

Inclusive Finance Cheat Sheet: Applying Intersectional Data & Analysis

Purpose of Intersectional Data

Intersectional data refers to data that is collected, analysed, and presented in a way that reflects how multiple aspects of a person's identity (e.g. gender, disability, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexuality, and geography) interact to shape their lived experiences, opportunities, and barriers.

Rather than examining one characteristic in isolation (e.g. only gender or only disability), intersectional data acknowledges that people's realities are shaped by interconnected and overlapping factors. This approach helps uncover hidden disparities and more accurately identify who is being excluded or underserved.

The purpose of intersectional data is to move beyond "one-size-fits-all" solutions and ensure that policies, programs, and investments are responsive to the diverse needs of people who experience multiple, compounding disadvantages. It enables more equitable, inclusive, and effective financial systems by:

- *Identifying gaps in access and outcomes.*
- *Informing targeted interventions.*
- *Amplifying the voices of those most affected by exclusion.*
- *Driving accountability in inclusive finance efforts.*

Key Aspects of Intersectionality in Financial Services

1. Gender & Financial Inclusion

Women, particularly those from marginalised communities, often face higher barriers to accessing credit, savings, and insurance as cultural norms, legal restrictions, and lack of collateral (due to unequal land or asset ownership) disproportionately impact their financial autonomy.

2. Disability & Access to Financial Services

People with disability often encounter physical, digital, and attitudinal barriers when trying to access financial services. Traditional loan requirements (such as proof of stable income) may not accommodate those with informal or inconsistent employment.

3. Rural vs. Urban Divide

Rural women with disability may face compounded exclusion due to poor infrastructure, limited financial literacy programs, and restricted mobility. Digital finance applications and urban financial services may be more accessible but still fail to address specific needs, such as sign language interpretation.

4. Intersection of Gender, Disability & Economic Class

A low-income woman with a disability may face triple discrimination, making it harder to secure microloans or participate in financial decision-making. Inclusive finance models that do not account for diverse needs risk further marginalising certain groups, even if they claim to be inclusive.

Applying Intersectionality in Inclusive Finance

- Designing or Improving Inclusive Loan Criteria (e.g. alternative forms of creditworthiness for women with disability)

- Accessible Digital Finance (e.g. mobile banking apps with screen readers or easy-to-navigate interfaces)
- Community-Based Lending Models (e.g. self-help groups that include women with disability)
- Tailored Digital Financial Literacy Programs (e.g. training that considers different literacy levels and accessibility needs).

Steps for Conducting Intersectional Analysis in Inclusive Finance

1. Assess National, Sectoral, and Institutional Context

- Review national financial inclusion policies and regulations for gender, disability, and social inclusion.
- Evaluate whether product and service design follow inclusive principles, co-created with end users, especially women and people with disability.
- Examine institutional policies and outreach strategies for marginalised groups.
- Engage FSP leadership and staff to assess awareness and commitment to GEDSI.
- Check staff training on gender-sensitive lending, disability inclusion, and unconscious bias.
- Review (digital) financial literacy programs for accessibility, language, and diverse learning needs.

Intersectional Customer Profiles

To effectively apply intersectional analysis, organisations should develop intersectional customer profiles, disaggregated across key dimensions. This enables a more nuanced understanding of overlapping vulnerabilities and access barriers.

Dimension – What to Capture:

- **Gender:** Inclusive and context-appropriate categories
- **Age:** Life-stage groups (e.g. youth, working age, older persons)
- **Disability:** Type, functional limitations, access barriers, caregiving responsibilities
- **Marital Status:** Single, married, widowed, divorced
- **Citizenship / Displacement:** Citizens, migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, IDPs
- **Location:** Urban, peri-urban, rural, remote, underserved areas
- **Income:** Income level, stability, exposure to shocks
- **Smartphone Ownership:** Access to digital tools and services
- **Social Protection:** Access to national systems (e.g. BPJS in Indonesia)

An intersectional lens is essential, as exclusion rarely occurs along a single dimension. For example, an internally displaced woman with a disability may face compounded barriers that cannot be understood through gender or location alone.

2. Data Collection

- Gather existing internal data on gender and disability. (See [Using the Washington Group Short Set \(WGSS\) in Inclusive Finance Cheat Sheet](#))
- Collect additional insights through surveys, interviews, and focus groups to understand gender and social dynamics.

3. Data Analysis

- Compare social groups to identify inequalities and structural barriers.
- Investigate root causes and entry points for inclusive interventions.
- Use quantitative data to measure gaps and qualitative data to capture lived experiences.

4. Develop Action Plan

- Provide clear, practical recommendations for inclusion.
- Identify opportunities for inclusive investments, products, and services.
- Develop GEDSI and safeguarding strategies to prevent harm.
- Integrate GEDSI into project cycles, outcomes, and budgets.

5. Monitoring and Evaluation

- Conduct regular participatory impact assessments to track outcomes for marginalised groups.
- Establish feedback mechanisms for clients and communities to report accessibility and safeguarding challenges.

Some Examples of Intersectional Barriers

Examples of Key Questions Regarding Gender Barriers

- *Are women facing challenges in accessing credit due to lack of collateral or (digital) financial literacy?*
- *Are loan terms (interest rates, repayment schedules) gender-responsive?*
- *Are there social norms restricting women's financial independence?*
- *Can she utilise grievance mechanisms to her satisfaction, and does her experience differ from that of a male counterpart? How does a woman customer adapt to changes in household dynamics resulting from altered access to finance?*

Examples of Overcoming Gender Barriers

- *Peer lending models where women guarantee each other's loans, reducing collateral barriers*
- *Financial service providers can offer gender-responsive financial products, including loan guarantees, flexible repayment terms*
- *Training programs focused on financial literacy and business management can be beneficial*
- *Supporting women's cooperatives and peer / crowd-lending models is also advantageous*
- *Loan guarantees for women entrepreneurs*
- *Financial service providers can establish market linkages with buyers to assist women entrepreneurs in securing buyers, thereby mitigating arrears as buyers make payments directly to the financial service providers*
- *Financial service providers can also develop market linkages with suppliers, enabling disbursements in the form of essential goods such as seeds, agricultural tools, and fertilisers*
- *Access to finance via biometrics can help prevent partners from misusing women's finances*
- *Digital finance solutions tailored to women, such as mobile banking and e-wallets, can be effective.*

Examples of Key Questions Regarding Disability Barriers

- *Are financial products and services physically, digitally, and informationally accessible?*

- *Are there any discriminatory lending practices against people with disability that restrict their ability to secure loans?*
- *Does social stigma affect creditworthiness assessments, further marginalising people with disability?*
- *Are alternative credit assessment methods (beyond formal employment or assets) available for people with disability?*
- *Does inadequate accessibility in banking infrastructure (physical and digital) hinder people with disability from accessing financial services?*

Examples of Overcoming Disability Barriers

- *Inclusive financial services can empower people with disability to advance their economic participation and self-sufficiency.*
- *Assistive technologies (e.g. voice-enabled banking, accessible ATMs) enhance financial access and independence.*
- *Social enterprises focusing on people with disability foster employment opportunities and economic growth.*
- *Financial service providers partnering with people with disability can design targeted financial products, improving financial inclusion.*
- *Accessible banking services (Braille documents, sign language support, wheelchair-accessible branches) promote equal access to financial services*
- *Loan guarantees or subsidised interest rates for people with disability-led businesses can stimulate entrepreneurship and economic development.*

Examples Key Questions Regarding Social Inclusion Barriers

- *Are there socioeconomic or cultural barriers preventing other marginalised groups from accessing financial services?*
- *Are financial services reaching rural, indigenous, or displaced communities?*
- *Are there literacy or language challenges in financial documentation?*
- *Does lack of identification documents hinder access to formal banking channels?*
- *Does discrimination in credit approvals based on social status or caste persist?*

Examples of Overcoming Social Inclusion Barriers

- *Community-based microfinance models, such as village savings and loans, offer financial access*
- *Fintech innovations like digital IDs and mobile banking overcome documentation barriers.*
- *Culturally responsive financial education programs foster trust and engagement*
- *Special loan schemes cater to marginalised communities*
- *Partnerships with NGOs and grassroots organisations enhance outreach*
- *Training and mentorship support first-time borrowers from excluded groups.*

Intersectional Analysis in Climate Change and Humanitarian Crises

Emergencies intensify existing inequalities, particularly for women and people with disability.

Intersectional analysis enables rapid needs assessment in post-disaster scenarios caused by climate change and other factors, informing financial product decisions to mitigate disaster consequences.

Common Pitfalls in Intersectional Data Analysis (with Case Studies)

A. Overlooking Intersectionality

Pitfall: *Analysing data by single variables only.*

Case Study: *A microfinance institution reported that women had lower loan approval rates than men. However, they failed to notice that rural women with disability had the lowest approval rates of all. By not cross-tabulating gender, location, and disability, they missed the most excluded group.*

Lesson: *Always explore intersections to uncover layered exclusion.*

B. Using Incomplete or Inaccurate Data

Pitfall: *Poor data quality leads to misleading conclusions.*

Case Study: *In a financial inclusion survey, disability status was recorded inconsistently. Some entries used 'PWD,' others 'disabled,' and some were blank. This made it impossible to analyse disability inclusion accurately.*

Lesson: *Standardise and clean data before analysis. Use the Washington Group Short Set (WGSS) to identify clients with disability.*

C. Assuming Homogeneity Within Groups

Pitfall: *Treating identity groups as monolithic.*

Case Study: *A digital wallet provider designed a campaign targeting 'women entrepreneurs.' However, they did not account for differences in literacy, age, and rural vs. urban access. Older women in rural areas couldn't use the app due to low digital literacy.*

Lesson: *Disaggregate within groups and tailor solutions accordingly.*

D. Ignoring Contextual Factors

Pitfall: *Applying findings without local context.*

Case Study: *A donor-funded program promoted mobile banking for refugees. However, many refugees lacked national IDs required to register for mobile accounts. The program failed because it did not consider legal and documentation barriers.*

Lesson: *Analyse data with contextual and structural factors in mind.*

E. Failing to Engage Affected Communities

Pitfall: *Excluding target groups from the analysis process.*

Case Study: *A financial institution launched a new savings product for people with disability. They did not consult organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs), resulting in a product that was physically inaccessible and poorly understood.*

Lesson: *Co-design and validate findings with affected communities.*

F. Over-relying on Quantitative Data

Pitfall: *Missing the 'why' behind the numbers.*

Case Study: *A data survey showed low uptake of microinsurance among ethnic minorities. Without qualitative interviews, analysts missed that religious beliefs and past discrimination were key reasons for mistrust.*

Lesson: *Combine quantitative and qualitative methods.*

G. Neglecting Ethical Considerations

Pitfall: *Mishandling sensitive data.*

Case Study: *A survey asked about disability and income without explaining how the data would be used. Some respondents felt exploited and withdrew from the program.*

Lesson: *Ensure informed consent and data protection.*

H. Not Translating Insights into Action

Pitfall: *Analysis that doesn't lead to change.*

Case Study: *A report identified that young women in rural areas lacked access to credit. However, no follow-up action was taken, and the findings were shelved.*

Lesson: *Use insights to drive inclusive design, policy, and advocacy.*

Resources & Tools

- [DFAT Ethical Research & Evaluation Guidance](#) ensures analysis is ethical and evidence based.
- [Government of Canada's Gender-Based Analysis Plus \(GBA+\)](#) provides a structured approach to intersectional analysis.
- [CBM International Disability and Gender Toolkit](#) assists in assessing program inclusion.
- [Washington Group Short Set \(WG-SS\) on Disability](#) offers a standardised approach to disability data collection.
- [The Gender at Work Framework](#) serves as a valuable tool for analysing power dynamics, providing critical insights that inform policy, program design, and risk mitigation strategies.
- [Climate-Responsive Policy for Women's Financial Inclusion](#)
- [Klimastudie -Bridging the Gap - Disability and Climate Resilience.pdf](#)
- [Vulnerability Analysis: assessing the impacts of \(climate-related\) hazards](#)