



SWISSAID Policy on
GENDER

1. Key Messages

SWISSAID relies on a set of principles to reach the goal of gender equity and equality. These principles are:

- SWISSAID promotes **gender equity and diversity** in the whole institution. We acknowledge that gender has much to do with personal values and attitudes (often unconscious) that can be changed. Within our work, we are sensitive to local culture, gender norms and stereotypical expectations while respecting human rights.
- Strengthening women's and minorities' rights is a key aspect of SWISSAID's **Human Rights-based approach**.
- Considering that a gender approach requires specific competencies, SWISSAID promotes the continuous training of staff and partners in **gender awareness** as well as the elaboration and the implementation of **strategies to overcome gender discrimination**, including discrimination based on gender identity and sexual preference.
- Gender has also much to do with political, economic, cultural, and social circumstances in a country. Therefore, SWISSAID supports partners in **gender-related policy influencing and advocacy**.
- Empowerment and gender equity are fundamental aspects of SWISSAID's work. The **implementation and monitoring** of this gender policy is considered as a fundamental responsibility of every SWISSAID collaborator.

2. Introduction

Generally, a gender policy is essential to close the gap between overall institutional principles and practice as well as to assure a coherent gender approach at all levels of the organisation.

Particularly, this policy aims at creating a common understanding and a general normative framework to be used by all SWISSAID staff members as reference and orientation for all SWISSAID activities. The overall aim of the policy is to enhance SWISSAID's quality of work in the area of gender equality as well as the external perception of SWISSAID as a leading actor in this thematic area. The policy intends to answer the following main questions: What do we understand by gender? Why is gender equality important for SWISSAID's work?

A unified understanding with a clear thematic focus provides an important framework and basis for defining goals, methodologies and elaborating strategies and projects at regional and country programme level. Along with the SWISSAID PSEAH¹ Policy and the SWISSAID Human Resources Policy² this document sets the institutional framework and defines SWISSAID's commitment to creating a working environment where diversity and equal opportunities are promoted and defended, both within the organisation and externally.

The first version of the SWISSAID Gender Policy was approved in December 2003 and updated in 2013. This revised policy takes account of developments and particularly of the new organisational strategy for the period 2019-2024. It promotes the mainstreaming of the Gender and Development Approach as a contribution to the achievement of the sustainable development goals of the Agenda 2030³.

The elaboration of this document involved experts in Switzerland as well as in SWISSAID country programmes.

¹ PSEAH: Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Sexual Harassment

² Particularly the chapter 4 "Equality of opportunity and diversity of opportunity"

³ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/>

3. Context

Gender equality has made some headway, but as yet there can be no claim of equal opportunities. The social, economic, environmental, and humanitarian crises in the world continue to affect women and men differently: access to education, decent work, resources, assets, credits, or leadership positions remains more difficult for women than for men. Peasant women, who in many countries are the key persons for the production of food and the main actors of the local economy, do not have equal opportunities, and their labour force continues to be economically under-recognized despite the processes of empowerment that they have been achieving in their countries. Millions of women worldwide continue to experience violence perpetrated by diverse actors despite important advances in national legal frameworks and international conventions and agendas to protect and guarantee a dignified life and the exercise of rights. Sexual violence has harmed the integrity of thousands of women and domestic violence, physical, psychological and sexual, continues to increase in numbers, even for the most extreme cases of violence, such as femicide.

For SWISSAID, the goal of equality - i.e. equal and fair power relationships between individuals, binary and non-binary⁴, women and men, in society as a whole - remains crucial as a cross-cutting issue.

With regard to the Agenda 2030 for sustainable development⁵, which is the fundamental international framework for SWISSAID's development and policy work, the commitment to gender equality is prominent, comprehensive and cross-cutting, building on the engagements and norms contained in the Beijing Declaration⁶ and Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)⁷. The Agenda 2030 makes clear that gender inequalities manifest themselves in every dimension of sustainable development and that development will only be sustainable if its benefits accrue equally to all individuals.

In line with the Agenda 2030, SWISSAID's vision (charter 2001) points out that equal participation of women and men is one of the fundamental premises for a sustainable development in dignity. In its Strategy 2019 – 2024, SWISSAID asserts once more its willingness to mainstream gender within all institutional and operational levels and in this way to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs, particularly SDG 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls).

⁴ Non-binary is a spectrum of gender identities that are not exclusively masculine or feminine – identities that are outside the gender binary

⁵ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/declar.htm>

⁷ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CEDAW.aspx>

AT A GLANCE: GENDER EQUALITY IN THE 2030 AGENDA

1 NO POVERTY



Globally, there are 122 women aged 25–34 living in extreme poverty for every 100 men of the same age group.

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



Women represent 28.8% of researchers worldwide. Only about 1 in 5 countries have achieved gender parity in this area.

2 ZERO HUNGER



Women are up to 11 percentage points more likely than men to report food insecurity.

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



Globally, 303,000 women died from pregnancy-related causes in 2015. The rate of death is declining much too slowly to achieve Target 3.1.

5 GENDER EQUALITY



The 2030 Agenda promises to put an end to barriers that prevent women and girls from realizing their full potential. But significant challenges lie ahead:

5.1 In 18 countries, husbands can legally prevent their wives from working; in 39 countries, daughters and sons do not have equal inheritance rights; and 49 countries lack laws protecting women from domestic violence.

5.2 19% of women and girls aged 15 to 49 have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner in the past 12 months.

5.3 Globally, 750 million women and girls were married before the age of 18 and at least 200 million women and girls in 30 countries have undergone FGM.

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



Up to 30% of income inequality is due to inequality within households, including between women and men. Women are also more likely than men to live below 50% of the median income.

14 LIFE BELOW WATER



The contamination of freshwater and marine ecosystems negatively impacts women's and men's livelihoods, their health and the health of their children.

15 LIFE ON LAND



Between 2010 and 2015, the world lost 3.3 million hectares of forest areas. Poor rural women depend on common pool resources and are especially affected by their depletion.

6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



Women and girls are responsible for water collection in 80% of households without access to water on premises.



Women's empowerment has been a priority topic for SWISSAID since 1981, a fact that concurs with the SWISSAID approach in its fieldwork: to support the initiatives of women in marginalized situations, promoting women's empowerment so that they can be the actors of their own development in equitable conditions as men.

In mid-2000, SWISSAID introduced a second gender workstream focusing on the co-responsibility of men. Consequently, several country programmes started working with a gender transformative approach, addressing gender inequalities by also engaging men and boys, supporting them in questioning the traditional gender roles, the underlying norms, attitudes, behaviours, and social systems. SWISSAID's work strives to sensitize and engage men and boys as allies, for example in being co-responsible for household activities or in the fight against domestic and gender-based violence.

4. Definitions

Gender is used to describe the socially determined characteristics assigned to individuals on the basis of their apparent sex at birth. The **distinction between sex and gender** is made to emphasise that everything individuals do, and everything expected of them, except for their sexually distinct functions (e.g. childbearing, breastfeeding etc.), can change and does change over time according to social, economic and cultural factors.

People are taught what behaviour and attitudes, roles and activities are appropriate for them. This learned behaviour is what determines **gender roles**. Gender roles are usually centred on conceptions of masculinity and femininity, although there are exceptions and variations. The specifics regarding these gendered expectations may vary substantially among cultures, while other characteristics may be common throughout a range of cultures.

Different roles and characteristics are assigned to people not only based on their gender, but also of their caste, class, ethnic background, religion, and age. People are positioned in society according to these different criteria, which are transformed into determining **power relations** and which interact strongly with each other. Understanding gender differentiation and gender discrimination helps us to understand differentiation and discrimination on other groups.

Other important terminologies in gender and their meaning are:

Gender equity is the process of being fair to all gender. To ensure fairness, measures must be available to compensate for historical and social disadvantages that prevent poor and disadvantaged individuals and groups from playing an active role in their personal, community and societal development. Equity leads to equality.

Gender equality refers to the state of being equal, concretely in four domains: Firstly, equal opportunities to realize intellectual, physical, and emotional personal objectives. Secondly, equal treatment, i.e. the right of the same social conditions of security, remunerations and working conditions. Thirdly, equal economic, political, civic, cultural, and social rights for all gender. And finally, equal distributions of duties, especially in the family and the community that would allow for example a fair distribution of domestic and care work.

Another concept relying on the human rights-based approach (HRBA)⁸ is **Gender justice**. Gender justice can be defined as “the protection and promotion of civil, political, economic and social rights on the basis of gender equality”. Gender justice also requires that policy makers are accountable for tackling the injustice and discrimination that keep a specific gender, e.g. women, poor and excluded.

The **Gender and Development (GAD) approach** seeks to base interventions on a participatory gender analysis and analysis of needs, interests and motivations in an effort to empower women to improve their position relative to men in ways which will benefit and transform society as a whole. GAD is thus driven by a powerful motivation – to work for equity and respect for human rights for both women and men. GAD also includes the distinction between practical and strategic gender needs, which is a useful analytic instrument to ensure the focus on structural changes in society.

A **gender analysis** is the very first step for effective implementation of the gender and development approach. The gender analysis focuses on the power-relations (challenging gender roles, access to and control over resources, decision-making) and is needed as a base study for further development strategies⁹. In detail, practical gender needs are a response to immediately perceived necessities; however, they do not challenge the gender divisions of labour or the women’s subordinate position as the **strategic gender needs** do. It is important to recognize that achieving better conditions (practical need) as well as better positions (strategic need) are essential for development.

⁸ For more information on the HRBA: <https://www.unfpa.org/human-rights-based-approach>

⁹ In the future SWISSAID aims to adopt an intersectional gender analysis, which goes one step further and takes into consideration how class, caste, religion, sexual orientation etc. affects individuals differently when it comes to opportunities and access / control over resources.

The most recent development of the GAD approach is the **Gender transformative¹⁰ approach** which focuses on putting even more the gender relations at the centre of the intervention and addresses the root causes of gender inequality by challenging negative social norms and values that define gender relations and are harmful to all individuals.

5. SWISSAID priorities in the area of gender

To be effective SWISSAID works in four complementary ways how to enhance gender equality and focuses on 4 sub-topics:

Gender mainstreaming:

Gender mainstreaming is the central dimension in the implementation of SWISSAID projects and programmes. At all levels and in all domains of action, SWISSAID strives for and actively supports an equal and equitable participation of individuals of all gender identities. Within our organization, this means integrating the gender approach in all relevant documents, working processes and behaviour as well as in all steps of the project cycle management:



Girls' and Women's empowerment:

Given the global inequality between women and men, specific efforts are needed to put an end to existing forms of discrimination against women. Therefore, SWISSAID promotes affirmative actions that empower women by improving their personal, familial, social, economic, and political conditions and positions. Empowering adolescents and promoting learning and economic opportunities for young girls are successful ways to interrupt the reproduction of gender inequalities across generations.

Women not only have to play an active role within partner organisations and the implementation of projects, but also as leaders. SWISSAID therefore supports women to assume leading positions within partner organisations or other institutions. The goal is an equal participation of women and men in leading positions.

¹⁰ SDC 2019: SDC Guidance sheet "Engaging men and boys for gender transformation"

Engaging men and boys:

SWISSAID started engaging with men and boys in projects for gender equality with the masculinity work in Latin America almost 20 years ago. Men have been identified as gatekeepers for women's empowerment, but at the same time they suffer under the pressure of harmful social norms. SWISSAID applies gender transformative approaches when working with men and boys, e.g. addressing men vulnerabilities with regard to gender equality and dominant forms of masculinity, making men aware of their oppressive and disempowering effects on women and themselves, empowering men and boys to develop their own positions against dominant forms of toxic masculinity and patriarchy¹¹.

Gender sensitisation through capacity building, policy influencing and advocacy:

Knowledge of gender and awareness of the potential for change that we carry as individuals are key to a balanced development and gender equality. For example, the recognition of the economic importance of women's paid and unpaid work and a more equal distribution of care work are necessary conditions for gender justice.

SWISSAID supports gender sensitisation - adjusted to the local conditions and needs - and enhances the specific competencies of its staff as well as its working partners.

In addition, political, economic, and social conditions influence the power relation between individuals and therefore can limit or promote gender justice. SWISSAID supports partners in the political struggle to eliminate any kind of gender discrimination. Gender equality is part of any kind of SWISSAID's policy influencing activities, focusing for example on the reduction of the workload for care work, land rights for women, the recognition of the important role women play in agriculture, the condemnation of gender-based violence and machismo.

Given the vastness of the strategic work on gender equality, SWISSAID has decided to focus its attention on **four specific gender sub-topics**, mainly to better achieve SWISSAID's overall outcomes¹², but also to enhance the institutional profile in these particular areas. The four sub-themes are:

- a. Combating **gender-based violence** with capacity building of civil society organizations and state agencies; awareness campaigns and by providing resources to state and para-governmental agencies, so that they can better protect the physical integrity of victims of domestic violence and support victims in knowing and claiming their rights (rehabilitation of the victims).
- b. Foster **women's empowerment and political participation** by supporting women to become politically active, to get elected to administrative or political entities, or to exercise their democratic rights.
- c. **Masculinity**: assist men and boys in challenging social norms that adversely affect women and girls. Support men and boys in changing behaviours and engage in co-responsibility.
- d. **Empowering youth**, so that young people can better articulate and represent gender equality and gender-specific interests (e.g. in family planning).

Given the focus of SWISSAID's work on agroecology, this policy is to be considered complementary to the SWISSAID Policy on Agroecology, which deals in detail with the sub-topic "Gender and peasant women"¹³.

¹¹ UNFPA 2013: Engaging men and boys: A brief summary of UNFPA experience and lessons learned

¹² For SWISSAID overall outcomes please see SWISSAID Organisational Strategy 2019-2024

¹³ Agroecology has an environmental, a socio-cultural, an economic and a political dimension. SWISSAID puts in its work on agroecology particularly the role and the rights of peasant women in its focus of attention.

6. Implementation of policy

The implementation of the Gender Policy in the SWISSAID Country Programmes depends on the prioritizations and the local context. Different contexts require different approaches and strategies on gender in order to be accurate. Based on the institutional gender policy, the Coordination Offices can develop and implement their own Gender Policies, adjusted to country-specific conditions. Hence, the implementation of the key elements described above are to be integrated in the currently existing management and planning system of SWISSAID.

It is expected that **all country programmes mainstream Gender in every programme, project or activity** and that they respect the following **minimal standards**:

- Programmes and projects are subject to a gender analysis (baseline, context, etc.) and the results of this analysis are integrated into the programme / project creation.
- Every project is supported by at least one gender indicator and all data and indicators shall be disaggregated by sex where applicable.
- Country programmes have at least one project targeted specifically towards gender equality.
- Country programmes assess annually the gender ratio of the staff in different institutions, not only in the Coordination Office, but also with partners and strategic / governance bodies at project level.

The adherence of the country programmes to the SWISSAID gender minimal standards is in the responsibility of the Country Representative and the Programme Manager and will be assessed in the frame of project and programme evaluations, at the stage of project approval and during programme visits. The head of the SWISSAID Development Cooperation Department and the Thematic Advisor will check the adherence of the policy on a random basis.

If necessary and required by the Coordination Offices, SWISSAID Switzerland will provide further conceptual guidance and support, e.g. by developing or sharing additional supportive documents or by participating in the development of country level specific policies, activities and projects in the identified sub-themes. Furthermore, adequate gender budgeting and gender monitoring at programme and project level are essential for the effective implementation of this policy. The assessment of quantitative and qualitative gender-segregated data which reflects the change of behaviour and life conditions is fundamental to monitor SWISSAID gender work – upon request SWISSAID Switzerland can backstop SWISSAID country programmes in the area of gender. Finally, the SWISSAID Community of Practice CoP on Gender will focus its exchanges mainly in the above outlined sub-themes to continuously enhance the competence and capacity of key staff.