In addition, there are limited tools and guidance available on how to do this well in PSD programmes.
- With the exception of ÉLAN's **Outcome Indicator 2**, the indicators are generic economic indicators disaggregated by gender rather than more targeted indicators that specifically measure the project's impact on gender equality. This may signal a reluctance on the part of logframe developers to hold either project accountable for independent gender impacts, outcomes, or outputs.
- The Essor indicators listed are not part of the current Essor logframe as they relate to workstreams that have now been closed. The comparatively small number of relevant logframe indicators for the Essor project reflects, in part, the perceived difficulty of identifying and measuring relevant GESI impacts of Business Environment Reform interventions that are focused on delivering high-level institutional changes. .

<sup>6</sup> Jordan, S. (2017) 'ÉLAN RDC's Women's Economic Empowerment Learning Series: Case Study 1'.

## ÉLAN indicators relevant to GESI

- **Impact Indicator 1:** Average Net Attributable Income Change (NAIC) among poor people as a result of market system changes supported by the programme (sex disaggregated)
- **Impact Indicator 2:** Cumulative number of poor people who have experienced net positive income change as a result of market system changes supported by the programme (sex disaggregated).
- **Impact Indicator 3:** Cumulative aggregate NAIC among poor people as a result of market system changes supported by the programme (sex disaggregated).
- **Outcome Indicator 1:** Cumulative number of poor people who report a substantial increase in enterprise or household performance as a result of market system changes supported by the programme (sex disaggregated)
- **Outcome Indicator 2:** Cumulative number of poor women showing a progression in their role within the targeted market systems.
- **Output Indicator 2.1:** Cumulative number of poor people showing significant changes in their practices as a result of market system changes supported by the programme (sex disaggregated).

## Essor indicators relevant to GESI

- **Impact Indicator:** Cumulative NAIC among poor people (sex disaggregated)
- **Output Indicator 1.1:** Cumulative number of unique private sector representatives participating in forums that identify issues and solutions for reform with Essor support (sex disaggregated)
- **Output Indicator 2.1:** Cumulative number of people trained or mentored with support from Essor (sex disaggregated).

## The programme's GESI mainstreaming approach

### Key preparatory actions: assessment, building the base

ÉLAN carried out preparatory work prior to implementing GESI mainstreaming in the programme:

- The project undertook a series of '**rapid GESI analyses**' during the design phase that identified the sectors with the most potential for GESI mainstreaming in terms of viability and compliance with a policy of 'do no harm', as well as potential for economic growth.
- Once these key intervention areas were identified (they included the mobile money sector and, in non-perennial agriculture, the sectors of coffee and rice production), proposals were sought.
- At this stage a strategy was developed for risk mitigation, and a baseline of sex-disaggregated data established.
- At an early stage of implementation, examination of sex-disaggregated data showed that projected figures for first- and

second-line female beneficiaries were falling below the 50% end-of-programme target. In response to this, ÉLAN developed a Gender Strategy and an actionable Gender Plan.

Following the varied levels of GESI integration across the programme since inception, Essor appointed a gender specialist mid-way through implementation to review the current approach and provide strategic recommendations:

- Whilst an early analysis of the DRC's 'Family Code' (a legal instrument that governs the rules and organisation of the family) suggested that there were few entry points for Essor to integrate GESI considerations, changes to the legal framework in 2016 offered new opportunities for the programme.
- The consultant found that whilst Essor had integrated gender considerations as part of the anti-corruption workstream, a strategic approach was required across the whole portfolio to target business-environment constraints for women in the DRC.
- Key strategic priorities for GESI were identified, particularly related to access to finance' (increasing the availability and up-take of credit, insurance, and leasing products, as well as mobile money services).
- A review of the data collected to date, led to revisions of the programme's logframe to include the three GESI-relevant indicators listed above, and increase the degree of sex-disaggregation for remaining indicators. The consultant also developed a gender 'Theory of Change'.
- The review also identified the need for a dedicated gender advisor, who was subsequently recruited.

### **Key programmatic actions**

ÉLAN appointed a dedicated GESI adviser who developed assessment tools and templates, as well as supporting ongoing GESI assessments. In addition, cross-programme training was provided for ÉLAN staff to provide an introduction to the concepts of sex and gender, and to introduce the importance of GESI mainstreaming.

An international, M4P-trained WEE specialist was also appointed by ÉLAN. This role supported and built the capacity of the GESI adviser, reviewed the quality of the GESI tools and templates, and ensured that the overall GESI strategy was aligned with both the M4P approach and with DFID's broader vision for WEE.

ÉLAN also developed a system of GESI 'champions' early in the mobilisation of the project. The initiative involved the training of a member of staff in each provincial team who was then tasked with supporting sector leads with monitoring and results measurement in GESI mainstreaming activities. This new approach was introduced following ÉLAN's gender inclusion review, which recognised that previous efforts did not do enough to capture and share (internally and externally) valuable information on what was working and not working in GESI.

In keeping with the overall adaptive programming philosophy of the PSD programme, and in recognition of the fact that many of the potential mainstreaming areas represented new ground, ÉLAN incorporated a 'what

works' approach in its GESI mainstreaming activities. This comprised a series of pilots designed to test different approaches and understand their relative strengths and weaknesses, the idea being to subsequently integrate lessons learnt more widely into programme activities.<sup>7</sup> Such pilots included, for example, partnerships with financial institutions and mobile money operators in the Access to Finance sector, as well as interventions relating to Improved Cook Stoves (ICS) and solar lamps within the renewable energy sector. These almost exclusively targeted women as producers, sales agents, and consumers, while intended benefits of the ICS included household savings, health benefits, and a reduction of the time spent on domestic chores. Solar lamps provided benefits in terms of household savings and greater opportunities for children to study. Meanwhile, a complementary communications initiative comprised a communications campaign on the benefits of solar lamps, targeting teachers and students in the Kivus.

In the non-perennial agriculture sector, ÉLAN developed a pilot intervention within the Mbeko Shamba contract farming intervention, negotiating for 50% of the participants in Fungurume Village to be female. Demonstrating that female maize farmers, provided with the same inputs as male farmers, were on average more productive, this pilot helped build the economic case for women's participation in commercial farming initiatives. Similar pilots were also undertaken in other locations and for other farming types, producing similar results.

Essor also appointed a dedicated Gender Advisor to support the programme leadership, monitoring and evaluation, and technical teams, and develop frameworks for monitoring and reporting on progress.

Work combatting corruption continued to be the most fruitful for integrating GESI considerations, recognising female entrepreneurs' heightened exposure to corrupt practices. In each sub-intervention, Essor designed indicators to gather evidence on gender-specific experiences of entrepreneurs relating to cross-border taxation and the cost of corruption. Essor also ran a more targeted intervention, which created community listening clubs for women, and some male "champions", to discuss positive masculinity, female entrepreneurship and tax classification. In collaboration with the OHADA workstream and the Ministry of Gender, the anti-corruption intervention publicised information on key reforms to the Family Code (in particular, the elimination of the requirement for a woman to obtain her husband's consent to register a business). Within the access to finance workstream interventions focused on women-owned companies and address challenges faced by women in obtaining finance.<sup>8</sup>

Following the closure of Anti-Corruption and Access to Finance work in 2018, Essor reviewed the strategic GESI priorities across the programme. The remaining workstreams' institutional focus meant that the potential for GESI integration was less clear and required more up-skilling of the project team's understanding. To support this the GESI advisor developed a 'Doing GESI' framework for the technical teams in strategy planning and identified gender champions from the two workstreams to push for greater integration.

<sup>7</sup> ÉLAN RDC (2017) 'Annual Reports and Business Plans, 2014–2017' <https://www.elanrdc.com/rapportsSeries: Case Study 1>.

<sup>8</sup> DSU (2018) Essor Annual Report 2016; Essor Mid-term Evaluation.



## **Monitoring, evaluation, and learning: measuring change**

Measuring and attributing a programme's impact on GESI presents challenges for programmes that are not principally focused on this area. The traditional approach is to use sex-disaggregated monitoring data to report on impact, outcome, and output indicators wherever possible. At the level of the programme logframe this was, in fact, the approach taken by the DFID DRC PSD programme—as noted in the lists of indicators presented above.

There is certainly value in this method. If done well it offers coherence, comparability, and consistency. However, it is inherently limited and lacking in nuance. For this reason, ÉLAN also introduced a far more ambitious and innovative strategy for measuring change, mapped across three dimensions:<sup>9</sup>

- 1. Clarity over counting approaches and disaggregation strategies.**

This demonstrates a recognition that even basic counting and sex disaggregation are not unproblematic and require attention and strategic consideration.

- 2. Measurement approach for the adoption of more beneficial roles established, and clear WEE Theory of Changes hypothesised.<sup>10</sup>**

Two things should be noted here: the first is the move away from off-the-rack disaggregation approaches toward more bespoke metrics; the second is the explicit focus on WEE, given that ÉLAN is not in fact a WEE programme.

- 3. Robust qualitative analysis to supplement sex-disaggregated data.**

This qualitative analysis was ultimately published in a three-volume series focused on experiences with WEE in the ÉLAN programme.

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<sup>9</sup> DSU (2016) ÉLAN RDC 2016 Annual Report; 2017 Business Plan.

<sup>10</sup> To qualify as having adopted a 'more beneficial role', poor women must experience at least one of the following role change types as a result of the intervention: Greater job security; Formalisation of role/employment; Improved position in value chain; Greater sustained opportunity for training and capacity development; and Improved worked conditions. Ibid.

# Conclusions and recommendations

The DFID DRC PSD programme sought to mainstream GESI delivery. The programme's logframes were used to incentivise sufficient focus on GESI and each component project adopted different approaches to mainstreaming and measuring GESI in their workstreams. These indicators address only the question of gender, and do not engage the issues of gender equality, equity, and social inclusion more broadly, which means that the programme has focused primarily on this narrow aspect of social inclusion.

Each project can demonstrate results and can highlight particular successful outcomes that support their approach. There are limitations in the measures that have been used to evaluate the programme's impact on GESI. The ÉLAN project has taken innovative steps to find a new way to monitor the change it has delivered in this area.

There are a number of recommendations that follow from the DFID DRC programme's experiences in this area:

1. **The importance of deep and early preparation.** The results were strongest where the programme prioritised GESI mainstreaming before implementation (commissioning GESI analyses and appointing expert personnel to drive the mainstreaming process forward at design stage). Where this activity happened later, key opportunities were missed to build GESI into programming.
2. **The need for dedicated GESI roles.** The appointment of GESI experts alongside the creation of a decentralised system of GESI 'champions' to address intervention-level issues paid dividends. For example, the network of GESI-trained champions was able to undertake a comprehensive gender review of ÉLAN RDC's interventions in the coffee market in North and South Kivu with the guidance of a centrally based GESI expert. On another occasion, GESI champions worked with the WEE expert to map theories of change for the adoption of more beneficial roles for women in a range of different markets.
3. **The benefits of an adaptive approach.** In keeping with the design philosophy of the PSD programme as a whole, the ÉLAN project employed an adaptive approach, involving (i) identification, through research, of viable and useful GESI entry points in workstreams, (ii) piloting of GESI-focused mainstreaming at these points, and (iii) scaling up of 'what worked'. The net result was that the project was able to hit targets that went beyond simply ensuring equal access for women, moving into the territory of WEE programming, with a potential for transformational change. This is a considerable achievement in a project focused on general market systems.

4. **The added value that is gained from broadening the way you measure change.** By engaging issues such as beneficial role change as well as traditional impact and outcome metrics, and by complementing numerical data with qualitative accounts, you can produce a more nuanced picture of programme-driven improvements for women, which helps to provide more meaningful lessons for future GESI activity.

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