# How to Mainstream Gender in Project Cycle Management

Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
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**Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC**



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## I.      Gender in SDC

Integrating gender and diminishing inequality between women and men contributes to and is essential to achieve sustainable development. SDC is committed to promote gender equality in all areas of its work to ensure that women and men have the same right to develop their potential and use their resources in a meaningful way. The Agenda 2030 and the SDG 5 on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls guide our work. Gender mainstreaming is the main instrument, implemented through a three pronged approach, as a dedicated transversal theme in all interventions with specific actions addressing gender gaps, inequalities and discrimination and anchoring gender in the organization. The latterrequires allocation of resources, namely human and financial, establishing accountability mechanisms and promoting capacity building to make sure that SDC and its partners are committed to equality and have gender-aware mechanisms, skills and tools to do this.

| Gender as a transversal theme | Gender in the organization | Gender specific actions |

The following is a practical 'How to' guide focusing on mainstreaming gender in the program or project cycle management (PCM, in the following we refer to project).

### Key questions to ask

1. What are gender inequalities and obstacles in your context?

2. What needs to change, what is the objective?

3. How can this objective be addressed in your intervention?

4. How can this objective be monitored and reported?

# II.    Gender in PCM

Project Cycle Management is a standard tool, relied on around the developing world, consisting of interconnected steps for managing programs or projects in a systematic, holistic, result-oriented and accountable manner.

Integrating gender as a transversal theme strengthens the existing planning approach and methodology. It consists in **engendering all steps and processes of the Project Cycle Management (PCM).** This increases the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of interventions as it brings the respective needs of women and men to the heart of planning. At different steps of the cycle, questions are asked to ensure that the processes and results integrate gender needs (see diagram below). Particular care is taken to ensure that gender does not evaporate between different phases and to translate the findings of the gender analysis into gender-responsive programming.

Engendering our project cycle management strengthens our capacity to more comprehensively and responsively plan, implement and assess our outputs, indicators, results, outcomes, and ultimately impacts, no matter the domain or sector. Applying a gender lens in the PCM means taking into account power, risk, and exclusion dynamics from the outset. This deepens our understanding of endogenous social processes and of the context we are or plan on intervening in. It also helps to mitigate exacerbating or creating new conflicts and gaps, while promoting *do no harm*.

PCM distinguishes **three levels of results** in cascades, which correspond to different spheres of responsibility and influence. The **first level** compares the **inputs/outputs** of a project and allows measurement of its efficiency (sphere of direct responsibility, what a project has to guarantee). Gender outputs are for example specific activities that aim to promote gender equality (capacity building, skills trainings, etc.). The **second level** is the principle level of **results or outcomes** of the project. It measures the obtained results and processes according to the project objectives. The outcomes give us information about the effectiveness of a project (domain of influence, partnership wager, and mutual expectations). With respect to gender, the outcome level aims for gender-transformative changes, such as better access to resources or income, etc. The **third level** puts the focus on **the impact** of the project and allows analysis of its relevance (to what the project contributes, in relation with the general context). For example, reduced prevalence of violence against women would be an impact.

# III.    How to: In Practice
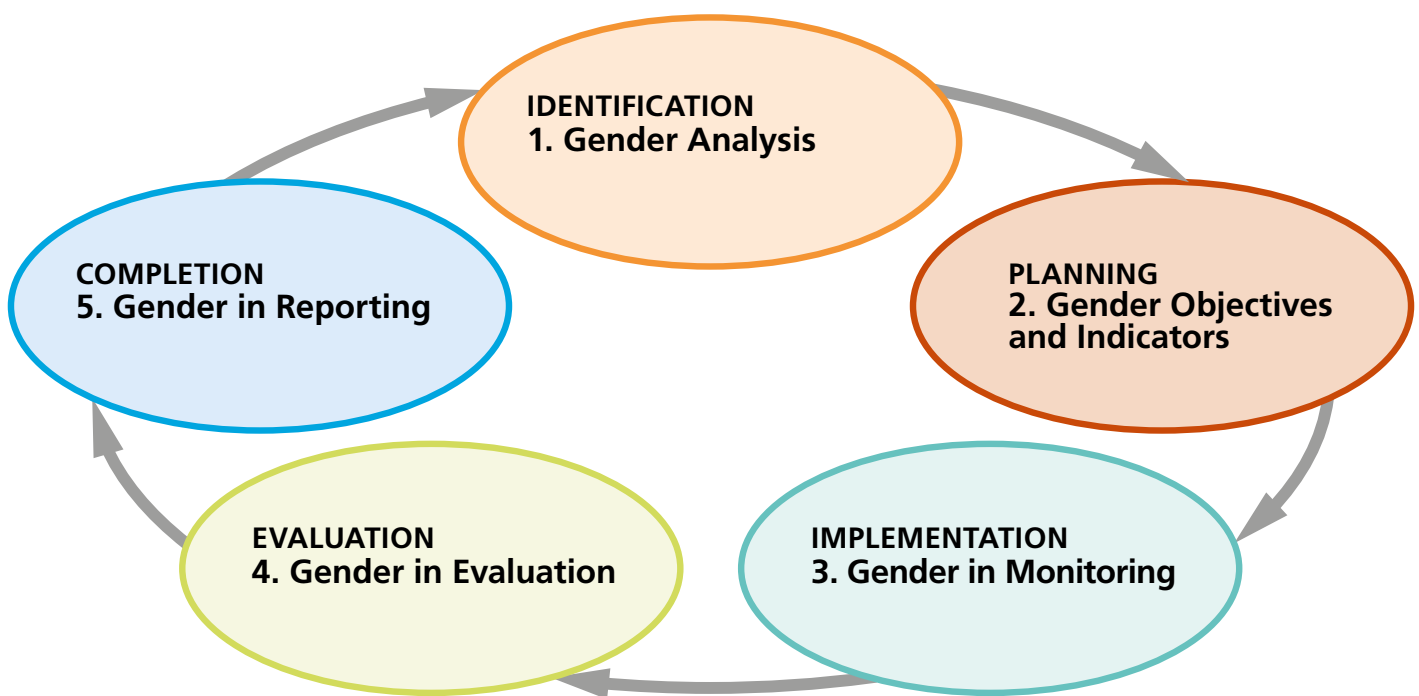
## 3.1 The Cycle

**There are 5 key steps in PCM:**

- The *first step* is the **gender analysis**. It aims to assess gender relations and gender inequalities, by looking at specific social, economic and political aspects such as gender roles and division of labour, access to and control over services and resources, participation at different levels, needs and interests. The gender analysis can be done as part of other project assessments, or as a separate analysis. For more detailed guidance on How to do a Gender Analysis, click here. The second step is setting gender **objectives and indicators,** based on the findings of the gender analysis, further detailed in a logframe with SMART indicators; this may require establishing a gender-specific theory of change and result chain.

- The *third step* is gender, based on the set objectives. This by integrating gender systematically in the overall project monitoring system, and/or by defining additional gender-specific monitoring fields. Sex-disaggregated data of all project objectives is a requirement. Changes in gender behaviours, norms and relations, or changes in related power and policy framework can be additional, specific monitoring fields;

- The *fourth step* is **evaluating** our outputs, results and impacts. Key questions on gender need to be integrated in the ToR's of all evaluations taking place (external, or self-evaluations, mid-term and end of phase etc.). Evaluations may draw on stakeholder surveys or case studies and are in comparison to a baseline, if available. (?)

- The *fifth step* is **reporting** on our findings. This is critical for accountability and learning. Reporting on gender results has to be integrated systematically in the overall reporting, based on the defined objectives and indicators. It should focus on achieved changes, not only activities, or the obstacles and challenges in achieving changes. In addition, stories or case studies are helpful to complement the technical reporting.



**IDENTIFICATION**
**1. Gender Analysis**

**PLANNING**
**2. Gender Objectives and Indicators**

**IMPLEMENTATION**
**3. Gender in Monitoring**

**EVALUATION**
**4. Gender in Evaluation**

**COMPLETION**
**5. Gender in Reporting**

## 1. IDENTIFICATION

| | Some Key Questions | Some Key Tools |
|---|---|---|
| During the **Gender Analysis**, Practical and strategic gender needs are assessed.<br><br>Gender inequalities are identified (project, program, context). | • Is gender part of the context analysis and other assessments for the intervention?<br>• Are women as well as men (target groups, staff, partners) involved in the initial situation analysis at all levels (e.g. policy dialogue, community consultation)?<br>• Are organisations working specifically on gender, or with women, consulted? | • Participatory rural appraisal, household and focus group surveys,<br>• time use diary,<br>• village and resource mapping, social and poverty mapping, legal framework and stakeholder/ power or political economy analysis,<br>• Risk and conflict assessment |

## 2. PLANNING

| | Some Key Questions | Some Key Tools |
|---|---|---|
| Gender-specific and/or gender- sensitive **objectives** are defined<br><br>Quantitative and qualitative **indicators** are identified | • Based on the findings of the gender analysis, what changes do we aim for with our intervention? How do we translate and integrate these aspired changes into a theory of change, objectives and a result framework?<br>• What is the most effective and feasible strategy, a mainstreaming approach or a gender-specific intervention?<br>• Are women/men's constraints, needs and views, as identified in the analysis, explicit and reflected in the objectives, risk analysis and impact hypothesis of the intervention?<br>• Have quantitative and qualitative indicators been defined (s. also the Gender Reference Indicators)<br>• Is the allocation of financial and human resources appropriate to address gender equality issues?<br>• Are key processes (e.g. dialogue between key stakeholders), procedures (e.g. Terms of Reference) and planning tools (e.g. logframe) explicit and specific on gender? | • Baseline, Problem tree, Theory of change, results chain, impact hypothesis, SDC Gender Reference Indicators (ARI and TRI); gender responsive budgeting; SDC Gender Policy Marker checklist |

## 3. IMPLEMENTATION & MONITORING

| | Some Key Questions | Some Key Tools |
|---|---|---|
| Sex disaggregated data is collected<br><br>Existing **monitoring systems** are engendered<br><br>Monitoring fields and key questions are defined | • Who will implement the planned intervention?<br>• Are partners and team gender competent with necessary tools and methodologies? Are outputs, outcomes and processes being monitored?<br>• Do women and men (target groups, SDC staff, partners) take part in monitoring?<br>• Do women and men have equitable access and control over programme resources - e.g. are there criteria that discriminate against women or men? Are there gender-specific obstacles?<br>• Is the programme steered with a view to increasing women and men's equal benefits?<br>• Is gender integrated in the monitoring system, and how? Are changes in gender relations reported as part of monitoring? Are additional gender-specific monitoring fields required? | • Baseline, Time use diary and occupational journals, focus group, change/process management benchmark tracking, feedback mechanisms, audio-visual documentation |

## 4. EVALUATION

| | Some Key Questions | Some Key Tools |
|---|---|---|
| Gender questions are included in the ToR/ evaluation plan<br><br>Quantitative and qualitative data are analysed which measure **relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the gender intervention** strategy against initial gender objectives and indicators (see step 2)<br><br>Key stakeholders, strategic partners, and primary target group are engaged through **participatory evaluation** approaches | • Are collected data on the immediate and/or longer-term effects of the programme sex-disaggregated?<br>• Have risks and stereotypes of structural barriers preventing full participation of women or men been considered?<br>• Are new gender issues emerging within the programme?<br>• Are there (unintended) negative effects of the program on gender? (do no harm)<br>• Are there new external and contextual factors/actors supporting or impeding gender equality that are relevant for the programme?<br>• Are women/men supportive of the programme or do they wish to change it (partly/totally)? Who? Why? How? Reference and planning tools (e.g. logframe) explicit and specific on gender? | • Primary target group assessments/surveys, stakeholder consultation, public reviews and audits<br>• Comparative analysis between baseline and documented results |

## 5. REPORTING

| | Some Key Questions | Some Key Tools |
|---|---|---|
| Gender is included in the context analysis<br><br>Gender **outputs, results and outcomes are analysed** and reported on (achievements, challenges, good practices, lessons learnt)<br><br>Gender in the organization is assessed and reported on promoting both **accountability and learning** | • Are gender results systematically integrated in all parts and levels of reporting?<br>• Are «best – and bad – practice» on gender mainstreaming analysed and disseminated?<br>• Has a learning and knowledge management strategy been developed for internal reflection, capacity development and capitalization of good practices and lessons learnt? (learning)<br>• Has a feedback mechanism toward the primary target group and key stakeholders been jointly developed and agreed? (downward accountability)<br>• Has a communication strategy been developed for informing various publics about the progress and results of the project from a gender perspective? (upward accountability) | • Case studying<br>• Target group voice: most significant change; quotes; photo-stories<br>• SDC Gender in Annual Reporting Check list and Gender Reference Indicator (ARI, TRI) Guideline |

# IV.    Lessons learnt and good practices

Below are some key considerations, non-exhaustive which can help to avoid common mistakes, and promote good practices from the outset when designing new programs/projects.

## Gender specific programmes do not automatically or exclusively target women.

Experience has shown that to improve the situation of women (girls), it is often necessary to involve men too. **Working with men** to change their behaviour towards women but also reflecting on their role as a men (e.g. challenging their own assumptions of masculinity) **is essential for the promotion of gender balanced development**. Gender-specific programs may also address gender-specific vulnerabilities of men, such as male victims of Sexual- and Gender-based Violence. Gender specific programmes can also support institutions that deal with women/gender strategic issues, such as national gender machineries, NGO or networks.

## Traditional diagnoses are not always appropriate.

Diagnosis and assessments must go beyond statistical data to relate to the gender-specific needs of the project participants. The use of anthropological techniques (informal interviews, direct observation, key informants etc.) for qualitative data is important. It will result in the production of «local images», reflecting that **not all communities and users, women and men are the same**. It is then possible to capture heterogeneity (other differences than women/men, such as age, class, ethnicity, religion etc.) and allows a deeper and closer knowledge of concrete reality (intersectionality).

## The role of women and men employees working for SDC and its partners is to support and facilitate change, including gender change.

Their visions or beliefs should not «overrule» what women and men in beneficiary groups wish to do and achieve. When formulating the project, they must consider external as well as internal constraints and opportunities for gender equality: **External:** What may be opportunities and problems to women's and men's equitable participation, access to decision-making and benefit from the programme/project? **Internal:** A dialogue within and between institutional stakeholders must assess to what extent SDC and its key development partners are willing, able, equipped etc. to work with gender (see Gender in practice toolkit, sheet 9 on gender and organisations and sheet 10 on partnerships).

## Gender & culture

It is a fact that promoting gender equality is a challenge, in particular in conservative and patriarchal societies, and it can **constitute a risk**, either by provoking backlash or even endanger collaborators and proponents. There is no simple solution to deal with this. However, as a compass, the following may serve: First, gender equality as a **principle is universal and non-negotiable**. It is anchored in our **legal obligations** (both national and international) and based on the conviction that **gender equality is key for sustainable and inclusive development**. Second, how to implement gender equality in practice must be **defined in the given context**, with the local community and stakeholders – women and men. **While the principle has to be respected, the strategies and messages have to be culturally and conflict- sensitive**. Experience shows that practical gender needs (i.e. women's access to health services, education etc.) often provide entry points where common values can be identified. While SDC cannot impose values, it can take a clear stand against all forms of discrimination, including based on gender, and lead a dialogue based on shared obligations (international frameworks and policies such as the Agenda 2030, CEDAW, regional human rights charters, Res 1325 etc.).

## Women's participation means not only representation by numbers, but also having the capacity for voice and influence

Strategies promoting equal numbers of women and men in programmes/projects, including quotas, can really boost women's participation (e.g. % of women on electoral lists). But they are limited if women's partic-ipation is «silent» (i.e. no decision making power). **Quotas are often interpreted as a maximum and efforts are not made to reach a real gender balance.** To be effective, these strategies need to be supported with capacity building and em-powerment measures for women to have influence and voice. Therefore, minimum criteria or quotas can be an important cata-lyst but should not be relied on alone.

## Gender equality gets 'lost' in the multiplicity of challenges and problems targeted for action.

Defining clear responsibilities for gender is critical to prevent evaporation. Therefore, **defining gender stakes** are identified between SDC and its partners for the intended action or program in the local/ national scene and the cooperation scene. These gender stakes are identified at three levels **i.** household/community (local); **ii.** Intervention program (national); **iii.** Poli-cy/ organizational (national/ international) which need to be at once distinguished but also linked for a more realistic analysis and prioritization of gender stakes.

# V.     Links

SDC Gender Policy Marker

SDC Gender in Practice Toolkit

SDC Gender Analysis

SDC Gender Reference Indicators

SDC Gender in Annual Reports

SDC CSPM Do No Harm Tip Sheet

SDC Gender in Cooperation Strategies

SDC Gender thematic guidance sheets

SDC Gendernet