



Gender at the SDC – strategic lines and thematic priorities 2015-2018

1. Background

1.1. Gender key to fighting poverty and sustainable development

Gender inequality is one of the greatest barriers to sustainable development, economic growth and poverty reduction. Despite the considerable progress made in fighting poverty within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals, gender is still a crucial factor in poverty: around 70% of people living in absolute poverty are women. This is owing to gender-specific inequalities that limit equal access by women in particular to basic services, employment and income. Women are mainly employed in low productivity sectors and in precarious jobs without social security and usually earn less than men. In rural economies, they have limited access to natural resources and capital goods. Climate change also has an above-average negative impact on the quality of life of women with few economic resources. Furthermore, in both the public and private spheres, women worldwide often encounter violence, social and regulatory discrimination, and exclusion on account of their gender, and they exert less influence in social, political and economic decision-making processes. Finally, in situations of crisis, conflict and transformation the rights of women and girls are also particularly affected by violence, lack of security, and the collapse of state structures.

To fight poverty effectively and to ensure sustainable development, men and women need to be able to achieve their potential and use their resources on an equal footing. This requires equal rights and greater equality of opportunities. From a gender perspective, however, it is important to fully address the transformation of unequal gender relations, because society's definition of gender roles, division of labour between the genders and gender stereotypes does not only limit women's options but also those of men. To achieve sustainable change and greater equality, **greater focus should be placed on men and boys in gender work.**

1.2. Gender equality in the new post-2015 development agenda

Gender equality is also a key theme in the current processes for the new post-2015 development agenda and has been defined as one of four priority areas in the Federal Council's mandate. Switzerland is calling for a **specific goal and the integration of gender-relevant targets and indicators into all other development goals.** Together with the FDFA's gender units, the SDC formulated the content of Switzerland's position on gender equality. This position promotes equal opportunities in economic development and in access to work and natural resources; elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls and equal participation at all levels of social, economic and political decision-making processes (see Switzerland's position in annex).

Gender featured as a standalone goal (goal 5) in the final outcome document from the *Open Working Group (OWG)* dated July 2014 and has been transversally integrated into relevant development goals. The SDC made a substantial contribution to the OWG process which found its way into the final outcome document¹. It is now a matter of following up ongoing processes

¹For example, regarding the elimination of violence against women, the issue of access to natural resources and land, the importance of social security and recognition of unpaid care work as a critical factor in high poverty risk. The SDC also supports the integration of resolution 1325 on women, peace and security with concrete wording proposals; these points, however, have not been explicitly included in the current OWG document for the time being.

and negotiations in cooperation with national and international partners in order to ensure that the new development agenda considers gender equality in all its social, economic, political and legal dimensions. It is also particularly important to strengthen political dialogue in partner countries in order to support localisation and implementation at national level. This may be done, for example, by supporting countries in developing gender data and indicators to strengthen result-orientation and effective monitoring.

The new post-2015 development agenda is intended to set a precedent for future women's rights and gender policies. The new global gender goal is of key importance for the SDC's orientation and must also be reflected in the new 2017-2020 dispatch.

1.3. Gender at the SDC

Through its 2003 gender policy, the SDC recognised **gender equality as being key to reducing poverty**, defining it as a binding guideline for the entire institution. The gender policy is based on national and international guidelines and Switzerland's commitments². It is implemented through **gender mainstreaming** as a threefold strategy, integrating gender as a cross-cutting theme into all SDC programmes and topics, supporting targeted gender-specific intervention and taking measures in favour of institutional change. .

The 10 year anniversary in 2013 provided an opportunity to reflect on what has been achieved. The SDC has many years of experience and has established instruments that enable systematic integration of gender equality at all levels and in all thematic sectors. The network structure simplifies the promotion of expertise and mutual learning between the head office and the field. In 2014, the **Gender Policy Marker**, which is relevant for management, was also newly adapted to the OECD/DAC policy marker³.

However, as an institution, the SDC is still required to incorporate **gender equality** into its work **as a central goal** and to demonstrate gender-specific results and progress as its contribution to achieving the development goals. To this end, expertise and capacities for systematic integration of gender equality at programme and strategy level should be enhanced. Indicators and monitoring systems that are capable of recording long-term and transformative gender results should also be developed. In concrete terms, this means not only counting the number of men and women supported but highlighting the resulting impact. For example, this could include additional income that women may have at their own disposal, also contributing to better nutrition, health and school education for children and strengthening their position in the family. Furthermore, the positioning of the SDC/Switzerland in relevant international forums and processes should be consolidated and the coherence of the FDFA's work in the area of gender and women's rights improved⁴.

1.4. Gender in the dispatch on Switzerland's international cooperation

Gender equality is embedded **as a cross-cutting theme** in the current dispatch on Switzerland's international cooperation in 2013-2016. Its central importance and contribution to poverty reduction and sustainable development is thereby recognised. However, it does appear that the implementation of gender equality is invariably unsystematic as no goals have been

² At the national level this concerns the article on equality in the Federal Constitution and the Gender Equality Act, while at the international level the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Action Plan, the Millennium Development Goals and UN resolution 1325 on women, peace and security are particularly relevant.

³ The Gender Policy Marker measures the percentage of gender-relevant interventions and expenditure and distinguishes between *cross-cutting integration* and *gender-specific measures*.

⁴ The assessment of the successes and challenges of gender mainstreaming in the SDC corresponds with the experiences of the majority of the donor institutions. This is shown by a report recently published by the OECD/DAC network on gender equality which analysed data from 23 donor institutions, including the SDC (From ambition to results: Delivering on gender equality in donor institutions, OECD/DAC 2014).

defined for cross-cutting themes. Gender results and their contribution to the development goals are thus difficult to establish, making monitoring progress more difficult and undermining accountability with respect to national and international commitments.

With regard to the **new dispatch in 2017-2020**, the integration of gender should thus be strengthened. Two criteria are pivotal: 1) consistency with the Federal Council's position on gender in the post-2015 agenda which promotes a twin track approach with a specific goal and transversal integration and 2) a greater results-focused approach regarding gender. In the current notice to the Federal Council (December 2014 version), a **seventh strategic gender goal** that takes both criteria into consideration is proposed. The actual implementation for each global credit is to be specified in accordance with the corresponding mandate.

2. Strategic lines and thematic priorities

The strategic lines define the thematic priorities for 2015-2018. They are based on the review of the Millennium Development Goals and Switzerland's position on the post-2015 agenda and are guided by current and ongoing discussions regarding the new dispatch. Three thematic areas have priority here:

- 1) **Fragility** – gender and women's rights in conflict situations and fragile contexts
- 2) **Economy** – access to natural resources, training and income in rural economies and urban areas
- 3) **Politics** – gender, participation and local governance

The thematic priorities must be reviewed in 2016 after the new dispatch is adopted. The actual implementation will be listed in detail in Annex 1.

2.1. *Fragility* – gender and women's rights in conflict situations and fragile contexts

Most fragile and conflict-affected countries will not achieve the MDGs, especially MDG 3 on the empowerment of women. Men and women have different roles, needs and weaknesses in conflict and post-conflict situations. On the one hand, women and girls are particularly affected by gender-specific violence; on the other, conflict situations also present opportunities for the empowerment of women as important actors in national and local governance and peace processes. Men are also victims of gender-specific violence in conflict situations - a fact that is an even greater taboo than violence against women. The focus on men and boys in post-conflict and fragile contexts is therefore crucial here: first, men should be perceived not only as perpetrators but also as victims; second, the commitment of men and boys to the prevention of violence and gender equality needs to be strengthened (engaging men and boys). From a humanitarian point of view, gender issues in humanitarian intervention and gender-specific protection of refugees, mainly women and girls, must be strengthened in conflict situations (gender and protection approaches). The gender-specific vulnerabilities of men and boys (e.g. recruitment of child soldiers) also need to be considered at the same time.

Work in fragile contexts is one of the SDC's priorities and Switzerland has signed the *New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States* and also supports ambitious goals in this area in the post-2015 agenda. With the third phase of the National Action Plan 1325 (NAP 1325), Switzerland also reaffirms its strong commitment to women, peace and security. The SDC plays a key role in this respect.

The aim is to strengthen the rights of girls and women in conflict situations, to implement measures to prevent and offer protection from gender-specific violence (focusing on men and women) and to promote the participation of women in peace, transformation and statebuilding processes.

Strategic line 1:

Strengthening the rights of women and girls in fragile contexts and integration of the gender dimension at policy and programme level (according to the key themes of NAP 1325)

- Intensified commitment to **prevention of and protection against gender-specific violence** with a particular focus on post-conflict contexts, humanitarian crises and involvement of men.
- To strengthen **women's participation** and integrate gender-related aspects in local peacebuilding, transformation and statebuilding processes.

2.2. Economy – access to natural resources, training and income in rural economies and urban areas

In agricultural production, rural economies and even in urban areas, women have a key role in poverty reduction and food security. However, due to social and legal discrimination, in many countries women still have limited access to rights of ownership and use of land, resources, training and vocational training, and financial services. In rural economies, women mostly work in family businesses and the informal sector, where they earn the lowest wages with low productivity and substantial time investment. Their contribution to food security and their economic potential are therefore under tapped. Women with few resources are particularly affected by the negative effects of increasing scarcity of resources, climate change and policies for extensive agricultural production and have fewer possibilities to absorb these factors, in turn increasing their risk of poverty. In urban areas, women often work in low-wage sectors in precarious conditions and with little social protection. Furthermore, access to further training, vocational training, the market and services, in particular financial services, is often very limited due to gender-specific factors.

Women thus need to receive targeted support in order to access natural resources, vocational education and training, the market and services. Social security also needs to be strengthened and the participation of women in shaping the market-specific framework conditions at local level needs to be promoted.

Relevant analyses show that two factors are crucial in the process⁵: Multiple discrimination due to religious, social or ethnic background coupled with gender inequalities, and a high workload due to unpaid household and care work. The latter is very much defined by social norms and set gender roles and is usually performed by women. These activities demand a high time investment particularly in poor countries and rural regions (e.g. fetching water and firewood, cooking). Opportunities for education and training and productive and paid work are thus highly limited. Access to social security insurance systems (mostly linked to income and formal employment) is also made difficult, exacerbating the vicious circle of poverty⁶.

Strategic line 2:

The SDC programmes in the area of the rural economy, food security, water, climate change adaptation and private sector development increasingly show gender-specific effects and results

- Improving food security through equal **access to natural resources**, with a particular focus on **land governance**

⁵ e.g. 2013 Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights; 2014 SIGI report (OECD/Development Centre); and also the SDC's publication "Added Value – Contributions to gender equitable economic development" (2011).

⁶ Unpaid care work and social security are considered with a separate target in the gender goal of the final outcome document from the OWG. They are also mentioned in Switzerland's position on the post-2015 agenda.

- Supporting **women's economic empowerment** through better value chains, access to vocational education and training, the market and services (*private sector development*)
- Identifying innovative approaches for the integration of **gender-sensitive security systems** in rural economies and urban areas.

2.3. *Politics* - gender, participation and local governance

Women worldwide still have less influence than men in decision-making processes in politics, the economy and society. Major gender differences can be seen in political participation, for example, both in terms of representation and influence of women in political bodies and in codetermination with regard to the allocation of resources and key areas of political concern as citizens. Equal participation on all levels and in all areas of society is thus one of the essential requirements for a gender goal in the post-2015 agenda that is backed by Switzerland with a prominent place in the dispatch as regards local governance.

The aim is for women and men to be able to enjoy equal rights and obligations as citizens and for public services to take into consideration the specific needs of women and men. Furthermore, the political empowerment of women and men needs to be promoted so that they have an equal say in political decision-making mechanisms at the local and national level.

Strategic line 3:

The SDC programmes on local governance systematically integrate gender perspectives, the political empowerment of women is actively promoted and gender-specific results increasingly reported

- Strengthening of the **political empowerment of women** in democratic processes and programmes for social inclusion and citizen participation
- Integration of **gender equality in local governance, public finance management and fiscal decentralisation** at the municipal level

3. Instruments and terms of implementation

With regard to the outlined strategic lines and the new dispatch, implementation tools and terms need to be actively strengthened in the years ahead. Key areas include greater gender positioning and visibility in current political processes and international initiatives, capacity building, institutional learning in the gender network, gender mainstreaming and quality assurance for integration at institutional level.

3.1. Gender mainstreaming in policy dialogue

Gender in the new dispatch: implementation of gender in the SDC global credits of the new dispatch in 2017-2020; contribution to greater coherence of gender and women's rights policies within the FDFA.

Gender in the post-2015 agenda (*including financing for development*): inputs regarding Switzerland's position and in the multilateral process in the framework of the post-2015 negotiations; agreement and coordination with the relevant actors in Switzerland and strengthening of political dialogue in SDC partner countries in view of the new agenda's implementation.

International initiatives, processes and platforms: strengthen political dialogue, visibility and commitment to gender, focusing on 1) **fragile contexts** (*New Deal for Engagement in Fragile Contexts*, UN Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, initiatives on sexual and gender-based in conflict situations and humanitarian crises), 2) **global programme themes** (relevant platforms, processes and organisations for food security (e.g. Rome-based institutions), climate change, water, migration) and 3) **political processes related to humanitarian aid** (DRR, World Humanitarian Summit etc.).

Concrete measures

- **Gender perspectives must be specifically and systematically integrated into the positions of the SDC/Switzerland** in all important political processes. The SDC ensures that gender perspectives are always included in speeches and statements and demands these aspects should they be lacking.
- In **core contribution management** for contributions to multilateral and international institutions, gender is increasingly cited as a priority for Switzerland.
- In the framework of **new cooperation strategies**, key areas for political dialogue on gender need to be defined with partner countries.

3.2. Supporting knowledge management and learning in the gender network

Capacity building to develop expertise for the systematic integration of gender equality at programme and cooperation strategy level (target group-specific training for head office and field in the framework of SDC further training).

Capitalisation and knowledge management: promoting a horizontal learning and communication culture in the gender network and targeted capitalisation of experience in selected thematic areas.

Thematic cooperation: strengthening of the **regional gender networks** and stepping up cooperation with the relevant thematic and normative SDC networks.

Concrete measures

- In the framework of the SDC's further training policy, **target group-specific measures** to extend and **improve the institutionalisation of gender expertise** must be implemented (at head office and on the field, at management and programme level)
- **Strengthening of gender focal points in the cooperation offices**, targeted fostering and support of management (time, resources, further training, coaching).
- Management and heads of departments **promote network cooperations** and provide commensurate incentives.

3.3. Ensuring institutional integration through gender mainstreaming and quality assurance

Strengthening effectiveness to obtain **demonstrable gender results** (changes in gender relations and a contribution to achieving development goals).

Development of indicators and monitoring systems to improve the **quality of reporting**

Systematic **monitoring of the institutional implementation** of gender mainstreaming to strengthen accountability (Gender Policy Marker).

Concrete measures

- **Gender results are increasingly reported and rendered visible in regulatory reports** (annual reports, effectiveness reports) and in public documents (annual reports, communication).
- Gender Focal Point presents an annual **status report** on the implementation of gender policies **in the agency** to strengthen accountability.

4. Partnerships and resources

4.1. Partnerships and cooperation

The SDC cooperates with various universities and international institutes which have specific competence and expertise in gender and development and contribute to the creation and management of knowledge. The current partners are:

- 1) Interdisciplinary Centre for Gender Studies**, University of Bern (ICFG)
 - Backstopping and network support for Shareweb and capitalisation, quality assurance and impact assessment
 - Knowledge development on gender and sustainable development
- 2) Bridge** (International Development Institute, University of Brighton)
 - Programme on gender, climate change and food security
 - Participatory research and knowledge development on gender and development
- 3) The Graduate Institute of International Development Studies (IHEID), 'Pôle Genre', Geneva**
 - Biannual conference and publication on current gender themes
 - E-learning module on gender in French for Francophone Africa

The OECD Development Centre's Social and **Institution and Gender Index (SIGI)** has received support from the SDC OECD global credit for the first time in 2015. Further cooperation is to be investigated in view of the development of gender data within the framework of the post-2015 monitoring agenda. Cooperation with the **MenEngage Global Alliance** for gender work by and together with men as well as with **UNRISD** (United Nation Research Institute for Social Development, Geneva) in the areas of gender, poverty and social policy is also being explored. Furthermore, **collaboration with UN Women as a strategic partner** will be **strengthened** and systematised. Close cooperation with the global institutions should be targeted for this purpose.

The Gender Focal Point also plays an active part in international networks, particularly in the **OECD/DAC Network for Gender Equality** (until now) and the **Learn4Development Network's Gender Expert Group** (new).

4.2. Financial and human resources (2014 version)

The Gender Focal Point currently has a **gender global credit** for gender mainstreaming, network work, backstopping and capacity building of around CHF 300,000 per year. The total amount of **contributions to institutional partners and cooperations** is currently CHF 450,000 per year.

The SDC Gender Focal Point is based in the regional cooperation unit. The Focal Point has a 90% full-time equivalent post and now also receives support from a Humanitarian Aid gender

officer (40% full-time equivalent), the members of the gender network and contacts at the head office and in the cooperation offices.

In order to implement these strategic lines, an increase to the budget for partnerships and contributions plus an additional programme position to support the Gender Focal Point are to be considered.

Annex:

- Switzerland's position on Gender Equality in the Post-2015 Agenda