One year down the road

The impact of the International Development (Gender Equality) Act 2014
Acknowledgements

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Cover photo: Alan Gignoux/Dreamstime.com
Foreword

The passing of the Gender Act last year was a historic moment for the UK and for international development. For the first time, a major global donor country enshrined a commitment to gender equality in development into law, signalling to the world that it was time to put decades of fine words into action.

The Act’s humble origins lie in a conversation between GREAT and Sir Bill Cash, an unlikely champion you may think, but let’s not forget that without him there wouldn’t have been a Private Members Bill, and now an Act. We were all outraged by the egregious inequalities we had witnessed in the developing world (which is not to say we have stamped out inequality here) and determined that the UK, as such a significant donor, should be doing more. Today that sentiment has the force of law behind it and not just that, the commitment of DFID to bring it to life.

This report demonstrates the impact of the Act just a year after it was passed. It is clear that the Act has the potential to completely transform the development landscape: from one where a road is just a road, to one where gender is a routine part of everything we do. DFID has made a tremendous start in showing the world how this can be done. We are now calling for other countries and donor agencies to replicate this bold and - as we have shown in this report - effective, impactful, necessary step.

Tanya Barron
Chief Executive, Plan UK

Mariella Frostrup, Karen Ruimy & Jason McCue
Founding Trustees, The GREAT Initiative

This year we have a historic window of opportunity to put gender equality at the heart of international development, and development at the top of the international agenda.

This report comes at a timely moment. It shows what can be achieved when gender equality is taken seriously; when it becomes a mandatory consideration, not an optional tick box. Imagine if other donors followed suit. What would happen if the EU, the World Bank, the whole UN system also replicated what the UK has done?

The stakes have never been higher, as the Sustainable Development Goals, Financing for Development and Climate Change talks set the world’s course for the foreseeable future. This report provides the evidence we need to argue that gender should be at the heart of these agreements. Not only is a road not just a road, but an Act is not just an Act, it is a living breathing document with the potential to transform lives.

We are now calling DFID to take this message to Accra, New York, Paris and beyond.
Summary of findings

The International Development (Gender Equality) Act 2014 came into force on 13 May 2014. One year on, The GREAT Initiative and Plan UK set out to evaluate how the Act has been implemented. Our report does not make any legal judgment on compliance with the Act, but rather seeks to assess how DFID has interpreted and implemented the Act’s provisions.

DFID is broadly compliant with the procedures it has defined for implementing the Act - namely a clearly flagged statement in the business case outlining the impact on gender inequality. This is what we expected to find in year one, where the focus would logically be on ensuring compliance with DFID’s implementation procedures in the first instance.

We applaud the emphasis placed by DFID on meaningful engagement with the Act – this goes beyond their legal obligations and reflects the broader strong leadership and political will within DFID to be a world-leading donor when it comes to integrating gender equality within development. There is some positive practice already, but more to do in year 2 to move beyond compliance to meaningful engagement across the board.

We found that:

- At the time of our analysis (May 2015) 64% of the business cases in our sample contained a clear statement addressing gender impact and only 18% of business cases lacked this statement (DFID have since provided us with a detailed explanation for this and the measures being taken to address this - see p.10). For a further 18% business cases were not available (again DFID provided some explanation as to why this might be the case, see p.16).

- DFID has some progress to make on transparency. Accessing information can be a challenge; both in terms of documents missing on Dev Tracker and the limits of the search function. This falls short of DFID’s commitments under the UK Aid Transparency Guarantee.

- Implementation of the Act is more variable with regard to the quality of gender analysis – i.e. how well the gender impact has been considered in the business case. 14% of business cases were assessed as gender transformative, 45% as gender sensitive, 23% as gender unaware and none were gender exploitative. (i.e. having a negative impact on gender equality)
The year ahead

We recommend that, in the second year of the Act, DFID:

- Focus on ensuring that all business cases have a clearly flagged statement of gender impact
- Increase the quality of gender analysis by for instance sharing good practice from gender sensitive and gender transformative programmes
- Move to a whole programme approach, with an expectation that the gender objectives identified in business cases (a) are delivered on in implementation and (b) are monitored and reported on in programme reviews
- Use the Act as a lever with delivery partners
- Address the question around transparency of documentation
- Maintain the current high level of political leadership
- Step up global advocacy around the Act
- Embrace a broader appreciation of gender equality, which includes sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI), and a more transformative approach, including addressing social norms and stereotypes
- Take steps to establish how other Government Departments with responsibility for dispensing Overseas Aid have interpreted the Act

This Act is an innovation both domestically and internationally. By enshrining a policy priority in law, the UK has not only mainstreamed gender into every DFID spending decision, it has ensured its sustainability into the future.
Introduction

The Act

The International Development (Gender Equality) Act was passed by Parliament in March 2014 and came into force on 13 May 2014. It has two main clauses: the first places a duty on the Secretary of State for International Development before providing development aid to consider whether the proposed assistance will reduce poverty in a way which is also likely to reduce gender inequality, and have similar regard before providing humanitarian assistance; the second calls for annual reporting.

The Act arose from a partnership between Sir Bill Cash MP and the Gender Rights and Equality Action Trust (GREAT) Initiative, with the support of Plan UK and WaterAid, and was taken up by the Government and passed with cross-party support. It is significant and unusual as it enshrines in domestic law the UK’s policy commitment to advancing gender equality in international development. As SoS Justine Greening MP has said, it shows that “gender equality isn’t something that can be simply tacked on to overseas programmes as an afterthought. It needs to be built in from the start”.

This evaluation

The Act does not spell out how the Department for International Development (DFID) should enact its provisions. Therefore, one year after it came into force, the GREAT Initiative and Plan UK wanted to evaluate how - and how well - DFID has implemented the Act. Our aims were:

1. To examine how DFID has implemented the Act in its first year
2. To scrutinise the difference the Act has made already to consideration of gender in decision-making and spending
3. To recommend how the Act can be built on to deliver better decision-making and greater impact on the ground in future

This report reviews the implementation of the Act which has occurred to date, so focuses on the first clause: to consider gender equality before dispensing overseas aid. We didn’t review the second clause, on annual reporting, because reporting had not occurred during the period in which we conducted our research. However we encourage DFID to report comprehensively on the Act, and Parliament and civil society to engage with this process.

Methodology

This was a mixed methods evaluation, drawing on both quantitative and qualitative analysis. The evidence base comprised:

- Document review of key documents relating to the Act (e.g. policy papers, speeches, programme management documentation).
- A representative sample taken from across DFID programme areas of 20% of all Business Cases for development aid and 30% for humanitarian assistance approved since the Act.
- In total 44 projects were analysed.

1. The Act applies to England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.
2. The business cases in our final sample were all confirmed with DFID to have been approved since the Act came into force. Projects may still be in the planning stage and/or not have a confirmed start date.
3. Four projects whose business cases scored highly (either Gender Sensitive or Gender Transformational) were selected as case studies. Semi-structured telephone interviews were conducted with the DFID official(s) who drafted the business cases. They were asked questions under three headings: (1) Awareness of the Act and approach in project planning (incl. what advice/guidance they received from DFID); (2) How they approached gender in drafting the business case (incl prior knowledge, relevance of gender to project aims and advice for colleagues); and (3) Project implementation and monitoring (incl how to use the Act with delivery partners, data and review). Notes were written up from the interviews and thematic analysis conducted to draw out commentary, lessons and recommendations which are referenced in this report. A semi-structured interview was conducted in-person with the Head of the Social Development Profession and Head of the Gender Team (referred to in this report as ‘Gender Act leads’). They were asked questions under three headings: the process by which the Act has been implemented, assessment of how well it has been implemented (including feedback on findings from DFID’s internal review and the Policy Implementation Review of the Strategic Vision), and future plans for implementation. Notes were thematically analysed and findings summarised in this report.
4. An online survey with six questions on implementation, awareness and the impact of the Act was sent to all the Act’s original civil society stakeholders, including UK and international NGO stakeholders. It was promoted via a blog on the BOND website, through the main meeting and working groups of the UK Gender and Development Network (GADN), and via social media and communications of The GREAT Initiative and Plan UK. The survey questions can be viewed online at: http://keeksurveys.com/l/8uWudidrmp37rv3y00y093032.
How has DFID implemented the Act?

DFID’s approach to implementation

The Act requires DFID to consider the impact on gender equality before providing aid or assistance. DFID has set out its own internal procedures for demonstrating compliance with the Act. These procedures specify that implementation of the Act should be evidenced by the inclusion of a sign-posted statement in the strategic case section of each business case for development aid or covering submission for humanitarian assistance. This should set out how the proposed activity will contribute to reducing gender inequality – or, if it will not, to demonstrate why it is not relevant. DFID’s guidance to staff says:

Under the Act, DFID must have meaningful yet proportionate regard to the contribution its assistance is likely to make to reducing gender inequality (development) or to gender-related differences in needs (humanitarian) before assistance is provided.

The decision to approve funding in DFID is in practice made through the business case or, in the case of humanitarian support, a funding submission, approved by the Secretary of State. ‘Meaningful yet proportionate regard’ means: For all interventions, consider the impact on gender inequality – the impact of the intervention on different genders and the relationship between them. Humanitarian responses should consider the different needs of girls and women and boys and men. Clear evidence of compliance will be provided in every business decision:

- A clearly flagged, proportionate statement to confirm and summarise ‘regard’ must be included in the strategic case section of a business case, submission for humanitarian aid, cost extension submission, or applications for Conflict Pool and International Climate Funds, etc.
- Programme leads should ensure that regard is made by those with the appropriate skills to do so (Social Development Adviser or equivalent).
- Depending on the context and nature of the programme, this can be a unique sentence.5

‘Meaningful’ engagement

DFID noted that the Act does not specify the quality of the consideration of gender equality in the business case. In line with its broader approach to flexible programme management, DFID has instructed its staff to engage ‘meaningfully but proportionately’ with the Act. This means enabling staff to apply thoughtful consideration to how and why gender might be relevant, rather than just ticking a box or name-checking the Act. But it might also mean having the courage to say that gender isn’t relevant to a programme – provided they can articulate why. We support this approach - tickbox exercises can quickly become meaningless and discourage project leads from thoughtful engagement with gender issues.

DFID programme management

DFID has recently implemented a new programme management approach, moving away from a prescriptive approach to writing business cases and funding submissions towards capability-based decision making. Under this approach, each project now has a Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) who must ensure sign off of a business case at the appropriate level. Where the proposed spend is £40m or over and/or the proposed programme is deemed novel or contentious, the business case is also reviewed by an internal DFID Quality Assurance Unit. The Secretary of State for International Development then agrees the provision of assistance via the finalised business case. So, there are up to three stages at which compliance can be ensured: (1) the staff member who coordinates the drafting of a business case, (2) a formal internal audit/quality assurance check for some BCs, (3) the person (Minister or official) who signs off on a case.6 Most business cases going to Ministers are also checked by several layers within the hierarchy (Deputy Director, Director) before reaching Ministers. The time it takes for a business case to go from initial drafting to agreement can vary considerably: from 1-2 weeks for a humanitarian emergency to many months for a development project.7
Implementation support

As the Act came in, DFID issued a range of guidance to its staff and in-country teams about how to demonstrate compliance. This included: specific guidance in the DFID Smart Rules for programme design and management (N.B. the Smart Rules were introduced on 30th June 2014, around 6 weeks after the Act came in to force, so some business cases may have been approved during the period between the two), a training session with Senior Civil Servants, guidance issued to Social Development Advisers across DFID (who are often project leads on gender), and the establishment of a helpdesk staffed by technical advisers to offer on-demand advice and share sample business cases. The helpdesk is still operational, though the number of queries has dwindled. DFID told us that staff had mainly sought guidance on how they should evidence compliance in drafting business cases. DFID has recently conducted a second round of implementation support, comprising a training meeting for project SROs, and re-training for specific teams who were found to be implementing the Act less consistently in DFID’s internal review (see below).

The internal support around implementation has been well received. DFID staff we interviewed all reported that they had received some guidance and/or training and, where they had sought it, helpful and relevant advice on drafting individual business cases from social development advisers.

Communicating the Act

Gender has been a policy priority for Secretary of State Justine Greening MP, and she has herself helped promote implementation, highlighting the Act in speeches and other communications. Her personal endorsement of the Bill was instrumental in it being passed and her leadership on this issue has given a clear message to DFID that she wishes to see meaningful implementation. She has described the Act as a “transformational and far-reaching achievement”, a “landmark piece of legislation” and, on the day it was passed, tweeted that it would “help to improve millions of girls’ lives around the world”. In March this year, in a speech to the Women of the World Festival, she said that the Act was “something many other countries are looking at and taking a lead from. It is a unique Bill we should be proud of.” Justine Greening re-stated her intention for gender equality to remain a priority for the Department after her reappointment as Secretary of State following the 2015 general election. DFID’s efforts to communicate the Act externally have also borne fruit. Respondents to our sector survey reported that the Act had been mentioned in a range of meetings, communications and other documentation (see figure 7).

DFID’s internal review

DFID has conducted its own internal review, examining all business cases agreed to between the Act coming into force and the end of November 2014 (a six-month period). These business cases were checked for whether they complied with DFID’s internal procedures for implementing the Act. We do not know whether they were also assessed on the quality of their gendered analysis or planning. DFID also commissioned an in-depth review of 15 business cases since the Act came into force as part of a wider Policy Implementation Review of its Strategic Vision for Girls and Women. These 15 cases were analysed for how well they had considered gender, which went beyond the narrower scope of the internal review.

In sum, DFID’s view is that it demonstrates implementation of the Gender Act by providing evidence of consideration of gender equality in business cases – in other words, before the Secretary of State signs off on aid being dispensed. However, DFID has gone further than the minimum required, in encouraging staff to demonstrate that they have followed its procedures for implementation and have meaningfully engaged with consideration of gender issues. In this evaluation we therefore consider two aspects of implementation: (1) to what extent is DFID compliant with the procedures it has defined for implementing the Act, and (2) how ‘meaningful’ is its consideration of gender equality?

11. DFID told us that some business cases are not made publicly available due to commercial sensitivity during tender and procurement. We do not know how many of the missing cases this applies to.
12. The PIR was expected to be published in July 2015. DFID was kind enough to share a draft version of the report with us.
Findings 1: Implementation

Our analysis (conducted in May 2015) found that (at the time, and with the information we had available) DFID was broadly compliant with the procedures it has defined for implementing the Act, i.e. that each new business case should contain a ‘clearly flagged, proportionate statement to summarise regard’ (however brief) in the strategic case section.

In our sample of 44 projects since the Act came into force, 18% (n=8) of business cases were not compliant. These were confirmed by DFID to have been submitted after the Act came into force, but contained no gender equality section. For a further 18% (n=8) it was impossible to tell because business cases were not available. We highlight this as transparency is a DFID commitment and an international standard donors have signed up to. 64% were confirmed as compliant. See figure 1.

It should be noted that our evaluation sampled 44 individual business cases we believed to have been agreed by DFID in the 12-month period between the Act coming into force and 31 May 2015. There was initially no full list available of all the business cases agreed by DFID since the Act, so we constructed a list by hand from DevTracker using project start dates. This identified 186 unique projects with known implementation start dates after May 2014.

To ensure that the sample covered each programme area, we stratified it to ensure that 20% were looked at from each sector. We raised this to 30% for the humanitarian business cases, since this sector is mentioned separately in the Act. In total, this gave a sample size of just over 25% of the 186 business cases. This is a robust sample size: by comparison, the PIR in-depth analysis of 15 business cases represents around a 10% sample of business cases since the Act was passed.

Our sampling was subsequently amended, in light of new information from DFID about when each business case had been agreed (business case submission dates are not available via DevTracker, only project start dates). The overall number of projects in our sample (n=44), and the proportions from each sector, remained the same. However, DFID told us that some of the business cases in our initial sample had been submitted before the Act came in. We replaced these projects with ones which DFID confirmed to be post-Act.

Once our final report and the findings detailed in our analysis - as set out above - were shared with DFID for final review, they provided some further clarifications to their original advice about the dates of submission of business cases. They informed us that of the eight business cases we identified as not having a statement of gender impact in the business case: two had been approved before the Act came in to force and a further two before the Smart Rules were agreed on 30th June.

13 DFID told us that some business cases are not made publicly available due to commercial sensitivity during tender and procurement.
14 Although DFID informally shared with us its list of the relevant cases to the end of November 2014.
15 Plus 97 duplicates and 64 with unclear start dates.
16 A population and sampling frame were devised by hand using DevTracker; each sector on DevTracker was searched for projects with a start date after 13 May 2014; a total list of projects was compiled; each was assigned a unique ID and a random sampling number in Excel. Projects were then randomly sorted by sampling number, and the first 20% of projects in each sector sampled (30% for humanitarian). These were selected in proportion to the overall number of new programmes in each sector on DevTracker - 20% from each of these sectors: Agriculture, Budget, Business, Communications, Education, Energy, Environment, Finance, Government, Health, Industry, Multisector, Social, Trade, Transport & Storage, Unallocated, Water, and 30% from Disaster.
Variation in performance between sectors

We found no particular pattern to the non-compliant projects, which were spread evenly across a range of sectors. As this only concerned a small number of projects from our sample, it is hard to draw reliable conclusions, but no single sector stood out as poorly - or well-performing. However, business cases were missing in significantly higher proportions in the humanitarian sector, making it hard to be clear how well the Act has been implemented in those projects.

DFID’s internal review identified Conflict, Humanitarian and Security (CHASE), as well as Middle East and North Africa (MENA), as initially poorer-performing areas, and targeted these in its second round of training. Separately, DFID’s Policy Implementation Review analysed 30 business cases, 15 agreed before the Act and 15 after. It also surveyed 93 DFID staff on 8 questions relating to awareness, confidence and training they had received on the Gender Equality Act. The Review highlighted the Economic Development and CHASE sectors as requiring further attention on embedding gender more broadly.

DFID officials informally considered there to be three main reasons why projects might not be compliant with their implementation procedures. First, if the business case was submitted close to the Act coming into force or the submission date was unclear (and it was therefore hard to be certain whether it was post-Act); second, if the team had a high volume of projects (e.g. MENA teams); and third, if they were humanitarian assistance applications completed at speed, often by teams with high staff turnover. For example, lots of new staff had been brought into teams working on specific crises, not all of whom may have received the initial training and guidance on the Act. Feedback from within DFID’s humanitarian teams was that it could be a struggle to give priority to gender issues in emergency situations for three reasons: (1) because partner implementing agencies didn’t see it as a priority; (2) because finding people with the right skill set was at a premium; and (3) because of the sheer pace at which most humanitarian responses had to move. Despite these challenges, humanitarian staff agreed that gender was especially important in humanitarian projects, in which men and women’s risk and protective factors are almost always different. DFID has itself recently reaffirmed its commitment to protecting women in emergency situations. It hosted a global conference in November 2013 to launch the Keep Her Safe initiative, which agreed to prioritise the protection of girls and women from violence and sexual exploitation in emergency situations. The Secretary of State herself pledged, “I want to make sure we are prioritising the needs of girls and women. They may seem simple but things like lockable toilets, safe access to firewood, or adequate lighting can make a huge difference”.

We analysed some humanitarian business cases which performed strongly. Some related to future preparedness and response, and therefore were drafted over a longer time period where more careful consideration could be given to gender. However, DFID humanitarian staff said that, even in emergency circumstances, demonstrating compliance should not be that difficult – it was about getting input from the right people with the right skills. The Act should give further emphasis to meeting DFID’s existing commitments to protecting women and girls in emergencies. One interviewee commented that gender sensitivity should be possible in any first phase response (e.g. ensuring that women are represented on committees and form part of assessment teams); another advised colleagues to start by checking the humanitarian development index, which gives a quick indication of whether and how gender inequality is a major issue in the affected area.

Of the remaining four, three had been identified by DFID’s own review and remedial action was being taken and the final one had been brought to light by our review and action would be taken.

Of the eight business cases which were not available, DFID clarified that six of these were excluded from publication due to political sensitivities (in line with DFID policy on transparency) and a further two had not been uploaded to Dev Tracker as yet but they would seek to correct this.

17. The rest of the missing business cases are spread evenly over different sectors. It is worth noting, too, that our initial sample of humanitarian business cases (some of which subsequently turned out to have been submitted before the Act) had an even higher rate of missing documentation from DevTracker.

18. Described by DFID Gender Act lead/s in interviews.


20. Interview with DFID Gender Act lead/s.


22. Interviews with individual DFID programme staff.

23. Interviews with individual DFID programme staff.
Upgrading the Kigumba-Masindi-Hoima-Kabwoya Road from gravel to bitumen standard

(GB-1-204011)

The project

DFID is providing £9.37m over 3 years to upgrade the surface of this 135km road in Western Uganda. Currently only 4% of Uganda’s roads are paved.

Gender relevance

The main focus of this project is not gender equality. It is a transport, infrastructure and construction project with a specific aim to improve transport times and safety for economic purposes for the 870,000 people living along the road. Therefore, we would not necessarily expect to see a strong gender equality component. It scored LOW on gender relevance to the programme aims.

Gender impact – how well has the Act been implemented?

Unexpectedly, this project not only complies fully with the Gender Act’s duty to consider impact on gender equality, but it was one of only six projects in our evaluation to be scored Gender Transformative. It uses the road upgrade to take a creative and transformative approach to gender, in 4 ways:

1. Conducts a gendered analysis of the composition of the local population:
   “the area population is 50.1% women. The land ownership is mainly in the hands of men to the tune of 79%.”

2. Identifies barriers faced by different genders:
   - female discrimination in being able to get jobs, and in the workplace in particular
   - gender violence at home as result of men controlling compensation payments
   - relocation of local populations will affect women as men control resources
   - widows are especially vulnerable – economically and physically

3. Puts in place measures to employ and protect female construction workers:
   - at least 25% of jobs (300 jobs) on the project to be reserved for women
   - gender sensitisation and awareness projects to be run during implementation
   - gender appropriate facilities at site camps
   - personal protective equipment to be provided to workers
   “There are opportunities during construction for women to be involved in a wide range of activities including traffic control, store-keeping, security, painting, stone pitching, landscaping and sweeping”

4. Identifies other incidental benefits for women from the project:
   - Increased trade for women-run roadside kiosks
   - challenging gender assumptions by making women visible in construction
   - improved access to health care, especially medical facilities during labour

“It is envisaged that women’s visibility in road works would contribute to women’s empowerment as well as breaking the stereotype that road construction is a preserve of men.”

“During project implementation, the improved road will ease access to healthcare which will benefit women from quick (due to reduced time of travel) and safe transport to medical facilities, during emergencies such as labour”

“There will be increased opportunities for income generation through roadside markets/kiosks which are mostly owned and operated by women.”
How to do it

Challenge initial assumptions: the programme teams initially thought that the main benefits would be indirect, such as women’s better access to health services. They (and we) thought gender “is not the first thing you think of with a road project”.

Look for local frameworks and targets: the African Development Bank and Government of Uganda already had progressive frameworks around gender and transport: e.g. the Roads Authority had detailed guidelines about gender in transport subsectors, including rules around contracts procurement and a minimum of 25% of project jobs for women.

Find the gaps: the team identified where there were still un-addressed gender opportunities and threats. They picked up that resettlement payment plans for displaced families was a challenge as culturally (though not legally) compensation for land ownership passed to men.

The team supported a survey of affected households, which found that 19% were female-headed – and registered their details to ensure that compensation went to the women. They also looked at roadside safety for women, questioning delivery partners about how they would ensure women’s safety, and provide facilities for female workers.

Keep focus in the delivery phase: To encourage implementation, the team included specific measures in the logframe (e.g. 25% of jobs for women). Where they could, the team used levers to ensure gender sensitivity in delivery – e.g. through the compensation plan, which was due before funds were released. Outside formal mechanisms, the programme put on gender sensitization workshops. DFID will conduct field visits to monitor progress: e.g. review site supervisor logs to check for female employees – and drive along the road to see if women are visible!
Whilst business cases’ procedural compliance may be discharged by a brief reference to the impact on gender equality, our analysis went beyond compliance to consider the quality of that consideration. We analysed each business case in more depth, to understand two questions:

1. How relevant is gender to the aims of the programme? (recognising that gender may not be a consideration in every programme)
2. How meaningful is the consideration of gender in the business case and other programme documentation (e.g. indicators in log frames)?

How relevant is gender to programme aims?

For (1) we scored each project as having either low, medium or high gender relevance, adapting a DFID marker:

- **Low relevance**: programmes in which outcomes are unlikely to affect beneficiaries differently on the basis of their gender.
- **Medium relevance**: programmes which could have moderately different outcomes for men and women, or men and women may have moderately different needs/vulnerabilities but gender inequality is not the principal activity.
- **High relevance**: programmes in which a significantly different outcome for men and women is likely, and/or the major programme aim is gender inequality.24

In approximately a third of the projects sampled (32%) gender was considered to have high relevance and in a further third (34%) it was deemed to be have medium relevance. In 16% gender was of low relevance, and a further 18% it was impossible to tell (missing business cases). See figure 3.

How meaningful is gender consideration?

The purpose of question (2) was to assess how well DFID has considered gender in the business cases – in other words, was compliance good quality?

We used The GREAT Initiative’s Adapted Gender Marker (see Box A) to assess how well gender inequality had been considered in each business case. The marker assesses how well a project performs on six criteria including gendered analysis, gender-disaggregated data, the roles, needs and barriers experienced by different genders, and whether the projects advocates to overcome these. It aggregates these scores to assign a grade from ‘Gender Exploitative’ to ‘Gender Transformative’.

Findings 2: ‘Meaningful Engagement’

This leads us to our next research question: what is the quality of engagement with gender in programme planning (as evidenced in the business cases)? Here we found a more mixed picture.

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24. This is adapted from DFID guidance in Examples of due regard in strategic cases.
The biggest proportion of business cases (45%) were deemed to be Gender Sensitive – although there was considerable variation of quality within this category. The next biggest proportion, a quarter (23%) were Gender Unaware. 14% were Gender Transformative, and (pleasingly) none were Gender Exploitative. A fifth (18%) were not known (missing business cases). See figure 4.

What does meaningful engagement look like (and not look like)?

Of the ten projects assessed as ‘Gender Unaware’, six had no statement of gender impact in the business case and a further four had a statement so brief or vague as to not demonstrate gender awareness. A further four were compliant but consideration of gender was so brief or vague as to be meaningless.

Interestingly, we found no clear link between the gender-relevance of a project and how well the business cases analysed its gender impact. Projects with high gender relevance were sometimes poor at meaningful engagement, and vice-versa: some projects with no specific gender relevance were deemed ‘Gender Transformative’. Figure 5 illustrates this: across all programmes, the proportion of business cases which were Gender Unaware, Gender Sensitive and Gender Transformative remained broadly similar, irrespective of how important gender was as a programme aim.

On the positive side, there were 6 projects assessed as ‘Gender Transformative’, and some great examples of thoughtful and relevant consideration of gender. These projects spanned different sectors and included both those scored as having high gender relevance and low gender relevance. Four positive case studies are highlighted throughout this report, where we also interviewed the DFID project teams who led drafting of the business cases to understand why they did well, and draw out some recommendations.
In sum, our analysis of business cases found that DFID’s implementation of the Act was more variable when we looked at the quality of implementation. This was supported by evidence from our interviews and sector survey. This was what we expected to find in year one, where the focus would logically be on ensuring that procedures for implementing the Act were understood and followed. We applaud the emphasis placed by DFID on meaningful engagement with the Act – this goes beyond their legal obligations and reflects the broader strong leadership and political will within DFID to be a world leading donor when it comes to integrating gender equality within development. There is some positive practice already, but more to do in year 2 to move compliance to meaningful engagement across the board.

A word on transparency

DFID has committed to transparency in its aid decisions. Under the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) it has signed up to publish information on aid spending and activities in a comparable and timely way. The UK discharges its duty by publishing project documentation and financial information online on DevTracker (www.devtracker.DFID.gov.uk) and via the IATI Registry (www.iatiregistry.org). The IATI Standard requires each project to link to at least one document. This means that, for all DFID-funded projects, business cases, logframes, annual reviews and any other relevant project documentation should be publicly available on DevTracker. DFID informed us that it routinely published all business cases except where they contained sensitive information, for instance during the tender and procurement process.

In our initial sample of projects we found that half (51%, n=23) were missing business cases on DevTracker. When we revised the sample (in response to new information from DFID) to ensure that projects had been agreed post-Act, this fell to a quarter missing (23%, n=10). We were subsequently sent documents from two of these projects by DFID, taking the proportion of projects in our sample with missing documents down to 18% (n=8). Of these 8 projects, DFID later informed us that 6 could not be shared for reasons of political sensitivity.

Accessing documents and being able to correctly assess them - by for instance having clear information around dates and sensitivities - has been a challenge. DFID has some work to do to ensure that project documentation is available on Dev Tracker and that it is easier to access and interpret. This is particularly important in light of the Act, so that third parties can assess implementation.

Searching on DevTracker – other than for a specific project - is not straightforward. One must search either by project sector or by project start date, but not by both. Importantly, it is not possible to tell from DevTracker when a business case was submitted for approval. Whilst DevTracker’s primary aim is transparency of aid spending, it would be a quick win for DFID to revise some of its search functions on DevTracker to make this kind of exercise easier in future. We would be happy to share our experiences in conducting this research to help them do so.

27. Interview with DFID Gender Act lead/s.
28. We constructed our initial sample from all projects with a start date after 13 May 2014 – in this sample, 23 of 45 (51%) projects sampled on DevTracker were missing business cases. We subsequently reviewed our sample in light of new information from DFID who gave us a list of projects where the business case had been submitted and approved after the Act – in this sample, 10 of 44 (23%) projects sampled on DevTracker were missing business cases (we were subsequently sent 2 of these by DFID).
The programme

DFID is funding £34m over 5 years to raise standards, transparency and accountability in the extractives industry (oil, gas and minerals) in developing countries. It will implement a new Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative Standard in 50 countries, and develop a resource hub of data for citizens and governments to manage extractives better.

Gender relevance

On the face of it, this project has limited gender relevance. It scored LOW in our analysis, since its main aims are better governance and transparency and increased revenue from extractives – rather than social or human development.

Gender impact – how well has the Act been implemented?

However, the business case identifies the impact on women and girls in relevant and specific ways throughout and identifies concrete opportunities to contribute to gender equality. We scored it as Gender Sensitive. Here’s why:

1. It determines the right (and wrong) stage for gender consideration:
   “At the outcome level, measures are focused on better governance of the extractives sector and increased revenue collection. But these have the potential to benefit everyone and a focus on gender at that level is not meaningful. Therefore the key opportunities for gender equality [are] within the implementation and evaluation of the programme.”

2. It identifies barriers to women accessing extractives information – and takes steps to ensure they can:
   - Women and girls may find it hard to participate in discussions about how resources are managed or to influence decision-making.
   - Data pilots will proactively ensure that marginalised groups of women and girls are included in capacity-building with civil society: by including incentives for delivery partners in the terms of reference, and monitoring engagement of different populations.
   - The most appropriate technology will be used to ensure that women and girls can access and use relevant data.

3. It plans to monitor the impact of programme changes on women and girls:
   - Logframe indicator with gender-disaggregated data
   - Terms of reference for the impact assessment programme will include analysis of the gendered impacts of changes in extractives spending.
   - The resource hub will specifically include resources on the gendered impacts of extractives growth.

How to do it

- Look for prior examples: the Act prompted the programme team to look at how others in the extractives industry had considered gender (e.g. World Bank gender & extractives guidance, UN gender framework for the extractives industry, Publish What You Pay framework).

- Identify your gender consequences: e.g. the team identified that where drilling companies pay compensation to displaced people, money often goes to the men; and that large influxes of foreign workers for extractives projects can increase the local sex trade.

- Consider levers with partners: the Act helped the team to ask their main delivery partner to think about how to build gender into their planning. They then included specific gender milestones in terms of reference and specifications – e.g. developing a gender strategy for each of the implementing countries.

- Write logframe indicators: the team included a specific indicator in the logframe for gender-disaggregated data on the number of new citizens using extractives data to engage with their governments.
Enshrining policy in law
– an experiment

This Act is an innovation both domestically and internationally. By enshrining a policy priority in law, the UK has not only mainstreamed gender into every DFID spending decision, it has ensured its sustainability into the future.

In interviews DFID staff identified four major impacts of the Act:

- Putting gender into law ensures that it becomes a long-term substantive commitment which can’t be easily undone
- The Act is a powerful and visible political commitment to gender
- The Act has broadened gender as an issue previously considered primarily the responsibility of the Gender Team, to an issue clearly considered to be the responsibility of every team within DFID
- Whilst the Act does not apply to downstream decisions (e.g. to delivery partners), it is a valuable lever which can be used to promote gender more widely.

Impact on DFID programming

At the individual programme level, we gathered feedback via interviews from those drafting business cases about what difference the Act had made to their planning. Of the four in-depth case studies we conducted, most reported that they had some appreciation of the relevance of gender when they set out to write the business case – and were already aware of gender as a priority for the Secretary of State. However, they described the Act as having three main effects:

1. It encouraged them to go into more detail about the gendered impact of the project. In some cases, this meant they proactively searched for relevant external frameworks or previous good practice to apply (for example, World Bank policies on extractives, UN gender frameworks and Publish What You Pay frameworks were cited); in other cases it meant going into greater detail about a project’s gender impact rather than simply describing overall social impact.

2. Being mindful of the need to demonstrate consideration of gender under the Act ensured that they clearly explained and signedpost a section on gender impact in the business case.

3. It encouraged project leads to think about and demonstrate the sustainability of gender throughout project implementation – for example, by ensuring gendered indicators in logframes, and considering how they could use the Act as an informal lever with delivery partners to be gender sensitive.

It is worth noting that our interviews were conducted with staff from projects which were scored ‘Gender Sensitive’ or ‘Gender Transformative’. So there may be a difference in the implementation of the Act between these DFID staff who were already gender-aware - for whom the Act shored up and deepened how they approached gender - and another group for whom even basic compliance may have moved them forward from no consideration of gender.

Impact on DFID policy

As mentioned earlier, the Act has been referenced in DFID documents and communications, and this came through in our sector survey too. Though there were small numbers of responses (13 individuals), they reported that the Act had been referenced in meetings and communications with DFID, in consultations, policy documents and reports (see figure 7).

Feedback via our survey from the (I)NGO sector on the impact of the Act in its first year was more mixed. Some respondents were critical of the Act:

…[the Act] is far too vague and needs to specify criteria and indicators. What exactly are DFID and others to do so others can monitor whether they are implementing this Act?

There are varying approaches and commitment towards gender and very little understanding of how to apply the act.

Some highlighted a renewed focus on gender from DFID, or thought the department was already strong on gender:

I see more pressure on programmes to look at gender and for advisers to ensure the gender act provision is explained in business cases.

Programmes that are already under implementation are being asked to have more of a gender and women focus, especially the private sector programmes.

DFID already very good on gender, hence why scored ‘very little impact’.

Findings 3: Wider Impact
There has been gender equality strengthening for a number of years within DFID requirements for grant consideration in grant rounds that are applicable to us so we do not notice a great change at this time – although we have received greater definition of gender mainstreaming more recently from DFID.

And others suggested it was too soon to tell:

…it’s too early to see how DFID advisers respond to the Act and whether it does take a greater priority in the management of programmes, in particular oversight of those managed by private contractors/consulting companies.

The main reason is because results won’t be seen yet.\(21\)
How the Act has made a difference

Across our interviews with DFID staff, it was evident that the Act had been passed in a policy environment in which gender was already a priority. Gender and social development policy leads told us that the refresh of the Strategic Vision for Girls and Women in 2013 had brought a renewed focus on gender, coupled with strong leadership from the Secretary of State Justine Greening MP during the 2010-15 Parliament and her ministerial team. They therefore considered that it was hard to attribute impact to the Act alone, rather than to the various other current gender initiatives. The Policy Implementation Review of the Strategic Vision came to a similar conclusion, commenting that in addition to the Strategic Vision, other important drivers of gender action within DFID included top-level political leadership, the Gender Equality Act and other policy hooks (e.g. UN Security Council Resolution 1325).

We found that ministerial leadership had been important in driving implementation (as well as supporting the Act to pass in the first place). The Policy Implementation Review again made a similar finding, observing that DFID leadership had been instrumental in improving gender work.

As well as ministerial leadership from the Secretary of State and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, it cited strong leadership from senior managers, Country Office heads and advisers, as well as the importance of having Social Development Advisers in senior management positions.

It is clear that the Act’s impact has been mixed in with that of various concurrent gender policy initiatives and strong leadership from the department. But this has served not to dilute its effect, but rather to amplify it. And it is the cumulative effect that matters – we were delighted to find that it has both driven, and joined forces with, other measures to promote gender equality.
On the international stage

‘...the Bill will make Britain have a leading role in examining gender equality before we deploy aid and other resources’

Prime Minister David Cameron
14 January 2014

As the Prime Minister acknowledged when the Act was passed, it put the UK in the driving seat of international action to put gender at the core of development policy. The Act has already sparked interest from other countries for its pioneering approach. It has been referenced by the OECD, UN and the EU, and there has been interest in the approach already from donors such as Norway, Sweden, Australia, Canada and the US. Additionally, the Director of UN Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, has recently publicly stated that she hopes the provisions of the Act will become the norm for all donors. DFID officials, too, wished to see the Act help to raise the bar in how gender is integrated in development across the international system.
Access to justice in South Sudan

The project

In a conflict-prone state, many South Sudanese are denied basic access to justice and security. DFID will provide £10m over 5 years to deliver knowledge and awareness-raising, legal representation, citizen empowerment, community mediation, reconciliation and healing/counselling and helping community based justice systems to be more equitable and responsive to local needs.

Gender relevance

Tackling Gender Based Violence (GBV) and inequality is key to this programme. It pledges to “contribute towards significantly reducing GBV by engaging both women and men on this issue” and the first of its programme outputs is “support to vulnerable victims, particularly girls and women, in accessing justice”. Violence in the form of rape, sexual assault, physical abuse, forced marriages and psychological abuse are experienced by many women and children, and have escalated during recent conflicts. We scored it HIGH for gender relevance.

Gender impact – how well has the Act been implemented?

We scored the project proposal as Gender Transformative because it:

1. Identifies specific barriers faced by women and girls in obtaining justice – with numbers
   • One in five South Sudanese women has experienced GBV.
   • A recent survey found 79% considered it justified for a man to beat his wife. Such attitudes mean that GBV goes largely unreported and justice denied.
   • GBV is seen as a family issue and cases tend to be heard by customary courts, where the bench consists of traditional chiefs and heads of clans, who typically tend to favour negotiated and restorative resolutions rather than punitive action.
   • Over 80% of women and girls are illiterate and many have little knowledge about their statutory rights.
   “Poor and vulnerable people and particularly women, face challenges in accessing justice in both the statutory and customary systems. Access to the formal courts is difficult and worsened by the current crisis: they are distant (in some cases now, non-existent), expensive and slow.”

2. Proposes action to inform and empower women about their rights
   • Transformation processes to support women and girls to understand their rights and empower them to claim those rights.
   • Link with the Girls Education South Sudan initiative to ensure empowerment of girls in education increases their ability to demand their rights.

3. Advocates fundamental, root cause reform including legal and cultural reform of key institutions
   • Increase legal options available for the vulnerable to seek justice and resolve disputes through different courts.
   • Provide legal advice and assistance and early access to mediation services through civil society organisations.
   • Plans community cohesion and conflict management initiatives. “There is a pressing need to act to alleviate the challenges facing women and girls, bolstering existing efforts to address the deep gender inequalities that undermine their role in development. Women and girls need to be empowered to know more about their rights and supported and resourced to claim them as individuals”.

4. Includes measurable targets and monitoring plans
   • Links to plan to increase access to justice for 250,000 vulnerable people
   • Plans an independent impact evaluation of how much improving access to justice for women and girls has impacted on VAWG.

How to do it

• Understand the local context: the DFID Uganda team writing the proposal knew the context in South Sudan was one of prevalent extreme gender violence and resistance to gender equality. So they knew that change would need to be from the ground up, and involve community engagement.

• Consult DFID insights pages/a Social Development Advisor: the team used DFID guidance and examples of good business cases to ensure they complied with the Act.

• Consider an independent evaluator: an independent impact evaluation from a third party was included in the plans, to be sure that they were making progress towards their outcomes for women and girls.

• Top tip: always think about 100% of stakeholders in a programme – there are gender issues in every sector. And consider how you can use the Act to encourage delivery partners to consider gender.
Ensuring gender makes it into programme implementation

Whilst the Act’s mandate to consider gender equality applies to programme approval, the main challenge in terms of meaningful engagement lies in whether and how gender analyses conducted in the programme planning process will be implemented in programme delivery. DFID has had a strong initial focus on compliance, as we would expect in the first year since the Act was passed, so there is little evidence yet available about the expectation on programme staff – and even less on delivery partners – to ensure a gender focus is maintained through programme delivery. Although the Smart Rules specify that annual programme reviews should cover gender, we found little to suggest that DFID has considered specifically how gender analyses included in business cases might be reviewed through monitoring and evaluation or the Annual Review process.

One interviewee noted that whilst the Act had driven a big focus on gender in project design, there was less impact noted around implementation. Survey respondents identified that the true impact of the Act would be tested by whether the gender analysis conducted at the programme planning stage was followed through in programme implementation:

The Act will enable DFID and its agents to collect greater data on what works and what does not work in the field from NGOs on the ground and help develop more effective delivery and M&E of results.

Most DFID-funded programmes are delivered through a range of external partners. The Act does not place any duties on these organisations and DFID has not specified how programmes might use the Act as leverage with these partners to ensure that they address or capitalise on gender impacts identified in business cases. Interviewees demonstrated that they had used the Act informally to encourage delivery partners to consider gender. For example, one described using the Act as a lever to ask the implementing organisation to report on how they would build gender into their project planning. Another cited the Anti Bribery and Corruption Act as an example of how legal obligations could aid discussions with partners about compliance, and another suggested that they would use gender-sensitivity as a criterion for selecting delivery partners. Others had looked into the gender policies and review procedures of the implementing organisation as part of planning their own compliance, and were then able to specify in project proposals the relevant frameworks of those organisations which could be applied. We would encourage DFID to make initiatives such as these a standard part of programme delivery.

DFID logical frameworks (log frames) set the indicators against which any programme will be reviewed. Any indicators which relate to gender (or call for gender-disaggregated data) will naturally form part of the reporting requirement for delivery partners. Log frames are therefore one way that DFID can ensure it maintains a focus on gender with its partners. However, the extent to which this opportunity has been taken is at present hard to assess. Only a handful of the business cases we reviewed had log frames available, and those that existed were almost all in draft form. Having gender indicators in the log frame is not in itself a guarantee of implementation. One interviewee noted that whilst gender was included as a key indicator, there was no penalty if the delivery organisation did not meet it – they would still receive programme funding.

Respondents to our survey suggested that DFID could use the Act better as a lever with partners:

- Require organisations that are funded by DFID to report against their performance on gender issues, at the project level and as organisations themselves. There should be penalties against those private contractors who fail to deliver on gender equality; often they make a big splash about it in their bids, and then it gets diluted when it comes to implementation. The Act is full of good intention but really has no “teeth” to ensure enforcement.

- It is too early to assess how well gender has been delivered through programmes - with very few exceptions, the programmes approved since the Act came in have not yet been implemented or reviewed. However, DFID programme staff indicated in interviews that they had received little guidance on how the Act might be used to maintain a focus on gender through programme delivery and review, and were keen to have some guidance on this. One suggested that topic guides or case studies of programmes which had implemented gender consideration well, and could demonstrate change as a result, would be welcome.
We identified two key limitations to the Act’s impact and one challenge for the future.

Another suggested that gender could be mainstreamed through all DFID procurement decisions and throughout the programme planning cycle, and also in DFID’s performance management system, for example in the competence framework for staff.

It is encouraging that both NGOs/implementing partners, and DFID staff, are calling for a greater emphasis on implementation and advocating for gender to be mainstreamed throughout the programme cycle. DFID has made a positive start by focusing on ensuring that procedures for implementing the Act were understood and followed. The next step is to link this to programme implementation, so that UK aid is delivering the results on the ground we all want to see. This should be looked at in any future reviews of the Act, internal or external.

**Does the Act apply to other Government Departments?**

The second challenge is that there is a lack of clarity about whether the Act – which concerns UK overseas aid - applies to Government Departments other than DFID (for instance the Departments of Defence, Health, Environment and others which also dispense a proportion of UK overseas aid). DFID told us that its legal advice was clear that the Act applies to the Secretary of State for International Development. Other Government Departments might have taken legal advice about whether the Act applies to them: DFID did not know. In auditing the Act, DFID had only looked at its own implementation and our study has also focused on DFID. However we would welcome consideration by other Departments about how they can implement the Act and we will consider this as a research question to be addressed in any future monitoring we might conduct.

**Sustainability in a future political climate**

The challenge for the future is whether compliance, and meaningful engagement, can withstand any shift in policy priorities. The Policy Implementation Review noted widespread concern that changed political leadership priorities could undermine the further progress of the Strategic Vision*. Following the General Election on 7 May 2015 Justine Greening MP remains in post as Secretary of State – so we can be optimistic that gender will continue to be a priority. From the perspective of the Act (rather than the wider gender agenda), putting gender equality on a legal footing should sustain it. However, it will be interesting to see whether the progress so far in implementing the Act can be sufficiently embedded within DFID so as to withstand any changes in political leadership.

33. In contrast to, say, the Anti-Bribery and Corruption Act which has continuous force both before and after programme approval.
34. Interviews with DFID programme staff.
35. Interviews with DFID programme staff.
36. Quotes from survey respondents.
37. DFID SV Policy Implementation Review draft Report (obtained via DFID).
The project

DFID will fund up to £139 million over three years to address emergency needs of those affected by multiple humanitarian crises in the Sahel region of Africa. This is a programme of humanitarian preparedness, early action and response to conflicts and on-going food insecurity crisis, while longer-term resilience building programmes are under development.

Gender relevance

The business case highlighted that “the Sahel is one of the worst places in the world to be a woman”. Gender inequality and violence against women are rife. So the needs of, and barriers to, different genders are already significant. As with most humanitarian assistance, whether in an emergency or non-emergency context, the DFID intervention has significant opportunities to improve (or, if done wrong, worsen) the situation for women and girls. We scored it as high gender relevance.

Gender impact – how well has the Act been implemented?

As you might expect with a programme with high gender relevance, there is a commitment to gender-sensitive programming, implementation and monitoring throughout. We scored it gender transformative. Here’s why:

1. Specific needs of and impacts on women and girls are identified:
   - In the Sahel gender inequalities are some of the highest in the world; in the 2011 gender inequality index Chad ranked 145 out of 146, Niger 144 and Mali 143.
   - High levels of poverty, illiteracy and sexual violence.
   - Boys face specific risks, from child recruitment into the armed forces and non-state armed groups.
   - Women and children are disproportionately affected by conflict and insecurity; 50-60% of the displaced population are children.
   - Child marriage, trafficking and child labour are common in conflict situations.
• Armed conflict and weak legal frameworks have also increased the prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence.
• Women and children may be more exposed to risk of food insecurity and malnutrition due to limited access to resources such as land, animals and savings.

“The overwhelming majority of women are impoverished, illiterate, yet often are responsible for much of the farming and care of animals. In parts of the Sahel, girls and women walk long distances to find, fetch, and carry water. FGM is common. Many societies in the western Sahel are polygamous and child marriage is common. Sexual abuse is prevalent.”

2. Specific interventions address the distinct needs of women and girls, some with transformative potential:
• Referral and care for 1,500 victims of sexual and gbv.
• Support to refugee children who otherwise are at risk of being recruited into armies.
• Referral to sexual and reproductive health services, to reduce maternal deaths.
• Work towards increased access to basic services particularly for women, to have a long-term impact on communities affected by protracted crises.

3. Opportunities for gender transformative interventions are identified:
“Across Sub-Saharan Africa, women tend to be engaged in low productivity sectors of work and less likely to access wage employment than men. Shocks can loosen gender norms and provide an opportunity to redress this balance. For example, male seasonal migration has been linked to greater female autonomy and exposes men to different gender norms.”

How to do it
• Know the common gender impacts in humanitarian settings: the team knew that most crises happen in countries with a pre-existing gender divide, so “in any humanitarian crisis men and women will cope and respond differently.”
• Check context-specific gender roles: gender was especially relevant to this project in several ways: in conflict situations (which the sahel is prone to) there is often gender based violence; women often plant in the fields, so disaster can affect adversely women’s livelihoods.
• Have a simple humanitarian gender checklist: in any first phase crisis response, gender can be done in quick but important ways, e.g. Include women in target populations for assistance, ensure women are represented on committees and as part of the assessment teams. Check the humanitarian development index to get a quick idea if gender inequality is a key issue in any area (e.g. Literacy, poverty, access to water and resources). Consider the risk of assistance contributing to tension and conflict – in the community but also within households.
• Longer-term humanitarian preparedness is key for gender: though important, there are limits to tackling gender inequality in emergency settings. Longer-term preparedness projects such as this one show how gender transformation can be done through pre- and post-crisis work.
The year ahead

We would like to applaud DFID, and in particular Secretary of State Justine Greening MP, for supporting this pioneering Act and taking the unusual step of enshrining gender as a policy priority in law. This will without doubt go far towards ensuring the sustainability of gender in UK development policy, giving it roots to weather any storms.

Overall, the implementation of the Act in its first year of operation has been a positive story. There has been – and likely still is – some more to do in terms of ensuring that all DFID teams are implementing the spirit as well as the letter of the law - and internal guidance. We have identified some excellent examples of proportionate, thoughtful and relevant gender analysis, and some patchier implementation in the humanitarian sector and beyond. We have highlighted and described some good case studies in this review, so that they can be used within and outside DFID to encourage better practice. We would suggest that DFID highlight examples of good practice business cases from the first year of the Act to its staff, ask programme leads who have led these to share tips and guidance – for example on the DFID ‘Insights’ pages, and perhaps ask staff who have written good business cases to write up 1-page ‘sector-specific’ guidelines – for example ‘Doing Gender in the Transport Sector’ or ‘Doing Gender in Humanitarian Crises’.

We also wish to note that, as external actors conducting an independent evaluation of DFID activity, accessing information has not always been easy. To be sure that it is meeting its duties under the IATI standard, DFID should review and ensure that all projects have at least a business case uploaded to DevTracker, unless there is an exemption on grounds of issues such as commercial or political sensitivity. A revision of elements of the search function on DevTracker to make it more user-friendly would also be welcome.

How well DFID can implement in programme delivery the gender analysis conducted in the planning process to comply with the Act, remains to be seen. Delivering through partners may be particularly challenging. To this end, monitoring and review of how gender is done in programme implementation will be key. We think DFID should issue some guidance and case studies around monitoring and review of gender equality in programme implementation. These need not be onerous – for example, programme leads who have written good business cases could be asked to provide some guidance or share their approach to programme implementation. DFID could also consider how it can use the Act as leverage with delivery partners – for instance, using gender as a criterion or consideration in procurement decisions, or including specific and measurable indicators in logframes, field monitoring and annual reviews.

We would also encourage DFID to take a broader approach to promoting equality for people of all genders. In year 2 we’d like to see issues around sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) being considered and a higher proportion of gender transformative programmes, which aim to tackle underlying social norms and stereotypes. DFID has told us it intends to repeat its own internal review on a yearly basis: we would urge it to set three goals for that review in 2016: (1) full and consistent implementation across all sectors, (2) more business cases that meaningfully engage with high quality gender analysis, drawing on good practice examples such as the ones we highlight in this evaluation, and (3) maintain a (proportionate) focus on gender throughout the programme cycle, through programme delivery to review. In its second year, there is a real opportunity, too, to build on the UK’s leadership in this area and promote the Act as a model internationally. We urge the Secretary of State and her Ministerial Team to promote the Act at a high level in their discussions with other donors, bilateral and multilateral agencies, and implementing partners. The GREAT Initiative, Plan UK and others will continue to promote the Act and share learning around implementation: we hope that, alongside DFID, this will encourage other national governments to implement similar legislation.