

# Report on Effectiveness of SDC's engagement in the field of gender equality

Technical Report

Final version - 28 February 2018





## Management Response

### ***Response to the report's findings and suggestions***

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) dedicated a Report on Effectiveness (RE) to its international cooperation efforts on the topic of gender equality. The main objective of this study was to assess the effectiveness of the SDC's engagement promoting gender equality, highlighting areas of success and areas in need of improvement. The study entailed the assessment of three distinct project and programme portfolios (principal gender projects, gender-significant projects and gender policy dialogue) covering the 2007–2016 period. The study was carried out between June 2017 and February 2018. The evaluation team consisted of a consortium under the lead of Femconsult and OQ consulting (Netherlands). The final technical report was presented to and endorsed by SDC senior management on 5 March 2018. This response outlines senior management's overall position perspective on the report and its findings, and presents the SDC's position on the suggestions made by the report.

Over the last ten years, Switzerland has stepped-up its engagement in the area of gender equality, drawing on its experience under the SDC gender policy adopted in 2003. The 2017–2020 Dispatch included for the first time a strategic objective on gender equality, in accordance with the gender goals of the 2030 Agenda.

The SDC welcomes the comprehensiveness of the report and the in-depth analysis of the different portfolios reviewed. The combination of methodological approaches applied – the screening of project documents concerning principal gender interventions and gender-mainstreamed interventions, two online surveys, in-depth country-based studies, the qualitative assessment of policy engagements and a comparison of SDC support for gender equality with that of other donors – provides a rich and nuanced picture of strengths and opportunities as well as gaps and weaknesses. The report's analysis, findings and resulting suggestions are useful. They will guide and reinforce existing efforts to advance towards full implementation of the SDC's gender commitments and the realisation of gender equality in the context of the 2030 Agenda, and contribute to institutional learning.

In particular,

- The SDC notes with satisfaction the report's finding that **SDC programmes contribute effectively to gender equality**, with 73% of the gender-specific projects and 27% of gender-mainstreamed projects having a gender-transformative or gender-positive effect. However, 23% of gender-specific projects were considered to have only gender-sensitive outcomes. The SDC is also aware that some projects assessed were considered gender-neutral, and therefore without any specific gender outcomes. Some projects even had gender-negative outcomes, reinforcing gender inequalities. The SDC will look further into these findings to ensure it learns from negative examples.
- The SDC is also pleased to note the **clear positive trend** identified by the report. This indicates that the adoption of the gender policy in 2003 and the measures and efforts subsequently undertaken to implement a gender mainstreaming approach, in addition to the strategic orientation towards the 2030 Agenda, have been bearing fruit.
- The SDC appreciates the report's attention to policy and thematic engagements in support of gender equality. The report found that **gender results are more effective if programmatic work is combined with and complemented by a strategic policy dialogue**. This is of strategic importance, reconfirming our comprehensive multi-stakeholder and multi-level approach.

- **The SDC also appreciates the acknowledgement of its thematic orientation as a strategic approach to achieving SDG 5 of the 2030 Agenda.** SDC interventions have contributed to structural improvements in three thematic areas, as defined in the strategic goal in the current dispatch (ending gender-based violence and promoting women's economic empowerment and political participation).
- **The SDC acknowledges the challenges and weaknesses** clearly identified by the study. These are widespread under-reporting on gender, which weakens overall accountability, and a lack of clear gender objectives and indicators in SDC projects and programmes. Also highlighted were limited capacities for and/or an overall weakness in the gender analysis of projects and programmes, in addition to the absence of a systematic theory-of-change approach towards gender equality. Finally, inadequate application of the gender policy marker in the statistical data set was criticised. These findings correspond with our own institutional experiences.
- **The suggestions based on these findings are well targeted** and useful for our future strategic and institutional directions. In particular, we will aim for more gender-transformative projects in our portfolio and invest in more and better gender analysis, both in projects and in country strategies. The SDC will also continue to pursue the thematic orientation and strategic policy dialogues contributing to the implementation and achievement of the 2030 Agenda.
- **The SDC has noted with interest the introduction and use of the Gender Effectiveness Score (GES).** The GES is an interesting tool addressing the methodological challenge of measuring gender equality as a transversal theme. However, the study found that the OECD-DAC Effectiveness Score system was not adequate as most projects lacked clear gender objectives and the minimum required information. The methodology applied instead (the Gender Effectiveness Score) uses different scales defining the extent and quality of gender equality (gender-negative, gender-neutral, gender-sensitive, gender-positive, gender-transformative). This is innovative and useful as a basis to steer the SDC's gender mainstreaming approach towards more gender-transformative work.

Bern, June 2018



Manuel Sager  
Ambassador  
SDC Director-General

A detailed outline of the suggestions and foreseen measures is listed in the Annex.

## Annex: Table overview on suggestions and measures

	Suggestions	Management response
1	<p><b>To achieve the SDC's goal of gender equality, it should put in place more projects that explicitly aim for structural gender changes.</b></p> <p>This can be achieved in two ways. Firstly, by implementing a higher proportion of gender-specific projects. And secondly, by ensuring that projects which have gender as a transversal theme better contribute to structural gender changes, going beyond the mere participation – or inclusion – of women (or men) in project activities.</p>	<p><b>Response: fully agree.</b> According to the SDC's internal statistics (SAP) only 5% of SDC projects are marked as gender principal. This is only half of the 10% aspired to as a target in the internal steering report. The SDC continues to strive for a gender transformative approach in all its interventions. Implementing the other suggestions in this report (in particular 2 &amp; 3) will be instrumental in that regard.</p> <p><b>Measures:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promote a gender-transformative approach in all SDC work, through the implementation of recommendation 2 and 3.</li> <li>- Consider using and applying the GES scoring system scales to assess gender equality achievements and results in monitoring and reporting.</li> </ul>
2	<p><b>Gender in country strategies and thematic sectors.</b></p> <p>To ensure a strategic approach on gender in the SDC's country strategies, it should consider sectoral gender analyses commissioned by SDC country offices. This should inform the identification of at least one gender objective per thematic sector and a structural approach towards achieving that objective.</p>	<p><b>Response: fully agree.</b> This is in line with the SDC's (Gendernet) current efforts to strengthen the integration of gender in cooperation strategies. To this end, a set of thematic gender guidance sheets has been published.</p> <p><b>Measures:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Aim for early involvement in cooperation strategy processes to ensure that a gender analysis is included in the sectoral assessments.</li> <li>- Promote and scale up the systematic use of the thematic gender guidance sheets as a basis for sectoral gender analysis in the different domains.</li> <li>- Develop further the systematic reporting of gender results by promoting the Gender Reference Indicators as a monitoring framework.</li> <li>- To that end continue to produce an annual Gender Status Report (published for the first time in 2017) to make gender results visible to aid steering and communication.</li> </ul>
3	<p><b>The SDC should invest in capacity building of own and partner staff for better gender analyses and project design.</b></p> <p>A proper project design should be informed by a gender analysis, contain gender sensitive activities and include gender indicators to measure the gender-related effects of a project.</p>	<p><b>Response: fully agree.</b> The SDC acknowledges the importance of capacity building for SDC staff and partners. To that aim a web-based toolbox has been developed and the Gender Focal Point conducts regular training in field offices (demand driven). Also joint training with other networks is provided (i.e. CHR, governance). However, human resources and expertise for conducting training are limited.</p> <p><b>Measures:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Invest in more human resources and gender expertise for capacity building, i.e. through Training of Trainers to build an internal pool of experts, web-based products, and joint training modules with other thematic units.</li> <li>- Consider external support (mandate for gender training courses).</li> </ul>

	Suggestions	Management response
4	<p><b>The current SDC thematic orientation should be maintained – living lives free from violence, women’s economic empowerment and women’s political participation.</b></p> <p>The current thematic areas clearly address global as well as country-specific challenges. They contribute to the achievement of the SDGs, confirming that the SDC should continue with its focus on these three themes. The SDC should also allow for flexibility, leaving room to address other gender issues that emerge as barriers for gender equality in specific contexts.</p>	<p><b>Response: fully agree.</b> The thematic orientation reflects the strategic objective of the current dispatch (2017–2020) and the FDFA gender strategy. These objectives are in line with and contribute to the achievement of the 2030 gender goals. The thematic orientation of any future dispatch is not part of the study.</p> <p><b>Measures:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Elaborate and orient the thematic orientation according to the priorities of the new dispatch.</li> <li>- Link reporting on gender as a transversal theme with the thematic orientation, to make gender results – and how they contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda – explicit.</li> </ul>
5	<p><b>The SDC should continue championing gender through policy dialogues,</b> which has shown to be an effective complementary strategy to the integration of gender in projects. It should set objectives for strategic focus areas of gender policy dialogues that potentially have high spin-off effects, while leaving room for emerging opportunities.</p>	<p><b>Response: fully agree.</b> The SDC is advocating for gender equality in various multilateral processes (incl. OECD/DAC), in accordance with the overall FDFA priorities. The SDC is also integrating gender in sectoral policy dialogues, but not always in a strategic and systematic manner.</p> <p><b>Measures:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identify areas and topics to invest in long-term and coordinated, concerted efforts for gender policy dialogue, both multilateral and bilateral/sectoral.</li> <li>- Intensify efforts to better link programmatic work and lessons learned from bilateral cooperation and to scale these up to feed into multilateral processes.</li> </ul>
6	<p><b>Commitment of SDC’s management and a favourable institutional environment</b> are key success factors for a strong integration of gender in SDC projects and the achievement of gender results. It is important, therefore, that SDC proactively sustains this by capacity building, human resource allocation and earmarking financial resources for gender.</p>	<p><b>Response: Fully Agree.</b> The SDC’s commitment to gender equality is anchored in the SDC Gender Policy, the strategic goal in the dispatch and the FDFA gender strategy. The SDC also has clear commitments on institutional gender equality (i.e. 50% women in top leadership positions). However, the available resources for these ambitious goals are not systematically evaluated.</p> <p><b>Measures:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continue measuring and analysing the financial commitment to gender equality through the application of the DAC-based standards of the gender policy marker.</li> <li>- Evaluate human and financial resources available for implementing the gender equality commitments (i.e. as part of the discussion on the structure and mandate of the thematic networks).</li> <li>- Continue to show strong commitment and political will on the gender equality goals, at programmatic and institutional levels.</li> </ul>

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## Acronyms

AAAA	Addis Ababa Action Agenda
AP	Approach Paper
ARIs	Aggregated Reference Indicators
BPA	Beijing Platform for Action
CEDAW	Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
CHF	Swiss Francs
CHR	Conflict and Human Rights
COOF	Country Office
CP	Credit Proposal
CS	Country Strategy
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSPM	Conflict Sensitive Project Management
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
DAGs	Disadvantaged groups
DCAF	The Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces
e+i	Employment and income (network)
EoPh	End-of-Phase report
EoPr	End-of-Project report
FDFA	Federal Department of Foreign Affairs
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GAP	Gender Action Plan
(S)GBV	(Sexual) Gender Based Violence
GenCaP	Gender Standby Capacity Project
GES	Gender Effectiveness Score
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
GFP	Gender Focal Point / Person
GRB	Gender Responsive Budgeting
(d)HoC	(deputy) Head of Cooperation
HSD	Human Security Division
HQ	Headquarter
ICFG	Interdisciplinary Centre for Gender Studies (of the University of Bern)
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent
IR	Inception Report
IWRAW	International Women's Rights Action Watch
KQ	Key evaluation question
LF	Logical Framework / Logframe
M4P	Making markets work for the poor

MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MERV	Monitoring of Development Related Changes (in German: Monitoring entwicklungsrelevanter Veränderungen)
(I)NGO	(International) Non-Governmental Organisation
NPO	National Programme Officer
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development Assistance Committee
Prodoc	Project document
PVE	Preventing Violent Extremism
RE	Report on Effectiveness
RG	Reference Group
SAP	Systems, Applications & Products in Data Processing; data system used by SDC
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SIGI	Social Institutions and Gender Index (of OECD)
SG	Steering Group
SHA	Swiss Humanitarian Aid
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
SSR	Security Sector Reform
TRIs	Thematic Reference Indicators
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UCLA	University of California at Los Angeles
UCW	Unpaid care work
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute on Conflict and Fragility
UNSCR (NAP 1325)	United Nations Security Council Resolution (National Action Plan 1325)
VAW(G)	Violence Against Women (and Girls)
WEE	Women Economic Empowerment
WWB	Women's World Banking



## Acknowledgement

The expert team of Femconsult and OQ Consulting would like to express their sincere appreciation to all persons who were consulted and cooperated in the context of this Report on Effectiveness. The team especially likes to thank the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation, in particular its Evaluation and Corporate Controlling Division and SDC's Gender Focal Point, for their continuous support and guidance throughout the entire process of this study. Special thanks go to SDC staff at HQ and at SDC's country offices in Bangladesh, Bolivia, Chad and Tajikistan as well as to the consulted external resource persons who made both their time and insights available during interviews, which were either conducted in person or through calls. The responses of SDC country staff, staff of implementing partners, and staff of multilateral organisations to the online surveys and questionnaire were vital and much appreciated. Last but not least, the team is grateful to the constructive feedback of the members of the Reference Group at key moments during this study. This report has only been possible due to the constructive inputs of all who were consulted or contacted.

This report presents the views of the expert team, which not necessarily reflect the opinion or views of SDC.

## Executive summary

<b>Donor</b>	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
<b>Report Title</b>	Report on the effectiveness of SDC's engagement in the field of gender equality (RE Gender Equality)
<b>Geographic area</b>	Worldwide
<b>Contract number</b>	81049880
<b>Date</b>	22 February 2018
<b>Consulting organisations</b>	Femconsult, Consultants on Gender and Development, and OQ Consulting BV, The Netherlands
<b>Consultancy team</b>	Kitty Bentvelsen (team leader and lead author), Thera van Osch, Joke Manders, Saskia Bauner, Eva Dalak, Raul Guerrero, Graziella Piga

### Objective and methodology

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) decided to dedicate their 6<sup>th</sup> Report on Effectiveness (RE) to SDC's efforts in international cooperation to the topic of Gender Equality. The RE on Gender Equality is an instrument of accountability addressed to the Swiss parliament and wider public, an opportunity for institutional learning and capacity building, as well as an opportunity to develop lessons for future strengthening of gender within SDC's engagements.

The main objective of this study was the assessment of the effectiveness of SDC's engagement in gender equality, also highlighting areas of success and in need of improvement. The two main questions to be addressed by this RE are:

1. To what extent have SDC interventions achieved their goals in regard to gender equality (fighting structural inequalities and unequal power relations)?
2. To what extent has the inclusion of gender equality contributed to the achievement of overall development goals of interventions?

As stipulated by SDC in its Approach Paper, this study entailed the assessment of three portfolios of SDC engagements:

- a) Gender principal projects (also labelled as G2), which have gender equality as their main objective; without this objective the project would not have been undertaken;
- b) Gender significant projects (also labelled as G1), which have gender equality as an important and deliberate objective, but not as the reason for undertaking the project; gender is mainstreamed;
- c) Gender relevant policy dialogues, which create or improve the enabling environment for enhancing gender equality, which includes the following elements: influencing others, including policies and legislation; putting gender issues on the agenda; and the development of thematic knowledge that can feed into policy dialogue processes. Strategic funding of multilateral and research organisations, e.g. as strategic partners in policy dialogues and/or involved in the implementation of the results of gender policy dialogues, was also part of this portfolio.

Through a sampling process 30 projects had been selected from the first portfolio and 50 from the second, covering the period 2006-2016. Due to missing information, several projects needed replacement by projects with similar characteristics and ultimately 29 gender principal projects and 50 gender significant projects had been assessed, involving 44 and 80 phases, respectively (i.e. 124 phases in total). The assessment consisted of the review of selected documents and completing an assessment grid; SPSS software was used for the processing. For the assessment of SDC's policy dialogues, 8 thematic areas had been selected and information was collected by review of documents and by interviews of SDC staff and external resource persons.

To complement the information collected by the assessments of the above discussed SDC engagements, several complementary data collection methods were applied: literature review, in-depth interviews, two online surveys among SDC country office staff and implementing partners, and four in-

depth studies in countries where SDC has long-term engagements, i.e. Bangladesh, Bolivia, Chad and Tajikistan. Comparing SDC's support to gender with other donors was also part of the complementary data collection.

## **Main findings and conclusions**

Findings from the different data collection methods complemented and reinforced each other, with only a few gaps between the findings from the different methods. Such gaps could usually be explained by either the different time frames or the fact that certain information was not available in the reviewed documentation but did emerge within the survey when respondents had been explicitly asked about the topic. A restriction to this study was the limited information on gender found in the reviewed documentation, with under-reporting on gender being apparent. As a consequence the scores for gender effectiveness could only be awarded to part of the assessed interventions. Another limiting factor was the incidence of incorrect application of the OECD-DAC gender equality policy marker, which is a phenomenon that is also common among other donors. This resulted in part of the interventions of the reviewed gender principal portfolio (G2) actually being gender significant (G1); and part of the interventions of the gender significant portfolio (G1) actually not -or hardly- targeting gender (G0).

**Main conclusion:** During the review period the enabling environment within SDC for integrating gender in its engagements further improved. This contributed to more effective gender mainstreaming in SDC programming, especially towards the end of the review period. Interventions with gender equality as principal objective (gender principal projects) tend to be more effective for reducing structural inequalities than those where gender is a transversal theme (gender significant projects), with still room for improvement, especially in the latter portfolio. SDC's engagements in policy dialogues are found as strategic and well effective, with clear links between these dialogues and programming. A main remaining challenge is ensuring effective gender mainstreaming in all gender significant projects, based on gender analyses -instead of gender as an "add-on" topic- and measuring and reporting on gender related results, including by setting relevant gender indicators and using sex-disaggregated data.

The more detailed findings and conclusions are presented below.

### ***Gender equality goals achieved and structural inequalities addressed***

**OECD-DAC Effectiveness score:** The OECD-DAC Effectiveness score was used in the previous Effectiveness Studies. However, applying this score to a transversal theme as gender proved less useful because many projects –especially the gender significant ones- missed the required information, in particular gender objectives or outcomes. Of those projects for which sufficient information was available (42 of the 124 assessed phases), over 80% of the phases were successful in the sense that the gender objectives or outcomes had been at least satisfactory achieved. The difference in scoring between the gender principal and gender significant projects was relatively small, mainly because the OECD-DAC scoring system does not consider the ambition level of the pre-set gender objectives.

**Gender Effectiveness Score (GES):** To overcome the limitations of the OECD-DAC effectiveness score, the expert team applied an adapted GES scoring system which measures the extent and quality that projects address gender issues, which could be applied to 77 of the 124 phases. The study found that genuine gender principal interventions are most conducive to lead towards structural gender results, with 73% of the concerned phases either scoring "gender positive" or "gender transformative", against 27% of the gender significant interventions. Though considerably less, this does demonstrate that also projects in which gender is mainstreamed have potential to contribute to gender transformative change.

**Increased gender effectiveness over time:** SDC interventions clearly improved their effectiveness in achieving their gender equality goals over the considered 10-year period, with many gender neutral interventions in phases that ended before 2009, more gender sensitive interventions in the years thereafter, whereas in recent years the average interventions became more often gender positive.

**Addressing structural inequalities:** Gender principal projects contribute significantly better to reducing structural gender inequalities and unequal power relations than gender significant projects in which gender was mainstreamed. The latter focused more on the inclusion or participation of women in project activities and/or addressing more practical gender needs. About 10% of all interventions -only gender significant ones- were found to risk gender negative effects, such as continuing or reinforcing gender inequalities, either because a project did not address gender issues whereas it would have

different impacts on women and men, or because women (and/or men) were targeted in a very traditional way, reinforcing gender inequalities.

**Importance of a proper Theory of Change approach:** Including gender (sensitive) activities as part of an intervention was found to be essential to achieve better scores for gender effectiveness. This confirms the validity of the so-called Theory of Change approach, consisting of a coherent sequence of objectives, outcomes, outputs and activities and identifying pathways of change, also for achieving gender results.

### *SDC's policy dialogues are effective and linked with interventions*

SDC is well effective in its gender related policy dialogue engagements, often strongly contributing to the achievement of the highest achievable results. The broad interpretation of “policy dialogues”, including commissioning strategic research and engaging in strategic partnerships, have proven to contribute to this effectiveness. Combining policy dialogues and programming as complementary strategies enhances their effectiveness. SDC's willingness to take up leadership positions, their strong negotiation capacities and the attention given to follow-up on policy dialogue results were factors contributing to success; the mismatch between SDC's gender ambitions and available gender expertise in terms of human resource allocation as well as a varying level of gender awareness among some of SDC's staff remain challenges.

### *Inclusion of gender contributes to achieving overall development goals*

85-92% of the surveyed SDC staff and partners perceive that gender mainstreaming contributes to achieving the overall goals of development interventions, even though this was hardly reflected in the reviewed documentation. The need for better measuring and documentation of how gender inclusion contributes to achieving overall project goals is therefore strong.

### *Gender thematic results are achieved and beneficiaries' gender needs met*

**Thematic results:** SDC interventions have contributed to structural improvements in the three main thematic areas of SDC's current Dispatch: freedom of violence, economic empowerment and political participation. About 40% of SDC's interventions contributed to “living lives free of violence” as a result area, mainly addressing domestic violence and/or sexual and gender based violence, but also combating harmful practices, trafficking and/or safe migration. About 30% of SDC's engagements were found to have been successful in contributing to women's economic empowerment. The topic of Unpaid Care Work, which SDC promoted pro-actively in its policy dialogues, was more often addressed by recent interventions -as reported upon through the online partner survey- than by the assessment of the projects of the last 10 years, demonstrating that this topic gained importance over the years. About half of SDC's interventions contributed to women's participation in decision-making at micro-level such as intra-household decision-making and local leadership; about one-tenth of the interventions contributed to more women's political participation at national level.

**Meeting beneficiaries' gender related needs:** Gender principal interventions more often met gender related needs of beneficiaries, including more structural needs, than gender significant interventions. Reasons for this were (i) the fact that genuine gender principal interventions are basically designed to address -structural- gender related needs and (ii) many gender significant interventions lacked a proper gender approach, often only focusing on women's inclusion in activities. However, when information from gender (context) analyses and/or lessons learnt from previous phases actually had informed the project design of gender significant interventions, these interventions significantly better met gender needs of their beneficiaries.

### *Improved internal climate within SDC for promoting gender equality*

The gradual improvement of the effectiveness of gender equality over the 10 year review period strongly suggests that the solid work done by committed staff of SDC, such as the GFPs at HQ and country level, on promoting the implementation of its gender policy, including the provision of gender tools, guidelines, etc., has been bearing fruits. However, there is still a gap between SDC's policy commitments and the effective integration of gender in SDC's programming, even though this gap has been reduced over the review period as demonstrated by this study.

### *Alignment with national context*

SDC's gender related interventions in partner countries are generally well aligned with national gender policies; however, this is often not translated into a holistic view on gender in documents such as country

strategies. Rather such country documents have limited information on the gender context, with especially MERVs lacking any gender information.

### ***SDC as compared to other donors***

Though the proportion of SDC's spending on gender equality focused aid -as based on SDC's statistical data submitted to OECD-DAC- is relatively low, SDC scores well when it comes to "institutional readiness" to gender mainstreaming, including commitment and enabling knowledge generation and sharing, as well as its effectiveness within gender related policy dialogues and linking such dialogues with programming, acting at micro-, meso- and macro-level. Some of the relative weaknesses found by this study, such as the still existing gap between gender policy and actual implementation, are similarly found for other donors.

### **Summarized suggestions for the way forward**

1. To achieve SDC's goal of gender equality, SDC should have more interventions addressing structural gender equality. This should be achieved by setting objectives for more gender principal interventions and promoting that also its gender significant projects better aim for transformative change. This is also in line with the twin track approach of SDC's current Dispatch, i.e. gender as a strategic goal and as a transversal theme.
2. SDC should consider sectoral gender analyses commissioned by SDC country offices to ensure a more strategic gender approach in its country strategies.
3. Staff capacities -of both SDC and its partners- need to be built for better gender analyses and integrating gender within the design of projects.
4. The current thematic orientation of SDC is recommended to be maintained, though applied with flexibility, leaving room to address other gender issues that emerge as barriers for gender equality in specific contexts.
5. SDC should continue championing gender through policy dialogues, e.g. by setting objectives for strategic focus areas of gender policy dialogues that have potential high spin-off effects, however, leaving room for emerging opportunities.
6. Commitment of management and a favourable enabling environment were found to be key success factors for SDC's gender mainstreaming and the achievement of gender results. It is important, however, that SDC pro-actively sustains this by capacity building, human resource allocation and earmarking financial resources for gender.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Report on Effectiveness in the field of Gender Equality

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (Federal Department of Foreign Affairs) decided to dedicate their 6<sup>th</sup> Report on Effectiveness (RE) to SDC's efforts in international cooperation to the topic of Gender Equality. The preceding five reports concerned the Water Sector (2008), Agricultural Sector (2010), Climate Change (2014), Health (2015) and Employment (2017).

The invitation to the tender procedure and the subsequent award of contract to Femconsult -as lead of a consortium of Femconsult and OQ Consulting- is in accordance to Section 3 of the Federal Ordinance on Public Procurement. Annex 1 provides the Terms of Reference for this effectiveness report; Annex 2 the Bibliography and Annex 3 the People Interviewed.

### 1.2 Objective, main questions and scope of the report on effectiveness

The RE on Gender Equality is an instrument of accountability addressed to the Swiss parliament and wider public, an opportunity for institutional learning and capacity building, as well as an opportunity to develop lessons for future strengthening of gender within SDC's engagements.

The main objective of this study is the assessment of the effectiveness of SDC's engagement in gender equality, also highlighting areas of success and in need of improvement. The two main questions to be addressed by this RE are:

1. To what extent have SDC interventions achieved their goals in regard to gender equality (fighting structural inequalities and unequal power relations)?
2. To what extent has the inclusion of gender equality contributed to the achievement of overall development goals of interventions?

The Approach Paper (AP) to this study defined three portfolios of SDG engagements to be assessed by this RE. These were: a) gender principal interventions<sup>1</sup>, b) gender significant interventions<sup>2</sup> and c) gender relevant policy dialogues. The selected engagements were expected to cover the different SDC sectors, thematic areas<sup>3</sup> and geographical spread. In particular, the RE on Gender Equality would aggregate and analyse information from different programmes and projects carried out by all four departments of SDC (Global Cooperation, South Cooperation, Cooperation with Eastern Europe, and Humanitarian Aid and SHA<sup>4</sup>).

This RE aimed to document the effectiveness of SDC's engagements during the time period 2007-2016. This timeframe was indeed applied in case of the assessment of SDC's gender principal and gender significant engagements. The assessment of the third portfolio (SDC's policy dialogue engagements), however, focused in practice more on recent years, also including some engagements of 2017.

It is important to observe that this RE study assessed the effectiveness of SDC's engagements in achieving gender objectives only, without considering the general effectiveness of the reviewed intervention.

Throughout the implementation the expert team worked in close cooperation with SDC's task manager, SDC's Gender Focal Point as well as the Reference Group of SDC for this assignment.

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<sup>1</sup> Gender principal projects (also labelled as G2) have gender equality as their main objective, with gender equality being fundamental in its design and expected results. The project would not have been undertaken without this objective.

<sup>2</sup> In gender significant projects (also labelled as G1) gender equality is an important and deliberate objective, but not the reason for undertaking the project; gender is mainstreamed.

<sup>3</sup> In principle all thematic areas are covered, however, because projects are labelled as relatively broad thematic areas (e.g. "Education") it could not be assessed to what extent some sub sectors mentioned in the AP (such as "Vocational Training") were included.

<sup>4</sup> Where in other parts of this Inception Report references are made to Humanitarian Aid, the department of "Humanitarian Aid and SHA" is meant.

### 1.3 About this report

Chapter 2 of this report presents a brief summary on the history of gender at SDC and its gender policy. Chapter 3 presents the methodological approach of this study. In chapter 4 summarized findings on the effectiveness of gender principal and gender significant interventions are presented, with the detailed findings presented in Annex 5. In chapter 5 the summarized findings of the assessment of SDC's engagements in policy dialogues are presented; the specific findings for the selected eight thematic areas of policy dialogue engagements are in Annex 10. Chapter 6 presents the summarized findings from the complementary data collection, specifically from the online surveys to SDC staff and SDC's partners organisations, the four in-depth country studies and the comparison with other donors. Annex 13 includes a more in-depth report on the findings of the staff survey; Annex 14 includes such findings of the online survey to partner organisations, and Annex 15 presents the in-depth country study reports on Bangladesh, Bolivia, Chad and Tajikistan. Chapter 7 presents the aggregated findings and conclusions from this study on the Effectiveness of Gender Equality, based on the findings from all data collection methods, also answering the two main research questions. The eight key questions of the Approach Paper are discussed in Annex 17. The final chapter 8 presents the aggregated suggestions for SDC to improve (the mainstreaming of) gender in SDC's programming; Annex 18 includes more detailed suggestions.

## 2. Gender in SDC

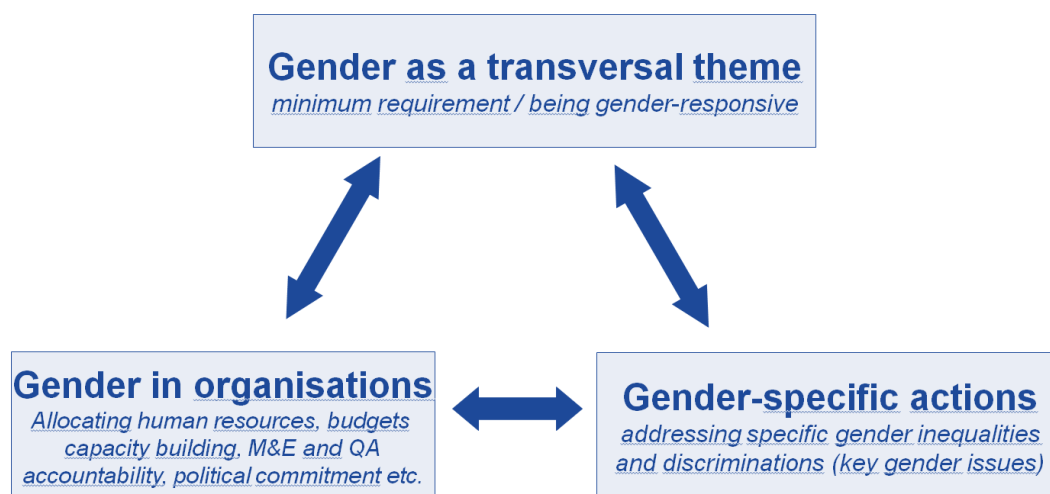
SDC is part of the donor community whose gender policy dates back to the beginning of the 1990s, when the first SDC guidelines for gender balanced development were formulated. Ten years later, in 2003, a new SDC Gender Equality Policy was launched by SDC, which recognises gender equality as key to reducing poverty, and as such a binding guideline for the entire institution.

SDC's Gender Equality Policy clearly provides the main reasons why SDC should work with both women and men, and promote equality between them<sup>5</sup>:

- Gender equality is embedded in human rights
- The empowerment of women and men is critical for good governance
- Women's and men's dynamic contributions to society as individuals, workers, and citizens is critical for sustainable development
- Empowerment of disadvantaged groups is key strategy for poverty alleviation and social change
- The integration of gender is part of broader empowerment strategies and positively affects operational performance and the impact of development interventions
- It is embedded in Switzerland's national and international commitments to equal opportunities and to gender equality, such as the Beijing Platform for Action (BPA), and the Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

SDC's gender policy is implemented through a threefold strategy as demonstrated in Figure 1: i) integrating gender as a transversal theme into all SDC programmes and topics; ii) supporting targeted gender specific interventions; and iii) taking measures in favour of institutional change, including the promotion of gender equality and women's advancement within SDC.

Figure 1: SDC gender in practice



Source: RE Gender Equality Approach Paper, pg 6

A main element of SDC's Gender Equality Policy is that all interventions must be based on a gender analysis, on which basis the project/programme has to be designed. SDC recognizes the following two approaches to a gender analysis<sup>6</sup>, which are not considered mutually exclusive:

1. **Integrate gender as a transversal theme in a traditional (context) analysis.** Whenever possible, gender is to be integrated as part of country, sectoral, beneficiary, community or other analyses. All methods of data collection, such as community and household surveys, participatory research, or stakeholders analysis, are to be adapted to better integrate gender.
2. **Conduct a separate gender analysis.** At times it is necessary to carry out a specific gender analysis to complement a prior diagnostic and/or when specific gender data is needed for a particular geographical area, sector, or programme.

<sup>5</sup> SDC: Gender Equality, a key for poverty alleviation and sustainable development, 2003, pg 3-4

<sup>6</sup> Idem



SDC's Gender Toolkit was developed and published in 2003. This good and in many respects still relevant toolkit is still widely used, as shown by the online survey for this effectiveness study among SDC-staff: 80% of the respondents consider the gender toolkit as useful.

In the years thereafter SDC allocated staff, in particular a Gender Focal Point and Gender Focal Persons, at HQ to support and manage the implementation of the gender policy by giving advice on project design, supporting gender capacity building within SDC and liaising with relevant international institutions promoting gender equality and women's empowerment such as Gendernet of OECD-DAC, UNIFEM (now UN Women) and other donors. At SDC country offices also Gender Focal Persons were appointed, who usually have a certain proportion of their time available to devote to gender, currently mostly between 10 and 20%.

Within SDC further gender materials were developed, such as the Toolkit on Gender and the Psychosocial Approach (2006) and the Gender Equality Checklist. The latter became widely used as an important instrument for all new projects, both as a guidance for gender mainstreaming and for assessing the Gender Equality Marker. The Gender Equality Network, with SDC staff at HQ and the country offices as members, developed as an important means for learning, to share experiences and information, also monitoring the compliance with SDC's gender policy.

SDC involved partner organisations with gender expertise, such as universities and NGOs, for backstopping, gender capacity building, (gender) evaluations and the development of guidance materials and capitalization reports on specific gender thematic areas. Examples are the 2009 Evaluation of SDC's Performance in Mainstreaming Gender Equality and the Added Value study of 2011 presenting success stories on gender equitable economic development. Research institutions contributed to ground-breaking insights on key gender issues, such as the unequal distribution of paid work and unpaid care work. The annual Gender Learning Day and face-to-face events with other thematic working groups from within SDC became useful ways for knowledge sharing and/or joint programming.

In recent years the Strategic Lines and Thematic Priorities 2015-2018 was an important milestone, paving the way for gender equality being included as one of the seven strategic goals in the current Dispatch on Switzerland's International Cooperation 2017-2020, also maintaining gender as a transversal issue. Together with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially Sustainable Development Goal 5 on Gender equality (SDG5) for which SDC had been lobbying hard, this seventh goal in the Dispatch contributed to the Strategy on Gender Equality and Women's Rights of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) being published in September 2017. This Gender Strategy presents the substantial and decisive commitment of Switzerland -including SDC- for a more equal and inclusive society.

Other recent developments on gender within SDC include the new Checklist for Gender Equality, now fully aligned with the OECD DAC Gender Policy Marker<sup>7</sup>, including the minimum criteria which should be met in order to mark a project as gender principal or gender significant. The application of this new checklist is likely to contribute to improved gender mainstreaming in SDC interventions. More gender tools have been recently developed, such as gender guidance sheets for 8 thematic areas. In 2017 gender reference indicators have been developed, which include mandatory indicators per thematic area (the so-called ARIs: aggregated reference indicators) as well as thematic indicators to be applied whenever relevant. The actual use of these indicators is another likely contributor to improved gender mainstreaming within SDC.

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<sup>7</sup> Based on the "Definition and minimum recommended criteria for the DAC gender equality policy marker" and the "Handbook on the OECD DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker" (Dec 2016), SAP Policy Marker, SDC, 2017

### 3. Methodological Approach

The Approach Paper foresaw the review of three types of SDC engagements, which were (a) gender principal engagements; (b) gender significant engagements and (c) gender relevant policy dialogues referred to as portfolio a, portfolio b and portfolio c. It was expected that the consulting team would analyse 30 principal engagements, 50 significant engagements and a maximum of 20 engagements in policy dialogues.

In the proposal and during the inception phase complementary data collection methods were proposed and agreed upon: literature review, in-depth interviews, online surveys and in-depth country analyses. The next sections present the methodological approach of the various data collection methods; section 3.4 presents the main limiting factors to this study.

#### 3.1 Assessment of SDC's gender principal and gender significant engagements

**Sampling:** SDC had provided the expert team with an overall database and two preselected lists of gender principal (portfolio a) and gender significant (portfolio b) projects. After cleaning the database<sup>8</sup> the expert team applied a scientific random sampling method to select 30 projects from portfolio a and 50 projects from portfolio b. The two samples were checked on four criteria: distribution over the responsible SDC departments, thematic balance, geographic balance and time balance. The distribution over these four criteria was generally found to be acceptable i.e. in line with the same criteria of the overall database. Several selected projects of the initial random sampling needed to be replaced because of missing project documentation; these projects were replaced by projects with the same characteristics. The detailed sampling process is described in Annex 4, which includes the final lists of the two samples. Annex 5 presents the selected projects more in detail, including project title, name of main contract partner and information about the phases assessed.

**Methodological approach to the assessment:** The selected projects were assessed by reviewing key documents, in particular Credit Proposals –including logical frameworks if available- and End-of-Phase or End-of-Project reports<sup>9</sup>, documenting the findings in a comprehensive assessment grid. The design of the grid was based on the (expected) links between impact, outcomes, outputs and activities (i.e. the so-called Theory of Change approach) and included questions about the gender-sensitivity of these four “criteria” (or levels) and the project’s context. The grid thus included questions about the achieved gender results at impact and/or outcome level. The pre-coded categories of these results were taken from SDC’s gender checklist which was in use until recently. The same grid was used for the gender principal and gender significant projects, with a few questions that only applied to either the gender principal or gender significant projects. Annex 6 presents the assessment grid. Most questions of the grid had to be answered by yes or no, with “yes” indicating that sufficient information was available to underpin a positive answer; but with “no” having a broader meaning, either indicating that the answer to the questions was clearly no, but also including the options of “no evidence” or “not applicable”.

Most of the selected SDC projects consisted of a number of subsequent phases, often between 1 and 4, but sometimes going up to 6 or 7. It was agreed with SDC that all phases of a project would be assessed, given that sufficient documentation was available. SDC had prepared a list of the phases of the 80 selected projects (about 210 phases in total) as well as the available documents for each of these phases. However, a considerable number of phases for which essential documentation was missing had to be discarded, which led to 124 phases ultimately being assessed. One gender principal project had to be discarded at the last moment -due to a document wrongly labelled-, hence 29 projects and 44 phases of the gender principal portfolio and 50 projects and 80 phases of the gender significant portfolio were assessed. The assessments were conducted by members of the expert team. The completed grids were checked on completeness, clarity, and internal consistency (quality control). Thereafter the data was entered into a database for analysis using SPSS. Chapter 4 presents the summarized findings; Annex 7 the findings in much greater detail.

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<sup>8</sup> Activities which were not real projects, such as short missions, or costs for an incidental meeting or training workshop, had to be taken out in order to have a database of only projects.

<sup>9</sup> The minimum required documentation for the assessment of a particular phase were (i) a Credit Proposal and (ii) an end-of-phase or end-of project report. Instead of the latter also an (external) evaluation report was used. If available, some complementary documents, such as gender documents or beneficiary assessments, were also reviewed.

### 3.2 Assessment of SDC's engagements in policy dialogues

**Selection of thematic areas:** During the inception phase 8 thematic areas with about 30 sub-themes were proposed by SDC and agreed upon. These 8 thematic areas are: (1) Agenda 2030; (2) Gender Based Violence; (3) Women, peace and security / UNSCR 1325; (4) Care economy, unpaid care work and gender budgeting; (5) Gender in rural economy, food security, climate change; (6) Measuring and accountability of Gender as a transversal theme; (7) Gender in the Multi-lateral system; and (8) Gender in Humanitarian Aid. Annex 8 presents detailed information on these themes and sub-themes.

**Methodological approach:** As also indicated in the Approach Paper, the policy dialogue engagements were assessed through qualitative interviews and the review of relevant documentation. This was complemented by information collected through questionnaires to multilateral and academic / strategic partners.

**Interviews:** The Inception Report foresaw two categories of interviews<sup>10</sup>: (i) interviews related to SDC's policy dialogue engagements and (ii) interviews to collect complementary information on SDC's gender policy and programming. Because several SDC staff members were relevant resource persons for both types of interviews, these interviews were combined. SDC had prepared the list of interviewees, mostly with two SDC staff members and one external resource person per thematic area, see Annex 3 for the list of persons interviewed. The interviews with SDC HQ staff and Bern-based external resource persons were arranged as face-to-face interviews; the other interviews were conducted by telephone or by skype. The interviews were semi-structured, discussing topics such as relevant SDC's policy dialogue actions, strategies followed, results achieved, success factors and challenges.

**Document review:** SDC had provided background documentation for the relevant policy dialogue themes. Annex 2 (Bibliography) includes the most relevant documents. The review of these documents was usually not in detail, but rather as evidence of SDC's efforts or achievements. More detailed review was limited to those documents that could provide information complementary to the interviews and/or would provide evidence on efforts or achievements.

**Questionnaires to multilateral and academic / strategic partners:** A brief questionnaire was developed (see Annex 9) and sent to 10 multilateral or academic partners of SDC, who were not represented among the interviewees. Six of the 10 organisations provided feedback, with one organisation submitting the form completed by six persons, thus 11 completed forms were received and reviewed. This information was integrated in the findings in the chapter on policy dialogues (chapter 5) as well as in Annex 10 presenting the detailed findings on the assessed policy dialogue engagements.

### 3.3 Complementary data collection

To complement the information collected by the assessments of the above discussed SDC engagements, several complementary data collection methods had been foreseen in the Inception Report: literature review, in-depth interviews, online surveys, and in-depth country analyses.

The literature review covered a wide range of documents related to SDC's gender work, such as SDC's gender policy, Strategic Lines and the recent FDFA gender strategy, reports on gender in thematic areas -including capitalization studies-, gender toolkits, checklists, gender guidance notes, documentation on policy dialogue engagements, evaluation documents both of SDC's performance in gender mainstreaming as well as several other donors' gender evaluations, and documentation related to the four in-depth country studies. The collected documents were reviewed to a varying degree of detail depending on the kind of relevance of the document for this study. Findings from this literature review, where opportune, are integrated in relevant sections of this report.

The Inception Report foresaw two categories of interviews: interviews to collect information related to SDC's policy dialogue engagements and in-depth interviews to gain more insight and understanding of SDC processes and interlinkages between portfolios. In practice often same resource persons provided

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<sup>10</sup> This excludes the interviews in the context of the four in-depth country studies.

information and insights in policy dialogue thematic areas as well as in SDC processes. Information derived on policy dialogue engagements is presented in chapter 5 (and Annex 10), whereas the more general insights gathered from the interviews were used throughout the study.

The methodological approach for the other complementary data collection methods is presented below.

### 3.3.1 Surveys among SDC partner organisations and SDC staff

Two online surveys were conducted: one for SDC's Heads of Cooperation and Gender Focal Persons at SDC's Country Offices and another one for staff of SDC's partner organisations. The survey to SDC staff aimed to get insight in the Country Offices' gender programming, the perception of country staff on SDC's engagement in the field of gender, and the extent to which gender perspectives are integrated in interventions and gender results achieved. The survey to partner staff aimed to obtain their feedback on the implementation of SDC (co-) funded interventions and to generate insight in the extent to which gender perspectives were (or are) integrated and gender results achieved. The two draft questionnaires had been shared with SDC and were finalised following SDC's feedback, see Annex 11 and 12.

The surveys were prepared in Survey Monkey software and an invitation to complete the online surveys using this platform was sent to selected SDC staff and partner organisations. A total of 40 SDC staff members and 88 staff members of partner organisations answered all survey questions. The aggregated findings, including relevant cross-tabulations, were generated from Survey Monkey and analysed. Annexes 13 and 14 present the detailed findings from these two surveys.

### 3.3.2 In-depth country studies

The purpose of the in-depth country studies was to complement the assessments of SDC's programming and policy dialogue engagements, particularly gaining more insight in how SDC's gender approach is applied at country level. The Inception Report foresaw a three-pronged approach:

1. The review of relevant documents, in particular country strategies, annual reports, MERVs, beneficiary assessments and other relevant documents, e.g. gender action plans.
2. Interviews with the Heads of Cooperation (or the deputy head) and the Gender Focal Point of the concerned country office, and with about three representatives of implementing partners involved in implementing SDC financed interventions in the concerned countries (through skype or telephone).
3. Focus Group Discussions with selected main target groups to catch their voice. These FGDs were expected to be organized by the country offices. However, such FGDs did not take place in any of the four countries for two reasons: (i) it had been agreed with SDC that the intended FGD participants would be representatives of implementing partners as organizing an FGD in the field with direct beneficiaries would be too complicated; however, these implementing partners were already part of the interviewees; and (ii) the time constraint of all four SDC offices. The organization of FGDs had therefore already been put aside in the initial discussions with the concerned Gender Focal Persons of the four country offices.

The countries for this study, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Chad and Tajikistan, had been selected during the inception meeting in Bern with SDC, based on the following criteria: a representation of one country from each continent, an active gender network and countries where SDC had long-term engagements and was active in country policy dialogues.

The first step was the review of selected country office documentation. The two most recent country strategies were reviewed, as well as one or two annual reports -mostly corresponding to the last year of each country strategy- and one or two MERVs. If available, also beneficiary assessments were reviewed (for 3 of the 4 countries) and other documents such as a gender analysis (e.g. for a rural drinking water programme in Tajikistan and a gender diagnosis for Chad), a synthesis report on the Gender and Governance (GENGOV) toolkit from Bangladesh, and a monitoring document of the gender action plan for Bolivia.

Interviews took place with SDC staff and the selected implementers, see Annex 7 for the persons who have been interviewed. The questions for the Head of Cooperation and SDC's GFP were more strategy focused, including how gender mainstreaming is pursued by the concerned office, whereas the questions to implementers were more related to the actual implementation of gender mainstreaming; in

both cases relevant RE research questions were also discussed. The collected information was used to elaborate four individual country reports (see Annex 15); section 6.2 presents summarized findings.

### 3.3.3 Comparison with other donors

SDC's support to gender has been compared with other donors through several approaches:

- Comparing the proportion of aid support that has the policy intention to contribute to gender principal and gender significant projects;
- Comparing SDC's gender approaches with other donors, especially by reviewing several selected gender evaluation reports of other international donors; and
- By including questions on this topic in other data collection methods, especially in the survey to the implementing partners.

Findings from the first two approaches are presented in section 6.3 (summarized) and Annex 16 (more detail); findings from the survey are part of in the concerned section (6.1) and Annex 14.

## 3.4 Limitations and other footnotes to this study

**Available documentation for the assessment of the gender principal and gender significant projects:** It had been agreed with SDC that the review of these projects would be based on credit proposals -including logical frameworks-, and end-of-phase or end-of project reports; the latter possibly to be replaced by end evaluation documents. However, for a considerable number of phases or entire projects the minimum number of documents was not available, which led to a reduced number of phases that could be assessed and the replacement of projects of the initial sample.

**Incorrect use of gender marker:** Both the gender principal and gender significant portfolios were found to include projects that had been incorrectly marked. 45% of the projects in the gender principal portfolio (G2) did not meet the criterion of improving gender equality and/or women's empowerment as the principal objective of the project, at least as based on the information available in the reviewed documents. The assessment of the gender significant portfolio led to a similar finding, with about one third of the projects not being gender significant (G1) as based on the available information. This phenomenon of an incorrect and too optimistic application of the gender marker is quite common also within other donor's programming, such as the EU and the Netherlands.

#### **Box 1 Example of a "wrongly marked" portfolio b project (7F-06451)**

This is an IFPRI project on national food crisis policies included in portfolio b sample. The Credit Proposal stated that "*gender relevant information will be mainstreamed throughout the project, especially by including monitoring impact of the food crisis and of crisis mitigating actions on women*".

Gender issues were not included in the context analysis and gender objectives or impact indicators were absent. The logframe included a few gender related results at output level and corresponding activities, such as research on gender and assets and collecting best practices on improving extension services to women. The link between these activities and the core interventions of this project, however, remained vague, with the gender activities rather looking as "add-on" than actual mainstreaming. Moreover, the End-of-Phase report did not include any evidence that these gender activities were actually implemented, but rather observed that "*gender has not been integrated systematically in the project*".

This project is therefore wrongly marked as a gender significant (G1) project; which is quite remarkable because the Credit Proposal also writes that "*this project contributes 0% to MDG3*".

**Lack of gender objectives, outcomes and/or indicators:** The absence of gender objectives, outcomes and/or corresponding indicators in many of the reviewed documents, in particular in logical frameworks, formed a main constraint for assessing the effectiveness of SDC's gender engagements, in particular, for applying the OECD-DAC effectiveness score.

**Apparent under-reporting on gender in the available documents:** In addition to the absence of gender indicators, many of the reviewed documents contained limited gender related information, even sex-disaggregated data on beneficiaries was not standard. It was hard to assess to what extent this was due to the actual absence of any gender related activities and results within the concerned interventions or to under-reporting on gender, e.g. due to –perceived- limited space for reporting on cross-cutting issues. The sometimes "add-on" nature of gender activities in combination with the absence of proper gender indicators is apparently a disincentive to measure and/or report on gender results. Under-

reporting on gender was discussed with interviewees during the country studies, confirming that there is indeed a certain degree of under-reporting on gender.

**Different time frames:** The projects of the gender principal and gender significant portfolios represent a different time frame than most of the other collected information somewhat limiting the validity of comparing the findings. In particular, the 124 assessed phases mainly concern the period 2006-2016, with the latter being the end years of the phases as per SAP information, meaning that many of these interventions had been designed in earlier years. The project related data in the partner survey all concern fairly recent interventions. Also the review of policy dialogue engagements had a strong focus on recent and current engagements, limiting the assessment of how policy dialogue results influenced gender in programming.

**Bias towards more recent information in interviews and surveys:** The interviews and surveys were “biased” in the sense that the respondents could only provide information they were aware of. In the policy dialogue interviews this meant that providing insights in past strategies and milestones was often limited, as these had occurred before the interviewees became involved. At the same time, this means that findings from the surveys and interviews –both country and policy dialogue- represent a more current picture than the findings from the gender principal and gender significant assessments.

**Some distortion due to assessment of more phases per project:** For each sampled project -of the gender principal / significant portfolios- all phases with adequate documentation available were assessed. However, this means that the sub-sample of 77 phases with a valid Gender Effectiveness Score includes projects with only one phase assessed -and the other phases not assessed-, but also projects with up to 5 phases assessed. This means that the latter interventions cause some over-representation within the sample of the 77 phases potentially distorting somewhat some findings.

**Phases without a valid Gender Effectiveness Score (GES):** There are 47 phases that lacked sufficient gender related information for a proper assessment of the GES score, without even a general statement in the Credit Proposal or End-of-Phase report about the extent that gender was mainstreamed. Though in the view of the expert team this meant that no proper GES value could be attributed, it was also considered that in such cases a poorer GES value more often seemed likely than a better value. This implies that the phases without a valid GES score are rather unlikely to have contributed to especially structural gender results.

## 4. Findings from the assessment of projects

This chapter presents the main findings from the assessment of the selected gender principal and gender significant engagements. The main purpose of this assessment was to establish the extent to which these SDC's interventions achieved their goals regarding gender equality, also collecting information on the thematic areas in which gender results have been achieved. Annex 7 presents more detailed findings from this assessment.

### 4.1 Assessment of selected projects

As stipulated this assessment would consist of the screening of 30 SDC gender principal engagements (i.e. projects with gender equality as their principal goal) and 50 SDC gender significant engagements (projects with gender equality as a significant transversal theme). It was agreed that in principle all phases of the selected projects in the concerned time frame (2006-2016) would be assessed if enough documentation would be available. Actually 124 phases of 79 projects were assessed using a pre-tested assessment grid.

#### 4.1.1 Effectiveness scores

The assessment grid used two scoring systems: (i) the OECD-DAC scoring system to measure the extent to which gender related objectives had been achieved (this scoring system was also used in previous effectiveness studies of SDC) and (ii) the Gender Effectiveness Score (GES), which looked more into the quality of the gender approach and results, and which was developed by the expert team based on the WHO Gender Effectiveness Scale.

For this RE on Gender Equality the **OECD-DAC Effectiveness Score** is interpreted as the extent to which gender relevant objectives have been achieved, thus not considering the extent to which overall non-gender objectives were achieved. The latter restriction is especially relevant for gender significant projects for which most objectives were expected to refer to thematic non-gender achievements. It had been agreed with SDC that the OECD-DAC score would be assessed at objective, outcome and output level. The OECD-DAC Effectiveness Score scale runs from "1" (very good = overachievement of the objectives) to "6" (useless = no objectives at all achieved), see table 7.1 in Annex 7.

The **Gender Effectiveness Score (GES)** indicates the degree to which projects effectively contributed towards a gender transformative process. This scoring system measures the extent and quality of addressing gender issues according to five criteria: context, objectives/impact, outcomes, outputs and inputs/activities. The scoring scale was put in line with the OECD-DAC effectiveness score, i.e. with also "1" as the highest (best) score (very good), and "6" as the lowest (worst) score indicating that existing gender inequalities were likely to be perpetuated or reinforced. The average of the five sub-scores (one per criterion) results into one overall Gender Effectiveness Score for the concerned project phase, indicating the degree to which the project effectively contributed to a gender transformative process, see table 1 below for the interpretation of the resulting GES scores.

Table 1 Gender Effectiveness Score

Gender Effectiveness	Score	Kind of gender effects
Gender transformative	1 – 2	The project has considered the different gender roles and responsibilities and has challenged the existing gender roles and responsibilities by addressing the <i>causes</i> for gender inequality and by aiming for gender equality.
Gender positive	>2 - 3	The project has considered different gender roles and responsibilities, and it has ensured that both men and women have had benefits also targeted particular groups (mostly women) who lag behind in access to resources or decision-making power, in order to empower them and improve their situation.
Gender-sensitive	>3 - 4	The project has considered the different roles and responsibilities of women and men, and it has registered different effects; neither men nor women have been harmed due to project intervention; practical gender needs may be addressed, however, without changing gender norms and roles.
Gender-neutral	>4 - 5	The project has ignored the different gender roles and responsibilities (gender-blind); Gender norms, roles and relations are not affected (worsened or improved).
Gender-negative	>5 - 6	Gender inequalities are reinforced by the project; gender inequality perpetuated or increased.

#### 4.1.2 Genuine vs “incoherent” principal projects

The assessment grid contained a question to verify whether all projects or phases of the gender principal portfolio were correctly marked as “principal” or “G2”, meaning that “gender equality was the main objective of the project and was fundamental in its design and expected results. The project would not have been undertaken without this objective” (OECD-DAC definition). Of the 44 phases assessed of the gender principal portfolio, 22 resulted to be “genuine” principal, representing 16 of the 29 assessed projects in this portfolio, and another 22 phases had been incoherently marked as principal, representing 13 projects<sup>11</sup>. In this Technical Report<sup>12</sup> part of the analyses of gender principal portfolio phases were done separately for these two sub-samples in order to distinguish the effectiveness of genuine gender principal projects and of the “incoherent” ones.

There was no specific question about the gender significant portfolio projects wrongly or rightly marked as “significant” or “G1”, but the assessors had been asked to comment on this in the comment section. This resulted into about one third of the 50 gender significant projects apparently not being genuine G1 (*gender equality is an important and deliberate objective, but not the reason for undertaking the project*) but rather “G0” (*gender not targeted*), plus about 3 more projects with doubt.

## 4.2 Findings

### 4.2.1 Findings on the OECD-DAC effectiveness score

In order to assess a valid OECD-DAC score two pre-conditions needed to be met: (1) gender (sensitive) objectives, outcomes and/or outputs should have been formulated in the Credit Proposal or logframe; and (2) there should have been reporting about the extent to which these gender results were actually achieved. The below table presents the number and percentage of phases at objective, outcome and output level for which gender (sensitive) results were formulated (rows (a)); for which reporting on the results was missing (rows (b)) and the number of phases for which adequate information was available to assess the OECD-DAC score (rows (c)).

Table 2 Proportion of phases (in %) for which OECD-DAC scores could be assessed for the gender principal portfolio (genuine and “incoherent”) and the gender significant portfolio

Levels:	gender principal portfolio		gender significant portfolio n=80
	genuine n=22	incoherent n=22	
	%	%	%
<b>At objective / impact level:</b>			
(a) Phases with gender (sensitive) objectives	100	36	23
(b) Phases with gender objectives, but without reporting on the achievements	18	18	9
(c) Phases for which the OECD-DAC score could be assessed (a-b)	<b>82</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>At outcome level:</b>			
(a) Phases with gender (sensitive) outcomes	86	59	33
(b) Phases with gender outcomes, but without reporting on the achievements	0	27	10
(c) Phases for which the OECD-DAC score could be assessed (a-b)	<b>86</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>At output level:</b>			
(a) Phases with gender (sensitive) outputs	100	68	43
(b) Phases with gender outputs, but without reporting on the achievements	14	32	18
(c) Phases for which the OECD-DAC score could be assessed	<b>86</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>25</b>

<sup>11</sup> One explanation of “incoherent marking” is the fact that about half of the projects in the gender principal portfolio had two gender policy markers in the original database (i.e. G1 and G2 for different phases); at that time it had been decided in consultation with SDC to consider all projects with a double marker as G2. Although some of the originally “double marked” projects were found to be “genuine” G2 projects, these double marked projects are over-represented among the incoherently marked G2 projects.

<sup>12</sup> It was agreed with SDC that in the Public Report only two categories would be used: gender principal, consisting of the genuine principal phases and gender significant, consisting of the incoherent gender principal and gender significant phases together.



The above table indicates that the OECD-DAC effectiveness score could be assessed for most “genuine” gender principal phases at all three levels (over 80%). For the “incoherent” gender principal phases and the phases of gender significant portfolio the OECD-DAC score could only be assessed for a relatively small proportion of the assessed phases (about one third or less), with even a lower proportion (less than 20%) at the objective level. This indicates that the OECD-DAC effectiveness score is not an adequate instrument to assess the effectiveness of projects in which gender is mainstreamed, including of projects that were incoherently marked as gender principal projects.

The below figure presents the proportion and number of genuine and incoherent gender principal phases and gender significant phases scoring at the six different levels of the OECD-DAC effectiveness scoring system, based on the combined scores for objective and/or outcome level.

Figure 2 Proportion (%) and number of phases per sub-sample scoring at the six levels of the OECD-DAC effectiveness score, also presenting the average score (in red) and the proportion of successful interventions.

	GENUINE GENDER PRINCIPAL PHASES 84% successful interventions		INCOHERENT GENDER PRINCIPAL PHASES 100% successful interventions		GENDER SIGNIFICANT PHASES 76% successful interventions	
1: <b>very good</b>	21.1	●●●●	16.6	●	5.9	●
2: <b>good</b>	42.1	●●●●●●●●	50	●●●●	41.2	●●●●●●●●
3: <b>satisfactory</b>	21.1	●●●●	33.3	●●	29.4	●●●●●●
4: <b>unsatisfactory</b>	10.5	●●	0		11.8	●●
5: <b>inadequate</b>	5.3	●	0		5.9	●
6: <b>useless</b>	0		0		5.9	●
phases <b>with valid score</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>without valid score</b>		<b>3</b>		<b>16</b>		<b>63</b>
<b>total</b>		<b>22</b>		<b>22</b>		<b>80</b>
	%	number	%	number	%	number

The above figure demonstrates that the average OECD-DAC effectiveness scores at all three levels are between good (score 2) and satisfactory (score 3) for all three sub-samples. Genuine gender principal phases score better than gender significant phases, but there is hardly difference in average scores between the genuine and incoherent gender principal phases. Apart from the fact that the proportion of phases with a OECD-DAC score is considerably smaller for the incoherent phases (6 of 22) than for genuine phases (19 of 22), the absence of a clear difference might also be due to the fact that the intended gender results of these incoherent phases were less ambitious -e.g. without inclusion of transformative change- than those of the genuine principal phases. This means that “easy-to-achieve” indicators, such as the inclusion of a proportion of women among the beneficiaries, might lead to better OECD-DAC scores than more ambitious results, e.g. reflecting strategic needs being addressed or changes in gender norms.

4.2.2 Findings on the Gender Effectiveness Score

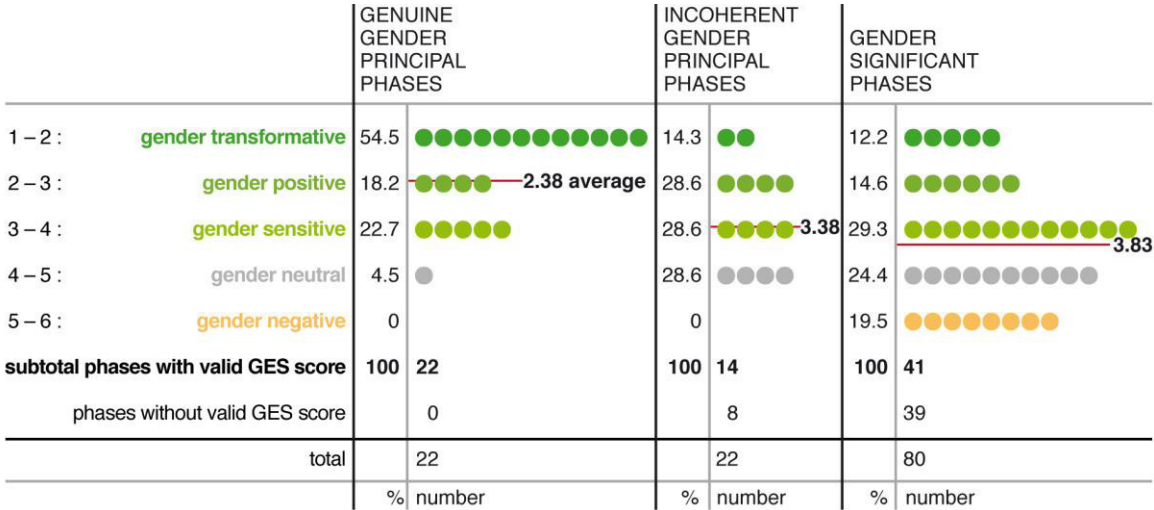
The Gender Effectiveness Score differs from the OECD-DAC score in the sense that the GES score measures the degree to which projects effectively contributed to a gender transformative process rather than the extent that pre-set objectives were achieved, whether the latter included gender transformative results or not. The GES score reflects the extent and quality of gender related achievements. The main pre-condition to assess a GES score is the availability of gender-related information in the reviewed documentation<sup>13</sup>. This resulted in more of the 124 phases with valid GES scores (77) than with valid OECD-DAC scores (42). Still, for 47 phases the GES score could not be assessed.

<sup>13</sup> This can include clear statements that gender was not (or not sufficiently) mainstreamed in a project, on which basis poor GES scores could be allocated.

In the assessment grid GES sub-scores were allocated for five criteria, i.e. the extent to which gender considerations and/or results had been effectively integrated and achieved in the following: (1) context; (2) objectives/impact; (3) outcomes; (4) outputs; and (5) inputs/activities. Detailed information on these scores is provided in Table 7.15 of Annex 7. It is not surprising that the average sub-scores for the gender significant phases are significantly poorer than for the genuine gender principal phases. Notable are the poor scores for the context criterion for the incoherent gender principal and the gender significant phases, meaning that the average context analyses -as documented especially in the credit proposals- were quite gender blind. The poor scores for context might also be explained -at least partially- by under-reporting on gender especially in the documentation for gender mainstreamed interventions.

The aggregated GES score per phase was calculated as the average of the GES sub-scores for the five criteria. For phases with GES sub-scores for some but not all of the five criteria, at least three GES sub-scores should have been in place to arrive at a valid GES score, including at least a sub-score for the objective and/or the outcome criterion<sup>14</sup>. The next figure presents the scoring results.

Figure 3 GES scoring results for the three sub-samples in proportion (%) and numbers, also presenting the average score (in red)



The above figure confirms that genuine gender principal phases contributed best towards “gender transformative change” by addressing causes of gender inequality and contributing to structural gender equality improvements. The figure also demonstrates that incoherent gender principal phases and gender significant phases can do so, but in practice to a considerably lesser extent. When taking “gender transformative” and “gender positive” phases together<sup>15</sup>, than 73%, 43% and 27% of the three subsamples respectively contributed towards more structural change. All sub-samples had a similar (23-30%) proportion of “gender sensitive” interventions, which address the inclusion of women and/or practical gender needs, but do not contribute to structural changes. Around a quarter of the incoherent and gender significant interventions were “gender neutral” in the sense that gender needs, roles and norms were apparently not affected by the project.

Only among the gender significant interventions “gender negative” scores were achieved (20%), corresponding to about 10% of all 77 phases with a valid GES score, meaning that gender inequalities

<sup>14</sup> Because the GES score measures the degree that a project or phase effectively contributed towards transformative change, at least one GES sub-score for either the objective or the outcome criterion should be in place, as these two criteria best reflect transformative change.

<sup>15</sup> Both gender transformative and gender positive interventions contribute towards the reduction of structural gender inequalities as referred to in the first main question of this RE. Gender sensitive interventions are not included because they do not contribute to the reduction of structural gender inequalities but rather address practical gender needs without changing gender norms or roles.

perpetuated and possibly increased. Reasons for gender negative scores were found to be diverse, with the two main reasons being the following:

1. Gender issues were not addressed and/or women not targeted, whereas the interventions were likely to have had different impacts on men and women. It was likely that the intervention contributed to the perpetuation or increase of gender inequality, e.g. because the situation of men improved, without changing the situation of the women<sup>16</sup>.
2. Women were also targeted by the intervention, but in a traditional way maintaining or reinforcing existing gender roles and norms.

The absence of a proper gender (context) analysis -or a gender lens as part of a “do no harm” analysis- as well as project staff lacking basic gender awareness seem main underlying factors. In case of two gender negative interventions only the first reviewed phase was “gender negative”, with a next reviewed phase being either gender neutral or gender sensitive. This suggests that SDC staff and/or implementing partners learned from an earlier phase to improve on gender in a subsequent phase, at least to some extent. Box 10 in section 7.1.2 presents an example of a gender negative intervention.

The average GES scores for the three sub-samples are 2.38, 3.38 and 3.83. This confirms that the genuine gender principal interventions on average have “gender positive” effects (score between 2 and 3). The incoherent gender principal interventions and the gender significant interventions fall -on average- in the scale of “gender sensitive”, with the average GES score of gender significant interventions, however, is closer to “gender neutral” (score between 4 and 5) than the incoherent gender principal ones.

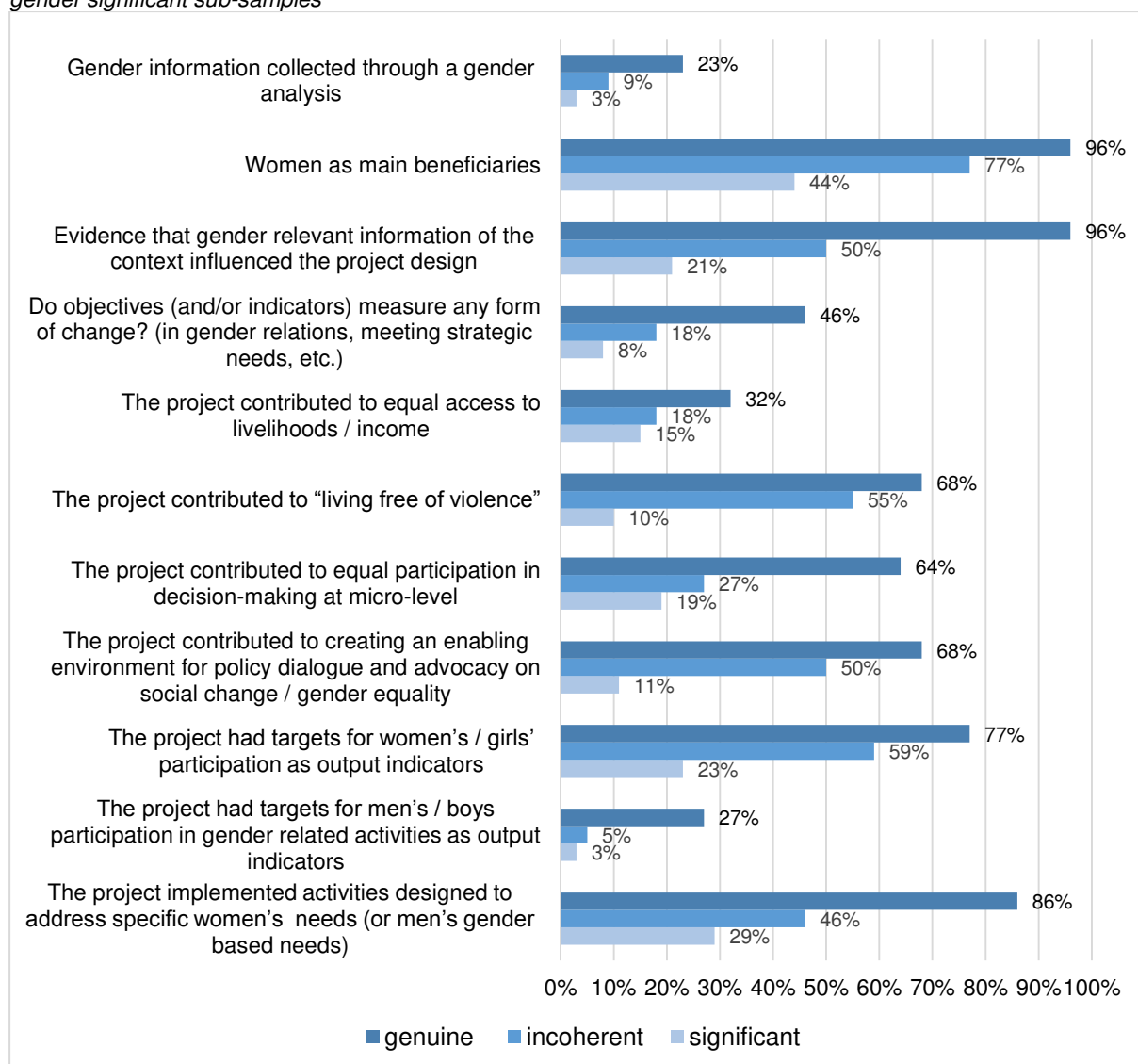
#### **4.2.3 Selected other findings from the assessment of all phases**

Frequency analyses were conducted for all questions of the assessment grid which were answerable by yes or no, which formed the large majority of the questions. The results (in percentages of yes-answers) are presented in the Appendix to Annex 7 and analysed in section 4.1 of Annex 7. A main finding is the clear pattern that emerges when comparing the answers for the genuine and incoherent gender principal phases with those for the gender significant phases, with the highest proportion “yes” answers (nearly) always for the genuine gender principal phases and the lowest for the gender significant phases. A brief selection is presented below to illustrate this.

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<sup>16</sup> In one of the gender negative interventions, rather the men were side-lined by only addressing (teenage) mothers, overlooking the role of the fathers. NB the intervention also reinforced the traditional roles of the girls.

Figure 4 Proportion of answers “yes” in percentages for selected questions separately for the gender principal and gender significant sub-samples



However, the outputs of the analyses of the 124 phases have two drawbacks: (i) the sample of 124 phases contains phases for which no or insufficient gender related information was available in the reviewed documentation, resulting in “no” answers because no evidence was available; and (ii) the output for all 124 phases cannot be linked to effectiveness scores (GES), as the latter could only be assessed for 77 phases. Therefore many of the further analyses were conducted using the sub-set of 77 phases for which a valid GES score is available, see also 4.2.4.

Table 7.22 of Annex 7 compares the distribution of all 124 phases over the SDC sectors with the sub-set of 77 phases, demonstrating that the sub-set is reasonably representative, apart from not including any water sector interventions anymore (none of the 7 assessed phases got a valid GES score as gender information was insufficient).

### Gender mainstreaming contributing to the overall goals

The assessment grid included several questions specifically for the 80 gender significant phases. Question q25 asked whether there was evidence that the inclusion of gender had contributed to the achievement of overall project goals. For only 14% of these phases the assessors found or distilled information in or from the reviewed documentation supporting the statement that inclusion of gender equality indeed had contributed to some extent to a better achievement of the overall objectives of the intervention. The comments to this question showed some examples, see the next box.

**Box 2 Examples of how including gender contributed to better achieving the project's overall objectives:**

- "It is acknowledged that FFS groups with a large number of female members or headed by a female chairperson were more successful"
- "By having women in the management team of the health insurance, the whole project became more successful"
- "...The importance to improve their situation (i.e. of women refugees) for the overall achievement of the intervention"
- Employing male staff in SRH clinics attracted more men (for HIV/Aids checks)
- From a Final Evaluation report: "such peace building work does not go forward without adequate gender sensitivity"

Question q45 asked whether the gender (sensitive) activities in the gender significant interventions had been well related to or integrated into the core activities of the intervention. This was found to apply to only 19% of the 80 gender significant phases, which is not very different from the above mentioned 14% of the phases for which gender integration was found to contribute to the overall project goals. 51% of gender significant phases did not have any gender activities at all, at least as mentioned in the reviewed documentation. This means that the gender activities for the other 30% of the phases apparently were "add-on" activities.

#### 4.2.4 GES scores per sector, department, partner and over time

**GES score per sector:** Comparing the average gender effectiveness scores for each sector demonstrates that better average GES scores were achieved for the Rule of Law sector (2.94), the Conflict Prevention sector (2.52) and the Humanitarian Assistance sector (2.82), corresponding with the score "gender positive". The Education sector had on average the least gender effective interventions, with the average score of 4.09, corresponding with "gender neutral", see below table.

Table 3 Best, **average** and worst GES score per sector

SDC sector (number of phases)	gender transformative	gender positive	gender sensitive	gender neutral	gender negative
Rule of Law/ Democracy/ Human Rights (19)	1.00	2.94		5.00	
Health (18)	1.40		3.53		5.60
Conflict prevention and transformation (4)	2.00	2.52 / 3.00			
Water* (0)					
Economy and Employment (4)	2.00		3.90		5.40
Environment (4)	2.00		3.25 / 3.75		
Migration (8)	1.80		3.48		6.00
Education (10)	2.00			4.09	5.33
Humanitarian Assistance (3)	2.00	2.92		4.20	
Agriculture / Food Security (7)	1.60		3.11		5.40

\*None of the 7 assessed phases of the water sector achieved a valid GES score

These differences in average GES scores per sector can only be partially be explained by the different proportions of gender principal and gender significant phases per sector. For example, the average GES score for the 7 phases of the Agricultural / Food Security sector is 3.11, which is relatively good whereas all 7 phases are gender significant.

**GES score per department:** The next table presents the best, average and worst GES scores per Department, demonstrating that the assessed interventions by the Eastern Europe Cooperation Department were on average most gender effective, closely followed by South Cooperation. Global Cooperation interventions were least gender effective (on average gender neutral); however, there were only 4 phases of Global Cooperation in the sub-sample of 77 phases, see next table for more details.

Table 4 Best, **average** and worst GES score per department

SDC department (number of phases)	gender transformative	gender positive	gender sensitive	gender neutral	gender negative
South Cooperation (38)	1.20		3.20		5.40
Cooperation with Eastern Europe (10)	1.00	2.98		4.20	
Global Cooperation (4)			3.33	4.37	5.40
Humanitarian Aid (25)	1.20		3.52		6.00

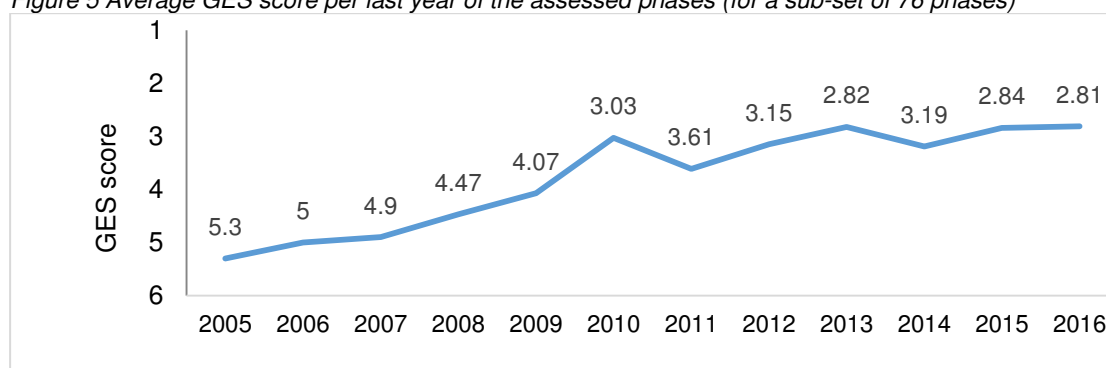
**GES scores per partner:** The main contract partners of the assessed projects have been subdivided into 6 categories: (1) international / Swiss NGOs; (2) local NGOs; (3) Multilateral organisations (including CGIAR); (4) Government institutions (such as Ministries); (5) Universities / Training Centres / Research Institutes; and (6) other. The partner category with the best average GES score turns out to be “government” (with 4 phases assessed) with all phases being gender transformative. Also the category “Other partners” scores well, followed by local and international/Swiss NGOs. The category of Universities / Training Centres / Research Institutes scores worst, due to mainly implementing gender neutral interventions, see below table.

Table 5 Best, **average** and worst GES score per partner

Main partner (number of phases)	gender transformative	gender positive	gender sensitive	gender neutral	gender negative
International / Swiss NGOs (23)	1.20		3.30		5.60
Local NGOs / CSOs (11)	1.80	3.04			5.40
Multilateral (incl CGIAR) (18)	1.00		3.66		6.00
Government (4)	1.20 / 1.75 / 2.00				
University / training centre / research institute (excl CGIAR) (8)			3.33	4.40 / 5.00	
Other (6)	1.60	2.75			5.40

**GES score over time:** The average GES scores per last year of the 77 phases<sup>17</sup> demonstrate clearly that over time the gender effectiveness of SDC interventions increased: before 2009 most interventions were gender neutral, whereas thereafter the average intervention was gender sensitive and -especially in the most recent years- gender positive. See the below diagram:

Figure 5 Average GES score per last year of the assessed phases (for a sub-set of 76 phases)

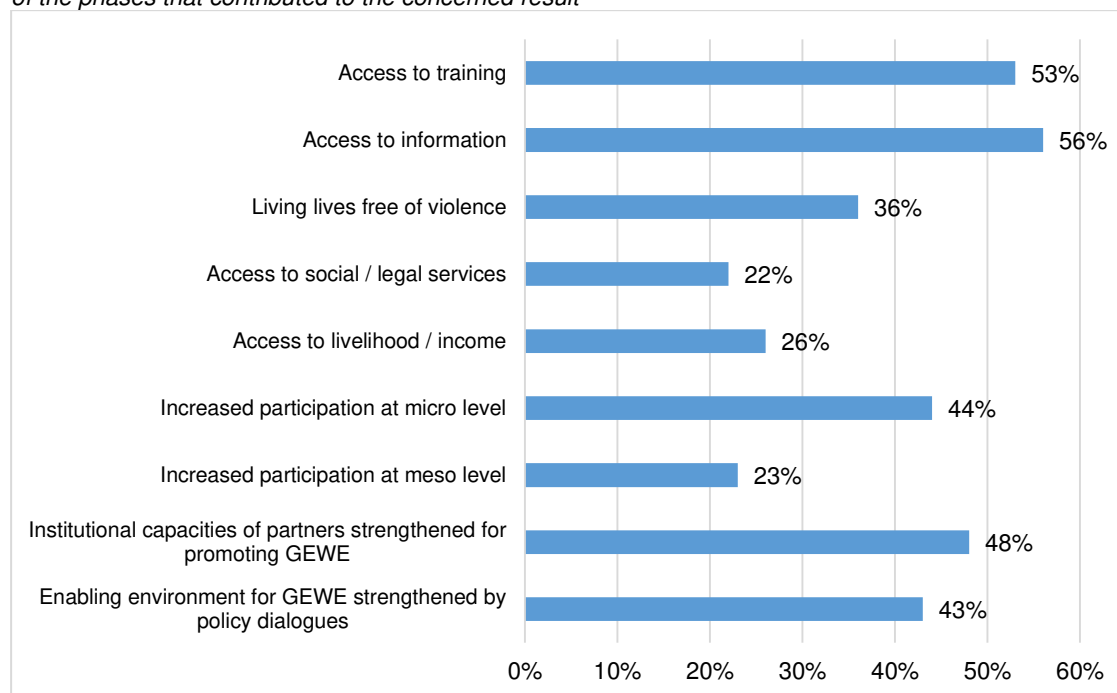


<sup>17</sup> Among the 77 phases with a valid GES score, there was one that was completed in 2002, which phase was part of a project with a later (assessed) phases that was covered by the timeframe for this study. This phase ending in 2002 has been omitted in the figure, hence n=76 for this diagram.

#### 4.2.5 Thematic achievements

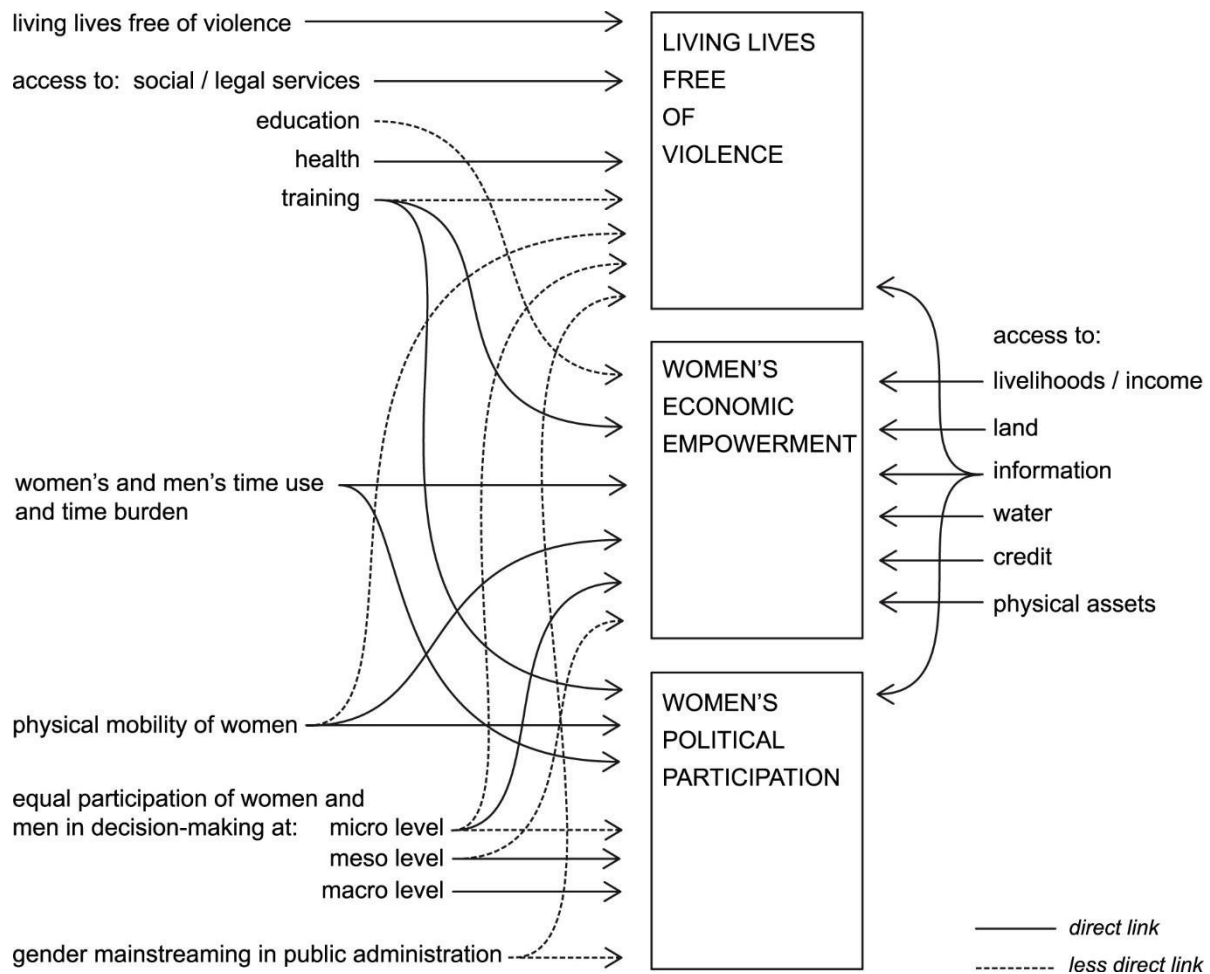
The gender related results of each assessed phase were recorded in the assessment grid. The pre-set options for these thematic achievements in the grid (q17 - q23) were based on the “core issues” of the Gender Equality Checklist of SDC, which was used during the review period. The next figure visualizes the extent that the main selected results were achieved for all phases with a valid GES score.

Figure 6 Selected results achieved by the assessed phases with a valid GES score (n=77) as the proportion (in %) of the phases that contributed to the concerned result



In the Dispatch 2017-2020 SDC identified 3 thematic areas under the strategic goal 7 on gender equality and women’s rights. These thematic areas are freedom of violence, women’s economic empowerment and women’s political participation. SDC has selected “observation fields” and reference indicators for each of these three thematic areas. The below overview, figure 7, links the two thematic area approaches:

Figure 7 Overview of the linkages between the thematic areas applied in the assessment of the gender principal and gender significant projects and the three main thematic areas of SDC (under Strategic Goal 7 on Gender Equality of Dispatch 2017-2020)



Annex 7 presents the achieved thematic results per SDC sector (in Table 7.27), which is more clarifying than only reviewing the proportion of interventions that contributed to a certain result area as in Figure 6. The main findings are summarized below:

**Increased access to quality services:**

- **Increased access to education** is especially achieved by (70% of) the Education sector interventions<sup>18</sup>;
- **Increased access to training** is achieved by just more than half of all phases, especially by the interventions in the Economy and Employment sector (100%); Migration (75%) and Rule of Law interventions (73%);
- **Increased access to health** is achieved by almost all reviewed phases in the Health sector (89%), but also by some interventions in other sectors, such as Conflict Prevention (50%) and Migration (50%);
- **Access to social and/or legal services** are achieved by 2 of the 3 Humanitarian Assistance interventions (67%), by half of the Conflict Prevention and Migration interventions and 32% of the Rule of Law sector interventions.

<sup>18</sup> This appears quite contradicting to the overall rather poor GES score for education sector projects, but might be explained by the fact that though access to education (for boys and girls) is increased, (other) gender needs were not or poorly addressed.



### **More equal access to:**

- More equal **access to livelihood / income** is especially achieved by interventions in the Economy and Employment sector (75%) and in Agriculture and Food Security (57%).
- Only one of the 77 interventions contributed to better **access to land**, which was under the Rule of Law Sector; none of the Agriculture / Food security interventions contributed to more equal access to land.
- Two interventions increased the **access to water**, one of the Rule of Law sector; one Conflict Prevention)<sup>19</sup>.
- Two interventions increased the equal **access to physical assets**: one of the Humanitarian Assistance sector and one Agriculture / Food Security intervention.
- Better **access to credit** was remarkably achieved by two phases of the Environment Sector and 3 other interventions, including only one of the 4 Economy and Employment interventions.
- More than half of the assessed phases contributed to increased **access to information**, with the highest proportion of phases in the Migration Sector
- **Increased (physical) mobility**, especially of women, was mostly achieved by the Economy and Employment interventions (75%), also by Migration (38%)

### **Increased participation of women in decision-making processes:**

- 44% of the 77 phases, representing all sectors (except the Water Sector as absent in this subset), contributed to **increased participation in decision-making at micro-level**, with - remarkably- all 4 Environment interventions and 3 of the 4 Economy and Employment interventions as best scoring sectors.
- Interventions of the Conflict Prevention Sector proportionally contributed best to **increased decision-making at meso level** (75% of the interventions), but the interventions of the Economy and Employment sector (50%) and Rule of Law sector (32%) interventions also contributed, as well as the Health sector (22%) and the Education sector to a lesser extent.
- Increased **participation of women in decision-making at macro-level** (especially political participation) was only achieved through interventions of the Rule of Law sector, i.e. by 21% of the interventions.

### **Other results achieved:**

- **Increased gender mainstreaming / gender responsive budgeting** : Less than 20% of the 77 interventions contributed to increased gender mainstreaming and/or gender responsive budgeting in public administration, which mainly corresponded with the Conflict Prevention interventions (50%) and Rule of Law interventions (42%), and to a lesser extent other sectors, such as Agriculture and Food Security.
- **Time use / redistribution work load**: 10% of the 77 interventions visualized the time use of women (and men), contributing to a more equal distribution of the workload. These interventions concern the Agriculture / Food Security Sector (29%), Health sector (22%) and Rule of Law sector (11%)
- **Living free of violence**: Over one third of the interventions contributed to (women) living free of violence, including GBV, reducing women's trafficking and/or combatting harmful practices, especially interventions in the Humanitarian Assistance sector (67%) and Migration sector (63%), although interventions of the following three sectors also contributed: Conflict prevention (50%), Health (50%) and Rule of Law (42%).
- **Capacity building of partners on GEWE**: Apart from Humanitarian Assistance, a certain proportion of the interventions of all other sectors contributed to a strengthened capacity of partners in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, with the best scores for the Conflict Prevention sector (100%), Migration sector (75%) and Rule of Law sector (68%).
- **Enabling environment for GEWE strengthened**: 43% of all 77 phases contributed to a strengthened enabling environment for social change and gender equality / women's empowerment by policy dialogues / advocacy, in particular the Conflict Prevention sector (100%) and the Rule of Law sector interventions (74%), with Health sector, Migration sector, Education sector and Agriculture / Food Security sectors to a lesser extent.

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<sup>19</sup> There are no water sector projects left in the sub-sample, which also explains the few phases that contributed to improved access to water.

#### 4.2.6 Gender (sensitive) activities

The assessment grid distinguished 15 specific gender (sensitive) activities. Analysis results show that the most common activities<sup>20</sup> within the sample of the 77 assessed phases with a valid GES score were those that were especially designed to address women's (or men's) specific needs and to enhance gender equality and/or women's empowerment (implemented in 62% and 52% of all phases, respectively). Gender training was implemented in 39% of the interventions. Other more common activities were women's empowerment / leadership training (38%), awareness raising campaigns (35%) and gender related advocacy (34%). Gender related policy dialogues at national level were part of 25% of the 77 phases; with 31% at local level. 20% of all phases included activities that targeted men and/or boys (e.g. for attitudinal change).

When comparing the gender principal and gender significant phases (based on all 124 assessed phases), it is clear that gender activities were considerably more often implemented within the genuine gender principal interventions, somewhat less in incoherent gender principal ones, and well below average in gender significant. See the Appendix of Annex 7 for details.

Table 6 The extent (in %) that gender sensitive activities have been included in the assessed phases per sub-sample

Gender (sensitive) activities	for the sample of 124 phases			phases with a valid GES score n=77
	gender principal		gender significant n=80	
	genuine (n=22)	incoherent (n=22)		
Gender focal point / gender task force	0	9	9	8
Affirmative action / temporary specific measures / quota systems	9	23	6	13
Gender training / gender capacity building	55	36	19	39
Women's empowerment / leadership training	55	32	19	28
Awareness raising campaign(s)	55	50	9	35
Gender related advocacy	59	23	15	24
Policy dialogue on gender and/or including gender aspects – at local level	36	32	13	31
Policy dialogue on gender and/or including gender aspects – at national level	36	18	10	25
Policy dialogue on gender and/or including gender aspects – at international level	14	0	5	9
Activities designed to (only/mainly) address specific women's needs (or needs of men, where appropriate)	86	46	29	62
Activities designed to enhance gender equality and women's empowerment	77	27	26	52
Activities designed to target men/boys (e.g. for attitudinal change)	27	27	5	20
Development of gender (mainstreaming) policies, strategies and/or gender action plans for (partner) organisations (including on equal opportunities)	23	32	15	27
Gender responsive budgeting	14	5	4	9
Research on gender issues (or research that includes gender issues)	9	18	6	13

In Annex 7 (table 7.28) also the extent to which specific gender activities are included in interventions of the SDC sectors have been analysed. This shows that the interventions of the Rule of Law /Democracy/ Human Rights sector included relatively most gender activities, often also in a considerably high proportion of the interventions. For example, in 79% of the 19 assessed Rule of Law phases gender training was conducted and 84% of the 19 phases included activities that were designed to enhance gender equality and women's empowerment. Other salient findings are that 3 out of the 4 interventions

<sup>20</sup> It is important to realize that the above data are based on the information available in the reviewed documentation. Some under-reporting on gender activities seemed likely, but without having an indication about the extent to which this happened. An example is the involvement of a gender focal person (GFP) in the project: only for 7% of the assessed phases this was explicitly mentioned in the reviewed documents, whereas it is now quite common (at least in recent projects) that a GFP is in place.

in the Conflict Prevention sector include activities that target men and/or boys, whereas all humanitarian assistance interventions (3) and 88% of the migration interventions (7 of the 8) included activities that addressed specific needs of women. In the Humanitarian Assistance sector few other gender activities were implemented. The interventions in the Environmental sector (4) hardly included any gender (sensitive) activities; also in interventions of the Economy and Employment sector (4 phases) relatively few gender activities were implemented.

**Activities contributing to effectiveness:** When comparing the average GES scores for phases with and without specific gender (sensitive) activities (see the below table), it is evident that including gender activities contributes to better scores for gender effectiveness, often resulting in a difference of one full point. The two activities that can be best linked to better GES scores are targeting men and boys and gender responsive budgeting.

*Table 7 Average GES score for phases with and without specific gender (sensitive) activities (for the 77 phases with valid GES scores)*

Gender (sensitive) activities	Average GES score for phases that include this activity		Average GES score for phases without this activity	
	Number of phases	Average GES score	Number of phases	Average GES score
Gender focal point / gender task force	6	2.7	71	3.4
Affirmative action / temporary specific measures / quota systems	10	2.8	67	3.4
Gender training / gender capacity building	30	2.7	47	3.7
Women's empowerment / leadership training	29	2.7	48	3.7
Awareness raising campaign(s)	27	2.7	50	3.7
Gender related advocacy	26	2.7	51	3.7
Policy dialogue on gender and/or including gender aspects – at local level	24	2.8	53	3.6
Policy dialogue on gender and/or including gender aspects – at national level	19	2.9	58	3.5
Policy dialogue on gender and/or including gender aspects – at international level	7	2.7	70	3.4
Activities designed to (only/mainly) address specific women's needs (or needs of men, where appropriate)	48	3.0	29	3.8
Activities designed to enhance gender equality and women's empowerment	40	2.9	37	3.8
Activities designed to target men/boys (e.g. for attitudinal change)	15	2.4	62	3.6
Development of gender (mainstreaming) policies, strategies and/or gender action plans for (partner) organisations (including on equal opportunities)	21	2.8	56	3.6
Gender responsive budgeting	7	2.4	70	3.4
Research on gender issues (or research that includes gender issues)	10	2.9	67	3.4

### **Application of targets for women's participation**

A common measure, especially in interventions in which gender is mainstreamed, is setting targets or quota for women's participation, which is indeed often a useful first step to promote the inclusion of women. The above table also demonstrates that the use of quota is linked to better gender results. However, the application of targets or quota needs also to be underpinned on insights derived from gender analyses, as otherwise the efforts to include women do not always lead to actual results, as demonstrated by an example of an SDC intervention discussed during an interview.

**Box 3 Example of a target for inclusion of women in mason training**

The SDC country office of Nepal applies the target of 50% inclusion of women in SDC funded interventions such as skill development. There is a financial incentive for the implementing partners to actually include women in skill training, which indeed contributes to (better) achieving such targets. A recent earthquake assistance intervention concerned the training of masons. For this intervention the target for the inclusion of women was lowered to 30%. The implementers indeed managed to include women as trainees, also stimulated by the financial incentive. However, once trained, it turned out that very few women actually found employment as masons. A study found various reasons for this, such as the attitude of employers but also the interest of the women themselves, who had been selected for the training based on their interest in training, but not with a view on future work as mason.

The above example confirms that for setting and applying targets or quota for women's (or men's) participation insight in the feasibility of such targets is needed –usually through gender analysis- and that the “mechanical” application of such targets should be avoided. Whereas being ambitious is important to achieve structural changes, a balance has also to be struck with reality, as otherwise such quota measures remain without sufficient results, rendering the measures ineffective. Moreover, the achievement of such targets should also be accompanied with a proper gender strategy.

## 5. Findings from the assessment of policy dialogues

Policy dialogue engagements are an integral part of SDC's work in the field of gender equality. SDC's understanding of "policy dialogues" is broader than only narrow engagements to influence policies or legislation<sup>21</sup>. In the context of gender, "policy dialogues" are engagements to create or improve the enabling environment for enhancing gender equality and women's empowerment. In practice the following elements are part of "policy dialogues", without being exhaustive: (i) influencing others, including policies and legislation; (ii) putting gender issues on agendas; and (iii) development of thematic knowledge that can feed into policy dialogues. Detailed findings for the eight reviewed thematic areas are presented in Annex 10. This section summarizes the findings in view of the effectiveness of SDC's engagements in policy dialogues, focusing on engagements involving SDC Head Quarters.

### 5.1 SDC's approach towards policy dialogues

In order to translate its gender policies into actual results in terms of reducing gender inequalities, SDC combines bottom-up work (through its programming) with influencing the international arena, creating a stronger enabling environment for achieving gender results. SDC's gender policy dialogues are two-pronged: (i) addressing typical gender issues as a main subject (such as Gender Based Violence); and (ii) integrating gender in policy dialogues on thematic areas such as food security and economic development. Many of the policy dialogue engagements are well planned forming part of SDC's broader mission to advance gender equality; other policy dialogue engagements are rather opportunity driven by jumping on opportunities when they arise.

In its policy dialogue engagements SDC combines actual lobbying work with supportive actions, such as building knowledge and evidence, and raising awareness among other stakeholders. Actively linking policy dialogue engagements with programming is also an integral part of SDC's approach, both by using lessons learnt from field level interventions as arguments in policy dialogues and by following-up policy dialogue achievements by promoting that programming contributes to the implementation.

SDC Country Offices are usually also involved in some form of gender-related policy dialogue to complement their work on gender equality in interventions. National level policy dialogue activities can involve actual lobbying for better (gender) policies or legislation, but can also consist of promoting gender in donor or other coordination units and/or raising more gender awareness.

During several of the interviews the issue was raised that the discussed policy dialogues engagements were often not an effort of SDC alone, but rather in cooperation with other Swiss stakeholders, in particular the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), mainly through its Human Security Division (HSD), as well as Swiss Embassies and/or Swiss representatives to multilateral organisations.

### 5.2 Examples of effectiveness of gender in policy dialogue engagements of SDC

**Unpaid Care Work in SDG5:** A major success is the inclusion of Unpaid Care Work (UCW) in SDG5<sup>22</sup>, recognizing this as a crucial dimension for the promotion of inclusive and effective development processes, including for women's social and economic empowerment. With target 5.4 on UCW now being part of SDG5, unpaid care work can no longer be ignored as an important factor governing the opportunities for addressing gender equality and women's empowerment.

**Agenda 2030 and Financing for Development:** Through a well-prepared process, SDC delivered key contributions to Agenda 2030 (in addition to UCW) and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) on Financing for Development. The resulting SDG5 is the strongest gender equality goal ever; and in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda gender is strongly integrated by stressing the importance of promoting gender equality and women's rights.

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<sup>21</sup> In other data collection methods (such as the country studies) some respondents might have used this more narrow understanding of policy dialogue when answering questions.

<sup>22</sup> SDG5 is the Sustainable Development Goal 5 on Gender Equality

**Women Peace and Security / UNSCR 1325:** In 2007 Switzerland was one of the first countries to adopt a National Action Plan (NAP 1325) for the implementation of Resolution 1325 of the UN Security Council. Since 2007 there have been three Swiss NAPs 1325, with a fourth one being under preparation. Switzerland's commitment to gender and fragility can be further illustrated by its substantial support to the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) which has a strong Gender and Security Division.

**Preventing and combating Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV):** SDC has been very active in initiatives to prevent and combat SGBV within the international arena, including within the context of Humanitarian Aid. Successes include the now widely adopted psychosocial approach, developed and promoted with SDC support; the inclusion of gender and GBV in humanitarian aid standards; and awareness raising on the role of men and boys, both as actors for change as well as also victims of violence. Other examples of an effective SDC contribution are Resolution 3 on SGBV of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Conference of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC) and the active contribution of SDC/HA to the Call to Action Road Map<sup>23</sup> on Protection from GBV in Emergencies.

**Strategic partnership with UN Women:** Through its core and project funding to UN Women, combined with an influential position in UN Women's board, SDC contributed strongly to the enhanced performance of UN Women over the years, as illustrated by the shift of UN Women from its focus on women to gender; its work in relevant thematic areas and its increased accountability and transparency.

**Strategic cooperation with World Bank:** SDC strategically contributed to a strengthened gender focus of World Bank by supporting the development of the World Bank's Gender Action Plan, also strengthening the Bank's gender unit. In practice this especially meant the strengthening of the World Bank's agenda on women's economic empowerment. SDC played also an important role in supporting a closer cooperation between World Bank and UN Women, with the aim to mutually strengthen gender performance.

**OECD-DAC Gendernet:** SDC plays an important and influential role within Gendernet, the network of OECD-DAC on gender equality, bringing together the Gender Focal Points from donor agencies and/or Ministries of Foreign Affairs of DAC member states. SDC played an active role in the development of new criteria for the Gender Policy Markers as well as in influencing strategic directions in discussions on gender relevant international policy developments, such as the SDGs, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and the climate negotiations, actively contributing to consensus within Gendernet.

**Gender in Food Security:** Within this thematic area SDC's policy dialogue engagements often consist of ensuring the inclusion of gender in international policies and programmes. Examples are the inclusion of Principle 3 "Fostering Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment" in the "Principles for Responsible Investments in Agriculture and Food Systems" by the Committee on World Food Security (2014) and amending CGIAR Research Programmes (CRPs) to include more attention to gender.

**Women's Economic Empowerment and Financial Inclusion:** SDC's international achievements in this field are often attained through support -funding and dialogues- to strategic partners, including Women's World Banking (on financial inclusion) and UN Women (especially their Women Economic Empowerment section).

## 5.3 Success factors and challenges in SDC's policy dialogues

### 5.3.1 Success factors

**Commitment and reputation of SDC towards gender equality:** The strong commitment of SDC to gender equality is a vital factor for its effectiveness in gender-related policy dialogue engagements, positioning itself as a credible actor. The fact that gender equality is currently one of the seven Strategic Goals in the Dispatch 2017-2020 confirms a strong legitimacy, which has been enhanced by FDFA's recent Gender Strategy of September 2017. The commitment to gender equality is also reflected in the

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<sup>23</sup> The Call to Action on Protection from Gender Based Violence is a global initiative, launched by UK, aiming at a fundamental transformation of addressing GBV in humanitarian emergencies, which resulted in the "Call to Action Road Map".

favourable gender climate within SDC, as represented by its gender policy and gender capacity building -both in-house and for partners- through provision of gender materials, facilitating a well-functioning gender network and the organization of gender events.

**Combining advocacy with strategic research:** A key example is the UNRISD study on time use of 2009, which provided evidence and input in further SDC policy dialogue engagements on unpaid care work. It is likely that without this study there would not have been an SDG5 target on UCW. Currently other interesting SDC (co-) funded research is ongoing, which will also contribute to policy dialogues by collecting evidence and awareness raising, such as the UCLA study on men and boys as victims of violence (the All Survivors project) and the study on Feminization of Agriculture currently being conducted by the Centre for Development and Environment of the University of Bern.

**Linking policy dialogues with programming:** This enhances the effectiveness of SDC's gender work. Lessons learnt from field level interventions are used as evidence in policy dialogue engagements, whereas gender policy dialogues, especially at country level, contribute to a better enabling environment for the successful implementation of specific gender (sensitive) interventions.

**Taking up leadership:** SDC's success in gender policy dialogues is enhanced by its willingness to take up leadership positions in gender policy dialogues, including by pro-actively taking initiatives, such as setting agendas, organising relevant side events, and/or developing strong stand points. In addition, SDC often is found in positions as board member of organisations that are its strategic partners, hence being in a position to support and influence the strategic directions of these organisations.

**Follow-up on policy dialogues:** Contributing to the inclusion of ambitious gender statements within international agreements, resolutions and guidelines etc., is an important step, but is not seen as an end goal by SDC. Much attention is therefore given to follow-up of advocacy results by promoting actual implementation. Examples of this include the financing (often core funding) of multi-lateral and other institutions that are engaged in (facilitating) implementation, such as UN Women, UNFPA, IPPF (International Planned Parenthood Federation), DCAF and many others. Support also includes secondments (of SDC staff) or funding of expertise for those organisations that have a lead function in implementation, such as the planned secondment to IFRC to support capacity building for the implementing their SGBV resolution.

**Strong negotiation capacities:** SDC (or Switzerland in general) is considered as a good negotiator, finding a balance between pushing and reaching consensus. The (politically) neutral position of Switzerland enhances its credibility, which makes that countries with different viewpoints more easily accept SDC in a lead position within negotiations. The fact that SDC is always thinking ahead, well informed and prepared and Swiss negotiators speak with one voice, enhances this. SDC is also considered strong in text negotiations, being successful to get the best possible formulations. An example is the inclusion of references to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights into several policy documents, even though these may be weakened by excluding the explicit reference to sexual rights.

**Effectiveness of SDC's policy engagements:** SDC is widely considered as very effective in its gender related policy engagements, even though it is often not possible to draw hard conclusions on the concrete attribution of SDC to gender policy achievements, as causality between input-output-outcome-impact is often difficult to trace in large multilateral interventions and programmes. The contributions of SDC to the above mentioned achievements, however, are traceable and many interviewees hold the opinion that SDC often played quite an instrumental role towards the achievements of gender related results of policy engagements.

### 5.3.2 Main challenges

**Limited resources for implementation:** The integration of strong gender equality text within international agreements is an important milestone. The challenge is to put them in practice. If the means and resources -both financial and in terms of staff capacity- to implement these agreements (in particular their gender related elements) are not in place, any gender policy risks to remain lip-service rather than an adequate policy instrument. Examples are the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (insufficient financial resources) and the World Humanitarian Summit results (leadership issue).

**Mismatch between SDC gender ambitions and available human resources:** A common comment, especially voiced by external interviewees, concerned the mismatch between SDC's high gender ambitions and the available gender expertise at especially HQ. Though in practice this is mitigated by the involvement of institutions such as ICFG of the University of Bern and/or experienced NGOs for backstopping and other specific gender tasks, SDC's high ambition with gender as a main development goal would warrant the strengthening of its current in-house gender expertise in terms of human resource allocation. At the level of country offices, the proportion of time available for GFPs is often considered insufficient to both work on gender advocacy and support gender mainstreaming in programming.

**Awareness of SDC staff:** Even though the gender awareness of SDC staff at HQ is high, some signals were also heard that the extent that gender issues are integrated into international policy dialogue processes depends also on the personal awareness and interest of concerned staff members. In addition, working on gender is not explicitly defined as a task within the job descriptions of all SDC staff involved in policy dialogue. This also applies to country offices, where the mind-set of (national) staff may be influenced by a more traditional socio-cultural context in the country. The risk of gender fatigue, combined with the view that addressing gender is an additional burden, may add to this.

**Sensitive issues:** Several of SDC's priority gender and women's rights issues are internationally considered as sensitive or controversial, especially by more conservative countries. This particularly applies to the sexual rights aspect of SRHR and sometimes also to SDC's agenda to better include men and boys as victims of violence. The ongoing UCLA study is likely to contribute to more evidence about the need for the latter topic, whereas also recent developments in Northern Africa -male migrants being enslaved- is feeding the international awareness that indeed men can also be violence victims.

**Regressive tendencies:** In several parts of the world conservative developments reduce the space to work on gender equality and women's empowerment, also leading to governments taking up more conservative views within international policy dialogues. Under such conditions, maintaining a status quo and limiting damage control can also be seen as (a kind of) achievement.



## 6. Findings of complementary data collection

### 6.1 Surveys among SDC staff and SDC partner organisations

This section presents the main findings of the surveys conducted among SDC staff and staff of SDC's partners, in particular Swiss NGOs and their (local) implementing partners. The questions of the two surveys were tailored to the different roles of the respondents and the overlap in questions was therefore only partial. In particular, only the respondents of the partner survey (76) had been asked to answer a number of questions related to one specific SDC project they recently or currently were involved in, preferably with at least 3 years of implementation to allow sufficient time for (gender) results to become observable. Annexes 13 and 14 present the detailed findings from the two surveys separately.

#### **Alignment to national policies and gender in country strategies**

The staff survey's findings indicate that SDC interventions are either fully aligned (50%) or partially aligned (35%) to the national gender policy of the concerned country. Gender equality and/or women's empowerment is a significant / transversal topic in 95% of the respondents' country strategies. 85% of the respondents indicated that their country strategies included gender related results: either objectives, outcomes and/or outputs. Almost all of these country strategies include result indicators reflecting targets for the participation of women and/or men. 60% include result indicators reflecting the reduction of gender inequalities and/or the improvement of women's empowerment. Despite these positive findings, there is also some room for improvement, as demonstrated by the comments provided by the respondents, see box 4.

#### **Box 4 Example of respondents' answers on the country strategy**

- *"The country strategy states gender as a cross-cutting issue but not as a specific objective with indicators"*
- *"SDC's gender approach is rather flexible (not mandatory) and therefore sometimes there are limitations to what we can actually achieve in terms of gender mainstreaming with governmental partners, since their policy doesn't always addresses women's strategic needs and interests."*
- *"We have the opportunity to fund affirmative action projects where the strategic needs of women are clearly stated within the objectives, but these projects are not visible enough within the country strategy since we don't have specific gender objectives and indicators."*
- *"No clear gender objective has been defined in the current country strategy. This will change in our new country strategy, which is being developed."*

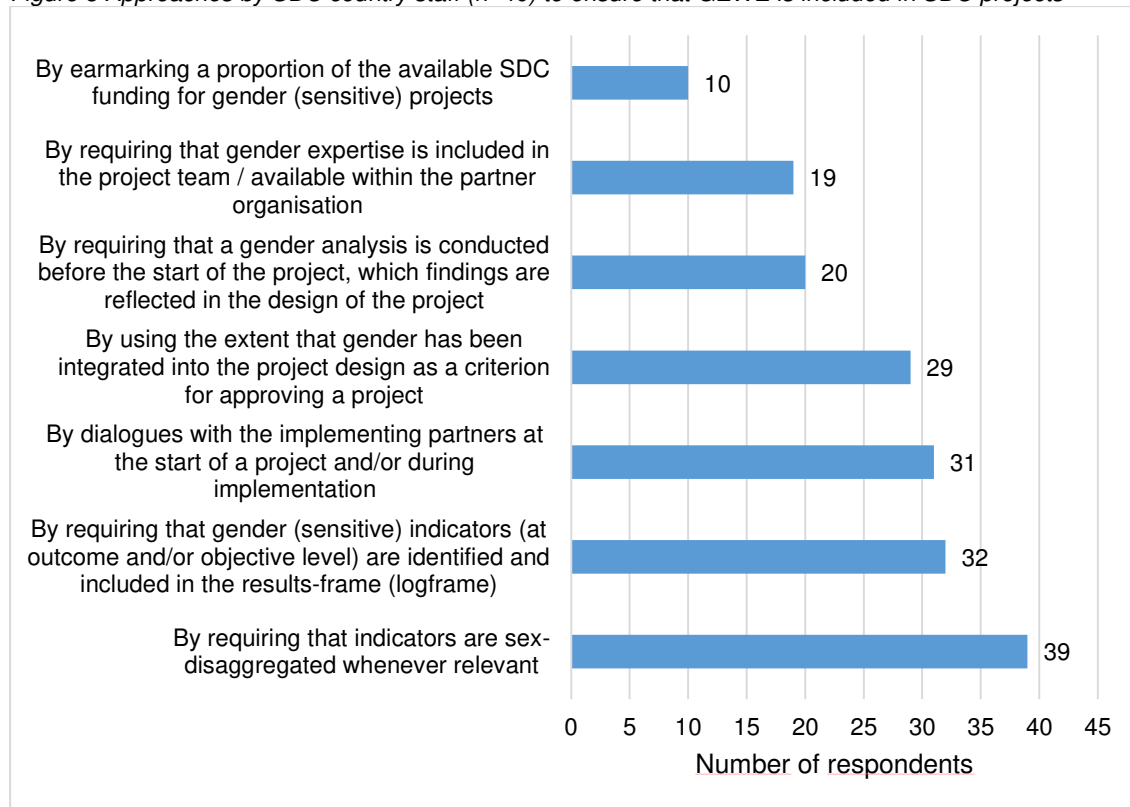
The respondents' answers demonstrate that the indicators for (women's) participation are achieved to a fair or large extent, whereas the more gender transformative indicators related to (structural) gender inequalities are achieved to a limited or fair extent. See box 13.1 of Annex 13 for examples of (structural) gender results achieved.

#### **Ensuring promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment**

The SDC staff survey indicated that adequate gender expertise within the country offices is ensured in different ways. More than half of the 40 respondents indicated that this is ensured through the Gender Focal Person of the country office (31); all (or almost all) SDC staff members in the office have some capacity to integrate gender into their work, including to mainstream gender (21); and by hiring gender consultants (20). Four respondents replied that there is no adequate gender expertise within their Country Office.

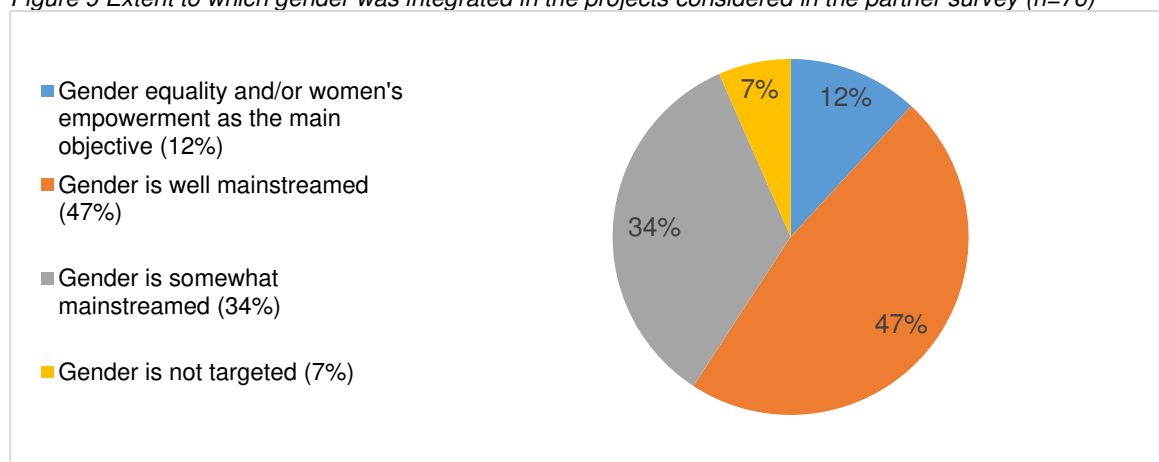
SDC country offices ensure that gender equality and/or women's empowerment (GEWE) in the SDC (co-) financed projects is included in different ways. The most common approaches are presented in figure 8. This figure demonstrates that requiring indicators to be sex-disaggregated is the most common way (39). A gender analysis is not routinely conducted before the start of a project, as only 50% of the respondents (20) answered that GEWE is ensured by *"requiring that a gender analysis is conducted before the start of the project, which findings are reflected in the design of the project"*.

Figure 8 Approaches by SDC country staff (n=40) to ensure that GEWE is included in SDC projects



The partner survey demonstrated that gender issues had been analysed for 87% of the 76 projects before the start of their current (or previous) SDC project. Most of these projects rather used lessons learned from previous phases (42) or carried out a gender aware context analysis (34). An in-depth gender analysis had only been carried out for nine projects (12%). The following graph presents the extent to which gender had been integrated in the considered projects.

Figure 9 Extent to which gender was integrated in the projects considered in the partner survey (n=76)



The above figure demonstrates that 12% of the projects can be considered as gender principal (G2) projects; 47% as well mainstreamed (good G1); 34% as weaker gender mainstreamed; and 7% as projects not targeting gender (G0).

### **Beneficiaries of SDC's gender sensitive interventions**

The partner survey found that in more than two-thirds of the projects women and vulnerable or marginalized people were the main beneficiaries. In about half of the projects youth (male and female) and men and boys are the target group. About half of the interventions have also institutions (government and/or non-government) as beneficiary. More specific target groups like (adolescent) girls are only mentioned as main beneficiary in a quarter of the projects.

### **Policy dialogue by SDC's Country Offices**

Almost three-quarters of the respondents to the staff survey indicated that their Country Office is involved in policy dialogues with national or local governments in their respective country to promote a better enabling environment for gender equality. Over 20 different topics of such dialogues were mentioned. Most common were: women's economic empowerment (6 times mentioned); promoting gender equality to be included in country's policy, legislation, development programming (5); (access to) education/VET (4); health including reproductive rights (4); Gender Based Violence (4); and women's representation in decision-making (4).

### **Effectiveness of gender (mainstreaming)**

Over 90% of the respondents to the partner survey rated the effectiveness on gender equality of their current (or previous) SDC project between adequate and very good, with 45% of the projects being considered as "adequate / acceptable", 46% as "good" (38%), and 8% as "very good". The other respondents (9%) rated their project as "poor" or "very poor"<sup>24</sup> in terms of contributing to increased gender equality. Comparing the gender effectiveness rate to the thematic areas addressed by the projects demonstrates that projects addressing Rule of Law/Democratisation/Human Rights scored best as 11 out of 12 projects scored "good" (7) or "very good" (4). For seven thematic areas -Economy & Employment, Education, Health, Conflict, Environment and Humanitarian Assistance- the scoring "adequate/ acceptable" was most often ticked, with the next best score as "good". For the areas Water and Migration approximately 50% of the projects either score "good" or "adequate/ acceptable"; the other half scored "poor" or "very poor".

### **Gender mainstreaming contributing to achieving a project's overall goal**

In total 92% of the respondents of the staff survey and 85% of the partner survey perceive that mainstreaming gender contributed to the better achievement of the project's main objective. 40% of the SDC staff and almost 50% of the partners were convinced that paying attention to gender definitely contributes to better achieving the main objectives, whereas 52% of the SDC staff and over one third of the partners answered that it contributed to some extent to the overall objective, but not for all the interventions.

***Box 5 Example on how mainstreaming gender contributed the project's main intervention as provided by a respondent of the online SDC partner survey***

The project aimed to reduce the mortality among women through the prevention of cervical cancer. In each targeted municipality facilities for basic diagnosis were established. However, men did not allow their partners to undergo the pap smear test nor did they allow their participation in sessions about cancer prevention.

To overcome this problem a gender sensitive approach was developed, promoting the participation and sensitization of both men and women, with the message that women's rights -in this case especially to good health- is a task of all. Citizen's proposals were requested and implemented, complemented by communication campaigns. As a result more men were participating and becoming supportive, more women were tested, and the mortality of women due to cervical cancer ultimately reduced.

### **Success and hindering factors**

The respondents were asked to rate a number of factors to the extent they considered these factors as a success or hindering factor in achieving gender objectives and/or effective gender mainstreaming in SDC funded interventions. The respondents of the two surveys indicated the constraining country context as the main hindering factor.

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<sup>24</sup> This 9% is quite well in line with the 10% gender negative phases (8 out of 77) found in the assessment of the gender principal and gender significant projects, see Chapter 4.

Both surveys showed that the more common success factors were the following:

- commitment of project management;
- capacity and motivation of SDC and partner's staff;
- long term planning of a project intervention;
- interest and knowledge of local implementing partners; and
- support from SDC's Gender Focal Person

More neutral factors, or factors which were mentioned as contributing to success by some respondents but as hindering by others, were the following:

- strict guidance / instructions by SDC; and
- budget and/or time available.

### **Comparative advantage of SDC compared to other donors**

About 40% of both SDC and partners' staff replied that there is comparative advantage of SDC's interventions on gender equality in comparison to other donors. The two categories of respondents, however, mentioned different reasons, though partially overlapping:

- The comparative advantages as seen by SDC staff relate to 1) SDC's support and commitment at micro-, meso-, and macro-level and over the long term; 2) SDC's partnerships with implementing organisations, including requiring gender focal points in the projects which is considered as an advantage for mainstreaming gender; 3) policy and strategy of SDC, like the focus on priority areas and themes, funding mechanisms, gender being defined in all policy papers, its operational system is oriented towards "do no harm" principles.
- The main reasons provided by partner staff related to: 1) SDC's targeted approach to gender mainstreaming, including do no harm and conflict sensitive programming; 2) professional, knowledgeable and supportive staff; 3) capacity building of partners and facilitating learning and exchange networks on gender, and tools etc.; and 4) being influential at policy making level.

#### **Box 6 Examples of the usefulness of a Gender Network according to respondents of the partner survey:**

*"The platform stresses peer to peer learning, exchange and sharing of tools, methodologies, knowledge and learning sharing. Most importantly through the platform SDC is building the capacity of its partners. It's an official channel to share gender, governance related message to partners. Thus this also empowers Gender Focal Person and underlines the fact that Gender related responsibilities concerns everyone."*

*"It is useful because it constantly creates spaces for reflection and provides tools to integrate the gender approach in all projects. It constitutes an important space for the exchange of experiences. It allows us to capitalize on achievements, and is guided by results."*

### **Recommendations of the two surveys**

The respondents of the two surveys were asked for recommendations for SDC to improve gender (mainstreaming) in SDC's programming. The answers can be summarized as follows:

- (Continuous) capacity building of both SDC and partner staff on gender (mainstreaming), including attention to motivation, and changing of mind-set;
- Motivation and commitment of SDC (local) staff and partners, and especially leadership of the management;
- Continue to invest human and financial resources in gender (mainstreaming) programmes, including sufficient time allocation to (SDC's) GFPs;
- Facilitate learning and exchange (of information, experience, tools & instruments etc.) between partners; more coordination and communication with SDC gender focal points;
- Make gender (mainstreaming) a (strict) requirement/mandatory, e.g. in the project design (logical framework, result framework, indicators), having at least one gender specific activity and/or objective for each domain of work, and at least one gender specific project per country.
- Focus on and take into account country specific (social norms hindering) gender issues, as well as the country's or local context.

## 6.2 In-depth country studies

In this section the aggregated findings from the four in-depth country studies –Bangladesh, Bolivia, Chad and Tajikistan- are presented, with some examples of a specific country when illustrative and relevant. The detailed country studies are included in Annex 15.

### Gender in Country Offices' documentation

- All SDC offices of the four countries defined gender as a transversal topic; all four offices undertake efforts to mainstream gender.
- Comparing the earlier with the more recent documents demonstrate that gender is better and more strategically integrated in the most recent country strategy. Comparing two annual reports per country demonstrates better reporting on gender in the most recent reports.
- The focus on reporting on gender, however, is more on sex-disaggregated data than on structural improvements reducing gender inequalities.
- The latter can be explained by the result frameworks of the country strategies, which include insufficient gender indicators at outcome and/or output level, often limited to one of the thematic domains.
- Gender was not (or insufficiently) integrated in the reviewed MERVs.

### How Country Offices address gender

- All countries have a Gender Focal Person (standard at SDC country offices) who is part-time responsible for promoting gender within SDC's work. An active GFP is quite essential and ensures or promotes (i) the integration of gender issues within all programming; (ii) the inclusion of gender in strategic documents; and (iii) organizes gender related capacity building e.g. through training.
- Where available, Gender Focal Point groups, bringing the GFPs of individual SDC projects together, turn out to be very useful, ensuring a similar understanding on gender issues and (SDC's) gender policy across all projects, also acting as a learning platform. Such a GFP group is very active in Bolivia; in Bangladesh a Gender Platform was initiated by SDC which is being led by a rotation system among the implementing organisations of SDC projects.
- The project logic and design is usually based on the sector domain topic, with gender rather as a side issue than well integrated.
- All country offices used small action grants to finance specific gender activities such as gender trainings or gender capitalization reports.
- There is a general need to strengthen gender knowledge, including the understanding of gender within the socio-cultural context for all staff, both of SDC and the implementing partners.
- Gender as a mainstreamed topic is till date insufficiently integrated in the thematic (non-gender) policy dialogues in the countries.

### Gender in SDC financed projects

In line with the findings of other data collection methods, also these country studies found that gender analyses are not routinely conducted prior to the planning of new SDC projects. Gender is reportedly not sufficiently integrated in project documents –including tender documents-, which tends to contribute to the inadequate integration of gender in the implementation phase. However, all projects put a strong emphasis on women's participation, also because gender is a mandatory requirement. Targets or quota for women's participation did bring positive improvements. Addressing structural inequalities seems more difficult in practice, also because "gender" is still too often equated with "women" rather than with the transformation of unequal gender relations, and most projects still lack systematic work on this. In particular, in the more technical projects -such as infrastructure, climate change and urban transport- gender is not or insufficiently addressed. Neither analyses of potential negative impact of interventions on gender are done (do no harm), e.g. to find out whether gender inequalities might be reinforced by a project.

Based on the interviews gender is mainstreamed to some extent in most SDC interventions, nonetheless there is often a gap between implemented gender related activities and achieved results and what is reflected in the documentation. Reasons are:

- There is no (strict) obligation to report on gender, apart from the annual report, hence under-reporting is not unlikely;

- If gender is insufficiently reflected in the logical framework, results also tend to be insufficiently measured and reported upon;
- It is also perceived that in the format for documents space is lacking for reporting on gender;
- There are more transversal topics, of which gender is one.

### **Success factors for SDC's programmes in their gender responsiveness**

Success factors -for all or some of the four countries- include the following:

- An active GFP, also engaging with the implementing partners on gender (mainstreaming);
- Having a gender network or platform at country level to coordinate with partners and/or having GFPs in each project;
- Quota for (women's) participation and the obligation to at least report on sex-disaggregated data;
- Combination of work at national and local level, including the participation in policy initiatives and/or coordination with other donors;
- Ensuring that SDC selects implementing partners who are gender sensitive; mandatory use of the gender checklist by them; and collaboration with local women's organizations (the latter in case of Chad).

#### **Box 7 Examples of successes from the in-depth country studies:**

- In Chad the promotion of equitable access to the different types of support by service providers (e.g. on processing and marketing) resulted in the generation of income by women, which contributed to women's empowerment and a change in perception at household and community level.
- The gender analysis for the rural drinking water sector contributed to successful gender mainstreaming in this sector (Tajikistan).
- In Bolivia the PADEM project (gender principal) was particularly successful in engaging men, with husbands better supporting their wives during pregnancy.
- In Bangladesh the NGO Rupantar achieved political empowerment of women to participate in local government, with mixed gender training as one of the success factors (also a gender principal project).

### **Hindering factors for SDC's programmes in their gender responsiveness**

The most common hindering factors for the four countries are:

- Gender is not (or not enough) included in project documents (including tender documents, Credit Proposals, etc.); gender not structurally mainstreamed in programming, still too often as an add-on; and no or insufficient gender indicators -especially at outcome level- are identified;
- Resistance of certain actors or partners to contribute to GEWE and/or increasing conservative discourses in some countries, including side-lining of national women's machinery;
- Insufficient understanding of gender by implementers and sub-contractors (mainly local NGOs) especially about gender issues that go beyond women's participation. This also leads to lack of commitment of the implementers to work on gender;
- Insufficient priority given to gender, as also other (transversal) topics require attention;
- Socio-cultural conditions being used as a "knockdown argument" to not work towards reducing more structural gender inequalities;
- Although most national governments have good gender policies or laws and/or gender equality plans, there is a lack of real commitment and political will as well as budget to implement these.

#### **Box 8 Example of regressive developments**

In Tajikistan the Committee on Women and Family Affairs, which is the main body in charge of gender equality issues, is apparently relegated into a more passive role and side-lined in discussions about relevant reforms. Instead more "trivial" issues such as women's proper attire are being discussed in this committee, which, however, is in line with current national developments.

### **Key challenges encountered in gender mainstreaming**

The socio-cultural context, including patriarchal structures and traditional gender norms, is a challenge for all gender activities, albeit with specific challenges varying from country to country. Most country studies, however, agreed that traditional behaviour and gender norms, also ingrained to some extent in the mind-set of national staff (potentially both SDC offices' and implementers' staff), form a key

challenge to the actual implementation of interventions that address transformative change. The lack of sufficient understanding, awareness and knowledge about gender issues and approaches among the various stakeholders involved in the implementation of SDC projects is another important challenge, sometimes complemented by the view that gender is a donor imposed topic. Another major challenge is the fact that to achieve a stronger and empowered position for women at all levels of society (from household level to national politics), men need to create space for them, and their roles and norms need to change as well.

SDC addresses the key challenges in several ways. A main approach is to increase the gender knowledge, sensitivity and capacity among own and implementers' staff through gender training and exchanges of experiences, the latter especially through a gender platform at national level. A specific example of challenging traditional gender norms is the involvement of influential resource persons, e.g. knowledgeable about Islam, to support a more active women's involvement in programmes. Ensuring that gender is better integrated in the project cycle is another important way to overcome challenges, starting with a good gender analysis, followed by a proper and relevant integration of gender in the project logic: from objectives to activities and budget.

### **Conclusion and recommendations from the country studies**

The main conclusion from the four country studies is in line with findings from other data collection methods. This is that a basic level of gender mainstreaming is nowadays achieved in most SDC projects, especially by addressing women's inclusion in project activities, but often without addressing structural inequalities. However, there is variation between projects, with some projects actually addressing such inequalities, especially gender principal projects, but others, especially some more "technical" projects, not even targeting the inclusion of women. Recommendations provided by interviewees and deduced from the country studies' findings are summarized in the next box.

#### **Box 9 Recommendations by interviewees and deduced from the findings of the country studies**

- Ensure robust gender analyses, for example, by SDC country offices commissioning such analyses for the sectors they are active in;
- Ensure that gender is integrated from the beginning in programming processes by incorporating gender issues within project concepts and tender documents, using a more holistic approach and also targeting gender transformative changes, requiring that proposals adequately mainstream gender and include gender objectives and indicators. The stricter application of the new gender checklist is likely to facilitate this. A more substantial feedback from HQ on gender in SDC programmes will also be helpful;
- Continue and/or strengthen with gender capacity building at all levels (SDC staff, implementers; ensure GFPs have sufficient time allocated for gender work;
- Put more emphasis on involving men in gender related activities;
- Policy dialogues to strengthen the enabling environment for better gender mainstreaming remains highly relevant, which can include support to the government to implement existing gender policies or laws;
- Define for each thematic area a joint transformative gender objective to which all projects of the respective thematic area have to contribute.

### **6.3 Comparison with other donors**

This section compares SDC's support to gender with other donors by two approaches: (i) comparing the proportion of aid support that has the policy intention to contribute to gender principal and gender significant projects and (ii) comparing SDC's interventions on gender equality with other donors based on the review of some selected gender evaluation reports of other international donors. Annex 16 provides more detailed information.

#### **6.3.1 Switzerland's aid in support of GEWE as compared to other donors**

Statistic data of SDC about the proportion of ODA budget allocated to projects and programmes marked G2 (gender principal) and G1 (gender significant) show that the proportion of the bilateral allocable aid that has the explicit intention to contribute to GEWE has been quite steady for most years between 2007 and 2016. See the below table, with G0 being the proportion of aid that did not target gender.

Table 8 Proportional amounts of Switzerland's bilateral ODA (in %) spent between 2007 and 2016 on G0, G1 and G2 projects and programmes (excluding core-contributions to multilateral and NGO organisations)

G	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
0	85.36	81.55	83.04	84.10	75.68	82.03	82.10	83.74	85.13	73.57
1	13.55	17.34	15.48	14.83	22.71	16.68	16.62	13.77	13.50	24.64
2	1.09	1.11	1.48	1.07	1.62	1.29	1.28	2.49	1.37	1.79

The above table demonstrates that after many years in which the G1 and G2 projects consisted of 15 to 18% of Switzerland's ODA spending (except for 2011), the proportion of gender equality focused aid (G1 and G2) increased prominently to over 26% in 2016<sup>25</sup>.

The OECD Donor Charts of March 2017 compared the aid in support of GEWE between all DAC member countries, using data from 2014 - 2015 as sources for the comparison. This comparison shows that the percentage of Swiss aid focusing on gender equality (14% of all screened aid) is relatively low as compared with some of the more like-minded donors, such as Sweden (86%), Iceland (83%), Canada (67%), Australia (55%), UK (52%), Germany (43%) and Norway (27%). If the Swiss 2016 data would have been used (over 26%), the position of Switzerland would have been close to Norway's. When comparing the ratio between funding for G2 and G1 projects (1 : 8.4 for Switzerland in the OECD Donor Chart document) with the average ratio for DAC members (1 : 6.1), it shows that Switzerland finances comparatively less gender principal interventions than other donors.

However, the above information mainly reveals the policy intention, and does not assess the effectiveness, the nature or quality of gender results achieved by the interventions that are earmarked with G1 and G2. It is also commonly known that gender markers are not always adequately applied, as was also found in the assessment of the gender principal and gender significant SDC interventions for this effectiveness study as well as for other donors. For example, an internal assessment for the EU of their development projects of 2008 found that more projects were wrongly marked (45%) than correctly marked (31%), with for the remaining projects inadequate information available to assess whether they were correctly marked or not<sup>26</sup>. Even after having developed a tool to facilitate the correct use of the Gender-marker and including the application of this tool in both online and face-to-face trainings, the EU Evaluation of EU support to GEWE (2015) concluded: "*The Gender Marker is poorly understood and inconsistently applied by EC Services and as a result it is impossible to determine with any confidence the EU's gender spend and the extent of gender mainstreaming in programming.*"<sup>27</sup>

### 6.3.2 Comparison with other donors based on gender evaluation reports

The review of several evaluation reports on the gender effectiveness of other donors' international cooperation demonstrate the following main findings:

**SDC's institutional readiness for gender mainstreaming:** This was not a specific focus of the gender effectiveness study. However, the comparison of SDC's "institutional readiness" for gender mainstreaming with findings from a 2008 study among 8 EU development cooperation institutions shows that SDC scores above the average found in the study, even though not all areas of institutional readiness of SDC could be assessed. For details, see Table 16.3 in Annex 16. This finding is in line with the observed improvement of the "favourable climate" for gender mainstreaming within SDC from other data collection methods.

**Similar findings and challenges:** Other donors' evaluation studies found also similar findings and/or challenges for gender mainstreaming as identified during this RE for SDC. Some examples are:

<sup>25</sup> There is a significant gap between the internal statistic data of SDC and the external reporting to the DAC. For instance, according to SDC's SAP data 2016, the value for G1 projects (gender significant) is 56% (578 Mio. CHF in absolute numbers) as against 25% reported to the DAC. A similar gap can be noted for G2 project (gender principal): the internal statistics count 9.6% as G2 projects while the DAC reported number is 1.8%. The reasons for this major gap are currently being evaluated.

<sup>26</sup> EU Gender Advisory Services (2008): Report on the quality review of the application of the G-marker (internal report).

<sup>27</sup> Watkins, F., et al, 2015: Evaluation of EU Support to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Partner Countries (Evaluation carried out on behalf of the European Commission by Consortium COWI A/S, ADE, Itad), Executive Summary, April 2015, conclusion 6, page 4.



- A synthesis study of 26 thematic gender evaluations over 20 years by the Operations Evaluation Department of the African Development Bank of 2011 came to the conclusion that *“promoting gender equality is not yet integrated into the mainstream operations and organisational culture of development organisations.”*<sup>28</sup> The evaluation was unable to mention any development organisation, which had successfully mainstreamed a gender equality perspective in the ‘DNA’ of their in-house culture.<sup>29</sup> This RE found that in case of SDC there is a trend towards improved gender mainstreaming, however, often limited to ensuring women’s participation, without addressing more structural gender inequalities.
- The evaluation of the ‘EU support on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (GEWE)’ detected *“some important and inspirational GEWE results”*, but they also concluded that these achievements *“are patchy and poorly documented”*. One of the main conclusions of this EU evaluation was however that there is *“a mismatch between the EU’s strong policy commitments on GEWE and the organisational capacity to deliver them”*<sup>30</sup> and that *“the EU’s weak delivery against its GEWE commitments is primarily an institutional rather than a technical problem.”*<sup>31</sup>
- Since 2003 the SDC gender policy requires a gender (aware) analysis previous to the project design, however, this effectiveness study found that such gender (aware) analyses were not always put in practice in SDC interventions. Similar experiences can be found among other donors, e.g. in the Evaluation of EU Support to GEWE which found that even when a gender analysis is not compulsory *“staff ... recognises the importance of building an understanding of the national context...”* but *“make little attempt to develop robust understanding of the gender context”*.<sup>32</sup>

**Importance of gender in policy dialogues confirmed:** An evaluation of the policy dialogue on gender equality of SIDA<sup>33</sup> shows that it is an effective strategy to promote gender equality, confirming the findings of assessments of SDC’s policy dialogues by this RE. One of the conclusions of SIDA’s evaluation report is about the effective twin-track approach: *“Policy dialogue in a development co-operation context has worked most effectively when it was explicitly and strategically paired with programme support in the same sector.”*<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> African Development Bank, OPEV: Mainstreaming Gender Equality. Evaluation Insights, Number 3, November 2011.

<sup>29</sup> The study mentioned 6 areas of action needed to get gender equality embedded in the culture of development organisations: Leadership and commitment at the top; accountability mechanisms and incentives linked to gender equality performance targets in job plans; sufficient funding; procedures and practices to ensure that gender equality is systematically as a standard rule is integrated throughout the entire cycle of operations; gender indicators to measure results and systematically reporting on lessons learned; an gender responsive in-house culture that sees gender equality as a contribution factor, rather than a competing factor, for aid effectiveness and other policy priorities.

<sup>30</sup> This conclusion is a logical result of the analytical framework used for the evaluation of the “EU’s support on GEWE” which was focused on the following donor-performance criteria for assessment: Commitment, Capacity, Cash (funds allocated to GEWE), Accountability, Context analysis and Coordination among donor partners.

<sup>31</sup> Watkins, F. et al, Executive Summary, page 1.

<sup>32</sup> Watkins, F. et al, *ibid*.

<sup>33</sup> Peebles, D. et al, 2015: Evaluation of Policy Dialogue as an Instrument - the case of Gender Equality. Evaluation commissioned to Partecip GmbH by Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida. June, 2015.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*

## 7. Aggregated findings and conclusions

This chapter presents the aggregated findings and conclusions from this study on the Effectiveness of Gender Equality, based on the findings from all data collection methods. The main findings related to the eight key questions of this study –as formulated in the Approach Paper- are integrated in this chapter; Annex 17 presents the answers per key question in more detail.

**Overall conclusion:** During the review period the preconditions within SDC for integrating gender in its engagements, which were already quite favourable in the early 2000s, further improved. This contributed to more effective gender mainstreaming in SDC programming, especially towards the end of the review period. The findings show that gender principal interventions tend to be more effective for reducing structural inequalities than gender significant ones, with still room for improvement in especially the latter portfolio. SDC's engagements in policy dialogues are largely considered as strategic and well effective, with clear links between these dialogues and programming. Main remaining challenges are ensuring effective gender mainstreaming in part of the gender significant projects, based on gender analyses -instead of gender as an “add-on” topic- and measuring and reporting on gender related results, including by setting relevant gender indicators and using sex-disaggregated data.

### 7.1 Extent that gender goals and structural inequalities were addressed

This section 7.1 addresses the first main question of this RE by considering the effectiveness of SDC's programming, in particular of its gender principal and gender significant interventions; section 7.2 concerns the effectiveness of SDC's policy dialogue engagements.

#### 7.1.1. OECD-DAC Effectiveness score

**Conclusion on OECD-DAC effectiveness score:** Of those phases with adequate information to assess the OECD-DAC score (i.e. 42 of the 124 assessed phases), over 80% had been successful in achieving the pre-set gender objectives or outcomes, at least at a satisfactory level, with the score “good” being most common. The difference in effectiveness between the three sub-samples is not very substantial as also demonstrated by the average OECD-DAC effectiveness scores: 2.5 for the genuine gender principal phases (19), 2.4 for the incoherent gender principal phases (6) and 2.9 for the gender significant phases (17). A main explanation for the similar distribution of scores over the six scoring levels (from “very good” to “useless”) for the principal and significant phases is the difference in the nature and ambition level of the gender indicators, with more easily to achieve gender indicators for the gender significant phases against more ambitious and structural indicators for the genuine gender principal phases.

**Conclusion on the applicability of the OECD-DAC effectiveness score:** (1) Applying the OECD-DAC effectiveness score to a transversal theme such as gender equality is not very useful, mainly because gender (sensitive) objectives / indicators had often not been identified within the logical framework or because reporting on these objectives / indicators was missing or inadequate. (2) This RE demonstrated a second weakness of the OECD-DAC effectiveness score, i.e. the fact that the scoring system does not consider the ambition level of the pre-set indicators and targets. This means that a project with unambitious targets that were fully achieved scored better than a project with partially achieved ambitious –and more structural- targets.

The OECD-DAC Effectiveness score results have not been used in further analyses for two reasons: (1) the limited number of phases for which the score could be allocated (one third of all phases); and (2) the fact that the OECD-DAC score does not consider the ambition level of the gender objectives.

#### 7.1.2 Gender Effectiveness Score

Of the 124 assessed phases, the GES score could be assessed for 77 phases, which is more than the 42 phases for which the OECD-DAC score could be assessed, but still not satisfactory as it means that for over one third of the phases not enough information was available to assess a valid GES score. Figure 3 of chapter 4 presents the GES scoring results for the 3 sub-samples.

**Conclusion on the GES scores:** The phases with better scores (gender transformative and gender positive<sup>35</sup>) form a significantly larger proportion of the genuine principal (73%) than of the incoherent gender principal (43%) or the gender significant phases (27%). The use of the GES score led to a significantly broader spread of effectiveness values than the OECD-DAC scores, with the genuine gender principal phases clearly being more effective in contributing towards gender transformative change than the incoherent gender principal phases. Gender significant phases contributed on average relatively little towards transformative change, doing a bit better than being gender neutral. However, in all subsamples the whole range of effectiveness scales can be found, from gender transformative to gender neutral for the gender principal phases and from gender transformative to gender negative for the gender significant phases.

An example of a project with a “gender negative” GES score is provided in the below box; several examples of better performing projects are found in further sections of this chapter.

**Box 10 Example of a “gender negative” project (7F-06844)**

This 3-year Humanitarian Aid project (2010-2012) aimed to strengthen the capacity of the Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee (LPDC) to develop and implement a comprehensive policy on Palestine refugee issues in order to improve the living conditions of Palestine refugees in Lebanon. The project provided administrative and technical support to the LPDC inter-ministerial committee, including advice on Palestinian Refugees civil rights, such as their right to work, and support towards camp improvements. There was no reference to gender in the project documentation, apart from a note in the Credit Proposal that “SDC will push for the inclusion of gender equality throughout the project”, but there was no evidence that this had happened. In contrary, the conclusion emerged that negative effects on gender equality had likely been occurred due to the absence of a gender approach. For example, there were issues at stake that would have a different impact on women than on men, such as ID cards and procurement of land. Moreover, only men had been involved in the consultations, suggesting that specific needs of women refugees had not been identified and addressed.

**Conclusion on gender negative interventions:** About ten percent of SDC’s interventions scored gender negative or poor/very poor in terms of gender effectiveness as found through two data collection methods. Such interventions either lacked a gender approach, which was especially detrimental when interventions were likely to have a different impact on men and women, or they targeted men and women in such a traditional way that existing gender inequalities were perpetuated or reinforced. Underlying factors were the apparent absence of a proper gender (context) analysis and gender awareness among involved staff. Gender negative interventions can therefore be avoided by building gender capacities among staff and ensuring that gender analyses are conducted which inform project design. All interventions, including those not targeting gender, should include at least a gender lens when doing a “do no harm” analysis.

**Conclusion on under-reporting on gender:** Over one third of the reviewed end documentation of the 124 assessed phases did not –or not sufficiently- report on gender in order to deduct a valid GES score. The RE found evidence of under-reporting on gender related interventions and/or gender results, in particular through some of the interviews. It was not possible to estimate any extent of under-reporting.

### 7.1.3 Effectiveness over time and in subsequent phases

Cross-tabulating the GES scores with the last year of the concerned phase clearly demonstrated that the gender effectiveness of SDC interventions increased over time, see figure 4 in chapter 4. Comparing GES scores of subsequent phases of a same project demonstrated that the GES score in a next phase is better or slightly better for about two-thirds of the 27 assessed projects of which two or more phases had been assessed. This seems in line with the finding that for 42% of the assessed phases with a valid GES score gender relevant information in the context analyses of Credit Proposals had been derived from lessons learnt from previous phases.

**Conclusion of gender effectiveness over time:** SDC interventions clearly improved their effectiveness in achieving their gender equality goals over the considered 10-year plus time period, with many gender neutral interventions in phases that ended before 2009, more gender sensitive

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<sup>35</sup> See footnote 15 for an explanation about why gender sensitive interventions are not included.

interventions in the years thereafter, whereas in recent years the average interventions became more often gender positive. This suggests that the solid work done by committed staff within SDC, such as the GFPs at HQ and country level, in promoting the implementation of its gender policy, including the provision of gender tools, guidelines, etc., has actually been bearing fruits.

**7.1.4 Addressing structural inequalities and unequal power relations versus policy marker**

Findings from the different data collection methods showed that about three quarters of the gender principal (G2) projects effectively addressed structural gender inequalities. For interventions in which gender is mainstreamed (G1) this proportion is lower, with the actual proportion varying per data collection method. The assessment of gender significant interventions completed between 2006 and 2016 found that 27% of the G1 phases contributed to structural gender improvements; the information from the on-line surveys suggested that 55% of the interventions in which gender is “well” mainstreamed potentially contributed to structural improvements against 27% of the interventions in which gender was “somewhat” mainstreamed. The difference can be –at least partially- explained because the latter interventions are more recent; and recent SDC interventions are more gender effective than those in the first years of the review period.

**Conclusion on G1 and G2 interventions addressing structural inequalities:** SDC’s interventions contributed to structural gender results to a certain extent, with gender principal projects (G2) significantly better contributing to reducing structural gender inequalities and unequal power relations than projects in which gender was mainstreamed. Gender significant projects (G1) rather focused on the inclusion or participation of women in project activities and/or addressing practical gender needs. However, there is enough evidence that gender significant projects can also contribute to structural gender improvements, with the proportion of gender significant interventions that actually do so increasing over time.

**Box 11 Example of a gender significant project in Nepal with gender transformative results (7F-03971)**

This project provided technical assistance to the government of Nepal for implementing an ADB financed rural infrastructure project. The Credit Proposal formulated the rationale for gender mainstreaming as follows: “*Social exclusion of disadvantaged groups which are economically poor households also socially discriminated and excluded by gender, caste, ethnicity and religious identities is a priority topic in Nepal and always includes gender. Typical excluded/discriminated groups are Dalits, Janajatis and women*”. This project foresaw that 40% of all unskilled employment generated was to go to women and 60% to (other) disadvantaged groups (DAGs). This road construction project considered all possibilities for gender mainstreaming. 40% of unskilled work was reserved for women and as well as 40% of the membership in construction groups. The project provided training for women and DAGs to empower them, including to give them confidence and opportunity to participate in community decision making processes. The project ensured equal pay for women and men for work of equal value; women often used the earned money to start a small business thus ensuring longer term income generation. A gender desk had been established and implemented in the Department of Local Infrastructure Development and Agricultural Roads, which showed the commitment of the Government of Nepal towards gender. The project improved access to services and facilities for rural women and DAGs. The project mainstreamed gender in a very strategic and strict manner based on a gender and social equity action plan. This gender significant (G1) project achieved a transformative impact on women’s life, even though it did not have a direct gender transformative objective.

**7.1.5 Activities contributing to gender results and gender effectiveness**

A high statistical correlation has been found between the four gender effectiveness sub-scores for input / activities, outputs, outcomes and impact. This demonstrates that a good package of gender (sensitive) activities is highly conducive to achieve good gender outputs as well as robust gender outcomes and/or impact. At the same time this means that it is unlikely that an intervention leads to gender results in the absence of a relevant set of gender (sensitive) activities.

There were slight differences per data collection method in regard to which activities resulted as best contributing to achieving gender results, see table 7 of chapter 4 and table 14.8 of Annex 14 for details. Implementing partners considered activities that address gender needs and gender equality as well as gender training and awareness raising as most essential for achieving gender results. Targeting men and boys and gender responsive budgeting (GRB) were found to lead to relatively better GES scores.

The latter might also be explained by the fact that projects that do target men and boys and include GRB are also likely to include other gender (sensitive) activities.

**Conclusion on the Theory of Change approach:** Including gender (sensitive) activities as part of an intervention is essential to achieve better scores for gender effectiveness. This confirms the validity of the so-called Theory of Change approach, consisting of a coherent sequence of objectives, outcomes, outputs and activities and identifying pathways of change, also for achieving gender results.

## 7.2 Effectiveness of SDC's policy dialogues and linkages with interventions

### 7.2.1 Effectiveness of policy dialogues

SDC is pro-active in its work on gender related policy dialogues in the international and multilateral context as well as at national levels, addressing a broad range of thematic areas and applying a broad definition of "policy dialogue". This includes commissioning research for collecting evidence as well as contributing to follow-up of policy dialogue results, e.g. by supporting the implementation of (inter-) national gender policies and resolutions. SDC's engagement in policy dialogues is widely recognized as very effective, which is attributed to various success factors such as thorough preparation, willingness to take up leadership roles, strong principles with a strategic but pragmatic approach seeking consensus, credibility and politically neutral.

**Conclusion on the effectiveness of SDC gender policy dialogues:** SDC is well effective in its gender related policy dialogue engagements, often strongly contributing to the achievement of the highest achievable results. The broad interpretation of "policy dialogues", including commissioning strategic research and engaging in strategic partnerships, have proven to contribute to this effectiveness.

### 7.2.2 Multi-pronged approach and linking micro-, meso- and macro-level

SDC's engagements in policy dialogues and programming are complementary and mutually reinforcing. Policy dialogues for better gender policies, laws and strategies create an enabling environment for gender sensitive projects and programmes to be successful. Experiences from projects and programmes are used to feed into policy dialogues as evidence underpinning the rationale for policy measures. SDC is strategic in funding complementary actions, which include -apart from the already mentioned commissioned research- also (core) funding to multilateral and other organisations that are key players in the implementation of such (gender) policies and resolutions. The effectiveness of combining policy dialogues as a complementary strategy to programming has been confirmed by a SIDA evaluation of policy dialogue as an instrument towards gender equality.

SDC's endeavours to work towards gender equality at three interlinked levels (micro-, meso- and macro-level) is found to be a contributing factor to successful gender work, including contributing to the sustainability of gender achievements. For example, reducing gender inequalities at local or micro-level is complemented by building the capacity of (local) partner organisations and relevant government institutions to mainstream gender in their work. Or interventions that address a specific gender topic at micro-level are complemented by efforts to improve national level legislation on the same subject.

#### **Box 12 Example of multi-level and multi-pronged approach**

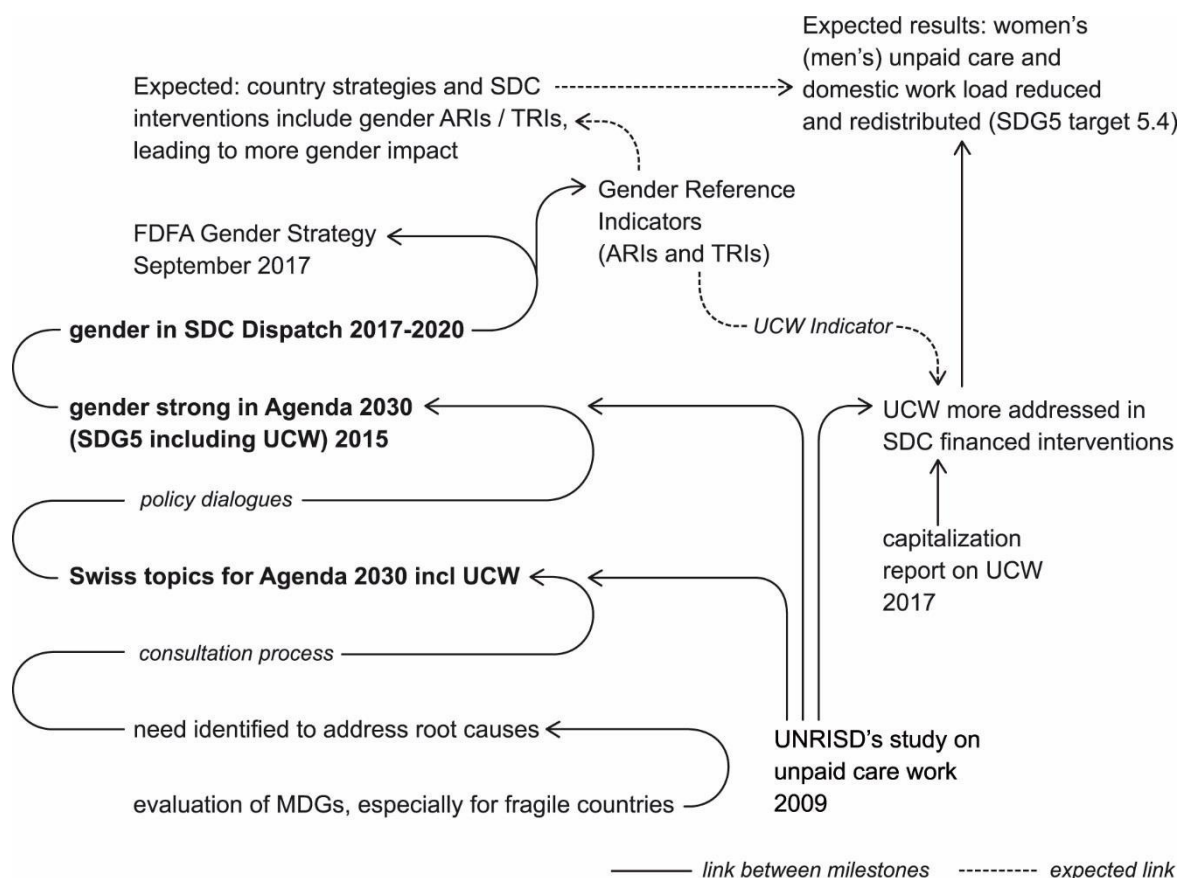
The SDC co-funded Safeguard Young People (SYP) programme on GBV and SRHR is implemented by UNFPA in 8 countries of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). This programme works at regional, national and local levels, addressing advocacy, increasing knowledge and skills of youth on protective sexual behaviours and improving the quality and access of youth friendly health services. Policy dialogues at regional level (SADC) contributed to the SADC Model Law on Child Marriage, whereas evidence on youth issues collected from the micro-level work at country level were crucial for informing national policies and strategies. Quote from UNFPA: "*The contribution of SDC was pivotal in ensuring integration of gender issues within regional and national frameworks*".

**Conclusion on multi-level and multi-pronged approach:** The findings from this RE confirm the importance and effectiveness of policy dialogues as complementary to programming in addressing gender inequality, with SDC's work at the three interlinked levels (micro, meso and macro) as a vital contributing factor to success.

### 7.2.3 Pathways to change

The information collected during this study convincingly points towards linkages between the various individual engagements of SDC. As an example, such a pathway with milestones and processes related to Agenda 2030 and UCW has been elaborated in a graphic form, see figure 10 below, also linking policy dialogues and programming.

Figure 10 Pathway of change related to Agenda 2030 and unpaid care work



### 7.3 Inclusion of gender contributing to achieving overall development goals

This concerns the second main question of this RE about the extent to which the inclusion of gender equality contributed to the achievement of overall development goals of interventions. This study question specifically applies to SDC's gender significant engagements, i.e. interventions that have overall objectives related to their thematic area with gender being mainstreamed. The RE found that a large majority of SDC country staff (92%) and staff of SDC partners (85%) are convinced that paying attention to gender contributes to better achieving a project's overall goals, either "definitely" or "to some extent". An exception was that some of the partner staff in more technical projects held the opinion that the inclusion of gender was considered unnecessary and women were not actively involved in those interventions. This view meant losing opportunities to address gender inequalities and have overall development goals of the intervention enhanced due to a more gender sensitive approach.

The above finding among 85-92% of the surveyed staff is hardly reflected in SDC's written documentation about their gender significant interventions, where for only 14% of the assessed phases some evidence was found in the reviewed end reports that inclusion of gender contributed to better achievement of the overall goals, see examples in box 2, chapter 4.

**Conclusion on inclusion of gender contributing to overall achievements:** The overall perception is that gender mainstreaming contributes to achieving the overall goals of development interventions, even

though this is hardly reflected in reporting and the opinion of some partner staff that including gender in technical projects is not necessary. The need for better measuring and documentation of how gender inclusion contributes to achieving overall project goals is therefore strong.

#### 7.4 Achievements within SDC's three thematic areas on gender

SDC aims to achieve its long-term goal of fighting structural inequalities and unequal power relations through pursuing structural improvements within three main thematic areas: freedom of violence, economic opportunities and political participation. Results in these three thematic areas are achieved by a combination of inputs and outputs at micro-, meso- and macro-level, with policy dialogue and programming engagements complementing and enhancing each other. Further to the presentation of the thematic results from the assessment of SD's gender principal and gender significant interventions (in 4.2.5), this section presents aggregated findings and examples on SDC's three main thematic areas.

Many of the reviewed SDC interventions address more than one of the three main thematic areas, as can be derived from the findings of the assessment of gender principal and gender significant projects, and is illustrated by the below example of an intervention that combined "living lives free of violence" with "women's economic empowerment", illustrating interlinkages between thematic areas.

**Box 13 Example of a project addressing more than one of SDC's gender thematic areas:**

Project title: Support to UNHCR's Community Service Programme and Support of the Refugee Women Centre (7F-06185). This project provided psychosocial support to refugee women combined with addressing their economic needs, in order to improve their living conditions and attain a level of self-sufficiency. The rationale for this was that economic empowerment would reduce the need of refugee women to resort to survival sex and decrease their vulnerability to HIV/Aids.

#### Freedom of violence

Around 40% of SDC's interventions addressed "living lives free of violence" as result area, with a slightly higher proportion (45%) found through the partner survey and slightly less (36%) from the assessment of SDC's gender principal and gender significant projects. A majority of the interventions addressing "living lives free of violence" addressed domestic violence / Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV); combating harmful practices and trafficking / safe migration were less often addressed.

**Box 14 Example Gender Based Violence Awareness Campaign by the ABAAD Research Center for Gender Equality (7F-08978)**

This intervention encompassed a nation-wide awareness raising campaign in Lebanon on condemning the general passive attitude within society towards violence against women. The campaign engaged and interacted with people directly, asking them to take action in their community. The project used a variety of creative and innovative tools to raise awareness on gender equality and Gender Based Violence. It targeted men and boys as role models and partners in fighting violence against women, making them part of the solution, and not only of the problem. The use of social media such as Facebook and YouTube enhanced engaging especially the youth, both girls and boys. Throughout the project collaboration with men and women was sought.

**Results achieved:** The campaign received much attention from social media (twitter, Facebook and YouTube) with very active public interaction and resulted in a measurable reduction in violence against women and an increased public awareness on women's rights and a change in public perception towards the causes, impact and results of Gender Based Violence.

SDC's gender related policy dialogues also put much emphasis on "freedom of violence" by addressing gender based violence; women, peace and security; and gender in humanitarian aid, with the latter having a strong focus on preventing or reducing sexual and gender based violence in humanitarian contexts. SDC also provides (core) funding to an impressive number of institutions that have aspects of living lives free of violence, including women's rights, as their core business.

**SRHR in health projects:** Within SDC's Strategic Goal 7, SRHR is part of the "freedom of violence" focused interventions. Analyses of the gender principal and gender significant projects found that SRHR is also addressed within health projects, focusing more on the medical health aspects, often without the "rights" element. More than one third of the phases with a valid GES scores (27 of the 77) contributed to improved access to health, of which again about one third had SRHR (including HIV/Aids and

maternal health) as a main or important focus, however, not necessarily linking this with “freedom of violence” or “freedom of choice”. Some of these interventions were mainly focused on health services to improve women’s health, but not always (automatically) contributing to actual women’s empowerment, see below example referring to missed opportunities. An example showing that an SRHR / maternal health project can contribute towards more structural gender equality has also been added in this box.

**Box 15 Example of a gender neutral and a gender transformative maternal health project**

**Gender neutral:** Of the two assessed phases of the project “Mother and Child Health” carried out by UNICEF in Moldova (7F-03732) marked as gender principal, the first phase addressed the improvement of children’s and maternal health, with pregnant women and their children as main target group. The second phase focused on children (paediatric health) whereas outcomes on pregnant women (as in phase 1) had disappeared. As the main hindering factor for achieving any gender results the assessor identified the existing gender stereotypes of project staff, who had not grasped opportunities for address gender stereotypes and discrimination.

**Gender transformative:** Successfully targeting (also) husbands of pregnant women to promote that they better support and care for their wives (PADEM project, referred to in the Bolivia country study).

### **Economic Opportunities**

About one quarter to one third of SDC’s engagements were found to actually contribute to improving (women’s) economic opportunities, expressed as more equal access to income, property and/or assets. The partner survey showed that more projects (two thirds) included economic opportunities as a result area, but that less than half were successful in achieving results. For relatively few interventions (less than 5%) there was evidence that they contributed to increased access to resources such as to land or water; 7% of the interventions contributed to access to credit.

The proportion of interventions that address time use / unpaid care work (UCW) seems higher when considering more recent projects (as in the partner survey) than when considering the full review period 2006-2016 as in the assessment of the gender principal and gender significant projects. Of the assessed gender principal and gender significant phases about 10% of the 77 phases actually contributed to visualizing time use and time burdens and/or redistribution of unpaid care work; 45% of the projects in the partner survey had time use / UCW as result area, however, with less than half being successful. The latter finding demonstrates that actually achieving UCW related results can be challenging.

Setting UCW on the international agenda was a major achievement with substantial contribution by SDC. SDC’s policy dialogues, including support to relevant multilateral / international organisations, also addressed other aspects of Women’s Economic Empowerment, such as Financial Inclusion, by providing financial support and facilitating the work of Women’s World Banking. SDC also successfully contributed to the better integration of gender in Food Security policy dialogues, including addressing women’s access to land and feminization of agriculture, the latter through current research commissioned by SDC.

**Box 16 Example of a project addressing women’s economic empowerment**

Title: Appui aux organisations paysannes de la région de Sikasso pour l’amélioration de leur niveau de vie à travers une valorisation durable de leurs ressources naturelles (Jèkasy), Mali (7F-01986)

This project provided support to peasant organisations in the Sikasso region in Mali to improve their standard of living through sustainable development of their natural resources, with special attention to access of women and young people to agricultural land resources. The project aimed to enable women to cultivate 25% of the developed plots on their own account. Gender equity in decision-making platforms on land and access to natural resources was addressed with 25% of women represented in the regional inclusive consultations. The program adopted the criterion of women’s access to land as a mandatory.

**Results achieved:** The 25% rate had been reached in most lowlands. Vegetable gardens increased considerably, benefitting especially female farmers. Because of surplus production, the project contributed to increased income. Rural women are now well organized to form an advocacy force for women’s rights in land.



## Political Participation

The RE study examined results related to the equal participation of women (and men) in decision-making at three levels: micro (household, community, CBO and/or company); meso (local government / civil society processes); and macro level (national elections, political parties). The findings from the different data sets were quite well in line, demonstrating that results at micro level were more often achieved (in about half of the interventions) than at meso level (one third), whereas national level results were relatively rare (5 to 13%, depending on the data collection method). The gap between foreseen and actually achieved results is biggest for national level political participation, followed by meso-level participation, demonstrating that achieving results in more equal decision-making at these two levels is more challenging than at micro-level. The latter often includes the increased decision-making of women in the management of services and resources (e.g. water management committee) as well as in local leadership and intra-household decision-making.

### **Box 17 Example of a project contributing to women's political participation**

Title: Contribution to AWEPA's Eastern and Southern Africa Programme /Support to the Pact of Stability, Security and Development for the Great Lakes Region (7F-04616)

This intervention supported the Pact on Security and Stability within the Great Lakes Region through working with parliamentarians from the Pact Platform. The project provided good opportunities and space for discussions on gender issues and challenges including traditional and religious beliefs and the gap between legislation and real life. The project monitored the participation of women and men, and had a specific outcome on gender in the provincial legislature and women's participation in provincial government bodies. Gender issues were only taken into account in the third phase of this project.

**Results reported** are mainly at output level. They include workshops for male and female Members of Parliament on gender mainstreaming (including in budgets), transformative leadership and addressing gender equality issues. This project contributed to increased gender awareness within the parliamentary system, encouraging gender budgeting and research on gender related issues such as religion and gender as a crucial first step in addressing gender issues in provincial politics.

SDC's engagement in policy dialogues addressing political participation as part of the policy dialogue review, however, was limited. An example include support to UN Women's Political Empowerment Section.

**Conclusion on SDC's three thematic areas:** SDC interventions have contributed to structural improvements in the three main thematic areas of SDC: living lives free of violence, women's economic empowerment and women's political participation. A lesson learnt is that various gender results, such as increased participation of women (and men) in decision-making at micro-level, are achieved by interventions across all (or many) SDC sectors.

## 7.5 Gender analysis and gender in project design

This RE found that the design of the reviewed projects had not always been informed by gender relevant information. This applied to about 45% of the 77 phases with a valid GES score, but to a much lesser extent (13%) to the interventions reported upon through the partner survey. The difference can be explained by the different time frames, reflecting that in recent years the use of gender information has become more common. There is also an apparent difference in the nature of the concerned interventions: the 77 assessed phases included a broader range of interventions, including humanitarian aid, global cooperation and more research oriented interventions, for which collecting or analysing gender information was less common than for field level interventions more commonly implemented by the interviewed partners, which, for example, excluded multilateral or research oriented implementing organizations. The findings are well consistent in the sense that for only 12% of the interventions a separate gender analysis had been conducted; gender information had rather been part of a gender aware context analyse (in about 40% of the interventions) and/or was based on lessons learnt from previous phases (about 50%).

The study also learnt that the correlation between gender (context) analyses and gender effectiveness is stronger for gender significant interventions than for gender principal interventions, implying that a good and explicit gender (context) analysis is more important for gender significant projects than for

gender principal projects. A probable explanation is that gender information is often already reflected in the “raison d’être” for gender principal projects.

A considerable proportion (between half and two-thirds) of the all reviewed interventions lacked gender objectives, outcomes and/or corresponding indicators as found by especially reviewing logical frameworks. However, the genuine gender principal projects did all have gender objectives or outcomes as this is the main criterion for being marked as gender principal, although corresponding indicators were not always in place. But especially the logical frameworks of gender significant interventions lacked gender results or indicators; and whenever these were in place, they more often reflected outputs rather than outcomes or impact. Only 40% of all 77 interventions with a valid GES score included sex-disaggregated output data. The absence of gender in results and indicators tend to discourage the measurement and reporting of any gender results, as well as a proper integration of gender concerns in interventions, because of the absence of a proper accountability mechanism.

**Conclusion on gender analysis and gender in project design:** The still considerable incidence of mainly gender significant interventions without a proper gender (context) analysis and/or gender reflected in their result frameworks, including in indicators, is counter-productive to achieving SDC’s gender goals. In order to achieve robust gender results, two main requirements are key: (i) conducting gender analyses and/or gender aware context analyses and (ii) the integration of gender issues in the project design directly from the start of the development of a new project concept, based on the information from gender analyses, thus avoiding that gender is only an “add-on”. This is even more important for gender significant interventions than gender principal ones.

## 7.6 SDC’s beneficiaries and addressing their needs

**Beneficiaries:** The various data collection methods were unanimous in their findings that SDC interventions targeted vulnerable or marginalized groups as main beneficiaries. Double marginalization (poor and discriminated) was often mentioned as a main criterion for beneficiary selection. Women were most often stated as beneficiary category (for two-thirds of the interventions), followed by men (in about half of the interventions), youth, adolescent girls and/or children. About half of the interventions had also institutions (government and/or non-government) as beneficiary. The examples in the following box demonstrate the wide range of beneficiary sub-categories:

**Box 18 Examples of more specific beneficiaries of SDC interventions:**

Women as victims of trafficking; street children; men (and boys) as actors to counter SGBV; girls as target group for SRHR awareness; migrant domestic workers; women as TVET trainees; women as members / leaders of farmers field schools and farmers groups; women as health insurance beneficiaries and members of management committees; men, women and special groups as WASH beneficiaries; men and boys for attitudinal change; women as (potential) MPs; displaced (IDP) women; pregnant women.

Examples of more institutional beneficiaries: Ministry of Finance (for Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and budgeting); Ministry of Justice; Police; Midwives; media; community and religious leaders.

Some sources commented on SDC’s strong focus on vulnerable women. Without disagreeing with the importance to target them -also as actors and agents of change- suggestions were made that more often women in higher positions (also) should be targeted, especially when these women are in positions to “wield leverage” favouring the improvement of the situation of a broader group of women, including the more vulnerable ones. An example was SDC support in Benin to women with an academic background, who subsequently occupied more positions in local government and public administration, from where they were in a position to better design or support measures benefiting the poor, including women, as well as to function as a role model<sup>36</sup>.

**Conclusion on SDC’s main beneficiaries:** The beneficiaries of SDC interventions are generally well in line with SDC’s priorities, with vulnerable groups, including women, as the most common beneficiaries, followed by men and youth. Targeting men and boys for changing gender norms and

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<sup>36</sup> This example was mentioned during one of the interviews

attitudes was found to increase the gender effectiveness of an intervention. Institutions -government, civil society and community- are also common beneficiaries of SDC interventions, which is appropriate when striving for more structural and sustainable changes.

**Needs of beneficiaries:** The extent to which SDC interventions suited the gender related needs and priorities of beneficiaries was found to depend on the extent to which gender (context) analyses had informed the design of the interventions, including the gender (sensitive) activities. Gender principal interventions were found to better meet women's strategic needs and/or address gender norms, whereas gender significant interventions more often targeted women's practical needs and/or the inclusion of women within project activities.

**Conclusion on meeting beneficiaries' gender related needs:** Gender principal interventions more often met gender related needs of beneficiaries, including more structural needs, than gender significant interventions. However, when gender information actually had informed the project design of gender significant interventions, gender significant interventions significantly better met gender needs of their beneficiaries.

### 7.7 A more favourable climate for gender mainstreaming within SDC

SDC's gender policy and gender toolkit from 2003 laid a solid groundwork for successfully promoting gender equality in its work. In subsequent years robust progress was made shaping the enabling environment within SDC for the implementation of gender as a transversal theme, see box 19. The importance of gender equality for SDC culminated in the inclusion of gender equality as the 7<sup>th</sup> goal in the Dispatch on Switzerland's International Cooperation 2017-2020 and the FDFA gender strategy of September 2017.

**Box 19 Illustrations of the favourable climate within SDC for the integration of gender in its work:**

- A good and in many respects still relevant gender policy as well as a gender toolkit (both 2003), with 80% of the respondents to the online survey for SDC staff considering the gender toolkit as useful;
- Other tools, such as specific toolkits (e.g. on gender and the psychosocial approach of 2006), a gender equality checklist and the recent gender guidance sheets on 8 (sub) thematic areas;
- The appointment of Gender Focal Points / Persons at HQ and in all country offices, most of whom spend a proportion of their time on gender; more recently SDC also expects that GFPs are appointed in projects and programmes financed by SDC;
- Though not systematically researched, committed SDC staff in management positions, both as Head of Cooperation and at HQ, also contributed to a more attention to gender, also as identified as a main success factor in the two online surveys;
- The Gender Equality Network to share learnings and build capacities, with 90% of the respondents to the online survey for SDC staff making use of this network;
- Other forms of capacity building by gender training especially at country level (e.g. by HQ's GFP or external gender trainers); at HQ annual Gender Learning Days are organized, also for representatives of implementing partners;
- Involving organisations (e.g. universities and NGOs) with gender expertise for backstopping, (gender) evaluations and development of capitalization reports on specific gender thematic areas; involving research institutions for ground breaking insights on key gender issues, such as the unequal distribution of paid work and unpaid care work;
- The SDC Gender Strategy of 2015-2018 paved the way for gender as one of the seven strategic goals in the most recent Dispatch on Switzerland's International Cooperation 2017-2020, also maintaining gender as a transversal issue. Also guided by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the FDFA Strategy on Gender equality and Women's rights was published in September 2017, presenting the substantial and decisive commitment of Switzerland -including SDC- for a more equal and inclusive society;
- Other recent developments at SDC include the revised gender checklist -more reflecting the latest OECD-DAC criteria for gender principal and gender significant projects- as well as the development of gender reference indicators, the application of which is well likely to contribute to improved gender mainstreaming in SDC interventions.

**Conclusion on internal climate within SDC for promoting gender equality:** The gradual improvement of the effectiveness of gender equality over the 10 year review period strongly suggests that the work done by SDC on promoting the implementation of its gender policy has been bearing fruits. However, there is still a gap between SDC's policy commitments and the effective integration of gender in SDC's programming, even though this gap has been reduced over the review period as demonstrated by this study.

## 7.8 Alignment and comparison with other international donors

### 7.8.1 Alignment with national contexts and development goals

The findings confirm that SDC interventions in SDC's partner countries are well aligned with national context and development goals, including with national gender policies whenever these are in place. Such alignment is particularly achieved through country strategies being based on the national context and policy analyses; to a varying extent the national policies and laws on gender were used as a reference in the country strategies. At the same time, however, country strategies were found to have limited specific information on existing gender inequalities in the country or within the thematic areas; MERVs were found not to include gender information at all.

**Conclusion to alignment with national context and development goals:** SDC's gender related interventions in partner countries are generally well aligned with national gender policies; however, this is often not translated into a holistic view on gender in documents such country strategies. Rather such country documents have limited information on the gender context, with especially MERVs lacking any gender information.

### 7.8.2 Comparison with international experience / other donors

SDC's statistical data demonstrate that SDC's spending on gender equality focused aid increased from an average of about 14% - 18% between 2007-2015 to 26% in 2016, with a rather unexplainable outlier of 23% in 2011<sup>37</sup>. The OECD-DAC donor charts of March 2017 showed that SDC's proportion is low as compared to other -likeminded- donors. These figures, however, rather reflect the intention to address gender equality and not the effectiveness of such interventions. The incorrect use of the Gender Marker is commonly found among other donors - as it was found in this effectiveness study for SDC.

The review of selected gender evaluation reports of other donors' international cooperation (in particular EU) demonstrated that SDC scores above average when it comes to "institutional readiness for gender mainstreaming", i.e. the internal "climate" within SDC as an enabling factor for gender mainstreaming. SDC particularly scores better in terms of gender policy framework, procedures for gender mainstreaming, availability of gender tools, dissemination of gender lessons learnt and in-house gender capacity building.

When it comes to the actual use of gender tools and methods, such as gender analysis and gender indicators, other evaluation studies found similar weaknesses related to their actual use as have been found by this study for SDC: they are not (or not enough) applied in practice, even though guidelines recommend or require them.

An evaluation of SIDA's (gender) policy dialogues found that such policy dialogues were most effective when it was "*explicitly and strategically paired with programme support in the same sector*", which confirms the rightness of SDC's approach of linking programming and policy dialogue, especially at national levels.

Comparative advantages of SDC as they emerged the surveys and were deducted from other findings of this study, are presented in box 20. They partially overlap with identified success factors in section 7.9.

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<sup>37</sup> See footnote 25 in section 6.3.1

**Box 20 Examples of comparative advantages of SDC as compared with other donors:**

- Switzerland is seen as a credible and neutral partner in development cooperation, committed to gender equality and aiming for consensus in gender related policy dialogues;
- There is a favourable climate and institutional commitment, including a strong gender policy / strategy (and the gender goal within the Dispatch), with gender tools, capacity building and learning mechanisms in place;
- The strong commitment to include women in interventions, with a focus on disadvantaged and/or discriminated women (as part of DAG);
- The active pursue of SDC -especially through its country offices- to link policy dialogues with programming, acting at micro-, meso-, and macro level;
- SDC's long-term approach (projects with several phases), which better allows achieving results related to changes in mind-set and attitudes;
- SDC's emphasis on knowledge generation and sharing, especially through gender networks / platforms;
- SDC's support and responsiveness to its implementing partners;
- The availability of small grants for small but strategic gender interventions.

As a comparative “disadvantage” with some other donors, such as GIZ and DFID, the partner survey found that SDC is less strict in requiring that gender is reflected in project documents, specifically in the budget and logical framework.

**Conclusion on SDC as compared to other donors:** Though the proportion of SDC's spending on gender equality focused aid -as based on SDC's statistical data submitted to OECD-DAC- is relatively low, SDC scores well when it comes to “institutional readiness” to gender mainstreaming, including commitment and enabling knowledge generation and sharing, as well as its effectiveness within gender related policy dialogues and linking such dialogues with programming, acting at micro-, meso- and macro-level. Some of the relative weaknesses found by this study, such as the still existing gap between gender policy and actual implementation, are similarly found for other donors.

## 7.9 Success and hindering factors

### 7.9.1 Main success factors

**Commitment and support:** The commitment of project management to gender emerged as the best scoring success factor, followed by support from the projects' or SDC's gender focal persons. In particular an active SDC GFP engaging with the implementing partners is important; having a gender platform or a gender focal point group at country level adds to this success factor.

**Motivation and capacity of staff:** The gender related capacity of staff, both of SDC's country office and of the partners, as well as their motivation, are also relevant success factors. The interest and knowledge of local implementing partners is equally important; hence the selection of gender sensitive implementing partners is essential for having gender-responsive programmes.

**Strict requirements:** The strict guidance and instructions related to integrating gender in project design and implementation is another success factor, especially for SDC country office staff. This includes the mandatory use of the gender checklist, the obligation to at least provide sex-disaggregated data, and setting quota for women's participation.

### **The right project design enabling and enhancing gender results:**

- Targeting the right institutions and beneficiaries groups; not only applying a socially inclusive approach but also including beneficiaries who potentially can leverage (structural) changes at a more structural level. Men -e.g. eldest or religious leaders- can play an important supportive role as well as women in management and decision-making functions;
- Coordination and partnership with relevant stakeholders, including women's organisations;
- Designing the right activities and creating enabling conditions for (especially) women's participation, taking into account the practical needs of women (and men) enabling participation. Addressing more strategic needs, including gender inequalities, is needed to achieve more gender transformative change;
- Sensitization on gender equality issues of male and female beneficiaries, project staff and other stakeholders is crucial for achieving more gender transformative change.

**Working at national and local level:** The combination of work at national and local level, including the participation -of SDC and/or project staff- in policy dialogues and donor coordination about gender issues, also promoting that relevant field level results feed into national policy dialogues and knowledge sharing platforms. SDC's pro-active approach towards policy dialogues, including the commissioning of relevant research, combined with also taking responsibilities for the implementation of agreements and resolutions, enhances this success factor.

**Duration and budget:** Long-term planning and longer duration of interventions (e.g. by subsequent phases) also contributes to the successful achievement of gender results, because lessons learnt in earlier years of an interventions can be applied in later years or phases and because more structural gender transformative changes are more likely to be achieved in interventions with a larger time frame. Earmarking (part of) budgets for gender activities better ensures the actual implementation of such activities. The use of the small action fund by SDC country offices to finance well-targeted and strategic gender activities, such as gender training or case studies, was also seen as highly successful.

**Gender principal projects:** The formulation and implementation of gender principal projects with gender equality as the main objective is also highly conducive to achieving more structural gender results.

### 7.8.2 Main hindering factors

**Constraining context:** The strongest hindering factor is the constraining country context, also referred to as the local traditional or patriarchal socio-cultural conditions and/or otherwise a difficult environment -including security issues and instable governments- not being conducive to successfully implementing gender related activities and achieving gender sensitive results. Such socio-cultural conditions are sometimes used as a "knockdown" argument for not addressing (structural) gender inequalities. Resistance of certain actors or partners to address gender issues is linked to this.

**Insufficient understanding of gender / gender no priority among staff:** The limited understanding of project staff of what gender equality actually means -especially going beyond women's participation- also hinders the tackling of more structural gender inequalities. This usually goes hand in hand with having a low priority for gender mainstreaming.

**Gender staffing and human resource allocation:** There is also a mismatch between SDC's high gender ambitions and SDC gender staff at HQ and country offices in terms of human resource allocation and/or the time they have available for gender. Country office GFPs have only a small proportion of their time available to spend on gender related work, often 10 to 20%, whereas active GFP support was found to be important for successful gender mainstreaming.

**Gender not structurally integrated in programming from the beginning:** If gender is not integrated from the start in the concept for new programming, there is a risk that gender remains an "add-on" topic. Especially the absence -or insufficient integration- of gender in tender documents and project proposals is seen as an important factor for subsequent weak gender mainstreaming. The absence of gender analyses, before or at the start of new interventions, reinforces this.

**Weak integration of gender in project design and lack of gender indicators:** Related to the above is the absence of activities in the project design that address structural inequalities and women's empowerment, whereas only including women in activities traditionally seen as fitting for women, hardly leads to structural gender results, but rather can reinforce gender inequalities. The absence of gender indicators in the logical frameworks of projects can form a disincentive to work on gender, as project staff tends to focus their efforts on achieving those results that are reflected in the logframe.

**Lack of time for women beneficiaries to participate:** Though this was not often mentioned as a hindering factor, the too heavy work load for women (e.g. farming and care work) prohibiting their participation in project activities was identified as a reason for not (sufficiently) achieving the expected gender results. This confirms the importance of paying attention to reducing the load of unpaid care work for women.

**Enabling environment for gender:** Although most national governments have good gender policies, laws or action plans, there is often a lack of real commitment, political will and/or budget to implement these. This leads to a weaker actual enabling environment than suggested on paper.

**Short duration and budget of interventions:** The short duration of especially the humanitarian assistance interventions was mentioned as a constraining factor to address gender issues. The absence of budgets or budget lines earmarked for gender specific activities decreases the likeliness that specific gender activities are implemented, especially if these are not directly related to logframe indicators, but would contribute to the quality of the gender mainstreaming.

**Gender as one of more transversal themes:** There are more transversal themes requiring attention. In particular when staff does not sufficiently perceive gender mainstreaming as creating better opportunities for achieving SDC's goal of fighting structural inequalities but rather as an extra burden, gender fatigue may be provoked.

**Inadequate gender capacity and awareness within human resources:** There is still a lack of proper understanding of gender issues among SDC staff, especially at country level where national staff might have the same traditional socio-cultural background as is prevailing in that country. Even when staff do recognise the importance of addressing gender inequalities, restricted capacities and skills may limit the efforts towards effective gender mainstreaming. The resulting situation is that the extent to which staff promotes the inclusion of gender concerns in his or her work also depends on the capacity, personal interest and commitment of a person.

## 8. Suggestions for the way forward

This chapter summarizes the main suggestions forthcoming from this RE on Gender Equality; more detailed suggestions are presented in Annex 18.

- 1. More SDC interventions addressing structural gender inequalities to achieving SDC's goal of gender equality:** SDC should move from the average “gender-sensitive” project towards more “gender transformative” projects. This should be achieved by setting objectives for a higher proportion of **gender principal interventions** addressing strategic gender issues which address gender inequalities. This will also lead to lessons learnt that are useful for replication, including in subsequent gender significant projects and as input for policy dialogues. In addition, **gender significant projects** should better aim for transformative change, going beyond the mere participation -or inclusion- of women (or men) in project activities. This study has demonstrated the potential of gender significant projects to do so. This suggestion also confirms the importance of SDC continuing with the twin track approach of the current Dispatch, i.e. gender as a strategic goal and as a transversal theme.
- 2. Gender in country strategy and thematic sectors:** To ensure a more strategic approach on gender in SDC's country strategies, with a better integration of gender in thematic sectors, SDC should consider sectoral gender analyses commissioned by SDC country offices for their thematic sectors in the specific country. This should inform the identification of at least one gender objective per thematic sector and a more structural gender approach towards achieving that objective, enhancing that all projects within that thematic area contribute to structural gender change. In this context, it is also suggested that studies such as MERVs address gender issues and that budget is earmarked for gender. The latter should include the availability of small funds, which proved to be very effective for small, strategic gender initiatives, such as gender training, gender studies and gender expertise.
- 3. Investing in capacities for gender analysis and adopting a Theory of Change approach:** Gender analysis is key for ensuring the integration of gender in the design and implementation of projects and therefore should be a strict requirement, whether they are sectoral and/or project specific. SDC should invest in capacity building of own and partner staff in order to improve the quality of the gender analyses, ensuring that both practical and strategic gender issues are addressed in such analyses. A proper project design -informed by gender analysis results and including gender indicators- should consist of a coherent sequence of (gender) objectives, outcomes, outputs and activities and budget -a so-called Theory of Change-, which is an important success factor for achieving structural gender results. The integration of findings from the gender analysis into project design avoids that gender becomes an “add on” topic, especially in gender significant projects, but also contributes to better achieving the development goals of a project. Using lessons learnt to fine-tune gender approaches -results-based management- is important for increasing the gender effectiveness of an intervention.
- 4. Maintain current thematic orientation with flexibility:** This study's findings demonstrate that the current three gender thematic areas freedom of violence, economic empowerment and political participation are clearly addressing global as well as country specific challenges and contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goal on Gender Equality (SDG5), confirming that SDC should continue with its focus on these three themes. A broad interpretation of these themes, however, remains important, e.g. ensuring that strategic topics as Unpaid Care Work are included to free women's time for economic and political activities. SDC should also allow flexibility, leaving room for addressing other specific gender issues that emerge as barriers for gender equality in specific contexts or countries. It should be self-evident that SDC's work on implementing Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development -apart from SDG5- ensures the integration of gender in its interventions to contribute to more gender equality and to better achieve these SDGs.



- 5. Gender in policy dialogues:** SDC should continue championing gender through policy dialogues, which has shown to be an effective complementary strategy to programming. Gender policy dialogues -as in the broad definition used by SDC- should therefore be a fixed item of SDC's gender work both at HQ and at country office level. SDC should consider setting objectives for strategic focus areas of gender policy dialogues that have potential high spin-off effects, however, leaving room for emerging opportunities. In particular, it is important that SDC also considers the integration of gender concerns in more technical related policy dialogues, such as climate change and water, ensuring that such policies cover needs of men and women and contribute to reducing gender inequalities.
- 6. Institutional commitment and enabling environment:** Commitment of management and a favourable enabling environment were found to be key success factors for SDC's gender mainstreaming and the achievement of gender results. SDC should therefore continue its institutional commitment to its work on gender equality, translating this in management decisions, as well as maintaining its favourable "climate" for gender work. It is important to realize that sustaining this requires continuous efforts in terms of staff's motivation and capacity on gender, maintaining -and improving- human resource allocation with gender expertise as well as financial resources, and continuing the application of gender guidelines and checklists.

## Annexes to Technical Report

*See separate file with the following Annexes to the Technical Report:*

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