

Country: Africa Region

VOPE name: Africa Gender and Development Evaluators Network (AGDEN)

Contact person: Enid Kaabunga, Board Chair, email: ekaabunga@gmail.com

Florence Etta, Vice Chair of the Board, email: feanywhere@yahoo.co.uk

Title: *The Rough Road of Pioneering Change: AGDEN's Engagement With Gender and Human Rights Responsive Development Evaluation*

Background

AGDEN was formed in 2002 as a bilingual special interest group of the African Evaluators Association (AfrEA) by UNIFEM (now UN Women) and the African Evaluators Association, with the aim that AGDEN would be a leader in providing expert evaluators who could bring a strong gender and human rights approach to evaluations in Africa, which is still its mandate. In 2007, it was registered in Kenya as a company limited by guarantee, and has since then run a secretariat in Nairobi, Kenya.

AGDEN has evolved from a core group of 14 members in 2002 to a network of 107 members from at least 18 countries in Africa, the United Kingdom and Canada. Membership is open to practitioners and leaders in gender and/or human rights and monitoring and development evaluation in Africa.

AGDEN was registered in Kenya in 2007 as a Not-for-profit organisation with no share capital. The AGDEN Secretariat is currently hosted by the E-Development Resource Centre, 604 Limuru Road, Muthaiga, Nairobi.

A 9-member Steering Committee sets policy and direction while activities are undertaken by members and other consultants. The Steering Committee (SC) is headed by a Chair person. Other non executive SC members represent north, south, west, and east Africa, as well as francophone and Anglophone Africa.

In its ten year history to date, AGDEN has had 3 Chair persons:

Adeline Sibanda; 2002 - 2006

Florence Etta; 2006 – 2012 &

Enid Kaabunga; 2012

Strategy and implementation

1. Contribution towards the mandatory monitoring of how gender equality is addressed at a national level

AGDEN is a continental organisation and much of its early work up to date (since 2004) has had a continental scope.

In 2006, AGDEN, working as a member of the UNIFEM Africa expert group on gender and the New Aid Modalities created a set of gender sensitive indicators together with an accountability and assessment framework for gender equality of the Paris Declaration and other aid instruments. These indicators were reviewed and revised by AGDEN at a workshop held in Nairobi in 2007, and presented at a handful of international for a namely; the Africa regional preparatory meeting for the third High Level Summit on Aid Effectiveness in Kigali, Rwanda; the CSO preparatory meetings of the 3rd High Level Summit on Aid Effectiveness in Accra Ghana in September 2007; the African Women's Regional Consultative Meeting on Aid Effectiveness and Gender Equality in Nairobi in 2008; and the 6th GENDERNET meeting at the OECD headquarters in Paris in 2008.

The AGDEN indicators influenced the work of the EC and UNIFEM as well as the indicators that were proposed in the optional protocol for the final Monitoring Survey of the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action in 2010. The results of this monitoring survey were presented at the Fourth High Level Forum in Busan in 2011, where members states committed to:

a) *Accelerate and deepen efforts to collect, disseminate, harmonise and make full use of data disaggregated by sex to inform policy decisions and guide investments, ensuring in turn that public expenditures are targeted appropriately to benefit both women and men.*

b) *Integrate targets for gender equality and women's empowerment in accountability mechanisms, grounded in international and regional commitments.*

c) *Address gender equality and women's empowerment in all aspects of development efforts, including peace-building and state-building.*

2. Contribution towards evaluation standards

Over the last four years, AGDEN has continued to popularise primarily the AGDEN approach to Rights & Gender Responsive Evaluation which it has been researching and developing as well as the African Evaluation Guidelines (AEG). The AGDEN approach and the AEG are included in the AGDEN toolkit on "Gender and Human Rights Responsive Monitoring and Evaluation", produced early in 2012 which is the basis for the AGDEN trainings given at workshop with the same title.

3. Plans to contribute towards policy and other decision-makers' commitment to evidence based policy making

AGDEN plans to extend its reach to politicians, public administrators and other entities that influence policy making and implementation to develop their capacity to understand and use evidence on gender equality, which is produced by M&E systems. This will be done through training workshops, and other forums for dialogue, both electronically and face to face. A proposal has been developed for this, and AGDEN is currently seeking support to operationalize it Africa-wide.

- Developing/strengthening a sustainable strategy to enhance individual capacities to conduct credible and useful evaluations, e.g. by partnering with national/local universities and/or centres of excellence to deliver training on evaluation; organizing workshops led by local experts; organizing webinars with international speakers; designing and delivering e-learning programmes; administering mentoring programmes; etc.

1. Development of a toolkit

AGDEN has developed a toolkit on Gender and Human Rights Responsive Monitoring and Evaluation. This toolkit is targeted at development practitioners and provides information and practical guides on how to conduct monitoring and evaluation that is responsive to women and human rights. It was developed by experts in gender, human rights and participatory monitoring and evaluation from Africa, and has undergone several revisions to ensure that it is relevant to practitioners in all regions of Africa. The toolkit or parts of it will be published as soon as possible plans are at an advanced stage for this.

2. Training workshops for evaluation practitioners

Over the last four years, i.e. since 2008 AGDEN has conducted seven training workshops in Kenya, South Africa (x2), Jordan, Czech republic, Ghana, and Burkina Faso for no fewer than 150 participants from civil society organizations, academic institutions, as well as government agencies. The workshops are all aimed at building capacity of participants to conduct monitoring and evaluation that is responsive to gender equality and human rights.

3. Panels and presentations at evaluation conferences and forums

Since 2002, AGDEN has hosted panels and made presentations that were aimed at eliciting dialogue and discussion on gender and human rights in monitoring and evaluation. Since 2009 AGDEN has been a regular host of panels, workshops, exhibitions or papers at the most significant continental Evaluation conferences; African Evaluation Association and the South Africa Monitoring and Evaluation Association. AGDEN was the second place winner of the AfrEA 2012 Member development prize.

AGDEN has also made a showing at international conferences hosting panels, giving workshops and discussion fora at: IDEAS in 2009 & 2011; the European Evaluation Society conferences in 2010, and the American Evaluation Association conferences.

4. Online discussions

AGDEN has a lively email discussion list and in October 2010 formed a web-based Community of Practice for gender, human rights and evaluation practitioners and professionals. This group is currently in the process of reactivation and re-engineering.

5. Web-based dissemination of information

AGDENews the AGDEN electronic newsletter has been in publication since 2009. Twelve volumes have been distributed to date online to members and other evaluation practitioners. The newsletter contains updates on AGDEN activities as well as information about worthwhile events and discussions in the fields of gender, development, monitoring and evaluation. Through its website, AGDEN also shares information and links related to its core mandate of gender, human rights and evaluation. These are available to all visitors of the website.

- Strengthening equity-focused and gender-sensitive evaluation systems and evaluations, e.g. by promoting issues related to cultural sensitivity, equity, social justice, empowerment, transformation and gender, within the evaluation community.
 1. Strengthening equity-focused and gender-sensitive evaluation systems and evaluations is the core mandate of AGDEN. Through its toolkit, training workshops, conference presentations, and online discussions, AGDEN conducts research studies, discusses, advocates and trains for the integration of the key principles of gender and human rights (empowerment, equality, non-discrimination, transparency, accountability, participation) into the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development interventions, programmes and/or policies. AGDEN has constructed a model for how these principles can be integrated with the 5 OECD-DAC evaluation criteria of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, and impact.

2. Research

For AGDEN research is a primary starting point for all the training. Each AGDEN workshop includes a participatory action research activity with participant evaluation practitioners. The research focuses on the practices, utility, and relevance of integrating gender equality and human rights into development evaluation. The research also expects (aims) to identify capacity needs of practitioners so as to ensure that the training offered is relevant to the context.

In 2009 AGDEN on commission by IOD PARC conducted a rapid assessment of M&E Capacity Strengthening Mechanisms For Development Evaluation In Sub-Saharan Africa Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

Please also describe how your VOPE strengthened its own institutional capacity to be able to deliver on the three issues identified above.

1. Training of members

AGDEN aims to ensure that all its members have the capacity to practice, train and advise on gender and human rights in monitoring and evaluation at the national, international level. AGDEN therefore targets its members when selecting participants for the training workshops, and has conducted the following training for members:

- Training in Outcome Mapping
- Training on new Aid modalities and the Paris Declaration
- Gender and Rights Based Monitoring and Evaluation in Development Practice
- Evaluation Proposal writing

2. Institutional Assessments

To date two institutional assessments have been conducted, one on the organizational systems and procedures, and another on the organizational readiness for learning and evaluation. Through these assessments, AGDEN identified key areas for institutional strengthening and is currently working to strengthen the weakness identified and further strengthen the good practices.

What were (are) **three key challenges/bottlenecks** that hampered your VOPE's capacity to contribute to the above strategy?

1. Funding & Resources base

AGDEN depends largely on donor support to conduct its activities. Even though a membership fee is charged, this constitutes less than 5% of the annual budget. The organization therefore experiences periods of very low activity when no funded project is being implemented. To date, the organization has received most of its funding from UN Women and the Ford Foundation. The organization is however pursuing relationships with other funding partners, in addition to strengthening and improving its consulting service as a way of improving sustainability.

2. Language

AGDEN is a bilingual network, but to date conducting activities in French has remained a major challenge despite having a sizeable number of French speaking members. The network secretariat is located in an Anglophone country and key AGDEN documents are currently only in English. Some mitigating strategies so far instituted include: election of a francophone secretary, and a francophone representative on the board; translation of the AGDEN toolkit into French; and sending out communications in both English and French to members on the mailing list.

3. Virtual Membership Network

AGDEN is a virtual membership network which depends immensely on ICT tools and infrastructure for its work and administration. GDEN has four ICT- related challenges namely;

- Members need to be ICT savvy to be adequately and appropriately engaged. This cannot always be guaranteed. E.g. seeking member information and updates of member documents such as cvs is often a major difficulty.
- Secondly managing and coordinating member contribution to tasks present ICT related challenges and delays
- On account of its continental spread, timing for meetings is often quite delicate
- AGDEN needs special ICT applications which need to be developed by Africa ICT developers and that has not yet happened

4. AGDEN Management Modus Operandi

AGDEN governance in particular oversight functions such as those currently undertaken by the Steering Committee are all conducted on a completely voluntary basis. Sometimes duties involve expenses at other times it is unclear if some other human rights are not being infringed for an organisation that is involved in upholding and protecting human rights this is that o small challenge.

Progress and results:

1. Growth in institutional capacity

AGDEN has experienced significant growth in membership, especially over the last 5 years. In the past year alone, membership has grown by 50%, and almost all the new members are trained in conducting gender human rights responsive evaluations. What this means for us is that there is growth in both our institutional capacity and the capacity of development evaluators in Africa

2. Increased knowledge among evaluation practitioners

Pre and post training assessments conducted by AGDEN have shown that there has been an increase in the knowledge of the evaluation practitioners reached. For example, following the last training that was conducted in Accra, there was a reported increase in knowledge of practitioners on human rights principles (30% pre-course to 92% post-course); key gender equality concepts (30% pre-course to 92% post-course); and tools for mainstreaming gender and human rights in monitoring and evaluation (59% pre-course to 92% post-course)

Key enabling factors:

1. Committed/Visionary Leadership

For many years, AGDEN has had a President and Steering Committee that are committed to its vision and mission. They have made great sacrifices and have shown incredible zeal to push AGDEN to new heights. Their commitment has been instrumental in the growth of the Network.

2. Strategic Partnerships

Since its formation, AGDEN has maintained important strategic partnerships with organizations like UN Women (previously UNIFEM) and Ford Foundation. These organizations have believed in the worth of AGDEN's work and continued to provide support from sponsorship of members to participate in international evaluators' meetings to more recently funding for 1-2 year development interventions.

3. Highly skilled membership

AGDEN membership is composed of experts in gender, human rights and M&E located in many countries of Africa. Because of this, AGDEN is able to develop and deliver products that are relevant to the target countries, and of high professional standard e.g. the development of the toolkit involved members from 6 different countries.

Innovations and lessons learned: Is there any particular innovation and/or lesson learned you would like to share as advice to leaders of other VOPEs?

1. AGDEN has developed the AGDEN approach to Rights & Gender Responsive Evaluation; This is an INNOVATION.

2. Documenting AGDEN Experiences for Posterity

Because AGDEN is a growing network with membership from various countries, there are few opportunities for its members to have face to face meetings. Similarly, the members of the steering committees are all in different countries. As such, unless a member is involved in a particular activity, they are not aware of what was involved in implementing the activity. AGDEN has therefore implemented strategies like documentation of activities in project reports, and using the bimonthly e-newsletter to share with members.

3. Formalize solutions to challenges

At the time that AGDEN was setup, there was no list or template of the tools that would be required to maintain a network and its secretariat. Over the years, AGDEN has devised methods to overcome challenges as they presented themselves, thereby strengthening its secretariat. AGDEN developed an operations and procedures manual that formalize AGDENs management processes, and as the network grows further, these are being developed into stand alone policy and procedures manuals for issues like human resource management, finance management and other tasks like management of trainings.

Next steps:

1. Future plans for strengthening the enabling environment

AGDEN is planning to build the capacity of policy makers and other decision makers to understand and interrogate the responsiveness of policies as well as policy processes to women and more generally human rights through training and facilitation of dialogue on gender and rights responsive evaluation. This work is awaiting funding and is planned to start off in Benin and Kenya before being rolled out to other countries.

AGDEN plans to conduct research on the policy environment in select countries to determine the factors which influence and/or hinder the use of evidence on women's rights. This information will be used to design future activities.

2. Future plans to strengthen individual capacities

AGDEN plans to continue conducting training on gender and human rights responsive evaluation for development practitioners throughout Africa and on invitation; the rest of the world. Indications from AGDEN research show that the need for this training is still high.

AGDEN is currently revitalising its web-based activities, and will rejuvenate the CoP for moderated discussions on gender equality in monitoring and evaluation.

3. Future Plans to advocate for equity focused and gender sensitive evaluation systems
AGDEN is developing plans to work with grassroots organizations to set up evaluation and learning systems that are gender and human rights responsive.

4. Future plans to strengthen AGDEN capacity
AGDEN plans to continue with its institutional strengthening of efforts and procedures that support the structure and work of the organization.

AGDEN also plans to continue to train its members, and is planning web-based training offerings.