

A Quick Guide on
How to Conduct a
**PARTICIPATORY
GESI AUDIT**

Lessons from
World Vision's
GESI Audit

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This guide on how to conduct a participatory Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Audit is based on lessons learned from World Vision U.S. Special appreciation goes to the following individuals who were engaged in this process:

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Introduction

World Vision conducted a participatory Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Audit (GESI Audit), with a focus on multi-sector approaches of its International Programs Group (IPG). The purpose of the GESI Audit that was concluded in 2021 was to identify how GESI is integrated and addressed in World Vision's resource acquisition, programming portfolio, advocacy, and internal organizational processes.

This document provides practical guidance on how to conduct a participatory GESI Audit, based on lessons learned by World Vision in this process. It offers practical steps and tools that can help develop and implement a GESI Audit, with follow-up action-planning and accountability mechanisms.

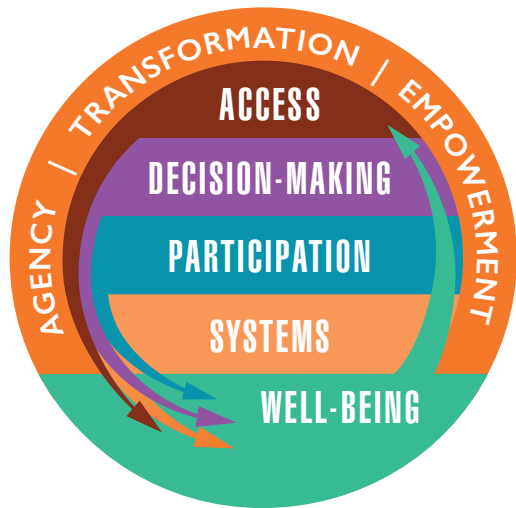
WORLD VISION'S COMMITMENTS TO GESI

World Vision is a child-focused humanitarian, development, and advocacy organization with programs in nearly 100 countries. As a Christian humanitarian organization, World Vision is dedicated to working with children and vulnerable adults, their families, and their communities worldwide to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice. Gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) is central to achieving World Vision's strategy to reach and serve the most vulnerable children and vulnerable adults.

Within 'Our Promise Going Further', World Vision's strategic plan, GESI is a strategic initiative to address the accelerators of extreme child vulnerability. Our organizational plans affirm strategic imperatives to deepen our commitments to the most vulnerable, and to focus our work for greater evidence-based impact across all programming. Gender equality and social inclusion are also central to achieving the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the various international conventions.

WORLD VISION'S GESI TEAM

World Vision's GESI Team and Focal Points support the implementation of the programmatic and organizational commitments and policies on gender equality and social inclusion. The team has developed a GESI Approach and Theory of Change that provides guidance on how to systematically apply a GESI lens into all facets of World Vision's work – resource acquisition, program implementation, advocacy, operations, and strategy. The goal is to consistently apply a GESI lens in a systematic manner, and to strengthen evidence of impact. The GESI Team and Focal Points prioritize GESI-transformative design and program quality assurance. We engage different sectors in efforts to develop GESI tools, conduct GESI assessments, provide technical capacity building, document promising practices, and ensure monitoring, evaluation and continuous learning and adaptation. At the time the GESI Audit was conducted, World Vision was in the process of finalizing the development of its GESI management policy to support efforts in systematic GESI integration and institutionalization. This policy has since been finalized and released.



DEFINING THE PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF A GESI AUDIT

It is important to define the objectives of a GESI Audit, which include the following:

1. **To assess practical action** taken to integrate and institutionalize gender equality and social inclusion, specifically in resource acquisition, program implementation quality assurance, and in organizational culture.
2. **To monitor progress** made in integrating GESI, set up an initial baseline on performance on GESI, and document promising practices in benchmarking and achieving gender equality and social inclusion.
3. **To develop an action plan** and provide recommendations on new and effective strategies to promote GESI over a period of three to five years.



It is equally important to define the scope of the GESI Audit. World Vision's GESI Audit assessed how gender equality and social inclusion is promoted across World Vision work and entities focusing on the following areas prioritized by International Programs Group leadership team:

1. **Resource Development** | Technical Branding; Donor cultivation; High quality bid creation; Evidence and learning
2. **Program quality and impact** | Program quality assurance; Evidence of impact; Technical branding and communications; External engagement and thought leadership
3. **Operations and institutional practices** | Relevant policies and implementation, including any new guidance on GESI, safeguarding and diversity and inclusion; Organizational measures and institutional practices; Human relations; Contributions to ongoing assessments on OVS—Our Voice Survey, the organizational staff engagement survey

Building on a gender audit that was carried out in 2015 that had focused only on gender, The GESI Audit explored intersectionality by expanding the scope to include social inclusion, in line with World Vision's strategic focus on GESI.¹

The findings established a baseline for the International Programs Group for ongoing work to improve internal practices and systems for effective GESI integration. An action plan was developed to guide ongoing action for the next five years.

¹ World Vision defines Gender Equality & Social Inclusion (GESI) as an approach whereby interventions lead to equal and inclusive access, decision-making, participation, systems, and wellbeing for all, as well as contribute to greater gender equality and social inclusion goals, including transforming gender and social norms, beyond any intervention or sector.

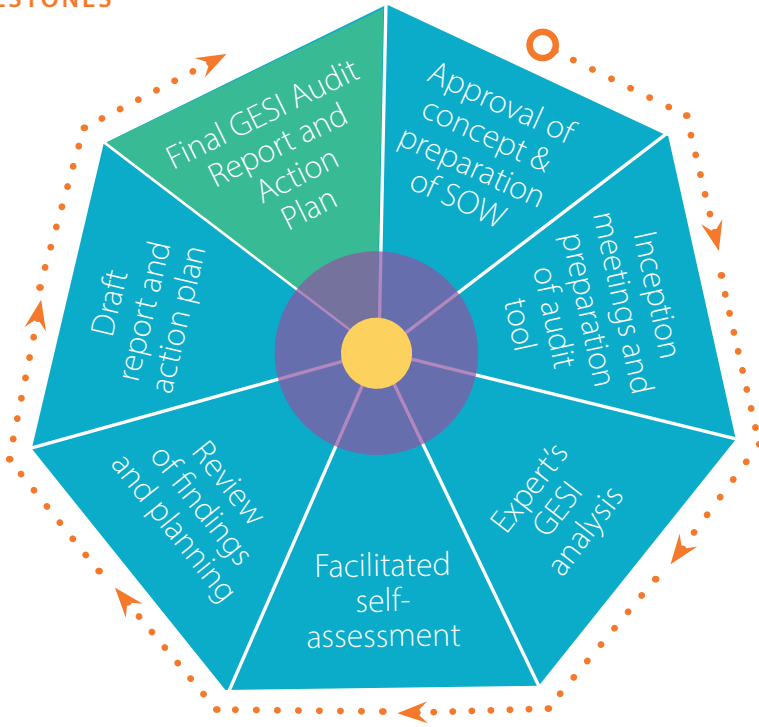
DEVELOPING A TIMELINE WITH CLEAR DELIVERABLES

Based on the approach and methodology, it is necessary to develop a timeline with an activity plan outlining all the expected deliverables.

World Vision's GESI Audit was conducted within a span of six months with a kick-off in June 2021 and ongoing engagements that were completed by the end of the Fiscal Year 2021. It included the following activities:

- 1 **Initial planning meetings:** Facilitation of initial planning meetings with Senior Leadership and core staff: Senior Vice President/Vice president from Resource Acquisition and Program Quality and impact; IPG Senior leadership – Senior Directors/Directors and Senior Technical Advisors; GESI Director, and GESI Focal Points
- 2 **Inception:** Delivery of inception report, including a GESI Audit methodology and tool based on international best practice to facilitate expert review, staff/stakeholder self-assessment and action-planning
- 3 **Expert Analysis:** Desk reviews of relevant documents provided by the organization; Communications and interviews with staff and selected partners/stakeholders. Preparation of the expert analysis report.
- 4 **Self-assessment:** Facilitation of the organizational self-assessment utilizing mixed methods such as historical maps, questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions.
- 5 **Action-planning and reporting:** Presentation and discussion of expert analysis and self-assessment findings with the leadership team, expanded leadership team, select staff; Facilitation of a core team to develop a GESI Action Plan to inform current and future interventions, plans, activities, or policies; Preparation of a report on the GESI Audit findings along with the GESI Action Plan for the short, medium- and longer-term action.

MILESTONES



APPLYING A PARTICIPATORY APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

A participatory methodology emphasizes self-assessment alongside expert analysis to allow for self-reflection by selected staff and stakeholders.

World Vision's GESI Audit involved a four-stage participatory process:

STAGE 1: EXPERT'S GESI ANALYSIS

World Vision engaged two external experts to carry out a GESI analysis based on a clear term of reference. The GESI analysis included interviews with staff, senior leadership, review of content, consultations with relevant stakeholders, and historical mapping. The experts elaborated on World Vision's GESI Continuum tool and came up with a checklist, for the purpose of implementation of the GESI Audit. The tool developed became the standardized audit tool.

STAGE 2: SELF-ASSESSMENT

The external experts engaged World Vision in assessing its own GESI-responsiveness and integration in the areas of focus identified above. The self-assessment utilized historical mapping and the GESI DME toolkit self-assessment tool and GESI continuum, along with other tools that the experts implemented—survey questionnaire, focus group discussions, and interviewing.

STAGE 3: REVIEW OF FINDINGS AND PLANNING

This stage reviewed the result of the GESI expert's analysis together with staff and stakeholder self- assessment to formulate an action plan. It included focus group discussions with key staff and action-planning. The findings and action plan were discussed initially with senior leadership for feedback, ownership, and potentially ongoing political will.

STAGE 4: PREPARATION OF REPORT AND ACTION PLAN

World Vision worked together with the experts to finalize the GESI action plan and final report on the findings of the audit, with recommendations. The International Programs Group unit provided final approval before the report and action plan were circulated. The audit build on World Vision's decades of work and long-standing relationships, as well as on other Human Resources assessments including "Our Voice Survey". It showed GESI promising practices, reflected on emerging priorities, identified emerging questions or gaps, exposed what had been overlooked, and encouraged the co-generation of future strategies for good quality practices for transformational GESI.

As a key outcome of the audit, the report and GESI action plan build on World Vision's organizational strengths, and outlined activities, strategies, and guidelines for transformational GESI integration. The findings formed a baseline from which progress in GESI would be tracked and measured for a period of five years, upon which a new GESI Audit would be conducted.





PREPARING A SELF-AUDIT REPORT

It is important to prepare an extensive GESI Audit report detailing the implications of the findings on the agency's culture, processes, programs, institutional practices and performance. World Vision prepared an extensive audit report based on its GESI Audit in 2021. Here is a summary of the findings, which include a historical mapping of progress, challenges, and opportunities.

FROM GENDER AUDITS TO GESI AUDIT

The findings from the GESI Audit indicated that World Vision had a strong focus on gender equality for several decades. The 2010 Gender Self-Assessment was foundational in the 2015 Gender Self-Assessment Report and Action Plan. Data from 2010 was included and used to compare results from 2015. The 2015 Gender Self-Assessment (GSA) focused on identifying staff perceptions regarding how gender issues were addressed in programming and in internal processes. The GSA used the Gender Integration Framework theory of change, which posits that transformation can only occur when these four organizational dimensions are ready for gender integration:

Political Will | **Technical Capacity** | **Accountability** | **Organizational Culture**

The actions undertaken following the 2010 and 2015 Gender Self-Assessments included the establishment of a gender task-force, and greater capacity building, awareness raising, and training efforts.

In 2017, World Vision endorsed the *Minimum Standards for Mainstreaming Gender Equality*, which reflected a commitment to eight minimum standards.

These minimum standards include adopting a gender equality policy, developing organizational culture and capacity, conducting gender analysis, utilizing sex-disaggregated data, developing indicators, budgeting, doing no harm, and ensuring accountability.

GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION APPROACH

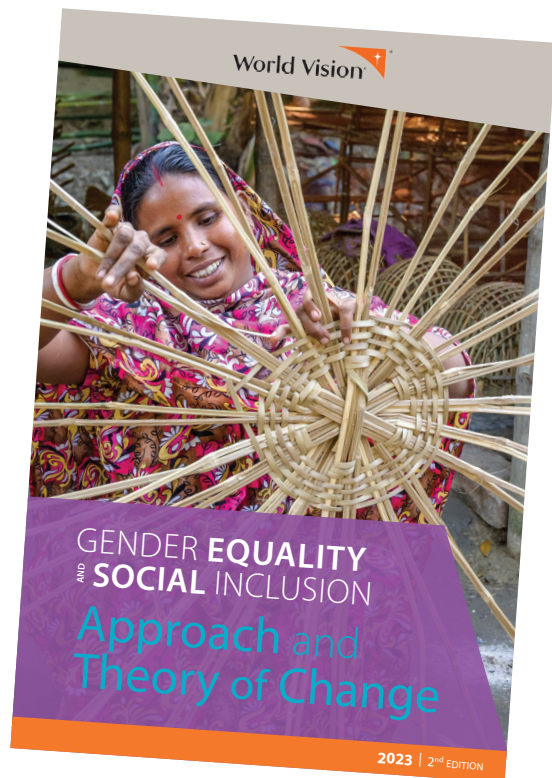
As established by this GESI Audit, World Vision continues its shift from a focus on working with girls and women – to an expanded lens on gender equality – to the present focus on gender equality and social inclusion. In 2018, World Vision established its first ever GESI Team, with a Director of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion leading a GESI technical team. There are also GESI focal points within World Vision's programs as established during the 2021 GESI Audit.

World Vision has established an integrated holistic approach on gender equality and social inclusion (GESI). This is in alignment with new and existing trends, including the commitments by the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), that emphasize the importance of intersectionality in understanding overlapping vulnerabilities based on gender inequality and social exclusion. Donor agencies and governments are calling for integrated approaches to disability inclusion, youth inclusion, and engagement of other vulnerable groups.

In 2020, World Vision's GESI Approach and Theory of Change was launched to provide guidance on how to systematically apply a GESI lens into all facets of World Vision' work: resource acquisition, program implementation, advocacy, operations, and strategy. The World Vision Toolkit for Integrating GESI in Design, Monitoring and Evaluation (DME) to strengthen the organization's capacity to apply equal and inclusive interventions and utilize GESI- responsive indicators and designs.

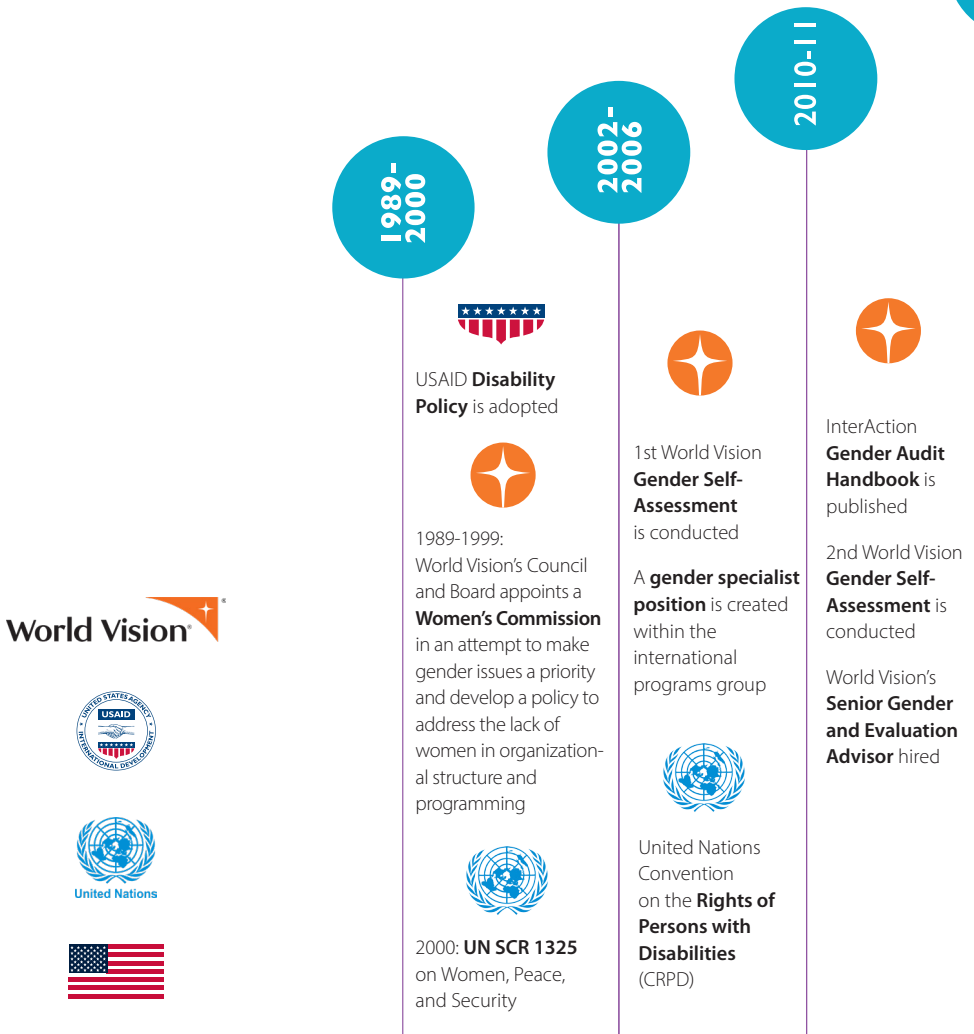
In addition to dedicated GESI staff, World Vision has provided institutional capacity building to field offices, through funding and technical training, documentation of promising practices in GESI, and supported the recruitment of dedicated GESI staff in various countries. World Vision has developed and conducted GESI training and made some of its training modules available online through its e-campus.

Building off the historical mapping presented here, this GESI Audit serves as a baseline for future assessments and the implementation of World Vision's GESI management policy looks to further progress in this area.



A TIMELINE OF KEY MILESTONES

within WORLD VISION, USAID and UNITED NATIONS
 establishing GESI as an agency-wide strategic priority



2012-13



USAID **Gender Policy** is launched

USAID **Youth Policy** released

2015-17



United Nations **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** launched



3rd World Vision **Gender Self-Assessment** is conducted

World Vision co-launches the **Minimum Standards for Gender Equality**



U.S. Global Strategy to **Empower Adolescent Girls**

2018-19



World Vision's **Director for Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)** is hired with a team of GESI technical experts

World Vision's **GESI Focal Points** are established

World Vision's **GESI funding for field office programming** is launched

World Vision's **GESI 101 training** is launched

2020



USAID **Indigenous Peoples Policy** is released



World Vision's **GESI Approach and Theory of Change** is launched

World Vision's **Toolkit for Integrating GESI in Design, Monitoring and Evaluation** is developed

World Vision's **GESI Technical Training** in launched

2021



USAID **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy** is released



World Vision's **1st GESI Audit** is conducted

World Vision's **GESI Promising Practices** are launched

World Vision's **GESI management policy** is drafted



U.S. **whole of government** National Gender Equity and Equality Strategy

GESI is integral to achieving World Vision's global strategy. World Vision defines GESI as a multi-faceted process of transformation that:

- Promotes equal and inclusive access, decision-making, participation, and well-being of the most vulnerable;
- Transforms systems, social norms, and relations to enable the most vulnerable to participate in and benefit equally from development interventions;
- Builds individual and collective agency, resilience, and action; and
- Promotes the empowerment and well-being of vulnerable children, their families and communities.

While vulnerability depends entirely on context, evidence suggests that gender inequality and social exclusion disproportionately affects women and girls, children, persons with disabilities people living in poverty, and displaced persons. Other factors of vulnerability or exclusion include refugee or migration status, ethnicity, religion, sex, age, language, and health status.

WORLD VISION'S GESI THEORY OF CHANGE

IF

Women and girls, men and boys, people with disabilities and other vulnerable populations have equal **access, decision-making and participation** at individual, household, community and society levels;

Systems are equal, fair and inclusive at individual, household, community and society levels; and

The most vulnerable have enhanced **well-being**;

THEN

Individuals are empowered to achieve agency, voice and full potential;

Households have equity, fairness, shared responsibility and balance relations;

Communities engage in collective action, mobilization and resilience; and

Societies establish transformational systems change;

THUS

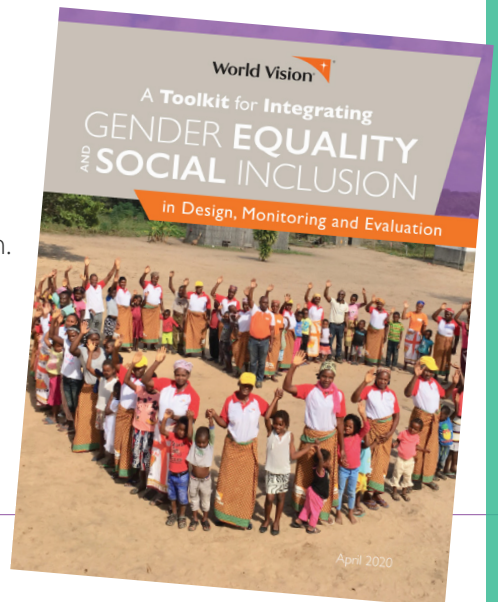
Vulnerable children, families and communities experience life in its fullness.

ALIGNMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT TO GESI

World Vision global strategy aligns its organizational mandate and mission with its commitment to end extreme poverty by the end of this decade. Within the strategic imperatives of the strategy, “strengthening programming for the most vulnerable girls and boys, paying special attention to those who are often invisible because of gender inequality, social exclusion, or disabilities” are listed as priorities. In 2020, special measures were taken to further prioritize GESI in this organizational mandate as a strategic imperative with accountability and reporting mechanisms.

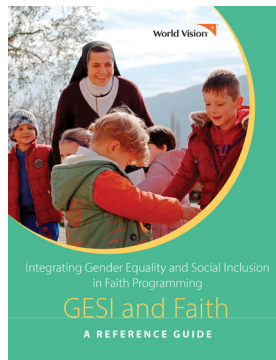
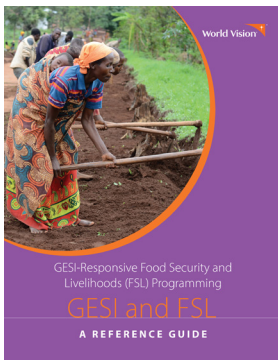
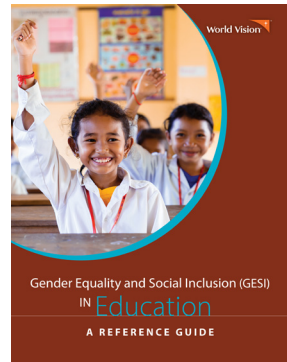
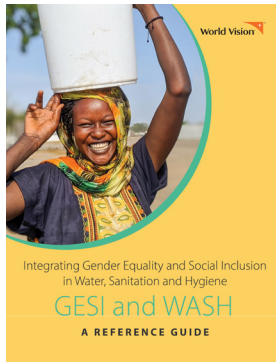
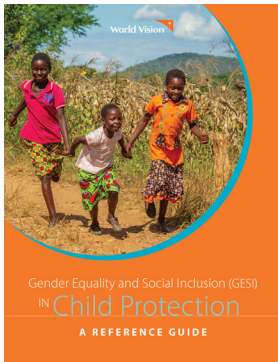
The goal of World Vision’s technical guidance on GESI is to enhance the effectiveness, impact and sustainability of World Vision’s work from a GESI perspective. This guidance is found in the *GESI Approach and Theory of Change* and the *Toolkit for Integrating GESI in Design, Monitoring and Evaluation*.

The GESI Approach and Theory of Change includes the five domains of change necessary to result in gender equality and social inclusion, four core actions to achieve GESI goals and objectives, and guidance on how to systematically apply a GESI lens to resource acquisition, program implementation, advocacy, operations, and strategy. The *Toolkit* is designed to provide guidance and tools to support staff in integrating GESI perspectives in all stages of project design, monitoring and evaluation. The toolkit includes practical guidance to help staff align relief and development programming with international GESI integration standards and best practices and includes many helpful tables, figures and examples.



In addition, the GESI Team developed sector-specific GESI integration reference guides for education, child protection, WASH, faith and development, food security and livelihoods and health to support GESI application to different sectors. The GESI Team is also capturing promising practices that can provide examples of ways in which GESI can be integrated effectively into different sector programming.

Further, the organization's commitment to GESI is reflected in several current business strategies. For example, the World Vision *Global Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Business Plan (2021-2025)*, notes that WASH work is supported by World Vision's GESI framework, which involves monitoring well-being impacts. GESI guidance has been incorporated in the Economic Empowerment, Health, and Food Security and Livelihoods strategies as a key component as well as a cross-cutting priority.



In the World Vision *Education Sector Strategy Summary* (2021-2024), a GESI lens is used to ensure greater impact. In order to reach the most vulnerable, World Vision partners with community and faith groups to support learning systems, change behaviors, advocate for policy changes and enhance quality of educational services through community-driven social accountability using World Vision’s Citizen Voice and Action program model. Learning and evidence are disseminated to improve technical designs and technical brand, thought leadership, innovation in education, and project outcomes. For example, the All Children Reading project focuses on EdTech solutions for all children along with specific support to children with disabilities.

While there has been steady progress in promoting GESI at World Vision, a lot more needs to be done. The self assessment revealed a number of areas of improvement that informed the development of the GESI Action Plan.

With regard to resource development, audit participants felt that GESI is integrated into existing sector acquisition strategies, and business development cycle/acquisition processes and materials (all relevant questions had scores over 3.7 on a scale of 1 to 5). When asked, however, if their “team or sector does a good job in showcasing our GESI work to donors and peers” the survey. [Score was 3.46] So, GESI integration within sector teams needs to be strengthened.

In the focus groups, staff wanted more support in their GESI work, such as involving the GESI Team earlier in the business development process, and guidance, perhaps even being provided with a checklist, to ensure that GESI is included consistently in proposals. Further, training for the grants team and the integration of GESI into program models were suggested to increase impact organization-wide.

GESI is seen as “essential” for resource development. However, participants thought that the documentation and use of the organization’s GESI promising practices, as well as a more consistent narrative about that work, could give World Vision a competitive advantage on bids and could be helpful in bringing in increased resource development. More needs to be done to ensure GESI goals, objectives and/or analyses are seen as an integral part of materials produced

for sector team technical branding and positioning. Lessons learned about GESI from monitoring and evaluation processes could be better captured and used to improve program design and implementation.

With regard to program quality and impact, the audit revealed that GESI goals and objectives are being fairly well-integrated into the program cycle. [Score of 3.8] However, fewer than desired GESI assessments are conducted to inform the program design. [Score of 3.31] Participants thought that project design processes incorporate the views and needs of community members from the most vulnerable groups and diverse backgrounds to a moderate extent. [Score of 3.53] In addition, focus groups participants thought there needs to be more contextualization of the “reality of GESI” in various communities, based on field experiences.

In implementing programs, participants thought there were a few GESI assessments conducted to inform the program inception period and ongoing activities. More such assessments were necessary, and intentionality in other measures including integrating GESI during project kick-off activities.

The majority of participants assessed World Vision’s progress in GESI integration in programs as GESI accommodating or sensitive, meaning that most interventions tend to address the practical needs of vulnerable groups but not the underlying root causes of inequality or exclusion (47/70 responses). Similarly, while many thought that a GESI analysis and other findings from monitoring and evaluation are used to reach and meet the needs of the most vulnerable groups, [Score of 3.42] there is a missed opportunity in the work to shift norms that reinforce inequality and exclusion.

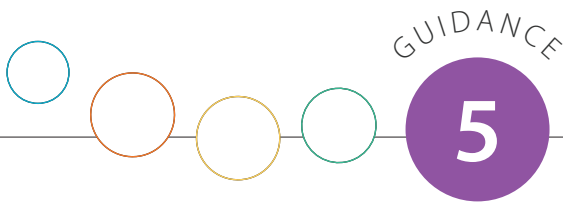
With regard to data and indicators, a fairly high number of participants believed that World Vision's projects collect data disaggregated by sex, age, and disability, or other gender equality or social inclusion categories. **[Score of 3.96]** More ought to be done to ensure GESI-specific indicators along the GESI domains are known and used by different sector teams.

With regard to operations and institutional practice, most participants emphasized the need for World Vision to have a greater emphasis on training staff about how to integrate GESI in program design and implementation, and in institutional practices.

Participants noted that there is "good momentum" behind the GESI capacity-building and that the guidance and toolkits developed will be used increasingly. There was also a new GESI policy drafted. Participants commented about the credibility of the current GESI Team, which has built an understanding within the organization about GESI and developed good materials.

The audit established that staff believe that World Vision's senior leadership has demonstrated its commitment to GESI integration in programs and practice. **[Score of 3.85]**. Further, participants believed that GESI principles and opportunities are considered a priority within organizational, departmental and team-level strategic planning. **[Scores of 3.6]** However, financial resources and dedicated budgets to advance these commitments were still limited.

The participants were engaged in action-planning, building on this self assessment.



DEVELOPING A GESI ACTION PLAN

It is very important to translate findings from a GESI Audit into actions. To make sure that the actions are implemented, it is necessary to ensure the process of action planning following a GESI Audit is participatory. The GESI Action Plan mirrors the four core actions laid out in the *GESI Approach and Theory of Change* to achieve GESI goals and objectives:

- Integrate GESI-transformative approaches in **resource development**, including proposal design, business positioning and donor engagement
- Apply a GESI lens in **program implementation** for program quality assurance
- Strengthen **evidence of impact** on GESI
- Promote GESI-responsive **institutional practices, policies, operations** and accountability mechanisms, guided by “do no harm” and protection principles

Broadly speaking, these goals and objectives will be accomplished by GESI-specific institutional capacity building, communications, knowledge management, and enhanced GESI training. The communications and training will be targeted to the needs of different teams including program, business development, advocacy, technical branding and communications staff. This will also include increased training at field offices.

With regard to **resource development**, the GESI Action Plan calls for strengthening GESI Team review of U.S. government and other public and private funding proposals, promoting the use of the GESI theory of change, domains, and indicators in proposal design and quality review. Moreover, there is a need for the GESI Director to work with both the Technical Branding and Communications Director and the Evidence and Learning Director to create opportunities for World

Vision staff to learn more about GESI work through the Impact Portal, Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, and Learning (MERL) and development narrative. Additionally, resource development will be supported by working with national staff during the preparation or “capture” period, embedding GESI expertise at the country level and including adequate resources for GESI expertise in program budgets.

The GESI Action Plan calls for the consistent use of GESI assessments, technical tools, reference guides, and training in order to improve **program implementation and quality assurance**. With the implementation of GESI-integrated programs, the GESI Team will work to document the GESI promising practices. Over the long-term, the team will work to incorporate the GESI best practices into partnership-wide project models as they are revised.

With regard to **evidence and impact**, the GESI Team will work with the Evidence and Learning team and Design, Monitoring and Evaluation Director to continually conduct GESI assessments, monitoring, and evaluation. The team will develop a GESI index -by domain- to ensure consistent use of GESI-responsive indicators which will lead to the use of GESI-disaggregated data to inform targeting and programming adjustments.

The GESI Action Plan also makes recommendations for World Vision **operations and institutional practices**. These include the implementation of the new GESI management policy by the IPG Leadership and GESI Director. The GESI Director will also work with the Human Resources team to integrate GESI throughout the employment cycle including GESI-sensitive advertising, hiring and recruitment processes. Once a new staff person is hired, the plan calls for a GESI session during new employee orientation and a meeting with a GESI focal point or GESI Team member early in a new employee’s time at World Vision.

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