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Translating gender audit findings into practice

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Overview of presentation

- Purpose of research
- What is a gender audit?
- Research methodology
- Research findings
 - Why, how, who, what?
 - 4 key lessons
- Summary
- Next steps

Purpose of research



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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:
 - establish a valid and reliable measure of performance – either for a baseline, or to enable changes in performance over time
 - provides useful information for reflection and **planning**
- May be less or more **participatory** in approach and method
 - More participatory approaches used to build ownership and achieve learning objectives
- **Aims to improve organisational performance → gender action plan**

Research methodology



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- 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



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Research findings

Why, how, who ...



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WHY agencies chose to conduct an audit (stated objectives)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Mix of in-house staff and consultants- Taskforces of staff from different teams- “Intergenerational feminist mentoring was key”- All staff participation encouraged

... what?



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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



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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



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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



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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



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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



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

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