

GEDSI in Action

A guide to mainstreaming inclusion within locally-led development

This document provides a brief overview and guidance related to mainstreaming GEDSI within locally-led development activities implemented by the Australia-Pacific Partnerships Platform (Partnerships Platform).

What do we mean by locally-led development?

Locally-led development is recognised as an approach that acknowledges that sustainable socio-economic progress is only achieved when it is desired, driven and perceived as legitimate by local actors. This approach is cognizant of the fact that *"development as social change is a complex political process – one in which a non-developmental status quo shifts only when motivated local leaders and coalitions have sufficient skills, opportunity and influence to contest power structures"*.

Our locally-led development efforts enable us to come behind and bolster individuals and organisations most committed to genuine development outcomes in their countries and communities, resulting in sustainable, long-term change.

So, what is GEDSI?

GEDSI stands for gender equality, disability and social inclusion. In international development, it refers to planning and implementing approaches and actions within policies and programs to ensure they are inclusive and deliver equitable outcomes for diverse groups of people regardless of their gender or sexual identity, disability, age, ethnicity or socio-economic background.



What does it mean to mainstream GEDSI within locally-led development?

Mainstreaming GEDSI within locally-led development involves applying a GEDSI lens across all program components, from design to evaluation, and ensuring meaningful participation and engagement of women and people with disabilities including other marginalised groups in development decisions. This requires a shift in approach to provision of our technical advice and capacity development activities:

- From directing to facilitating.
- From leading to enabling.
- From implementing to supporting.
- From deciding to empowering local stakeholders to set their own development priorities and solutions.

Why is GEDSI mainstreaming important within locally-led development?

GEDSI and locally-led development in the Pacific are deeply interconnected. The lack of GEDSI mainstreaming within locally-led development often stems from discrimination entrenched in social and cultural norms and power dynamics that perpetuate exclusion of marginalised groups. However, locally-led development seeks to empower Pacific communities to take ownership of development, and mainstreaming GEDSI not only addresses systematic barriers but also strengthens locally-led approaches that contribute to inclusive and equitable development outcomes for all.

There exists a strong case for mainstreaming GEDSI within locally-led development in the Pacific; “*while external actors can make important technical contributions to improve social inclusion outcomes, much work is needed to contest prevailing norms and legitimise new behaviours and power shifts.*”

As such, when development work is led and supported by local stakeholders, especially those representing diverse groups and with lived experience of exclusion; they gain legitimacy and are better positioned to address the complex barriers that drive discrimination within their local settings, ultimately contributing to effective sustainable development efforts.

Integrating GEDSI within locally-led development

The Platform’s approach to integrating GEDSI within locally-led development is based on three action areas:

- **Shift and share power** to ensure local actors have ownership over, and can meaningfully and equitably engage in, development, humanitarian and peacebuilding programs.
- **Work to channel high quality funding** as directly as possible to local actors while ensuring mutual accountability for the effective use of funds, management of risks, and achievement of development results.
- **Publicly advocate for locally led development** using our convening authority, partnerships and networks.

Shift and Share Power	Channel high quality direct funding	Advocacy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support recruitment and professional development of GEDSI specialists. • Support the implementation of government-led GEDSI capacity building programmes. • Support governments to collect and use GEDSI-disaggregated data for decision-making. • Identify government allies and encourage partner governments to establish inter-ministerial GEDSI coordination mechanisms. • Support targeted government programs for women, persons with disabilities, and marginalised communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyse planning and budgeting cycles with a GEDSI lens. • Develop gender-responsive budgeting systems. • Support access to international funding for GEDSI initiatives. • Assist in developing government business cases for GEDSI investment. • Support the establishment of GEDSI requirements in government procurement and partnership agreements. • Support government funding mechanisms specifically for GEDSI initiatives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for the integration of GEDSI considerations into all ministry/department policies and programs. • Support the facilitation of government engagement with civil society and private sector on GEDSI issues. • Support government participation in regional and international GEDSI networks.

References: Global Locally Led Development Framework (Sep 2024).

Practical Strategies for Success

-  Understand local institutional and cultural context for gender equality, disability equity and rights, and social inclusion and work through local government systems.
-  Start with less controversial entry points (e.g. women’s economic participation, disability services).
-  Use local government language and local terminology (e.g. instead of the term 'GEDSI budgeting', reframe with 'budget planning for women, men and people with disabilities.')
-  Apply context-specific, sequenced, and locally defined approaches involving diverse groups of people within the local context.
-  Identify and advocate for opportunities to include GEDSI considerations within existing budget commitments.
-  Work with credible government allies (e.g. Ministry of Women).