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# TIPS FOR INTEGRATING GENDER INTO USAID AGRICULTURE SECTOR SOLICITATIONS

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This document borrows heavily from the *Tips for Integrating Gender into USAID Education Sector Solicitations* written by Julie Hanson Swanson of USAID's Women in Development Office in July 2010 and *Tips for Integrating Gender into Health Programs* prepared by the Interagency Gender Working Group in June 2010.

The *Tips for Integrating Gender into USAID Agriculture Sector Solicitations* document was prepared by Sandra L. Russo (University of Florida through a PASA with USDA/FAS) and Jillian Jensen (University of Florida) with support from the USAID Knowledge-Driven Microenterprise Development Project (KDMD). The authors wish to acknowledge the valuable input of reviewers Misrak Brhane and Natalie Elwell (USAID Women in Development Office), Sharon Phillipps (USAID Africa Bureau) and Sylvia Cabus (USAID Office of Agriculture).

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

ADS	Automated Directives System
AO	Assistance Objectives
APS	Annual Program Statements
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
RFAs	Requests for Applications
RFPs	Requests for Proposals
RFTOPs	Requests for Task Order Proposals
TEC	Technical Evaluation Committee

## GLOSSARY

**Applicants** refer to entities submitting responses to Requests for Applications (RFAs) and Annual Program Statements (APSS).

**Gender** is a social construct that refers to relations between and among the sexes, based on their relative roles. It encompasses the economic, political, and socio-cultural attributes, constraints, and opportunities associated with being male or female. As a social construct, gender varies across cultures, is dynamic, and open to change over time. Because of the variation in gender across cultures and over time, gender roles should not be assumed but investigated. Note that “gender” is not interchangeable with “women” or “sex.”

**Gender dynamics** refers to the relationships and interactions between and among boys, girls, women, and men. Gender dynamics are informed by socio-cultural ideas about gender and the power relationships that define them. Depending upon how they are manifested, gender dynamics can reinforce or challenge existing norms.

**Gender equality** is a broad concept and a goal for development. It is achieved when men and women have equal rights, freedoms, conditions, and opportunities for realizing their full potential and for contributing to and benefiting from economic, social, cultural, and political development. It means society values men and women equally for their similarities and differences and the diverse roles they play. It signifies the outcomes that result from gender equity strategies and processes.

**Gender equity** is the process of being fair to women and men. To ensure fairness, measures must often be available to compensate for historical and social disadvantages that prevent women and men from otherwise operating on a level playing field. Equity leads to equality.

**Gender integration** refers to the process of identifying and then addressing gender differences and inequalities during program and project design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

**Offerors** refer to entities submitting responses to Requests for Proposals (RFPs) and Requests for Task Order Proposals (RFTOPs).

**Procurement instruments** include contracts, grants, or cooperative agreements, which are used to procure either goods or services (contracts) or provide financial support to the programs of non-governmental organizations (grants and cooperative agreements).

**Sex** is a biological construct that define males and females according to physical characteristics and reproductive capabilities. Gender and sex are not synonyms.

**Solicitation** refers to the assorted means by which offers or proposals are sought for government requirements and programs. These include Requests for Proposals, Requests for Applications, Requests for Task Order Proposals, and Annual Program Statements, which are referred to collectively throughout this guide as solicitations.

**Value chain** refers to the full sequence of activities to bring a product or service from conception, through production and value-addition, to marketing and delivery to the final consumer. In the agricultural sector, the stages along the **agricultural value chain** include crop selection and production, input purchase and use, post-harvest processing and packaging, and wholesale and retail marketing.

## INTRODUCTION

*“Gender issues are central to the achievement of strategic plans and Assistance Objectives (AO) and USAID strives to promote gender equality, in which both men and women have equal opportunity to benefit from and contribute to economic, social, cultural, and political development; enjoy socially valued resources and rewards; and realize their human rights.”*

USAID ADS 201.3.9.3

Investing in agriculture is critical to development in terms of food security and helping economies grow. In most developing countries, women play a major role in agricultural activities, producing 60-80% of food, yet they have limited access to, and control of, productive resources such as land, labor, credit, and capital. Given this disparity in resources, it is essential that agricultural programs identify and then address gender differences and inequalities during program and project design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

Development programming that integrates gender is more effective, responsive, and sustainable. Within the context of agriculture, this means addressing equity issues, such as women’s access to resources, including land and water; access to financial services, extension, training, technologies, tools, and inputs, such as improved seeds; and access to markets, including information and business-development services. *Tips for Integrating Gender into USAID Agriculture Sector Solicitations* provides staff with a systematic way of ensuring gender issues are comprehensively addressed in the solicitation and during the technical evaluation process.

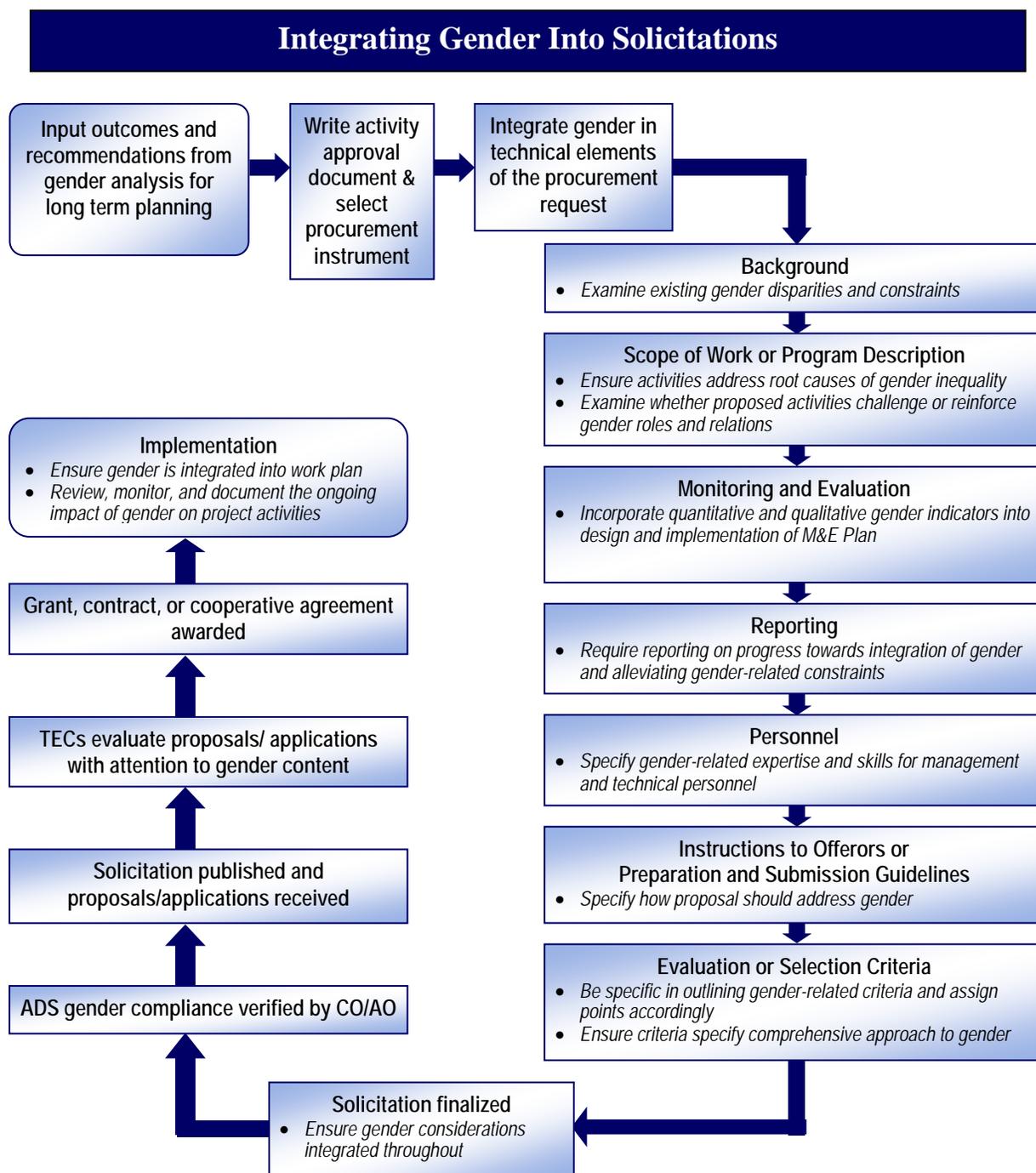
## ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide is designed to help USAID agriculture officers better incorporate gender issues into solicitations and their technical evaluation. It is not an exhaustive presentation of the myriad gender issues that may affect a given project. It is not intended to cover all questions an agriculture officer might have, nor is it intended to be applied verbatim as a template. The level of specificity and types of information included in the procurement document depend on the type of instrument selected and is context-specific. It is therefore important to coordinate early on with the contracting/agreement officer and work closely throughout to ensure that you are meeting the needs of your specific contract/ agreements.

The guide is divided into three sections: USAID programming requirements for integrating gender into solicitations, guidelines for developing solicitations, and guidelines for reviewing proposals/applications. Figure 1 on the next page illustrates the overall process of integrating gender issues into solicitations.

For additional technical support, or for clarification on any elements of this guide, please contact the gender specialist in EGAT/AG, the Office of Women in Development, or your USAID Mission or Bureau gender specialist.

**FIGURE I. INTEGRATING GENDER INTO SOLICITATIONS<sup>1</sup>**



<sup>1</sup> This figure was adapted heavily from *Integrating Gender into Health Programs: A Guide to Implementing ADS Requirements* (Washington, DC: USAID 2010) and *Tips for Gender Integration in USAID Education Sector Solicitations* (Washington, DC: USAID 2010).

# USAID PROGRAMMING REQUIREMENTS FOR INTEGRATING GENDER INTO SOLICITATIONS

The solicitation documents for both contracts and grants/cooperative agreements/Annual Program Statements (APSs) have similar requirements for addressing gender issues, which are found in the Automated Directives System (ADS). The ADS defines staff roles and responsibilities so that employees can achieve the Agency’s development goals, consistent with applicable rules, sound policy principles, and management practices. Integrating gender into solicitations is guided by [ADS 201.3.11.6](#), [ADS 302.3.5.15](#) (for contracts), and [ADS 303.3.6.3](#) (for grants and cooperative agreements).

Terminology used in the ADS varies according to whether the procurement request is for acquisition or assistance. The chart below illustrates the key sections in which gender issues must be integrated into Requests for Proposals (RFPs) and Requests for Task Order Proposals (RFTOPs) for contract awards or Requests for Applications (RFAs) and APSs for assistance awards.

**Table: Components of Acquisition and Assistance Instruments in Which Gender Must Be Integrated**

Acquisition (RFPs and RFTOPs)	Assistance (RFAs and APSs)
<b>Description/ specifications/ statement of work</b> (Section C of the RFP): There is no standard format but usually contains sections on background, title, objectives, scope of work, implementation and management plan, and performance monitoring plan.	<b>Program Description:</b> There is no standard format, but usually contains background, plans for achieving results, description of activities deemed essential to achieve planned results, and plans for monitoring and evaluation.
<b>Instructions, conditions, and notices to offerors or respondents</b> (Section L of the RFP): Technical approach and personnel.	<b>Instructions to Applicants/Application and Submission Information:</b> There is no standard title for this section.
<b>Evaluation factors for award</b> (Section M of the RFP): Technical proposal evaluation criteria.	<b>Selection Criteria:</b> There is no standard title for this section.

ADS 201.3.11.6 indicates that a gender analysis is mandatory before the approval of individual projects or activities. The findings of the analytical work performed during the development of a project or activity design must be integrated into the Activity Approval Document, Statement of Work/requirements definition or the Program Description when the project or activity is to be implemented through an acquisition or assistance award. This will better ensure that as contractors or recipients implement the project or activity, the gender issues identified through the analysis are not overlooked, sidelined, or marginalized. Once gender issues are fully integrated into a contract Statement of Work or the Program Description for a grant/cooperative agreement, they are an integral part of the evaluation/selection process for any solicitations financed under the project or activity.

Assistance Objective (AO) Teams must ensure that potential implementers are capable of addressing the gender concerns identified in solicitations. This is done by including performance requirements regarding gender expertise and capacity in the solicitations, tasking offerors and applicants with proposing meaningful approaches to address identified gender issues, and reflecting these performance requirements in technical evaluation and selection criteria.

Below is a summary of the ADS guidance on contracts ([ADS 302.3.5.15](#)) and grants ([ADS 303.3.6.3](#)):

- The Contract or Agreement Officer must ensure that the requiring office integrates gender issues in the procurement request or includes a rationale for not addressing gender in the project or activity.
- Gender issues must be integrated in the different performance components of an RFP (e.g., Statement of Work, project deliverables, key personnel qualifications, monitoring and evaluation requirements), or an RFA (e.g., Program Description, key personnel qualifications, monitoring and evaluation requirements).
- The Contract or Agreement Officer must ensure that once gender has been integrated into the solicitation contract performance components, gender is also reflected in the corresponding technical evaluation criteria for RFPs or technical selection criteria for RFAs or APSs. These technical criteria include, but are not limited to, technical understanding and approach, monitoring and evaluation, and personnel.

## GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING SOLICITATIONS

Addressing the key points outlined in each of the sections of this guide will ensure that gender issues are integrated throughout the solicitation. In addition to the section-specific points, there are a number of general considerations that agricultural officers are encouraged to keep in mind when writing the procurement request.

### *General Considerations*

- Include sex-disaggregated information to provide a clearer understanding of the context and any existing inequalities.
- Expand the examination of gender issues beyond the individual level (e.g., the producer, input supplier, or trader) to examine gender implications at the institutional and policy levels (e.g., use of innovations daunting for women when extension services are lacking or lack of sex-disaggregated data makes it difficult to use gender lens in developing agriculture policy).
- Avoid including an all-encompassing, one-sentence statement regarding the importance of considering gender (e.g., the offeror/applicant should address gender in designing project activities). To ensure gender issues are adequately addressed in proposals/applications, these considerations should be incorporated throughout the solicitation (background, scope of work, M&E requirements, personnel, etc.).
- Be careful not to equate gender concerns with an exclusive focus on women or girls. Gender refers to the qualities and behaviors expected from men and women<sup>2</sup> – what is defined by society as “masculine” or “feminine” traits or roles. An attention to gender involves examining the roles, relationships, and dynamics between men and women and how these affect their needs, what they do and how they spend their time, their access to resources, their ability to participate and make decisions, and the power relations between them.

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<sup>2</sup> Implicit in references to men and women are boys and girls.

## Background and Objectives

### *Purpose*

Integrating gender issues into the background and objectives sections allows agricultural officers to set the tone for the solicitation and for the design and implementation of project activities. These sections provide the overall context in which project activities will take place, including information on historical trends and the political, social, and agricultural context.

Addressing gender in the solicitation and in the project design begins with the information presented in the background section. This is where the findings from the mandatory gender analysis conducted during the project/activity planning stages, which must be integrated into the Statement of Work or Program Description, could be included. Incorporating information on the gender-related constraints and opportunities in the agriculture sector provides the contextual information offerors/applicants need to develop a comprehensive response. It also provides them with a greater understanding of the causes of the problems the project is intended to address. Identifying these causes enables agriculture officers to develop project objectives specific to meeting the recognized needs. Agriculture officers are able to outline the desired changes, making it clear to offerors/applicants what needs to be addressed to achieve the specified results. The more complete the gender-related information presented in these sections, the better offerors/applicants will be able to respond to the identified needs and constraints.

### **Example**

#### **Before:**

In implementing an agricultural value chain project, one common systemic deficiency is the lack of reliable data about access to and use of agricultural inputs. Improving agricultural productivity will rely on the use of purchased inputs, such as improved seed and fertilizer, yet previous results have shown that such efforts have not been sustainable.

#### **After:**

In implementing an agricultural value chain project targeting smallholder producers where 80% of the farming is done by women, one common systemic deficiency is the lack of reliable data on the differential access that men and women experience in their purchase and use of agricultural inputs and their knowledge and training in the use of inputs. Improving agricultural productivity will rely on the correct use of purchased inputs such as improved seed and fertilizer. The absence of data on use and access makes it difficult to assess program outcomes. Sex-aggregated data collection elements will need to be incorporated to provide an understanding of gender-based constraints to input purchases and use in order to make inputs accessible to all farmers and to better evaluate and monitor program outcomes. Existing data collection mechanisms do not produce adequate information on disparities/inequalities in access to agricultural inputs because the method for gathering information (e.g., enumerators only talk to male heads-of-household and may be culturally prohibited from talking to women) makes it difficult to collect sex-aggregated data. In addition, data collection focused solely on head counts is insufficient to assess improvements in farm incomes. Local input dealers are often unwilling to provide credit to women when they do not have collateral. Women and poorer male producers are often unwilling to purchase the inputs because the amount being sold is too large, because the purchase requires cash which they don't have, and they have no means for transporting inputs back to their homes.

### ***Explanation:***

The revised background information provides a more complete picture of the existing system and its limitations. It highlights gaps in the information that is currently available, indicating specific components that will need to be addressed in the redesigned system. This version also draws attention to the importance of addressing issues of access and use, which are essential for ensuring gender equality in agriculture. In addition to providing more contextual information on the existing system, the revised version acknowledges the importance of considering the importance of sex-aggregated data in assessing differential impacts on women and men.

### ***Key Points:***

- Set the stage for the importance of addressing gender equality issues in agriculture by introducing specific information on existing disparities and the differing needs of men and women engaged in the project, such as skills development, access to credit and inputs, or time constraints. The mandatory gender analysis conducted during the planning phase for the proposed project activity is a key source of information, as well as past Agency and development partner experiences, including Agency policy documents, alternative development approaches, best practices, evaluations, and other development literature in designing activities.
- Expand the discussion of gender issues beyond the individual level by examining gender implications at the institutional and policy levels, e.g., an under-representation of women in senior positions in the Ministry of Agriculture or as Chairs of Departments or Deans at the agricultural university.
- Balance quantitative information, such as sex-disaggregated statistics, with qualitative information that contextualizes the data and provides a more nuanced understanding of the context. Female-headed households, for example, are not a proxy for all women farmers. As another example, in polygamous societies, identify multiple wives who often have very different roles in their households.
- Incorporate gender issues into project objectives to ensure that they are addressed by offerors/applicants. For example, an agriculture program designed to improve household nutrition through crop diversification should include training for both women and men.

## **Scope of Work or Description of Activities**

### ***Purpose***

Integrating gender into the scope of work or description of activities sections of the solicitation ensures that the activities and program approaches proposed by offerors/applicants are designed to address the gender-related gaps, disparities, and constraints outlined in the background section. Whereas the background and objectives sections of the solicitation provide the context and overall purpose of the intended project, the scope of work and description of activities sections elaborate on the activities and approach to be undertaken during the project. A high level of specificity when outlining the program approach or illustrative activities can provide offerors/applicants with the information needed to develop a targeted response.

Considering the different responsibilities, needs, and interests of men and women when developing the scope of work/description of activities will enable offerors/applicants to develop approaches that are responsive to the needs of communities and host country partners. It will help ensure that proposed activities do not perpetuate existing stereotypes, but that they seek to transform inequitable gender dynamics that may limit full participation in agricultural activities by men and women. A scope of work or description of activities that incorporates an understanding of how men and women are differently

engaged in and benefiting from the proposed intervention(s) will help agriculture officers ensure that project activities achieve their desired results.

### **Example**

#### **Before:**

Illustrative activities:

- Mothers trained in improved nutrition practices (to improve household nutrition)
- Women participate in producer groups (to improve income and access to markets)

#### **After:**

Illustrative activities:

- Promote nutrition training for the entire family by teaching about vegetable gardening, the importance of a balanced diet, and the links between good nutrition and good health. Work with community and religious leaders (traditional birth attendants, local decision makers or persons of influence etc.), family elders (i.e. mothers-in-law) and others that influence the household to improve understanding about the importance of nutritional status of all members of the household (including women and children). Train and empower mothers to make sound nutrition choices for the entire family by teaching them about the variety of vegetables that can be grown or otherwise accessed locally to improve the composition of the family's diet. Train and empower men and key community influencers to feel ownership through supporting women in prioritizing crops, diversification strategies, food purchasing, and/or preparation and allocation choices within the household.
- Promote leadership and full participation of women within same sex and mixed gender producer groups. Ensure activities associated with the group (including training, membership meetings, decision making events, etc.) are at times that are amenable and safe for both men and women to attend. Support activities to ensure woman and men meet production and basic skills requirements of a producer group; may also include activities to improve secure land tenure or access to land, access to key inputs of production and processing, and training in literacy, numeracy and/or other business development skills. Disaggregate data on producer group participation in various roles as well as training and other associated activities by sex in order to measure the impacts on men and women.

### *Explanation:*

The revised version of the first example highlights the importance of engaging both parents and the extended social/cultural community in the family's nutrition and agricultural production. The goal of training mothers in the before example may have little impact if women are unable to go against norms which dictate that men and then boys eat first, that pregnant women cannot eat eggs, or that rice water is as good as milk as a weaning food. A familial commitment to good nutrition decreases mortality, morbidity, and malnutrition. A community commitment ensures that the household can be more fully supported in taking on empowered roles for women and men in adopting important nutrition behaviors and practices in their household.

In the second example, the revised version highlights the need to emphasize not just participation but also the type of participation and especially in leadership and decision making capacities. Also, a "one size fits all" model of a producer organization may not work for some farmers and consideration to timing of

meetings, trainings, and decision making points – such as voting – need to consider needs of men and women. Since many farmers lack education, couching the literacy and numeracy training as business development skills can encourage both men and women to participate and not be ashamed of their lack of formal education. Some situations may also require targeted additional activities to address particular production or participation constraints of men and women. If the context warrants training, provide both male and female trainers and keep track of the male and female participants and their needs so as to improve the training programs in the future. Without baseline sex disaggregated numerical data on the participation of men and women, it is not possible to measure the impact of a project’s activities.

## Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

### *Purpose*

The monitoring and evaluation section (stand alone or incorporated elsewhere in the solicitation) presents agriculture officers with the opportunity to clearly and explicitly state what the project is intended to achieve. Incorporating gender issues into the M&E section allows agriculture officers to ensure that implementers track and report on changes in gender norms, gender roles, and related factors that positively or negatively impact project implementation and results.

Integrating gender issues into the M&E section of a solicitation highlights the need for implementers to assess the differential impact of project activities on men and women. Specifying that implementers collect sex-disaggregated data for all people-level indicators will help ensure that implementers have the information needed to understand how project activities are impacting men and women.

Requiring a draft performance or award monitoring plan that includes sex-specific targets and gender-sensitive indicators can help ensure that offerors/applicants pay attention to gender issues in the design of project activities, and that they continue to do so throughout project implementation. This establishes a better basis for evaluating proposals/applications as it provides reviewers with the information needed to determine whether offerors/applicants have responded to gender issues in a superficial manner, or whether these considerations have truly been integrated throughout the project design.

### ***Example***

#### **Before:**

Expected Results:

- Equitable access to labor-saving technologies increased
  - The percentage of farmers using new labor-saving technologies will be increased from 0 to 15%
- Use of mobile banking services improved
  - The percentage of producers using mobile banking services will be increased from 5 to 50%.

#### **After:**

Expected results include increased, equitable access to labor-saving technologies such as shallot-choppers and forage grinders. The percent of farmers using labor-saving technologies will increase from 0 to 15%. Training on the use of the technologies will be made available to men and women and fee-for-service costs will be calculated based on both cash and in-kind labor to enable poorer farmers to use the technologies. To ensure access translates into use of these technologies, programs will monitor characteristics of users, understand constraints and solutions for overcoming them to increase use of both men and women. Data collected on technology users will be disaggregated by sex with the objective that at least 50% of the users are female.

Expected results include improved and more transparent mobile banking services in the rural areas by providing individual savings accounts for men and women. Opening accounts will only require one witness (who will not have to be the spouse or parent of the banking client). Both male and female mobile bank officers will be available. Training will be offered in the use of mobile banking through producer groups and women's organizations. Expected results include percent of agriculture producers able to open an individual savings account through a mobile banking service locally increased from 20% to 60%, disaggregated by sex.

Expected results include increased use of mobile banking services by both men and women producers in the target area. This will require measuring the usage of these banking services (i.e., number of accounts, frequency of use) and disaggregating by sex. To improve the use of these services, the program will need to ensure it properly understands the profile of users and any constraints or gaps that prevent women from fully engaging. By addressing constraints faced by women and adapting program and banking activities, the program will increase woman's participation in mobile banking. Expected results include percent of agricultural producers engaging in banking services from 5% to 50%, disaggregated by sex.

### ***Explanation:***

Access to, use of, and control over labor-saving technologies are important gender issues for female and poorer farmers. To see the intended behavior outcomes, access and use must both be addressed. Collecting sex disaggregated data gives the implementers the opportunity to adjust the training and outreach components of the activity if monitoring indicates that use of the technologies is not meeting expectations.

Similarly, in this example, allowing individuals to open bank accounts and use mobile banking services without the permission or signature of a spouse or parent encourages the use of the banking services. It

can provide women with not only more flexibility to use the account when is best for them but also the confidence that their accounts are safe from predation by family member. Each local context must be examined to determine what the challenges are and the options for addressing them.

Numerical parity is not the goal, nor is it sufficient to ensure that producers actually benefit from access to these opportunities. However, providing sex-specific targets signifies the Mission's expectation that project activities must realistically and intentionally address any barriers to participation on the part of men or women, such as failing to provide training opportunities to either gender. Suggested interventions to address existing barriers should be included in the scope of work or description of activities section of the solicitation.

The revised version also helps to ensure that the training leads to opportunities for increased access to technology-saving devices by providing realistic payment plans. To ensure ongoing support for the use of these methodologies and to promote sustainability, the revised version includes the expectation that support networks for those who adopt technology and use mobile banking will be implemented.

***Key Points:***

- Incorporate gender issues into the design and selection of project indicators, e.g., indicators that measure changes in gender roles or in gender constraints to participation.
- Utilize qualitative and quantitative indicators to track project results.
- Develop indicators across all levels (assistance objectives and intermediate results) that incorporate gender, e.g., assistance objectives that address gender-related constraints in agriculture or intermediate results that measure increased participation by women in agricultural training on input use.
- Require the collection of sex-disaggregated data for all people-level indicators to accurately track the impact of project activities on men and women.

## Reports

***Purpose***

Identifying specific gender-related reporting requirements is a simple, effective way for agriculture officers to ensure that implementing partners track the project's progress towards addressing the root causes of the identified problems. The reports section typically specifies the type and frequency of programmatic and financial reports to be submitted. However, this section can also be used to specify the types of information on which the offerors/applicants should report. Project reports can provide valuable information regarding changes in the societal context, the impact of project activities, and newly emerging barriers to project implementation.

Routine reporting of changes in gender norms and gender-related constraints to implementation will help project staff be more responsive and achieve enhanced results. These reporting requirements also ensure continued attention among project staff to gender issues, such as how gender roles are impacting project participation or how gender norms affect the policy environment in which the project is operating. Project reports that incorporate gender issues such as these are an invaluable tool for increasing understanding among implementing partners and USAID staff and enhancing overall project effectiveness.

### ***Example***

#### **Before:**

“The contractor shall provide quarterly reports detailing progress and accomplishments for all components of this program...”

#### **After:**

The contractor must provide quarterly reports detailing the progress of project activities for all components of the program. Quarterly reports must include qualitative and quantitative information on project accomplishments. Where new gender-related constraints or opportunities arise, these should also be reported. All people-level indicators must be disaggregated by sex.

The final report must include:

- Planned versus actual activities and targets, including an explanation of any divergences
- Specific project accomplishments and impact
- Challenges, recommendations, and lessons learned
- Findings from the final gender analysis, including improvements in previously identified disparities and inequities

#### ***Explanation:***

Specifying the types of information that implementers must furnish ensures that they track more than just the progress of project activities. It ensures that agriculture officers receive regular information regarding the extent to which project activities are impacting, or are impacted by, gender norms, roles, and relations. Routine reporting of changes in gender norms and gender-related constraints to implementation will help projects be more responsive and achieve better results.

The revised version also requires that a gender analysis be conducted as part of the final project assessment. Requesting the submission of reports on the gender analyses highlights their importance in assessing the project’s overall impact.

### ***Key Points:***

- Include reporting requirements that track progress on gender equality issues in agriculture that affect the project, whether access to training, markets, technologies, inputs, credit and banking services, or other issues that affect women’s participation in the agricultural sector.
- Request that results of an updated gender analysis be included in the final report. Ask implementers to address questions such as how gender gaps were closed, what new opportunities were created and who took advantage of them, what gender-based constraints were identified and addressed (or avoided), and what needs and disparities emerged or remain.

## Key Personnel

### *Purpose*

Key personnel must have the knowledge, skills, and commitment to develop appropriate responses to the identified problems. Understanding the cultural context and identifying the underlying gender-based constraints in agriculture are critical skill sets that personnel with experience in gender and agriculture can bring to any project. They can also identify any gender-related factors that may positively or negatively impact the project. To ensure that these gender issues are examined and addressed in a comprehensive way throughout the life of the project, a commitment to addressing gender issues is needed at all levels.

Technical staff must understand the extent to which project activities impact and are impacted by gender norms, roles, and relationships. They must understand and be able to address the different constraints facing men and women, their different needs and responsibilities, and the way that power relationships affect access to and participation in the agriculture sector.

Management staff must have sufficient knowledge and commitment to ensure that gender concerns such as these are addressed throughout the project. Including specific gender-related qualifications and responsibilities in the key personnel section of the solicitation will help agriculture officers to ensure that proposed candidates have gender experience specific to the needs of the project.

### **Example**

#### **Before:**

This solicitation “will address improved rural incomes through increasing farmer access to innovations, technologies and markets ...”

“Key Personnel: The key personnel that the Contractor shall furnish for the performance of this contract are as follows: Chief of Party.”

#### **After:**

Key personnel that the contractor must furnish for the performance of the contract are as follows: Chief of Party (COP) and Senior Agriculture Advisor. The COP will be responsible for the overall management and implementation of the project. The COP must have at least 10 years of experience managing and implementing agricultural activities which may include either research or extension, or both, in developing countries. A familiarity with and commitment to addressing gender equality in agriculture is also required, as demonstrated by at least two years of senior-level experience working on agriculture projects that addressed gender-related constraints in this sector.

The Senior Agriculture Advisor must have a Doctorate or Master’s degree in agriculture, agricultural economics, agronomy or closely related fields with substantial knowledge of agricultural value chains in this region. A minimum of eight years of experience on similar projects within the region is required. Demonstrated experience (at least five years) addressing gender-related concerns in the agriculture sector is required. At least two years of experience addressing gender bias in programmatic areas or implementing gender analysis is required.

### ***Explanation:***

The revised version specifies the type and amount of experience needed by the two key personnel to ensure the project is able to effectively meet its goal of improved rural incomes. The Senior Agriculture Advisor has the background needed to understand how gender norms in this country will affect men's and women's participation in the agriculture sector. The Advisor also has the experience needed to help others understand gender-based constraints and how to overcome them. To ensure that the project is staffed by individuals who are able to address issues such as these, the COP needs to have an appreciation of the role that gender issues play in extension, farm management, marketing, use of technologies and innovations, and other aspects of agricultural production.

The revised specifications ensure that management and technical staff have the skills and commitment needed to understand the gender-based constraints in agriculture and to ensure the integration of gender concerns into project activities. Specific skill sets and areas of experience, and the corresponding number of years required, have been included in the revised version to ensure that the key personnel have the gender experience needed to successfully implement the project.

### ***Key Points:***

- Design the scope and qualifications for key personnel to ensure that both management and technical staff have a demonstrated commitment to and experience with addressing gender issues in agriculture. Be specific in identifying the necessary types of experience.
- Indicate that key personnel are expected to clearly and explicitly indicate their specific gender experience and qualifications in their resumes.
- Identify the number of years of specific experience required for each of the key personnel within each of the specified technical areas, for example, conducting trainings on agriculture and gender, implementing gender analyses, or designing programs that address gender issues.
- Ensure that key personnel possess significant technical knowledge of gender issues in agriculture by including these provisions in the technical specialist's role or by requiring a gender advisor on the project, if financial resources permit. If specifying a gender advisor, stipulate that the advisor be part of the management team, thus ensuring that the advisor is in a position to directly affect project activities.

## **Instructions to Offerors or Preparation and Submission Guidelines**

### ***Purpose***

Agriculture officers can use the instructions to offerors and the preparation and submission guidelines sections to draw special attention to those elements deemed most critical to integrating gender concerns into program activities. While this section is a reflection of the gender issues highlighted throughout the solicitation, it also provides the opportunity to reinforce what is presented elsewhere and to emphasize the most critical elements. This section enables agriculture officers to clearly and explicitly state how the offeror/applicant should incorporate gender issues within the proposal/application, such as through mandating a comprehensive gender analysis, specifying indicators, or requesting evidence of appropriate experience on gender issues in agriculture. This helps to ensure that gender-related concerns will be incorporated throughout the proposals/applications.

### ***Example***

#### **Before:**

The offeror should demonstrate an understanding of the country's agricultural systems and the significant issues being faced in the agriculture sector...The contractor shall clearly describe how it intends to promote the activities being proposed...

#### **After:**

The offeror must demonstrate an understanding of the country's agricultural systems and of the significant issues being faced in the agriculture sector. Gender issues, identified through a comprehensive gender analysis at the commencement of the project, must be addressed throughout all program activities. The contractor must clearly describe how the project intends to promote the replication of activities undertaken, and indicate how the differential impacts on male and female participants in all activities will be tracked.

### ***Explanation:***

More explicit instructions in the revised version provide detailed information to offerors and reinforce the importance of addressing gender issues throughout the proposal. The revised version makes it clear that a gender analysis is a required component that must be completed during project start-up and prior to project implementation, thus ensuring that the data from the analysis will inform the detailed work plan and project design. Specifying that the contractor tracks the differential impacts also ensures that these issues are considered in the initial project design.

### ***Key Points:***

- Instruct offerors/applicants to address their institutional capacity with regards to gender. Instructions should be explicit and include areas such as: experience in participatory methodologies and gender analysis, experience conducting gender trainings, and an institutional commitment to addressing gender equality issues.
- Stipulate that initial work plans present recommendations for addressing identified issues and gaps related to gender. Ask offerors/applicants to demonstrate how they would anticipate and deal with gender issues through integrated project activities.
- Caution against treating gender as an add-on component within activities, urging offerors/applicants to demonstrate the integration of gender throughout the project. Specify that proposed activities must address the causes of the problems identified in the solicitation.
- Request the completion of project-specific gender analyses at the beginning and end of the project.

## **Evaluation or Selection Criteria**

### ***Purpose***

Since the evaluation or selection criteria set the standard for evaluating submissions, these sections provide the best opportunity for agriculture officers to affect proposals/applications and, ultimately, the design and implementation of project activities. It is critical and required by the ADS that gender issues are incorporated throughout the evaluation or selection criteria as these form the basis for selecting the implementing partner. The partner's capacity, knowledge, and approach will determine the extent to

which the project satisfactorily integrates gender concerns and responds to gender-related constraints. Specificity and the comprehensive inclusion of gender-related elements in the evaluation or selection criteria provide the technical evaluation committee (TEC) with the tools and information needed to determine whether a submission evinces either a cursory attention to gender or a comprehensive understanding and approach. It also ensures that offerors/applicants explicitly address gender concerns within their responses, increasing the likelihood of receiving proposals/applications that address gender-related concerns in a meaningful manner.

Technical evaluation committees evaluate proposals/applications based on the criteria set forth in the solicitation. Evaluation criteria must be clear and specific so that evaluators can determine how to rate the strengths and weaknesses of each proposal/application. The comprehensive integration of gender issues throughout the evaluation or selection criteria is essential for ensuring that proposals/applications that score high in other areas, but do not integrate gender issues, are ranked accordingly. Failure to address gender-related issues in one evaluation or selection factor may distort the results in terms of the offeror's/applicant's attention to gender issues. Allocating specific point values to gender-related criteria is one way of ensuring that gender-related evaluation or selection criteria are sufficiently acknowledged.

Evaluation or selection criteria should be consistent with the statements and information presented elsewhere in the solicitation, reinforcing the need to address gender issues in each of the technical sections. Establishing evaluation or selection criteria that are clear and specific will help ensure that the offeror/ applicant with the best capacity, staff, and program design will be selected.

### ***Example***

#### **Before:**

1. Technical Approach and Methodology...Clear understanding of the agricultural sector...
2. Management Capability...
  - a. Well-defined work plan with clear targets and benchmarks
  - b. A monitoring and evaluation plan with clear performance indicators...
3. Staffing Plan and Qualifications of Key Personnel...Demonstrated capability, experience, education and qualifications (included demonstrated management, leadership, and interpersonal skills)..."

#### **After:**

1. Technical approach: Demonstrated understanding of the agricultural sector, including constraints that may limit the participation and performance of either women or men. (20 points)
2. Management capability: Well-defined work plan with clear, sex-disaggregated targets and benchmarks. A monitoring and evaluation plan with clear performance indicators, including sex-disaggregated indicators that demonstrate progress in minimizing gender-based constraints in agriculture or that highlight new or unexpected disparities that may arise affecting either women or men. (20 points)
3. Staffing qualification: Demonstrated experience and qualifications (including demonstrated management, leadership, and interpersonal skills and a demonstrated ability to address gender equality issues in agriculture programs. (15 points)

### ***Explanation:***

The revised version specifies the gender-related evaluation criteria on which proposals/applications will be judged. It incorporates specifications within each evaluation category to ensure that gender issues are addressed in multiple ways throughout the proposal. It reinforces the Mission's commitment to addressing gender equality issues in agriculture and demonstrates that a comprehensive approach is required. The specificity of the revised version ensures that offerors/applicants pay special attention to these aspects when preparing proposals/ applications.

### ***Key Points:***

- Incorporate gender issues into the evaluation criteria within each category of consideration (program description, technical approach, capacity, management plan, etc.).
- Specify that offerors/applicants will be assessed on the extent to which the proposal/application demonstrates a thorough understanding of gender issues and utilizes a comprehensive approach to address gender equality issues in agriculture.
- Break down overall point totals for a particular category and allocate specific point values to gender-related components. For example, if the total point allotment for key personnel is 30 points, 10 points could specifically be allotted to the proposed individuals' experience with gender equality issues in agriculture. Other areas where specific point allotments could be used to ensure the consideration of gender include conducting a gender analysis or developing a gender-sensitive M&E.
- Develop evaluation criteria that will enable evaluators to ascertain whether proposed activities actually address the causes of the identified problems.

## **GUIDELINES FOR REVIEWING PROPOSALS/ APPLICATIONS**

Once the agriculture officer finalizes the technical components of the solicitation, the contracting or agreement officer will verify the instrument's compliance with the requirements of the ADS. The process of integrating gender into the procurement process does not end, however, with the issuance of the solicitation. The development of the TEC, the elaboration of the evaluation plan, and the process of reviewing proposals/applications provide additional opportunities for ensuring that responses to the solicitation adequately address the identified gender-related problems, gaps, and disparities.

### **Composition of the Technical Evaluation Committee**

The evaluation criteria specify the terms of analysis, but the composition of the TEC is also critical. TEC members review and analyze proposals/applications, interpreting the requirements set forth in the evaluation plan. Evaluating the extent to which gender concerns have been incorporated into proposals/applications requires that at least one member of the TEC has sufficient technical knowledge of agriculture and gender issues.

Just as geographic experience or sector-specific expertise is essential for analyzing the appropriateness of proposed activities, gender expertise is also a vital component. Committee members with gender experience can help ensure that the proposed strategies for addressing gender are an appropriate response to the problems identified in the solicitation. Gender expertise among the TEC members is an important part of determining whether proposals/applications recognize and respond strategically to gender-related inequities or if their attention to gender issues is superficial. The TEC member with gender expertise (there may be more than one) can also help ensure that the skills and qualifications of proposed key personnel are appropriate in relation to the tasks and activities identified in the solicitation.

If the requisite technical knowledge on gender is not available within the unit evaluating the proposals/applications, it may be necessary to identify TEC members from other operating units who can participate remotely. Remote TEC members must be able to review the proposals/applications and engage in discussions with other TEC members as necessary.

## Evaluating Proposals/Applications

Criteria for evaluating proposals/applications are established by agriculture officers during the development of the solicitation. When developing the evaluation plan and elaborating on these criteria, it is important to be specific in the details provided to the TEC members. The sample evaluation form (Figure 2) provides a partial example of how the evaluation factors specified in the solicitation are elaborated to form the basis for the review of proposals/applications. The additional details, especially regarding the gender-related evaluation criteria, can help TEC members determine the extent to which the proposals/applications meet the specified requirements.

The sample evaluation form is a partial representation of an evaluation form for a solicitation that has addressed gender throughout. It uses selected evaluation factors, sub-factors, and descriptions to paint a picture of the types of information that could be included in the evaluation plan. It is not comprehensive as it does not include all of the evaluation factors or sub-factors necessary for reviewing a proposal or application. Combined, all of the evaluation factors would add up to a total of 100 points.

**FIGURE 2. SAMPLE EVALUATION FORM**

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Rating</b>
<i>1. Technical Understanding and Approach (30 points)</i>	
a. project activities integrate gender issues throughout	
b. innovative, creative approach	
<i>2. Key Personnel: Senior Agriculture Advisor (15 points)</i>	
a. amount and type of experience in gender and agriculture	
b. amount and type of experience in training or management	
<i>3. Institutional Capability (15 points)</i>	
a. relevant experience in gender and agriculture	
b. clarity of management plan	

Evaluation Factor I: Technical Understanding and Approach

Evaluation of the offeror’s/applicant’s technical understanding and approach will be based on the comprehensiveness of proposed activities and their ability to affect gender-related constraints to agriculture. The sub-factors described below are of equal value:

1. project activities integrate gender throughout, addressing the root causes of gender-related constraints in agriculture and identifying gender-related needs and opportunities
2. innovative technical approaches and creative merit of proposed methodology to achieve an increase in agricultural productivity

Evaluation Factor II: Key Personnel, Senior Agriculture Advisor

Evaluation of key personnel will be based on a qualitative assessment of the proposed candidate. In-depth knowledge of the country’s agricultural systems is required. The advisor also must be proficient in analyzing gender-related factors that affect participation in the agriculture sector. She/he must be able to develop a gender analysis and conduct trainings on gender issues in agriculture.

The key personnel evaluation sub-factors listed below are of equal value:

1. amount (years) and type of experience on projects that addressed gender-related constraints and needs in agriculture
2. amount (years) and type of experience in developing innovative approaches to addressing gender issues and increasing agricultural productivity

Evaluation Factor III: Institutional Capability

Evaluation of the offeror’s/applicant’s institutional capability will be based on its institutional commitment to addressing gender and its prior experience successfully addressing the types of gender concerns identified in the solicitation. The sub-factors described below are of equal value:

1. relevant experience in gender and agriculture, including experience in gender analysis and gender trainings
2. clarity of management plan

As this example illustrates, the key points identified in this guide can be translated into evaluation criteria and reflected in the evaluation plan. For example, the key personnel section specifies the type and number of years experience needed by the Senior Agriculture Advisor.

Specificity and the use of examples in the evaluation criteria and the evaluation plan can provide TECs with the additional information needed to assess the extent to which proposals/applications are comprehensively and effectively addressing the gender issues outlined in the solicitation.

## **CONCLUSION**

This guide has provided section-by-section tips for integrating gender into USAID agriculture solicitations. Systematically analyzing the impact that gender norms, roles, and relationships have on access to assets, inputs, credit, markets, training, and technologies in the agriculture sector helps agriculture officers strengthen the solicitations, enhancing the responses proposed by offerors/applicants. A well-designed solicitation that incorporates gender issues throughout can lead to programs that are more responsive to the needs of host country partners, more effective in achieving the intended results, and therefore, more sustainable in their impact.

# APPENDIX A: ADS GENDER REQUIREMENTS RELATED TO REQUESTS FOR PROPOSALS AND REQUESTS FOR TASK ORDER PROPOSALS

## **\*302.3.5.15 Incorporating Gender Issues into Solicitations**

*Effective Date: 11/05/2009*

USAID must address gender issues in all USAID-funded activities (see [ADS 201.3.11.6](#)). For solicitations, such as Requests for Proposals (RFPs) and Requests for Task Order Proposals (RFTOPs), the Contracting Officer (CO) must ensure that the requiring office integrated gender issues in the procurement request or provided the rationale, as approved in the Activity Approval Document, for why gender is not an issue for the particular activity to be implemented through the requested contract action (see ADS **201.3.11.6** and **201.3.11.16**).

When the procurement request integrates gender issues into the different contract performance components, e.g., Statement of Work, project deliverables, key personnel qualifications, and monitoring and evaluation requirements, the CO must work with the technical office to ensure that the technical evaluation criteria (e.g., technical understanding and approach, monitoring and evaluation, personnel, etc.) correspond to these contract performance requirements. Within these major evaluation criteria, however, gender issues should not be separate subcriteria with maximum possible points assigned to them, since this dilutes their significance.

If the procurement request does not comply with the requirement in ADS **201.3.11.6** and **201.3.11.16** to either include contract performance and qualification requirements that reflect gender issues or the rationale for why gender is not an issue for the particular contract action, then the CO will notify the requiring office that he or she is unable to take any further action on the request until the office meets one of the requirements.

For technical assistance and additional guidance, consult the USAID Mission, Office or Bureau gender specialist or the Office of Women in Development in the Bureau for Economic Growth, Agriculture, and Trade (EGAT).

*\*An asterisk indicates that the adjacent information is new or substantively revised.*

## APPENDIX B: ADS GENDER REQUIREMENTS RELATED TO REQUESTS FOR APPLICATIONS AND ANNUAL PROGRAM STATEMENTS

### 303.3.6.3 Evaluation Criteria

*Effective Date: 11/05/2009*

\*c. Gender issues. USAID must address gender issues in all USAID-funded activities (see ADS 201.3.11.6). In RFAs (including those for Leader/Associate Awards) and APSs, the Agreement Officer must ensure that the RFA or APS:

- Integrates gender issues into the solicitation or includes a rationale for not addressing gender in the project or activity, in accordance with ADS **201.3.11.6**. When USAID directs applicants to incorporate gender issues into their applications, the RFA or APS must state the requirements in the different performance components, e.g., Program Description, key personnel qualifications, and monitoring and evaluation requirements.
- Integrates gender issues into the technical selection criteria (e.g., technical understanding and approach, monitoring and evaluation, personnel, etc.) that correspond to the performance requirements stated above, unless an approved rationale for not incorporating gender issues has been included in the RFA or APS.

If the program/project office provides the Agreement Officer with a procurement request for a program that does not include the requirements in ADS **201.3.11.6** for either integrating gender issues in the Program Description or the rationale for why gender is not an issue for the particular assistance program it intends to fund, then the Agreement Officer will notify the program/project office that he/she is unable to take any further action on the request until it meets one of these requirements.

For technical assistance and additional guidance, consult the USAID Mission/Office or Bureau gender specialist or the Office of Women in Development (WID) in the Bureau for Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade (EGAT).

*\*An asterisk indicates that the adjacent information is new or substantively revised.*





