

GENDER ANALYSIS



Key finding from the Safe and Inclusive Cities program

To better understand how gendered experiences affect urban violence and vice versa, researchers need to **build gender analysis into all stages of the research cycle**, including the development of methodologies.

Understanding gender analysis

Safe and Inclusive Cities (SAIC) seeks to integrate gender analysis in all research. To this end, SAIC supports projects that focus on women and girls' experiences of violence as victims and as agents of change, while also investigating masculinities and men and boys' roles in cycles of violence. SAIC research explores gender as a root cause of urban violence, and examines how strategies and interventions for tackling violence, poverty, and inequalities affect different genders differently.

Researchers have identified five key challenges to the meaningful consideration of gender and the incorporation of gender analysis in their work.

Challenge 1: There is no consensus in urban violence research about: the meaning of gender and why it matters; the meaning and importance of gender-based analysis in urban violence research; and how gender analysis is applied.

One solution would be to establish a benchmark for gender analysis in research, such as collecting sex-disaggregated data. When analyzing violence, however, there is a risk that gender is interpreted only in biological terms. The resulting binaries – such as victim/perpetrator – mask the complex nature of urban violence. Research also needs to examine how social inequality and power differentials that shape people's identity and actions affect and are affected by gender.

Researchers committed to integrating gender analysis into their research should do so throughout the research cycle — from design to implementation, analysis, and dissemination — because knowledge is created and interpreted at each stage. Challenges arise when research teams are not committed to integrating gender in their work, or when ways of doing so are unclear.

Challenge 2: Although they may have different perspectives and entry points, projects that explicitly focus on gender and social change are more likely to consider gender as crucial to understanding social phenomena that influence and result from urban violence.

QUESTIONS FOR LEARNING:

1. Do you think gender should be analyzed in research on violence? Why? To what extent do you assess your views and assumptions?
2. At what points in the research cycle should gender-based analysis take place? Why?
3. How do different methodological approaches influence gender analysis and what does this mean for the findings? How can methodological development strengthen gender analysis?

Many projects explore the ways in which urban violence is linked to factors that shape perceptions and interpretations of male identity, but they may not be analyzing it through a gender lens or stating it explicitly. Similarly, how gender and violence affect children must be understood to gain insight into intergenerational causes and effects.

Challenge 3: Strong gender analysis is nourished by regular sharing and exchange.

It is important to discuss issues surrounding the approach to gender analysis, the challenges/opportunities, and emerging questions, such as the links between gender-based violence and constructions of gender identity. Although opportunities to reflect on the gendered dimensions of research practice and findings in documents and discussions are valuable, the research process should include regular opportunities to share knowledge and experiences.

Challenge 4: Sex-disaggregated data alone does not convey the differences between men's and women's experiences, or the socio-cultural and historical influences that shape them.

Qualitative and participatory research can facilitate learning about the construction of masculine and feminine identities, as well as how inequalities influence expressions of power, control, and forms of violence. Gender-sensitive qualitative research can increase the relevance and legitimacy of quantitative data.

Challenge 5: It can be difficult to establish meaningful entry points for engaging on gender and violence. These entry points can come from daily life, such as housing and accessing services. Adequate time and space should be allowed for participants to engage with these issues.

Implications

Researchers should mainstream gender analysis in their studies, allowing sufficient opportunities to reflect and discuss gendered issues, norms, and assumptions, both at the personal and professional level. In doing so, gender researchers can increase opportunities for collaborating with others who are less interested or experienced. This can increase understanding of how and why gender analysis is important when studying urban violence, and the differing experiences of men, women, and children.

Gender analysis requires adopting appropriate research methods. Qualitative approaches are well suited to exploring the dynamics and specificities of men's and women's different experience, and can inform and strengthen the integrity of quantitative research.

For gender analysis to become an integral part of the research process, researchers must be convinced that it is important to achieving their objectives. Commitment to integrating gender analysis can empower those involved to go beyond the generation of knowledge to the formulation of policy recommendations and other actions.

About this learning summary

This learning summary is based on the analysis of data gathered for a mid-term evaluation of the program. The data was compiled from a document review, observations, and discussions at the Safe and Inclusive Cities Mid-Term Workshop, as well as informant interviews with researchers, IDRC experts, and external stakeholders. The evaluation team used these data sources to compile and code a qualitative analysis using the key evaluation questions. Through this process, the evaluators analyzed experiences from across the program to find patterns and resonances that point to important challenges for the entire group.

This learning summary presents some of SAIC's challenges in including gender in research and their implications for SAIC or other global knowledge networks. It does not, however, describe every challenge or include examples of these challenges across the program. The learning case encourages critical analysis of challenges within SAIC and identifies possibilities for peer learning and future exchange.

Safe and Inclusive Cities is a global research effort jointly funded by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) and Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC). Launched in 2012, it supports 15 multidisciplinary teams working in 40 cities across sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Latin America to build evidence on the connections between urban violence, poverty, and inequalities.



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