

Terms of Reference -Gender Assessment Gender Audit

Background

The United Nations Human Settlements Programme, UN-Habitat, is the agency for human settlements. It is mandated by the UN General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities with the goal of providing adequate shelter for all. UN-Habitat helps the urban poor by transforming cities into safer, healthier, greener places with better opportunities where everyone can live in with dignity. It works with organizations at every level, including all spheres of government, civil society and the private sector to help build, manage, plan and finance sustainable urban development.

The Greater Busia Metro (GBM), spanning the Kenya–Uganda border, is a dynamic cross-border economic zone characterized by high volumes of informal trade, particularly in agricultural products and small-scale commodities. Women and youth make up the majority of informal cross-border traders (ICBTs) in the region. Despite their critical role in sustaining local livelihoods and regional commerce, these groups face deep structural barriers in accessing secure land, housing, and property rights. The consequences include economic insecurity, vulnerability to exploitation and gender-based violence, and limited opportunities for upward mobility.

In response to these challenges, UN-Habitat, with support from the Government of Denmark (DANIDA), is implementing a multi-year project (2025–2028) titled “Harnessing Property Rights: Building Resilience of Local Governments and Informal Women and Youth Traders in the Greater Busia Metro.” The project seeks to improve local economic development by strengthening the governance of land and property rights, formalizing trade, enhancing tenure security, and promoting inclusive, data-driven planning and service delivery.

Gender equality and the empowerment of women and youth are cross-cutting concerns at the heart of this initiative. The project recognizes that women and youth not only face disproportionate tenure insecurity, but also endure systemic marginalization in legal, economic, and governance processes that influence their access to resources, services, and voice in decision-making. The project therefore seeks to promote more inclusive institutions and legal frameworks, build the capacity of local authorities, and reduce gendered vulnerabilities in trade and land systems.

While gender considerations are embedded in the project’s design, a comprehensive gender assessment is needed to ensure that gender equality principles are meaningfully operationalized. The assessment will help to unpack the nuanced gender dimensions of land rights, informal trade, and local governance in the GBM. It will also inform the development of practical strategies and entry points for addressing gender disparities, mitigating risks, and enhancing the overall effectiveness and sustainability of the project.

This consultancy is therefore commissioned to conduct a gender assessment and/or audit that will provide an evidence-based foundation for gender-responsive programming, monitoring, and stakeholder engagement throughout the life of the project.

2. Objectives of the Assignment

- To assess the extent to which gender has been integrated in the project design, implementation plans, institutional arrangements, and M&E frameworks.
- To analyze barriers and opportunities related to gender equality in access to land, housing, property rights, cross-border informal trade, and local governance within the GBM.
- To provide actionable recommendations for enhancing gender-responsiveness of the project throughout its implementation phase.
- To contribute to the development of a Gender Action Plan aligned with the project's outcomes and DANIDA's gender priorities.

3. Scope of Work

The consultant will:

1. **Review project documents** including the project proposal, theory of change, results framework, risk management plan, and stakeholder analysis.
2. **Provide a detailed taxonomy of Women and Youth informal traders (including number, distribution etc. in the GBM)**
3. **Conduct field consultations** (Busia Kenya and Uganda) with:
 - Informal women and youth traders
 - Local government officials
 - Community leaders
 - CSOs and trade associations (e.g., Busia Women Cross-border Traders Association)
 - Relevant national institutions and bilateral stakeholders
 - Any other important stakeholders
4. **Analyze gender dimensions** in the areas of:
 - Land tenure and property rights
 - Access to legal, financial, and digital services
 - Informal cross-border trade dynamics
 - Participation in decision-making and local governance
 - Gender-based violence (including risks faced by women and youth in ICBTs)
5. **Assess the capacity** of project stakeholders to address gender equality.
6. **Develop a Gender Assessment Report** highlighting findings and recommendations.
7. **Draft a Gender Action Plan** for the project with clear indicators and responsibilities.

4. Duration: 5-6 weeks

5. Deliverables

1. **Inception Report with methodology and tools:** A concise report outlining the consultant's understanding of the assignment, refined objectives, proposed methodology, tools for data collection (e.g. interview guides, survey tools), stakeholder engagement strategy, and a detailed work plan with timelines.
2. **Field consultation summaries and gender-disaggregated findings:** A synthesis of key findings from consultations with stakeholders across both sides of the GBM (Kenya and Uganda), including informal women and youth traders, local government, civil society, and other actors. The analysis should highlight gender-specific barriers, needs, and opportunities in relation to land tenure, informal trade, access to services, and participation in governance.
3. **Draft Gender Assessment Report:** A comprehensive draft report presenting the gender analysis in the context of the project's components and objectives. It should include: An overview of the gender landscape in GBM; Key findings and identified gaps; Risks and constraints for gender-responsive implementation; Practical recommendations for improving gender integration across the project lifecycle
4. **Gender Action Plan (2025–2028):** A standalone, actionable plan aligned with the project's outcomes, detailing: Priority gender-responsive interventions; Roles and responsibilities (UN-Habitat, local governments, community actors, etc.); Implementation timeline; Gender indicators for monitoring progress; Required resources and capacity-building needs
5. **Final consolidated report:** A final report incorporating feedback from stakeholders and UN-Habitat, combining the revised Gender Assessment and Gender Action Plan. The report should include an executive summary, annexes (e.g., tools used, list of stakeholders consulted), and be delivered alongside a brief presentation to the project team and key partners.

Qualifications and experience

- Advanced degree in Gender Studies, Social Sciences, Development Studies or related field is required.
- Minimum 7 years of experience in gender analysis and mainstreaming in development programmes is required.
- Proven experience with gender assessments/audits in urban development, land governance, or trade facilitation is an added advantage.
- Familiarity with East African cross-border dynamics, informal cross-border trade, and customary land systems is an added advantage.
- Strong facilitation and stakeholder engagement skills
- Excellent analytical and report writing skills