

**GENDER RESPONSIVENESS OF M&E SYSTEMS: AN ASSESSMENT OF
KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES AMONG HUMANITARIAN
NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN YUMBE DISTRICT**

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DECLARATION

I AKAO RUTH, hereby declare that the Dissertation *titled “Gender Responsiveness Of M&E Systems: An Assessment Of Knowledge, Attitudes And Practices Among Humanitarian Non-Governmental Organizations in Yumbe District”* is entirely my original work and has never been submitted to any institution for any academic award or other purposes and the information reproduced was got from the original literature texts.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized capital 'R' followed by the letters 'AKAO'.

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APPROVAL

This dissertation “*Gender responsiveness of M&E systems. An assessment of knowledge, Attitudes and Practices among Humanitarian NGOs in Yumbe District*” has been read and approved by the University supervisor and recommended to be submitted to the School of Social Sciences at Uganda Christian University for it satisfies the partial requirements for the award of Master of Development Monitoring and Evaluation.

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ABBREVIATIONS

KAPS- Knowledge, Attitude and Practices

M&E- Monitoring and Evaluation

MDGs- Millennium Development Goals

NGOs- Non-Governmental Organizations

SDGs- Sustainable Development Goals

IDI- Indepth Interviews

KII- Key Informant Interviews

FGD- Focus group discussion

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ABSTRACT

The study explored the gender responsiveness of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems among humanitarian NGOs in Yumbe district Uganda. While promoting gender equality is a key part of humanitarian work, many NGOs continue to rely on conventional M&E systems that inadequately capture the differential impacts of interventions on men and women. The research investigated the knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) of humanitarian NGO staff towards gender responsive M&E systems.

A qualitative case study design was used and the data was collected through key informant interviews, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with M&E and program staff. The thematic analysis revealed that while majority NGOs demonstrated a basic understanding of gender responsiveness, they struggled to put it into practice. Attitudes towards gender integration were usually shaped by donor requirements rather than internal organizational commitment and gender was frequently equated to women's issues, side lining the needs of men and boys. Practices such as sex disaggregated data collection and gender sensitive indicators were inconsistently applied. Organizational readiness varied, with some NGOs lacking the tools, training and leadership support needed to fully integrate gender into their M&E frameworks.

Overall, the study highlights the need for more training, stronger internal policies and real commitment to inclusive approaches. Helping staff improve their knowledge, attitudes and practices is key in building a more effective M&E system that truly reflect the experiences of both women and men in humanitarian settings.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The study investigated the gender responsiveness of M&E systems, an assessment of knowledge, attitudes and practices. This introductory chapter presents the background of the study, followed by the problem statement, research objectives and questions, scope, significance, justification, and the illustrative model that guided the research.

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems have become increasingly important in development and humanitarian programming because they ensure that the different needs, experiences, and outcomes of women, men, boys, and girls are adequately considered in project implementation and assessment (UN Women,2020).

Gender-responsive M&E systems are essential in ensuring the meaningful participation of both women and men in evaluating the outcomes, impacts, and broader social implications of development interventions. The increasing recognition of the need for projects and programs to better reflect context-specific social and cultural realities has further reinforced the need for M&E systems to consider the dynamic distinctions between men and women (Wokadala, 2016).

The evolution of gender-responsive M&E systems can be traced back to the 1980s with the introduction of the Harvard Analytical Framework, the first tool to systematically analyse gender roles and recognize the distinct contributions and challenges of women, men, boys, and girls in development settings (March, Smyth, & Mukhopadhyay, 1999).

During the 1990s, the concept of gender mainstreaming gained global attention, emphasizing that development interventions and their monitoring processes needed to integrate gender perspectives at all stages. This shift reinforced the understanding that without gender-responsive M&E systems, it would be difficult to effectively measure or advance gender equality (United Nations, 2002).

By the 2000s, gender responsiveness became more embedded within the global development agenda through frameworks such as the Millennium Development Goals

(MDGs) and later the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These frameworks highlighted the importance of robust M&E systems capable of tracking development progress through a gender lens (Kabeer, 2016). Consequently, organizations increasingly adopted systems that could collect gender-disaggregated data, assess the differential impacts of interventions on various gender groups, and guide evidence-based gender-responsive policies and programming (UN Women & Social Development Direct, 2020).

The effectiveness of gender-responsive M&E systems is largely influenced by the interplay of knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP) among individuals and organizations implementing humanitarian and development programs. Knowledge refers to the understanding and awareness of gender concepts and the integration of gender considerations within M&E systems.

Attitudes encompass the beliefs, perceptions, values, and organizational culture that shape how gender equality is prioritized and supported. Practices refer to the actual implementation of gender-responsive actions such as collecting sex-disaggregated data, applying gender-sensitive indicators, conducting gender analysis, and ensuring inclusive participation in M&E activities. Strengthening these dimensions is essential for developing M&E systems that effectively capture gender realities and support equitable humanitarian programming.

Globally, several organizations have demonstrated strong KAP in promoting gender-responsive M&E systems. For example, Plan International integrates gender transformation within its theory of change and supports this through tools such as the Gender Marker, which evaluates the extent to which projects incorporate gender considerations (Plan International, 2022). This demonstrates strong organizational knowledge, positive attitudes, and consistent practices toward gender responsiveness. Similarly, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has integrated sex-disaggregated data collection, gender-sensitive indicators, and inclusive participation of marginalized groups within its M&E systems (USAID, 2016). These practices reflect deliberate institutional efforts to strengthen gender responsiveness in development programming.

Despite these advancements, significant gaps in gender-responsive M&E systems continue to exist across humanitarian organizations. Ravelo (2018) observed that many NGOs tend to focus predominantly on women and girls while unintentionally neglecting the vulnerabilities and experiences of men and boys. Such approaches reflect limited or biased knowledge and narrow attitudes toward gender inclusivity, ultimately weakening the effectiveness of gender-responsive M&E systems. Additionally, Ravelo's (2018) survey in Manila revealed that only one-third of humanitarian NGOs collected sex-disaggregated data, indicating weaknesses in organizational practices, inadequate staff capacity, and limited prioritization of gender-responsive programming.

In Uganda, efforts have also been made to institutionalize gender-responsive M&E systems within humanitarian organizations. The International Rescue Committee (IRC), for example, has integrated gender mainstreaming into its M&E systems and routinely conducts gender analysis across its programs (Maiso, Ssekamatte, & Namara, 2019). However, the same study found that although many staff members had received gender training, they lacked the confidence and practical skills necessary to effectively conduct gender analysis, including identifying gender-specific risks, barriers, and safety concerns. The study attributed these challenges to one-off training approaches that resulted in incomplete knowledge retention and weak practical application.

These examples collectively reveal varying levels of knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding gender-responsive M&E systems among humanitarian NGOs. While some organizations demonstrate comprehensive understanding, positive institutional attitudes, and effective implementation practices, others continue to face challenges related to inadequate training, resource limitations, and fragmented implementation processes. Such disparities directly affect the extent to which M&E systems can effectively capture and respond to gender-specific needs and experiences.

Therefore, there is a need for a deeper understanding of the knowledge, attitudes, and practices that influence the gender responsiveness of M&E systems within humanitarian NGOs. Strengthening these dimensions is critical not only for designing equitable and inclusive programs but also for ensuring that M&E systems adequately capture diverse

gendered experiences and contribute toward transformative and sustainable development outcomes.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Gender-responsive Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems are important in ensuring that humanitarian interventions effectively address the different needs, experiences, and vulnerabilities of women, men, boys, and girls. These systems strengthen accountability, support evidence-based decision-making, and help organizations assess whether interventions contribute to or hinder gender equality (UN Women, 2020). Globally, humanitarian and development organizations have increasingly been encouraged to mainstream gender within their programs and M&E systems through frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Kabeer, 2016).

Despite this growing emphasis, many humanitarian NGOs still face challenges in integrating gender responsiveness into their M&E systems. Existing studies indicate that organizations often continue to apply traditional M&E approaches that inadequately incorporate gender perspectives, resulting in limited gender analysis, inconsistent collection of sex-disaggregated data, and failure to capture the experiences of all gender groups (Bamberger, 2013). In many cases, gender considerations are treated as an add-on rather than being systematically integrated into planning, implementation, monitoring, and reporting processes.

Furthermore, humanitarian interventions have frequently focused more on women and girls while overlooking the vulnerabilities and experiences of men and boys, which limits the inclusiveness of programming and weakens comprehensive gender analysis (Ravelo, 2018). Similarly, studies in Uganda have shown that some interventions continue to apply narrow gender lenses that insufficiently address the realities and needs of all affected populations (Shirley & Damba, 2024). Weak implementation practices, including inconsistent use of gender-sensitive indicators and inadequate collection and utilization of sex-disaggregated data, further undermine the effectiveness of gender-responsive M&E systems (Ravelo, 2018).

These challenges suggest possible gaps in the knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP) of staff responsible for designing and implementing M&E systems within humanitarian NGOs. Limited understanding of gender-responsive M&E concepts, negative or indifferent attitudes toward gender integration, and inadequate application of gender-sensitive practices may contribute to weak gender responsiveness within organizational M&E systems. Although some humanitarian NGOs have adopted gender-sensitive approaches, inconsistencies in implementation continue to weaken accountability, inclusivity, and the ability of organizations to capture the differential impacts of interventions on diverse gender groups (Cornwall et al., 2015).

Therefore, there is a need to assess the knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to gender-responsive M&E systems among humanitarian NGOs. This study sought to examine the knowledge, attitudes, and practices towards gender-responsive M&E systems among humanitarian non-governmental organizations in Yumbe District, Uganda, in order to identify existing gaps and contribute to strengthening gender-responsive programming and accountability.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The main objective is to assess the KAPS of Humanitarian NGOs towards gender responsive M&E systems.

1.3.1 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To explore the knowledge base of Humanitarian NGOs towards building gender responsive M&E systems in Yumbe District
2. To assess the attitude towards establishing gender responsive M&E systems among Humanitarian NGOs in Yumbe district.
3. To examine the gender responsive M&E practices in Humanitarian NGOs in Yumbe district.

1.3.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the knowledge base of Humanitarian NGOs in Yumbe District towards building gender responsive M&E systems?
2. What is the attitude of Humanitarian NGOs in Yumbe District toward establishing a gender responsive M&E?
3. What practices have the Humanitarian NGOs in Yumbe District used to ensure a gender responsive M&E?

1.4 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Gender responsive M&E systems are critical for transformative change in the achievement of gender equality because it assesses changes in regards to gender equality such as changes in power relations, cultural values, attitudes, social behaviours, the participation and representation of women and men in all their diversity (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2022).

In this view, this study focused on humanitarian NGO'S operating in Yumbe District, Uganda. It examined their knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) regarding gender responsive M&E systems, specifically exploring the level of understanding among NGO staff on gender sensitive M&E principles, assesses their attitude toward integrating gender consideration into their monitoring and evaluation frameworks and examines the actual practices in place to ensure gender responsiveness in M&E. Strictly Humanitarian NGOs with M&E systems were selected using purposive sampling which is a non-probability sampling technique that chooses the most suitable key informants to take part in the study (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016), that is to say, referring to Humanitarian NGOs that have M&E systems.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study is significant as it addresses the gap in understanding the knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) of humanitarian NGOs regarding gender responsive M&E systems. While there has been research on gender responsive M&E, little has been

known to assess how well humanitarian organizations integrate gender responsiveness into their M&E systems. By examining KAP, this study highlighted strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement, ensuring that humanitarian projects are equitable and sustainable.

Findings are also intended to guide Humanitarian NGOs in enhancing their gender mainstreaming efforts, strengthening capacity and promoting the use of gender disaggregated data and gender sensitive indicators. Additionally, the study raised awareness of the importance of gender responsive M&E thus ensuring that interventions account for the experiences of both men and women. In the end, this research offered practical evidence-based insights that can help humanitarian organizations design interventions that are truly inclusive and make a meaningful, lasting difference.

1.6 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

A gender responsive M&E system considers gendered systems and assesses the needs of both genders to inform and identify priorities for action (Morgan et al, 2023). It values the inclusivity and participation of the beneficiaries regardless of the gender. The Sustainable development goals (SDGs) stress the importance of gender equality, and if we depend on the traditional M&E systems, we might overlook gender specific impacts (Kabeer,2016).

This study is essential because by looking closely at how these organisations incorporate gender responsiveness into their M&E systems, the research shed lights on the existing gaps and barriers offering practical insights to strengthen their approaches. Gaining this understanding will ensure equitable and effective humanitarian interventions, ensuring that the needs and contributions of both genders are fully recognized and addresses. It as well supports the growing demand for accountability as organizations require evidence-based strategies to enhance gender inclusivity (Sil & Lenka, 2024)

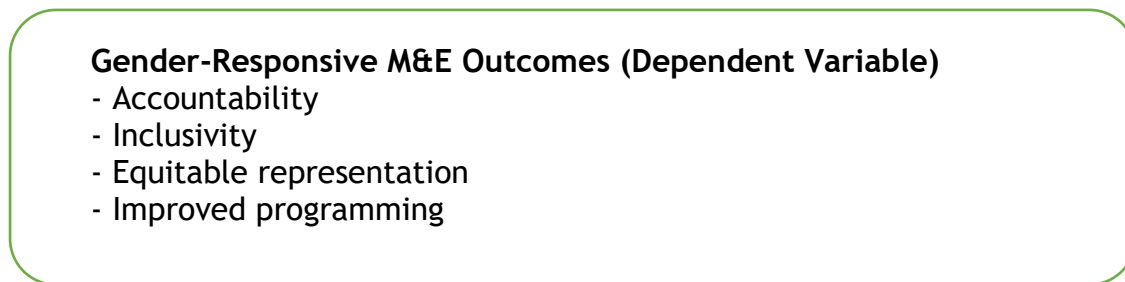
1.7 ILLUSTRATIVE FRAMEWORK: GENDER-RESPONSIVE MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEM

According to Janis et al (2020), illustrative frameworks aren't meant to be rigid but rather a flexible tool that highlights the most important aspects of the topic and this helps to shape the direction of the study. An illustrative framework was used to exhibit the relationship between gender responsiveness of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems and the resulting humanitarian programming outcomes among humanitarian Non-Governmental Organizations in Yumbe District.

The framework is based on the Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) perspective, which assumes that the level of knowledge, attitudes and practices among staff influences the extent to which M&E systems are gender responsive. The independent variable is gender responsiveness of M&E systems, measured through dimensions of knowledge, attitudes and practices regarding gender integration in M&E processes. These dimensions include understanding of gender frameworks, use of sex-disaggregated data, organizational commitment to gender equality, and application of gender-sensitive indicators and reporting mechanisms.

The dependent variable comprises the outcomes of gender-responsive M&E systems, including equitable representation in monitoring and evaluation processes, stronger accountability to different gender groups, inclusive decision-making, and improved humanitarian programming. The framework therefore assumes that improved knowledge, positive attitudes, and effective gender-responsive practices within M&E systems contribute to better and more inclusive humanitarian outcomes.

Figure 1: Illustrative framework



Gender Responsiveness of M&E Systems (Independent Variable)

Knowledge

- Understanding of gender frameworks.
- Knowledge of gender-responsive M&E principles
- Ability to use sex-disaggregated data.
- Familiarity with gender-sensitive indicators and tools.

Attitudes

- Value placed on gender equality
- Staff perceptions toward gender inclusion
- Organizational commitment to gender-responsive M&E
- Supportive institutional culture).

Practice

- Collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data.
- Use of gender-sensitive indicators, Inclusion of women, men, boys, and girls in assessments
- Gender-sensitive reporting and decision-making
- Integration of gender findings into programming

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a comprehensive review of related literature about the gender responsiveness of M&E systems and outlines the theoretical framework that explains the research idea.

2.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study uses Social Role Theory to explain how gender expectations shape the way humanitarian organizations understand and integrate gender into their Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems. According to Eagly and Wood (2012), Social Role Theory suggests that society assigns different roles to men and women based on cultural norms and historical patterns. Over time, these roles shape expectations about how people should behave for example, men might be seen as leaders or protectors, while women are often expected to care for and support others. These societal expectations don't just affect individuals, they also influence how organizations operate.

In humanitarian settings, these gender roles often shape not just how programs are designed, implemented and evaluated. For instance, while many interventions rightly focus on women and girls especially in areas like health, education, or gender-based violence, this can sometimes result in the unintentional neglect of men and boys who also face gender specific challenges during crises (Affleck, Selvadurai, & Sikora, 2018).

Social Role Theory helps explain why gender in M&E is often misunderstood or narrowly interpret as women's issue. Koenig and Eagly (2014) argue that these perceptions stem from internalized social expectation, which can lead staff to overlook gender dynamics or avoid integrating gender into evaluation processes. This can result in missed opportunities to capture the differentiated impacts of interventions on all genders.

Moreover, organizational practices often reflect these societal roles. Castañeda Carney et al. (2020) observes that leadership roles in development organizations are frequently held by men while gender related responsibilities are typically assigned to women. This separation can make gender issues appear secondary or specialized rather than a shared

institutional priority limiting the integration of gender responsiveness across departments, including M&E.

By using Social Role Theory, this study aims to uncover how these deeply rooted social norms influence humanitarian NGOs' knowledge, attitudes, and practices toward gender responsive M&E. It helps explain why some staff may not feel confident to integrate gender into evaluations, or why some organizations do it only when donors demand it. This theory also offers insights into how changing these roles and expectations can improve gender equality within humanitarian M&E systems.

2.2 EMPIRICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

This section explores the existing research on gender-responsive M&E systems while focusing on these three key areas, knowledge, attitudes, and practices within humanitarian NGOs.

2.2.1 KNOWLEDGE ON GENDER-RESPONSIVE M&E

Knowledge of gender responsive M&E refers to the ability to integrate gender perspectives in all aspects of their M&E framework which includes, understanding, applying and integrating gender considerations throughout the M&E process to reveal address how programs impact both genders (Morgan et al, 2024). Knowledge is both conceptual and practical. It encompasses familiarity with the tools such as sex disaggregated data, gender sensitive indicators, participatory evaluation approaches and accountability mechanisms that ensure inclusion across diverse groups (Bamberger,2012; Wyatt et al, 2021).

Several organizations have demonstrated strong institutional knowledge of gender responsive M&E. UN Women (2020) emphasizes that involving women and men in evaluation processes is key to embedding equity, while the Inter Agency Standing Committee (2017) highlights that inclusive participation is essential for needs based programming that avoids unintended exclusion. CARE International also has institutionalized participatory gender analysis and iterative learning systems across its humanitarian programs, ensuring continuous refinement of gender integration (CARE,

2017). Oxfam also applied feminist evaluation principles by embedding sex disaggregated data and participatory methodologies into its humanitarian M&E systems to uncover how power relations shape outcomes (Espinosa,2013).

At the national level, Caritas Uganda as integrated gender considerations into diocesan monitoring system through capacity initiatives, reflecting institutional awareness of gender equity in evaluation processes (Cartias Uganda, 2024). United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Uganda (2025) in their humanitarian report highlighted the importance of gender disaggregated data to support evidence-based decision making, transparency and accountability. World Vision (2023) in their Gender Equality and social inclusion approach emphasized the use of gender disaggregated data to inform programming. These examples highlight growing awareness and institutional knowledge of gender responsive M&E within humanitarian NGOs.

However, evidence shows that knowledge of gender responsive M&E remains partial and unevenly institutionalized. Wokadala (2016) and Twende Mbele (2019) diagnostic studies found that Uganda's national M&E system remains only partially gender responsive, with major gaps in policies, institutional arrangements and technical procedures for incorporating gender. A research done at IRC by Maiso, et al (2019) also showed that weak institutional support and limited staff capacity continue to undermine gender sensitive monitoring among Humanitarian NGOs. Similarly, Jansen van Rensburg and Loye (2021) observed that many young evaluators lack adequate preparation in gender methodologies. Uganda's Country strategy papers also depicted that the commitments were rarely translated into explicit performance indicators but rather gender was often a cross cutting them without measurable outcomes (UNIFEM,2009). These findings suggest that while awareness of gender issues exists, consistent organizational knowledge remains limited, particular in Humanitarian settings.

2.2.2 ATTITUDES TOWARDS GENDER-RESPONSIVE M&E

Attitudes towards gender responsive M&E refers to the extent to which organizations value inclusivity and equity in their monitoring and evaluation systems. Positive attitudes are critical because they determine whether staff and institutions perceive gender responsiveness as integral to accountability and quality or as a peripheral requirement.

Organizations like UN Women (2020) stresses that gender should be a core part of program quality, while Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC, 2017) similarly emphasizes that inclusive participation of both genders reflects the attitudinal shift towards equity focused M&E systems. For example, a report by ActionAid (2024) underscores that disaggregated data as key to identifying gender specific trends and patterns in actual or potential adverse impacts demonstrating a mindset that values responsiveness

In Uganda, NGOs like IRC has integrated gender equality into its global evaluation framework, emphasizing the use of sex disaggregated data and participatory tools to ensure both men and women's voices shape the program design (Maiso, Ssekamatte & Namara, 2019). Similarly Save the Children's reflects a strong commitment because, its M&E system mentions the use of gender informed assessments, disaggregated indicators and gender safe data collection (Save The children, 2015). These organizations exhibit a positive attitude towards gender responsive M&E.

However, negative or weak attitudes remain common. Bamberger (2013) notes that many NGOs still use the traditional systems that do not fully consider gender. Warren (2012) found that in Ghana, NGOs only used gender approaches when donors required it, showing that commitment was linked to funding rather than values. Maiso, Ssekamatte and Namara (2019) reported that staff often see gender as a donor condition leading to tokenistic practices. Freedman et al (2017) and Dias and Erman (2020) further pointed out that assumptions such as men being resilient limited inclusive programming, while UN Women (2020) highlights that cultural barriers and weak incentives often stop organizations from fully embracing gender mainstreaming.

In conclusion, attitudes play a key role in shaping gender responsive M&E. Where organizations value inclusion, they embed gender across evaluation processes. Yet, where attitudes are shaped by bias, donor pressure, or institutional barriers, gender responsiveness remains partial.

2.2.3 PRACTICES IN GENDER-RESPONSIVE M&E

Practices refer to the actual implementation of gender principles in M&E, covering processes such as data collection, analysis, reporting and decision-making. Strong practices are shaped by both technical knowledge and supportive attitudes. Andrade et al. (2020) argue that effective practice depends on translating conceptual understanding into day to day evaluation processes. Peralta (2021) identifies key practices that strengthen gender responsiveness, including allocating budget for gender analysis, involving both women and men in evaluations, using gender sensitive indicators, and consistently reporting on gender outcomes.

Organizations like the European Institute for Gender Equality (2022) highlight a project in Andalusia that integrated sex disaggregated indicators throughout the M&E cycle and ensured equal participation of girls and boys in data collection processes. Similarly, UN Women (2020) uses participatory evaluations where both women and men contribute to shaping evaluation findings, thereby strengthening accountability and inclusivity. Oxfam has embedded feminist evaluation approaches by applying participatory tools and collecting sex disaggregated data to reveal how power dynamics affect program outcomes (Espinosa, 2013).

In Uganda, humanitarian NGOs have also demonstrated good practices. The International Rescue Committee (IRC) has applied gender sensitive monitoring frameworks in refugee settlements, ensuring sex disaggregated data collection and the integration of gender specific indicators in health and protection programs (Maiso, Ssekamatte & Namara, 2019). A report by the UN Women Uganda (2025) on the comprehensive gender assessment of Uganda Refugee response did not only focus on women but men as well and how the reduced food rations have affected them. Similarly, Oxfam Uganda (2014) uses mixed methods of combining quantitative and

qualitative methods to the disaggregate data and including a gender analysis in their programs as guided by their quick guide to gender sensitive indicators.

Despite these positive examples, weak practice remains common. Wokadala (2016) noted that national M&E systems still lack consistent integration of gender sensitive indicators with gender often treated as a cross cutting issue rather than a measurable outcome. Similarly, UNICEF (2021) observed that many organizations adopt gender policies but fail to allocate sufficient technical and financial resources to put them into practice, resulting in partial or superficial implementation.

In summary, gender responsive practices in M&E are strongest where organizations commit resources, integrate participatory methods, and use sex disaggregated data consistently.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the research design, area of study, sample size, sampling techniques, data collection methods, ethical considerations and methodological constraints.

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

Thakur (2021) describes a research design as strategy chosen to integrate different components of the study in a logical way to ensure the problem is effectively addressed.

A case study research design was employed because it allows an in depth understanding of a specific topic (Cornell, 2023). Yin (2014) defines a case study as an investigation of a current phenomenon within its real life context, especially when it is difficult to separate the phenomenon from its surrounding circumstances. A case study design was useful in examining how humanitarian NGOs in Yumbe understand and implement gender responsive M&E systems. This was through collecting data from multiple sources, including key informants and focus group discussions ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the issue (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

A qualitative research approach was used and this involved collecting and analyzing non-numerical data mainly words from the selected participants (Bhandari, 2020). It ensured a deep understanding of the topic by exploring the perspectives, experiences and practices of these NGOs regarding gender responsive M&E systems.

3.2 STUDY SITE

The study was in Yumbe District, located in the West Nile Sub Region of Northern Uganda. This district was selected because it hosts the largest number of refugees in African and this has led to the significant presence of Humanitarian NGOs working across different sectors such as health, education, protection and livelihood sectors (UNHCR,2022; Yumbe District local Government, 2021).

The district provided a relevant context due to its complex humanitarian situation so three Humanitarian NGOs took part in this study. However, for purposes of confidentiality, the names of the NGOs are not disclosed.

3.3 POPULATION OF THE STUDY

The study population comprised humanitarian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operating in Yumbe District. From this broader target population, the accessible population consisted of NGOs with functional Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems, as these provided a suitable context for examining Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP) related to gender-responsive M&E systems.

The study focused on key personnel within these organizations, including Monitoring and Evaluation officers, program managers, and field staff. These individuals were directly involved in the design, implementation, and oversight of M&E systems and therefore possessed relevant experience and insights necessary for understanding the integration of gender responsiveness within humanitarian M&E practices.

3.4 SAMPLE SIZE

A sample size is the number of participants selected to represent the population in the study (Kaur, 2021). In this study, the principle of data saturation was used, which occurs when additional data collection no longer generates new themes, insights, or patterns (Mwita, 2022).

Instead of using a predetermined sample size, interviews and focus group discussions were conducted until responses became repetitive and no new information emerged. This approach allowed for flexibility and ensured a comprehensive understanding of knowledge, attitudes, and practices without being restricted by fixed numbers.

Table 1: Data Collection Methods and Participants

Data collection method	Number of participants	
	Male	Female
Focus group discussion	6	0

Key Informant Interview	5	2
In depth Interviews	5	1

3.6 SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

Purposive sampling technique was used which is the identification of members of the population that have the characteristics or experiences (Nikolopoulou, 2022). Since gender-responsive M&E systems require specialized expertise, this approach ensured that only individuals with substantial experience in humanitarian M&E practices were included. Participants were selected based on their roles within NGOs, allowing the study to capture insights from those directly responsible for designing, implementing, and evaluating gender-sensitive interventions..

3.7 DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND TOOLS

Primary data was collected and this is the data collected for the first time for a specific purpose (Costa, 2022). Qualitative data was collected using key informant interviews, in depth interviews and focus group discussions that broke down Humanitarian NGO knowledge, attitude and practices towards gender responsive M&E systems.

3.7.1 KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Key informant interviews (KII) were conducted with individuals who have knowledge and experience in gender responsive M&E systems within humanitarian NGOs in Yumbe District. A key informant interview guide with open ended questions were administered to key informants that include M&E focal point persons and program managers who are responsible for designing and implementing M&E systems.

According to Patton (2015), key informants provide rich insights that may not be captured through broader surveys. Engaging with individuals directly involved in M&E practices, the study gathered detailed perspectives on how gender responsive M&E is understood, integrated and challenged within organizations.

3.7.2 FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted to gather diverse views on gender-responsive M&E from program staff and field officers. According to Scheelbeek et al.

(2020), FGDs aim to explore participants' experiences, beliefs, and attitudes through guided group discussions that encourage interaction and shared insights.

An FGD guide with open-ended questions was used with six participants. The group discussion allowed participants to exchange ideas and provide collective insights on the topic.

3.7.3 IN DEPTH INTERVIEWS

Kvale and Brinkmann (2015) describe in depth interviews as a qualitative data collection method that involves one on one conversations that explore participants detailed experiences and perspectives. Due to the limited number of people to conduct FGDs, in depth interviews were conducted using the FGD guide.

3.8 DATA QUALITY CONTROL

Data quality control in qualitative research focuses on establishing and demonstrating trustworthiness (Ahmed et al, 2025). This requires deliberate and systematic efforts to enhance the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Credibility refers to how believable and accurate the findings are and this was ensured by triangulation (McLeod,2013). Triangulation refers to the use of multiple sources of data collection methods in research. In this study, Key informant interviews and in-depth interviews provided detailed individual perspectives, while focus group discussion collective views of the participants. Comparing the three sources, allowed for a cross validation of patterns and trends leading to more reliable conclusions.

According to Lal (2025), Confirmability is ensuring the findings are shared by the participants data rather than research bias and to ensure this, I grounded the findings with direct quotations from the participants. This allows tracing the interpretations to the participants actual words.

Member checking was also used to ensure confirmability and this is sharing what I have written down with the participants to ensure they are accurate with their experiences

(Birt et al, 2016). Member checking also allowed participants verify the information and clarify any misunderstanding ensuring the interpretation aligned with what the participant intended to say.

According to Korstjen and Moser (2018), dependability was ensured by using the same set of guiding questions with all participants. This helped keep the process consistent and made it easier to compare what different people shared.

Data collection was also stopped at the point of Saturation. According to Mwita (2022), this is when sufficient data has been collected to draw necessary conclusions. By stopping data collection at the point of saturation, it ensured that the study remained focused and efficient, while still capturing a comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

3.9 DATA ANALYSIS METHOD

The data collected from the interviews and FGDs were recorded and transcribed. A thematic analysis was employed to analyse the data. This involved identifying, analysing and reporting themes within the qualitative data (Naeem et al, 2023). The thematic analysis was conducted in six phases; familiarization with the data through repeated reading of transcripts, code generation to highlight the relevant highlights, generating themes from the related codes, reviewing the themes and defining and naming the themes. Nvivo software was used and this facilitated the organization of the qualitative data to systematically identify patterns across the transcripts.

3.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations are principles that guide the research designs and practices and this is to protect the rights of the researchers and ensure validity of the results (Bhandari, 2018).

The researcher got authorization for data collection from Uganda Christian University research ethics committee (UCUREC) clearance committee.

Before data collection, participants were given an informed consent form explaining the purpose of the study, their rights including confidentiality and the option to withdraw and how the information would be used. The form was explained clearly, and participants were given time to ask questions. Only those who gave voluntary consent by signing or thumbprinting the form took part in the study.

Confidentiality was kept to ensure anonymity that is to say their names of the participants and organisations are not included anywhere in my research.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

4.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the results of analysis in relation to the specific objectives of the study. The study was conducted using focus group discussions, indepth interviews and Key informant interviews with M&E staff and program staff from selected humanitarian NGOs operating in Yumbe District. The findings are presented for purposes of clarity and interpretation in relation to these objectives;

- i. To explore the level of knowledge among Humanitarian NGOs regarding gender responsiveness of M&E systems in Yumbe District.
- ii. To assess the attitude towards establishing gender responsive M&E systems among Humanitarian NGOs in Yumbe district.
- iii. To examine the gender responsive M&E practices in Humanitarian NGOs in Yumbe district.

4.1 SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHICS CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE.

Table 2: Socio-demographic characteristics of the sample

Variable	Category	Number
Gender	Female	3
	Male	16
Role in the organisation	MEAL Manager	2
	Project Manager	1
	MEAL Coordinator	4
	M&E Officer	12
Years of experience	5+ years	3
	3 years	9

	2 years	7
Level of education	Masters degree	2
	PGD	12
	Bachelors degree	5
Major Humanitarian Interventions	• Education • Child Protection • Sexual Reproductive health	

4.2 KNOWLEDGE OF HUMANITARIAN NGOS ON GENDER RESPONSIVE M&E SYSTEMS

4.2.1 UNDERSTANDING GENDER RESPONSIVENESS

From the focus group discussions with M&E officers and interviews with M&E Coordinators, Managers and project managers of the humanitarian NGOs operating in Yumbe District, they were asked to give their views on their understanding of the term “gender responsiveness” and their responses were as follows;

Gender inclusivity: Interview and FGD participants largely defined gender responsiveness as a deliberate integration of women's and men's needs, experiences, and perspectives into the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of projects. Project manager and M&E officers both agreed that the gender-responsive approach ensures the gaps in gender are identified and addressed throughout the project cycle. Some selected participants mentioned that “...To me, gender responsiveness means making sure our programs work well for both men and women, and that we don’t leave anyone behind...” (FGD3-HNGO3-2025). A respondent from the KII also mentioned that, “...*Gender responsiveness means deliberately considering the needs of both men and women from planning to closure...*” (KII1-HNGO1-2025)

Addressing gender disparities was frequently highlighted as a core element of gender responsiveness in M&E systems. Both interviewees and focus group participants

highlighted that these systems are meant to tackle the marginalization of women and girls by uncovering and addressing power imbalances. While M&E coordinators spoke about institutional approaches such as gender audits and gender budgeting, FGD participants pointed to community level practices like giving women priority in livelihood programs and making sure their voices are heard through feedback mechanisms. A focus group member noted, “Gender responsiveness is about aiming at striving for equality... or trying to walk around the barriers brought about by the fact that one is female and the other is male” (FGD1-HNGO3-2025).

Other than numbers (emphasis on participation): There was an agreement across both interview participants and focus group members that gender responsiveness is not just a question of representation or counts, but also participation. Similarly, the respondents emphasized that gender-responsive systems must also provide active participation of both genders in decision-making. The M&E officers in the FGDs often used examples of involving women in planning committee meetings, while M&E managers stressed including participatory gender assessments in M&E frameworks in order to consider diverse voices. An IDI respondent mentioned that, “Gender responsiveness is more than counting women, it’s about ensuring they have a voice and their needs are genuinely addressed” (IDI1-HNGO1-2025).

Contextual sensitivity in roll-out: Similarly, respondents also called for contextual sensitivity to roll out gender responsiveness. Both FGD participants and interviewees emphasized gender norms vary across Yumbe District communities and hence gender responsiveness has to be addressed through localized approaches. While project coordinators called for convergence of gender strategy with cultural norms to reduce resistance, FGD participants, however, emphasized community sensitization and male involvement to create enabling environments for women's participation. As one key informant explained, “In Yumbe, we adapt tools to local norms like separate FGDs for women because of religion and other social dynamics” (KII7-HNGO2-2025). This underscores the need for flexibility and cultural awareness in designing gender-responsive interventions.

4.2.2 UNDERSTANDING OF AN M&E SYSTEM

From the focus group discussions with M&E officers and interviews with M&E Coordinators, and project manager of the humanitarian NGOs operating in Yumbe District, they were asked to give their views on their understanding of an M&E system and their responses were as follows;

Progress tracking tool: The Respondents in the FGDs and interviews generally described an M&E system as a formal structure being used to track progress against planned targets in a project. M&E officers and managers also expressed that the system helps identify if interventions are being implemented as planned and if results desired are being achieved. Whereas M&E officers tended to concentrate on day-to-day data gathering and report-writing mechanisms, project and M&E manager highlighted the system's function in performance measurement and linking activities with strategic objectives. A respondent from the KII said,

“...An M&E system is a structured and integrated framework that combines data collection, analysis, and reporting tools to track the progress and impact of a project.” (KI16-HNGO3-2025)

Similarly, a respondent from one of the FGDs recounted that M&E system is used for tracking performance in delivery of expected outcomes “...An M&E system is basically the engine that tells us whether we’re on track or off-track in delivering what we promised....” (FGD2-HNGO3-2025)

Evidence-based decision-making: The other shared perception among the participants was that an M&E system facilitates evidence-based decision-making. In agreement, both FGD and interview respondents listed that data and analysis built under M&E help organizations make timely adjustments and improve project effectiveness. M&E Coordinators cited most frequently the system's capacity to facilitate learning and inform future programming, whereas M&E officers highlighted instead how M&E reports influence changes at the field level to meet the needs of the beneficiaries. A FGD respondent mentioned that,

“...It’s the system that ensures data-driven decision-making. Without it, we would be implementing blindly. It includes evaluations, surveys, stakeholder feedback, and dashboards that allow us to reflect and adapt...” (FGD6-HNGO3-2025)

Accountability and transparency: Accountability was also a strong theme to be found among both groups of respondents. Similarly, project managers and M&E officers also pointed out that an M&E system promotes transparency to organizational leadership, donors, and beneficiaries. The interview participants were more concerned with upward accountability, particularly in reporting outcomes to funders, while FGD participants were worried with downward accountability by making the projects responsive to the true needs of target communities. A KII respondent mentioned that,

“...An M&E system is not just about collecting data it is the backbone of transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement. It ensures that every decision we make is backed by evidence, every stakeholder is kept informed, and that we are constantly learning and adapting to improve outcomes...” (KII1-HNGO1-2025)

Data management and analysis: Both groups of respondents described the M&E system as central to data management, which entails collection, analysis, interpretation, and use. Consistently, both interview and FGD participants acknowledged that an effective M&E system allows for systematic monitoring of indicators over a time period. While M&E officers mentioned routine tools such as logframes and indicator tracking tables, M&E Managers highlighted more advanced elements such as digital data platforms, dashboards, and analysis tools used for making inferences and informing strategies. An IDI respondent mentioned that,

“...We manage data from collection through to analysis and reporting. That includes using tools like logframes and indicator tracking tables, plus digital dashboards...” (IDI3-HNGO3-2025)

Learning and adaptation: Another perspective that came out of both groups was the organizational learning and continuous improvement role that M&E systems play. Likewise, M&E staff and project leaders stressed that in addition to measuring outputs and outcomes, M&E systems assist in pulling lessons learned and recording best practices out. Whereas project officers were more interested in the learning at the implementation and community levels, the M&E Coordinators were keen to stress the importance of institutionalizing that learning into organizational strategic reviews and future program design. Some of the selected respondents reported that, “An M&E system is basically the engine that tells us whether we’re on track or off-track in delivering what we promised” (FGD2-HNGO3-2025)

4.2.3 COMPONENTS OF M&E SYSTEM CONSIDERED IN ORGANIZATIONS

From the focus group discussions with M&E officers and interviews with M&E Coordinators, Managers and project coordinators and managers of the humanitarian NGOs operating in Yumbe District, they were asked to give their views on the components of the M&E system that are considered in their respective organizations and their responses were as follows;

Indicators and targets: FGD participants and interviewees overwhelmingly concurred that indicators and targets form an important component of their M&E systems. Similarly, M&E officers and project officers stated that they utilize predetermined indicators to measure outputs, outcomes, and even impact. Interview respondents, particularly M&E Coordinators and Project Managers, emphasized the importance of setting SMART indicators during project design to guide implementation and reporting. While FGD respondents were also interested in how indicators support tracking day-to-day progress, interview respondents highlighted the use of targets in assessing project success over time.

As one FGD participant explained, “Clear indicators is one of them, it’s hard to know whether we’re making progress or not. Indicators guide everything from planning to reporting” (FGD6-HNGO2-2025). This underscores the foundational role of well-developed indicators and targets in effective M&E practice.

Data collection tools and methods: Another key area emphasized was the use of data collection tools and methodologies. In line with this, FGD participants and interviewees indicated that their organizations utilize structured tools such as questionnaires, mobile data collection apps, and monitoring checklists. M&E Coordinators in the interview pointed out the application of online tools like KoboToolbox and CommCare for real-time data, while project officers in FGD pointed out the consistent usage of paper-based tools, especially in rural areas where connectivity is weak.

As one key informant explained, “Digital tools are key in the M&E system like KoboToolbox and CommCare help us streamline data collection and reduce delays in reporting” (KII3-HNGO1-2025). Meanwhile, FGD participants particularly pointed out that paper-based tools are still commonly used where digital access is limited. One respondent said that, “Sometimes we still rely on paper-based tools, especially in rural areas. But even then, our checklists and forms are structured to capture accurate field data” (FGD4-HNGO3-2025). This highlights how organizations adapt data collection methods based on context, ensuring information remains reliable and accurate no matter the tools used.

Reporting and documentation: Reporting channels were also extensively cited as a crucial component. Both respondent groups additionally reported that routine reporting weekly, monthly, and quarterly is an important component of their M&E system. Respondents such as Project Managers emphasized that reporting from the field guides donor reporting and project review, while FGD participants emphasized in return the importance of reporting as a document to gather community-level accountability and assist in monitoring beneficiary feedback and implementation **difficulties**. On the other hand, FGD and IDI participants highlighted that reporting also serves as a tool for gathering community-level accountability, monitoring beneficiary feedback, and addressing implementation challenges.

One key informant noted, “Reporting is key and this includes weekly field updates, monthly summaries, and donor-specific reports. We also include gender-specific sections now in all progress reports” (KII6-HNGO3-2025). Another respondent added,

“We treat reporting not just as an obligation to donors but as a learning opportunity for us and our community stakeholders” (IDI2-HNGO1-2025). These insights underscore that reporting serves not only external compliance needs but also internal learning and community engagement.

Learning and assessment: The learning and assessment component was discussed as an essential element for facilitating organizational growth and measuring program impact. Both FGD participants and interview respondents acknowledged the importance of conducting mid-term reviews and end-of-project assessments. Interviewees particularly M&E Managers emphasized that evaluations play a key role in informing strategic planning and improving decision-making processes. M&E officers in the FGDs added that these evaluations often provide practical, field-level recommendations that help refine operations and better align interventions with community needs.

As one key informant explained,

“...Assessments like endline assessments and mid-term reviews are key components in an M&E system. These help us refine strategies and redesign interventions if they aren’t yielding desired results...” (KII5-HNGO3-2025).

Another shared, “...Evaluations give us realistic recommendations. It’s one of the few ways we learn what worked, what didn’t, and why...” (KII2-HNGO1-2025). These reflections highlight the critical role of assessments in promoting evidence-based adaptation and continuous improvement within humanitarian programs.

Feedback and accountability mechanisms: Feedback mechanisms were considered essential for promoting accountability and encouraging meaningful participation from the community. Both FGD participants and interviewees shared that tools like suggestion boxes, community scorecards, and hotline numbers are commonly used to collect feedback from beneficiaries. The KII respondents stressed that feedback loops are vital for shaping program design and making adjustments based on community input. FGD and IDI participants also pointed out that these mechanisms build trust and show transparency in how services are delivered. As one interviewee noted, “We see

feedback from beneficiaries not as complaints as a form of accountability as the title is MEAL. A stands for accountability which is an important aspect of the system.” (IDI1-HNGO1-2025). This perspective reflects a shift from viewing feedback as criticism to embracing it as a valuable tool for continuous improvement and accountability.

4.2.4 UNDERSTANDING GENDER RESPONSIVENESS IN M&E

During the FGD, IDI AND KII’s, they were asked to give their views on their understanding of the term “gender responsiveness” in the context of M&E systems and their responses were as follows;

Inclusion of gender needs: Interviewees and FGD participants generally described gender responsiveness in M&E systems as deliberately considering the needs, experiences, and concerns of both women and men. The M&E officers and project managers also emphasized that gender responsiveness involves having equal gender representation of women, men, girls, and boys when collecting data and having their specific concerns addressed in project reports and evaluation. Although FGD and IDI participants typically emphasized the importance of collecting gender-disaggregated data during monitoring visits, interviewees reiterated the need for harmonizing project indicators and gender equality targets. An IDI respondent mentioned that,

“Gender responsiveness means ensuring the M&E process is safe, accessible, and respectful to all genders from the time we plan field visits to the way we interpret their feedback.” (IDI5-HNGO2-2025)

Utilization and disaggregation of data: A perspective from one of these categories was that gender responsiveness entails the use of sex-disaggregated data to expose trends and differences on the basis of gender. In line with this, FGD respondents noted that data disaggregation helps in identifying beneficiaries of interventions and excluded individuals. Conversely, interviewees, particularly M&E Coordinators, stressed that not only the collection but analysis and use of such data to inform programmatic decisions, monitor equity outcomes, and support advocacy for gender-responsive funding and planning are important. A key informant mentioned that,

“It is collecting gender-disaggregated data to help us know how much of an impact our project has had on men and women. That’s what helped us realize we were not really considering the men, even though they’re the decision makers at home.” (KII2-HNGO1-2025)

Gender-sensitive indicators and tools: The development and application of gender-sensitive indicators and tools emerged as a critical element of gender-responsive M&E, as highlighted by respondents. Both FGD participants and interviewees emphasized that incorporating a gender lens into logframes, baseline surveys, and evaluation checklists ensures that gender equality is considered from project inception to completion. While FGD and IDI respondents pointed out that this approach requires additional training and investment, interviewees underscored the importance of organizational commitment to mainstream gender throughout all M&E frameworks.

As one IDI participant put it, “It’s about including gender-specific indicators and using tools that capture power dynamics, and training staff in gender-aware methods” (IDI3-HNGO2-2025). This reflects a growing recognition that meaningful gender integration in M&E goes beyond numbers it requires context-sensitive tools and capacity building to uncover and address deeper social dynamics.

Participation and voice: The second mutual understanding was that gender responsiveness involves ensuring equal voice and participation in the M&E process. Respondent groups both emphasized that women and girls, and other marginalized groups, should be intentionally included in providing feedback, feeding into assessments, and influencing decisions. FGD participants were interested in how participatory approaches help empower women at the community level, whereas interviewees focused on creating spaces that are safe and employing the proper cultural approaches to bring forth silenced voices. A respondent from the FGD mentioned that,

“Conducting separate FGDs by gender, test tools with both sexes, and including female-led field teams is crucial for a gender responsive M&E system.” (FGD6-HNGO3-2025)

A KII respondent mentioned that,

“...Gender responsive M&E systems is about creating platforms where both genders give feedback to ensure inclusion to make better informed decisions...”
(KII1-HNGO1-2025)

Accountability for gender equity: Finally, M&E officers and senior managers viewed gender responsiveness as a form of accountability to gender equity goals. Across the board, respondents agreed that M&E systems must be capable of assessing whether programs are effectively narrowing gender gaps or inadvertently widening them. FGD participants discussed the importance of tracking gender outcome indicators for learning purposes, while interviewees emphasized the practical consequences of failing to be gender responsive, such as donor disapproval or reduced funding.

One FGD participant noted, “Gender responsiveness in M&E means we don’t just count people we understand how each group is affected differently” (FGD4-HNGO3-2025). A key informant added, “Disaggregated data tells us a story we can’t see when all numbers are lumped together. That’s where real equity work begins” (KII7-HNGO3-2025). Another respondent further emphasized, “A gender-responsive M&E system helps us remain accountable, not just to donors, but to the women and men we serve” (IDI4-HNGO2-2025). These reflections highlight that gender-responsive M&E is not only a technical requirement but also an ethical commitment to equitable development.

4.3 ATTITUDE TOWARDS ESTABLISHING A GENDER RESPONSIVE M&E SYSTEM

4.3.1 IMPORTANCE OF GENDER CONSIDERATIONS IN THE M&E SYSTEMS

From the focus group discussions with M&E officers and interviews with M&E Coordinators, Managers and project managers of the humanitarian NGOs operating in Yumbe District, they were asked to give their views on the importance of gender considerations in the M&E systems in Humanitarian work and their responses were as follows;

Strengthening equity and inclusion: FGD and interview respondents strongly emphasized that integrating gender considerations into M&E systems is essential for

enhancing equity and inclusiveness in humanitarian action. The FGD, KII and IDI respondents saw gender responsive M&E as essential for identifying the unique needs and vulnerabilities of women, men, girls and boys. FGD participants added that without this approach, programs could easily overlook certain groups or even end up reinforcing existing inequalities.

Respondents also noted that gender sensitive M&E frameworks help organizations check whether services are distributed fairly and whether interventions are genuinely making transformative impact. One IDI respondent remarked, “It’s absolutely necessary. Without gender considerations, we risk missing half the story of what’s happening on the ground” (IDI1-HNGO2-2025). Similarly, an FGD participant noted, “Gender considerations ensure that both men and women benefit equally and that our programs are not unintentionally excluding or disadvantaging anyone” (FGD1-HNGO2-2025). These insights underscore the vital role of gender integration in achieving fair and inclusive humanitarian outcomes.

Bolstering program effectiveness: Some respondents believed that integrating gender considerations into M&E contributes to improved programming. Both FGD participants and interviewees agreed that incorporating gender analysis in M&E enables responsiveness to the distinct risks and benefits experienced by different genders. FGD members emphasized that this information helps make interventions more appropriate and effective at the community level. Interviewees, especially M&E Manager, pointed out that when programs actively address gender relations, outcomes improve and beneficiary satisfaction increases.

One KII respondent stated,

“When you include gender analysis in M&E, you start to see the real picture of how both genders have been affected and this helps us create more relevant programs...” (KII5-HNGO2-2025)

These insights highlight the essential role of gender-responsive M&E in enhancing both the relevance and impact of humanitarian programs.

Strengthening stakeholders' accountability: A common perception was also that gender-sensitive M&E enhances donors' and communities' accountability. Similarly, interview and FGD participants conceded that donors increasingly want humanitarian actors to track and report on gender outcomes. The M&E Coordinators emphasized the point that having gender indicators indicates that an organization is serious about upholding global standards like the SPHERE guidelines and the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS). Conversely, M&E officers reiterated that accountability is also giving voice to marginal groups, especially to girls and women, in monitoring and evaluation. An IDI respondent mentioned that, “Donors want numbers, yes but they also want to know who benefits, and why. That’s where gender considerations come in.” (IDI5-HNGO2-2025)

Shaping evidence-based gender programming: FGD and interview participants noted that gender concerns in M&E support the provision of evidence to inform gender programming. Similarly, M&E personnel across agencies agreed that sex-disaggregated data collection and analysis help to point out areas of gaps in services, the design of more effective gender-specific interventions, and resource mobilization. While FGD respondents highlighted the way, this information is utilized in real-time to inform field operations, interviewees, on the contrary, explained how findings shape overall program design, gender budgeting, and reprioritization of resources. A KII responded that,

“If data is not disaggregated in that kind of category, we will not be able to write to donors to request for funding or support women effectively. We must be able to demonstrate who is affected and how.” KII7-HNGO3-2025

Facilitating organizational learning and change: Respondents also highlighted the role of gender-sensitive M&E in promoting internal learning and organizational transformation. Both FGD facilitators and interviewees noted that analyzing gender-differentiated results enables organizations to reflect on their practices and make necessary adjustments for future interventions. M&E managers emphasized that gender-responsive M&E fosters institutional memory and strengthens learning systems,

while M&E officers highlighted its role in cultivating a culture of inclusion among partners and field staff.

As one FGD participant stated, “If we ignore gender in our M&E, we’re not only missing data, we’re missing part of the story” (FGD1-NGO3-2025). Another key informant added, “Gender-sensitive M&E helps us ensure our programs are not just effective, but also fair and just” (KII4-NGO2-2025). These reflections demonstrate how gender-responsive M&E contributes not only to improved program outcomes but also to fostering equity and accountability within organizations.

4.3.2 ROLE OF MEN AND BOYS IN GENDER EQUALITY

From the focus group discussions with M&E officers and interviews with M&E Coordinators, managers of the humanitarian NGOs operating in Yumbe District, they were asked to give their views on how they perceive the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality within your programs and their responses were as follows;

Key allies in change: Men and boys were perceived by the respondents across a broad spectrum to be key allies in gender equality in humanitarian programming. FGD and interview participants alike also asserted that men cannot be excluded from the equation if gender equality is to be achieved. M&E officers explained that men yield power in a great deal of community institutions, hence their inclusion facilitates breaking resistance and inclusive practice.

Interviewees, particularly coordinators and managers, however emphasized that there is a need to shift attitudes that gender equality is a “women’s issue,” and instead make it everyone’s responsibility. A respondent from the FGD mentioned that, “Men and boys must be engaged as **allies in gender equality**. Excluding them causes resistance.” (FGD6-HNGO3-2025)

An IDI respondent mentioned that,

“We do involve the men and the boys because we have faced resistance in the past. We recently added a component to reduce gender-based violence....If one

man is exemplary, he will be able to recruit others, and it reduces challenges caused by inequality.” IDI2-HNGO1-2025

Role models and champions: Another common perspective was that men and boys can serve as powerful role models and champions for gender equality. Both FGDs and interviews highlighted experiences where men advocating for girls’ education, equal sharing of household responsibilities, or the prevention of violence helped drive meaningful changes in attitudes and behaviors. FGD participants noted the strategic use of male community influencers during campaigns, while interviewees shared examples of male program staff trained to lead sessions on respectful relationships and inclusion at both household and program levels.

As one key informant explained, “Men can become gender equality advocates. Educated men like me can influence others in our families, in our groups, even in our communities” (KII3-HNGO1-2025). Another interviewee added, “If we want gender equality, we must work with men to understand and support it. They are gatekeepers in many communities” (IDI4-HNGO2-2025). These insights underscore the important role men play as allies in advancing gender-responsive programming and social change.

Breaking stereotypes and social norms: The respondents also reiterated that engaging men and boys is fundamental to breaking gender stereotypes and disestablishing adverse norms. Similarly, both agreed that changing long-held assumptions on masculinity, leadership, and decision-making begins with sensitizing boys and men. FGD and IDI respondents emphasized the importance of early engagement through youth organizations or school clubs, whereas interview respondents discussed training workshops for male beneficiaries and leaders to address issues such as household control and dominance by males. A KII from organisation one mentioned that,

“We have male action groups... we go to men in drinking points and talk about menstruation, sexuality, and education to support their daughters. This is reducing the problems girls face.” (KII2-HNGO1-2025)

Another KII respondent mentioned,

“To achieve equality, we must tackle the mindset of men... Positive masculinity empathy, equity, and shared responsibility must be promoted from early on.” (KII3-HNGO1-2025)

Enhancing program acceptance: The majority of respondents highlighted that involving men in gender equality initiatives significantly improves program acceptance and sustainability. Managers and M&E officers agreed that when men are educated and engaged, resistance to gender-transformative programs such as women’s empowerment or sexual and reproductive health is greatly reduced. Conversely, FGD participants cautioned that excluding men from these programs can lead to backlash, mistrust, or misunderstandings about the program’s purpose at the community level.

As one key informant explained, “We initially focused only on women, but it led to backlash. So, we included their husbands in gender dialogue sessions and acceptance improved immediately” (KII1-HNGO1-2025). Similarly, an interviewee noted, “When men are included, programs are more effective and sustainable. Otherwise, they may feel left out or challenged” (IDI5-HNGO2-2025). These insights emphasize the importance of male engagement for the success and longevity of gender-responsive interventions.

Co-beneficiaries of gender equality: Another important perspective shared by respondents was that men and boys, while allies, are also direct beneficiaries of gender equality. Both FGDs and interviews emphasized that engaging men contributes to healthier families, improved mental health, and a more balanced sharing of economic responsibilities. M&E managers highlighted broader social impacts, such as reductions in gender-based violence, while M&E officers focused on individual-level benefits for men, including learning new parenting skills, improving communication, and resolving conflicts more effectively.

One FGD participant stated, “We cannot achieve gender equality by working with only half the population men must be part of the process” (FGD5-HNGO3-2025). A key informant added, “When boys grow up seeing gender equality as normal, they become

the men who build more just communities” (KII2-HNGO1-2025). Another interviewee remarked, “Involving men makes them realize they too gain when relationships are respectful and responsibilities are shared” (IDI1-HNGO1-2025). These insights highlight the mutual benefits of inclusive gender equality efforts for individuals, families, and communities.

4.3.3 ORGANIZATIONAL READINESS IN INTEGRATING GENDER CONSIDERATIONS INTO M&E

From the focus group discussions with M&E officers, and interviews with M&E Coordinators, Managers of the humanitarian NGOs operating in Yumbe District, they were asked to give their views on how well prepared they think their organization are in integrating gender considerations into M&E and their responses were as follows;

Existing gender policies and frameworks: Respondents noted that their organizations have established gender policies and frameworks to support gender-responsive M&E. Both FGDs and interviews confirmed the existence of institutional gender strategies, gender action plans, and M&E guidelines that incorporate gender principles. M&E staff participating in FGDs highlighted that these documents guide the selection of indicators and data collection methods, while interviewees emphasized that such frameworks demonstrate strong commitment from top management and signal organizational readiness to mainstream gender throughout project cycles.

As one interviewee explained, “We have a Gender Task Force that ensures gender is put at the forefront. Gender is integrated at every level from participation to staff awareness and programming” (IDI1-HNGO1-2025). A key informant added, “We also have a gender marker we use in every project to track how well boys and girls are engaged. It helps us remain focused throughout implementation” (KII1-HNGO1-2025). These insights highlight the critical role of formal policies and tools in institutionalizing gender-responsive M&E.

Staff training and capacity gaps: While most organizations appeared to have basic gender tools in place, respondents highlighted ongoing capacity gaps related to staff training and knowledge. Both FGD and interview participants agreed that not all field

staff have received adequate training in gender analysis or the application of gender-sensitive indicators. M&E Coordinators emphasized the need for more frequent capacity-building initiatives, whereas FGD participants noted limited learning opportunities and a heavy reliance on gender specialists during evaluations.

One FGD participant shared, “We are conceptually strong but lack consistent field-level practice. More localized gender integration is needed” (FGD3-HNGO3-2025). Another added, “We still need more investment in capacity-building and resourcing for gender in M&E. Truthfully, we haven’t had a specific training on gender in M&E” (FGD5-HNGO3-2025). These observations underscore the necessity for ongoing staff development to strengthen gender integration at all levels

Donor influence and motivation: Some respondents felt that their organization’s readiness to integrate gender considerations is often driven more by donor requirements than by internal commitment. Both FGDs and interviews agreed that gender becomes a priority mainly when explicitly mandated by funding partners. One M&E manager noted, “We do gender-responsive M&E when the donor puts it in the contract. Otherwise, it’s not always prioritized” (KII1-HNGO1-2025). Similarly, interviewees particularly managers explained that gender indicators are generally incorporated into M&E frameworks to meet donor demands for gender-disaggregated data, ensuring accountability and justifying funding.

As another respondent shared, “Sometimes these gender components are donor-driven. We include them to comply with reporting obligations, but internally the momentum to follow through can fade” (IDI4-HNGO2-2025). M&E officers cautioned that without external pressure, gender components risk becoming tokenistic, lacking depth or meaningful follow-through. One interviewee observed, “There’s goodwill, yes, but if gender isn’t a donor deliverable, it’s often side-lined in the implementation. It ends up being something we just mention in passing” (IDI5-HNGO2-2025). These reflections highlight the challenges of sustaining genuine gender integration beyond donor compliance.

Resource and budget constraints: Another recurring theme was the insufficient resources allocated for gender-responsive M&E. The respondents from the KII, IDI and FGD agreed that, although gender responsive M&E is recognized as important, it is often not given enough funding or staffing. M&E officers pointed out the challenges of collecting gender specific data or facilitating community dialogues when budgets are limited. The KII also noted that these resource constraints make it difficult to carry out gender audits, conduct participatory appraisal or hire dedicated gender specialists.

One interviewee remarked, “Even though there’s goodwill, sometimes the project design doesn’t budget for gender components” (IDI5-HNGO2-2025). Similarly, a key informant explained, “The challenge is that even though gender is a priority, there is often no specific budget to support the M&E activities around it” (KII2-HNGO2-2025). These insights reveal how financial limitations can undermine the effective integration of gender in M&E processes.

Varying levels of organizational commitment: Respondents noted that organizations vary in their readiness, largely depending on leadership and internal culture. Both FGDs and interviews highlighted that while some organizations in Yumbe are leading in mainstreaming gender into M&E due to strong leadership, others remain at the awareness stage without deeper integration. M&E officers stressed that readiness depends heavily on how much priority headquarters or country offices place on gender equality.

Conversely, senior managers emphasized that authentic integration requires local ownership of gender issues. As one FGD participant noted, “We have the gender policy, yes, but the challenge is turning it into action at the field level” (FGD6-HNGO3-2025). Another interviewee added, “Training is key. Some of our officers collect data but don't really understand the gender lens behind the indicators” (IDI4-HNGO2-2025). These perspectives illustrate that organizational commitment is critical but varies widely, impacting the effectiveness of gender-responsive M&E.

4.4 PRACTICES TOWARDS A GENDER RESPONSIVE M&E SYSTEM

4.4.1 GENDER CONSIDERATIONS CURRENTLY INTEGRATED INTO M&E ACTIVITIES

From the focus group discussions with M&E officers, and interviews with M&E Coordinators, Managers and managers of the humanitarian NGOs operating in Yumbe District, they were asked to give their views on the gender considerations currently integrated into M&E activities within their respective organizations and their responses were as follows;

Use of sex-disaggregated data: The collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data was among the most cited gender considerations in both FGDs and interviews. Similarly, the respondents stated that their organizations also gather and analyze data separately for males and females in order to assess participation and outcomes by gender groups. FGD participants emphasized the utilization of disaggregated data in ongoing monitoring to assess who is accessing services. Conversely, interviewees, and especially M&E Coordinators, stressed that the practice also allows for reporting back to donors and making programmatic changes to address inequities revealed through the data. A FGD respondent mentioned that,

“In the project, all data is disaggregated by gender, nationality and disability status. So when we are talking about the number of learners in school, we know exactly how many are female and how many are male in each class.” FGD3-HNGO3-2025

Gender-sensitive indicators: The respondents indicated that their M&E systems include gender-sensitive indicators in project monitoring and evaluation plans. In consensus, both FGDs and interviews reported that indicators on women's participation, access to services, decision-making power, and protection issues are regularly monitored. While M&E officers in FGDs focused on how such indicators are used in the conduct of baseline and endline surveys, interview respondents, by contrast, focused on how they are used to assess impact and inform programming decisions at strategic levels. A KII respondent mentioned, “We’ve included gender indicators in our logframe, like tracking the number of women in leadership roles within community groups.” (KII3-HNGO1-2025)

Inclusion of gender in evaluation tools: The participants also bore witness that gender is integrated into M&E tools such as questionnaires, focus group discussion guides, and assessment checklists. In the same spirit, both participant groups maintained that gender role, access, and outcome-related inquiries are embedded in data collection tools. FGD members mentioned the incorporation of gender-specific questions in feedback forms at the community level, while interviewees, on the other hand, talked about applying gender analysis tools in evaluations to learn about projects' differentiated effects on men and women. A IDI respondent mentioned that, "Creating safe spaces for women to speak freely during data collection makes a huge difference in the quality of information we get." (IDI2-HNG1-2025)

Community representation and participation: Another gender consideration brought out was the intentional inclusion of men and women in M&E processes. Respondents, in consensus, pointed out that organizations make efforts to balance the genders in sampled populations for interviews, FGDs, and surveys. FGD participants pointed out the necessity of including women in decision-making and reflection forums to benefit from their lived experiences. Conversely, interviewees discussed their organizations' efforts to engage male champions and women leaders in inclusive M&E processes to ensure both voices inform learning and reporting. A KII respondent mentioned that, "I make sure I interview both male and female and put into consideration all what they are saying. It helps me understand how it's affecting both genders." (KII5-HNG02-2025)

Integration of gender in reporting and learning: Respondents highlighted the growing incorporation of gender findings into reports and learning documents. Both FGDs and interviews confirmed that gender-disaggregated data is now routinely included in progress reports, annual reviews, and evaluation summaries. M&E officers participating in FGDs noted that gender-specific sections have become standard components of most reporting templates. Managers and M&E coordinators further reported that insights from gender-targeted analyses are actively used to inform program adjustments, target improvements, and guide future project design.

As one FGD participant emphasized, “All our monitoring tools must collect data by gender it’s non-negotiable now” (FGD5-HNGO3-2025). A key informant added, “We’ve included gender indicators in our logframe, like tracking the number of women in leadership roles within community groups” (KII3-HNGO1-2025). Another interviewee noted, “During evaluations, we always separate male and female respondents so we can understand their different experiences” (IDI5-HNGO2-2025). These reflections indicate that gender integration in reporting and learning is becoming a core practice in M&E systems.

4.4.2 CHALLENGES IN INCORPORATING GENDER RESPONSIVE INTO M&E PROCESSES

From the focus group discussions with M&E officers, and interviews with M&E Coordinators, Managers and project coordinators and managers of the humanitarian NGOs operating in Yumbe District, they were asked to give their views on the challenges, if any, they have encountered in incorporating gender responsive approaches into M&E processes and their responses were as follows;

Inadequate staff capacity: One of the most cited challenges was limited staff knowledge and skills in applying gender-responsive approaches within M&E systems. The interviewees and participants in FGDs also noted that most staff, particularly those in field-based roles, lack adequate training in gender-sensitive data collection and analysis. While FGD respondents pointed to the absence of gender-specific refresher workshops or trainings, interview respondents, on the other hand, pointed out that even if training takes place, such training tends to be one-off without the follow-up practical mentoring and technical support. A FGD respondent mentioned that, “Most staff can collect sex-disaggregated data, but few understand how to interpret it from a gender lens.” (FG1-HNGO3-2025)

Insufficient gender-specific indicators: The absence or inadequacy of gender-differentiated indicators in existing M&E systems was again a concern reflected. Both groups indicated that most M&E tools continue to be focused on output measures such as numbers of men and women reached, and not delve deeper into more core gender issues like empowerment, decision-making, or safety.

Respondents explained that donor templates do not necessarily need comprehensive gender indicators, while FGD members stated that it is difficult to come up with indicators of qualitative gender outcomes. A KII respondent mentioned that, “Gender indicators are sometimes too generic, we need more that go beyond counting women.” (KII1-HNGO1-2025). Another KII mentioned that, “Most organizations don’t have gender-responsive indicators. General ones dominate. That leads to general interventions.” (KII4-HNGO2-2025)

Social and cultural norms: Respondents also noted culture-level cultural barriers as among the challenges in gender-responsive M&E implementation. Similarly, interviewees and FGD participants noted that in most communities across Yumbe District, it is sensitive or even resented to talk about gender issues specifically on power relations, gender-based violence, or women’s participation. FGD respondents clarified cases where women did not want to speak during FGDs or interviews, and on the other hand, interviewees reported the male leaders even rule out the relevance of gender-sensitive analyses. A IDI participant mentioned that, “Some people in the community still believe that boys are more important than girls... so girls who’ve given birth must stay home.” (IDI6-HNGO2-2025)

Resource and budget constraints: Another recurring issue was that there wasn’t a dearth of specific resources to support gender-responsive M&E. Agreeing with one another; the two groups reacted saying that though gender is prioritized in strategy plans, budgets don’t allocate specific funds for gender-focused M&E activities. FGD participants mentioned challenge in organizing single focus group discussions for women and men due to logistic limitations, while interview participants instead mentioned that gender consultants or specialized software aren’t present due to a lack of resources. An KII participant mentioned that,

“We don’t integrate gender during planning. By the time we remember, it’s too late to capture anything meaningful. This actually affected one fo our projects and we had to include an aspect for the men. That is how Male action groups started” (KII2-HNGO1-2025)

Weak integration in M&E design: Some respondents pointed out that gender considerations are often not mainstreamed during the planning phases of M&E. Both FGDs and interviews expressed that gender responsiveness is sometimes treated as a low priority, addressed only at the final stages of the project life cycle. M&E officers reported that logframes and M&E plans are frequently developed without incorporating gender, making it challenging to track meaningful gender outcomes retrospectively.

The M&E coordinators emphasized that failing to integrate gender early on complicates the measurement of its impact and the documentation of gender-transformative change later. One KII participant noted,

“Sometimes, gender comes in as an afterthought. By the time the M&E plan is already approved, its too late to add meaningful gender indicators and then we struggle to show real impact later... these plans are sometimes done by the donor and we cant make adjustments...” (KII1-HGNO1-2025)

4.4.3 STRATEGIES FOR INCORPORATING GENDER INCLUSION IN M&E

From the focus group discussions with M&E officers and M&E officers, and interviews with M&E Coordinators, Managers and project coordinators and managers of the humanitarian NGOs operating in Yumbe District, they were asked to give their views on how their organizations can better incorporate the experiences of both genders in their M&E processes and their responses were as follows;

Gender-responsive tool design: The respondents preferred most highly the revision and review of M&E tools in order to guarantee that they capture the differential experiences of women and men. Similarly, FGD participants and interviewees noted that data tools need to go beyond enumerating female and male beneficiaries and rather contain open-ended and contextual gender-sensitive questions. Although FGD respondents provided accommodative strategies to culture and local language sensitivities of tools, interviewees proposed inclusion of indicators relating to power relations, decision-making roles, and perceived levels of access to resources by both genders. A respondent from the KII mentioned that,

“We revise our tools to include questions around gender roles and access to resources. It’s not just about counting participants it’s about capturing experience.”

(KII2-HNGO1-2025)

Gender-sensitive training for M&E staff: Some of the respondents reported that capacity building through gender training would enhance the capacity to collect and analyze gender-related experiences. Equivalently, FGD participants and interviewees acknowledged that, even in the presence of tools, staff cannot apply a gender focus while collecting, analyzing, and reporting data. FGD participants recommended conducting regular training workshops comprised of hands-on exercises and field simulations, whereas interviewees rather emphasized integrating gender modules as part of induction programs for all M&E staff and field officers. A KII respondent mentioned that

“We recently had a gender training that included all program staff to help them appreciate gender. It was not necessarily gender in M&E, but mainly how to use the gender marker across the project cycle.” (KII2-HNGO2-2025)

Inclusive community engagement: Respondents emphasized the requirement of actively engaging men and women in equal measure in M&E endeavour to ensure that their voice is heard equally. Similarly, interviewees and FGD emphasized conducting gender-segregated focus group discussions, household interviews, and participatory assessments. FGD participants stated that women are more forthcoming when interviewed in safe, female-only spaces, while interviewees highlighted that male community leaders and boys must be involved in M&E at the community level to ensure community ownership and reduce gender-related opposition.

Data disaggregation and gender analysis: Data disaggregation and gender analysis, were considered vital. In unison, the two respondent groups claimed that sex- and age-disaggregated data in itself is not enough unless analyzed in order to identify patterns and inequalities. FGD respondents underscored that results must be interpreted in an

effort to inform programming choices for both genders, whereas interviewees indicated that gender analysis reports must be regularly prepared and circulated to teams for reflection, learning, and adaptation. A KII respondent noted that, *“We need to reflect gender perspectives in how we interpret and use the data... and ensure our decisions don’t unintentionally reinforce inequalities.” (KII6-HNGO3-2025)*

Institutional commitment and resource allocation: Various respondents emphasized the importance of organizational commitment and financial support to enable inclusive M&E practices. Both FGDs and interviews revealed that gender inclusion often falters due to a lack of dedicated resources. M&E officers recommended appointing gender focal persons within M&E departments, while interviewees advocated for specific budget lines to support gender-responsive M&E activities, including targeted assessments, hiring gender experts, and providing translation services to reach marginalized gender groups.

One FGD participant said,

“Without a clear budget and someone responsible for gender in M&E, it remains just talk. We need focal persons and dedicated funds if we want to do proper gender responsive monitoring...” (FGD1-HNGO3-2025)

These insights underscore the critical role of institutional commitment and resource allocation in advancing meaningful gender-responsive M&E.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter includes the summary of findings in relation to the literature. It also summarizes all findings reported in chapter four according to questions of the study, draws conclusions propose some areas for further study.

5.1 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1.1 KNOWLEDGE AMONG HUMANITARIAN NGOS REGARDING GENDER

RESPONSIVENESS OF M&E SYSTEMS IN YUMBE DISTRICT

The findings revealed that humanitarian NGOs in Yumbe District generally demonstrate conceptual awareness of gender responsiveness, often defining it as the deliberate integration of men's and women's needs into project planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Respondents emphasized that gender responsiveness goes beyond numerical representation to active participation and contextual sensitivity. This aligns with the literature, which describes gender-responsive M&E as systems that capture both quantitative and qualitative gendered experiences, promote inclusion, and reduce inequalities (Bamberger, 2012; Wyatt et al, 2021).

The emphasis by respondents on participation and contextual sensitivity reflects the participatory approaches advocated by UN Women (2022), who stress that equitable M&E processes require both genders to have a voice. Similarly, the use of sex-disaggregated data and gender-sensitive indicators highlighted in the findings echoes the practices noted by Oxfam (2017) and CARE International (2017), where participatory gender analysis and sex-disaggregated data are embedded in humanitarian evaluations.

However, despite this conceptual understanding, the findings also showed that knowledge is unevenly institutionalized. While managers referenced institutional tools such as gender audits and gender budgeting, field-level officers tended to emphasize simpler aspects like counting participation or conducting separate FGDs for women due to cultural constraints. This resonates with Wokadala (2016) and Twende Mbele (2019) who noted that national and NGO M&E systems tend to understand gender responsiveness but fail to systematically operationalize it. Maiso, Ssekamatte and

Namara (2019) also found that weak staff capacity undermines gender responsive monitoring in Uganda. Thus, while there is a widespread awareness of gender responsiveness, the findings suggest that technical knowledge and consistent application across levels remains limited a gap that was highlighted in the literature as a persistent challenge.

5.1.2 ATTITUDE TOWARDS ESTABLISHING GENDER RESPONSIVE M&E SYSTEMS AMONG HUMANITARIAN NGOS IN YUMBE DISTRICT

The study found that humanitarian NGO staff in Yumbe generally express positive attitudes toward integrating gender considerations in M&E. Respondents perceived gender responsiveness as central to equity, program effectiveness, accountability, and organizational learning. Staff positive attitudes lie at the root of mainstreaming gender considerations into M&E systems. Similarly, UN Women (2020) emphasizes that if staff believe in gender-responsive M&E value in bringing change, this fosters internal ownership and functional mainstreaming of gender equality objectives in every program cycle.

A notable dimension in the findings was the recognition of men and boys as allies in gender equality. Respondents emphasized that male engagement is critical to program acceptance, sustainability, and reducing resistance, a perspective consistent with Freedman et al. (2017) who note that overlooking men's experiences perpetuates inequality. This also extends Social Role Theory's argument that gender roles, often privileging men as gatekeepers, must be deliberately engaged to achieve balance (Eagly & Wood, 2012).

Nonetheless, the findings also exposed ambivalence and conditional attitudes. While positive attitudes exist, many respondents admitted that organizational commitment to gender-responsive M&E is frequently donor-driven. This reflects the literature by Warren (2012) and Maiso, Ssekamatte and Namara (2019), which found that NGOs often treat gender as a funding condition rather than an internalized value. Moreover, respondents noted that without explicit donor requirements, gender components risk

tokenism, confirming Bamberger's (2013) observation of weak attitudes toward gender mainstreaming in M&E.

In sum, while humanitarian NGOs in Yumbe demonstrate an encouraging attitudinal shift toward gender equity, these attitudes are not always deeply institutionalized. Positive perceptions co-exist with dependency on external donor pressure, which undermines the sustainability of gender-responsive commitments.

5.1.3 GENDER RESPONSIVE M&E PRACTICES IN HUMANITARIAN NGOS IN YUMBE DISTRICT

The findings reveal that humanitarian NGOs in Yumbe have made practical strides in integrating gender into M&E processes. Practices include sex disaggregated data collection, incorporation of gender sensitive indicators, and the deliberate engagement of both men and women in surveys and reporting. These align with Peralta (2021) and Andrade et al (2021) that mention that strong practices involve consistent use of gender sensitive indicators, participatory methods, and disaggregated data.

The practice of gender responsive reporting reflects the trend noted by UN Women (2022), which emphasizes that gender sensitive reporting is essential for accountability and program effectiveness. Similarly, the adoption of participatory gender analysis reflects Oxfam's feminist evaluation practices which involves the use of inclusive tools to highlight how power relations shape outcomes (Espinosa, 2013).

However, challenges persist. The study highlighted capacity gaps, limited trainings, inadequate gender specific indicators and persistent social and cultural norms that have constraint open gender discussions. This reflects UNICEF (2021) and Wokadala (2016) who noted that while NGOs adopt gender policies, limited resources and cultural barriers often hinder full implementation. Similarly, the issue of resource and budget constraints identified in the findings reflects the literature that gender considerations are often side-lined when budgets are tight (UNICEF, 2021).

The findings also revealed a weak integration of gender considerations during the planning phase of the M&E system. Gender often emerges as an afterthought making it difficult to track meaningful outcomes. This aligns with the critique that many M&E

systems treat gender as a cross cutting issue rather than embedding it in measurable indicators from the onset (Wokadala, 2016).

Despite these challenges, strategies such as revising tools, building staff capacity and institutional resource allocation were highlighted as key steps forward. These strategies resonate with UN Women & Social Development Direct (2020) who stress capacity building and organizational commitment as prerequisites for effective gender responsive M&E.

5.2 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The number of female M&E staff in the Humanitarian NGOs is limited and this limited the diverse views from both genders.

The project officers had limited knowledge on what M&E is and they failed to answer some of the questions. This made the researcher to refocus on only M&E personnel.

Some organisations were hesitant to take part in the study due to the sensitivity of the issue and thus took long to get approvals.

Some field staff were quite busy. The researcher had to strategically coordinate and explore ways of getting them all together by meeting them over the weekend and after office hours.

CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a summary of the study's findings, conclusions drawn from those findings, and practical recommendations.

6.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The study set out first to explore the level of knowledge among humanitarian NGOs regarding gender responsiveness of M&E systems in Yumbe District. The findings revealed that staff generally understood gender responsiveness as the deliberate integration of both men's and women's needs into project planning, monitoring, and evaluation. Respondents emphasized that gender was not only about counting numbers but about ensuring meaningful participation and adapting approaches to local cultural contexts. However, knowledge varied across organizational levels, with managers and coordinators demonstrating stronger familiarity with institutional tools such as gender audits and budgeting, while field staff tended to focus more narrowly on representation and participation.

The second objective was to assess the attitudes of humanitarian NGOs towards establishing gender-responsive M&E systems. The study showed that staff largely held positive views, identifying gender responsiveness as central to equity, accountability, and program effectiveness. Many respondents also recognized the importance of involving men and boys as allies to reduce resistance and increase community acceptance of gender initiatives. Despite these encouraging perspectives, it was evident that attitudes were often externally motivated, with gender considerations prioritized mainly when required by donors. This reliance on external pressure risked turning gender responsiveness into a compliance exercise rather than an internal organizational value.

The third objective was to examine the gender-responsive M&E practices employed by humanitarian NGOs in Yumbe District. The findings demonstrated that most organizations routinely collected sex-disaggregated data, applied gender-sensitive indicators, and integrated gender into evaluation tools and reporting. These practices

represent progress; however, they were constrained by limited staff capacity to interpret data from a gender perspective, inadequate indicators, resource shortages, and sociocultural barriers that limited open discussion of gender issues. Gender considerations were also often introduced late in project design, reducing their impact on long-term outcomes.

6.2 CONCLUSIONS

This study has shown that humanitarian NGOs in Yumbe District have made notable progress in understanding, valuing, and practicing gender-responsive M&E, though these efforts remain uneven and at times externally driven. While awareness and positive attitudes exist, weak capacity, resource limitations, and cultural barriers prevent full integration. Moving forward, sustainable progress will depend on strengthening institutional ownership, resourcing gender work adequately, and embedding gender responsiveness into every stage of monitoring and evaluation. By doing so, humanitarian NGOs will not only meet donor expectations but also contribute more meaningfully to equity, accountability, and transformative development outcomes.

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

On the knowledge of gender responsiveness of M&E systems, it is recommended that humanitarian NGOs strengthen knowledge of gender-responsive M&E by conducting regular capacity-building sessions for all staff, from field officers to senior managers. Developing standardized toolkits and fostering peer-learning forums across organizations would also ensure a more consistent and institutionalized understanding of gender integration.

For the attitudes towards gender responsive M&E systems, NGOs should embed gender equality principles into their core strategies and organizational culture, ensuring that commitment is not driven solely by donor requirements. Promoting male engagement initiatives and reframing gender responsiveness as a shared responsibility across all staff will foster more sustainable and genuine attitudinal change.

For the practices, organizations should integrate gender considerations from the design stage of projects, with clear gender-sensitive indicators and dedicated budget

allocations. Continuous training and mentoring are needed to build staff confidence in analyzing and applying gender data. Expanding participatory approaches that deliberately include both men and women will ensure that diverse perspectives inform program design and evaluation.

6.4 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY TO THE EXISTING BODY OF LITERATURE

This study contributes to the growing body of literature on gender-responsive Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) by offering empirical insights from a rural humanitarian context, specifically Yumbe District. While much of the existing research tends to focus on national frameworks or urban-based interventions, this study highlights the practical realities, challenges, and opportunities faced by humanitarian NGOs operating at the sub-national level.

The findings underscore the gap between policy and practice, particularly in translating institutional gender frameworks into field-level implementation. By exploring the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of M&E staff and program managers, the study adds a practitioner centered perspective to the highlighting the crucial role of internal capacity, organizational culture, and local ownership in advancing gender integration in M&E systems.

Additionally, the research highlights the influence of donor-driven priorities on gender responsiveness, prompting important reflections on sustainability and institutional commitment beyond compliance. It also contributes to the conversation on inclusive programming by illustrating the evolving role of men and boys as allies and co-beneficiaries in gender equality efforts an area over looked in gender and M&E research.

Overall, the study deepens our understanding of how gender can be meaningfully integrated into M&E processes in humanitarian settings, offering practical insights that may inform future policy, programming, and academic inquiry.

6.5 AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study enriches the existing literature on gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation by offering grounded, field-based evidence from a humanitarian context in Uganda. It fills a gap in understanding how gender equity is interpreted and operationalized at both strategic and field levels within NGOs. By triangulating insights from M&E officers, program managers, and M&E managers, the research reveals not only the presence of gender-responsive practices but also the structural and institutional limitations that hinder their full realization.

Importantly, the study surfaces the evolving role of men and boys in M&E processes an underexplored dimension in current gender discourse and provides a practical lens for navigating donor influence versus internal agency motivation. These insights collectively provide a framework for both practitioners and policymakers seeking to institutionalize gender equity in humanitarian evaluation systems.

Since this study aimed at assessing gender responsiveness of M&E systems: an assessment of knowledge, attitudes and practices among humanitarian non-governmental organizations in Yumbe District, the study recommends that; similar study should be done on other areas concerning this topic and these areas of further research needed include the following:

The study recommends further research into the effectiveness of gender-responsive M&E systems in influencing program outcomes across different humanitarian sectors such as health, education, and protection.

Lastly, future studies could explore the role of donor policies in shaping gender integration practices, assess community perceptions of gender-responsive programming, and examine how male engagement strategies influence gender equality outcomes in humanitarian interventions.

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APPEDICIES

Appendix 1: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE / IN DEPTH INTERVIEW

(To be administered to M&E officers and project officers)

INTRODUCTION

Greetings. My name is Ruth Akao and I am Master of Development Monitoring and Evaluation at Uganda Christian University. As part of my academic program, I am conducting a research study on “Gender Responsiveness of M&E systems: An assessment of knowledge, attitudes and practices of Humanitarian Non-Government Organizations. The purpose to explore the gender responsiveness of an organization’s M&E systems so that we can identify areas for improvement and promote more inclusive practices. This study is purely for my academic purposes and I guarantee confidentiality to all the answers. There are no right and wrong answers and I would really like you to freely express your opinions. With your permission, I would like to record this interview so that I can get all your responses fully. The recordings and notes I will take will be kept secure and confidentiality will be kept.

Name (optional)

Gender

Position/Role in the organization

Years of experience in M&E or related fields

Level of education

Major humanitarian interventions

DATE OF THE INTERVIEW:

KNOWLEDGE ON GENDER RESPONSIVE M&E SYSTEMS

1. What is your understanding of the term “gender responsiveness”?
2. What is your understanding of an M&E system?

3. What components of the M&E system are considered in your organization?
4. What is your understanding of the term “gender responsiveness” in the context of M&E systems?

ATTITUDES TOWARDS A GENDER RESPONSIVE M&E SYSTEM

5. What is your personal view on the importance of gender considerations in the M&E systems in Humanitarian work?
6. How do you perceive the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality within your programs?
7. How well prepared do you think your organization is in integrating gender considerations into M&E?

PRACTICES TOWARDS A GENDER RESPONSIVE M&E SYSTEM

8. Describe the gender considerations currently integrated into M&E activities within your organizations
 - Data collection methods
 - Staff capacity
 - Indicators
 - Reporting
9. What challenges, if any, have you encountered in incorporating gender responsive approaches into M&E processes? (Probe for components of the M&E system of interest)
10. How can your organization better incorporate the experiences of both genders in its M&E processes?

Thank you for your time.

Appendix 2: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE

(To be administered to M&E Coordinators, Managers and project coordinators and managers)

INTRODUCTION

Greetings. My name is Ruth Akao and I am Master of Development Monitoring and Evaluation at Uganda Christian University. As part of my academic program, I am conducting a research study on “Gender Responsiveness of M&E systems: An assessment of knowledge, attitudes and practices of Humanitarian Non Government Organizations. The purpose to explore the gender responsiveness of an organization’s M&E systems so that we can identify areas for improvement and promote more inclusive practices. This study is purely for my academic purposes and I guarantee confidentiality to all the answers.

Name (optional)

Gender

Position/Role in the organization

Years of experience in M&E or related fields

Level of education

Major humanitarian interventions

DATE OF THE INTERVIEW:

KNOWLEDGE ON GENDER RESPONSIVE M&E SYSTEMS

1. What is your understanding of the term “gender responsiveness”?
2. What is your understanding of an M&E system?
3. What components of the M&E system are considered in your organization?
4. What is your understanding of the term “gender responsiveness” in the context of M&E systems?

ATTITUDES TOWARDS A GENDER RESPONSIVE M&E SYSTEM

5. What is your personal view on the importance of gender considerations in the M&E systems in Humanitarian work?
6. How do you perceive the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality within your programs?

PRACTICES TOWARDS A GENDER RESPONSIVE M&E SYSTEM

7. Can you describe a specific project where gender-responsive M&E was implemented? What were the outcomes?
8. How do you ensure that both men's and women's experiences are adequately captured in your evaluations?
9. How do you ensure that M&E findings are translated into actionable recommendations that promote gender equality and inclusivity?
10. What challenges, if any, have you encountered in incorporating gender responsive approaches into M&E processes? (Probe for components of the M&E system of interest)

Thank you for your time.

APPENDIX 3: CONSENT FORM

“GENDER RESPONSIVENESS OF M&E SYSTEMS: AN ASSESSMENT OF KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES AMONG HUMANITARIAN NGOS”

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: RUTH AKAO (0776258352/0751431290)

RESEARCH INSTITUTION: UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:

The purpose of the study to gender responsiveness of M&E systems among humanitarian NGOs. We aim to understand the knowledge, attitudes and practices of staff members within these organization regarding considering gender in M&E processes.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION:

If you agree to participate in this study, the interview will take about 1 hour. Participation is voluntary and you can decide whether to participate or not. If you do not wish to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time during the discussion without penalty or consequence. Your identity will not be disclosed and to ensure this, a unique number will be assigned to you to get any research related information so that your identity is kept confidential. Any other information that contains your identity will remain only with the principal investigator. The organization name will also be given a unique number to ensure no information is tracked back to you.

BENEFITS

There will be no direct benefit but sharing your opinions will contribute to improving the gender responsiveness of M&E systems in humanitarian NGOS and in turn promoting a more inclusive and effective programming. Participation in this study may involve minimal risks such as discomfort or emotional stress arising from discussing sensitive topics. However, if you feel any personal discomfort during the discussion, you are free to stop the interview and withdraw as stated above.

CONTACT PERSON

If you have any questions about the study, you can contact the Ruth Akao at 0776258352/0751431290.

CONSENT

I have read and understood the information provided. I voluntarily agree to participate in this focus group discussion and consent to the recording and use of my contributions for the study.

Name of Person seeking consent:

Signature:

Date:

Name of Participant:

Participants Signature:

Date:

Thank you for your time

APPENDIX 4: REC APPROVAL



**UGANDA CHRISTIAN
UNIVERSITY**

A Centre of Excellence in the Heart of Africa

Office of the Vice Chancellor
Research Ethics Committee UG-026



09th July, 2024

RUTH AKAO
Uganda Christian University
0776258352
Email: r.akao@yahoo.com

UG-REC-026 APPROVAL NOTICE

To: Ruth Akao, Principal Investigator

Re: UCU-REC Application titled: *Gender Responsiveness of M&E Systems: An Assessment of Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices among Humanitarian Non-Governmental Organizations in Yumbe District.*

Application Number: UCUREC-2024-891
Version: 4.0

Type: ☐ Initial Review
☐ Protocol Amendment
☐ Letter of Amendment (LOA)
☐ Continuing Review
☐ Material Transfer Agreement
☐ Other, Specify:



I am pleased to inform you that the UG-REC-026; UCUREC approved the above referenced application.

Approval of the research is for the period from 09th July, 2024, to 09th July, 2025
This research is considered minimal risk category.

As Principal Investigator of the research, you are responsible for fulfilling the following requirements of approval:

1. All co-investigators must be kept informed of the status of the research.
2. Changes, amendments, and additions to the protocol or the consent form must be submitted to the REC for re-review and approval prior to the activation of the changes. The REC application number assigned to the research should be cited in any correspondence.

1 of 2

Research and Ethics

P.O. Box 4, Mukono, Uganda, Plot 67-173, Bishop Tucker Road, Mukono Hill
Tel: +256 (0) 312 350 885 Fax: +256 (0) 4142 90 800 Email: rec@ucu.ac.ug Web: www.ucu.ac.ug
UCUREC is accredited by Uganda National Council for Science & Technology, FDA, and National Institutes for Health of the United States of America

APPENDIX 5: INTRODUCTORY LETTER

 **UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY**
A Centre of Excellence in the Heart of Africa

July 24th, 2024

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir /Madam

Re: INTRODUCTORY LETTER FOR RESEARCH

This is to introduce to you AKAO Ruth Registration number RS21M66/015, a student of Uganda Christian University, pursuing Master's degree in Development Monitoring and Evaluations. She is expected to carry out research in the final year under the guidance of a university supervisor in partial fulfillment for the requirements of the above mentioned award.

Topic: Gender Responsivess of M&E Systems: An Assessment of Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices among Humanitarian NGOs."

The purpose of this communication is to request your office to allow her collect data from your organization. Any assistance rendered to her will be highly appreciated.


Jeremy Waiswa, PhD
Head, Research & Postgraduate Studies Department
Tel: 0752319951
Email: jwaiswa@ucu.ac.ug

A Centre of Excellence in the Heart of Africa

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