Developing an Evidence Collection Process for Gender Integration

For the project: ***Intersectionality-Informed Framework for Implementation of Effective Gender Integration in WSH***

Introduction

A cursory glance at the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) ascertains the commitment towards universal access. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs include several targets related to inclusive societies and are committed to the 'leave no one behind' agenda. This political commitment needs to be translated into actions and measures to ensure universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible cities. Traditional planning approaches have failed to address the challenges of rapid urbanisation, as well as the exclusion, informality and vulnerability which it brings in its wake. In this regard, the planning processes must align themselves to larger agendas of social inclusion and equity. The inclusive planning process is an integrated approach encompassing resilient, sustainable, affordable and accessible solutions to the challenges faced by the vulnerable groups. This approach inspires an institutional delivery mechanism that facilitates participation of all institutions and stakeholders—government, the private sector, and civil society—who have the capacity to ensure inclusive urban service delivery. Thus, it has become increasingly important to closely examine the barriers that hinder or halt access to inclusive urban service delivery

Collecting evidence in a disaggregated manner not only makes a case towards strengthening social inclusion but also acts as an instrument to monitor progress towards the same. Paying attention to the most vulnerable requires detailed data that zooms in on these groups. Along these lines, disaggregated data is key to effective planning, as aggregated data may show progress for the larger population but might mask the lack of (or extremely slow) progress of the vulnerable population that is harder to reach. In addition to tracking who is left behind, disaggregated data also helps in determining the most effective action/intervention in helping them catch up.

Evidence Collection Methods

The evidence collection process involves two types of evidence/data that are collected in any study: primary data and secondary data. Primary data means first-hand data collected from the original source for a specific purpose. The questions asked are designed to elicit the data that will help researchers with their study. On the other hand, secondary data is collected from secondary sources (that have previously collected the data), such as print media, published material, etc. In order to capture elements of human experience that influence access to safe and equitable basic services, the first-hand data from the ground stands to be more reliable.

Primary data allows researchers to concentrate on the aspects that are the prime focus of the study (omitting details that are not pertinent to the study), thus making the sorting and assessment of the information collected easier. However, primary data collection is also associated with larger cost implications, problems of bias and dishonesty while collecting data.

Primary data collection methods can be divided into two groups: quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative data collection methods are based in mathematical calculations in various formats, while qualitative research is closely associated with observations and other elements that are non-quantifiable. The choice between quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection depends on

the area and nature of research. Numerous methods are used to minimise errors in data, and in some cases a combination of methods are advisable.

Developing an Evidence Collection Process for IIGMF

The Center for Study of Science, Technology and Policy (CSTEP); the Administrative Staff College of India (ASCI); and the Centre for Advocacy and Research (CFAR) are currently engaged in a collaborative project titled 'Intersectionality-Informed Framework for Implementation of Effective Gender Mainstreaming in WSH: Andhra Pradesh', supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF). The project aims to strengthen agencies and advance policies, regulations and processes for increased accessibility to sanitation services. This will be done by demonstrating an inclusive and implementable framework.

The framework is validated and calibrated through on-ground evidence from 3 cities of Andhra Pradesh (Anantapur, Kovvur and Narsapur), as this approach champions a highly contextualised look at problems and gaps in accessibility. By analysing the differences and similarities between these different contexts, the framework identifies pressing factors that have the greatest impact on access to sanitation. The project employed mixed methods that combine recce surveys, household and random surveys, focus group discussions (FGDs), vulnerability assessment and key informant interviews to ensure inclusion.

Given below are the different data collection methods (refer Figure 1) that were adopted for development of IIGMF and its implementation in the three towns in Andhra Pradesh. The objective of this note is to guide other cities in selecting an appropriate data collection method for implementation and scaling-up of IIGMF.

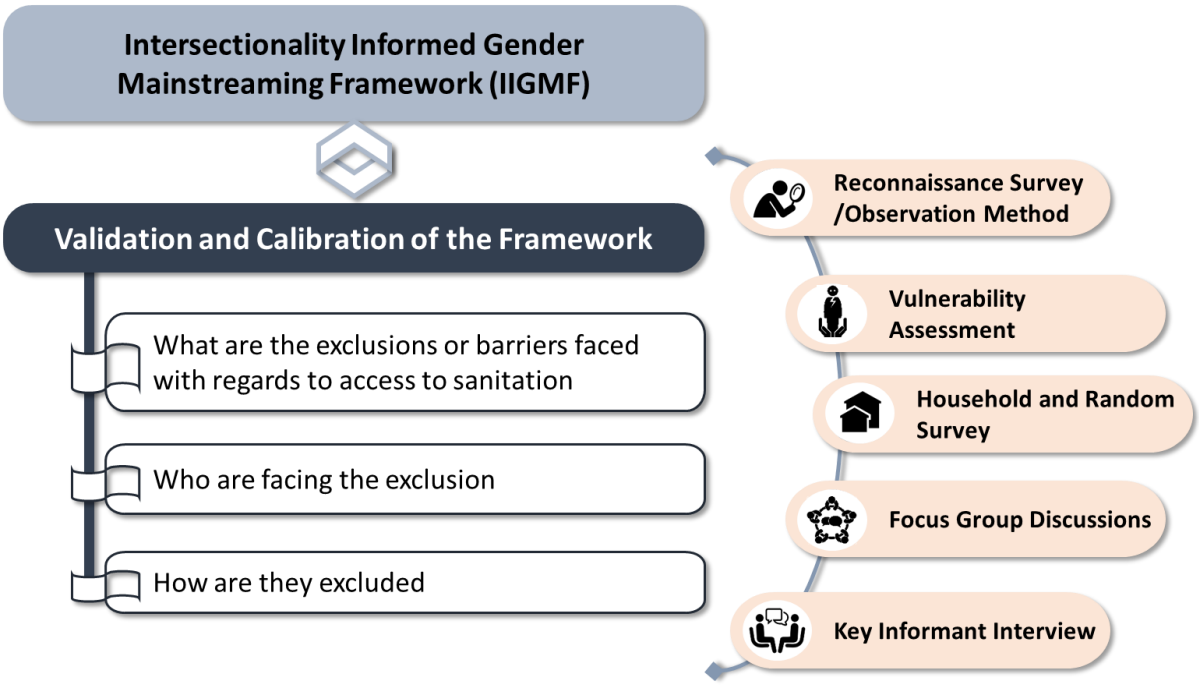

Figure 1 Evidence collection process for IIGMF

Reconnaissance Survey/Observation Method

Observation is a common method used in all sciences, whether physical or social. In this method, data is collected based on the personal observations of the surveyors. The investigator/surveyor carefully observes and interacts with the people to understand their behaviour and the surrounding environment. Observation as a data collection method can be structured or unstructured. Information received from this method can become a basis for a detailed data collection process such as household surveys, FGDs, etc.

There are three main types of observational methods based primarily on the extent to which the surveyors/investigators interact with or control the environment: Naturalistic Observation (the surveyor typically attempts to carry out the observations without the knowledge of the participants), Participant Observation (the surveyors intervene in the environment in some manner, inserting themselves into the group as a member) and Controlled Observation (surveyors will explain the purpose of the study, and the participants know they are being observed). In all the cases, preparation of an observation checklist will ensure that the investigators/surveyors have covered the ground/environment completely.

Limitations

This method is time-consuming compared with other methods of data collection. Moreover, results of this method could be distorted with the personal bias of the investigator/surveyor.

Experience from the Project

For the IIGMF project, this method was employed at the very beginning of the evidence collection process. The observations provided insights into the overall access to basic services and the day-to-day issues faced by the community. The template for the observation checklist developed for the project has been provided at the end of this document[1].

Vulnerability Assessment

The vulnerability assessment is a structured reconnaissance survey developed specifically for the project. It involves the process of defining, identifying, classifying and prioritising vulnerabilities. Vulnerability is the quality or state of being exposed to the possibility of being attacked or harmed, either physically or emotionally. There are many dimensions to vulnerability and their assessment helps in prioritising interventions. This method involves mostly qualitative information. For the assessment, the indicators of social vulnerability were mapped against indicators of infrastructure deficiency. The following steps were used in carrying out the assessment:

- Identification of indicators for social and infrastructural vulnerability
- Collection of indicator-related information from ULB and MEPMA, community resource persons, etc.
- Cross-validation of information collected
- Analysis of the information

[1] Will be added as an annexure to this document

Advantages

The strength of this method lies in understanding the hidden dimensions of various vulnerabilities and analysing (at a broader level) the factors by which people fall into and get out of them. It helps in identifying various marginalised groups and assessing the overall access to basic services.

Limitations

Results of this method could be distorted with the personal bias of the investigators/surveyors.

Experience from the Project

For this project, the vulnerability assessment was conducted using a community-led assessment method—Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA). In this method, slums were assessed using various techniques, such as conversational interviews, community meetings with representatives, semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, participant observation and scoring/ranking the indicators. Indicators such as literacy levels, presence of disabled people, women-headed households, marginalised communities and strength of SHGs were used to measure social vulnerability. Similarly, infrastructure deficiency was measured with indicators such as water supply, street lights, faecal sludge management, solid waste collection and segregation, drainage system, status of individual household toilets and maintenance of community/public toilets.

Vulnerability assessment of 114 notified slums across 3 towns was conducted; 32 (28%) slums were relatively better serviced, 63 (55%) had basic/limited service and 19 (17%) had weak service. The slums with weak and limited service were given a high priority for the future (for recommending interventions).The assessment also helped in identifying marginalised groups across 3 towns. A note describing the detailed methodology and results of the vulnerability assessment conducted for the project has been provided at the end of this document[2].

Household Survey

Household surveys have become a key data source for social phenomena and are among the most flexible methods of primary data collection. Households are used as sampling units in area-based sampling strategies. In household surveys, part of the population is selected from which data is collected or observations are made, and then inferences are made for the entire population. Depending on the nature of the project/study and the resources available, the survey is carried out either by the project/study group itself or subcontracted to an external agency. The survey can be conducted with paper-based questionnaires or online application–based questionnaires. The questionnaires are always designed to ask short closed-ended questions. The following steps were involved in carrying out the survey:

- Definition of survey objective and target population
- Identification of appropriate sample size and respondents, ensuring that the sample size allows the research team to draw valid conclusions from the results
- Preparation of survey questionnaire, ensuring that a majority of the issues are captured
- Training of interviews/surveyors
- Piloting and re-adjusting the questionnaire
- Implementation of the survey, ensuring a high response rate

[2] Will be added as an annexure to this document

- Interpretation of results from the data collected

Advantages

- Surveys have capability of representing a large population. The data collected possesses a better portrayal of the relative characteristics of the general population involved in the study.
- Surveys produce statistical information of better quality by engaging competent, well-trained interviewers/surveyors it is also easier to provide better supervision and the supervisor/interviewer.
- Household sample surveys offer greater scope and flexibility with respect to the depth of investigation. Flexibility of data collection instruments allows researchers to accommodate a larger number of questions on a variety of topics.
- Surveys provide all participants with a standardised stimulus; thus, there is less or no bias within the investigators/surveyors.

Limitations

- The overall cost of a survey is generally higher than other methods, especially if an external survey agency is appointed and study sites are at distant locations.
- Surveys generally require large amounts of manpower as well as logistical and material resources.
- If the sample is large or if the questionnaire is long and complicated, skilled personnel are required to create online application–based surveys.
- Questions in surveys are always standardised. However, these general questions may not be always relevant for all participants

Experience from the Project

For the project, the survey aimed at exploring the three selected cities with regards to addressing the issue of intersectionality within and beyond gender. The sample mainly comprised slum households. Both notified and non-notified slum households were covered as part of the household survey to include all axes of exclusion, especially the ones stemming from status of citizenship or legality. This is important in the present scenario of various government programmes seeking to go beyond notified slums. The questionnaire was designed in context of access to sanitation with the objective of answering the following questions: what are the exclusions or barriers faced, who are facing the exclusion, and how are they excluded? The survey significantly assisted in our understanding of the access situation while simultaneously helping us identify any missing links in completing the proposed framework.

It was observed that the surveyed slums had access to better facilities than slums found in larger cities. It was also determined that the survey did not highlight the vulnerabilities of the marginalised groups; thus, a more targeted approach (such as FGDs and KIIs) was required to capture such vulnerabilities. A template of the survey questionnaire and the survey plan prepared for this project can be referred to at the end of this document[3].

[3] Will be added as an annexure to this document later

Random Survey

In a random survey, sampling units are selected at random so that the opportunity of every sampling unit being included in the sample is the same. One method of doing this is by a place-based sample survey. This method involves selection of samples from common places or landmark locations across the study areas to capture the floating population, beyond the household survey. This method intends to capture the experience of people other than the household experiences, such as while being in transit, or to capture the highly vulnerable population such as the homeless people and rag pickers. Employing this method requires a separate questionnaire designed to collect the necessary information in the shortest possible time.

Advantages

This method, if applied properly, helps to reduce any bias involved (compared with other methods).

Experience from the project

For the IIGMF project, random surveys were targeted at the 'floating population' and population without any formal housing, to understand the sanitation problems faced by people beyond the household.

The survey was conducted across different landmarks in the study cities, such as bus stands, railway stations, markets, areas of public congregation (parks, religious sites, cinemas etc.), junctions (addressing the homeless) and central business districts. It was ensured that the sample collected at each place is statistically significant and has an equal representation of individuals of different genders and age groups. The questionnaire was designed to be short, with a time requirement of not more than 3 minutes for the respondent.

It was observed from the survey that the propensity of PT usage is varied across all three cities. People are intentionally making efforts to avoid using toilets in transit. Lack of proper access to toilets, poor maintenance, harassment/eve-teasing, broken latches, etc. are some of the major issues that people face. A template of the random survey questionnaire and the survey plan prepared for this project can be referred to at the end of this document[4].

Focus Group Discussions

An FGD is a qualitative method to gather people from similar backgrounds or experiences to discuss a specific subject. The discussion is guided by a moderator (or a group facilitator), who asks broad questions to elicit responses and stimulate discussion among the participants. The goal is to generate the maximum number of opinions, suggestions, etc. within a given time period. The order in which the topics are covered is flexible, but the discussion usually starts with general issues and slowly flows into more specific ones. FGDs are generally guided by three types of questions: probe questions (which introduce participants to the discussion topic), follow-up questions (which delve further into the discussion topic and participants' opinions) and exit questions (which try to ensure that facilitator did not miss anything). FGDs are used when an issue needs to be understood at a deeper level than can be assessed with a survey. An FGD mostly adds to the existing knowledge or helps in understanding the 'why' and 'how' of issues. The following steps are involved in carrying out an FGD:

[4] Will be added as an annexure to this document later

- Identification of groups with similar background or experiences, groups with similar vulnerabilities, etc.
- Invitation to participants using key local contacts, who may be a municipal functionary, local community leader, SHG member, school teacher, senior member of a household, local CBO/NGO representatives, etc.
- Preparation of probe, follow-up and exit questions/points
- Training of moderators/facilitators in the use of interpersonal communication tools to get information
- Selection of a venue and time that is accessible and convenient to the participants

Advantages

- Ideas and opinions flow freely without any rules and regulations; thus, the scope for new ideas to emerge increases manifold.
- FGDs are flexible; one can work as per convenience.
- Moderators can make changes whenever required, in order to facilitate discussions in a better manner.

Limitations

- Since FGD data is qualitative, it cannot necessarily be generalised to the population.
- Facilitators must ensure that their bias is not evident. Otherwise, it will veer the trajectory of the conversation.

Experience from the Project

For the IIGMF project, FGDs were a key tool in understanding the exclusions faced by the most vulnerable groups. The objective was to understand the opportunities for integrating voices of women and other vulnerable groups in sanitation decision-making. To ensure that all marginalised groups are included in this process, two types of FGDs were proposed: FGDs for highly excluded communities and common FGDs in the slums. Exclusive FGDs were proposed for the specific socially excluded communities identified from the vulnerability assessment and surveys. Common FGDs were conducted across slums (among the highly vulnerable slums) to seek participation from all social groups across gender, age and ability.

It was observed from the exclusive FGDs that a majority of the marginalised groups, such as female construction workers, fisher folk and rag pickers were vulnerable in their place of work due to the lack of access to toilets. They prefer to consume less food and not drink adequate water so that they do not need a toilet till they reach their home, or resort to open defecation, which has serious health implications. However, the common slum-based FGDs suggested that most slum communities have individual household toilets and the rest resort to open defecation. In spite of the presence of community toilets, they practice open defecation due to the poor maintenance of these toilets and unreliable availability of water. A guidance document suggesting discussion points, overall methodology to be followed and the implementation process for the FGDs is provided at the end of the document[5].

[5] Will be added as an annexure to this document later

Key Informant Interview

Key informant interviews are semi-structured, qualitative, in-depth interviews with people who are properly aware of the situation in a community or city. The main purpose of such interviews is to collect detailed information from a wide range of people—such as community leaders, residents, members of community support structures (NGO/SHG/SLF/TLF/CBOs), members from the ULB and other government agencies, etc.—who have first-hand knowledge about the community. These people can provide insights on the nature of problems and provide recommendations for solutions. Key informant interviews can be useful in various scenarios, such as when generating recommendations is the key purpose, to examine a specialised system or process, to further interpret quantitative data about the how and why of quantitative findings, and also to gather sensitive information when cultural barriers make survey or focus group research difficult. Employing this method requires a set of questions tailored to the profile of the informant in order to capture specific information.

Advantages

- This method provides the opportunity to establish a rapport and build trust.
- It improves clarity of ideas and information.
- It can be easily combined with other methods in order improve the data collection process.
- It offers a higher possibility of collecting information from minority or silent majority viewpoints.
- Such an interview helps in getting a community- or expert-level perspective.

Limitations

- Informants may provide information tainted by their bias.
- Information collected through this method may be difficult to quantify or organise.
- Relationship with the informant may influence the information obtained.
- The method is time-consuming compared with other methods, as substantial time is required to select appropriate informants and build trust.

Experience from the Project

For the project, such interviews were targeted at members of municipalities, MEPMA, community members (who are not covered in the FGDs), Primary Health Centres, orphanages, night shelters and old-age homes. These interviews presented the government's perspective on gender and other vulnerable groups in the context of access to sanitation; they also enabled the project personnel to build a rapport with them. With this familiarity, they were more approachable for implementing strategic interventions. A set of questions for the project's stakeholders is provided at the end of this document[6].

[6] Will be added as an annexure to this document later