



Evidence Brief 3. Why Gender Equality is Mission Critical to Development Effectiveness

Until women and girls are liberated from poverty and injustice, all our goals – peace, security, sustainable development – stand in jeopardy.¹

Overview

This Brief addresses Terms of Reference a, c, d and e. This is the third of three ACFID submissions to the Aid Effectiveness Review covering²:

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Summary of Reforms

- 3.1. AusAID should formulate, implement and fully resource a Gender Equality Policy.
- 3.2. AusAID should ensure gender equality policy commitments are taken into account throughout the scale-up of AusAID activities and that they flow through to program implementation and are properly resourced.
- 3.3. AusAID should actively work to increase women's participation in all levels of development decision-making including in conflict and post-conflict situations, national policy fora and consultations on national development plans and budgets.
- 3.4. AusAID should ensure that programs aimed at advancing gender equality acknowledge the necessity for the involvement of men and entire communities.
- 3.5. AusAID should recognise the necessity for core funding within government and NGO communities for entities focusing on gender equality and ensure participation mechanisms for CSOs and NGOs alike for consultation in national development policies.
- 3.6. The Government should work to strengthen the capacity of relevant line Ministries, particularly influential ones such as Ministries of Finance – to ensure gender responsive budgeting – and Statistical Offices to ensure compilation and analysis of sex-disaggregated data.

¹ UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon in UNIFEM (2010), 'Gender Justice: Key to Achieving the Millennium Development Goals', p.4.

² This paper was authored by Meghan Cooper of UN Women Australia and Barbara O'Dwyer of WILPF with research assistance by Rachel Phillips and edited by Jo Crawford from IWDA on behalf of the ACFID Gender Equity Working Group.



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- 3.7. AusAID country strategies should include gender analysis at all stages of formulation and implementation.
- 3.8 AusAID should improve gender focus and responsiveness in monitoring and evaluation strategies.
- 3.9 All AusAID program reviews and evaluation should include gender equality as an overarching goal.
- 3.10 The Government should recognise the need for sustainable funding, including increased core funding, to CSOs and NGOs who advocate and work for gender equality.
- 3.11 The Government should commit to multi-year funding support for a sector-level Gender Advocacy and Support Unit to complement the work of the AusAID gender unit in improving the development effectiveness and sector capacity to genuinely promote opportunities for all.

Why gender equality is important – improving outcomes for women improves aid effectiveness

Gender equality is a human right, with every woman and girl entitled to live in dignity and in freedom from fear.³ It is also a development goal in itself, and a means of achieving other development goals.

In many countries women have fewer educational and employment opportunities than men, earn only 75 per cent of their male counterparts, are often denied access to finance and endure social restrictions that limit their chances for advancement. In some developing countries women still cannot vote, own property or move outside their home without a male family member, constituting a very significant constraint on both the enjoyment of human rights and on sustainable development. Empowering women to participate fully in social and economic life across all sectors is essential to build stronger economies, achieve internationally agreed goals for development and sustainability, and improve the quality of life for women, men, families and communities.

ACFID believes that gender equality is central to sustainable, effective development and consequently that gender should be central – core business – in Australia’s development assistance program.⁴

Gender equality outcomes are signs of effective aid because women tend to be the poorest and most disadvantaged citizens of developing countries. States that fail to promote gender equality tend to experience slower economic growth and more persistent poverty than those that promote equality.⁵

The promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women is also a key goal within the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which underpin the Australian aid program.⁶ A lack of progress in advancing gender equality and empowering women will hinder global progress in meeting each of the MDGs. The stalled progress in girls’ secondary schooling means foregoing reductions in fertility, maternal mortality, child mortality, malnutrition and other impediments to economic growth.⁷ A lack of gender parity in primary and secondary schooling can lead to lost wages, reduced labour force participation and lower productivity. It can lead to higher rates of child mortality, malnutrition and maternal mortality amongst less educated women, and an increase in the incidence of HIV/AIDS.

³ UNFPA (2011), ‘Gender Equality: A Cornerstone of Development’.

⁴ The 2005 Paris Declaration, though not directly mentioning gender equality – a fact which itself reflects the gap between the rhetorical and the actual priority accorded to gender equality – provides opportunities for advancing gender equality through its five principles of ownership, alignment, harmonization, managing for results and mutual accountability. These principles are an important part of the evolving aid effectiveness agenda to reduce poverty through reaching gender equality. See further CIDA (2008), ‘CIDA’s Policy on Gender Equality’.

⁵ DAC, OECD (2002), ‘Gender Equality in SWAPs’.

⁶ AusAID (2011), ‘The Millennium Development Goals: the fight against global poverty and inequality’.

⁷ UNIFEM (2007), ‘State of the World’s Children 2007: Women and Children, the Double Dividend of Gender Equality’. See also Marie Stopes International’s work estimating the wider demographic, health, economic and environmental impact of its family planning and safe abortion services. Corby N, Boler T and Hovig D (2009), *The MSIA Impact Calculator: methodology and assumptions*, Marie Stopes International.

Violence against women underlies many of these challenges and is an obstacle to closing the gender gap and making progress towards all the MDGs.⁸ The 2008 report conducted by the Office for Development Effectiveness (ODE) on violence against women in Melanesia and East Timor produced significant recommendations on this issue.⁹ The priority now is to resource the implementation of those recommendations.¹⁰

With the positive economic and social effects for individuals and communities through the advancement of gender equality, a region or country is likely to become more prosperous; meaning that aid delivered within this area will be more effective, in turn leading to further successful development and enabling countries to make more effective use of any development assistance being provided.

As shown by the World Bank, those programs that pay attention to gender equality greatly enhance development effectiveness, achieving their objectives more often than those programs that ignore women's empowerment and gender equality.¹¹ In other words, there exists a symbiotic relationship between effective aid and gender equality. Without effective aid, gender equality is impossible to achieve, and without gender equality, aid is less effective.

A clear level of commitment to gender equality does appear to exist within AusAID, and the agency has a strategy that ACFID supports and seeks further resources to implement.¹² However, a visible and articulated policy is needed, detailing the implementation and integration of gender equality principles and supported by full resourcing and accountability mechanisms.

Australia's development assistance needs to contribute not just to expanded economic opportunities for women but to improving women's overall circumstances. Similarly, progress towards gender equality needs to be viewed as not just about greater and more secure access to resources, but making visible and valuing the work that is currently rendered invisible, including informal sector work, reproductive and care work.

Ensuring the real and effective involvement of women also requires understanding that economic justice is not just about income and resources but inputs, including time, return on labour and quality of work. Australia's development assistance will not contribute to sustained improvements in well-being only by aiming for growth and formulating some policies for women, or for poor families. Rather, the approach needs to locate equal rights and equal opportunities for everyone at the core of thinking about what to do and how to do it.¹³

Reform 3.1: AusAID should formulate, implement and fully resource a Gender Equality Policy.

The risk of not addressing gender equality

With the substantial scaling up of Australia's aid program, there is the chance to make significant change in the lives of countless women in developing countries. The opportunity to ensure that women continue to benefit equitably from the expanding aid program will be lost unless gender equality is clearly integrated into all planning processes.

Even very limited attention to gender issues in design can make a significant difference to whether women benefit, although local context is critical for sustaining benefits and for making progress towards gender equality. Attention to gender issues in activity design and implementation is essential if we are to increase the likelihood that both women and men will participate and benefit and to ensure that they are not disadvantaged by development activities. Including

⁸ UNIFEM (2009), 'Gender Equality Now – Accelerating the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals', New York.

⁹ ODE (2008), 'Violence against Women in Melanesia and East Timor: Building on Global and Regional Promising Approaches'.

¹⁰ See ACFID 2011-12 Pre-Budget submission -

http://www.acfid.asn.au//resources/docs_resources/docs_submissions/Fact%20Sheet%203%20-%20Reducing%20Violence%20and%20Empowering%20Women.pdf

¹¹ AusAID (2007), 'Gender Equality in Australia's Aid Program- Why and How Report', p. 6.

¹² See Reform 2.17.

¹³ For further discussion, see the recent report from Social Watch, 'Gender in times of crisis: new development paradigm needed', <http://www3.socialwatch.org/node/12049>.

gender equity in design will have little impact unless, for instance, partner government policies and practices are favourable.

Significantly though, activities which have been specifically designed to promote gender equality by strengthening local women's organisations to set and carry out their own agenda for equality show the strongest evidence of strategic and sustainable changes in gender relations. Effective strategies include support for women's analytical, networking and organisation capacity and support for women's advocacy activities with men in local political and social institutions. Frequently, local women's organisations have limited capacity to influence development priorities, and need to be resourced to fulfil this role.¹⁴ In parallel with strengthening local 'demand' for improved gender equality, it is vital to support local capacity to engage constructively with civil society. Accountability of government agencies to civil society is critical for making progress towards gender equality.

The OECD DAC Network on Gender Equality has pointed out that there are concrete risks to development effectiveness from *not* adopting a gender perspective. These include the likelihood that women will not benefit equitably from expanded budgets; new institutions, systems and mechanisms will be developed without recognising their gender dimensions; competing priorities and dominance of a technocratic efficiency approach will limit resources for gender equality; and there will be a continuation of the current gap between policy commitments and policy implementation, resulting in failure to meet gender equality commitments.¹⁵

The continued under-funding of gender equality work despite decades of it being a rhetorical policy priority in our aid framework is itself a reflection of power imbalances in development that contribute to the perpetuation of gender inequality. Many key decision makers and institutions do not acknowledge the gap between policy and commitment on gender equality – the political and corporate leadership and the institutions they lead remain themselves profoundly gendered and in turn ineffective in aid delivery.

Donor ability to influence how partner countries allocate money, including the resources given to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, is likely to decrease as programme aid (budget and sector) increases. The mainstreaming of gender equality can make it more difficult to track what resources are focused on gender equality in the absence of performance frameworks and budget management tools which appropriately track investment of resources. These problems would in part be alleviated through a comprehensive gender policy, which guides the integration of gender equality principles and the application of resources within the aid program.

The national policy fora that donors support runs the risk of being distanced and out of touch with the realities faced by poor men and women, and their needs and interests. Both civil society and UN bodies such as UNIFEM (now part of UN Women) have expressed concerns about the increased risk of women's voices not being heard amongst the wide range of stakeholders engaged in national-level consensus building. Directly investing in civil society is an important part of avoiding this risk, a point which will be elaborated later in this submission.

There is also concern that poor implementation of gender mainstreaming will be perpetuated, further entrenching the cycle of favourable-sounding policy commitments but without a task force or focused attention, specific budget and limited profile in papers and policies, all factors which contribute to the failure of donor and partner countries to meet commitments on gender equality.¹⁶ Successful mainstreaming requires a conscious, consistent and persistent move from policies and goals to programming and operations.¹⁷

¹⁴ DAC (2008), 'Exploring the link between aid effectiveness, gender equality and women's empowerment: Effective Strategies.'

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ DAC Network on Gender Equality (2006), 'Paris Declaration Commitments and Implications for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment'.

¹⁷ For a detailed review of the problem of 'policy evaporation', see Mirijam van Reizen with Maxi Ussar (2005), *Accountability Upside Down: Gender equality in a partnership for poverty eradication*, Eurostep and Social Watch. The report assessed gender policy implementation by nine OECD donors.

Reform 3.2: AusAID should ensure gender equality policy commitments are taken into account throughout the scale-up of AusAID activities and that they flow through to program implementation and are properly resourced.

How the aid program can advance gender equality

Australia's aid program already incorporates the principle of gender equality. It aims to reduce poverty by advancing gender equality and empowering women. AusAID's 2007 Gender Policy highlighted numerous key principles designed to develop lasting and sustainable gender equality and should be implemented as an active and explicit policy within the aid program in order to achieve more effective aid. This point reiterates the recommendation for AusAID to formulate and implement a Gender Equality Policy which is utilised through all AusAID's programmatic work.

ACFID sees the following as key areas of focus for advancing gender equality in the aid program:

- Support for partner countries in developing and implementing trade and financial policies as well as property reforms that reduce gender disparities – such as policies that involve women in natural resource management and support women's access to markets. If financial investments flow in ways that are blind to and do not seek to directly address existing social and economic inequalities and systemic barriers, both economic objectives and gender equality objectives will be compromised.¹⁸
- Supporting initiatives in regard to increased involvement of women in political leadership, decision-making, peace building and democratic processes. Supporting gender equitable approaches to leadership helps to ensure that political and community leaders are accountable and that women participate in political processes and is therefore an important component to advancing gender equality.
- Education as crucial to the promotion and advancement of sustainable gender equality. The positive attitudes of teachers in regard to gender equality, as well as curricula that encourage reflection on gender relations for boys and girls, can serve as important methods for transforming social attitudes on discrimination. Any approach taken towards education must be accompanied by an understanding of the disproportionate time and resource constraints facing young girls, which prevent attention to their education.¹⁹
- The need to address gendered relations and structures for both women and men. Marginalisation, further responsibilities, hostility and sometimes open violence and intensification of gender inequalities are some results of focusing purely on women. Achieving gender equality is a path that must be taken by women and men, girls and boys, and when working to empower women, men need also be involved as this leads to more effective and lasting results within society.²⁰
- Establishing gender equality as core government business. At an institutional level, many governments have not seen gender equality and issues of particular concern for women as a priority part of their mandate or part of government responsibility.²¹ Women's mechanisms are generally located in lower level ministries and departments, have low budgets, are poorly equipped, have low staff numbers (which are usually comprised of women) and rely on donor programs for anything other than core expenses.
- Assessing gender impact needs to be part of the formal process for analysing and reviewing expenditure. In the context of a whole of government approach to Australia's development assistance the Australian Government should review its budget processes so that assessing the gender impact is part of the formal process for analysing and reviewing programs and expenditure. This would support a coherent policy on gender equality. Having a gender budget process in place across government would accelerate Australia's efforts to advance gender equality within and beyond our borders, and improve overall policy effectiveness, transparency and

¹⁸ For further discussion on this issue, see IWDA's submission to the Department of Foreign Affairs regarding the proposed Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER), <http://www.iwda.org.au/au/2009/08/03/iwda-calls-for-gender-analysis-of-pacific-free-trade-agreement-as-essential-to-anticipating-impact-and-effectiveness/>,

¹⁹ See, for example, Raquel Tsukada and Elydia Silva (2009), *Age and Gender Bias in Workloads During the Lifecycle: Evidence from Rural Ghana*, One Pager No. 88, International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth

²⁰ AusAID (2007), p. 11 – 24.

²¹ There is little recognition in Asia and the Pacific of the place of gender equality principles in national planning, as noted in 'Beijing +15: Regional Report on the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action'(2010).

accountability. This would provide an enabling environment for – and help reinforce – the focus on gender equality in the aid program.

- Strengthening approaches to women’s inclusion and involvement in recipient countries. Specifically, Australia should encourage Ministries of Finance in recipient countries to ensure gender responsive budgeting throughout government departments and Statistical Offices in recipient countries to ensure tracking of sex-disaggregated data. It is also crucial to strengthen women’s participation in policy planning and budgeting to ensure integration of gender equality priorities in national development plans. Gender equality should be properly programmed into national development policies and strategies and women’s and community groups should have ample opportunity to participate in these processes.
- Advancing women’s individual agency as the primary mechanism for reaching gender equality. In a context where women face a range of cultural and systemic barriers to participation, women’s organisations provide a key pathway through which individual agency can be promoted and exercised. Such an understanding of gender equality and the role of collective action in creating space for change is crucial to a rights-based and inclusive approach to any aid program.

Reform 3.3: AusAID should actively work to increase women’s participation in all levels of development decision-making including in conflict and post-conflict situations, national policy fora and consultations on national development plans and budgets.

Reform 3.4: AusAID should ensure that programs aimed at advancing gender equality acknowledge the necessity for the involvement of men and entire communities.

Reform 3.5: AusAID should recognise the necessity for core funding within government and NGO communities for entities focusing on gender equality and ensure participation mechanisms for CSOs and NGOs alike for consultation in national development policies.

Reform 3.6: The Government should work to strengthen the capacity of relevant line Ministries, particularly influential ones such as Ministries of Finance – to ensure gender responsive budgeting – and Statistical Offices to ensure compilation and analysis of sex-disaggregated data.

Gender situational analysis and gender strategies

In order for the gender dimensions of all planning processes and programmes to be properly understood and comprehensive responses developed, it is essential that gender situational analysis be carried out and gender strategies developed as part of any development assistance.

Gender analysis refers to the variety of methods used to understand the relationships between men and women, their access to resources, their activities, and the constraints they face relative to each other. Gender analysis provides information that recognises that gender, and its relationship with race, ethnicity, culture, class, age, disability, and/or other status, is important in understanding the different patterns of involvement, behaviour and activities that women and men have in economic, social and legal structures.

An understanding of socio-economic relations, and with it gender relations, is an integral part of policy analysis, and is essential in creating and implementing effective development cooperation initiatives. Analysis of the different situations of men and women can provide an understanding of the different impacts that legislation, cultural practices, policies and programs can have on women and men. Gender analysis offers information to understand women’s and men’s access to and control over resources that can be used to address disparities, challenge systemic inequalities (most often faced by women) and build efficient and equitable solutions. To be most effective, gender analysis should be part of each step of a development initiative: from conception and design to implementation and evaluation. In this way, it will

lead to changes in strategies for development cooperation that previously did not meet the needs of women.²² In order for this strategy to be most effective, this must be done in consultation with the partner government.

Properly integrating gender equality into all national development plans and activities is the most effective way of ensuring that gender becomes a core theme of analysis. Given that gender discrimination is as much a social attitude as it is a systemic obstacle, gender analyses and subsequent gender strategies must be linked to institutional, legal and financial changes as well as focusing on changing attitudes which facilitate improvements in outcomes for women.

If aid is to be effective in achieving positive gender outcomes, systems and program goals require not just 'women's participation, but also institutional reform to make gender equality one of the standards against which the performance of decision-makers is assessed.'²³ The involvement of gender advocates and civil society should be included in all development planning processes to ensure the voice of women's organisations and other civil society groups. This should be done when creating new country strategies on the basis of previous reviews.

Additionally, in country-based, aid adviser and annual reviews conducted by the ODE, gender needs to be considered as an overarching goal evaluated against core development themes.

AusAID's Quality and Reporting System does evaluate the promotion of gender equality throughout its aid activities; however the concern remains that gender is not considered within a framework where it is seen as interdependent with sustainability and other factors. Instead it is seen as a distinct entity in and of itself. This results in little coherence regarding how gender influences and overlaps all program activity. For the 'promotion of gender equality' to adequately and effectively be measured, it must be considered against all themes of relevance, impact, efficiency and effectiveness and not only as a theme unto itself.

ACFID recommends that multiple approaches to monitoring and evaluation be employed accounting for short-term service delivery and long-term advocacy outcomes and that comprehensively measure both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of activities. This approach is most effective when monitoring gender outcomes from the aid program.²⁴

Reform 3.7: AusAID country strategies should include gender analysis at all stages of formulation and implementation.

Reform 3.8: All AusAID program reviews and evaluations should include gender equality as an overarching goal.

Reform 3.9: AusAID should improve gender focus and responsiveness in monitoring and evaluation strategies.

The benefits of working with NGOs and CSOs in gender programs

ACFID supports the findings of the ODE *Working Paper on Good Practice Donor Engagement with Civil Society* and urges AusAID to adopt its recommendations on gender equality in particular.

Involving civil society and gender advocates is central if we consider that 'good practice is recognition that any practice needs to be designed with a close appreciation of the local context'.²⁵ NGOs, with their connections to local

²² CIDA (2009), 'Gender Analysis as a Tool'. For an example of a situation analysis that integrates gender and identifies the implications for women and men, see the research of attitudes and perceptions of women and men towards inclusive and sustainable natural resource management undertaken by Live and Learn Environmental Education and IWDA in Solomon Islands in 2009, <http://www.livelearn.org/research/SINPA%20RAP.pdf>

²³ UNIFEM (2009), 'Progress of the World's Women 2008/2009: Who Answers to Women? Gender & Accountability', p.3.

²⁴ For a recent example of gender programming which accounts for qualitative and quantitative aspects of monitoring and evaluation see Oxfam Australia (2009) 'Breaking the shackles: Women's empowerment in Oxfam Australia's Sri Lanka program'.

²⁵ ODE (2010), 'Working Paper: Good Practice Donor Engagement with Civil Society'.

organisations and advocates can bring a different perspective from donors, leading to more effective analyses and programs and frequently at a lesser cost than bilateral donors.

Government programs can effectively use intermediaries to fund advocacy groups that may be critical of regional governments' human rights abuses. Considering this avenue would significantly contribute to the advancement of gender advocacy priorities such as the full implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and Security Council Resolution 1325 (Women, Peace and Security) and its crucial focus on the participation of women in peace processes at all levels.²⁶

Adopting the principles of the *Istanbul CSO Development Effectiveness Principles* as a foundation for working with NGOs can open opportunities for good practice, knowledge sharing and innovative programs. There are a number of good examples in our region, including the Australian Government's continued support of the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC) where relatively small expenditure has not only led to the professional development of Women's Crisis Centres in Fiji but has also expanded and allowed the FWCC to provide training and support for similar institutions throughout the Pacific; and for femLINKPACIFIC, with its focus on capacity building for women's peace-building organisations in a number of countries across the Pacific. This approach considers NGO funding not just as an end in and of itself but as a long term endeavour for facilitating training and learning. Furthermore, it is suggested that core funding to civil society organisations be considered as an avenue for effective and targeted program delivery.

Reform 3.10: The Government should recognise the need for sustainable funding, including increased core funding, to CSOs and NGOs who advocate and work for gender equality.

Building the capacity for gender-informed work within the wider development sector

Culture and practices within institutions and organisations will not change without performance and accountability arrangements sufficient to support real traction and confirm that performance on gender matters. This applies to AusAID, NGOs and private sector contractors involved in aid delivery.

Gender mainstreaming is in part a technical process that can be supported with technical assistance and resourcing, and it will not happen without appropriate investment in gender expertise. But it is also a political process, enabling previously unheard voices to be brought into the development dialogue and strengthening accountability to those we seek to benefit.

There has been increased interest in gender issues in development among the Australian aid and development sector in recent years, and some growth in resourcing of gender focal points and advisers, particularly among larger NGO agencies.

To date, the formal publicly available evidence about the barriers and challenges to improved performance on gender has been limited.²⁷ Findings thus far suggest that while many development actors understand that they could and should be doing more to improve the integration of gender, they struggle to mobilise the political will and resources to make it happen. As elsewhere, policy commitments run ahead of practice. Changing this situation will require a range of strategies, and additional funding at both sector and agency levels.

To enable real progress on gender equality, the Australian aid program needs to both require continuous improvement and invest in the capacity of all actors, including civil society to advance gender equality.

²⁶ See Reform 2.18

²⁷ The Australian National University and IWDA are currently conducting research to map how Australian NGOs are approaching gender and has begun to identify the specific barriers and challenges experienced in organisations. Research findings will inform thinking within ACFID and its member agencies about how best to engage with partner organisations on gender issues, how to assist agencies to implement the gender provisions in the revised ACFID Code of Conduct, and to comply more fully with AusAID accreditation criteria.

Reform 3.11: The Government should commit to multi-year funding support for a sector-level Gender Advocacy and Support Unit to complement the work of the AusAID gender unit in improving the development effectiveness and sector capacity to genuinely promote opportunities for all.

The Gender Advocacy and Support unit could sit in ACFID or elsewhere, and would serve as:

- A clearing house and a focus for a dynamic community of practice that helps to facilitate and support the consolidation and dissemination of learning and approaches
- A support and resource network of people doing similar things, because gender equality work can be difficult and frustrating and results in some areas slow to show
- Work with the AusAID Gender Unit, and the newly formed ACFID-universities network to identify gender skills and workforce planning needs for the sector and support gender skills development , and
- Manage new funding to support activities such as:
 - Conducting gender audits and developing detailed gender action plans (GAPs) to address audit recommendations
 - Appointing additional gender expertise to support the implementation of GAPs and resource the ongoing integration of gender in agency work
 - Developing accountability arrangements and associated information collection and performance monitoring and reporting systems that integrate gender into corporate planning and management, so agencies are better able to monitor and evaluate progress and share and integrate knowledge, reinforcing promising practices.