

For Official Use**English - Or. English****27 September 2021****COUNCIL****Meeting of the Council at Ministerial Level, 5-6 October 2021****POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR GENDER-SENSITIVE PUBLIC GOVERNANCE****JT03481704**

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The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.

*Policy Framework for Gender-sensitive Public Governance**

1. Executive Summary

1. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought into the spotlight longstanding and deeply rooted gender inequalities across OECD Member countries in education, employment, entrepreneurship and public life. Women's overrepresentation in some of the hardest-hit sectors of the economy, an increase in unpaid care responsibilities and a surge in the rates of gender-based violence during COVID-19 suggest that governments' gender equality initiatives to date have not always been up to the task of addressing persisting structural inequalities related to gender. Moreover, gender bias may be hidden in plain sight in the baseline of policies, regulations, budgets and procurement practices. Women have also been underrepresented globally in the *ad hoc* decision-making structures created by countries during the emergency response to the pandemic, making up only 24% of the members of such structures. Having had differentiated impacts on certain groups such as racial and ethnic minorities or people living in poverty, the COVID-19 pandemic has also further reinforced the importance of advancing the understanding of intersecting identity factors that affect individuals.

2. Public governance matters now more than ever for shaping a sustainable and a gender-inclusive recovery from the COVID-19 crisis. In this context, emerging evidence suggests that taking action now to address gender equality would lead to significant gains in global GDP growth by 2030. In managing related policy challenges, governments must balance the need for rapid responses with the need to uphold the values of transparency, fairness, accountability and inclusiveness. Governments also have the responsibility to lead by example in addressing gender norms and setting the tone for citizens, businesses and society as a whole. Beyond the recovery, enhancing gender equality is integral to ensuring a balanced approach to the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development and to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as highlighted in the 2015 OECD Recommendation on Gender Equality in Public Life [[OECD/LEGAL/0418](#)] (hereafter, the "2015 Recommendation").

3. Gender mainstreaming – the integration of a gender equality perspective across all government action – is a strategy that helps governments make better decisions to achieve gender equality including as they relate to policy and spending decisions. The quality of government decisions depends on the quality of the inputs, processes, and evidence used to make them. Solid gender expertise and analysis using data disaggregated by sex and other identity factors (e.g., age, ethnicity, socio-economic background) can help policy makers identify trade-offs among policy options, and make more informed decisions. By bringing gender inequality to the forefront, a meaningful application of gender mainstreaming may also improve the responsiveness and fairness of policy delivery and outcomes – key government competences and values that are also strong predictors of public trust. However, OECD Member countries reported several challenges in applying gender mainstreaming, including during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, of 26 OECD Member countries that responded to an OECD survey in April 2020, only 11 reported having used gender impact assessments in emergency responses to the pandemic. In addition, 22% of respondent countries reported difficulties with emphasising gender equality as a priority area in the overall governmental response to the pandemic. As countries around the world work towards recovery, there is an opportunity to harness governance tools such as policy-making, planning, regulations, budgets and public procurement to improve policy outcomes for all and ensure that "no one is left behind".

* The Policy Framework for Gender-sensitive Public Governance was approved by the Public Governance Committee on 27 August 2021.

4. Gender mainstreaming can also generate positive externalities for governments in managing other high-level priorities such as the green recovery, digitalisation and inter-generational justice. In this regard, gender mainstreaming helps put in place foundational governance mechanisms and capabilities – such as strategic planning, co-ordination, and impact analysis tools – that can be mobilised or adapted for mainstreaming any horizontal policy priority across the government. Moreover, gender mainstreaming can help advance other government priorities through mutually reinforcing initiatives.

5. This Policy Framework for Gender-sensitive Public Governance (hereinafter the “Policy Framework”) builds on the 2015 OECD Recommendation, the OECD Public Governance Committee’s Strategy and Action Plan on Gender Mainstreaming [[GOV/PGC\(2019\)7](#)] and the OECD Policy Framework on Sound Public Governance [[GOV/PGC\(2018\)26/FINAL](#)]. It provides a foundation for comprehensively and consistently assessing the gender-sensitivity of public governance. This refers to the extent to which gender equality is accounted for in public governance processes and tools as well as in the composition and culture of the public sector. The Policy Framework aims to help OECD Member and non-Member countries to close gender gaps through effective and gender-sensitive governance and structural reforms, highlighting gender-related dimensions of the core pillars of the OECD Policy Framework on Sound Public Governance.

6. The Policy Framework consists of five sections, outlining the values and enablers for gender-sensitive public governance (sections I and II), followed by instruments and tools – namely problem identification, policy formulation and design (section III), policy implementation (section IV), and policy evaluation (section V) – and how respective processes can be made more gender-sensitive.

1.1. Values for gender-sensitive public governance

7. Values—such as integrity, openness, transparency and accountability - play a key role in shaping public governance and citizen expectations. All these values have gender dimensions as explained below. Hence, upholding these values can also contribute to the promotion of gender equality if such gender dimensions are appropriately considered. On the other hand, the promotion of gender equality can also contribute to upholding these values.

- **Public integrity** can help reveal gender-related integrity breaches and mitigate gender implications of integrity and anti-corruption measures.
- **Openness and transparency** can improve awareness about existing gender inequalities as well as accountability for, and the quality of, gender mainstreaming in policy-making.
- **Inclusion, participation, and diversity** can improve gender-balanced access to public institutions, and gender equality in the delivery of public services.
- **Accountability and respect for the rule of law** can support the achievement of gender equality objectives by enhancing avenues for redress and access to justice in the face of inequality.

1.2. Enablers of gender-sensitive public governance

8. Enablers are an integrated set of practices that support the effective design and implementation of reforms. They go hand-in-hand with values to contribute to effective public governance, and can support the incorporation of a gender lens in public governance. Enablers are particularly important in addressing multidimensional challenges such as climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic, whose effects are often disproportionately felt by women and vulnerable populations. The Policy Framework identifies the following enabling factors for gender-sensitive public governance:

- **Commitment, vision and leadership**, which are crucial for achieving gender equality goals by generating buy-in across the public administration.
- **Equitable and evidence-informed policy-making**, which is rooted in a sound knowledge base, gender-disaggregated data from diverse sources, and assessments of gender-specific impacts across the policy cycle.
- **Whole-of-government co-ordination**, with clear roles and responsibilities to overcome siloes and tackle complex structural inequalities as well as emergencies.
- **Innovation and change management** in the public sector, which apply a gender and intersectional lens in order to ensure that innovation and change in the public sector are responsive to the needs of all persons.

1.3. Problem Identification, Policy Formulation and Design

9. Problem identification, policy formulation and design are the key processes through which policy decisions are made and are not always gender-neutral. Due to this, an understanding of the various interests involved and potential implications on all persons is necessary when undertaking these key tasks.

10. Integrating gender considerations into the policy cycle requires policy makers to draw on gender-disaggregated data and evidence and inclusive stakeholder engagement from the initial stages of decision making (i.e., problem identification and definition).

11. In the policy formulation and design stage, using management tools in a gender-sensitive manner can help improve the quality of policy design and subsequently produce more gender-equal policy outcomes. Some of the key **management tools** are:

- **Strategic planning**, which integrates gender equality objectives at governmental, ministerial and programmatic levels.
- **Core skills for developing policy** (namely, defining policy problems, designing solutions and influencing the policy agenda), which take into account gender expertise.
- **Digital capacities**, with due cognisance of the existence of gender gaps and biases in digital technologies and the potential risks posed by digitalisation and automation on all persons in public sector employment.

12. **Policy instruments**, or governance tools used to address public policy challenges, can be assessed to ensure they do not widen gender inequalities and, rather, improve overall gender equality outcomes. This section of the Policy Framework highlights the importance of:

- **Regulatory policy and governance**, as integrating a gender lens across all phases of the regulatory cycle can help in achieving more substantive levels of gender equality.
- **Budgetary governance**, as gender budgeting practices can help identify gender-specific needs and impacts of policies and enhance transparency.

1.4. Policy implementation

13. There are several tools and processes available to policymakers to support the implementation of a policy and enhance its impact in a gender-sensitive manner. In order to effectively manage policy implementation in a gender-sensitive way, the Policy Framework emphasises the importance of:

- Strengthening **public service leadership**, capacity and skills for promoting gender equality;
 - Understanding and mitigating the gender impacts of **digital technology** to improve service delivery;
 - Using **public procurement** as a strategic lever to promote gender equality;
 - Bolstering gender perspectives in the establishment and processes of **public-private partnerships (PPPs) and public-civil partnerships**;
 - Adopting agile and **innovative approaches** to policy to identify and respond to gender-specific needs;
 - Mainstreaming a gender perspective in **governance of risks and emergency management**; and
 - Strategically **aligning the SDGs** with gender equality strategies.
14. Robust monitoring can help ensure gender equality strategies achieve their intended impacts. This can be done through:
- Monitoring the implementation of **government-wide policy priorities** by the centres of government;
 - Monitoring **financial performance and budget execution** with a gender lens to understand what works;
 - Monitoring the **regulatory process** and its impact on gender equality; and
 - **Developing robust indicators** to monitor gender-sensitive governance.

1.5. Policy Evaluation

15. Policy evaluation is necessary for policy makers and citizens to determine whether policies are meeting their objectives and furthering gender equality goals. From a gender perspective, this includes evaluating gender equality strategies and integrating a gender perspective into all evaluation functions across the whole of government. This requires a clearly designated institutional framework for evaluation. It also calls for quality control and quality assurance of the evaluation process. Finally, post-implementation reviews of regulations can help identify gender impacts and track results.

2. Introduction

2.1. Context

16. The COVID-19 pandemic, which has deeply impacted health, social and economic well-being globally, has had different effects on women. Notably, the short-term economic impact of the pandemic seems to have disrupted work in certain sectors more than others, such as air travel and hotel/accommodation services, in which women are heavily represented, with 47% and 60% share in these sectors respectively (Maliszewska, 2020^[1]; OECD, 2020^[2]). Women are also overrepresented in the hardest-hit sectors of the economy, making them vulnerable to job losses and lack of social security protection (ILO, 2020^[3]; OECD, 2020^[2]). Moreover, they are overrepresented in the frontline professions fighting the pandemic, making up almost 70% of the healthcare workforce globally (OECD, 2020^[2]). Equal share of care work is a key condition to achieve gender equality. Yet, despite variations noted across countries, early evidence on the pandemic suggests that during confinements, women took on higher unpaid care responsibilities, and faced higher risks of gender-based violence and differential

economic risks (Andrew et al., 2020_[4]; UN Women, 2020_[5]); (UN Women, 2020_[5]). The COVID-19 pandemic has also highlighted the gender imbalance in public leadership and decision-making positions, as reflected in the underrepresentation of women in the ad-hoc decision-making structures put in place by countries to deal with the pandemic (CARE, 2020_[6]). Women made up only 24% of the members of these ad-hoc decision-making structures globally (UNDP & UN Women, 2021_[7]). It must also be noted that during emergency situations such as the pandemic, intersecting identity factors may create additional barriers for women and girls in accessing public services. For example, older women – given their higher life expectancy and greater likelihood of experiencing health problems – often make up the majority of residents in long-term care facilities, which are at high risk of being affected by the virus (OECD, 2017_[8]; OECD, 2021_[9]). Similarly, single mothers working in essential sectors coping with the care and education of their children in the total absence of help from public services and primary networks are particularly vulnerable not only due to gender but from the presence of other disadvantaged conditions (Maestriperi, n.d._[10]).

17. In fact, the COVID-19 pandemic has shed light on longstanding and deeply rooted gender inequalities across OECD Member countries, although to varying degrees, in education, employment, entrepreneurship and public life. While women's labour force participation rates have been improving over the past few decades, progress remains slow and patchy and the glass ceiling persists as well as "sticky floors"¹. Women are still less likely than men to be in the workforce across the OECD, although their educational attainment tends to be higher. When women do participate in paid labour, they are more likely to work part-time and work for lower pay in a gender-segregated labour market (OECD, 2017_[8]). In the recent years, a number of OECD Member countries have stepped up efforts to enhance pay transparency and these efforts are slowly coming to fruition. Yet, on average, gender pay gaps across the OECD remain at about 12.8% at the median, with little progression recorded in recent years (OECD, 2021_[11]). Moreover, evidence clearly demonstrates that gender pay gaps widen when we account for intersecting identity factors such as race and disability (Chapman and Benis, 2017_[12]). Furthermore, much needs to be done to achieve gender balance in management positions and at the top of listed companies (on average, 26.7% of seats on boards of publicly listed companies in OECD are women (OECD, n.d._[13]).

18. In addition, within public administrations, women remain overrepresented in both lower-level job categories (e.g., secretarial positions) and part-time work (75% of total part-time workers in the public sector in participating OECD Member countries). The higher the position, the lower the proportion of women in many OECD Member countries across all branches of power. In OECD Member countries, there has only been a marginal increase (around 5 p.p.) in the share of women in parliaments between 2012 and 2021 (OECD, 2019_[14]). Women continue to represent, on average, only one-third of senior public service employees, members of parliaments and Supreme Court judges (OECD, 2019_[15]).

19. Overall, the sluggish progress suggests that many of the gender equality initiatives to date have not always been up to the task of addressing persisting structural inequalities related to gender. By way of example, women remain disproportionately responsible for care work – whether paid, unpaid or underpaid – with major potential to improve public, accessible and affordable child and/or elderly care, and to encourage men to participate in care work. Increase in unpaid care work due to lockdowns and movement restrictions implemented by several countries to curb the spread of COVID-19 have further

¹ According to the EIGE Glossary, "sticky floors" is an "Expression used as a metaphor to point to a discriminatory employment pattern that keeps workers, mainly women, in the lower ranks of the job scale, with low mobility and invisible barriers to career advancement.". Examples of reference by the OECD to "sticky floors" in: <https://www.oecd.org/economy/sticky-floors-or-glass-ceilings-the-role-of-human-capital-working-time-flexibility-and-discrimination-in-the-gender-wage-02ef3235-en.htm>; <https://www.oecd.org/social/broken-elevator-how-to-promote-social-mobility-9789264301085-en.htm>

demonstrated the disproportionately gendered nature of unpaid care work (OECD, 2020^[2]). Although women are often at the losing end of structural gender inequality, cultural norms and stereotypes are simultaneously creating pressure and subsequent problems for men and boys, such as underdiagnosed mental health problems, addiction and alcohol abuse, and the use of violence as a masculinity norm. These are reinforced by structural disincentives (e.g., lack of or unequal paternity leaves as compared to maternity leaves) and cultural norms that discourage men from participating in care work, both paid and unpaid (OECD, 2021^[16]).

20. In addition, new challenges are arising. While presenting real opportunities for change, digitalisation, disruptive technologies, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and big data generate additional risks to expand the scale of persisting inequalities and gender biases, and create new forms of divides and algorithmic discrimination. Algorithmic discrimination can affect gender equality and non-discrimination and can also increase the gender pay and gender digital gap as well as gender stereotypes and structural inequalities between women and men (European Commission, 2020^[17]). In part, this is because the data used to feed the algorithms – which drive this technological revolution – is selected by humans, and thereby mirrors and perpetuates societal inequalities and gender stereotypes. On the other hand, deeply rooted prejudices and biases can also creep into the development and execution of algorithms (Lee, Resnick and Barton, 2019^[18]). Increasing incidences of technology-facilitated violence against women, especially in the form of online sexual harassment, is another example of a challenge presented by digitalisation and the increasing use of technology. Besides inflicting emotional and psychological harm, technology-facilitated violence may also generate a risk of democratic deficit. For example, women may become intimidated and, in order to avoid such violence, hesitant to participate in public debate. As a response, G7 countries have already made a political commitment to end gender-based violence, abuse and harassment in digital contexts (G7 Canada, 2018^[19]). Lack of representation of women in the digital technology and AI development workforce, as well as lack of gender analysis and perspective in the development of new tools and technologies increase the risk of gender bias coded into algorithms, machine learning, and AI, which in turn perpetuates structural inequities. Governments should support technological education for girls and work with the private sector to strengthen the pipeline for women’s leadership in the tech industry.

21. The OECD has long championed the cause of gender equality and has placed it at the core of its policy advice. In 2010, the OECD launched the OECD Gender Initiative to examine the obstacles to gender equality in the fields of education, employment and entrepreneurship. The Initiative was a catalyst for the Council’s adoption of the 2013 Recommendation on Gender Equality in Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship [[OECD/LEGAL/0398](#)] and the 2015 Recommendation [[OECD/LEGAL/0418](#)]. The latter, for which the Public Governance Committee (PGC) is responsible in co-operation with the Employment, Labour and Social Affairs Committee (ELSAC), promotes a government-wide strategy for gender equality reform, sound mechanisms to ensure accountability and sustainability of gender equality initiatives, and tools and evidence to inform inclusive policy decisions. It also promotes a “whole-of-society” approach to reducing gender stereotypes, empowering women from diverse backgrounds to participate in politics and decision-making, and removing implicit and explicit barriers to gender equality. In 2017, the OECD Ministerial Council recognised that progress in closing gender gaps has been very slow, and that gender gaps have even widened in some countries [[C/MIN\(2017\)9/FINAL](#)]. Accordingly, Members called on the OECD to continue its work on gender equality and committed to reinforce their efforts in this regard, including by adopting comprehensive plans and measures to mainstream and improve gender equality. More recently, taking note of the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women and girls, the OECD’s 2020 Ministerial Council Statement [[C/MIN\(2020\)7/FINAL](#)] highlights the importance of recognising women as key drivers of a broad-based recovery from the pandemic.

2.2. The nexus between good governance and gender equality

22. Sound public governance constitutes a necessary condition for pluralist democracies to give effect to the respect for the rule of law and human rights, with efficient democratic institutions lying at the core of sound public governance. Sound public governance also matters now more than ever: governments need to manage multi-dimensional and complex policy challenges including a global pandemic and its social and economic fallouts, climate crisis, and inequalities counting structural gender inequalities. In managing these policy challenges, governments must balance the need for rapid responses with the need to uphold the values of transparency, fairness, accountability and inclusiveness. Governments also have the responsibility to lead by example in addressing gender norms and setting the tone for the citizens, businesses and societies as a whole. Indeed, persisting gender stereotypes and biases may be embedded in the baseline of policies, regulations, budgets and other government tools like procurement, communication, etc.

23. Gender mainstreaming is a strategy that helps governments make better decisions to achieve gender equality including as they relate to policy and spending decisions. Given the crosscutting nature of structural inequalities, a siloed public governance approach is neither effective in accelerating progress in gender equality, nor in removing deeply rooted cultural norms and stereotypes². Formulating co-ordinated, competent and ambitious whole-of-government commitments to gender equality is thus important, as is putting clear and effective mechanisms in place within and across government institutions to be able to translate public policies, programmes, services and budgets into concrete benefits for men and women. Indeed, in adopting the 2015 Recommendation, the OECD Members and non-Members having adhered to it (“Adherents”) committed to mainstreaming gender equality in the design, development, implementation, and evaluation of public policies and budgets; and to integrating evidence-based assessments of gender-related impacts into various dimensions of public governance, such as public procurement and regulatory policies.

24. Gender mainstreaming is especially important during the recovery from the COVID-19 crisis as governments invest in institutional and structural reforms and adopt further economic stimulus packages. Indeed, renewed attention on gender-sensitive decision-making is required to shape an inclusive and sustainable recovery. This is important to note in the context of emerging evidence that taking action now to address gender equality would lead to significant gains in global GDP growth. A study by McKinsey Global Institute suggests an addition of \$13 trillion to global GDP by 2030 if urgent action is taken to counter the regressive impacts on gender equality caused by the pandemic, as opposed to no action taken in this regard (Madgavkar et al., 2020_[20]). Besides recovery, enhancing gender equality is also integral to ensuring a balanced approach to the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development and to achieving all other SDGs, as highlighted in the 2015 Recommendation.

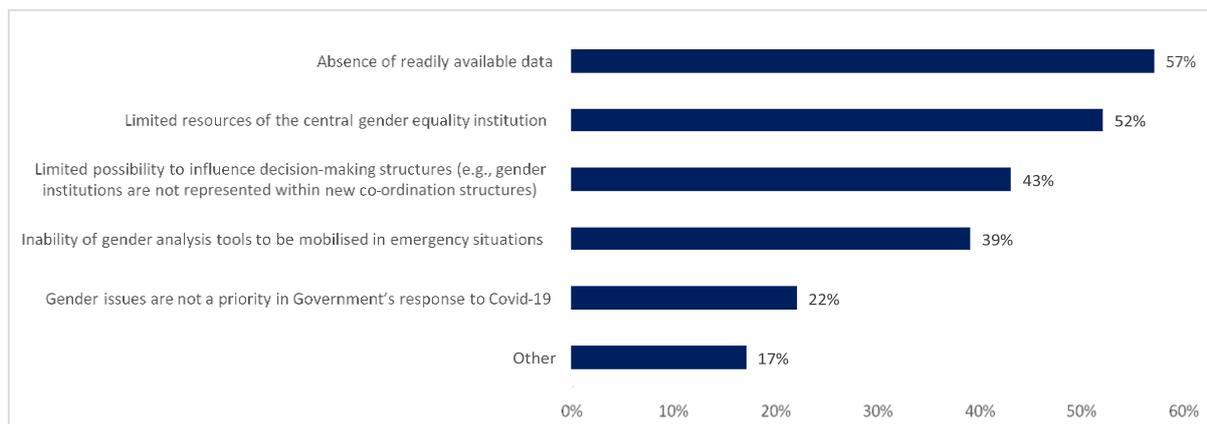
25. However, OECD Member countries have reported several challenges in gender mainstreaming, such as limited availability of gender disaggregated data, limited capacities and resources, and absence of leadership and accountability (OECD, 2019_[15]). These challenges were reportedly acute during the emergency response to the pandemic, as shown in Figure 2.1. Reported challenges in using gender impact assessment tools in emergency responses

26. For example, in a survey conducted by the OECD in April 2020, only 11 out of the 26 respondent countries reported performing gender impact assessments in emergency responses (OECD, 2021_[9]). Data

² Apart from a whole-of-government approach, other factors are also required to address stereotypes. This includes for example, formal and informal education, through ensuring gender-neutral curricula, providing role-models with atypical career paths and using gender-sensitive language. Similarly, media and communication channels can be made gender-neutral (e.g., ensuring advertisements and government campaigns do not reproduce gender stereotypes but introduce men doing tasks viewed as female and vice versa).

analysed by the UN suggests that this issue persisted throughout the pandemic, with only 42% of COVID measures taken globally up until February 2021 having been classified as gender-sensitive (UNDP & UN Women, 2021^[7]). As countries manage the crisis and work to pave the way for recovery, there is an opportunity to harness governance tools such as policy-making, planning, regulations, budgets and public procurement to ensure that “no one is left behind”, including by mainstreaming gender considerations into these processes.

Figure 2.1. Reported challenges in using gender impact assessment tools in emergency responses



Source: (OECD, 2020^[21]), Survey “Mapping good practices & challenges faced by the National Gender Equality Institutions in tackling the effects of COVID-19”, addressed to the OECD Working Party on Gender Mainstreaming and Governance under the aegis of the Public Governance Committee, April 2020

27. Data from 2021 shows that public trust levels in government have fallen down to pre-crisis levels despite observing a rapid rise in public trust levels in May 2020, at the peak of the onset of the pandemic (Edelman, 2021^[22]). While the trajectory of public trust levels in government in the recovery period remains to be seen, there is a clear risk of increased inequality and lower incomes for some groups which are associated negatively with trust levels. In order to reinforce public trust, OECD analysis points to the importance of boosting fairness of public institutions, improving responsiveness and reliability in public service delivery as well as anticipating new needs (OECD, 2017^[23]). By bringing gender inequalities to the forefront, a meaningful application of gender mainstreaming may also improve the responsiveness and fairness of policy delivery and outcomes – key government competences and values that are also strong predictors of public trust (OECD, 2017^[23]). Similarly, improving the gender balance and gender-sensitivity of public institutions, actions, and decision-making can also contribute to enhancing representativeness, fairness and responsiveness (OECD, 2014^[24]). Furthermore, gender equality in participation in decision-making and agenda setting can help to ensure policies adequately reflect the priorities and needs of all members of society and addressing systemic power imbalances in public and private life. Gender-balanced leadership and gender-sensitive policy-making are more likely to ensure that members of the society equally share the benefits of growth, thereby underpinning improved responsiveness and fairness of decision-making. In turn, this could contribute to strengthening or restoring the trust of citizens in public responsiveness (OECD, 2014^[24]).

28. In view of the above, the PGC approved the Strategy for Gender Mainstreaming and its Action Plan [GOV/PGC(2019)7], which recognised the need for the PGC to reinforce its role in supporting countries in closing gender gaps through effective and inclusive governance and structural reforms. To this end, the Strategy proposed to develop an analytical Framework which would identify gender dimensions of various governance levers and decision-making processes, and which would lay the

foundation for deepening the understanding of how to best leverage governance tools to close gender gaps.

2.3. Objectives of the Policy Framework

29. In preparation for further monitoring and evaluation of Adherents' progress on the implementation of the 2015 Recommendation, and taking into account the findings of the reports mentioned above, the PGC has developed the present Policy Framework. The Policy Framework provides a foundation for assessing the gender-sensitivity of public governance approaches and processes across OECD Member and non-Member countries in a comprehensive and consistent way³. It also aims to help OECD Member and non-Member countries to maximise the role of governance processes and tools to close gender gaps through effective and gender-sensitive governance and structural reforms. Importantly, the Policy Framework directly builds upon the OECD's Policy Framework on Sound Public Governance [[GOV/PGC\(2018\)26/FINAL](#)], a tool aiming to help governments design and implement public governance reforms that take into account effective policy-making approaches and that enable governments to move closer to OECD standards and good practices in the area of public governance (see Box 2.1 for the OECD's definition of sound public governance). The Policy Framework aims to highlight potential gender-related dimensions of the core pillars of the Policy Framework on Sound Public Governance.

Box 2.1. Definition of Sound Public Governance

Sound public governance consists of the formal and informal rules, procedures, practices and interactions within the State, and between the State, non-state institutions and citizens, that frame the exercise of public authority and decision-making in the public interest.

Sound public governance constitutes a necessary condition for pluralist democracies to give effect to the respect for the rule of law and human rights, with efficient democratic institutions lying at the core of sound public governance.

Sound public governance is therefore the combination of three interconnected elements:

- Values: principles that play a key role in shaping public governance and citizen expectations.
- Enablers: an integrated nexus of practices that supports the effective design and implementation of reforms.
- Instruments and tools: a set of policies and management practices for efficient governance and policy and service design, implementation and evaluation.

Source: (OECD, 2020₍₂₅₎).

³ Gender-sensitivity of public governance refers to the extent to which gender equality is accounted for in public governance processes and tools as well as in the composition and culture of the public sector. The objective is to adequately consider and reflect the concerns and experiences of all individuals in decision making, based on their gender, ideally in intersection with other identity factors.

30. In line with the PGC Strategy and Action Plan for Gender Mainstreaming [[GOV/PGC\(2019\)7](#)], the Policy Framework offers a strategic approach for countries in closing gender gaps through effective and inclusive governance and structural reforms. It also advances the PGC’s priorities identified in the Programme of Work and Budget [[GOV/PGC\(2020\)3/REV3](#)], as it will assist efforts to “support a comprehensive response, encompassing institutions, strategies and instruments, especially in the post-COVID-19 environment.”

31. The Policy Framework bears particular relevance in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has placed tremendous strain on public governance across the world. Identifying the short- and long-term priorities while balancing conflicting interests of different sections of the population has been a significant challenge for governments. As governments continue to manage their way out of the pandemic, the Policy Framework can provide an instrumental approach to strengthening public governance to support a gender-inclusive recovery.

32. The primary target audiences of the Policy Framework include centres of government, line ministries, agencies and other public institutions in the executive branch at all levels of government focusing on designing, implementing and evaluating policy and governance reform agendas for results. This in particular, includes central gender equality institutions and/or gender equality units within line ministries for whom this tool could prove useful in promoting gender equality as a critical whole-of-government policy and governance issue. In addition to executive branch actors, the Policy Framework could be useful for legislative and judicial branches seeking to mainstream gender in their approaches to governance and/or hold executive branches accountable for their gender equality goals and commitments.

Box 2.2. Gender-sensitive Public Governance on the Foundation of the 2015 OECD Recommendation

The 2015 Recommendation outlines a strategic framework for advancing gender equality across the whole-of-government. It lays down standards for effectively promoting gender equality in the actions of all three branches of power, i.e., executive, legislative and judiciary through four key pillars:

- Gender mainstreaming in public policies and budgets;
- Accountability and oversight;
- Gender-balanced decision-making; and,
- Gender equality in public administration.

This Policy Framework is based on the building blocks laid down in the 2015 Recommendation, and the core benchmarks for effective public governance approaches and reforms as identified in the OECD Policy Framework for Sound Public Governance. In this sense, the Policy Framework draws on the standards put forth in the 2015 Recommendation as a prism to map out specific actions and ways in which public governance approaches and reforms can be integrated with a gender-sensitive lens. The actions and ways identified in this framework thus aspire to accelerate country progress in adhering to the standards of the 2015 Recommendation, while building on the vast legacy of good governance practices identified by the OECD in the Policy Framework for Sound Public Governance.

3. Values

3.1. Overview

33. As governments around the world struggle with issues of declining trust and legitimacy, values – notably integrity, openness and transparency, inclusiveness, and accountability – have emerged as the foundation of sound public governance. These values help guide the behaviour of public officials and shape citizen expectations. They are therefore essential in strengthening trust in public institutions.

34. Governance values, however, may not be gender-neutral in application or effect. Research in public administration has documented how values may shift in relation to organisational leadership and may reflect masculine bias that can lead to marginalisation of women (Stivers, 1994^[26]). Thus, it is useful to understand how these values contribute to organisational culture rooted in gender stereotypes or differences, and explore how they might be better utilised to promote equality.

3.1.1. Public Integrity

35. Public integrity refers to the consistent alignment of, and adherence to, shared ethical values, principles and norms for upholding and prioritising the public interest over private interests in the public sector (OECD, 2017^[27]). It is the cornerstone of any system of sound public governance because it is critical to ensuring the public interest is consistently placed ahead of personal interests and thereby safeguarding the integrity of public institutions and decision-making, and the rule of law. That said, no country is immune to violations of integrity, and corruption remains one of the most persistent challenges facing governments today. In a 2020 study of 180 countries on perceived levels of corruption, two out of every three countries scored below 50 on a scale of 0-100 (with 100 being very clean and 0 being highly corrupt) (Transparency International, 2021^[28]).

36. Although there is debate about the causal mechanisms (Stensöta, 2018^[29]; Goetz, 2007^[30]), research points to connections between violations of integrity and the underrepresentation of women across all branches of power. Indeed, there is emerging evidence on the links between gender equality in public decision-making and institutional integrity. In a cross-country analysis of over 125 countries, for example, corruption was found to be lower in countries where a greater share of parliamentarians are women (Jha and Sarangi, 2018^[31]). While such findings do not allow making any inference with respect to causality, theory and qualitative evidence do provide some support for a linkage between the share of women in politics and levels of corruption (Bauhr, Charron and Wangnerud, 2019^[32]).

37. Similarly, in the private sector, diversity on boards with a range of appropriate skills, experience, gender, and knowledge can be linked to healthier risk-management practices with better decision-making and fewer instances of governance-related scandals, such as bribery, corruption, fraud, and shareholder battles (MSCI, 2014^[33]; OECD, 2014^[34]). A robust integrity system is the result of the coherent and consistent implementation of a wide range of provisions, measures and tools (OECD, 2020^[25]). Increasing gender equality is one of the elements among a broader set of tools to strengthen coherent, inclusive and accountable public integrity systems. An environment with a more balanced representation makes the establishment of “old boy networks” prone to corrupt practices more difficult.

38. Corruption may also have a varying impact on men and women from diverse backgrounds. For example, evidence suggests that women, especially those from vulnerable populations, tend to be affected by corruption (including petty corruption i.e., selling of basic public services, instead of making them available by right). This exposure to corruption and its impact can be due both to women’s status as a vulnerable group in many societies, as well as the chronic underrepresentation of women in decision-making positions. Often the primary caretakers within families, women may be more dependent on public service provision, which makes them more susceptible to extortion at the point of service delivery (Broker, 2018^[35]). Women are more at risk of being exposed to physical abuse, sexual extortion

(sextortion), exploitation, or harassment. Unfortunately, these forms of corruption are not always formally recognised and are even less likely to be reported, in part because of a culture of shaming and victim blaming (UNODC, 2020_[36]).

39. Corruption may also contribute to under-resourced, inefficient and unresponsive public services and programmes (e.g., access to maternal healthcare or menstrual hygiene products)⁴. Crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic create opportunities for integrity violations including corruption and fraud in public procurement and delivery of economic stimulus packages. Such potential violations risk exacerbating existing social inequalities and barriers faced by women from diverse backgrounds (OECD, 2020_[37]; OECD, 2021_[9]).

40. Moreover, measures aimed at curbing corruption, including whistle-blower reporting mechanisms and protections, as well as other integrity-related legal provisions, may be experienced differently by men and women. Research suggests the possibility that whistle-blower protection measures are not gender-neutral, with women often being more susceptible to retaliation than men, as they may be seen as transgressing traditional female behaviour (Rehg, 2008_[38]). To reduce the risks of silencing women, more evidence and data is needed, in order to ensure for such measures to be designed taking into account diverse effects on all persons.

41. Finally, corrupt practices and established power networks, often reflecting the interests of the men, may undermine the effective design and implementation of policies that are aiming at promoting gender equality. Since improving gender equality also contributes to breaking established networks, there could be incentives to maintain the status quo. Applying a gender lens to public integrity systems can help to expose and mitigate the gender implications of integrity and anti-corruption measures and vice-versa ensure the effectiveness of gender policies that could be undermined through corrupt practices or a capture of public decision-making processes. As such, establishing data collection procedures from a gender perspective and collecting gender- or sex-disaggregated data⁵ is an important step that countries can take. This can help policymakers document the potentially different ways in which all persons perceive corruption as well as the potentially different ways they are impacted by it. With this information, policy makers will be better equipped to design policy interventions. Moreover, such data can assist efforts to design gender-sensitive integrity strategies and to devise, update and reform integrity and corruption prevention policies.

Box 3.1. Whistle-blower protection measures with a gender lens

Korea

The Anti-Corruption and Civil Rights Commission (ACRC) of the Republic of Korea has introduced a proxy reporting system for whistle-blowers in November 2018. Through this system, there is a provision to enter a lawyer's name into the report format, which is then used for throughout the process of handling the report. This proxy reporting system was introduced to guarantee confidentiality of the whistle-blower's identity, as the legal requirement does not allow anonymous reporting. Furthermore, to address the issue of low take up of this option due to high costs of hiring lawyers, the ACRC also formed a group of lawyers offering advice and services in this regard. This is an example of an approach that could be used to offer protection for whistle-blowers in a gender-sensitive manner.

Source: (UNODC, 2020_[36]).

⁴ See Paragraph 2 of this Policy Framework on the gender-wise composition of parliaments, judiciaries and senior civil services.

⁵ Data would be collected in line with relevant national legislation.

3.1.2. Openness and Transparency

42. The basis of government openness and transparency is the disclosure and accessibility of government data and information, especially in relation to public services and resources. As such, they are key building blocks for accountability and the design and implementation of quality public services. In turn, they contribute to the improved public trust in governments.

43. Transparency can support the realisation of gender-sensitive public governance, as it increases access to information, facilitates awareness regarding the scope and scale of existing gender inequalities and the groups most acutely affected by them. This, in turn, means that policymakers have more information available to guide policy-making, including gender mainstreaming. Moreover, greater transparency can highlight weaknesses and gaps in policy efforts. With more information, citizens and non-governmental organisations can better identify and advocate for their needs, thereby putting positive pressure on policymakers to be more accountable for their actions – or inactions – on gender equality. For example, this can be done by making dashboards used to help track progress made in implementing gender equality strategies (including through sub-components and indicators) openly accessible to citizens and other stakeholders. This can serve as an accountability mechanism and result in more responsive actions by the government, which is critical for the achievement of gender equality goals.

44. However, research demonstrates that women often lack access to government information compared to men (International Development Research Council, 2018^[39]), which can thus hinder their ability to hold governments accountable. As such, designing open government and transparency initiatives through collaborative processes with diverse organisations and in gender-sensitive ways can help ensure that all citizens have equal access to information. In recognition of this, some countries (e.g., Canada, and Germany) have adopted open government strategies that are gender-sensitive, which involves enhancing women’s participation in open government initiatives and increasing gender perspectives in open government commitments⁶ (Box 3.2). In addition, during crises, employing open government principles such as transparency and stakeholder participation can help foster citizen trust, as demonstrated by the COVID-19 pandemic (OECD, 2020^[40]). Use of gender-sensitive communication and outreach tools, in particular, can enable governments to engage stakeholders as well as effectively target communication efforts to, for example, women from vulnerable populations during crises.

Box 3.2. Country examples of gender-sensitive open government practices

Canada

In preparation of Canada’s 2018-2020 National Action Plan on Open Government, Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus) assessment of the entire action plan was undertaken to examine how various intersecting identity factors might impact the effectiveness of Canada’s open government work. Furthermore, one of the ten commitments put forth in the action plan was focused on feminist and inclusive dialogue to make benefits of open government available to all. As a part of this, Canada committed to supporting greater inclusion and diversity in its public engagement, applying an intersectional lens to its open government activities, and ensuring representation and inclusion of marginalised and underrepresented voices.

⁶ See Open Government Partnership, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/policy-area/gender/>

Germany

In its First National Action Plan 2017-2019 as a part of the Open Government Partnership, Germany adopted the commitment to monitor the share of women and men in leadership positions in public and private sectors. The action plan stated, “Regular monitoring reports on the development of the share of women and men in leadership positions and in private sector bodies and the public service in the framework of implementing the Act on Equal Participation of Women and Men in Leadership Positions in the Private and the Public Sector (Gesetz für die gleichberechtigte Teilhabe von Frauen und Männern an Führungspositionen in der Privatwirtschaft und im öffentlichen Dienst, FÜPoG).” The Act has been amended (with FPoG II) which entered into force in 2021.

Switzerland

As part of the Federal Council's Open Government Data strategy 2019-2023 - aiming to gradually make public administration data freely available on the portal “opendata.swiss” - a roundtable on gender statistics is forthcoming. This roundtable intends to foster dialogue amongst the various sectors on the use of data and statistics in the public sphere in the field of gender equality. This will provide a platform to exchange on the use and analysis of existing data and possible improvements to suit the needs of all end users, leading to tailored measures by the Swiss government to meet this objective. This platform will also give the chance to the data and statistics producers to show and explain the limits and the reasons of making some data freely available. Source: (Government of Canada, 2018^[41]); (Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI), 2017^[42])

45. Moreover, transparency with respect to how public decisions are made is important, and thus public institutions can consider different practices towards this end. This includes encouraging and disclosing gender impact assessments and budgeting processes, as well as engaging stakeholders and affected groups at different stages of the policy cycle and reporting back to them. Doing so not only enhances access to information, but can also nurture trust, legitimacy, and a sense of reciprocity among citizens and community groups.

46. Public institutions can also strive to be open and transparent about gender equality within their own workforce. Institutions can track and publish information about the workforce composition of institutions across all branches of government from a gender perspective, including within leadership positions, and report on gender pay gaps. They can also report on their initiatives to improve employment and pay equity, and in doing so demonstrate to the private sector potential policies and initiatives to do the same (see Box 3.3).

Box 3.3. Measures for transparency in pay equity

Spain

In Spain, the Royal Decree 902/2020 of October 13, was approved in 2020 on the issue of equal remuneration between women and men. It regulates the obligation of equal remuneration for work of equal value and the principle and instruments of pay transparency, including the obligation for all companies to have remuneration records and, for those obliged to develop an equality plan, to also carry out a remuneration audit. It also introduces job evaluation systems and the right of workers to be informed. The Ministry of Labour and Social Economy and the Institute of Women, in agreement with Social Partners, have published a pay record tool for companies.

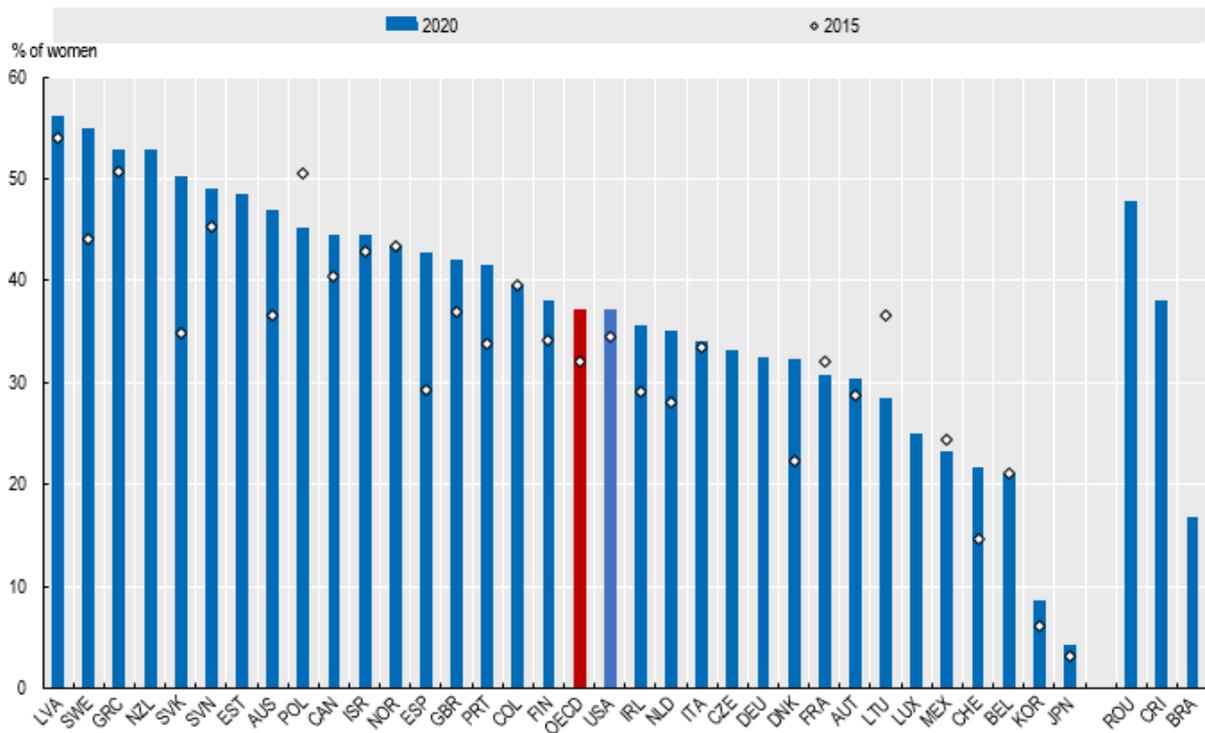
Switzerland

Switzerland has introduced an online equal pay analysis tool named Logib, available at www.logib.admin.ch. It allows all private and public employers to quickly obtain precise information about their pay practices with regard to gender and to check if they comply with the principle of equal pay for work of equal value. In addition to a company-level result indicating whether a gender is systematically disadvantaged and by how much. A cockpit allows to investigate the data in more detail from a gender perspective (e.g. average values of wage components - basic wage, allowances, bonuses - for women and men). According to Swiss Law, employers with 100 or more employees must analyse their equal pay practice, to have the analysis verified by an independent body and to inform their employees and shareholders about the results. Source: Information provided by the Government of Spain and the Government of Switzerland (2021)

3.1.3. Inclusion, Participation and Diversity to Support Gender Equality

47. As emphasised in the 2015 Recommendation, gender equality in public decision-making is critical for achieving inclusive growth at all levels of government ((OECD, 2016_[43]) Moreover, research demonstrates that improving gender representation in decision-making institutions and processes improves policy outcomes for those groups (Kahn, 2012_[44]). In consideration of this, it is important to have public sector workforces that reflect the diversity of the societies they serve, as this can help lead to more responsive actions. Countries are beginning to take heed of this, with New Zealand, for example, adopting the Public Service Act (2020), which recognises the principle that public service employees should reflect the makeup of society (Government of New Zealand, 2020_[45]). Figure 3.1 shows the gender equality in senior public administrations in OECD Member countries in 2015 and 2020.

Figure 3.1. Gender equality in senior management positions in central governments, 2015 and 2020



Source: (OECD, 2021^[46]), *Government at a Glance 2021*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/1c258f55-en>.

48. Facilitating representation and participation, however, is complex. This necessitates initiatives aimed at addressing deep-rooted stereotypes and related cultural expectations associated with gender roles, as well as harassment and gender-based value systems that undervalue or malign care work. Thus, organisational values could be re-examined to ensure these are gender-sensitive and efforts could be taken to enhance the uptake of such values through training and awareness. Furthermore, it is important to note the difference between participation and representation, as there is a need to go beyond token representation through numbers and instead aim for equal participation in decision-making and public service delivery. On the one hand, this could consist of the design of participatory systems that ensure everyone has equal access to participate, and harassment-free and inclusive workplaces in public institutions.

49. On the other hand, it could involve upholding the values of inclusiveness, participation, gender equality and diversity in delivering public services. In addition, gender mainstreaming in policy-making can help uphold these values. In the absence of the integration of a gender lens in such processes, the policies developed to improve women's participation can pose a risk to the broader gender equality agenda. For example, work-life balance policies developed without integrating a gender lens could lead to the overrepresentation of women in part-time work, or target flexible working as a means only for working mothers instead of working parents.

50. In so doing, it cannot be forgotten that gender inequality also concerns men. On the one hand, governments can use various policy levers to challenge and change masculinity norms. On the other hand, they can engage men and boys in efforts to achieve gender equality. Cultural norms and stereotypes also create pressure and subsequent problems for men and boys, such as underdiagnosed mental health problems, poor school performance, addiction, disconnection from family and community, and use of

violence as a masculinity norm. Cultural norms and gender stereotypes simultaneously inform and get reproduced by structural and systemic barriers that discourage men from participating in care work, both paid and unpaid. Addressing these barriers is thus important for achieving gender equality. For example, research demonstrates that non-transferrable paternity leave policies not only result in more fathers and other parents taking leave, but also result in a more equitable distribution of care work beyond the leave period⁷. Thus, work-life balance policies that encourage men and other parents to participate equitably in care work can effectively challenge norms and stereotypes and reduce systemic barriers that reproduce and reinforce gender inequality. Moreover, changing work norms (e.g., remote working and the use of digital technologies) since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, with a gender perspective, provide an opportunity to leverage these changes to promote the equal share of care work at home between women and men.

51. Inclusiveness also warrants a discussion on the various intersecting and overlapping identities and backgrounds, including factors like geography, maternity, family status, ability, ethnicity, etc. These create unique contexts and lived realities which in turn influence the impact and experience of policies on people belonging to these intersectional identities and backgrounds. For example, barriers in the workplace would look different for women with a disability. Thus, when facilitating representation and participation, it is encouraged that governments take into account the intersectional nature of people's identities, noting the differences in the needs, concerns, challenges, and lived experiences.

3.1.4. Accountability and Respect for the Rule of Law

52. Accountability refers to the government's responsibility and duty to inform its citizens about the decisions it makes as well as to provide an account of the activities and performance of the entire government and its public officials. This includes several lines of accountability, including but not restricted to, governmental accountability towards the elected representatives of citizens, and towards the citizens themselves.

53. Gender equality objectives have a greater chance of being achieved if they are supported by robust accountability mechanisms across the government. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Norwegian Directorate for Children and Family Affairs was commissioned to follow, compile and regularly report on the equality consequences of the pandemic, including on the basis of gender, which could serve as a basis for upholding the accountability of the government for the emergency responses undertaken (OECD, 2021^[9]). Sound accountability and oversight begins with articulating a clear vision of gender equality, and is premised on the consultation and deliberation with key stakeholders and citizens' groups, ensuring gender-related expertise of oversight bodies and establishing clear roles, responsibilities, and lines of accountability of key governmental and oversight bodies. Accountability systems that involve reporting to the highest levels of government increase the likelihood that gender equality and mainstreaming strategies will be successful and sustainable. For example, supplementary mandate letters issued by the Prime Minister of Canada to the ministers outline the objectives that each minister will work to accomplish, thereby serving as a basis for accountability for the ministers (Government of Canada, n.d.^[47]). In addition, the Canada Gender Budgeting Act (2018) requires that all tax and expenditure programs be assessed in terms of their impacts on gender and diversity. Public sector accountability and performance frameworks that promote gender-sensitive decision-making and service design and delivery can be effective tools that help articulate this vision, and can nurture inclusive workplaces with respect to both representation and practices.

⁷ See, for example, (Patnaik, 2014^[105]) Patnaik, A. (2017). Reserving time for daddy: The consequences of fathers' quotas (December 17, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2475970>

54. Independent oversight institutions, such as independent commissions, supreme audit institutions (SAIs), Ombuds' offices, National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs)⁸, as well as the legislatures and judiciaries all strongly contribute to the advancement of gender equality. Such institutions can play both a pre-emptive and remedial role. Independent oversight institutions and advisory bodies, in particular, provide neutral, objective assessments and evaluations on policy formulation, implementation, evaluation and outcomes. Parliaments and parliamentary committees, for example, are the gatekeepers of gender equality agendas, reviewing drafts and existing legislation and monitoring the activities of government through reviews and inquiries on programmes, policies, expenditures and appointments. Expanding the mandate of these committees to review all legislation, beyond that which relates to gender equality or women's issues, as well as tasking all committees with adopting a gender lens to their respective policy areas can deepen gender equality commitments and strengthen accountability mechanisms. In addition to expanding the scope of their mandate, it is important to provide them with the necessary resources and capacities to fulfil these tasks.

55. In addition, such institutions can play a remedial role in evaluating results and protecting equality rights. For example, available evidence shows that SAIs can provide an important boost for the advancement of gender equality objectives by governments, by offering an independent assessment of gender equality initiatives and making recommendations. This is illustrated in the case of Canada and Sweden, where audits by SAIs have helped remove barriers to gender mainstreaming by reforming its structures to maximise performance and results (OECD, 2019_[15]). Additionally, the European Union published a report of the European Court of Auditors on gender mainstreaming in the EU Budget (European Court of Auditors, 2021_[48]). These institutions can also strengthen the evidence base and systematically measure progress towards gender equality performance, based on gender impact indicators and measurable outcomes, thereby enhancing and strengthening accountability with respect to gender equality.

56. The rule of law is a core element of accountability. It has been pivotal in the promotion of gender equality in both international and domestic contexts, offering a venue for equality seeking groups and a mechanism with which civil society and the judiciary can hold governments to account. Ensuring equal access to justice is an important component of rule of law. Indeed, SDG 16.3 calls on countries to “promote the rule of law at the national and international levels, and ensure equal access to justice for all”, implicating both formal and substantive equality. Formal equality entails that all citizens are equal under the law, whereas substantive equality ensures that no individual or group obtains special treatment under the law by virtue of origin or background, socio-economic circumstances or links to society's power structures. Substantive equality enables governments to remedy systemic barriers that limit the opportunities and outcomes of various groups.

57. To achieve equal access to justice, governments can seek to identify and address both the barriers that prevent particular groups from the full benefits of citizenship and the unique legal needs of women and girls. This may consist of equal representation within the judiciary and addressing pay gaps therein, as outlined in the OECD report *Fast Forward to Gender Equality* (2019). Gender-sensitive processes that are needs-based and community-centred are also important. Country reporting in the 2017 OECD Survey on *Gender-sensitive Practices in the Judiciary* highlights that to date, measures adopted by OECD Members – where it exists – have primarily included encouraging the application of a gender perspective in the analysis of cases and in judgements, integrating gender issues in courts arrangements, and correcting systems and inappropriate practices where gender-based discrimination is embedded. Other initiatives, such as the identification of gender bias in laws and judicial practices' use of gender-sensitive language in courts and promotion of people-centred, gender-sensitive justice pathways have received less attention to date. To address this, governments can collect gender-disaggregated data that assesses and measures issues such as awareness of rights and legal literacy; access to legal advice and representation;

⁸ More information on these institutions can be found here: <http://ennhri.org/>

equal access to justice institutions; procedural barriers such as cost and perceived fairness; trust; and attrition rates. In addition, specialised training, supplemented by gender knowledge assessments, for lawyers and judges that addresses implicit bias, exposes systemic barriers, and illuminates the unique experiences of particular justice seeking groups can help facilitate more inclusive justice processes. Finally, gender-sensitive codes of conduct for members of the judiciary can serve as a reminder that a one-size-fits-all approach to justice is neither appropriate nor effective.

Box 3.4. Performance Evaluation in Austria

Austria has put in place a performance management process including ex-ante strategic planning and ex-post internal evaluation processes. This ensures that all ministries and supreme organs (e.g., the constitutional court, the court of audit) define at least one and maximum five medium-term gender-related outcome objectives with at least one and maximum five indicators on the budget section level as well as at least one and maximum five measures on the global budget level in order to ensure pursuing the goals set. These, along with planned measures, are in turn translated into a performance mandate, which determines the actions taken in relation to gender equality by the ministries and supreme organs. Results of self-evaluations and monitoring processes of the policies are ultimately compiled in a standardized ‘gender’ report and submitted to Parliament and the public.

Source: Information provided by the Government of Austria in July 2021.

Box 3.5. Proposed Policy Actions

In order to support building a value-driven public governance system, which is able to remove explicit or implicit gender-based biases, government leaders, civil service managers and relevant stakeholders across the government may consider:

- Establishing value statements/guidelines and codes of conduct for the public service, which explicitly considers gender equality dimensions to accelerate progress and raise further awareness among civil servants.
- Putting in place organizational practices that reflect gender-sensitive values and provide a permanent management of awareness, training, critical reflection sessions on these issues.

Public Integrity

- Integrating gender equality dimensions in designing and implementing the public integrity agenda (e.g., in the area of whistle-blower protection), and continuing to deepen evidence, based on gender-disaggregated data, on how corruption impacts men and women differently.

Openness and Transparency

- Promoting and facilitating the design and delivery of open government policies and initiatives in a gender-sensitive manner to maximise the impacts of such initiatives for the society. Gender dimensions can be considered, for example, when ensuring equal and fair opportunities for stakeholders to be informed, consulted, and actively engaged in the policy cycle and service design and delivery; collecting data; and engaging stakeholders in co-creation of solutions.
- Ensuring transparency about how gender is accounted for in decision-making, which may consist of disclosing gender impact assessments and budgeting processes, as appropriate, and reporting back to stakeholders and affected populations who were engaged at different stages of the policy cycle.

Inclusiveness and Participation

- Taking appropriate measures to make the composition of senior management more gender-balanced and reflective of the population, in the line with the 2015 Recommendation.
- Committing to building institutions where there is equal participation in decision-making and public service delivery is the norm, including by enacting internal policies that support harassment-free and inclusive workplaces and promote work-life balance.

Accountability

- Requiring reporting to the centre of government on the implementation of gender equality objectives, including those identified in gender equality strategies as well as other whole-of-government policy or sectoral strategies. Such requirements can send signals from the leadership to the public administration on the importance of the agenda and help create the necessary momentum for its advancement.
- Establishing or assigning gender equality responsibilities to established independent oversight institutions and advisory bodies to help monitor and enforce gender-sensitive processes and outcomes.
- Integrating gender aspects as part of the core processes of accountability and oversight institutions, such as auditing of governments' gender mainstreaming processes by SAIs and reporting on progress of gender equality initiatives to the parliament.

Respect for the Rule of Law

- Improving access to justice by ensuring policy makers and service providers in the justice system understand the differential legal needs and justice pathways of women and men, and girls and boys; by encouraging equal representation within justice institutions; and by adopting gender-sensitive and people-centred approaches to justice processes and decision-making.

4. Enablers**4.1. Overview**

58. As noted in the OECD Policy Framework on Sound Public Governance, public policy challenges have become more complex and multidimensional due in part to increasing interdependence and interconnection across nations. It is important to note that from a gender perspective, these challenges

are experienced differentially. Indeed, the effects of climate change, migration, economic precariousness and uncertainty, and adverse socio-economic impacts of crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic are disproportionately experienced by women, most often racialised and/or poor women, and women living with disabilities⁹. Thus, as governments grapple with these challenges, it is important to do so with gender equality in mind. In the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, now more than ever, governments can reflect on public governance in order to uphold gender equality during the recovery. Going forward, there is scope to ensure the resilience of gender equality machineries across countries and work towards resilience in the face of future shocks. Importantly, a dual approach to gender mainstreaming combining gender equality targeted measures and gender-sensitive decision-making, which engages the whole of government, including all policy sectors and branches of government, can help to foster gender-sensitive public governance. Moreover, governments can look to monitor and report on progress made using gender equality indicators.

4.1.1. Commitment, Vision and Leadership

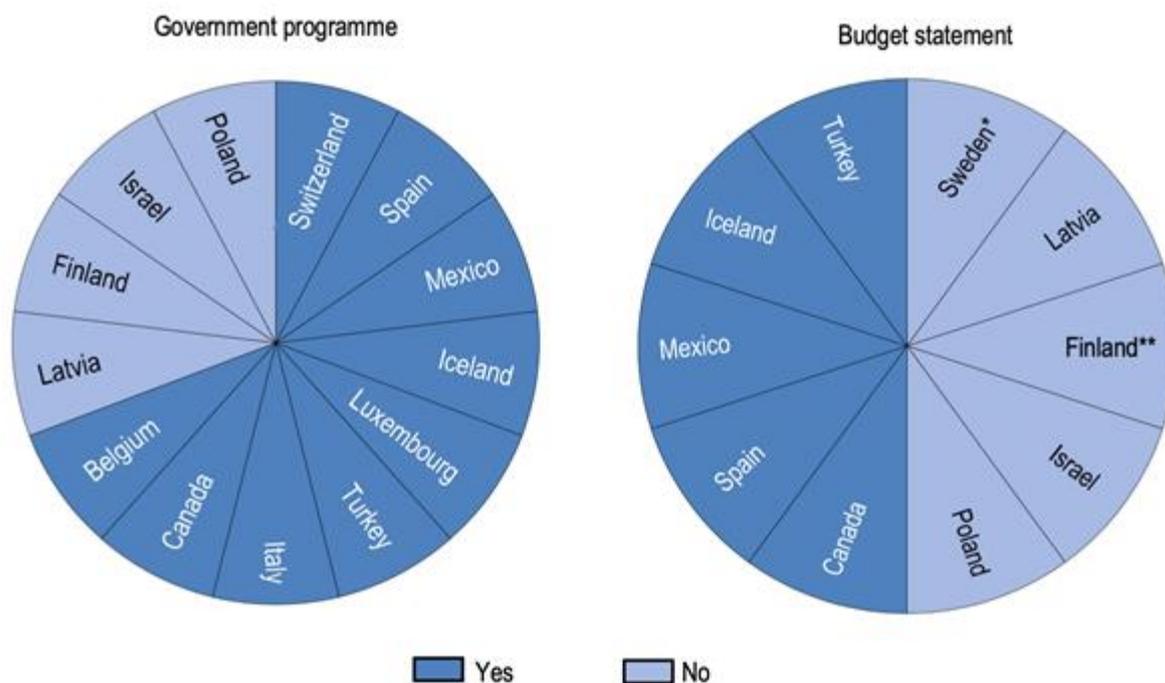
59. Commitment, vision and leadership are key elements for the achievement of gender equality objectives and goals. In particular, political commitment at the highest levels of government is crucial because it signals to the rest of government that gender equality is a priority. In return, this can put positive pressure on line ministries to demonstrate better results on gender equality, which makes them more likely to take gender-sensitive approaches to governance more seriously. Without high-level commitment, it becomes difficult to generate buy-in across the administration, and broad buy-in is essential for effective implementation, given the crosscutting nature of gender inequalities.

60. An important way that governmental leaders (i.e., heads of governments, ministers, senior civil servants) can demonstrate commitment to and leadership on gender equality is by incorporating a medium- to long-term whole-of-government vision for gender equality into broader government programs and priorities or national development objectives. Figure 4.1 shows OECD Member countries which have reported a requirement to promote gender equality in government programme and budgets as of 2017. The vision, developed in partnership with stakeholders and citizens' groups, can also be incorporated into the public service, elected bodies, and the judiciary as well as supported by industry partners, include clearly defined goals, objectives and performance indicators; and be accompanied by clear roles and responsibilities and adequate resource allocations. This not only conveys a national aspiration for a gender-equal society but can also set expectations for policymakers and provide a benchmark for measuring progress. Government leaders can also help secure political commitment for gender equality, and promote monitoring and follow-up mechanisms to ensure that gender objectives are upheld across the government. During crisis and recovery, leadership that is gender-balanced and driven by the goal of equality can help ensure that gender considerations are not side-lined. In addition, governments can actively seek to recruit and promote leaders with gender equality goals in mind.

⁹ See, for example, UN Climate Change (nd), *Introduction to Gender and Climate Change*, <https://unfccc.int/gender>, accessed January 8th, 2020; UN Migration (nd), *Gender and Migration*, <https://www.iom.int/gender-and-migration>, accessed January 8th, 2020; UNAIDS (2012), *Impact of the Global Economic Crisis on Women, Girls, and Gender Equality*, https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/JC2368_impact-economic-crisis-women_en_0.pdf

Figure 4.1. High-level commitment to gender equality

Requirements to promote gender equality in government programmes and budgets



Note: In Sweden, while the budget statement does not provide references to gender equality, there is a requirement that the Budget Bill as a whole must be gender mainstreamed, as stated in the government decision on Gender Mainstreaming in the Government Offices. The Finnish Ministry of Finance's regulation on drawing up budget proposals stipulates that ministries' budget proposals must include a summary of those activities within each administrative branch that have a significant gender impact. The budget proposal can also define concrete objectives and measures in order to promote gender equality. The Gender Equality Unit collects the summaries yearly and gives feedback to the ministries.

Source: (OECD, 2019_[15]); 2017 OECD Survey on National Gender Equality Frameworks and Public Policies

4.1.2. Equitable and Evidence-informed Policy-making

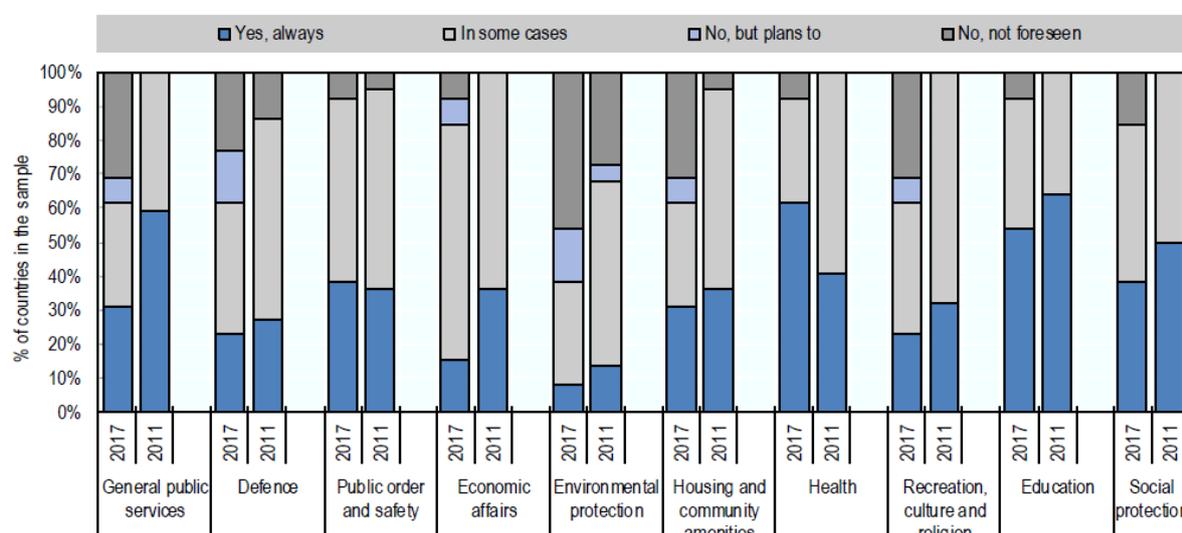
61. The COVID-19 pandemic has underlined the importance of having quality evidence to inform policy-making, particularly in the face of volatile, multidimensional, and complex policy challenges. Policy-making and decision-making processes informed by quality evidence and data can result in more effective public interventions, and trust in public institutions and science (OECD, 2017_[49]). A sound knowledge base and analysis, including both quantitative and qualitative data, of where the country stands in terms of gender equality are crucial for defining gender equality objectives, designing a strategic plan, setting policy priorities and sequencing, and measuring their potential impact. In parallel, it is equally important to understand the human and financial resources required to meet the identified gender equality needs. For example, mapping where these gaps lie in terms of data and evidence can provide insight on where these efforts need to be prioritised and reinforced. In general, having sound evidence across all policy areas that is disaggregated by gender can help ensure all policy-making, to the extent possible, reflects the different needs of and impacts on women and men. Accordingly, it is also important to watch out for potential gender bias in the available data sources and evidence utilised to inform policy-making.

62. To advance gender-sensitive policy outcomes, it is important to consider the differentiated needs, concerns and circumstances of all persons at all stages of the policy process and across all policy sectors. This can be facilitated by integrating evidence-based assessments of gender impacts and considerations

into various dimensions of public governance (e.g., public procurement, public consultation and service delivery management) and decision-making, and at early stages of all phases of the policy cycle (e.g., ex ante assessments of gender impacts). In addition, sound evidence and analysis can contribute to creating accountability mechanisms that oversee whether governments are meeting gender equality goals and objectives.

63. Overall, a data-driven public sector which recognises data governance as a fundamental asset for improved policy monitoring, forecasting and tailored service delivery can play a central role in evidence-informed policy-making. High-quality, easily accessible, objective and understandable evidence and data disaggregated by gender-related factors provide the foundation for this exercise. During data collection and data governance, important considerations are to be made regarding the ethicality, including factors such as transparency regarding the purpose of collection (also see Introduction). Data collected and tabulated separately for women and men, is a first step towards integrating a gender lens in the use of data. As seen in Figure 4.2, OECD research demonstrates that the collection of gender-disaggregated data is rare and sector-specific across Members (OECD, 2019_[15]). Indeed, one of the main challenges reported by OECD Member countries in the 2020 OECD Survey “Mapping good practices and challenges faced by the Institutions in tackling the effects of COVID-19” in ensuring integration of a gender lens in emergency responses to COVID-19 was the lack of such data (OECD, 2021_[9]). Gender-disaggregated data and information needs to be available for policy makers to be able to assess the situation and develop appropriate, evidence-based responses and policies, especially during crises. Such data can be collected and analysed within the policy-making process, ideally covering several years to track changes and take corrective action. Without such data, it is difficult to understand the impact of gender equality and mainstreaming strategies and initiatives or the consequences of policies. It would be important for data on gender equality and mainstreaming in a country to be easily accessible and allow results to be tracked against national and international targets and benchmarks.

Figure 4.2. Collection of gender-disaggregated data across sectors, 2011 vs. 2017



Source: (OECD, 2019_[15]); 2017 OECD Survey on National Gender Equality Frameworks and Public Policies

64. In establishing a sound knowledge base, involving a wide range of governmental and non-governmental stakeholders can help ensure it is comprehensive and reflects expertise and insights from different policy areas and actors. Academia and civil society organisations, including non-governmental

organisations (NGOs) and women’s groups, can serve as allies in gathering information about the potential or actual impact of government policies, and can be consulted regularly. Surveys, interviews, reviews, opinion polls and benchmarking are also effective methods for obtaining and analysing data on gender equality policies, as well as desk reviews, household interviews, and focus group discussions. Building public servants’ awareness and expertise through information campaigns and training is also important.

65. In establishing and strengthening the knowledge base, there is a significant role for national statistics or data bureaus, as well as knowledge centres or centres of excellence that help bring together data and research disaggregated by gender to the extent possible from diverse sources, including government reports, grey literature, and academic work.

4.1.3. Whole-of-government Co-ordination

66. As defined by the Australian Public Service (APS), a whole-of-government approach “denotes public service agencies working across portfolio boundaries to achieve a shared goal and an integrated government response to science (OECD, 2017_[49]). Coordinated whole-of-government approaches have become particularly pertinent over the past two decades due to the increase in crosscutting, multi-dimensional policy challenges as well as the exponential growth in the number and size of agencies and autonomous bodies. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of strengthening whole-of-government coordination to tackle complex emergencies given the time-sensitive and overarching nature of crises. According to an OECD survey of Centre of Governments (CoGs), for example, 59% of countries surveyed reported an increase in the number of cross-ministerial policy initiatives since 2008, before the full effects of the 2008 financial crisis were felt (OECD, 2014_[50]).

67. Whole-of-government coordination is necessary for achieving gender equality objectives because gender equality itself is a complex and crosscutting public governance issue. Gender inequality is a structural inequality – it is embedded across governance systems, public policies and social and economic life. In effect, all public issues are issues that concern gender equality. Gender mainstreaming strategies can help to identify the differential impacts of policies across the whole of government and engage all departments and agencies in addressing change. In addition, no single institution has sufficient capacity and agency to address it alone; a range of institutions working in silos cannot effectively eliminate gender gaps and discriminations. As such, gender equality strategies and policies benefit from institutional frameworks “establishing clear roles, responsibilities, mandates and lines of accountability of key governmental and oversight bodies” (OECD, 2016_[43]). Without clear roles and responsibilities backed up by accountability mechanisms, gender equality simultaneously becomes everyone’s problem and no one’s problem. Robust “vertical and horizontal co-ordination mechanisms for policy coherence across governmental bodies and levels of government that involve relevant non-governmental stakeholders” can therefore support effective implementation (OECD, 2016_[43]). Additionally, developing standard methodologies to be applicable across all government sectors, can facilitate the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in government actions and processes.

68. Accordingly, to ensure whole-of-government lives up to its name, it needs to meaningfully involve the full range of public institutions, notably centres of governments, including finance departments, central gender equality institutions¹⁰, and all line departments, including those concerned with issues not traditionally associated with gender, such as transportation, planning, economic development, industry and innovation, and environment. Engaging CoGs may signal the importance of

¹⁰ These institutions are often tasked with creating social change and utilising a gender lens when conducting research and drafting policies. There is no single blueprint for the design of these institutions. Arrangements across the OECD include having a full ministry dedicated to gender equality, having a gender equality unit within ministries responsible for social policy, having a gender equality unit with the centre of government, or having an independent agency or commission.

gender equality as a national goal and policy practice, enhancing accountability and facilitating buy-in. Moreover, central gender equality institutions – bodies primarily responsible for supporting the government’s agenda to advance society-wide gender equality goals – have an important role in facilitating the incorporation of gender considerations into public policies, programmes and budgets. They also have a key role in ensuring policy coherence with respect to gender equality policy across the whole of government. Central gender equality institutions can also provide support to the rest of the government by providing gender expertise and advice, including through the development of guidelines, tools and trainings. As for policies specifically targeting gender equality, they can undertake a management role and facilitate coordination across the government. Analysis by the OECD also highlights the crucial role played by the central gender equality institutions in bringing a gender perspective to the decision-making table in the immediate aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic (OECD, 2021^[9]).

Box 4.1. Advancing gender equality from the centre

Iceland

In Iceland, the policy area of gender equality has been moved under the auspices of the Prime Minister’s Office in January 2019, following a parliamentary resolution. The Directorate of Equality is a special institution under the Prime Minister’s Office, in-charge of monitoring the implementation of various equality legislation, including the Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender (no. 150/2020). This move to the centre of the government has reportedly improved coordination across ministries in the area of gender equality.

New Zealand

Centralised oversight of pay equity within the state sector is a key feature of the Government’s approach, with a Taskforce established in the Public Service Commission, which is one of the three central agencies in New Zealand. Similarly a centralised approach (a joint venture with a board of Chief Executives, with the Public Service Commissioner as the chair of the board), has been used to combat family and sexual violence.

United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom, the Government Equalities Office (GEO) is located in the Cabinet office. This has aimed to facilitate sharing of key equalities information with central decision-making while also encouraging government departments to seek out their expertise. The GEO works across the government improving equality and reducing discrimination and disadvantage for all in the UK with regards to national and international commitments. GEO works closely with other government departments to deliver its priorities, maintain the equalities framework, and promote equality. It also works with a range of stakeholders external to government, including businesses, third sector organisations, and academics.

United States

In the United States, following an executive order by the President in March 2021, the White House Gender Policy Council was established within the Executive Office of the President. The Council is tasked with the coordination of policies and programmes of the federal government on gender equity and equality. It is also in-charge of coordinating this agenda across the whole-of-government in order to ensure that the work of all federal agencies advances gender equality and equity.

Source: (OECD, 2019^[15]; Directorate of Equality Iceland, n.d.^[51]; OECD, 2018^[52]; Government of United Kingdom, n.d.^[53]); Information provided by the Government of United Kingdom provided on the occasion of the Meeting of Working Party on Gender Mainstreaming and Governance in April 2020.

Box 4.2. Country examples of coordination mechanisms

Austria

Since 2000, the Inter-Ministerial Working Group on Gender Mainstreaming/Gender Budgeting (IMAG GMB) supports and facilitates the implementation of gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting in all federal ministries and at all political levels. Chaired by the Ministry of Women's Affairs and composed of ministry experts in gender mainstreaming, the group is tasked to exchange information on initiatives and experiences, engage with federal provinces and municipalities and offer evaluation support in ongoing projects and measures. Currently, the gender-specific impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are the main focus of IMAG GMB. An overview of its activities and best practices is publicly available on its website.

Switzerland

On 28 April 2021 the Swiss Government adopted its first national strategy specifically aimed at achieving gender equality. This 2030 Gender Equality Strategy focuses on four central topics: I) promoting equality in the workplace, II) improving work-life balance, III) preventing violence against women and domestic violence, IV) fighting discrimination. The key measures of the strategy will be fleshed out by the end of 2021 and are expected to be adopted or implemented by 2023. The Federal Office for Gender Equality (FOGE) is responsible for monitoring the strategy. It is leading an interdepartmental committee to ensure that the strategy is fully implemented in the federal administration, with representation from all the offices that are primarily concerned. Representation is planned at the decision-making level. The main objective of the committee is to lead and coordinate the implementation work. It meets at regular intervals, usually twice a year.

Germany

In July 2020, the German Federal Government adopted an interdepartmental gender equality strategy. This strategy identifies, collects, promotes and coordinates the contributions of the ministries to gender equality and bundles them into an overall strategy of the federal government. The strategy describes the initial situation in various fields relevant to gender equality and underpins it with key figures. Gender equality policy objectives are derived from the initial situation. 67 concrete measures show how the federal government intends to achieve these goals within the scope of its federal responsibilities. In August 2021, the implementation status of the individual measures was surveyed for the first time. The strategy is to be updated and further developed.

Source: Information provided by the Government of Austria and the Government of Switzerland; (Government of Switzerland, 2021^[54]; Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, 2020^[55])

4.1.4. Innovation and Change Management

69. Innovation and change bring both challenges and opportunities with respect to gender equality. Throughout the world, governments are being asked to do more with less, and technological changes are

changing the way we work and interact. Furthermore, crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic have demonstrated the importance of being able to respond to unexpected challenges and to do so quickly. Public sector innovation is thus an essential component of sound public governance. The Policy Framework on Sound Public Governance notes that “Public-sector innovation is about introducing and implementing new ideas whose impact help promote and improve sound public governance by reinforcing the strategic agility and forward-looking nature of the state. It is about how to introduce, and how to respond to, discontinuous change while promoting citizen-centred approaches in the design and implementation of public services” (OECD, 2019^[56]).

70. Although much is still being learned about how best to create the conditions for innovation, and the skills, capabilities, tools and resources needed to undertake it successfully, there is a role for the central government to create the conditions for it to emerge. As the Policy Framework on Sound Public Governance notes, research has found that “the main innovation enablers in government are linked to factors related to how people are managed, whether internal regulations work, the role of budgets in creating space for innovation, how project management practices can be designed to deal with risks, and how to create safe spaces to experiment (innovation labs and units)” (OECD, 2019^[56]).

71. All of these dimensions implicate gender equality. Beyond awareness raising on the gender gaps, there is scope for policymakers to adopt a gender-sensitive approach to innovation and change management strategies. For example, the beta-skills model for public sector innovation, developed by the OECD, is premised in six “core” skills that enable innovation, including iteration, data literacy, user-centricity, curiosity, storytelling, and insurgency, and can be refined by integrating gender considerations into these skills where relevant. To make innovation gender-sensitive, data literacy would have to entail skills regarding collection and utilisation of gender-disaggregated data (including sector-specific data) to drive innovative policy-making. Similarly, the skill of user-centricity, or a focus on user needs, could integrate an intersectional needs analysis of the different needs of all persons.

72. Additionally, the OECD has proposed the innovation lifecycle, consisting of five stages, as a means for governments (and other organisations) to consider their innovation process, their strengths and weaknesses, what they need innovation for, and how they are supporting it (OECD, 2020^[57]). Governments can also consider the inclusion of gender-sensitive measures in innovation processes and outcomes through the innovation lifecycle proposed by the OECD. This can be done, for example, through the proactive inclusion of gender-sensitive measures across these stages (e.g., consulting women during the “identifying problems” stage, evaluating gender-specific impacts at the “evaluating projects” stage, and so on). The OECD also encourages the use of the portfolio approach to innovation, noting the high risks and considerations associated with innovation. In this regard, while deciding the portfolio of innovations, governments can take into account the criteria of gender equality to determine the choice of the projects to carry forward (e.g., those that are enhancing gender-sensitive public action) and in ways gender considerations come into play (e.g., assessment of a balanced portfolio based on gender as a criteria).

73. Moreover, a gender-balanced, diverse and equitable public sector workforce can support the harnessing of innovation. Such a workforce not only serves to generate a diversity of ideas but can also change the ways in which individuals participate in the workplace. It can therefore work towards ensuring that everyone feels safe to seek out, explore, and express new ways of doing things. On the other hand, introducing measures to promote the gender-balanced participation throughout the innovation cycle, and providing spaces for addressing the diversity of women's voices especially during the initial stages of innovation and experimentation (e.g., as test users of a new service), can go help enhance the gender-sensitivity of public sector innovation.

74. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the ability of governments to respond and innovate quickly to ensure continued assistance, service delivery, and access to justice to women. For example, to address concerns over increased rates of gender-based violence during the pandemic, and the

insufficiency of existing systems (e.g., helplines) to detect and respond to them, several countries set up new reporting mechanisms, allowing survivors/victims to alert authorities through SMS, WhatsApp and pharmacies (OECD, 2021^[9]). As countries strive to recover from the pandemic, there is an opportunity to build on this spirit of innovation in the area of gender equality policy-making.

75. With respect to change management, a key challenge for governments is to sustain legitimacy while enhancing support for reforms despite political and policy roadblocks or bottlenecks. Effective change management aims to keep the momentum for reform going, while overcoming opposition to change, whether internal or from the public. In the public sector, this is especially difficult as simultaneous change processes often occur at once. The OECD report “Making Reform Happen” suggests that success in change management often depends on the existence of an electoral mandate, effective communication, sound institutions and leadership, prioritisation and sequencing of reforms, and how effectively reform agents interact with opponents to the reforms being pursued (OECD, 2010^[58]). Importantly, integrating men and women from diverse backgrounds and civil society groups into this process can help identify necessary changes, and establish and maintain buy in and trust in both processes and outcomes. Highlighting innovative actions undertaken by agencies and departments could be useful to foster a culture of innovation and encourage change in the public sector by providing acknowledgement to such efforts and serving as examples of good practices.

Box 4.3. Proposed Policy Actions

To support building an enabling environment for gender-sensitive public governance, government leaders, civil service managers and relevant stakeholders across the government may consider:

Commitment, Vision and Leadership

- Demonstrating a political and financial commitment, corresponding to clear goals, for gender equality. In line with the 2015 Recommendation, this can entail promoting a whole-of-government vision for gender equality and incorporating gender equality as a key commitment in government programmes and/or national development strategies.

Equitable and Evidence-informed Policy-making

- Developing measurable outcomes, benchmarks and indicators that are designed from a gender-sensitive perspective and that are systematically monitored and reported on.
- Creating an accessible sound gender-sensitive knowledge base that includes both quantitative and qualitative data, which is disaggregated by gender and corrected for gender biases, and input from civil society groups.
- Strengthening the capacity of national data centres and establish, where appropriate, centres of excellence or knowledge centres to provide an evidence base for gender-sensitive policy-making.

Whole-of-Government Co-ordination

- Engaging all government departments and agencies across all levels in the development and implementation of gender equality objectives, with clearly articulated goals, roles, responsibilities, and expectations, and use of standard methodologies; and ensuring all of them have sufficient capacities and resources for gender mainstreaming.

Innovation and Change Management

- Promoting the skills-training of public service employees to integrate a gender perspective in carrying out their routine functions, including in relation to innovation and change management strategies.

5. Problem Identification, Policy Formulation and Design

5.1. Overview

76. Policy formulation and design are the processes in which problems are linked with not only potential solutions, but also to broader governing priorities and commitments. It thus requires policymakers to respond to identified problems, analyse solutions, identify and set goals and objectives, and choose appropriate instruments. Taking into account gender equality considerations during these processes is not just a matter of procedure, it also supports the realisation of gender-equal policy outcomes.

5.1.1. Problem Identification and Policy Design

77. Policy-making is often seen as public problem solving, involving choices between both values and tools. As problem solvers, then, it is important that policymakers have a firm grasp of the problem, its potential solutions and anticipated effects. As easy as this sounds, identifying problems and analysing and assigning solutions are complex and challenging tasks, necessitating an understanding of the various interests involved and potential implications and effects on all persons. How we identify problems is not gender-neutral. Indeed, the ways in which problems come to light, who gets to define them, whether or not they get onto the government's agenda, as well as the evidence we use to track, monitor, and evaluate problems and, subsequently, their solutions, and the language we use to discuss them, reflect (often implicit) biases.

78. For these reasons, integrating gender-disaggregated data and evidence as well as a gender perspective from the earliest stages of decision making (e.g., problem definition) can help ensure that such considerations are adequately reflected throughout the policy cycle. Consulting with stakeholders early and often, starting as soon as problems are identified, can be useful in this regard. In view of this, it is helpful to consider whether participatory or collaborative processes are inclusive, not just in terms of who participates, but also how. This means, for example, examining whether processes accommodate the particular needs of nursing parents or people living with disabilities, and taking care to schedule meetings at times that do not conflict with religious minorities' holidays or daily practices. It might also mean that participants are provided interpreters to effectively engage with policymakers, and providing policymakers with gender- and cultural-sensitivity training. Leveraging digital tools can also provide further opportunities to expand the scope of stakeholder engagement and promote their inclusiveness through digitally-enabled consultations. Participation from experts and citizens can refine how problems are understood and acted upon, thereby improving policy design and outcomes, and strengthening the legitimacy of and trust in public decision-making and institutions (see Box 5.1) for examples of good practices in stakeholder consultations.

Box 5.1. Good practices in stakeholder consultations for gender equality

Canada

In 2017, the Government of Canada launched It's Time: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence. The strategy builds on current federal initiatives, coordinates existing programs, and sets the foundation for greater action on GBV. Its initiatives are organized across three pillars: Preventing gender-based violence; Supporting survivors and their families; and, Promoting responsive legal and justice systems. Through roundtables, meetings, surveys and online submissions, individuals from various backgrounds shared their experiences and insights to inform the development of the GBV Strategy¹¹. In 2016, the Minister of Status of Women formed an Advisory Council to serve as a forum to exchange views, share promising practices, and discuss research related to gender-based violence. Members from a broad range of sectors were selected for the Advisory Council based on their expertise in violence prevention, supporting survivors and justice and other system responses, and in speaking to the barriers facing diverse groups.

Source : (OECD, 2018_[52]), (Government of Canada, 2017_[59]), (Government of Canada, 2018_[60]), 2018_[56], 2018_[56]).

Spain

In Spain, the Council for Women's Participation was established by Article 78 of the Constitutional Act 3/2007 of 22 March for effective equality between women and men. The Council is an advisory body made up of representatives from state-wide women's associations and organisations, central, regional and local government social partners and equality experts. Its role is to channel women's participation in public policy development in relation to the principle of equal treatment and opportunities for women and men. The Government of Spain consults with the Council during the development of the Equal Opportunities Strategic Plan. The Council sets up working groups which focus on different elements of the draft Plan and agree specific amendments aimed at its improvement. Royal Decree 1791/2009 of 20 November was passed to implement the Organic Law's provisions, regulating its functions, competencies and composition.

Source: Government of Spain 2018, (OECD, 2018_[52]).

5.1.2. Management Tools

79. In the policy formulation and design stage, management tools constitute a means to enhance public sector skills and capacity for policy design. They can serve as direct channels for policy implementation such as is the case of digital learning platforms. Some of the key management tools to improve the quality of policy design and therefore, to shape policy outcomes are (1) **strategic planning**, (2) **skills for developing policy**, (3) **digital capacities**. Ensuring that these tools are gender-sensitive will go a long way towards achieving inclusive policy outcomes.

a) Strategic planning

80. Strategic planning is an inherent aspect of functioning public governance (Bryson, 2018_[61]). It can help improve decision-making processes by focusing attention on the most crucial issues and

¹¹ See Canada's GBV Strategy here: <https://cfc-swc.gc.ca/violence/strategy-strategie/breaking-briser-en.html>

challenges. It can also underpin accountability around the achievement of strategic priorities. As strategic planning guides every step of the policy-making process, incorporating gender equality considerations is important. Strategic planning, complemented by strategic foresight tools, at the government, ministerial and programmatic levels can integrate gender equality objectives in both content and process. For example, countries could pursue this by recognising gender equality as a crosscutting issue in strategic planning for policy issues such as education, environment, or healthcare as well as by allocating roles and responsibilities for gender equality institutions in the implementation of the strategic goals.

81. In addition, governments can seek to address gender inequality more directly through well-designed strategic plans that aim to provide a policy umbrella under which gender mainstreaming and targeted initiatives meet to advance society-wide goals for gender equality (OECD, 2018_[52]). An effective strategy, complemented by strategic foresight tools, will incorporate realistic and measurable goals and targets and embed commitments to use policy instruments such as budgeting, regulations and procurement to achieve them. Ideally, the legal framework of a country will underpin a strategy, establishing mandates, requirements and affirmative actions in support of the gender equality goals.

82. The strategic planning process – for gender equality and more broadly in all policy areas – can be improved by taking into account potential behavioural pitfalls that may discourage or disrupt implementation. These may include, for example, underestimating the time or resources needed to accomplish a task. Overly ambitious targets may generate frustration among public servants, or an abundance of output indicators may redirect focus from getting results where they matter the most. This is especially problematic in sectors not often associated with gender equality, reinforcing the case for integrating gender equality into all strategic planning processes.

83. Moreover, countries can use strategic foresight methodologies to provide the basis for strategic planning. According to the OECD, “Strategic foresight is a systematic approach to looking beyond current expectations and taking into account a variety of plausible future developments in order to identify implications for policies today” (OECD, 2019_[62]). In this regard, strategic foresight can provide a useful framework for governments to anticipate better, innovate, and future-proof gender-sensitive policy-making, in order to shape an equitable future (OECD, 2020_[63]). On the other hand, governments can integrate gender considerations as a key criteria for strategic foresight and exploration, to ensure that the methodologies used are envisaging a longer-term perspective for a gender-equal future.

b) Skills for developing policy

84. With increasing complexity of both the contexts in which policies are made and the broader environment in which problems are identified, policy formulation and design skills are important. With persistent and, in some cases, rising inequality, gender expertise is particularly important. The Policy Framework on Sound Public Governance identifies three essential skill sets for civil servants:

- Defining policy problems;
- Designing solutions; and,
- Influencing the policy agenda.

85. Together, these skill sets require an ability to analyse both research and political contexts, and make recommendations accordingly. They implicate the creation of core competencies; a sound knowledge base; recruitment and training; and performance management systems.

86. Establishing core competencies related to gender equality can underpin institutions with the capacity to advance gender equality objectives. It also signals the importance of gender-sensitive analysis, enhancing its legitimacy and buy-in. As noted above, creating a sound knowledge base ideally consists of not only the collection of qualitative and quantitative data along gender lines but also consultative mechanisms that invite input from key stakeholders and citizens’ groups. This can help

ensure sound and inclusive decision-making and facilitate trust in public institutions, processes, and decisions.

87. Facilitating gender expertise within public institutions requires attention to recruitment and training systems. This entails not only ensuring substantive expertise in gender analysis, but also ensuring women of diverse backgrounds are represented in key decision-making and leadership positions. Moreover, countries could also consider including competence on gender issues as a requirement for recruitment or promotion of managers. Integrating gender expertise into performance management systems can signal its importance within the broader scope of public priorities, and support continued awareness and training.

c) Digital capacities

88. Digital tools have the potential to transform the way public institutions work to address gender inequality. Digital tools can contribute to more evidence-based policy-making, including gender mainstreaming, by increasing access to information and by providing more avenues for stakeholders to collaborate in the policy-making process. Governments can also leverage digital tools to deliver public services faster and more efficiently. The user-friendliness of these tools can be improved by including women in the development of these tools, taking efforts to understand gender biases or gender-based barriers as well as redesigning the tools when necessary, to help enhance service delivery, uptake, and accessibility. At the same time, however, OECD research demonstrates that many governments are ill-equipped to use digital technologies (OECD, 2018_[64]). As a result, there is a need to boost the digital capacities of the public sector workforce, in particular women employees, who tend to be at the risk of being excluded by the ongoing gender digital gap and affected by gender biases in digital technologies (Dyck, 2017_[65]), and policy-makers who play key roles in gender equality policy (e.g., gender experts and gender focal points).

89. While digital technology offers possibilities to improve gender-sensitive governance, it is important that governments account for the fact that digital technology is not gender-neutral. For example, the policies and procedures used to develop AI systems – that are increasingly relied upon to make decisions in the areas of social policy, immigration, and criminal justice systems – as well as the algorithm and data that such systems build upon often have built-in gender biases that further marginalise women and reinforce gender stereotypes (Tonry, 2019_[66]). Ensuring that no one is left behind, therefore, would require extensive analysis to identify and understand the implications of the digital transformation of the government on groups who are differentially positioned in society and securing their rights in online space, which could be reflected in the digital governance agenda (Human Rights Council, 2018_[67]). Overall, open algorithm and open data approaches are fundamental to overcoming biases which may be inherent in the conception of AI and machine learning systems, especially when these are built by male-dominated teams and trained on data reflecting societal gender and racialised biases as well as to prevent algorithmic discrimination. Given this, it is also important to consider how training of public sector employees can be used to identify and remedy potential biases and barriers in the digital government systems and in AI. Additionally, factors such as gender-specific differences in rates of digital proficiency, digital adoption, access to a personal device such as smart phones, can all impact the accessibility for and participation of women in digital government initiatives.

5.1.3. Policy Instruments

90. Policy instruments refer to the various tools governments have at their disposal to address public problems. They typically include interventions such as law, regulations, taxation, expenditure, exhortation, and organisational measures such as state-run monopolies, public-private partnerships, and arms-length or independent organisations. A key part of policy design, then, is connecting proposed solutions to effective instruments.

91. Research demonstrates, however, that policy instruments are not neutral in application or impact. For example, delivering social policy initiatives through the tax system has been shown to further marginalise people with low income, many of whom are racialised women or people with disabilities (Bakker, 2011^[68]).

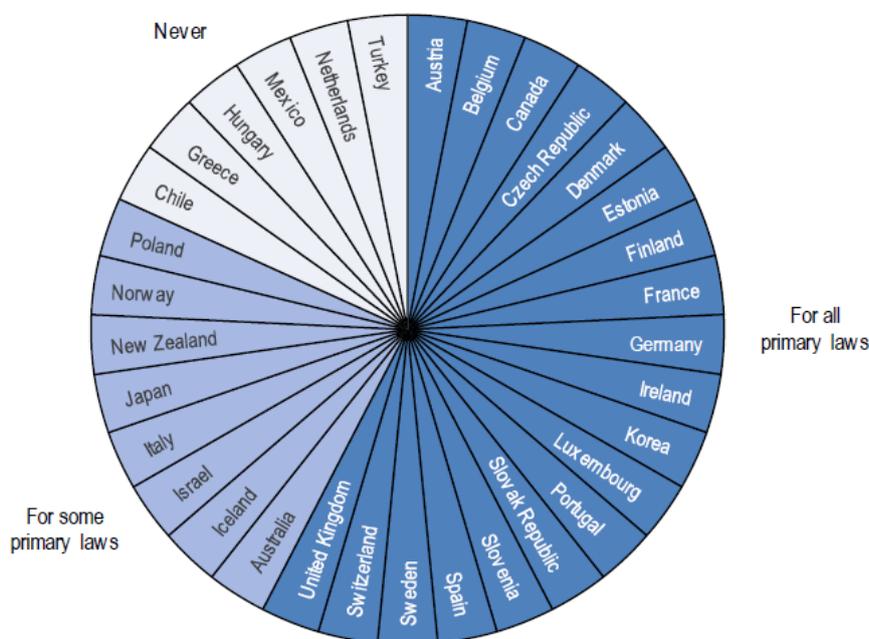
92. The 2015 Recommendation highlights the importance of integrating evidence-based assessments of gender impacts and considerations into various dimensions of public governance, including regulations, budgeting, public consultation and service delivery management. It also emphasises the importance of integrating these assessments and considerations at early stages of all phases of the policy cycle, e.g., by aligning ex-ante assessments of gender impacts with broader government-wide policy development processes, such as regulatory impact assessment.

a) Regulatory policy and governance

93. Regulatory practices may serve as an important tool for moving gender equality forward. As noted in the 2012 OECD Recommendation on Regulatory Policy and Governance [[OECD/LEGAL/0390](#)], “fair, transparent and clear regulatory frameworks serve as a *sine qua non* basic condition for dealing effectively with environmental and equality challenges in a society” and “well-designed regulations can generate significant social and economic benefits which outweigh the costs of regulation, and contribute to social well-being” (OECD/Korea Development Institute, 2017^[69]).

94. Regulation is a complex task that involves a cycle of activities. As noted in the OECD document on Inclusive Government, while different authors define the cycle in different ways, they all reflect some variation on the three main activities defined by the OECD: make – operate – review, which are elements in a continuous cycle that may function sequentially or concurrently (OECD, 2013^[70]). OECD data demonstrates that only one dimension of this cycle has been used relatively regularly to advance gender equality, namely, the application of Gender Impact Assessments (GIAs) to Regulatory Impact Assessments (RIAs), most often at the “make” or “review” stages of the regulatory cycle. Indeed, in 2017, 30 out of 35 Member countries assessed the gender impacts of regulations, up from 13 out of 35 in 2008 (OECD, 2019^[15]). Figure 5.1 shows the OECD Member countries which had a requirement to assess impacts on gender equality in the development of primary laws in 2017.

Figure 5.1. Requirements to assess the impacts on gender equality in developing primary laws, 2017



Source: (OECD, 2019^[15]); OECD (2017), OECD Indicators of Regulatory Policy and Governance Survey 2017, <http://oe.cd/ireg>

95. Going forward, GIAs, by moving beyond solely gender considerations, can be leveraged to encompass the full range of intersecting factors that impact the lives of women and men. Furthermore, as regulators often have to take into account a number of impacts, a strategic approach to ensuring proportionality between primary and complementary objectives can be useful in balancing the multiplicity of impacts while upholding gender equality and other strategic objectives (OECD, 2019^[15]). These efforts can be complemented with follow-up processes, such as introducing action plans, to correct these in the service design and delivery.

96. There are various aspects of the regulatory cycle that can be leveraged to greater advantage in the achievement of more substantive levels of gender equality. This can include, for example, decisions on where regulations are needed; ex ante and ex post evaluations of the impact of regulations, including the implementation and enforcement, on gender equality; stakeholder engagement; and ongoing monitoring and evaluations of regulatory practices. Previous work by the OECD has discussed how a gender lens can be applied to the regulatory reform principles, including in commitment to regulatory reform and identification of gender-specific regulatory barriers to economic activity, trade and investment (OECD, 2008^[71]).

97. As noted by the OECD, integrating a gender lens across all phases of the regulatory cycle can involve both legal mechanisms, such as making GIAs mandatory, and regulatory requirements, such as the use of diverse stakeholder consultations and inclusion during all parts of the regulatory cycle (OECD, 2019^[15]). Some examples of adopting a gender-sensitive approach to the broader regulatory cycle include consultation and inclusion of those impacted by regulation at all stages of the cycle, making gender equality considerations a key part of what is done (i.e., not just an add-on), and providing opportunities for participation. Gender equality can be enhanced when all regulatory practices include:

- Planning that incorporates gender equality considerations;
- Consultation with all impacted men and women at each stage in the regulatory cycle;
- GIAs as part of RIAs;
- Quality control practices that are equally supportive of men, women, boys and girls;
- The inclusion of gender equality as part of all monitoring and regulation fitness checks; and
- The incorporation of gender equality in evaluation across all parts of the regulatory cycle, beyond RIA.

98. In addition, it is important to build leadership for gender equality among regulatory authorities and oversight bodies, and to assist such entities to consider gender equality in all aspects of their work. In so doing, it could be useful to embed clear and easy-to-understand gender equality standards/goals in the approach to regulatory oversight, to evaluate regulatory practices to ensure they are supportive of gender equality, and to design and implement training programs to help staff understand the role and importance of applying gender equality to regulatory practices. It would also be helpful for these organisations to be committed to a gender-balanced representative workforce.

b) Budgetary governance

99. The Policy Framework on Sound Public Governance notes, “The budget reflects a government’s policy priorities and translates political commitments, goals and objectives into decisions on the financial resources allocated to pursue them, and on how these financial resources are to be generated. It enables the government to establish spending priorities related to the pursuit of its strategic objectives and to proceed with a sequencing of initiatives that takes into account the availability of financial resources as defined in the fiscal framework” (OECD, 2019_[56]). Furthermore, in the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the emerging need for fiscal support in the face of economic uncertainty has altered the traditional conduct of budget, underscoring the importance of good budgetary governance at all times (OECD, 2020_[72]).

100. At present, there is a vast and growing amount of evidence that demonstrates the potential of budgets to further equality objectives¹². The OECD defines gender budgeting as, “the systematic application of analytical tools and processes as a routine part of the budget process, in order to highlight gender equality issues and to inform, prioritise and resource gender-responsive policies” (OECD, 2019_[15]). Gender budgeting can consist of integrating a gender perspective into all aspects of the budgeting cycle, which may include using ex ante, concurrent, and ex post gender assessments.

101. Ex ante analysis can help identify gender-related needs in different policy areas, as well as the gender-specific impact of policies along gender dimensions. This allows policymakers to target resources more effectively to promote gender equality and ensure that policies do not negatively affect equality.

102. Concurrent gender assessments of the budgeting process can enhance transparency by informing citizens about how the government is using its budget to improve gender equality. Setting gender-related performance targets in different areas of spending also allows stakeholders to track the government’s progress in achieving its objectives. Applying an intersectional perspective to the allocation of resources over the course of the year can help ensure that gender equality is being promoted and implemented across all areas of government. During a crisis, budgeting that integrates a gender perspective can support

¹² See, for example, Elson, D. (2016), *Gender Budgeting and Macroeconomic Policy*, in *Feminist Economics and Public Policy*, J. Campbell and M. Gillespie (eds), Routledge, 27-37

the fiscal recovery process, including through gender budgeting of the economic stimulus packages or performance targets to drive the design of the recovery process (OECD, 2021^[9]). Box 5.2 highlights gender budgeting practices in Canada and Iceland in the emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Box 5.2. Gender budgeting in pandemic responses in Canada and Iceland

Canada

In Canada, the Gender Budgeting Act requires the Government to prepare a Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus) for all new and existing programs, including COVID-19 response measures. In line with this requirement, the Government published these assessments in its July 2020 Economic and Fiscal Snapshot. In addition, the Government used its Gender Results Framework to examine the impacts of COVID-19 on diverse groups, furthermore helping it to map its response measures based on how specific communities and priority groups have been impacted by the pandemic. For example, the Gender Results Framework includes a pillar on “poverty reduction, health and wellbeing”. Analysis found that in May 2020 women, youth and Indigenous peoples were more likely to report poorer mental health. The Government included direct support for virtual care and mental health tools, as well as funding for the Kids Help Phone in its response measures. The ongoing observed impacts on gender and diversity of COVID-19 programs will be reported in the annual Departmental Results Reports.

Iceland

In Iceland, gender budgeting has been embedded in the budget process since 2015. The response to the pandemic was the first time an overall gender impact assessment was a part of a budget bill. Gender impact assessments were undertaken in relation to key measures, including a wide-ranging investment programme. To undertake this analysis, line ministries were asked to estimate the number of jobs created and the gender ratio of these jobs in their project proposals. Where this information was incomplete, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs helped to estimate this information. The Government also made an effort to move beyond a discussion of the gender impact during the actual construction phase, to try and understand how infrastructure would be used and the corresponding impact it has on gender equality. The Government found that this makes for better and more equitable decisions on the choice of infrastructure projects to be undertaken.

Source: (OECD, 2021^[9]; Government of Canada, 2020^[73]); Information provided by the Governments of Canada and Iceland at the occasion of the Virtual Workshop on Gender Budgeting and the COVID-19. 10 July 2020.

103. During the ex post phase (after implementation), the government and its oversight institutions typically consider the extent to which the budget has achieved its intended outcomes, including those related to gender equality. Lessons from these assessments can feed into future budget decisions to improve the way the budget is used to achieve gender quality outcomes.

104. The OECD publication “Designing and Implementing Gender Budgeting: A Path to Action” (OECD, 2019^[74]) sets out the key elements that are important for an effective and enduring gender budgeting practice. These are:

- A strong **strategic framework**: Gender budgeting efforts are more likely to be effective when there is political commitment, strong leadership and clarity of the roles and responsibilities of different actors across government so that a whole-of-government approach is in place. This approach is also most effective where actions

are guided by a national gender equality strategy which outlines overarching gender goals.

- Effective **tools of implementation**: To successfully implement gender budgeting, countries would benefit from selecting an approach that builds on existing elements of their budgeting model. A more advanced approach to gender budgeting benefits from the incorporation of a gender perspective to all of the different stages of the budget process previously mentioned (including the ex ante, concurrent and the ex post phases).
- A supportive **enabling environment**: This includes systematic collection of gender-disaggregated data, training and capacity development for government staff, structured engagement with civil society and oversight by accountability institutions such as parliaments and SAIs.

Box 5.3. Country practices in gender budgeting

Colombia

In Colombia, the National Policy for Gender Equality (called CONPES 161) of 2013 and Article 221 of Law 1955 of 2019 called upon the Ministry of Finance and the National Planning Department (DNP) to develop a methodology which allows to track government resources targeting gender equality. To this end, in 2019, the Ministry of Finance and DNP created a “budget tracer for women’s equity” which detects resources allocated by all state entities to address gender inequality. Allocated resources are classified according to the following five categories: (i) Financial autonomy and access to assets; (ii) Political participation; (iii) Sexual and reproductive rights; (iv) Access to new technologies; and (v) Women free of violence.

Austria

In Austria, gender-informed budgeting has been a constitutional requirement for all levels of government since 2009. It was put into practice as a by-product of the introduction of a performance budgeting framework in 2013. This framework is codified in the budget law which requires that each chapter within the Annual Budget Statement includes at least one objective directly addressing gender equality. Objectives include for example higher female participation in the labour market or the reduction of the gender pay gap. These objectives, together with information given in the budget documents are used as a lever to foster gender equality as a general principle in the administration in line with the broader equality agenda. In terms of gender-informed budgeting tools, Austria’s use of tools includes ex ante and ex post gender impact assessments.

Source: (Government of Colombia, 2019^[75]; Government of Colombia, n.d.^[76]; OECD, n.d.^[77]); Information provided by the Government of Columbia (2021).

Box 5.4. Proposed Policy Actions

To support meaningful gender mainstreaming in the policy design and development, government leaders, civil service managers and relevant stakeholders (e.g., line ministries, senior budget officials, regulators) across the government may consider:

Problem Identification and Policy Design

- Integrating assessments of gender impacts early and often across all aspects of the policy cycle, including at the problem identification stage in order to meaningfully consider different policy options and trade-offs and influence policy decisions.
- Using consultative mechanisms that invite both gender equality experts and civil society organisations to participate early and often throughout the policy cycle. This can also support government transparency and openness, in line with proposed actions in Box 2.1.

Management Tools

- Developing a whole-of-government strategic plan on gender equality, as strategic plans could help policy makers address inequality more directly by providing a policy umbrella under which gender mainstreaming and targeted initiatives meet to advance society-wide goals for gender equality.
- Making knowledge on gender analysis a competency requirement when identifying skills for developing policy and enhancing digital capacities.

Policy Instruments

- Embedding greater consideration of gender equality impacts in the full regulatory cycle, including regulatory delivery, evaluation, stakeholder engagement processes and public consultations, in order to ensure regulations are supporting, rather than hindering, the achievement of gender equality goals. It is important to note that while regulatory practices were adjusted in times of crisis, governments may endeavour to provide some form of evidence-based rationale for regulation including based on gender-disaggregated data.
- Applying a gender perspective to all appropriate elements of the budgetary cycle as well as undertaking more sustained monitoring of the budgeting cycle in order to ensure resources are targeted more effectively to promote gender equality and to ensure that public spending does not negatively affect equality.

6. Policy Implementation

6.1. Overview

105. Policy implementation requires policy makers to translate their decisions into action. In the previous sections of this framework, a number of factors for effective implementation were discussed, including policy tools, leadership, effective co-ordination, monitoring and enforcement mechanisms, and innovation. Successful implementation, as noted in the Policy Framework on Sound Public Governance, also necessitates an understanding of the broader political context, and acknowledging that national governments no longer hold a monopoly on service delivery. To be sure, national governments are often working in multilevel governance contexts, and with private-sector and civil society groups to implement policies. Research on policy implementation suggests that the original goals of policy can be altered

during the implementation phase, especially in such complex contexts (Mazur, 2016_[78]). This section of the framework deals with tools and practices available to policymakers at the implementation stage which can support the implementation and enhance the impact of policy.

106. This is especially relevant with respect to gender equality policy. Noted above, the 2015 Recommendation promotes a dual-focused gender equality strategy that includes both gender mainstreaming and targeted equality measures. With respect to implementation, this entails attention to the implementation of the gender equality strategy itself, as well as the adoption of a gender-sensitive approach to implementation across the whole of government.

107. Approaching the implementation process with a gender-sensitive perspective is a key element of sound public governance. Yet research demonstrates that in controversial and complex policy areas, including gender equality, governments are reluctant to fully implement policies that challenge the status quo, and are more likely to rely on “symbolic” measures, such as vague policy statements, that lack clear objectives and related outputs (Mazur, 2016_[78]). OECD research on gender equality policies substantiates this finding, demonstrating that gender mainstreaming processes are often poorly implemented (OECD, 2019_[15]). Establishing strong leadership, a sound institutional framework with clear roles and responsibilities, adequate capacity and resources to meet goals, and monitoring and oversight mechanisms are thus important for effective implementation of gender equality policies.

108. In addition, gender mainstreaming ideally consists of governments applying a gender lens to all policies and programs, including budgets, at all stages of the policy cycle. This would help ensure that all policy processes, regardless of whether or not they are directly related to gender equality, including problem identification, policy formulation and design, implementation, and evaluation, are gender-sensitive. Gender mainstreaming can leverage existing processes and relationships to further gender equality goals. This can include measures such as consultative and participatory mechanisms for both service providers and recipients, integrating gender knowledge as a core competency of policy-making, and establishing results frameworks based on gender- and sex-disaggregated¹³ indicators with which to monitor and measure progress.

6.1.1. Management

a) Public service leadership, capacity and skills for implementation

109. Effective leadership can help the implementation of gender equality policy by setting a rationale, action plans, priorities, timelines, objectives, expected outcomes and/or targets, and effective policy planning across the whole of government for promoting gender equality.

110. In addition, enhancing the capacities, skills, and resources for addressing gender equality in public institutions and decision-making is important. This can consist of the development and maintenance of gender-related capacities and skills across all representatives of public institutions, including senior leaders, elected officials, public servants, members of the judiciary, and front-line service providers such as police officers, educators, and healthcare workers. These skills may also include the ability to work in collaborative partnerships with gender experts across and outside of public institutions, and the ability to commission and contract services from partners who will work toward shared gender equality goals. Relatedly, it is important to build the capacity of gender equality institutions to facilitate a consistent response at appropriate levels of government and to develop, implement and monitor the gender-sensitive programmes and policies throughout the government, based on gender-disaggregated statistics and indicators. This can also work to ensure that civil servants have the knowledge, time, and resources necessary implement gender equality policy, without growing frustrated. Drawing on the lessons from the initial experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic, in countries which

¹³ Data would be collected in line with relevant national legislation.

managed to include a gender analysis in emergency responses, there is scope for public sector workforces to consolidate this experience of becoming “accidentally agile” into their work more systematically, even in the face of future emergencies (OECD, 2020^[79]). Going forward, there is scope for identifying a standardised approach for core skills and competencies for gender mainstreaming across the public service, building on the work of the OECD's Public Employment and Management Network on competency framework for a high-performing civil service.

Box 6.1. Country practices in building public sector leadership, capacities and skills

Austria

Austria has introduced measures in gender quotas both in the private and public sectors to ensure balanced and equal representation of women and men in leadership and supervisory positions. To this effect, the Act on Equality between Women and Men in Supervisory Boards (GFMA-G) obliges supervisory boards of listed companies and companies with more than 1,000 employees to align with the required gender quotas - at least 30 percent women and 30 percent men since January 1st, 2018. Furthermore, the Council of Ministers of June 3, 2020 committed to increase the proportion of women on the supervisory boards of state-affiliated companies (federal share of at least 50 percent) from 35 percent to 40 percent over the course of the current legislative period (until 2024). The status of this commitment is reviewed annually and an increase of 2 percentage points was observed in 2020.

Additionally, the Austrian Federal Civil Service offers a cross-mentoring scheme where managers from one Ministry (i.e., the mentors) support their colleagues from other Ministries (i.e., the mentees) by passing on their experience and know-how, giving advice on career planning and facilitating access to professional networks. Since 2005, about 1200 mentors and mentees have participated in the programme. Based on their valuable feedback, the programme is evaluated, adapted and improved on a yearly basis.

Israel

In Israel, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development is holding a training program for senior managers, headed by the Director General of the Ministry. The aim is to provide senior managers with tools for implementation of gender mainstreaming in policy examination, decision-making processes, allocating resources in the area of agriculture policy, to support inclusive decisions. The first meeting has mapped the managerial principles and tools for the promotion of a gender equal institutional culture. The second meeting has focussed on the issue of women working in the field of agriculture. The third meeting – which is forthcoming - will be dedicated to formulating active steps for the implementation of gender mainstreaming within the Ministry's work plan. These will be presented to the Minister of Agriculture and the Director General of the Ministry. This training program was implemented thanks to the Chief Gender Equality Officers & Special Advisers on Advancement of Women at the Ministries and governmental agencies.

Source: Information provided by the Government of Austria and the Government of Israel (2021).

b) Better service delivery through digital government

111. The diffusion and adoption of new digital technologies has altered citizens' expectations regarding the governments' ability to deliver public services that respond to their needs. This presents a challenge to governments, as it requires the digital transformation of the government itself. From a gender

equality and inclusion perspective, it is important for governments to have a sound understanding of the needs and fears of particular communities with respect to digital technology, for example about the role of digital government in private lives. It is also important to consider the potential differential impacts with respect to gender. As noted previously, increasing use of digital technology in decision-making and service delivery contexts have the potential to reinforce gender biases. Digitalisation also creates new threats to women’s rights, such as online violence, reinforcing offline discrimination. Specific violence facilitated by ICT includes, among other things, stalking, threats, hate speech, breaches of privacy, blackmail, non-consensual sharing of explicit images, human trafficking and prostitution (OECD, 2019_[80]). The COVID-19 pandemic has also highlighted the digital gender divide, with gaps persisting in terms of access to digital technology and skillsets for the use of such technology (OECD, 2020_[21]). As such, governments need to adopt policy measures aimed at closing the digital gender divide.

112. Addressing the new gender dynamics generated by the digital age will be challenging; however, strategic approaches that integrate gender equality into the design and delivery of public services like digital government can help. To better shape public governance outcomes and public service delivery, the OECD Recommendation on Digital Government Strategies [[OECD/LEGAL/0406](#)] recommends conducting early sharing, testing and evaluation of prototypes with the involvement of expected end-users, as well as ensuring the availability of a comprehensive picture of on-going digital initiatives to avoid duplication of systems and datasets. At the same time, it could be useful to go beyond the set of current users to include a more representative sample of users which includes otherwise under-represented groups, including women, users with disabilities, and so on. From a gender perspective, this may entail collecting and using gender-disaggregated data, as well as engaging groups of male and female end-users, including, and especially, those who are reluctant to use or have limited access to digital technology. Doing so can help policymakers tailor services to meet the needs of end-users (OECD, 2014_[81]). Governments can also consider gender equality considerations in the procurement of digital tools.

c) Public Procurement as a strategic lever to pursue policy objectives

113. Public procurement refers to the many ways in which governments acquire goods and services using a range of contractual arrangements and purchasing tools. It is a significant tool accounting for 29% of OECD Member country expenditures and approximately 12% of GDP (OECD, 2016_[82]). It brings together government actors and a wide range of vendors to set the terms and conditions of supply arrangements. When designed effectively, procurement can be used to advance important strategic objectives such as gender equality.

114. Given this scope, all countries could benefit from exploring ways to leverage contracting and purchasing and vendor relationships to promote and achieve greater gender equality. This approach to procurement is part of a wider initiative in public procurement called socially responsible public procurement or strategic public procurement in which public authorities can give businesses real incentives to develop responsible business and management practices, including in terms of gender equality (OECD, 2020_[83]). Despite the fact that, at present, the application of gender considerations in procurement policy and practice is rare across OECD Members, there is significant potential in using public procurement to advance gender equality. For example, public procurement has tremendous potential to impact social and environmental objectives while also ensuring effectiveness, efficiency, and value for money in the operations of government and fairness to the vendor community (OECD, forthcoming_[84]). Indeed, the Commonwealth has noted that applying a gender perspective to procurement policy is important to “ensure equitable access and provide benefits from diversifying the supply chain”, and that “[i]ncreasing the opportunities for more economic agents, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to engage in the delivery of goods and services can result in improved outcomes for the alleviation of poverty and increasing gender equality, given that women-owned businesses are disproportionately located in this sub-sector of the economy” ” (Kirton, 2014_[85]). This, in turn, could

reduce barriers to women’s participation in the economy, scale up gender-smart procurement in the private sector, and encourage transparency (Chatham House – The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2017^[86]). Thus, integrating gender analysis into all stages of the procurement cycle can contribute to gender equality goals.

115. There are a number of ways to integrate gender equality into public procurement, including the inclusion of social criteria, as well as the inclusion of gender-specific conditions in the technical specifications of contracts while retaining sound principles of competition (OECD, 2009^[87]). It is also helpful to consider if the action bidders have taken in their commitment to gender equality outcomes (European Commission, 2020^[88]). We can also distinguish between public procurement for the promotion of gender equality, integration of gender equality considerations into the requirements for or technical specifications of contracts (such as gender equality targets or stipulated provisions of parental leave for employees) and mechanisms to ensure that public procurement practices provide equal access to various types of companies and non-governmental organisations, including those headed by women. Notably, women may face barriers when participating in public procurement markets, including administrative, financial and procedural challenges which can be tied to the complexity and costliness of procurement processes. In this regard, procurement can be used as a vehicle for supporting the advancement of businesses owned by women (e.g., by removing barriers to their participation in the procurement process and by assisting in the establishment and development of women-owned businesses through programs aimed at providing financial supports, training, and mentorship). For example, Chile introduced a programme to promote the participation of companies led by women in the public procurement market; and Iceland and Switzerland introduced legislation to make equal pay between men and women mandatory for suppliers (as a prerequisite for participation in a tender). In its Digital Buying Guide, issued in 2020, the UK Government supports public buying with social purpose by presenting modern approaches to public procurement, including incorporating gender-responsive procurement tools and approaches (OECD, 2020^[83]). Box 6.1. contains a few detailed examples in this regard. Looking forward, there is more room for countries to consider ways for integrating gender equality considerations into public procurement, taking into account the potential impacts that current procurement processes have on gender equality. For example, given that public procurement was at the frontline of most countries’ responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, countries could conduct ex post reviews of the emergency procurement processes they undertook in response to the pandemic to better understand their economic impact on women and women-owned businesses and identify lessons for future crises (OECD, 2020^[89]; OECD, 2021^[9]).

116. Several measures or actions can support governments in harnessing the potential of public procurement in the pursuit of gender equality. Strong leadership, for example, can help in articulating the role and importance of gender equality in procurement, and in securing the tools and resources needed for success. Similarly, organisations can build transparency and accountability among leaders for their use of public procurement in support of gender equality, and commit to collecting data and reporting on their results. In addition, establishing a sound institutional framework, supported by legislation and policy that clarifies regulations, roles and responsibilities, can help ensure there is an equal footing for all potential participants. Grounding requirements in legislation, regulations and principles, issuing guidelines, providing detailed information on how wage equality is measured, and requiring compliance letters are possible ways to communicate gender equality goals with respect to procurement. Moreover, ensuring a gender-sensitive approach to public procurement can include training public servants and providing them with guidelines for evaluating proposals. Monitoring, reporting, and evaluation systems are also effective tools to strengthen implementation, transparency, and accountability.

117. Moving forward, it is important to apply the concept of “value for money” in a way that encompasses environmental, social and other values. “Value for money” is a fundamental principle underpinning public procurement. It guides public procurement decisions and actions to focus on the “most advantageous combination of cost, quality and sustainability to meet defined requirements”

(MAPS, 2018_[90]). The economic argument (cost and quality) has been brought to the forefront of government considerations given budget pressures and citizens demanding accountability for public spending. However, for more than a decade now, value in public procurement increasingly focusses on the sustainability dimension, including more frequently objectives beyond cost and quality like environmental objectives or social considerations such as respect for human rights, labour rights including non-discrimination, and gender mainstreaming, as well as promoting economic opportunities for long-term unemployed people, minorities and people with disabilities (OECD, 2020_[83]). There is social and economic value to society when public procurement helps women-owned businesses succeed and when there are equal opportunities for all, to easily put forward a bid and be considered as a supplier to government. When strategic social objectives are applied to procurement there may be additional costs to taxpayers; however, what is needed is clear justification of these costs in terms of their overall benefit to society and the greater economic good. In this way, the value for money can be extended beyond simple bottom-line budget numbers for specific program areas to a more comprehensive view in which broader benefits are documented and the value to society is illustrated along with budgetary value. It would also be important to consider the cost of not including gender equality considerations.

Box 6.2. Country examples of gender-sensitive public procurement practices

Australia

In Australia, the Commonwealth Government introduced a new exemption in the Commonwealth Procurement Rules (CPRs) to supporting SMEs accessing the Government procurement market. Exemption 17 was introduced in Appendix A of the CPRs, which allows entities to directly engage a small and medium enterprise (SME) for procurements valued up to \$200,000 (including GST) providing value for money can be demonstrated. From a procurement perspective, the SME exemption would, by extension, have the possibility of increasing government procurement opportunities for SMEs that are female owned or led.

Chile

The public procurement system in Chile uses an e-marketplace that encourages use by SMEs and women. There are specialised training programmes for women, and in 2015 Chile revised relevant regulations and guidelines to help officials include gender considerations in their decisions by incorporating gender-specific evaluation criteria. Women represent 36% of the contracts awarded by the government, and the figure is increasing even though women account for a smaller share of aggregated procurement value. Many of the women who have participated are from rural areas, and 64% are the main breadwinner for their family. The main issue with increasing women's participation is identifying which companies are truly women-led or women-owned, and certification and identification can be a barrier to entry as it can be expensive.

Chile has remedied this problem by introducing an electronic registry that certifies "female enterprise" and is linked with the civil registry (for sole proprietorships). As far as more complex corporations are concerned, women must own the majority of company shares and the CEO must be a woman for the company to be labelled "female enterprise" in the registry. Chile measures the average amount traded by suppliers who are women and noted that it increased from 2013 to 2017 by USD 1 500. Participation in the total amounts traded by suppliers who are women has increased by 6 percentage points from 2013 to 2017 (from 21% to 27%).

Japan

Japan adopted the guidelines for utilisation of public procurement and subsidies towards the promotion of women’s advancement through a decision by the Headquarters for Creating a Society in which All Women Shine on March 22, 2016. It encourages companies to take positive actions for public procurements and subsidies for the realization of work-life balance, which forms the basis of promoting the advancement of women. In accordance with the Act on the Promotion of Female Participation and Career Advancement in the Workplace, when ministries and incorporated administrative agencies conduct procurements based on evaluation of factors other than price (the Comprehensive Evaluation Bidding System and the Competitive Proposal Bidding System), additional evaluation points are to be awarded to companies that promote work-life balance.

Switzerland

Through the amended Gender Equality Act all employers with at least 100 employees are obligated to analyse their pay practice. Moreover, the Confederation awards contracts for public procurements only to companies guaranteeing compliance with equal pay for men and women. To this end, audits can be conducted by public authorities to ensure that Equal Pay is respected.

Source: (OECD, 2019^[91]; Government of Japan, n.d.^[92]); Information provided by the Governments of Australia, Chile, Japan and Switzerland (2021).

d) Public-Private partnerships (PPPs) and public-civil partnerships

118. Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) and public-civil partnerships allow partners to share policy implementation functions, expanding the capacity for service delivery. The OECD defines PPPs as, “long-term agreements between the government and a private partner whereby the private partner delivers and funds public services using a capital asset, sharing the associated risks. PPPs may deliver public services both with regard to infrastructure assets (such as bridges, roads) and social assets (such as hospitals, utilities, prisons)” (OECD, 2012^[93]).

119. PPPs can help furthering gender equality objectives. Research, however, identifies important concerns with respect to PPPs (Prügl and True, 2014^[94]). For example, research from the health policy field reveals that gender mainstreaming has been poorly implemented throughout such arrangements (Hawkes, S., Buse, K., & Kapilashrami, A., 2017^[95]). Similarly, research from the voluntary sector demonstrates that PPP governing boards and leadership positions tend to be dominated by men (Johnston, 2017^[96]). Approaching such partnerships with a gender perspective is thus important.

120. Towards this end, PPPs can bolster gender equality processes and outcomes in a number of ways. First, it is important to build gender equality into the institutional framework, establishing clear roles and responsibilities throughout the network, as well as appropriate oversight and accountability mechanisms. This includes the establishment of a gender-balanced governing board and ensuring that leadership positions are awarded with gender equality in mind. Second, similar to public procurement processes, selection processes for PPPs can be grounded in not only value for money, but also social value, taking into account the goals and objectives of the partnership, employment and social benefits for both men and women. Third, budgeting processes can be approached from a gender-sensitive perspective. Finally, PPPs can be established not only with private sector organisations, but also with civil society organisations, including women’s groups. Collaborating with community groups is an important way to integrate gender perspectives into the design, delivery, and management of public services.

e) Agile and innovative approaches to policy and service delivery

121. Innovation is critical to finding new solutions and approaches to deal with complexity, particularly in the face of multidimensional challenges and crises. In this context, governments are approaching policy implementation and service delivery from an innovative and agile approaches to project management, which focus on principles such as simplicity, quick iteration, and close collaboration with citizens¹⁴. These approaches, similar to the other tools discussed in this section, have the potential to further gender equality goals, if approached from a gender perspective. For example, agile approaches based on collaboration, for instance between civil servants responsible for planning the delivery of a policy or service and potential users, allow for regular interactions with both men and women to discuss progress and integrate feedback to ensure that the needs of all citizens are met. These approaches can also create a regular feedback loop that enables continuous improvements with respect to gender during the implementation process.

122. Additional agile and/or innovative approaches for implementation and delivery can be utilised in ways that drive gender equality forward. For example, project management tools such as results frameworks and critical path analysis can help clarify gender equality goals and objectives and roles and responsibilities, as well as identify gaps in existing frameworks and resource allocations¹⁵. Crowdsourcing can serve to bring in communities to the policy process that might otherwise remain invisible. It can also introduce new perspectives, serving as an important tool with which to generate and process data and information quickly. Digital networks and communities of practice across the civil service can help to establish a community of gender expertise, share good practices and lessons learned, and work to scale up projects, services and trainings that take into account gender issues, from piloting to broader implementation. Building on the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic, whereby most engagement processes and events moved to the digital sphere, countries can reflect on how such a move to digital networks could be pursued going forward. Co-creation, co-production and co-delivery, as well as user-centred design methods, can engage many users in creating innovative solutions as a way to identify and respond to gender needs, and to build ownership and secure greater tolerance for eventual setbacks¹⁶.

123. Other approaches, such as innovation labs and behaviour insights methods, can be important tools for generating information and developing new ways of approaching gender equality. Innovation labs can experiment with novel approaches and potential solutions aimed at addressing gender equality. For example, new approaches to data collection, including the use of social media, and innovative approaches to policy analysis and design, such as foresight analysis and design thinking, offer

¹⁴ Agile project management, originally applied in the ICT sector, is based on focus on relationships and people, outcomes, consumer interaction and feedback, and responsiveness to changes. Agile project management is characterized by quick iterative cycles of planning and development that allow a project team to constantly evaluate its work and receive immediate feedback. See, Bogdanova, M., et al., (2020), Agile project management in governmental organizations – Methodological issues, *IJASOS-International E-Journal of Advances in Social Sciences*, Vol. VI, Issue 16, April 2020, <http://ijasos.ocerintjournals.org/tr/download/article-file/1260202>

¹⁵ Critical path analysis refers to the technique of mapping out all the key tasks required to complete a given project, outlining its timelines and understanding dependencies between tasks.

¹⁶ Co-creation and co-production are both interrelated, sometimes interchangeable concepts used in the context of social innovation, to denote the active participation of end-users (i.e., citizens) in various stages of the production process (e.g., public sector goods and services). See Voorberg, William, et al. (2014). Co-creation and Co-production in Social Innovation: A Systematic Review and Future Research Agenda. ipse.org. 320090.

considerable promise in reshaping the government-citizen interface and generating new ideas about solutions to inequality.

124. In addition, the influence of underlying attitudes, cultural norms and gender stereotypes cannot be overlooked when designing and implementing interventions to advance gender equality. Indeed, social norms and practices are one of the drivers of gender inequality that is taken into account by the OECD's Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI). New approaches such as behavioural sciences can help focus on underlying norms and attitudes that hinder gender equality. Such approaches can also help identify and weed out ineffective policies and initiatives. Although actions taken by OECD Members that are shaped by behavioural insights are relatively rare, they are taking root in a number of countries, with some establishing behavioural insights units to assess and experiment with new approaches to achieve gender equality. Moreover, behavioural approaches bring the possibility of identifying effective, often low-cost, solutions without resorting to additional rules or sanctions. Another part of the attraction, which is especially important in the context of gender inequality, is grounding reforms and interventions in a good understanding of the beliefs and associations that everyone has, that are unconscious and automatic, and that affect how people behave. Such reforms can generate buy-in because they avoid blaming and shaming that might otherwise hinder support for interventions and create hostility.

f) Risk governance and emergency management¹⁷

125. As noted in the OECD Report *Assessing Global Progress in the Governance of Critical Risks*, “[t]he successful governance of critical risks is a strategic investment in preventing deaths, in preserving economic competitiveness and sustainable growth, and in ensuring better lives for the future” (OECD, n.d._[97]). Risk governance and emergency management are also important to ensuring the economy and society are resilient and to promoting an inclusive recovery. Drawing on the OECD Recommendation of the Council on the Governance of Critical Risks [[OECD/LEGAL/0405](#)], strategic crisis management entails building capacities for crisis management, adopting a whole-of-government approach (i.e., engaging all levels and sectors of the government), and establishing scaled-up mechanisms for emergency response (OECD, 2014_[98]).

126. The impact of crises such as economic recessions, climate change and natural disasters, pandemics and epidemics, and armed conflicts is different across various sections of the population. As highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic, this differential impact may not necessarily be caused by the crisis *per se*, but may be due to the nature of emergency responses and the pre-existing distribution of and access to resources, infrastructure and labour and structural inequalities. Such differential impacts point to the importance of integrating a gender perspective in governance of risks and emergency management to address the specific impacts on women and girls. While there is a substantive body of work that has been produced to integrate gender lens in emergencies in the context of humanitarian assistance and development co-operation, such efforts are limited at the domestic policy level.

127. In integrating a gender lens in governance of risks, governments ideally would consider gender throughout the risk and emergency management cycle: risk identification and assessment, risk prevention and mitigation, preparedness and response, and recovery and reconstruction. Several countries have established national frameworks or adopted national strategies for disaster management, which provide an avenue to incorporate considerations in the governance of critical risks, including through the articulation of different needs of all persons. Furthermore, diversifying the leadership and decision-making processes to include women and vulnerable populations can be instrumental in facilitating inclusive responses to and recovery from crises, by ensuring that the varied needs of the population are reflected, identified, valued, planned for and addressed (UN, 2015_[99]). Additionally, tools such as gender

¹⁷ This section has been incorporated in this document in light of the experience of the COVID-19 crisis, and is not included in the OECD Policy Framework on Sound Public Governance.

needs analysis and gender impact assessment can play a critical role in facilitating gender mainstreaming throughout the risk management cycle. More importantly, as the absence of good quality data can pose a barrier to effective gender mainstreaming in emergency management, governments can consider efforts to increase the availability of quality gender-disaggregated data.

Box 6.3. Country examples on integrating a gender lens in crises and emergencies

Israel

In Israel, a Permanent Advisory Committee to the National Security Council was set up in May 2021, drawing from the country experience of the COVID-19 pandemic and recognising the need to address the varying challenges faced by women from different populations within Israeli society during various states of national crisis. The Israeli National Security Council serves as the advisory body for the Prime Minister and the Government of Israel on matters related to foreign and security affairs. The advisory committee is titled "Integrating Gender Mainstreaming into the National Policy Planning During Different States of Crisis in Israel". It was established on the basis of the Covid-19 experience that diversity in opinions and expertise on issues relevant to women's lives (and in relation to different communities and targeted populations) during times of emergency, and the integration of gender impacts early and often across all aspects of the policy cycle (including at the problem identification stage) may help the decision makers to meaningfully consider different policy options and trade-offs in a way that could influence their policy consideration. Ultimately this may lead to more sound and sustainable decisions. The members of the advisory committee are tasked with the formulation of knowledge, evidence and structural recommendations which could serve as guiding principles on the issue. The advisory committee is also tasked with proposing various monitoring tools and follow up mechanisms aimed to verify the implementation of its proposed recommendations.

Japan

Japan has taken important steps in developing its disaster risk management strategies from a gender perspective, following the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011. In May 2020, the Basic Disaster Management Plan was revised to include that local governments shall work to build a cooperative system between the disaster management division and the gender equality division, and to clarify the gender equality division's and the gender equality centre's role in ordinary times and at each stage of disaster response.

In addition, the Government of Japan has also issued the "Guidelines for Disaster Planning, Response and Reconstruction from a Gender-equal Perspective" in May 2020 setting forth the basic actions to be taken by local governments at each stage of disaster response. Moreover, in consideration for the fact that women and men are affected by disasters in different ways, the government has been promoting the implementation of disaster preparation, management of designated evacuation shelters, and support for disaster victims from a gender-equal perspective.

Source: Information provided by the Government of Israel and the Government of Japan (2021).

g) A strategic approach to the implementation of the SDGs

128. The SDGs were established on the principle of "leave no one behind", aiming to secure a healthy and prosperous future for all by 2030. This implicates a gender-sensitive approach to sustainable development that addresses social, economic, and environmental determinants. Indeed, gender equality is both an explicit SDG, and a crosscutting principle for the realisation of the entire SDG framework. The

SDGs thus complement an already significant framework of international instruments relating to gender equality.

129. The ambitious plan includes 17 goals and 169 targets, representing a significant implementation challenge for all countries, irrespective of income levels. Governments will be expected to develop comprehensive solutions to facilitate the implementation of the SDGs by 2030. Given the centrality of gender equality in the SDG framework, aligning SDGs with gender equality strategies will potentially ease implementation challenges. Implementation thus can be advanced through strategic whole-of-government approaches that make use of budgeting, procurement, and regulatory tools. From this perspective, and as discussed previously, approaching budgeting, procurement, and regulatory processes from a gender perspective can assist in ensuring adequate implementation of the SDGs. In addition, the SDGs can assist in the creation of strategic gender equality plans and provide support for equality initiatives. Given the widespread and multidimensional impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the SDGs can also present a framework to guide a coherent response for sustainable and inclusive recovery in the long run (OECD, 2020_[100]).

6.1.2. Monitoring Performance

a) Monitoring government-wide policy priorities

130. Robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms can help ensure gender equality strategies achieve their intended impacts. Monitoring assesses progress, improves decision-making, allows programmes to be adjusted for greater impact, and enhances accountability and institutional learning. It also helps policy makers understand where resources are needed. During crises, monitoring can be an important tool to understand the impact of emergency measures, adopted through accelerated processes, on gender equality (OECD, 2021_[9]).

131. Monitoring government-wide policy priorities has become one of CoG's major responsibilities to ensure that operational and strategic objectives are reached and policies are implemented in an effective and co-ordinated manner. CoG bodies are key actors in providing leadership and steering the implementation of crosscutting goals. The CoG takes almost exclusive responsibility for co-ordinating the preparation of Cabinet meetings and policy co-ordination across government. This makes the CoG a critical player in advancing society-wide gender equality goals. In particular, the CoG can contribute to clarifying what the line ministries and agencies are expected to do in advancing gender equality, establishing effective accountability and performance frameworks, and ensuring that a gender equality lens is mainstreamed in all government decision-making processes. During the initial phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, CoGs played an important role in co-ordination and strategic planning, the use of evidence to inform decision-making, and the communication of decisions to the public (OECD, 2020_[101]).

132. It is important to make the distinction between gender equality institutions that are located within the CoG and explicitly mandating CoG institutions to oversee the implementation and rigour of gender mainstreaming efforts, including gender impact assessments. For example, in Canada, central agencies (i.e., the Privy Council Office, Treasury Board Secretariat and Department of Finance) provide a "gatekeeper" function by ensuring that requirements in relation to Gender Based Analysis Plus are upheld, as well as a "challenge" function with regard to the questions of analytical rigour and quality.

133. Central gender equality institutions refer to government bodies primarily responsible for supporting the government's agenda to advance society-wide gender equality goals. Delivering specific programmes related to women's empowerment remains one of the main responsibilities of central gender equality institutions. However, given the crosscutting nature of gender equality policy, they also play an increasing role in ensuring co-ordination with governmental stakeholders and diverse civil society representatives. Research demonstrates that these institutions can have a positive effect on policy

processes and outcomes when situated in or close to the CoG because it helps ensure that they are closely engaged in the policy-making process¹⁸. Moreover, nurturing a strong relationship between the CoG and gender equality institutions can help foster the whole-of-government approach necessary for the realisation of gender equality. At the same time, however, arms-length advisory bodies can play a positive role in monitoring government-wide gender priorities, and can serve as an intermediary between government and civil society. They are therefore an important part of gender equality accountability mechanisms.

134. Monitoring government-wide policy priorities also entails developing and implementing evaluation, measurement and accountability frameworks and indicators and collecting data to regularly assess and report on performance of gender equality and mainstreaming strategies, initiatives, public policies and programmes at the appropriate levels of government. Ideally, it includes mainstreaming gender into the monitoring and evaluation frameworks of all strategies, policies and programmes, not only those specifically focused on gender equality. In addition, actively promoting gender- and sex-disaggregated data¹⁹ dissemination and ensuring affordable, effective and timely access to performance information on gender equality and mainstreaming, which allows for tracking results against targets, monitoring progress towards socio-economic development and for comparison with international and other benchmarks, can result in better policy outcomes. This can be done through creating databases for public policies, programs and projects with data disaggregated by gender on factors such as service delivery. It should also be noted that several in-country variations exist in administrative data and records of different government agencies, departments and institutions. In order to make sure that data on issues that disproportionately affect women are properly collected, managed and exchanged while ensuring its quality, it is important to facilitate data interoperability across different agencies and levels of governments²⁰. Moreover, increasing co-ordination among data collecting and producing bodies and collaboration with relevant stakeholders can lead to developing better gender impact indicators. Training public officials engaged in data collection and data analysis on gender-disaggregated data can go a long way to facilitate the integration of gender-related considerations in data right from the onset.

b) Monitoring financial performance and budget execution

135. As discussed earlier in this framework, systematic and continuous monitoring of the budgeting process can help ensure that gender equality objectives are being met. Monitoring financial performance and budget execution with respect to gender can provide evidence on what is working and what is not, enabling the reallocation of resources as necessary. As noted in the previous section, establishing clear and measurable targets and indicators contributes to tracking performance. In addition, collaborative processes and feedback mechanisms are important tools to monitor gender-related impacts. Line ministries - in charge of executing programs and spending budgetary resources - hold the responsibility to define and monitor the potential gender impacts of their decisions. Budget offices and SAIs can play an important supportive role in monitoring and reporting on progress towards gender equality goals and can help to hold governments accountable in meeting these objectives.

¹⁸ See, as examples, Goetz, A.M. (2003), National women's machinery: State-based institutions to advocate for gender equality. In *Mainstreaming gender, democratizing the state? Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women*, S. Rai (ed). Manchester University Press, 69-95; see also McBride, D. and A. Mazur (2012), *The Politics of State Feminism: Innovation in Comparative Research*, Temple University Press.

¹⁹ Data would be collected in line with relevant national legislation.

²⁰ Data interoperability refers to clear, shared expectations for the contents, context and meaning of data which is created, processed and exchanged by systems and services. See, for example, <https://datainteroperability.org/>

c) Measuring regulatory performance and ensuring implementation

136. In the Policy Formulation and Design section of this Policy Framework, the potential for regulatory instruments to further gender equality goals was discussed. Monitoring regulatory performance is a critical tool for ensuring that gender goals are met. Doing so can help identify barriers and improve regulations. In view of this, it is important to have a sound institutional framework that includes oversight institutions that monitor the regulatory process and its impact on gender equality.

d) Building robust gender-sensitive governance indicators

137. As discussed above, monitoring performance can help ensure that gender equality goals are being actively pursued and met. This may consist of establishing, from a gender perspective, clear goals, and identifying appropriate measurable targets and indicators with respect to gender equality. In addition, it may include approaching governance indicators, including various input, process, output and outcome/impact indicators, from a gender-sensitive perspective. To this end, it is important that adequate resources are allocated (input); that communities of men and women are, and continue to be, consulted (process); that the quantity, type, and quality of public services are adequate to meet the stated objectives (output); and that the program is having the desired impact over time (outcome). Central to this is making sure that sex-disaggregated data is collected, monitored and reported, and that roles and responsibilities are clearly defined. Equally important is the collection of demographic data by governments to monitor performance, while limiting the collection of personal information to what is directly related to and demonstrably necessary for the government institution's programs or activities.

Box 6.4. Country examples on monitoring policy priorities

Colombia

In Colombia, the policy documents developed by the National Council for Economic and Social Policy (CONPES) are supported with Action and Monitoring Plan. This provides tools which allow for the monitoring of goals, indicators and resources related to these policies.

Israel

The Civil Service Commission of Israel works to promote and implement gender equality in the public service - Government Ministries, the Defense and the Health systems of approximately 80,000 employees. To support this initiative, the Gender Equality Index has been developed to measure gender equality in the various areas in every government ministry and in the civil service in general. An interactive dashboard presents data and gender equality projects of each ministry such as the number of women within tender candidates and onboarding employees, salary components, organizational climate, percentage of women within the senior ranks and more.

Source: Information provided by the Government of Colombia and the Government of Israel (2021).

Box 6.5. Country examples on the use of gender-sensitive indicators

Australia

The Australian government, through the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), collects sex-disaggregated data sets (through over 20 national surveys) to track progress towards gender equality. The data sets provided by these surveys assist the Australian government in its public policy development in areas of public safety and justice, health service provision and infrastructure, housing, socio-economic factors, and economic affairs. Additionally, the ABS publishes the Australian Gender Indicators annually which comprise 56 key indicators and a further 96 related or detailed data series across 6 domains of interest, namely: 1) economic security; 2) education; 3) health; 4) work and family balance; 5) safety and justice; and 6) democracy, governance and citizenship. The Gender Indicators are drawn from a wide range of ABS resources and other sources, including the Workplace Gender Equality Agency.

Austria

Noting the importance of gender-disaggregated data as the basis for gender equality in decision-making processes, the Minister for Women's Affairs of Austria has been publishing the "Gender Index" since 2011. This index provides an overview of the most essential facts and figures on women and men in various areas of life, such as demographics, education, employment and representation. The Gender Index is updated annually.

Greece

Greece has set up the "Observatory on Gender Equality", which constitutes a mechanism to support Public Administration and Local Authorities to design, implement and evaluate policies concerning gender equality through detailed gender-disaggregated data on equality issues (statistics and surveys) deriving from the development and function of relevant tools. It is located in the Department of Informatics, Research and Digital Support of the General Secretariat for Family Policy and Gender Equality. The structure of the Observatory is based on the twelve critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA). Its goal is to map gender differentiations in 12 basic policy areas and the monitoring of any relevant trends and advances in Greece. Moreover, it includes 84 gender indicators based either on the Beijing Platform for Action or on specific national priorities and is followed by metadata. The Observatory has an online portal "paratiritirio.isotita.gr" designed to include, analyse, process and disseminate statistical data and indicators on gender equality policies. Since 2016, the Observatory has produced 29 e-bulletins on various areas that are available in Greek and some of them in English.

United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom, data collection on gender, ethnicity and disability in a standard and systematic manner is well-established. The Centre for Equalities and Inclusion of the Office of National Statistics routinely conducts audit of data available on the protected characteristics of the Equality Act (2010), namely, age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race/ethnicity, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. The government has recently announced the launch of the Equality Data Programme, which will gather data from across Government to better understand the barriers that people from every background are facing across the United Kingdom. The work will consider a range of issues, such as geography and social background, alongside other demographic factors such as people's sex, ethnicity, sexuality and disability status, and aims to support the work of the Equality Hub.

Source: (Government of United Kingdom, n.d.^[53]; OECD, 2019^[15]; OECD, 2018^[52]; Directorate of Equality Iceland, n.d.^[51]); Information also shared by the Government of Australia, the Government of Austria, the Government of Greece and by the Government Equalities Office of the United Kingdom (2021).

Box 6.6. Proposed Policy Actions

In order to support effective gender-sensitive implementation of policies and delivery of services and programmes, government leaders, civil service managers and relevant stakeholders across the government may consider:

Management

- Enhancing institutions' capacities, skills, and resources for addressing gender equality in policy implementation including the staff responsible for policy implementation and service delivery.
- Bolstering the capacity of national gender equality institutions, as required, to facilitate and support gender-sensitive policy implementation across the public administration.
- Increasing efforts to understand and mitigate the gender impacts of digital technology in service delivery.
- Establishing clear dialogue and coherence between policy makers and procurement practitioners on how public procurement can be used as a strategic tool to promote gender equality. This can also include reviewing the types of data that are being collected and boosting gender equality expertise among public procurement officials in order to the support the use of gender impact analysis in public procurement cycle.

Monitoring Performance

- Adopting clear and relevant gender equality criteria for monitoring of, and progress reporting on, all strategies, policies and programmes, not only those specifically focused on gender equality. This can also contribute to improved accountability, as highlighted in the proposed actions in Box 1.5.
- Establishing clear performance goals, targets and indicators for the advancement of gender equality objectives. This could also include monitoring financial performance, budgeting and regulatory processes from a gender perspective.

7. Policy Evaluation

7.1. Overview

138. Policy evaluation is the structured and objective assessment of an ongoing or completed policy or reform initiative. The aim is to determine, *inter alia*, the relevance and fulfilment of objectives along with the initiative's efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability, analysing linkages between policy interventions and effects. It strives to create a deeper understanding of observed policy successes or failures, both as an end in itself, and as a means to correct course and improve performance to enhance results and outcomes. It is through evaluation that policymakers and citizens can determine if policies are meeting their objectives and furthering gender equality goals. Particularly in times of crisis, where

governments have to expedite the decision-making process, policy evaluation can be useful to promote accountability, trust and evidence-based policy-making (OECD, 2020_[102]).

139. Policy evaluation is therefore an important tool for democratic inclusive governance, providing an important learning mechanism for public institutions and civil society. It also serves as an important tool for both transparency and accountability, thereby facilitating legitimacy and trust in public decision-making and institutions. From a gender perspective, this includes the evaluation of gender equality strategies, including gender mainstreaming efforts and targeted measures. It also entails the integration of a gender perspective into all evaluation functions across the whole of government. It is important to highlight that progress is not linear and can take a long time. Thus, it is important to assess and value mid-term outcomes in addition to long-term outcomes.

140. Within this context, the 2015 Recommendation provides that Adherents should, “[s]trengthen the evidence base and systematically measure progress towards gender equality performance, based on gender impact indicators and measurable outcomes, by:

- Developing and implementing evaluation, measurement and accountability frameworks and indicators and collecting data to regularly assess and report on performance of gender equality and mainstreaming strategies, initiatives, public policies and programmes at appropriate levels of government. Consider building capacity of public institutions based on these evaluations.
- Actively promoting data dissemination and ensuring affordable, effective and timely access to performance information on gender equality and mainstreaming that allows for tracking results against targets, monitoring progress towards socio-economic development, and for comparison with international and other benchmarks.”
- Increasing co-ordination among data collecting and producing bodies and collaboration with relevant stakeholders with a view to developing better gender impact indicators.

141. Policy evaluation also needs to be considered during the policy design stage in order to ensure that the necessary information and data required for effective policy evaluation can be collected during the implementation phase. However, evidence demonstrates that monitoring and evaluation systems are underutilised with respect to gender equality (OECD, 2019_[15]). Indeed, OECD research reveals that gender impact assessments (GIAs) are most commonly applied ex ante (i.e., during the policy formulation and design stages). Limited application of GIAs, especially in the ex post phase, as well as their focus on gender as a single variable, at the evaluation phase may obstruct the understanding about whether legislation and budgets serve the intended goals and whether they equally benefit men and women, making it difficult to build on the lessons learned. Furthermore, due to the urgent nature of certain policy challenges, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic, it may not always be feasible to undertake ex ante GIA. In such cases, policy actions could benefit from a post-implementation review through ex post GIAs (OECD, 2021_[9]).

142. Strengthening GIAs at the evaluation stages of the decision-making cycle can help to more accurately assess the impacts of government decisions on women and men. Countries can reap the benefits of GIAs if such requirements are supported by criteria to ensure the quality and rigour of the analysis.

Box 7.1. Policy evaluation with a gender lens in Canada

For over 40 years, evaluation through various means has been used in Canada to assess the performance of programmes operated by government departments. The 2016 Policy on Results sets out that departments should have a five-year, rolling departmental evaluation plan. In terms of institutional structure for evaluation, there are Evaluation Units in each department. These units undertake evaluation studies, but also have a broader role in relation to preparing evaluation planning reports and assessments, developing results-based management accountability frameworks and providing advice and training to programme managers on evaluation. The Directive on Results, which also came into effect in 2016, puts in place requirements for program officials and evaluators to include government-wide policy considerations, such as Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus) in performance information profiles and evaluation processes. In light of this, in 2019, the Government of Canada launched a primer for integrating GBA Plus into evaluation, which considers a range of intersectional factors, into policy, program and service delivery continuum highlighting that the body of knowledge developed through numerous evaluations indicates GBA Plus should be applied at each point on the continuum. The primer includes questions and suggestions to consider for each stage of evaluation (namely, planning, conducting and reporting).

Source: (OECD, 2018^[52]; Government of Canada, 2019^[103])

7.1.1. Policy and Institutional Framework for Policy Evaluation

143. Policy evaluation systems can benefit from clearly designated institutional actors with a well-defined mandate and specific resources to oversee and/or carry out policy evaluation. Evaluation units within public institutions, as well as national gender equality institutions can play a central role in co-ordinating and implementing evaluation processes. Audit unions can also be helpful to track public expenditures on gender equality programmes established by public institutions. Moreover, SAIs can play a critical role in the evaluation process through their audits, evaluations and advice, thus holding governments to account for the use of public resources (see Accountability and Respect for the Rule of Law for more information). In addition to evaluating policies and programmes on a performance or value-for-money basis, they can act as an “evaluator of evaluators” in government by auditing the effectiveness of a gender-sensitive evaluation system and those responsible for it.

144. It is important to integrate policy evaluation from the outset of policy cycle to ensure that gender-sensitive indicators are appropriately identified and that gender-sensitive evidence and quality data are being collected to support the evaluation. To this end, appropriate training needs to be extended to the people responsible for policy development and implementation.

7.1.2. Promoting Quality and Use of Evaluations

145. To ensure the production of quality evaluations, it is helpful to give attention to both quality control (e.g., orienting evaluation reports towards deliverables) and quality assurance (e.g., orienting evaluation reports towards process). Accordingly, it is important to have clear evaluation frameworks that identify goals and measurable outcomes, an adequate skills base and engagement from stakeholder and civil society. Together, these can help ensure that gender evaluations are targeted properly and result in recommendations that are practical, user-centred and needs-based.

146. Once quality evaluations are produced, it is important that policy makers use them to inform policy and decision-making. To foster the use of evaluations, OECD Member countries have reported practices such as discussing the results of evaluations at senior levels of government and establishing co-

ordinating mechanisms that promote the sharing and use of evidence produced by evaluations (OECD, 2019^[56]). Ensuring the proactive involvement of governmental leaders and a culture of sharing and learning are thus important for the continued use of evaluation. Additionally, ensuring the credibility (i.e., through evidence), and availability and accessibility (e.g., accessible to public) of evaluation reports may be relevant to improve the use of evaluation, as well as to engage and raise awareness amongst all related stakeholders.

7.1.3. Reviewing Impact of Regulations

147. Noted above, use of gender analysis in the area of regulation has been primarily ex ante, focused on determining potential differential impacts of regulations. Ensuring equitable impacts, however, cannot be fully achieved without ex post analyses that assess the ways in which regulations are experienced between men and women. In view of this, countries may consider incorporating ex post gender analysis into regulatory frameworks. In so doing, it would be important to consult different groups of men and women.

Box 7.2. Proposed Policy Actions

In order to support the effective undertaking and use of policy evaluations from a gender perspective, government leaders, civil service managers and relevant stakeholders across the government may consider:

Institutional Framework for Policy Evaluation

- Embedding gender impact assessment tools in the legal and policy frameworks on the policy evaluations across the government while building the capacity of evaluation officers and functions to integrate a gender lens in all evaluations, including, but not limited to, training on gender-sensitive policy evaluation and data collection.

Promoting Quality and Use of Evaluations

- Promoting, as appropriate, generating gender-disaggregated evidence through evaluations, using both quantitative and qualitative indicators and methodologies; and use these findings to feed into the policy-making cycle.

Reviewing Impact of Regulations

- Increasing understanding among regulatory authorities of the impacts of decisions on the laws related to gender equality and anti-discrimination and of ex post gender analysis.

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