SUMERNET GEDSI training: Reflections from group discussions

The training engaged participants interactively by having break-out group discussions on specific cases. Participants from each group have reflected on their group discussion outcomes. The below offers some insights into the group discussions.

Group 1: GEDSI lanes in methods and data collection
Chea Sameang, MTT Fellow

The ideas in the group discussion were to try to navigate their research methodology by using and applying the GEDSI lanes to ensure that the research outcome would be beneficial and linked to all groups of vulnerability. By questioning them [groups] on what constitutes a research methodologies project's essential component? As a result, they shared that to ensure the research is sensitive to the diverse needs and experiences of individuals and communities, particularly those who are marginalized or vulnerable because of their social identities, gender equality and social inclusion (GEDSI) must be incorporated into mixed methods research. Why do mixed methods matter? While there are several points to consider, three are important.

First, addressing systemic inequalities: Identifying and addressing the underlying power structures, norms, and attitudes that sustain systemic disparities is made possible by GEDSI-informed mixed methods research, contributing to more equitable and inclusive outcomes.

Second, enhancing project sustainability: improving project sustainability with mixed techniques informed by GEDSI Research can guarantee that initiatives are planned in a way that promotes long-term social and economic growth and is sustainable.

Third, improving project monitoring and evaluation: Mixed methods research informed by GEDSI can contribute to the creation of more sensitivity to the needs and experiences of marginalized groups monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

To sum up, GEDSI should be integrated into mixed methods research to have more equitable and inclusive development outcomes. In addition to addressing systemic inequalities, it improves project effectiveness, enhances project sustainability, and promotes transformative change.

Group 2: Integration GEDSI in designing new research projects
(drafted by Medina Adulyarat, MTT Fellow)

Mainstreaming GEDSI:

Early and Continuous Integration: GEDSI considerations shouldn't be an afterthought. They should be integrated from the proposal stage into all project phases to ensure they don't "evaporate" along the way.

Framework Familiarity: Team members must be familiar with relevant international and national frameworks; the team members agree to use the 6 GEDSI principles as a guiding light for project implementation.

Inclusive Teams and Stakeholder Engagement:

Diverse Team Members: The members of the teams should reflect the diversity of the target population, including representation from various genders, disability groups, elderly individuals, marginalized communities, and ethnic minorities (GEDSI population)
Inclusive Data Collection: Ensure all key stakeholders, including those representing GEDSI populations, are involved in data collection to capture their perspectives and experiences.

Intersectionality: Consider the intersection of multiple identities and their impact on project experiences and outcomes using an intersectionality approach.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Communication:

GEDSI Indicators: Include GEDSI integration indicators in the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) plan and consistently monitor progress against these indicators.

Clear Communication: Once the project is completed or done with the first phase, communicate results/ongoing work clearly and understandably to all stakeholders, especially the communities involved, using language accessible to everyone.

Group 3: Disability Inclusion in program implementation
Sovannarong Tim, MTT Fellow

Disability inclusion was one of the scenario topics discussed during the training. It is hard to engage people with disabilities in the data collection process, one of the concerns raised by participants.

When discussing inclusion, it is vital to remember that accessibility allows everyone to fully engage in all aspects of life, regardless of circumstances, age, or ability. Furthermore, to achieve real accessibility, we need to consider universal design (UD), which is the design of products and environments that all people use to the greatest extent possible without the need for adaptation or specialized design.

However, the discussion suggests potential options for addressing disability inclusion. First, awareness of inclusive language. Words matter because they shape our perception of people with disabilities. One of the general principles that we can use is people-first language; it emphasizes the person, not the disability. Second, from an experience-based sharing standpoint, involving people with disabilities in projects and/or research is more effective when done through networks. For example, in Cambodia, we work with the Organisation of People

with Disabilities (OPD) at the district level to engage and facilitate people with disabilities in the community.

In sum, engaging with socially marginalised groups including people with disabilities in development works is beyond important and is not as hard as people generally think. All we need is a pre-planned strategy to engage with them in a way that doesn't cause any harm.