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SDC-Gender Equality Network

SDC GENDER EQUALITY NETWORK NEWSLETTER

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Vocational training and gender

EDITORIAL

Dear readers, this is the second Gendernet Newsletter, published just before the summer break. On the global agenda we have major events ahead - the international conference on Financing for Development in July in Addis Abbaba and the summit at the UN on the post-2015 agenda in September – shaping the new development agenda and its finances. The outcomes of both events will have a significant impact on gender equality in the coming 15 years. However, the global architecture is only one side of the coin. We need good strategies and tangible results on the ground to build a steady path towards more equality for all. Such an example is presented below in the focus article on gender learnings from the Vocational Skills Development project in Nepal during the last six years. Improving access to professional skills and employment is key to promoting women’s economic empowerment and achieving gender equality. Nonetheless, there are many barriers to overcome. The article outlines obstacles, learnings and factors for success and shows, once more, that only comprehensive approaches incorporating both technical and soft skills can make the difference. The massive earthquake that hit Nepal in April and the cost of lives of thousands of people, is a huge blow to the country. We can only hope that the skills acquired by the young women and men in the project will prove to be a lasting investment and contribute towards rebuilding homes and lives of the people in Nepal.

Ursula Keller, Senior Gender Policy Advisor SDC

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«Providing skills and employment to women pays off!»

Barriers in access to the labour market for women in Nepal are numerous: their low level of education, lack of marketable skills, poor economic condition, household responsibilities and social restrictions. Traditional discriminatory social structures and practices are transferred to the work place, while poor rural women from disadvantaged ethnic groups are at the lowest level of the wage ladder (UNFPA, 2007). Challenges also remain for women and girls to overcome their own perceptions of traditional roles and the types of work suitable and accepted for women.

THE EMPLOYMENT FUND (EF) IN NEPAL

The Employment Fund (EF), established under a bilateral agreement signed between the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Government of Nepal (GoN), is implemented by HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation. It provides vocational skills training to out-of-school youth who are poor and socially discriminated. EF has been working in Nepal since 2008 with selected training providers and an outcome-based financing approach. It has trained close to 100,000 youth with an average annual coverage rate of 15,000. Out of these trainees, more than 50% are women.

More information: [Employment Fund](#)

Inclusion of women starts before the training: communication and family support

A smart communication campaign about the trainings on offer is important to inform and attract the prospective participants, i.e. targeted information spread through local radio stations. Family and community support is crucial for women trainees, who are often tied to gender roles and household responsibilities. Family members not allowing women to enrol in training or to work at the end of the training and (early) marriage are major obstacles in the career paths of girls and women. Whilst child marriage¹ is illegal, it is common in rural areas. In average, Nepalese women marry at 19 years of age and are often expected to take care of the household (World Economic Forum, 2013). Addressing decision-makers, usually male family members, about the advantages skills and employment can have for women, is crucial. Chitra Bam, Managing Director of TRACE, a training provider working with the Employment Fund, says: "We need to counsel families to allow women to work, so we visit homes to convince the families. We have gradually built trust among communities and employers and facilitate discussions to ease doubts that families may have."

Details that make a difference

The Employment Fund (EF) specifically targets vulnerable and disadvantaged women. Widows, single women and women from poor families may not have anyone in their social network to look after their children. Therefore, the Employment Fund offers day-care facilities for children below school age to enable women to participate regularly in the training. Overall, considering a few small things can make a big difference, such as

- setting the training hours so that women can participate, i.e. starting after they see the children off to school and finish their household chores, finishing in time for them to get home and prepare dinner and/or finishing before it gets dark to ensure safety;
- choosing a centrally located training venue close to the women's homes;
- covering food expenses during training hours.

¹ Below the age of 18

Increased earning and employment after skills training

Although traditional views restrict women to the household, women can play a vital role in contributing to the household income and poverty alleviation. A rigorous impact evaluation of the EF proves that individuals selected for the training programmes have significantly increased their non-farm employment and monthly earnings after the training, as opposed to a control group who did not participate in an EF training. Notably, the impacts of the EF programme are larger for women than for men.



Radhika Sahi, female trainer, Nepal (SDC Nepal)

Skills can transform lives

Women working after completing the training often talk about the transformation in their lives. They appreciate being financially independent, and report of increased self-esteem and being respected in their community. This is especially true for women working as trainers: “Being a skilled person, and on top of it a trainer, has been a big life change”, says Radhika Sahi, a trainer in Mobile Phone Repairing. “I raised my living standards. And everyone knows me in my community. Before, I was just sitting at home; I was not special. Now, when people see me walking past, they notice me. They refer to me as an example – a role model for others. It makes me proud and it also encourages me in my pursuit to teach others and to create these opportunities for other women”. Social recognition is one of the main drivers for women to work as trainers.

The importance of female trainers

Women appreciate being taught by other women. Findings from a study conducted in 2014 showed that almost all respondents were of the opinion that it was easier and more comfortable to have a female trainer. As a main reason they stated that they could address personal issues such as reproductive health, dress code, unwanted behaviour of male colleagues, as well as household and family matters in conversations. Having a trainer who understands them and who provides support if issues arise, motivates and encourages women to join, complete the training and work.

Life skills for self-confidence and enhanced employability

Only an estimated 17.9% of women in Nepal have at least some secondary education, while the same is true for 39.9% of men². Hence, the starting point for gainful employment of women is much lower than for men. As a result, women often work in low paid unskilled jobs. Such working conditions also take their toll on the self-esteem and confidence of women. The EF provides life skills classes to build participants' self-assurance by imparting valuable soft skills, such as

- interpersonal skills (communication, negotiating/refusal skills, assertiveness, empathy),
- cognitive skills (problem solving, decision making, critical thinking and self-evaluation),
- personal skills (coping skills, managing stress, self-awareness).

An additional mental and physical health component which includes topics such as reproductive health, sexuality, female body and organs, HIV/AIDS, sexual abuse and domestic violence is also covered here. Better life skills increase self-esteem and consequently also the employability.

As mentioned, increasing women's access to employment opportunities requires addressing their social challenges. Women have particular requirements, and meeting them can make it easier for them to access training and employment. Januka Duwadi successfully runs her own poultry farm after having completed training at the Employment Fund. She says, "If I had not taken this training, I would have never known what I am capable of".



Case study

Padma Devi Bam, 29 years, a widow with two children, works as a gardener at Sathi Hotel in Dhangadhi. She migrated to Dhangadhi after her husband was killed during the Maoist insurgency in 2003. At the time, her husband was the only breadwinner of her family.

Although traumatised by events, she started working as a daily wage labourer and struggled to feed her children. She recalls, "I went through a very difficult time to feed my children and myself". During her difficult time, Padma Devi Bam heard about the skills training programme in gardening in the local radio. She felt the time for the training was

convenient for her so she could look after her children and work half a day; and the venue too was close by. She completed the three-month course, which included one month on-the-job training in a nursery.

With the help of her trainer, Padma Devi Bam found her current job, in which she has been working as a gardener for two years. She earns around CHF 80 per month plus CHF 20-25 in tips. The hotel provides her with breakfast, lunch and snacks during working time. She is happy with her children's progress in their education as her older daughter has completed the second year of her Bachelors and her son is studying in grade nine.

She is motivated to upgrade her skills and would like to become a successful trainer in gardening. Her dream is to run her own plant nursery which provides (skills) trainings as well. She concludes, "If you have skills, you can either start your own enterprise or get a job. The best part is that you are not dependent on others for financial support."

See also the [SDC publication on Gender & Vocational Training](#)

Sonja Hofstetter, Employment Fund Secretariat, HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation

² Human Development Report 2014

NEWS FROM THE GENDER FOCAL POINT & HEAD QUARTERS

Learning from SDC's Gender-based Violence Work: In January, the Gendernet conducted a survey on SDC gender-based violence programmes and announced a capitalisation process which will be launched before summer holidays. The aim is to share experiences and knowledge for institutional learning and knowledge management, as well as to reflect on thematic key issues to develop a coherent Swiss policy on how to work on SGBV. The process will be facilitated by external backstoppers (medica mondiale and Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation) in close coordination with the Gender Focal Point. We have defined a number of thematic areas to explore and capitalise SDC's and its implementing partners' knowledge and experiences. More information on the process will follow soon.

Gender-based Violence Fund of Humanitarian Aid: SDC/Humanitarian Aid (HA) has launched a call for proposals for 2-3 projects in the range of CHF 70'000-100'000. HA Field Offices are thereby encouraged to submit concept notes for gender-specific and/or sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) projects within the humanitarian sphere by the end of June. Projects which are innovative, complement current field operations, support local structures, fulfil a critical gap and/or have the potential of being continued once the seed funding from HQ is withdrawn, will be given priority in the selection process. For further inquiries please contact [Sascha Müller](#), SDC/HA Gender Focal Point.

15 Years Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security – Review and Outlook: 31st of October will be the 15th anniversary of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Now is the time for critical review and renewed commitment: SDC, the Human Security Division and the Geneva based Center for Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) will jointly organise an international conference on 9th September 2015 in Geneva. Keynote-speeches will be given by the Swiss Foreign Minister, Didier Burkhalter and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma. The conference will bring together multiple voices from governments, international organisations, civil society and academia and explore new approaches and strategies around three interconnected topics of resolution 1325: women and gender in peace processes, gendered security and gender in post-conflict and state-building processes. Information on the programme and registration are available [here](#).

Measuring gender results and the post-2015 agenda are key topics for SDC – both as a major challenge in our operational work as well as in our commitments for the post-2015 agenda. In light of this, the SDC Gendernet organised an event with the OECD Development Centre's [Social Institutions and Gender Index \(SIGI\)](#). SIGI³ is a cross-country measure of discrimination against women in social institutions across 160 countries capturing formal and customary laws, social norms and attitudes and social practices. The event was an opportunity to reflect on how SDC can support countries in building up a strong database to measure progress towards gender equality goals and targets in the new development framework. The SIGI database may also be consulted when developing new cooperation strategies: the country-specific gender profiles can serve as a major input and baseline for the context and gender analysis.

The [SDC strategic guidelines 2015-2018](#) presented in the last Newsletter is now available in English on the Gender Shareweb Site.

³ See also Publications, Events & Links, p. 10 "Country specific gender data around the world"

The FDFA and the Voice of Women

This year, the annual TERRE DES FEMMES event, known as VOIX DES FEMMES (the Voice of Women), which is supported by the FDFA, celebrated its 20th anniversary of the fourth world conference on women, held in Beijing in 1995. Guest of honour was Irene M. Santiago, secretary-general of the parallel NGO forum. The annual congress of the NGO-Coordination post Beijing Switzerland took place on 30th May 2015 under the title "De Beijing 1995 en Suisse 2015" (From Beijing in 1995 to Switzerland in 2015) at which FDFA secretary-general Benno Bättig gave the opening speech. During a panel discussion on the question of "Women and Armed Violence: Peace and Gender Equality" on 1st June 2015, the opening speech was given by Ambassador Alexandre Fasel, Swiss permanent representative to the United Nations and the other international organisations in Geneva. Further information is available [here](#).

NEWS FROM THE COOPERATION OFFICES

Collective effort

Stock-take on "Gender and Intergovernmental Transfers"

In their joint collaboration, Gendernet and DDLGN conducted a stock-take on GENDER and FISCAL DECENTRALISATION from May 5th-15th 2015. The exchange focused on the gender dimension in intergovernmental fiscal transfer schemes. Some of the conclusions are that gender-specific criteria in intergovernmental transfers are particularly applied in the health sector. An important question is whether transfers to subnational governments should be given prevalence over transfers to individuals (voucher schemes, for instance) as an alternative approach. This can only be decided on a case-by-case basis. Finally, performance transfers should not substitute existing transfer schemes, nevertheless they can set useful incentives for subnational governments to engage in gender-sensitive areas. The topic will be further elaborated in the upcoming DLGN F2F in Mozambique, 15th-19th June 2015. Please find the summary with the first conclusions [here](#). **Thank you for all your valuable inputs!**

Mongolia

Gender peer learning facilitated by SDC projects in rural Mongolia

Good practices on gender equality were shared for peer learning in rural Mongolia to create synergies among the SDC funded projects. On May 25th 60 rural stakeholders representing local authorities and civil society gathered in the Zavkhan Province and shared experiences of empowering women's leadership and meaningful participation at the local decision-making level and worked out next steps to enhance gender equality. In addition to creating a sound network with peers as well as the experts from the National Commission on Gender Equality and UNDP, local actors pledged to develop the gender action plans and the gender sensitive monitoring systems for the first time to be implemented in their provinces.

More information: SDC Cooperation Office Mongolia, erdenesaikhan.nyamjav@eda.admin.ch

Bolivia

Women in the construction industry

In 2014, the Vocational Education Training Project in Bolivia developed the platform, "Para muestra basta un botón", aimed at identifying good practices in women's empowerment projects. One of the experiences presented was "Women in Construction" that was implemented by a local NGO. Based on a local analysis in La Paz, the NGO identified a niche for women in the construction industry –

traditionally dominated by men. The NGO developed a course for women in basic construction, emphasising painting, murals and wall covering. With the project's support, many trained groups started micro enterprises and proved that women could bring competitive services to the market.

More information: See [video](#) / SDC Cooperation Office Bolivia, amparo.ergueta@eda.admin.ch

Nicaragua

Economy and Women: more than a matter of income

Critical thinking about development and its significances for gender equality stood at the centre of a conference on feminist economy that was organised by the Interagency Commission on Gender Equality in Managua. The conference was supported by COSUDE and featured the renowned activist and feminist Amaia Pérez Orozco. She presented the main contributions of feminist economy with a particular focus on the relations between sustainability of life and the care economy and also economic alternatives to the dominant capitalist model, for example by putting life processes and not the accumulation of capital at the centre of economic aspirations. The conference also questioned the contemporary cooperation model, which is rather promoting the model of capital accumulation. The main challenge of cooperation agencies, so the conclusion, is to promote the role of the state as a regulator in order to reduce conflicts between life centred and capital centred approaches.

More information: See [video](#) / SDC Cooperation Office Nicaragua, joseluis.sandino@eda.admin.ch

Bangladesh

Gender Mainstreaming at SDC Bangladesh: Partners' Gender Platform and GenGov Toolkit



GenGov Charter Signing Ceremony (Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh)

Gender Equality and Good Governance Mainstreaming are two crucial components for SDC's Cooperation Strategy in Bangladesh. In order to support SDC's partner organisations in their efforts to mainstream and put into practice these two transversal themes, SDC provides a platform for learning and developed a [GenGov Toolkit](#) with hands-on information. SDC Gender Platform members meet four times a year to exchange, share and learn from good practices and discuss gender related issues. For instance, in the last meeting the members were invited to conduct a conflict analysis from a gender perspective. Furthermore, this platform provides a good opportunity for capacity building of partner

organisations; thus, it is also a useful steering tool for SDC in terms of quality assurance. The platform works in a very participatory approach: each meeting is hosted by a different partner organisation, which ensures ownership and sustainability. At the same time, SDC Bangladesh tries to create commitment of the top management level for gender mainstreaming.

More information: Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh, sohel.ibn.ali@eda.admin.ch

West Africa

Gender and Local Public Governance

How could we link Gender and Local Public Governance to reduce inequalities between men and women? This was the main topic of the last workshop organised by the Gender thematic group of West Africa Division in Ouagadougou. During four days, various members exchanged ideas around this new way of addressing the Local Public Government regarding gender inequalities. To measure the potential of this action better and to identify new tracks from the ground, all members participated in field trips, which were fruitful as it helped formulate the basis of the new Gender action plan.

More information: SDC Division West Africa, thomas.piras@eda.admin.ch



PUBLICATIONS, EVENTS & LINKS



Financing Gender Equality

In July 2015, the 3rd International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD) will be held in Addis Ababa. Among other areas of development, ambitious financing will also be needed for gender equality to turn political aspirations into a reality. In the preparation of this conference different very interesting publications, briefs and statements are being published – among them we would like to mention a few:

UN-Financing for Development Office: [Website of the FfD with information on its mandate, documents and on the Addis-Conference](#)

OECD DAC Network on Gender Equality: [Brief on priorities for financing gender equality in the implementation of the post-2015 agenda](#) (March 2015)

Policy Documents: [Joint Statement on gender equality in the financing for development process \(Jan 2015\)](#) and [FfD-Zero](#) Draft (March 2015)

AWID: [Draft outcome on imbalances](#) (May 2015) and [Analysis of and recommendations for the financing for development Zero draft](#) (April 2015)



Women, Peace and Security

In October 2015, the international community will mark its 15th anniversary of the adoption of the UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325. UNSCR 1325 was the first landmark decision to place women's interests and concerns at the centre of the international peace and security agenda. The UNSCR 1325 aims at increasing women's participation at all levels of decision-making in peace processes; preventing and protecting women and girls against sexual and gender-based violence; and at integrating gender-sensitive perspectives in all peacebuilding projects. Below is a choice of selected interesting events and valuable articles around this topic:

Swiss FDFA: [International Conference on Women, Peace and Security - Review and Outlook, Geneva, 9th September 2015. Program and registration](#)

OECD DAC Network on Gender Equality: [Survey on financing UNSR 1325 and gender related official development assistance \(ODA\) in fragile states](#) (March 2015)

OECD: [Aid in Support of Gender Equality in Fragile and Conflict-affected States](#) (Oct 2010)

swisspeace KOFF: [KOFF Essentials: Gendergerechte Friedenspolitik](#) (1|2015, German)

Symposium for Women, Peace & Security: Event in Bern on 27th and 28th Nov 2015 to celebrate the anniversary of UNSCR 1325 organised by different civil society organisations

WILPF: A [resolution](#) was passed at the 100th anniversary celebrated in April 2015



Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

In March 2015 the community of states reviewed the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPA) at the 50th session of the CSW in New York. Beijing+20 was the focus topic of the last newsletter of the Gender Equality Network with many publications and links on it. Since then many more very interesting information around it has been published:

Session Outcomes at CSW 59: [Political Declarations and Working Methods](#)

Statements: [Statements of the different states on achievements and challenges since Beijing 1995](#)

Information on different subtopics of the CSW: [Discussion guides, chair's summaries, papers of experts on i.e. accountability, resources, statistics, participation etc.](#)

Side Events: [Papers, flyers and possible contacts for very different further topics](#)

UNRISD: [Additional Think Pieces in the series on Beijing+20](#)



Country specific gender data around the world

Some members of the Gender Equality Network participated in the very interesting workshop with Keiko Nowacko held at the SDC Headquarters on 23rd April 2015 on Social Institutions & Gender Index (SIGI). Below are similar platforms providing gender equality related information.

OECD: [Social Institutions & Gender Index \(SIGI\)](#)

OECD: [The latest edition of SIGI's synthesis report, an analysis of gender related information according to the geographic region](#) (2014)

OECD: [Wikigender, an ideal platform to facilitate, exchange and improve knowledge on gender equality related issues around the world](#)



Gender & Land and Gender & Food Security

In 2014, the Gender Equality Network discussed in-depth issues of gender and land as well as of food security and capitalised experiences and knowledge of the network members. A network member, Flurina Derungs from ICFG in Bern, would like to share the updated FAO Gender and Land Rights Database (GLRD), which was presented at a side event at the 59th session of the CSW. Moreover, Stéphanie Aubin from the Pretoria office recommends Fairtrade Foundation's new publication / research findings on barriers to women's involvement in small producers organisations. Based on 6 case studies, the report provides a solid analysis of why women's participation is so low in these structures and identifies possible strategies to overcome this situation.

FAO: [GLRD is a database and platform to address, discuss and provide information on gender and land](#)

Fairtrade Foundation: [Equal Harvest: Removing the barriers to women's participation in small holder agriculture](#) (2015)

SDC, ICFG: [Working Paper Gender & Land](#) (2014)

SDC, BRIDGE: [Gender and Food Security](#). Overview Report (2014)

WECF: [Practical guide aimed at practitioners on gender and food security](#) (2014)



New publications by UN Women

UN Women has published many interesting publications lately; below are the most interesting:

UN Women: [Report on progress of women concerning human rights and economic policymaking](#) (2015)

UN Women: [Practical guide on conducting gender sensitive evaluations](#) (2015)

UN Women: [Manual on developing log frames with a gender perspective](#) (2015,

Spanish)



Situation of women and girls one month after the earthquake in Nepal

One month after Nepal's earthquake, needs of women and girls are still enormous; below are a few publications and links providing information on the challenges faced on the ground.

UNFPA: [Account of the situation and the needs of female survivors](#)

UNFPA: [Article on reproductive health in the aftermath of the earthquake](#)

UN Women Asia Pacific: [Short bulletin on the earthquake affected women](#)