Translating gender audit findings into practice

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Overview of presentation

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• What is a gender audit?
• Research methodology
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Purpose of research

To explore:

• the scope and methods used by Australian development organisations when conducting gender audits, including their common and distinguishing features

• the effectiveness of gender audits in contributing to changing organisational and development practice on gender equality

• the factors that increase the likelihood that gender audit findings will be owned and applied
What is a gender audit?

• A process for assessing **accountability** to gender equity/equality policy commitments and thereby providing evidence for learning

• Has a **comprehensive** scope of enquiry across an organisation’s work

• Uses **rigorous and credible** methodology in order to:
  o establish a valid and reliable measure of performance – either for a baseline, or to enable changes in performance over time
  o provides useful information for reflection and **planning**

• May be less or more **participatory** in approach and method
  o More participatory approaches used to build ownership and achieve learning objectives

• **Aims to improve organisational performance** → **gender action plan**
Research methodology

- Key informant interviews with staff from three development agencies who had conducted a gender audit in the past 5 years
  - ACFID
  - Plan International Australia
  - TEAR Australia
- One agency had conducted a gender audit previously
- Audit timeframes varied from just completed, to completed several years ago
- Limitations:
  - Small sample size
  - Interviews conducted only with staff responsible for audits
  - Involvement of researchers in audits being studied
- Research is ongoing
Research findings
### Why, how, who ...

| WHY agencies chose to conduct an audit (stated objectives) | - Assess work and organisational culture  
- Increase staff awareness, technical capacity, and ownership of gender equality outcomes  
- One audit also addressed sexual orientation and gender identity |
| HOW audits were undertaken | - Mixed methodology (staff survey, participatory focus groups/workshops, desk review of key documents)  
- Covered all aspects of the organisations work and culture – internal and program-related |
| WHO was involved (both leading & participating) in the audit | - Mix of in-house staff and consultants  
- Taskforces of staff from different teams  
- “Intergenerational feminist mentoring was key”  
- All staff participation encouraged |
**WHAT were the findings?**

- **Mandate:** Organisational mandate and political will were generally strong
- **Technical:** Work output and staff’s skills on gender equality were uneven between teams/departments
- **Structural:** Staff knowledge of organisational policies needed strengthening (and in some cases the policies themselves)
- **Attitudinal:** Staff attitudes and beliefs about gender equality reflect cultural context

**WHAT were the outcomes?**

- Development of organisational Gender Action Plans – covering all aspects of organisational work, internal and program-related
- Review and socialisation of organisational policies
- Increase in staff understanding and technical capacity and identification of additional training needed
- (Proposed) changes to systems/processes for gender analysis in work
Key lesson #1

Risk: Competing priorities delay decision to start, implement or complete an audit

Enablers:

- Combination of internal (eg: long term staff advocacy) and external (eg: board or international office pressure, accreditation requirements) influencers
- Champions in senior positions
- Flexibility, adaptation and iteration
Key lesson #2

Risk: Insufficient human resources allocated to the audit

Enablers:

• Strategic use of consultants
• Supportive leadership (including direct manager) who can help staff manage other priorities
• Commitment of lead staff – tenacity, internal advocacy, and preparedness to go over and above
Key lesson #3

Risk: Staff and/or management resistance to the process and/or findings

Enablers:

- Communication: early and often, formal and informal, at all organisational levels, adapted to the culture and established ways of working of the agency
- Establish rigorousness of the methodology
- Participatory process to build ownership of the process and the findings
- Recognise your own baggage and meet people where they are
Key lesson #4

Risk: Gender audit becomes the end of the process, instead of the beginning

Enablers:

• Develop a Gender Action Plan with built in monitoring and accountability mechanisms
• Embed and align with other organisational processes eg: MEL and reporting cycles
• Ongoing open engagement with staff on organisational values, and on how social norms on gender relations play out in the organisation
In Summary

Key lessons for translating gender audit findings into practice:

• **Organisational readiness** – leadership buy-in, staff commitment and expertise, resources for outside support

• **Communication** – early, often, formal and informal, contextualised – and ongoing, after the completion of the audit

• **Accountability** – multiple sources of accountability inside and outside the organisation, embed change and link to organisational processes
Next steps

• Incorporating additional agencies into research sample
• Writing up findings
• Sharing with ACFID members to improve practice in the sector

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