

# Promoting Gender Equality

IN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION



## SIDA POLICY INFO

A Sida policy offers norms, guidance and support. Sida departments and Swedish embassies are responsible for policy application and execution. Overall responsibility for Sida's policies rests with the Department for Policy and Development. Comments are welcome, send them to the policy owner.

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POLICY NAME: Promoting Gender Equality in Development Cooperation

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ISSUE DATE: 10 October 2005

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POLICY OWNER: Department for Democracy and Social Development, Gender Equality Team.

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VALIDITY: This policy replaces the Action Programme for promoting gender equality, issued in 1997. This policy is valid until 10 October 2010.

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SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:  
This policy is supported by a manual.

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**GENDER** is an overarching and fundamental variable in the sense that it can also be applied to all other cross-cutting variables such as race, class, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, disability and locality. Gender systems are rooted in different socio-cultural contexts which determine what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman/man and girl/boy in these specific contexts. Gender roles are learned through socialisation processes; they are not fixed but are changeable. Gender systems are institutionalised through child-rearing ideologies and practices, education systems, political and economic systems, legislation, and culture, religion and traditions. The relationship between “sex” and “gender” is not as straightforward as it once was. Nor is the relation of either of them to demeanour, dress, behaviour, sexuality or sexual orientation. Both concepts should be considered as contextual and subjectively formulated.

### Sida’s gender equality policy

The Swedish Policy for Global Development, adopted by the Parliament of Sweden in 2003, states that a special goal for Swedish development cooperation is to “help create conditions that will enable the poor to improve their lives”. This goal puts the focus on individual women and men, as well as on girls and boys.

Gender equality is at the centre of Sida’s mission to promote and create conditions for poverty reduction in partner countries. Mainstreaming gender equality is a strategy for achieving sustainable development for all, by supporting the right of choice, empowerment and provision of resources.

To Sida gender equality involves ensuring that all human beings – women, men, girls and boys – are considered equal and treated equally in terms of dignity and rights. Gender discrimination is one of the main causes of poverty, and a major obstacle to equitable and sustainable global human development.

The objective of this policy is to ensure that Sida’s interventions and actions contribute to gender equality, since it is strongly linked to sustainable development and pro-poor growth in any society.

This policy is an outcome of the 2002 evaluation of Sida’s support to the promotion of gender equality, together with recommendations from Sida’s departments, Swedish embassies and Swedish civil society organisations. The result was a new requirement: that gender equality is present in Sida’s contributions with more effective strategies and that levels of accountability within Sida are made clear.

### Global commitment to gender equality goals

Gender equality is a key element of the human rights system established by the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. The declaration states that rights and freedoms shall not be limited by a person’s sex. It establishes that “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”.

Other important milestones were the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1979, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1990, and the outcome documents from the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994 and the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, resulting in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

Despite some progress in the wake of these declarations, women and men still have different levels of access to power, resources and possibilities of making choices in their lives.

More recently, a context has evolved to set a new global agenda and change the architecture for international development cooperation.

The UN Millennium Declaration (2000) includes the following resolution: “To promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable.” This is reflected in several of the Millennium Development Goals and in particular in goal three: “Promote gender equality and empower women.” The targets and indicators related to this goal are monitored globally.

In addition, the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness in 2005 called for harmonisation of gender equality.

According to the Swedish Policy for Global Development, a “rights perspective” and a “perspective of the poor” should influence all levels of interventions and work. The rights perspective includes human rights, the rights of the child, democracy, women’s rights and equal opportunities for women and men.

Gender equality is one of the eight “central component elements” of this policy. It also states that gender equality should be a fundamental value, together with respect for human rights, democracy and good governance. This means that gender equality is a necessary building block for eliminating poverty.

Together these documents constitute a framework for poverty reduction and as such make it possible and widely accepted to integrate an overall gender perspective in international development cooperation

**SEX** traditionally refers to the physiological, biological and hormonal characteristics or markers which are used to define and differentiate humans as either female or male. These sets of biological characteristics are primarily defined by outer and/or inner manifestations of the human reproductive tract and organs. They are not always mutually exclusive as there are individuals who possess elements of both sexes.

## Sida's points of departure for gender equality

The following points of departure explains further what gender equality is for Sida in its work. They are also identified as key for ensuring that Sida's work contributes to the promotion of gender equality. They are based on the understanding that lack of power, lack of choices and lack of material resources form the essence of poverty as outlined in Sida's Perspectives on Poverty (2002).

**1. Gender equality further strengthens Sida's work for poverty reduction.** Sida should therefore always ensure women's and men's equal access to, and benefits from, its work.

**2. Gender equality is crucial in order to reach sustainable democratic development.** Sida should reinforce equal rights to, and participation in, political, economic, religious and social life and decision making for women and men, girls and boys. Sida should therefore actively combat gender-based discrimination in order to promote equal participation and democracy.

**3. Power structures are fundamental for working towards equality between women and men, girls and boys.**

Unequal power relations have created structural obstacles for women and girls in all spheres of society – political, economic, social, educational, cultural and religious – as well as for their full enjoyment of their productive, reproductive and sexual rights and roles. Sida should therefore consider and act upon unequal power relations between and among women and men, as well as the structural causes and frameworks of these power relations.

**4. Gender equality is about the relationship between women and men, girls and boys.** The societal context is therefore important for how gender equality should be promoted. The interpretation of key concepts and the historic background that has shaped the relationships between women and men, and between girls and boys, are context-specific and based on very different value systems and structures in different countries. Development is about creating and supporting processes through which human beings are able to realise their full potential. Gender stereotypes often block this process, for men as much as for women. These elements should be taken into consideration in Sida's work. However, Sida should always use the universal human rights framework as the platform and basis for its work, in particular referring

to the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

**5. Equal economic opportunities for all is fundamental for achieving sustainable and democratic development and pro-poor growth.** Sida should always contribute to removing constraints for women's and girls' full participation within the economy, whether these barriers are based on social norms, religious values, or legal practice. Sida should promote and address the importance of women and men equally owning and controlling resources such as land, housing and money.

## Sida's strategy for promoting and creating conditions for gender equality

Sida's role as a development cooperation partner includes promoting and creating conditions for gender equality in its interventions, actions and dialogue. Sida's partner countries have the overall responsibility for creating the appropriate conditions for gender equality.

Mainstreaming a gender perspective is a global strategy for promoting gender equality and was established in the Platform for Action at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. Gender mainstreaming implies that gender equality is analysed and understood before any decisions are made and plans outlined in order to influence and affect Sida's interventions and work.

Gender mainstreaming therefore always begins by analysing the gender equality situation in a specific context, and identifying relevant areas for further collaboration as well as the appropriate approach to use. This is not to be done as a separate gender analysis – if not specifically desired or required – but should rather be mainstreamed into the overall mandatory poverty analysis, before any decisions are taken by Sida.

The analysis should be applied to linked work processes. Using the gender mainstreamed poverty analysis as the platform, three approaches are equally relevant for working towards gender equality in Sida's work and interventions:

- Actively applying and integrating the gender perspective
- Targeting specific groups or issues
- Conducting a gender-aware dialogue with partners

Gender mainstreaming is commonly understood to refer only to the first approach. But all approaches should be considered equally important and effective. Sida can target specific issues or groups (for instance women, adolescents and boys) or use the “partner dialogue” as an instrument for gender mainstreaming, not focusing only on integrating gender equality in all interventions.

## Strategic focus areas

Focusing on strategic or critical areas is often effective in highlighting existing gender inequality at a broader level. Interventions at a practical level can lead to strategic changes. The 1995 Platform for Action identified twelve critical areas for action (see appendix) that should be given priority when mainstreaming gender equality. Many of Sida’s thematic policies are linked to these areas and have incorporated a gender perspective and indicated specific gender-related priorities.

In all specific areas of action and contributions, basic knowledge on gender disparities is a condition for ensuring that contributions are effective and sustainable. Sida should thus contribute to the development and use of gender disaggregated statistics in partner countries.

In Sida’s efforts towards poverty reduction and gender equality two strategic areas should mainly be prioritised for support: strengthening rights, power structures and relations. These priorities relate to the two perspectives in the Swedish Policy for Global Development and Sida’s Perspectives on Poverty.

### **Strengthening rights for women and men, girls and boys**

- Sida will address different kinds of formal and informal power structures affecting women’s and men’s rights and possibilities to make choices regarding their individual sexual and reproductive lives, such as the right to safe health care, or the right to safe abortions. Such possibilities must not be limited due to the individual’s sexual orientation.
- As the spread of HIV/AIDS is closely linked to imbalances in gender relations, Sida will give priority to actions oriented towards openness on men’s and women’s roles and responsibilities towards safer sexual behaviour, including their sexual and reproductive rights, giving priority to young people.

- Sida will support actions oriented towards men's roles and understanding of masculinity as a mean of strengthening a rights perspective on gender equality.
- Sida will support different ways of securing women's and children's right to physical integrity.
- Sida will contribute to and strengthen institutional frameworks such as formal policies, legislation or other systems of norms that stipulate the limits within which individuals and organisations can develop their own capacity to promote gender equality.
- In promoting structural stability and in conflict management, Sida will address the specific needs and interests of women and men, girls and boys – for example, by strengthening women's participation in peace processes or by promoting changes to societal norms on gender-based violence.

## **Power structures and relations**

### **ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT**

- Sida will work to enhance the inclusion and productivity of women in economic activities and to counteract discriminatory legislation and practices based on sex.
- Sida will contribute to removing barriers to poor women's equal participation in the economy.
- Sida will highlight access to resources – such as land, tenure, credit, financial resources, facilities and information – when promoting balanced power relations and gender equality.

### **POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT**

- Sida supports and promotes equal rights of participation in central political institutions such as parties, parliaments and elections.
- Supporting central gender equality institutions such as gender equality ministries can be strategically important for accelerating national processes towards including gender equality in all policy areas.

## Entry points and ways of working

The points of departure for gender equality should also be related to Sida's three major roles – those of analyst, dialogue partner and/or financier/intermediator – depending on the context or the issue. The overall responsibility for promoting and mainstreaming gender equality into Sida's work always lies with Sida's management. The following entry points and ways of working have been identified as strategic for mainstreaming of Sida's gender equality policy.

**Developing knowledge and competence on gender** within Sida is crucial to the implementation of this gender equality policy. The use of gender experts and gender training in the working processes should be encouraged.

**Development cooperation strategies** such as country cooperation strategies, corresponding country plans, and strategies for working in partnership with multilateral organisations should have an integrated gender perspective. In these strategies Sida should be guided by priorities and initiatives expressed in the partner country's Poverty Reduction Strategy, or similar plans, and by the international conventions and agendas to which the partner country has subscribed. If national priorities and plans do not include gender equality issues, Sida should raise this in the bilateral dialogue and promote further steps to be taken. Sida can also promote and support the capacity of the civil society to influence the national plans and priorities in order to close an existing gender gap.

**Thematic policies** have different impacts for women and men and must consequently address these differences.

**Budget and sector program support** based on a national sector plan or reform has different impact on women and men, girls and boys. Assessment, decisions, implementation and follow-up must be gender-sensitive. A gender analysis of budgets is a strategic entry point, especially when a partner country's Medium Term Expenditure Framework is discussed.

**Capacity development** is often a component in sector programmes and projects and, as such, should be developed with a gender perspective.

**In the planning process** Sida's managers at headquarter and in the field must support their staff with resources, incentives and competence development in the field of gender equality and gender mainstreaming.

Gender equality should always be visible in the annual operational planning, where activities should be outlined and resources identified.

**Monitoring and evaluating progress** towards gender equality takes place at different levels, from global monitoring by the OECD/DAC and UNDP to monitoring and evaluation of a specific intervention or contribution. It is not sufficient to consider how the conditions of women have improved as a result from an intervention. There is also a need to know if the relationships between women and men have changed and how this is linked to the goal of poverty reduction. Sida is responsible for monitoring and evaluating its own actions. Further guidance is available in the gender equality manual.

**Through dialogue and communication** with partners and other stakeholders, Sida can raise issues of importance and exchange views on central areas of concern on gender equality. In the dialogue Sida can choose to focus on either one particular area or issue of importance in a specific sector intervention. For example women's land rights, access to credits, girls' education, the right to health or broadly focus on the promotion of gender equality for all.

**In co-ordination and harmonisation** with other donors, Sida should make sure that actions taken to support gender equality are aligned with, and developed within, the national context. Sida should, in line with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005), promote a common approach among donors on gender equality, enabling national governments to develop and own a consistent approach to mainstreaming gender equality in all sectors.

When participating in donor co-ordination at global, regional or national levels, Sida should contribute to improved mainstreaming of gender equality at strategic levels such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy, sector strategies and plans (SWAp), and budgets.

## Implementation

To support the implementation of this gender equality policy a separate guiding instrument – the gender equality manual – has been developed in close co-ordination with the Department of Policy and Methodology. It addresses especially the central role of Sida's field organisation in Sida's work with gender equality.

**Sweden subscribes to the principles of the following conventions:**

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child

Sweden is also committed to international agreements, such as the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and to the documents from UN conferences, such as the Cairo Conference on Population and Development, the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing and its Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Declaration and Goals Resolution 1325.

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**The 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) comprises 16 substantive articles:**

**ARTICLE 1** Definition of the term “discrimination against women”.

**ARTICLE 2** State parties condemn discrimination against women in all its forms.

**ARTICLE 3** To take all appropriate measures to ensure the full development and advancement of women in all fields, including legislation.

**ARTICLE 4** To adopt temporary measures aimed at accelerating the de facto equality between women and men.

**ARTICLE 5** To take measures to modify social and cultural conduct that discriminates women, and enforces stereotypes.

**ARTICLE 6** To take all measures, including legislative, to suppress all traffic in women.

**ARTICLE 7** To take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination in political and public life.

**ARTICLE 8** To take appropriate measures to ensure that women on equal term with men have the opportunity to represent their government at the international level.

**ARTICLE 9** To grant women equal rights with men to acquire, change or retain their nationality.

**ARTICLE 10** To ensure women the equal right to education.

**ARTICLE 11** To take appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment.

**ARTICLE 12** To take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination in the field of health care, including those related to family planning.

**ARTICLE 13** To take appropriate measures to eliminate all discrimination against women in areas of economic and social life.

**ARTICLE 14** To take into account the particular problems faced by rural women.

**ARTICLE 15** State parties shall accord to women equality with men before the law.

**ARTICLE 16** To take appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family, including the right to own and acquire property.

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**The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing 1995 resulted in the Beijing Declaration and its Platform for Action listing 12 critical areas:**

- A. Women and poverty
- B. Education and training of women
- C. Women and health
- D. Violence against women
- E. Women and armed conflict
- F. Women and the economy
- G. Women in power and decision-making
- H. Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women
- I. Human rights of women
- J. Women and the media
- K. Women and the environment
- L. The girl-child

EDITORIAL SUPPORT: BATTISON&PARTNERS AB  
LAYOUT: ANNA LIND LEWIN  
ILLUSTRATION: JESPER WALDERSTEN  
PRINTED BY EDITA, 2005  
ISBN 91-586-8346-1  
ART. NO: SIDA4888EN

Halving poverty by 2015 is one of the greatest challenges of our time, requiring cooperation and sustainability. The partner countries are responsible for their own development. Sida provides resources and develops knowledge and expertise, making the world a richer place.



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