



Gender Equality -Strengthening Women's and Girls' Freedom and Empowerment

Swedish development assistance is a clear voice and driver for gender equality with a particular focus on strengthening women's and girls' rights and freedoms, empowerment and opportunities. Gender equality is a human right, a prerequisite, and driver for poverty reduction, sustainable peace and development. Gender equality is achieved when women and men, girls and boys and non-binary persons have equal rights, life prospects and opportunities, and the same power to shape their own lives and contribute to society. Sida strives to integrate a gender equality perspective at all levels and all thematic areas; throughout preparation, implementation, monitoring, evaluation as well as through dialogue. Sida applies a gender-transformative approach which seeks to change unequal power relations through tackling the root causes of gender inequality. Sida's work for the advancement of gender equality is based on evidence with an intersectional gender analysis is the starting point. Sida recognises that women's rights organisations, movements and active participation of men and boys are central for achieving sustainable results.



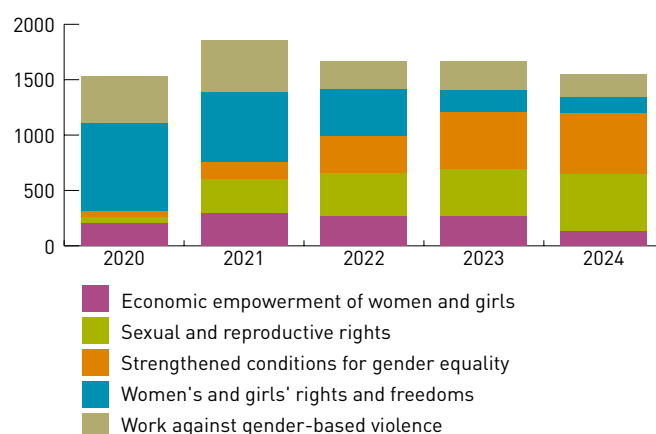
DEVELOPMENT IN THE WORLD

Globally, some progress has been made with an increase in women's political participation and a poverty rate below 10 per cent among women and girls.¹ At country level, there have been positive developments for gender equality, such as laws against female genital mutilation^{2,3} and increased job security for pregnant women.⁴ However, the gains remain fragile. Deep-rooted norms and power structures hinder the implementation of non-discriminatory laws, and the progress is slow.

Gender equality in Sida's partner countries is increasingly under threat. A growing, well-funded opposition is actively working against gender equality, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and the rights of LGBTQI people. The drivers for change – women's rights organisations, feminist movements and human rights defenders have increasingly less possibility to advocate for a new narrative. Gender-based violence remains widespread and pandemic, with one in five girls marrying before the age of 18 and every ten minutes a

woman is killed.⁵ Conflicts, environmental crises, and humanitarian emergencies further erode women's rights and freedoms.⁶

FIGURE 1. DISBURSEMENT BY SUB-AREA WITHIN [SECTOR] 2018-2022 (MILLION SEK)



1 Un Women and the United Nations Office Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Progress on Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2024, September 2024, p. 10.

2 UN Women Liberia, UN Women Liberia Newsletter for 2023, 2023, p. 10-15.

3 ActionAid Liberia, Annual Report: Just Equal Communities - Securing comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights in Liberia, 2023, p. 12-15. Contribution number : 10054.

4 Republic of Rwanda, Official gazette special of 30/05/2023., 30 May 2023, p. 4.

5 Un Women and the United Nations Office Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Progress on Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2024, september 2024, p 13.

6 Un Women and the United Nations Office Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Progress on Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2024, September 2024.

THE GLOBAL GOALS

The Global Goals for Sustainable Development include everyone – and we can all contribute. The goals are interdependent and therefore indivisible. Sida's main contribution is to implement development cooperation, thereby reducing poverty and saving lives. Together we can build a better future where no one is left behind.



Results

Women face major challenges to economic empowerment. They lack equal access to resources, leadership roles, and land ownership, which restricts their ability to make financial decisions or escape violence. Women also carry a disproportionate burden of unpaid care work and are often forced into insecure, low-paid jobs without proper labour rights.⁷

MAIN AREAS OF SUPPORT

Gender equality is a central part in Swedish development cooperation. Sida strives to integrate gender equality in all its work: providing targeted support for gender equality interventions, integrating gender perspectives into all of its programs, and emphasising gender equality and women's and girls' rights in policy dialogue with partner organisations and other stakeholders.

Out of the Swedish Government's 46 development cooperation strategies, 32 include an objective for gender equality (as of end 2024). The main areas for Sida's gender equality work are human rights for women, girls and the non-binary, SRHR, women's economic empowerment, work against gender-based violence and harmful practices, women's agency in peace and security, women's political participation and education.

Sida places particular importance on conducting intersectional analyses to address the specific needs of marginalised groups. A transformative approach is essential for achieving sustainable outcomes, which involves not only addressing immediate issues but also working to change underlying social norms. Involvement of men and boys is crucial to shifting societal attitudes and achieving lasting gender equality. Sida's efforts also include working with men and boys as target groups in this process, understanding that they also are disadvantaged by unequal power dynamics.

SIDA'S SUPPORT

Gender equality was the principal objective in 9.7 per cent of Sida's disbursed funds in 2024 (or SEK 2.5 billion). The proportion of support in which gender equality was a significant, but not the main objective, was 55 per cent (or SEK 14.4 billion). In 2024, 44 per cent of support for gender equality went to Africa, 16.6 per cent to global programs, 20.3 per cent to Asia, 13.9 per cent to Europe (including Ukraine) and 4.8 per cent to Latin America. Sida's main cooperation partners for increased gender equality is civil society- and multilateral organisations. Women's rights organisations and feminist movements are key drivers for legal and policy change as well as ensuring an intersectional perspective. In 2024, 3.1 per cent of Sida's total disbursements were directly targeted to support for women's rights organisations and feminist movements.

Prevention is key in the fight against all forms of gender-based violence. Sida supports efforts to change discriminatory norms, challenge violent masculinity, and improve conditions for women's and girls' education, health, rights,

freedom, and economic empowerment. Support is also provided to strengthen legislation, legal systems, accountability, and increase psychosocial and economic assistance for victims and survivors.

One example of support is the UN's fund against gender-based violence which has a broad outreach. The fund allocates grants annually to local women's rights organisations working to prevent violence by advocating for legal and normative changes and increasing access to protection and support for women and girls affected by violence. In 2024, the fund managed a portfolio of 180 initiatives across 74 countries and territories in five regions, with grants totaling US\$ 87.5 million.

When women gain increased access to and control over economic resources, their ability to influence their own lives and society at large increases. Greater economic empowerment is a prerequisite for gender equality and an effective way to reduce poverty. In Ukraine, Sida funds UN Women, which has collaborated with, and supported the Ukrainian Government to increase women's and girls' access to the labour market. A government strategy with an action plan has been developed with the aim to reduce the gender wage gap. Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is central for upholding the humanitarian principles and goals of saving lives, alleviating human suffering and upholding human dignity. Therefore, Sida has strengthened its work on gender equality in humanitarian assistance by developing a tool for supporting Sida staff and partners in this regard.

FIGURE 2. GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE SUPPORT TO [SECTOR]

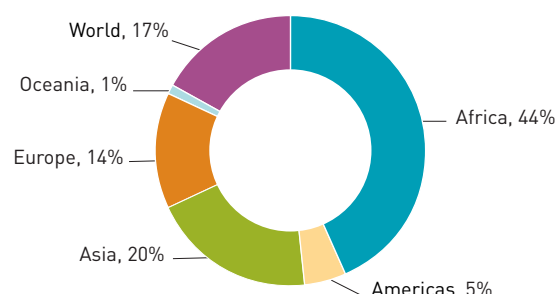
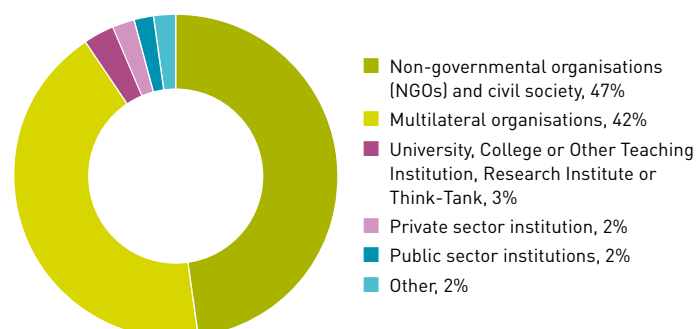


FIGURE 3. EMPOWERING WOMEN AND GIRLS DISBURSEMENTS 2024, BY IMPLEMENTING PARTNER



⁷ Un Women and the United Nations Office Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Progress on Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2024, September 2024.