

# Countering Gender-Based Misinformation to Strengthen Impact Assessment



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# Why Gender Misinformation Matters?

## Data

50%

of countries have no reliable gender-disaggregated data on women = no complete info.

## Inequality

77%

of women report that earning differences arise simply because they are women = lack of equality

## Exclusion

58%

of women participate in the labor force = lack of opportunities

## Responsibilities

Only 1%

of essential childcare support frameworks are in place = lack of participation in workplace and meetings

∴ **Misinformation & disinformation** distort assessments, leading to flawed decisions and reduced effectiveness

∴ **Stereotypes (incl. culture) silence women's voices**, reducing representativeness and masking differentiated needs and risks

∴ **Gender integration is now mandatory** — multilateral development banks require it for financing approval

# Understanding Gender & Information Distortion

## *What Is Gender:*

*Gender refers to socially constructed roles, norms, and power relations that shape behavior, access to resources, and decision-making.*

## Three Types of Information Distortion

### MISUNDERSTANDING

#### **Complexity / Unclear Info**

Incorrect interpretation of the facts due to complexity, language barriers, or incomplete disclosure

### MISINFORMATION

#### **Unintentional Errors**

Incorrect information circulating without intent to mislead — often via rumor or informal networks

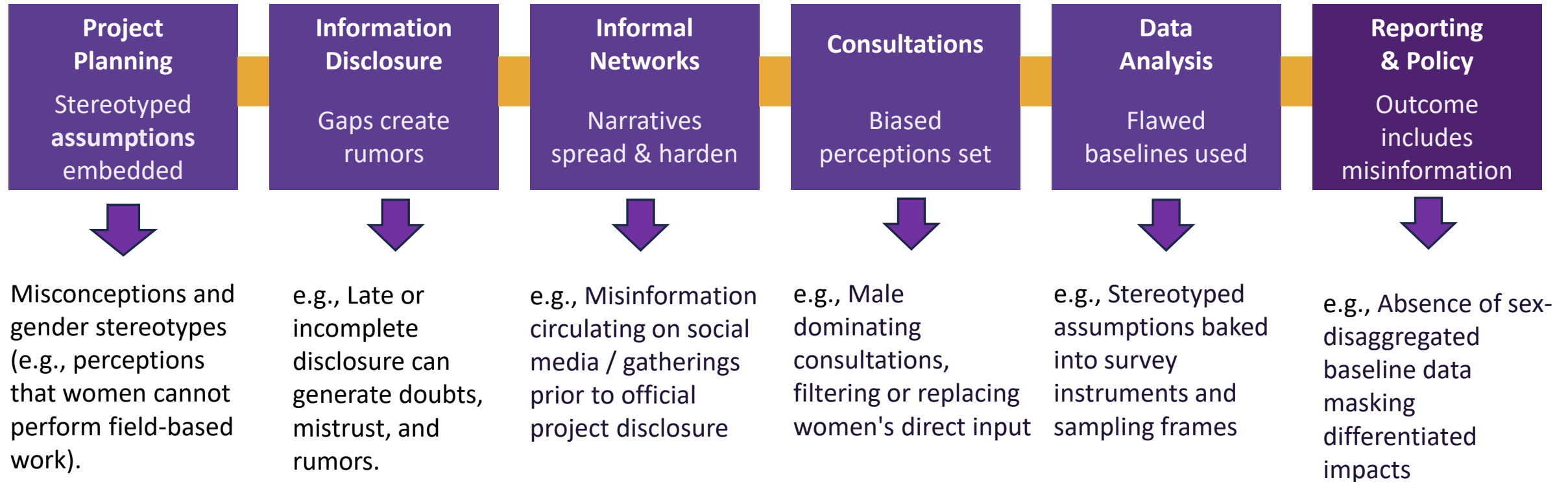
### DISINFORMATION

#### **Intentional Manipulation**

False information spread deliberately to influence perceptions and distort engagement

# How Misinformation Enters the Assessment Pipeline

*Misinformation does not start during consultations — it often emerges earlier, as project information circulates through informal discussions and local networks. By the time formal engagement begins, narratives may already be established.*



# How Misinformation & Stereotypes Undermine Assessment Quality

## How It Happens

## Consequences

1

Gender perspectives filtered or mediated within assessment processes



Generate incomplete or skewed identification of who is affected and how.

2

Entrenched stereotypes shape which voices are expressed, heard, and recorded



Result in mitigation measures that do not reflect the actual needs and priorities of women and vulnerable groups.

3

Unverified narratives distort perceptions and obscure differentiated needs



Contribute to mistrust, rumors, conflict, and stakeholder disengagement.

4

Consultations fail to capture actual impacts, reducing representativeness



Increase financing, compliance, and reputational risks under IFC/Multilateral development Bank gender requirements.

**Result: Assessments that are inaccurate, non-representative, and unable to support equitable project design or secure financing approval.**

# Warning Signs of Misinformation in Stakeholder Engagement



Overly consistent or rehearsed narratives across different stakeholder groups — **use of the exact same words** or phrases



**Absence or marginalization of women** and other vulnerable groups from consultation processes



Reliance on **intermediaries to represent stakeholders** instead of direct, firsthand engagement with women and vulnerable groups



Information shared during consultations has **unclear or untraceable sources**



**Mismatch** between information reported in consultations and **conditions observed in the field**



Project **information** (including rumor or misinformation) circulating **on social media before official disclosure**

# Case Studies

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Four real-world examples from Suriname, Bolivia, and Haiti— demonstrating how gender-based misinformation was identified and countered in impact assessments

CS 1

**SURINAME**

"Communities have access to electricity"

CS 3

**BOLIVIA**

"Equal conditions for men & women in WASH"

CS 2

**SURINAME**

"Unskilled women cannot work in solar plants"

CS 4

**HAITI**

"Electricity access is expanding and benefiting all"

# "Communities have access to electricity"

 Rural & Hinterland Communities, Suriname

**BARRIER**

**Male dominated consultations**, filtering women's voices and shaping the narrative around electricity access — women's real needs were never asked about.

**REALITY**

Limited generator use for **lack of fuel** meant no reliable power for most of the day.

**STRATEGY**

**Created women-only engagement spaces during culturally familiar activities (e.g., meal preparation, walk-and-talk...)** to enable open, unfiltered discussion away from male gatekeeping.



**OUTCOME**

Targeted engagement revealed that reliability — not just access — was the critical unmet need. Without this approach, the impact assessment would have been fundamentally incorrect.

# "Unskilled women cannot work in solar energy plants"

 Pokigron Community, Suriname

## BARRIER

**Women's skills**, willingness, and capacity to participate in energy projects were **overlooked** by project planners and community leaders — a stereotype, not an evidence-based finding.

## REALITY

**Women were already participating** in support activities around energy infrastructure, demonstrating both willingness and practical capacity to contribute to solar projects.

## STRATEGY

**Women were consulted directly** to ensure inclusive engagement with women to identify and validate practical, entry-level roles linked to solar energy — e.g., panel cleaning, site maintenance, facility support.



## OUTCOME

Concrete income-generating opportunities were identified and formalized. 'Lack of skills' was a perceived barrier, not an actual one — directly contradicting the misleading baseline assumption.

## CS 3

*"Equal opportunities and conditions for men and women in the water & sanitation sector"* Bolivia – Water & Sanitation Services

## BARRIER

**Gender inequalities** were normalized and institutionally invisible; data collection practices did not capture women's specific roles, constraints, harassment risks, or grievances.

## REALITY

Perceived equality masked **structural inequalities** in workload distribution, workplace safety, reporting mechanisms, and career advancement across the sector.

## STRATEGY

Conducted **one-on-one phone interviews** compiling sex disaggregated surveys, institutional analysis, and staff interviews to identify systemic gaps in roles, workplace conditions, and grievance processes.

## OUTCOME

Analysis revealed systemic barriers hidden behind assumptions of equality, requiring institutional reforms to ensure inclusive workplaces and equitable service delivery outcomes.



## "Electricity is equally accessible for all"

### Rural Communities, Northern Haiti

#### BARRIER

Energy assessments **focused on installed systems** and coverage rates, without capturing reliability, physical security issues, or women's actual day-to-day use patterns.

#### REALITY

Access was severely undermined by unreliability and insecurity — households were **required to remove and store solar panels daily to prevent theft**, making consistent use impossible.

#### STRATEGY

**Combined in-the-field observation** with targeted women-only discussions to verify how systems were actually used day-to-day, including undisclosed practices like daily panel removal for security.

#### OUTCOME

Field validation revealed security and reliability — not installation — determined effective energy access, fundamentally changing the design requirements for women-centered energy solutions.



# Actionable Measures to Counter Bias in Impact Assessment

## 1. Inclusive Communication & Outreach

Use women-centered communication channels and send direct, targeted invitations to ensure inclusive participation of women.

## 2. Gender-Responsive Scheduling

Schedule interviews and meetings when domestic responsibilities are lighter (e.g., during school hours or mid-mornings).

## 3. Safe & Accessible Consultation Spaces

Hold consultations in safe, accessible locations familiar to women (e.g., schools, health centers, community spaces, or markets) and provide transportation support where needed.

## 4. Childcare & Caregiving Support

Provide childcare or child-friendly spaces to reduce participation barriers for women with caregiving responsibilities.

## 5. Female-Led Engagement Teams

Use female facilitators, interviewers, and note-takers to create a more comfortable environment for participation.

## 6. Women-Only Engagement Spaces

Organize women-only engagement spaces and discussions during culturally familiar activities (e.g., meal preparation, walk-and-talk consultations).

## 7. Field Observation & Women-Focused Discussions

Combine in-the-field observation with targeted women-only discussions to better understand daily realities, risks, and priorities.

## 8. Confidential & Gender-Sensitive Data Collection

Conduct one-on-one phone interviews or conduct sex-disaggregated surveys to capture confidential and gender-specific perspectives.

## 9. Indirect Questioning Techniques

Use indirect questioning techniques to discuss sensitive issues in general terms rather than asking women to speak directly about their own personal experiences.

## 10. Active & Balanced Facilitation

Ensure facilitators actively invite women to speak and manage discussions so no participant dominates the conversation.

## 11. Women-Informed Livelihood Opportunities

Consult women directly to identify the types of employment, training, and livelihood opportunities they are interested in and consider suitable for themselves.

## 12. Gender-Sensitive Analysis & Safeguarding

Triangulate field observations, stakeholder input, and available data using gender-disaggregated indicators, gender-sensitive grievance mechanisms, GBV risk assessments, and community-level safeguarding protocols.

# Conclusion

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Information integrity is essential for credible impact assessment

Misinformation and stereotypes shape whose voices are heard — and how impacts are defined

Early identification of warning signs is critical to prevent distorted stakeholder engagement

Strengthening direct engagement, communication, and field verification improves assessment quality

Accurately representing women's perspectives is fundamental to assessment credibility and legitimacy

Countering gender misinformation is essential to meet lender requirements and support long-term project sustainability.

***Honest evidence is an act of justice. Counter misinformation. Strengthen the measurement. Reach those left behind.***



**IAIA26**  
QUÉBEC CITY, CANADA

# Let's continue the conversation!

Message me your questions or comments in the IAIA26 app.

**#iaia26**

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