

Striking**a**balance



On women and men in development cooperation

Foreword

The desire to promote equality between women and men (gender equality) has been a consistent feature of Swedish development cooperation from the start.

Sweden has long played a leading role when it comes to recognizing the importance of equality between women and men in the development process. Sweden has, for example, worked to put gender equality on the agenda of all the principal United Nations conferences of the past decade. At the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, Sweden played a key role in pinpointing the importance of men's roles, responsibilities and needs for the success of the work toward equality.

The goal of promoting gender equality in development cooperation remains the same, but the means applied to reach it have changed over time.

For many years, measures which specifically targeted women were emphasized. Many positive results were achieved, but they remained isolated achievements, that is, they did not affect development in society at large.

More recent methods and strategies focus on equality between women and men as an integral part of all aspects of societal development.

Corollary to this notion, gender equality has come to be an integral part of all aspects of Sida's work. Whether a matter of road construction or preventive health care, gender equality shall be a fundamental guiding concern.

Working toward gender equality means focusing on both women and men, and on the relationships between them.

To ensure effective and sustainable results in the longer term, it is necessary that both women and men participate in and benefit from development cooperation.

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Towards equitable development cooperation

Within Swedish development cooperation today there is a firm conviction that measures which exclude women or men seldom produce optimal and effective results. Particularly not in the longer term.



The road to this insight has been long, however. Looking back, there is no escaping the fact that Swedish development cooperation for many years mainly benefitted men. Women have been reached and involved to a far less extent.

When women have been involved in the cooperation, they have not participated on equal terms. Men have had nearly total influence - even in cases where women were expected to do all the work.

Swedish cooperation is not alone in this. By international comparison, Swedish projects have, in fact, been quite progressive. One reason is the importance the Swedish people have long accorded equality between women and men within Sweden. Naturally, such values have influenced Sweden's development cooperation, too.

Not knowing enough

Let us assume that no one has actually intended to leave women out of the picture. If that is so, why have development projects so often failed

to benefit women?

Sida has come to the conclusion that one of the principal reasons has been a failure to find out enough about how a given project may be expected to affect women and men, respectively.

In all too many cases projects have been planned with broad target groups such as "the local people" or "the community"; without adequate consideration of which groups are part of these broad categories. It has also been assumed that men represent the whole community. The assumption has been that the views of the men are shared by the women, as well. Only too late has it become clear that the assumption was wrong.

Male norms prevail

In many cases, development projects have increased women's burdens, whereas the amount of work men do has remained the same. There are even examples where projects have clearly been to the detriment of women.

Blindness to the respective needs of women and men has been compounded by the fact that much of the decision-making concerning the projects has been done by men in Sweden, as well. Men have traditionally predominated in positions of authority in the field of development cooperation – in Sweden and in the field.

Today, the numbers of women and men in decision-making positions is roughly equal, but this in itself is no guarantee that gender equality will get sufficient attention. Female decision-makers, too, may fail to grasp the importance of gender equality.

A turning point

Lately, however, the situation has begun to improve. Awareness of the differences in women's and men's roles and needs has grown. Progress is being made, both within Sida and among our partners in development cooperation.

Sida has introduced an on-going programme of gender awareness

training. Handbooks on gender equality have been developed on a variety of subjects, ranging from health care till road construction.

Impact assessment

What is needed is a kind of impact assessment, similar to the environmental impact assessments that have become standard practice in a growing number of countries. It is a question of what impact a project may be expected to have on women and men, respectively. Asking this question at the planning stage will make it easier to see whether a project can serve the goal of gender equality. Similar analysis must also be included in monitoring and evaluation.

Development cooperation interventions in many countries today benefit both women and men. They have been planned with the goal of gender equality in mind. Some of these are described on pages 23-27.

Women a vital target group

Women have been a vital target group ever since Swedish development cooperation programmes got under way in the 1960s. Women's contribution to national development was recognized early on. For example, it was very evident that in many parts of the world most of the work in agriculture

was done by women.

Experience confirms an important rule of thumb: what benefits women benefits children, too. Supporting women has a double effect.

Given this, why is not all – or much more – development cooperation directed toward women? Might it not be better to leave men out of the picture and put all the resources where they would do the most good?

Gender equality shall be mainstreamed

Experience has shown that projects directed exclusively toward women can make it difficult for women to take part in the overall development process. Separate projects for women are often interventions on the sidelines.

The goal in all development efforts nowadays is to keep in focus the priorities and needs of both women and men. Both women and men should be in the mainstream of development; neither should be kept on the sidelines.

Mainstreaming is the guiding principle in development cooperation today, and Sweden is in the forefront among donor countries in promoting mainstreaming. Unless both women and men can participate in and benefit from development cooperation, no

sustainable results can be achieved.

At the same time, there is still a long way to go before gender equality has been fully attained in Swedish society. Many unmotivated differences between women and men remain – differences for which the only explanation is gender discrimination.

Equality between women and men means

- equal opportunities
- equal rights
- equal responsibilities.

Equality between women and men a human right

The international development cooperation which started with the founding of the United Nations in 1945 has resulted in a number of conventions and other important international agreements.

One of the most fundamental of these documents is The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted on 10th December 1948. It is on this foundation which all work toward gender equality rests.

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. (Article 2, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UN, 1948).





The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

In 1979, the United Nations adopted a convention which forbade all forms of discrimination of women. The CEDAW Convention further defines the principle of non-discrimination set out in the above-mentioned Universal Declaration

The Convention contains a number of articles designed to eliminate discrimination of women. It sets out the principle of equality before the law, women's right to bank loans and credits, and the rights of married women, among others.

The Convention devotes one article to the situation of women in rural areas and the importance of strengthening their rights.

By the end of the World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, some 153 states had ratified the Convention. Ratification implies an obligation to conform to the principles of the convention.

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures: ... to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women; ...

(Article 5, The CEDAW Convention, UN, 1979).

Equality is a fundamental human right. The United Nations Convention (CEDAW), which most of the countries of the world have pledged to honour, forbids discrimination on the basis of sex.

In their Human Development Report for 1995, which addressed the issue of gender equality, the United Nations Development Programme states that no country in the world can claim to have achieved equality between women and men in all areas of societal development.

Equality a vital issue for the whole of society

The equality between women and men is not a women's issue, but rather an important issue for society as a whole. No country where women and men are not equals can claim to be democratic and just.

Gender equality is as important for men as it is for women. The proven axiom that women's education results in better health for women and children is an eloquent example. The education of women also leads to better economic status, both for the individual household and all its members, including men, and for society as a whole.

Lack of gender equality is also a decisive hindrance to development. As the Beijing Declaration makes clear, gender equality is not only about justice, it is also a matter of effective development.

Women contribute to effective development

There are many examples which demonstrate that when women take part in, and benefit from, development interventions, available resources are used more efficiently.

Consider these examples:

- When a woman earns income, she tends - more than a man does - to invest the money in ways that benefit her children and the household.
- Projects to improve the supply of household water have attained significantly greater success when women are involved in their planning and execution.
- Research conducted by the World Bank shows that the most cost-effective investment that can be made is to finance the education of girls and young women.
- Loans and credits extended to women are paid back to a greater extent than loans and credits to men.

"Tradition"

One might think that what has been said so far would be enough to convince anyone. But a number of social and cultural factors complicate the issue of gender equality.

These factors play important roles in our lives. Most of us strive for acceptance and approval within our family and the surrounding community. We are all influenced - often unconsciously - by prevailing ideals of masculinity and femininity, and most of us conform to them.



In a good number of societies attitudes, customs and religious beliefs lead people to consider girls and women inferior to boys and men or to disparage them in other ways. There are few, if any, examples of the opposite.

On the other hand, notions of masculinity in many societies form men to higher levels of ambition than they probably would choose freely.

Breaking with deeply rooted ideas is difficult. Those who do so are generally penalized in different ways, including social censure or even exclusion from the community. The debate on female genital mutilation is a current example of how problematic the process of change can be.

Different priorities, but a common goal

Within the framework of the United Nations, a majority of nations have agreed on an international strategy for achieving equality between women and men. But all such efforts to promote gender equality must be based on and adapted to the specific conditions of each society.

Priorities may differ widely. Women's right to inherit land may be of great strategic importance in a primarily rural society, whereas it might not be a priority at all in a country where few women are farmers or make their living off the land.

In Sweden, a woman's right to abortion was long an important social goal, which in time was achieved. In Latin America, on the other hand, such a demand would be highly controversial and, consequently, is not likely to be high on the agenda.

Men's sharing of responsibility for child care and housework is important in countries like Sweden, where women want equitable employment opportunities and to be economically independent of their partners.

In Russia, on the other hand, many women today consider gainful employment as part of the yoke of Soviet oppression. These women long for the opportunity to be able to devote more time and energy to their homes and families - a lifestyle which, for that matter, is glorified in the many soap operas which can be seen on television there today. The right to choose and define priorities is an important goal to work for.

Power a key factor

The formal distribution of power in society as a whole is an important determinant of the extent to which women participate equitably in the development process. In 1995, less than ten per cent of the world's parliamentarians were women. Among cabinet members the percentage of women was six per cent. Women's

participation in politics is currently declining in the countries of eastern and central Europe. This is not the case in other parts of the world, albeit progress has been slow everywhere.

The fact that men are the formal interpreters of most religions also has power implications.

In some cases women and men in positions of authority write laws and agree on programmes to encourage broad and equitable participation in social and political processes, but they are combatted by forces (both female and male) which strive to maintain the existing order - women and men alike.

In the countries of the former Soviet bloc women and men were equal in theory. Women and men had the same opportunities for education and employment. In practice, however, society remained highly patriarchal.

In other cases, efforts to inform people about their human rights may be thwarted by poor infrastructure hindering communication or by illiteracy.

Gender equality is

- *not a women's issue but a matter of importance to the whole of society*
- *as important to men as it is to women*
- *necessary in order to achieve effective, sustainable development*

Starting with the problems at hand

In an action programme drawn up in connection with the general elections of 1996, women in the Dominican Republic listed the following problems in the field of public education:

- many women cannot read or write
- materials and teaching methods are biased in favour of stereotyped gender roles
- elementary school curricula do not include sex education

- women and men are trained separately, which reinforces existing differences in professional status between women and men.

Among the remedial measures proposed are:

- educational reform to remove all forms of gender discrimination in the education system and to introduce methods and materials which challenge stereotyped gender role-patterns
- the introduction of sex education and courses in order to prevent violence in the home

- measures to encourage women to choose non-traditional occupations and professions
- campaigns against illiteracy.

Furthermore, the Dominican women recommend that commitment to gender equality is an integral part of legislative on education.

(Excerpt from Las mujeres y la coyuntura electoral mayo 1996. Plataforma de acción frente a los programas de gobierno de los partidos políticos)



Who grows the food?

Let us now take a look at a United Nations-supported agricultural project in Africa.

Farmers who for generations produced staple foods were offered the opportunity to convert to large-scale production of rice for export, on a wage basis. The project would modernize production, the local population would have more money to spend, and the export of rice would improve the country's balance of trade.

To the men of the community, who made the decisions in the village as well as in their respective families, the project sounded like a good idea. And so they agreed to lease their lands to the government for a period of 50 years - all the land around the village, including the land women used to grow rice and vegetables to feed their families. Everyone in the village would instead be employed on the rice plantation.

Modern equipment was utilized to plough the fields so that the villagers could plant rice on a large scale. Although the rice in the women's plots was almost ripe, the machines tore through it, ruining the harvest which was to have fed the family during months to come.

In order to raise the crops their families needed, the women of the village now had to walk long distances, beyond the fringes of the rice plantation, to cultivate what little productive land was left. Breaking new soil was terribly hard work, and since the land was not the best, harvests were not as plentiful as they had been. The people of the village suffered hunger, something they had not known before. They soon realized how vital the women's produce had been to their welfare.

For the women of the village, the rice plantation had many disadvantages. They lost the plots that used to feed their families.

Their work became heavier and demanded more of their time. They



had to do their part on the rice plantation - planting and weeding - and cultivating their plots for the family's subsistence was now more time-consuming, too.

Earlier, their own land had usually produced a surplus that they could sell for a little cash income. Now, that surplus and the income it generated were no more, which left the women totally dependent on their husbands for money. In addition, they now laboured for others' profit, not their own.

The men, on the other hand, initially benefitted from the project. Harvesting, their main task on the

plantation, had been mechanized and was now much less taxing. They also had more cash.

But the men, too, suffered some unexpected disadvantages. They were now sharecroppers and no longer had title to the land. Should they fail to deliver the contracted amount of rice, they would lose their right to use the land.

And it is far from certain that they will be able to fill their quotas - the women of the village are working themselves to the bone. What will happen when the women are worn out?

Who plants the trees?

Reforestation is an effective way to combat erosion and to improve soil quality. Planting trees in areas where firewood is scarce can make it possible for people to stay in their villages provided the forest is replenished. This is the rationale behind the many reforestation projects Sweden has supported over the years - projects which we have regarded as singularly positive examples of development interventions.

Let us take a closer look at one such project which men in a village in the heart of Africa agreed to. The women of the village are responsible for farming, household work and wellbeing of their children.

And for the tree nursery.

For some time now the women of the village have had an additional task, namely, planting, watering and caring for a good number of seedling trees.

The women don't have very much time to put into this extra work. It is hard enough to manage their work load as it is. What is more, no one has told them very much about the project and the benefits the plantations can yield. Under such conditions, it is no surprise that they are poorly motivated to care for the trees on top of everything else.

If they had been consulted in advance, they might have said "No, thanks" or suggested a smaller project. But only the men were contacted, and no one made any effort to determine whether those who actually would be doing the work, the women, had time for it.

Thus, for the women of the village the project has meant more work. The men's work load was not affected. In time, the soil around the village may be improved, making it possible for the villagers to stay there.

But it remains unclear how many

trees the women will manage to plant and care for. They really don't have the time.

Who decides how many children?

Munira lives together with her family in a poor area of Bangladesh. When she was still very young she was married to a man whom her father had chosen for her.

Munira's problem is that she has not given birth to a son. She and her husband, Ablus, have had five children - all girls.

Munira has been pregnant most of her married life, and these last few years her health has not been good. The fact that her husband treats her cruelly, beats her, and frightens her hardly helps. He threatens to scar her face with acid and then leave her and the family if the child she is carrying is not a son.

Munira would rather not have another child in the first place. The poor wages Ablus earns is not enough to feed even a family of half the size they have today. What is more, Munira feels quite certain that more pregnancies will ruin her health.



Thanks to development cooperation inputs, Munira has access to health care close to her home. The staff at the clinic have provided medical care for her repeatedly the past year and on one occasion arranged for her to be admitted to hospital.

That, of course, is good. But does it really help Munira to patch up her injuries so that she is able to go home to even more beatings?

How effective is it in the long term to treat the symptoms, but not the cause?

Emergency relief for better or worse

Zambia experienced extreme drought in 1991 and 1992, and many people sought security in a Food-for-Work programme, which was offered as part of the relief assistance to the country. Participants in the programme received a ration of maize each day in return for their labour on various local projects, such as repairing roads or digging canals.

A Zambian study has shown that in some regions nearly all the participants in the Food-for-Work programme were women. No matter that the women were also expected to do their normal farming and household work. No matter that some were pregnant, others nursing. Everybody had to do the same amount of work to earn their rations. With the exception of the sick, the aged, disabled and orphaned, who received rations without having to work.

The reason so few men took part in the programme, the study found, was because they considered it beneath them, an insult to their dignity, to work for food. The problem would not have arisen had the programme offered cash payment.

Consequently, women's total work load increased markedly during the



drought period. Men's, on the other hand, decreased.

Meanwhile, it was the men who decided who would do what within the programme. A few men were also employed to distribute maize to the needy.

The example shows what can happen when a project is designed without taking account of the different responsibilities and activities women and men have. It also shows how strong these traditional roles can be.

Important to find out who does what

The examples above show how important it is in the planning stages to analyze how development cooperation projects involve women and men, respectively.



In both the rice plantation and the reforestation project it was assumed that the women would do most of the work. The men's input was far less.

Projects that fail to take women's as well as men's responsibilities, activities and needs into account hurt families, including the men, as the example of the rice plantation illustrates.

The examples of the health project and the disaster relief programme illustrate moreover how the differences in women's and men's responsibilities and activities cannot be ignored, nor

the distribution of power and decision-making between women and men.

These factors have to be analyzed thoroughly before any reliable conclusions can be drawn regarding the consequences a project may have. Women and men have different needs and priorities, and what is good for the one may not be good for the other.

Therefore, it is important that projects are planned in continuous consultation with the women and men the project will involve and affect, and that both women and men are involved in the planning and decision-making on an equal basis.

Negative side-effects cannot always be avoided, but just as in the case of environmental impact, it is wise to try to take account of them beforehand. Doing so provides some preparedness to make interventions more responsive to both women and men or to find ways to deal with any less than positive impact.

Women and men often have different needs and different priorities. This insight has to guide all development planning. To understand the reality in different contexts, and particularly to know who does what, is essential to the effectiveness of interventions. Gender equality must be included as an integral part in all planning, from the start, as well as in analyses and evaluations.

Different responsibilities, different activities

A growing number of the people in the world today live in poverty, either in the countryside or in rapidly growing urban and suburban slums. For women and men alike, poverty means long, hard working days for little or no pay.

If we examine what poor women and men do on a day-to-day basis, something resembling the following pattern emerges:

- **Both women and men have reproductive roles**

Women give birth and nurture and raise their children and do nearly all the household chores. They prepare and cook food, gather firewood and water, wash, clean the house and care for the children. These tasks are vital to the family's survival.

To generalize on a worldwide basis, the reproductive role of men is still marginal. But reproductive responsibilities and activities of men differ widely, both within and between cultures, nations and parts of the world. Nor are they static. In the Swedish society, for example, the role men play in family life has grown substantially in only the last generation or two.

- **Both women and men also have productive roles**

In many parts of the poorer regions of the world women do most of the farming, particularly more time-consuming tasks like sowing, planting and weeding.

Even if women work for pay, with cash crops, for example, they nearly always also cultivate a plot of land to feed their families. Whatever surplus the plot produces may be sold on the local market for a little cash income.



In the slums, many women cook food for sale, or they wash, clean the house or sew for others.

Men's roles are closely tied to the formal sector. In the countryside many men are employed as day labourers or are employed in connection with agriculture production for export. In urban areas poor men tend to have strenuous, poorly paid work in factories, industrial shops, services and so forth.

Compared to women, men receive more cash income and participate to

a greater extent in the formal economy or so-called modern sector.

• **Both women and men contributes to community development - but in different ways and on different levels**

Women are involved in activities more directly related to their families' well-being: health care, the water supply, neighbourhood activities. Theirs is mainly voluntary work performed in groups.

Men tend to be involved in the formal sectors of society. They take part in decision-making bodies on local and national levels.

Men generally make the decisions in their households as well. They decide matters concerning the family's economy and the number of children. Title to the land, dwelling and other capital assets are generally registered under the man of the household. In most cases, the sons of the family inherit the father.

Social interaction differs among women and men, respectively. Women's social life takes place for the most part in conjunction with work. Men do their work and then socialize in their leisure time.

It is not meaningful to use collective terms like "the local population", "local farmers", or "slum-dwellers". Any changes in a community - such as new projects - will most likely mean quite different things to women and men. It is important to avoid such collective terms and to instead utilize analytical tools to better predict the likely impact on women and men, respectively.

Socially constructed roles can be changed

There is a big difference between the biological roles of women and men and their socially constructed roles.

Our biological roles - the biological differences between women and men - cannot be changed.

Socially constructed roles - the things we (are expected to) do in various social contexts - are things we learn and then pass on to our children. They can be changed.

In efforts to achieve gender equality it is important to distinguish between *practical needs* and *strategic interests*.

- *Practical needs* are those relating to women's and men's traditionally accepted roles in society. The need for better child health is one example. The issues and demands relating to such needs do not question the subordinate position assigned to women in most societies, nor do they challenge the prevailing distribution of labour. Consequently, they are seldom controversial.
- *Strategic interests* are those relating to the need to change roles. They normally crystallize in the process of trying to strengthen women's position relative to men, with the goal of achieving a social order in which

women are not discriminated against. Examples of issues of this kind are equality before the law, protection against violence, or the right to decide over one's body.

Changes of this kind do challenge the prevailing order, and they are often perceived to be threatening. On the other hand, men's strategic interests are served when they enter into areas traditionally considered women's domains such as child care, which gives them the opportunity to develop a richer, more rewarding relationship with their children.

Keeping pace with societal change

Over the course of the twentieth century the world has changed in many and fundamental respects. And never has change been a more prominent feature than in the 1990s. The globalization of the world economy has been achieved in the span of a few years. Similarly, the pace of progress in the realm of information technology (IT) - particularly the ability to communicate via Internet - has been astounding.



The world map has changed a great deal. New countries have emerged after the fall of the Soviet empire; they have received support from international development cooperation agencies.

Clearly the countries of eastern and central Europe have entered into a new and hopeful course of development. Not everyone has benefitted from the change, however. In the short term, there have been winners and losers. The greatest benefits have been achieved mainly by young, enterprising men. The losers are to be found among those who in one way or another are dependent on the existence of social safety nets.

Gaps in wealth and welfare have once again widened in the world at large, both between the rich and poor countries of the world and between rich and poor within countries.

How have all these changes affected

the responsibilities and activities of women and men? What impact have they had on equality between women and men? The analysis can be done on an individual level, as well as at local, national and global levels.

Not a rosy picture...

In a gender equality perspective, we see that men dominate and steer developments in the world economy. Most players in the realm of finance are men. The field of information technology, too, is dominated by men. Information technology (IT) is largely attuned to men's needs, and most users are men, as well.

Applying the same perspective to developments in world poverty, we find a different pattern. In recent years observers have begun to talk about the "feminization of poverty". They are referring to the fact that women make up an increasing share of the poorest groups in the world today.

As the systems in place to provide social security are gradually undermined in all parts of the world, the burden on the poorest members of society (to an increasing extent women) grows more and more heavy.

In some societies religious fanaticism, steered by men and functioning as a vehicle of male dominance, has taken root. Here, men use religious beliefs to justify their control over women's bodies and lives.

The repressive policies of the Taliban movement in Afghanistan are the most extreme example - but not the only one.

More often than not, courts of law will interpret the law to men's advantage or tend to make light of men's offences, for example in cases of domestic violence or rape. How society looks upon marital infidelity among women and men, respectively, differs widely in many cultures.

...but there are some hopeful signs

Nonetheless, there are some positive



developments. During the 1990s, action groups and networks, research institutions and opinion-forming organizations engaged in the movement for gender equality have consolidated their positions. Their influence and ability to influence policy-makers has grown.

Networks on all levels, international, regional and national, have become stronger and more influential. Despite certain reactionary currents, so-called backlash, it is clear that the gender equality movement today commands respect on an international plane.

There have also been numerous positive developments in the fields of gender awareness training and scientific research. In the field of public health, for example, the insight that diseases like malaria affect women and men differently will improve the effectiveness of medical care.

The increasing availability of sex-disaggregated statistics has also made it easier to identify and correct disparities between women and men.

Another positive note is the number of women involved in nascent private enterprise in the countries of eastern and central Europe.

Sweden is proud to have been able to contribute to these positive developments through development cooperation interventions. In the following section this contribution is discussed in the light of how Swedish development cooperation has evolved

and the strategies which have guided interventions relating to women and gender equality over the years.

Strategies and approaches

That both women and men should benefit from development cooperation has been a prime objective from the start. What has changed over the years is the perception as to how this goal can best be achieved.

In retrospect, we also see how efforts to achieve equality between women and men have been influenced by the general development theories, policies and strategies which have prevailed at the time.

Briefly, the evolutionary process can be described as a progression from measures that targeted women specifically to the goal that all interventions should involve both women and men, and take account of their respective needs and priorities. Also, one may say that the focus has shifted from the symptoms of inequality to address the structural factors which cause it.

It is important to study the past in order to learn from experience and avoid making the same mistakes.

In recent years, a new region, namely the countries of central and

eastern Europe, has come into focus in development cooperation. Development cooperation programmes in these countries have provided new perspectives on our work.

Welfare to compensate

The 1960s were characterized by a general belief that development would more or less automatically lead to improvements in the standard of living and justice for all.

In retrospect we can see that such a belief was all too simplistic. At the time it seemed a reasonable assumption that welfare inputs targeted to women would improve their situation as mothers and wives.

Women were perceived as vulnerable and helpless, that is as an especially needy group. They were reduced to passive recipients and a group with special interests of their own.

Men's responsibility for the situation and social status of women was totally ignored, as were relationships between the women and men.

No account was taken of the productive roles women play, such as their work in agriculture.

As this overview indicates, there were many negative aspects in the welfare approach. Nonetheless, many interventions did improve women's situation considerably. Improvements in women's access to maternity care and education are two prime examples.





Rise up out of poverty

In the 1970s women's disadvantaged situation tended to be attributed to their poverty; women outnumbered men among the poor in most parts of the world.

Combatting poverty now assumed priority with an emphasis on small, income-generating projects for poor and destitute women.

These projects helped many women, but they did not always take into account the amount of time women had at their disposal after attending to all their other responsibilities and activities. The scale of the projects was often too small to achieve either lasting improvements in the women's situation or greater equality between women and men.

Human rights in focus

The United Nations Decade of Women was declared in 1975, midway in a decade characterized by efforts to achieve social and economic equity.

The spirit of the times gave rise to more far-reaching demands for equality between women and men, and women's subordination to men was perceived to be a major factor behind women's problems. One might say that the principles of equality and social justice guided the support Sweden directed to women.

The ideas of Western feminism were a dominant influence and focused attention on the injustices inherent in the legal system. Sometimes these ideas were considered too Western and too radical by policy-makers (nearly always men).

Nor were the goals women in industrialized countries struggled to attain always equally relevant in less affluent societies. Changes in the law to provide greater gender equality did not have the same effect in settings where most women remained unaware of their rights.

Instead, women of the South developed an alternative strategy in

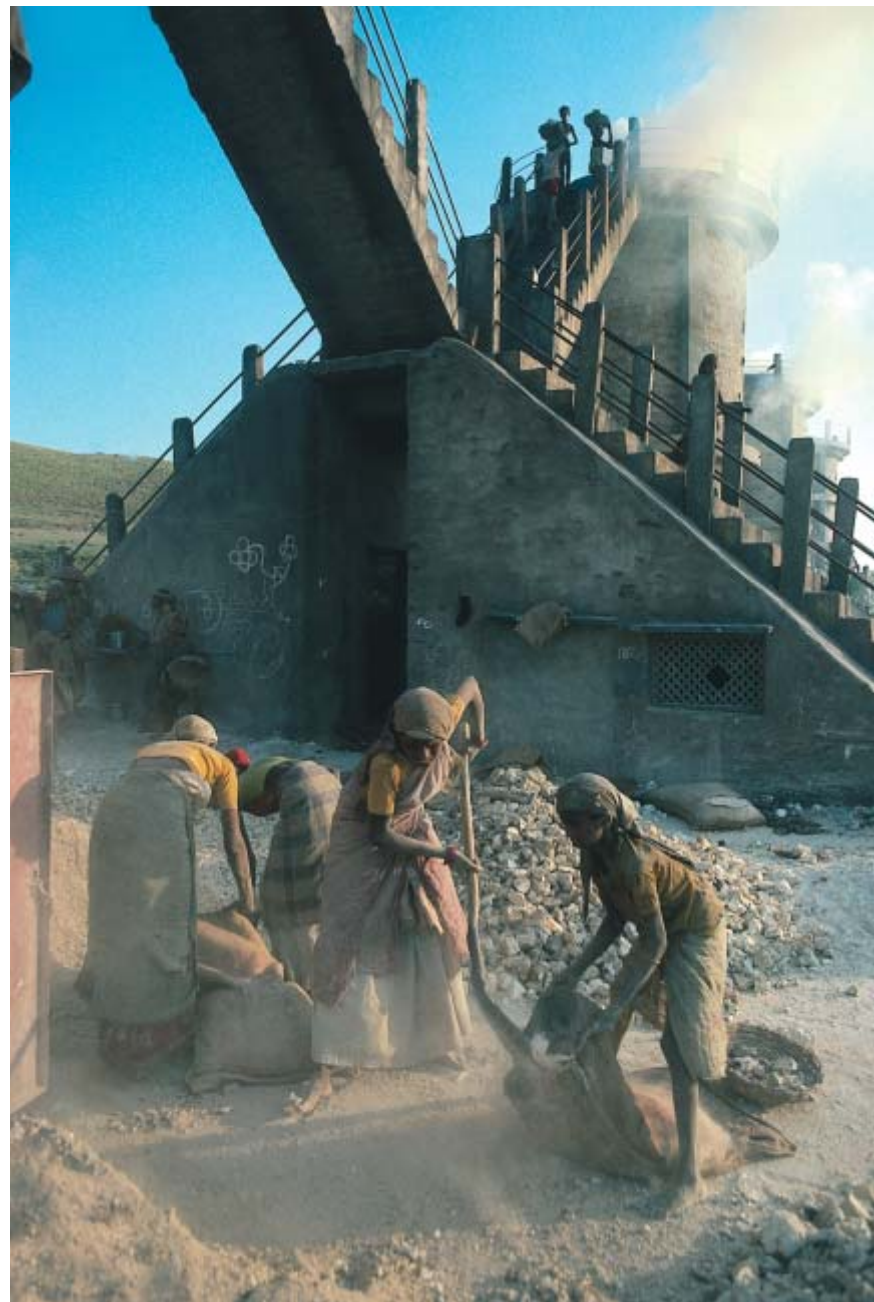
their work for gender equality. Many women's organizations received support, from Sweden and other countries, to work for gender equality on the grassroots level.

The United Nations Decade of Women came to an end in 1985 with the Third World Conference on Women under the auspices of the United Nations. The conference, held in Nairobi, was to become an

important milestone for local women's organizations, which were inspired to build networks nationally, regionally and internationally.

Women as a resource

The economic crisis of the 1980s brought about a more realistic assessment of women's contribution to social and economic development. For better and worse.



The productive roles women play became apparent to politicians and social planners, who began to regard women's work as a vital resource. By taking advantage of this resource they hoped to make development efforts more effective.

Recognition of women's contribution was, of course, positive. The problem was that policy makers sometimes failed to see that the women already had a full work-load. Development cooperation projects that depended entirely, or in part, on women doing the work were not successful, except in those cases where women were involved in the planning process and could ensure that they would have enough time and energy to take on the tasks involved.

Often, there was no true understanding of women's situation and the balance between reproductive and productive responsibilities and activities in their daily lives.

Charting their own course

Women's organizations in the South advanced the principle of supporting women to help themselves, that is, of giving women the resources they, themselves, felt they needed in order to improve their situation. Empowerment was the catchword of the day.

Empowerment meant ensuring that women gained access to the information and resources they need to chart and steer their own course and to find solutions to their problems.

Bilateral donors could play a part in this - but the women themselves had to set the priorities and identify initiatives.

Analysis an important tool

Meanwhile, it had become clear that a one-sided focus on women did not lead to greater gender equality. It became increasingly apparent that it was necessary to consider both women and men, and the relations between them.

Consequently, the respective responsibilities, activities, needs and interests of women and men, their



access to and control over resources, and the part they played in decision-making were examined. Development efforts began to be guided by a focus on gender, that is, on the social relationships between women and men.

Methods of analysis, which began to be employed quite generally in development cooperation in the 1990s (and continued to be refined over the past decade), revealed that many women's problems were directly linked to their relations with men.

Analyses of women's and men's responsibilities and activities makes it

clear that women play a key role in the development of society. Denying women equitable participation in the development process, or keeping them on the sidelines, unavoidably leads to poorer results.

"In the mainstream"

The structural adjustment programmes implemented in the 1980s and 1990s were dictated by economic necessity, but they had undesired effects on women as a consequence of cuts in public spending. In this regard women came to be regarded again as a vulnerable group; they were "victims" who had to be "compensated" in various ways.

In such a situation it became especially important to specify the relationships between gender equality and a sound economic development. When the potential of both women and men is utilized in development, there is less need for special compensatory support for women.

The best guarantee of sustainable development - in both socio-economic and ecological senses of the word - is a situation where women as well as men occupy the mainstream, that is, when attention to both women's and men's priorities and needs is mainstreamed into all interventions.

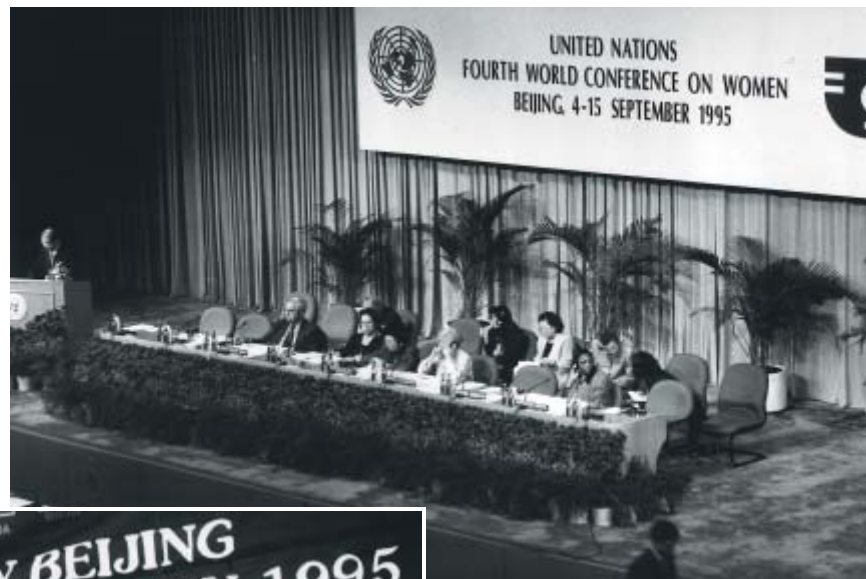




Human rights emphasized

The fourth United Nations conference on women in Beijing in 1995 concluded with a strong emphasis on human rights. It marks an important milestone in the work for gender equality in the world, and for development cooperation.

A central theme of the Conference was the situation of women, viewed in the light of human rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights had been brought to the fore at an international conference held in Vienna in 1993.



political participation is important, because it is a key to success in all the other areas.

The Platform for Action also stresses the importance of getting men actively involved in the work toward gender equality.

Sweden played a central role at the conference with respect to emphasizing the importance of men's roles, responsibilities and needs as key to success in efforts to promote gender equality.

The Beijing conference established the responsibility of national governments to promote equality between women and men.

An important result of the conference was the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The Platform for Action pinpoints twelve areas where measures are urgently needed: poverty, education and training, health, violence against women, armed conflict, women and the economy, women in power and decision-making, institutional mechanisms for gender equality, human rights, the media, women and the environment, the situation of girls.

Different needs, different priorities

The areas are not ordered according to priority since conditions vary from country to country. Each country must be free to set its own priorities.

Nonetheless, one item is especially important, namely, women's access to power and decision-making. Women's



A continuing process

It is important to see the Beijing conference as part of an ongoing process, which started long before, and will continue long after the conference itself.

In preparation for the Conference, regional and national plans of action were drafted. The objectives set out are now in the process of being realized.

For many participants, Sida included, the process around Beijing yielded new and valuable contacts and forms of collaboration.

The process of collaboration and exchange on gender equality within and between countries continues, which is in fact one important result that can be credited to the Conference.

A vital forum

The NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) Forum arranged in Huairou, China, parallel to the United Nations Conference, was also a source of vital impulses.

NGO Forum gathered some 36,000 participants who were able to exchange new ideas and discuss innovative strategies toward the goal of gender equality. Networking was another important activity here.

The efforts made to bring gender equality aspects into the spotlight at other major United Nations conferences over the past decade should also be mentioned here: the World Conference on Education in Jomtien in 1990, the Conference on the Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992; the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993; the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994; the Social Summit in Copenhagen in



1995; and the follow-up to the World Conference on Education in Amman in 1996. Sweden played a key role in focusing attention on gender equality on all these occasions.

It is now up to all the nations of the world to realize the objectives set out in the Platform for Action, and to

bring their policies into alignment with the United Nations Declarations. Here, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women will play a vital role by monitoring countries' performance in relation to the Platform and other agreements.

SWEDEN:

Women early a prime target group

Traveling in Africa in 1963, Inga Thorsson, a leading Swedish Social Democrat, was appalled to see that the dynamic process of development that was sweeping the continent at the time was leaving Africa's women standing on the wayside. Her report of what she observed resulted in a special Swedish programme of development cooperation targeting women - a programme of secondary education for African women - the following year.

This may have been an isolated instance, but it established an early recognition of women's educational needs.

In the early 1960s, Swedish programmes of bilateral development cooperation were well under way. The goal of an annual volume of development cooperation corresponding to one per cent of Sweden's GNP was set out in a Government Bill in 1962.

It was in the realm of education that the women of the poor countries of the world have made the greatest progress.

Sweden's contribution to that progress has primarily been in the areas of primary education and adult education. In the 1970s, Sweden was able to incorporate support to women in major educational projects with some success.

Child-health and maternity care, nutrition, health education and family planning were part of the programmes to expand primary health care which Sweden supported in many countries during the 1960s and 1970s.

Sweden first extended support directly to women's organizations in cooperating countries in 1979. The volume of this support has multiplied since then.

Toward the end of the 1970s Sweden also undertook a number of projects designed to help women support themselves and their families. Following the World Conference on Women in Nairobi in 1985,

Sweden began increasingly to urge acceptance and recognition of women's participation in the economic development. As means toward this end, Sweden supported projects that gave women control over productive resources, such as water, fuel and appropriate technology.

In the field of research cooperation Sweden has long supported research with a focus on women. In 1987, for example, Sweden gave support to an African network for better maternity care, which has come to play an important role. Support to agricultural research has made it possible for small farmers in arid regions of Africa (most of whom are women) to improve their yields.

In an international perspective, Sweden has long played a prominent role in developing methods to promote women's participation in development cooperation on an equal footing with men, and, by the same token, to involve men in efforts relating to family planning, nutrition and child care.

Development cooperation today



In Swedish development cooperation today gender equality is seen to be

- important in itself, namely, as a matter of human rights
- a necessary precondition for effective and sustainable development
- not a women's issue, but an important societal issue of equal concern to women and men.

Swedish commitments in Beijing

The importance of development cooperation was underlined at the conference in Beijing, as was the importance of including gender equality aspects as an integral part of such cooperation.

The Platform for Action adopted at the Conference specifies measures that should be taken in development cooperation. Sweden has made a commitment to support promotion of gender equality in partner countries.

Sweden is active in all twelve of the priority areas identified in the *Platform for Action*.

A sixth goal

In May 1996, the Swedish Parliament voted to add a new overall goal for Swedish development cooperation, namely, the promotion of equality between women and men in partner countries.

The decision in Parliament bears witness to a broad consensus among political parties in Sweden concerning the importance of working toward gender equality in development cooperation.

It also marks recognition of the importance of gender equality as a factor for development. Only when gender equality aspects are considered an integral aspect of economic and political affairs can one hope to achieve development of a kind that benefits society as a whole.

The linkage to The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is vital. Development cooperation should not contribute in any way to perpetuating or worsening conditions in violation of the Declaration.

The existence of a specific goal on gender equality gives equality between women and men even more central status in Swedish development cooperation. It can not be treated as a marginal issue.

The overall goal of Swedish development cooperation is to raise the standard of living of poor peoples.

The goals of Swedish development cooperation:

- economic growth
- economic and social equality
- economic and political independence
- democratic development
- environmental protection
- gender equality

Special goals have been formulated for the cooperation with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe:

- to promote common security
- to deepen the culture of democracy
- to support environmentally sustainable development
- to support socially sustainable economic transition

The striving for equality between women and men should also imbue Sweden's cooperation with partners in Eastern and Central Europe, even though it has not been formulated as a specific goal.

Swedish guidelines

Shortly after the sixth goal for Swedish development cooperation was adopted, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs developed Guidelines regarding gender equality in Swedish development cooperation.

The Guidelines apply to all forms of cooperation – multilateral as well as bilateral. They also apply to Sweden's cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe.

One basic principle is that a gender equality perspective be systematically incorporated (mainstreamed) into all development cooperation.

Every intervention shall be designed in such a way that both women and men are able to influence, participate in and benefit from the kind of development the intervention aims to achieve.

Finally, evaluations shall include assessments of how the measures taken have affected relations between women and men in the target group.

The Guidelines also note that integration of gender equality aspects into all projects may on occasion have to be complemented with specific measures to ensure gender equality. Such measures should primarily target structural causes of inequality between women and men.

One of the most important conclusions from Beijing is the importance of a better grasp of the causes underlying inequality between women and men and the unequal distribution of power between women and men. An analysis of the conditions pertaining to women and men in all sectors of society is needed. By integrating a gender equality perspective into all policy areas a lasting potential to alter political, economic, social and cultural structures so as to promote equality between women and men can be achieved.

(Excerpt from Guidelines Regarding Gender Equality in Swedish Development Cooperation, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 1996)

How Sida works

The new agency, Sida, was established 1st July 1995. It incorporates five previous Swedish development cooperation agencies, namely: SIDA, SAREC, BITS, SwedeCorp and Sandö U-centrum.

Four areas of priority for Swedish development cooperation were specified for the new agency. One of the four was equality between women and men. The focus on gender equality was intensified

after Parliament's adoption of the new, sixth goal the following year.

Sida's Action Programme

In April 1997, Sida adopted an Action Programme to promote equality between women and men in Sweden's partner countries. The Programme comprises three documents; a policy document, an experience analysis, and a plan of action. The documents, which are available in English, Portuguese and Spanish, may be ordered from Sida (see page 30).

The Action Programme covers the period 1997-2001. It will be reviewed and updated periodically.

The *Platform for Action* adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 (page 16-17) has been a principal frame of reference for both Sida's Action Programme and the Guidelines developed by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

Taking a starting point in the Beijing document helps ensure that Sida's policy will have international relevance and not only be influenced by Swedish perspectives.

Partners in cooperation show the way

Sida's work toward gender equality is also based on the political commitments Sweden's partners in development made at the Beijing conference, and on the countries' own priorities and initiatives.

In Beijing, many of Sweden's partners raised the issue of the relationship between lack of gender equality and poverty. Many African countries, for example, pointed to gender-related differences in access to education and differences relating to sexual and reproductive rights, health and sustainable livelihoods. They also discussed the situation of girls and young women.

These areas have long been highlighted in Swedish development cooperation and continue to be prioritized as a means of fulfilling the recommendations from Beijing.



Structural causes brought to the fore

Sweden gives priority to support to areas which relate to the structural causes of inequality between women and men. Among these are

- human rights
- participation in political decision-making
- participation in economic decision-making and the opportunities for economic independence.

Many of the priorities set in Beijing are related to these three key areas.

Acts of violence committed against women are, for example, a consequence of a lack of respect for women's human rights. And women's poverty is often a consequence of their economic

are brought to light, it is difficult to promote gender equality realistically and to achieve lasting results.

For reasons of strategy Sida emphasizes a focus on men. A familiarity with men's attitudes and behaviour is decisive for the effectiveness of promotion of gender equality. Consequently, Sida intends to contribute to methods development to secure more active involvement of men in gender equality efforts.

Plans of Action guide policy

In addition to the overall Plan of Action for the whole of Sida, each department within the organization has formulated a concrete plan for its specific area of work. These plans set out clear, measurable objectives,

Sida be equipped to assess interventions from this perspective. This way, issues of gender equality will not be left out which might occur if they were managed solely by a small group of experts.

It also implies that Sida puts a lot of effort into competence development of personnel and the consultants and partners who are involved in Swedish cooperation programmes.

Consultants play a very central role. They are engaged to develop proposals, reports, and evaluations, etc.

Gender training provides only basic competence, which means that gender equality specialists have to be engaged when Sida personnel's knowledge is insufficient.

The next step: Competence development

Continuous competence development is important. To be able to work effectively with gender equality one has to be familiar with the reality facing women and men in the respective partner countries, and that knowledge needs to be renewed and updated on a regular basis. It should, furthermore, be reflected in the policies governing development cooperation.

The capacity to carry out adequate analyses and make proper assessments needs to be increased, as does the capacity for dialogue with Sweden's partners in development concerning gender equality aspects of the cooperation.

Here it is vital that familiarity with the Platform for Action from the Beijing conference and the United Nations Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) be enhanced.

Greater familiarity with men's needs and priorities is also needed.

Equality initiatives link countries

In a cooperative programme involving Namibia, Tanzania, India, Nicaragua and Estonia, Sida has undertaken to



dependence and minimal influence in economic decision-making.

Focus on women and men

Sida's work toward gender equality addresses both women and men and the relationship between them rather than women alone.

In Sida's view a focus on both women and men is necessary if development cooperation is to benefit women as well as men.

Experience has shown that structural and systemic causes often underlie gender inequality. Unless these factors

which are to be followed up in the annual report of each respective department.

In many areas, such as health, education and agriculture there are also handbooks which may be used to aid planning and evaluation phases of interventions (see box page 21).

Knowledge guides judgement

Gender equality aspects are to be mainstreamed in all development cooperation interventions. This is an important principle, which requires that each and every programme officer at



work in partnership to develop competence and methods for working toward equality between women and men. The aim is that the lessons learned will enhance the effectiveness of future work toward gender equality in development cooperation.

The programme, a Sida initiative, underlines the importance of gender

equality as one of the cornerstones in the countries' cooperation with Sweden. Particular stress will be laid on structural causes of inequality.

The initiative will lead into a new kind of cooperation or partnership to realize the goals of the Platform for Action from the Beijing conference.

The aim is to involve many different

organizations and players - including many who normally do not figure in development cooperation contexts. Participants will include politicians, journalists, women's and men's organizations against violence, the police, financial institutions and agencies, and many more.

Particular efforts will be made to involve representatives of the national governments and other influential figures so as to put gender equality on the agenda in the highest possible echelons.

It is hoped that the exchange of views and experiences will strengthen efforts toward gender equality in all the countries in the "partnership" - Sweden included.

A long tradition of cooperation

The Swedish government has engaged in development cooperation with many different actors, in Sweden, Europe and the rest of the world, for many years.

Exchange and participation in networks are important ways to get

Handbooks as a support

Sida personnel have access to special handbooks which illustrate the gender equality aspects of various sectors - agriculture, the transport sector, and the health sector, among others.

The handbooks list questions that should be asked in different phases of the programming cycle. The following examples have to do with consultations concerning a project in the health sector:

- Were both women and men consulted?
- Which women and men were consulted? Bureaucrats? Representatives of those for whom the project is intended? Representatives of the ministry? Others?
- How were they consulted - through meetings? Interviews?

The handbook also presents reasons why it is important to ask questions such as the above, as well as various measures and steps to be taken if the answers are not satisfactory.





Highlights of the Action Plans in different departments

Action Plans have been formulated for all sectors of societal development, for example health, education, resource management, and all the regions where Sida is active. They include the following main points:

- gender equality aspects of the sectors in question
- clear, measurable objectives
- strategies and priorities for interventions
- routines for monitoring and reporting
- competence development programme
- development of a resource base of consultants with knowledge of the gender equality aspects of the sectors.

access to different points of view and to enrich our knowledge. Coordination is one of the keys to effective development cooperation and sustainable results.

United Nations organs, financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, research institutions and private organizations are important partners in cooperation. Local and regional networks in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Central and Eastern Europe play an important role.

Sida is also active in the efforts toward gender equality undertaken on a Nordic basis.

Sida makes demands

The sixth goal for development cooperation, gender equality, applies to Swedish NGOs, as well.

Sida will be demanding more of the organizations which receive or channel funds from Sida with regard to gender equality, in keeping with the new goal.

Sida carries on a continuous dialogue with the organizations to ensure that gender equality aspects are incorporated into their work in various countries.

Similarly, Sida requires that the consultants engaged - both institutions and individuals - have competence in gender equality and that they follow Sida's policy.

Swedish networks important

Sida does not work in isolation from the rest of Swedish society. On the contrary. The collaboration generated in the preparations for the Beijing conference is a case in point: efforts to secure gender equality in the context of development cooperation were an integral part of domestic efforts to attain gender equality in Sweden.

The Swedish Women's Council for Development, KIB, formed in 1982, comprises representatives of ten Swedish women's organizations, including affiliates of the major political parties and labour unions. KIB plays a vital role in spreading information about gender equality and development cooperation throughout Swedish society.

"Pursuant to the conclusions of the United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing, all policy and strategic work must be based on a fundamental analysis of activities, responsibilities, needs and relations between women and men."

(Excerpt from Guidelines Regarding Gender Equality in Swedish Development Cooperation, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 1996)

What kind of knowledge do we need?

To be able to work effectively with problems of gender equality, we need the following:

- a capacity to undertake analyses and assessments
- an ability to carry on a dialogue on the issues involved
- familiarity with the country and culture - policies and reality
- familiarity with United Nations conventions and declarations and the Platform for Action adopted at the Beijing conference
- an improved knowledge of men.

Analyses sensitize politicians

Six Swedish municipalities participate in a project whereby proposed policies are routinely evaluated with respect to the impact they may be expected to have on women and men, respectively.

The analyses help politicians develop an awareness of possible gender-related differences prior to policy decisions instead of - at best - becoming aware of them afterwards.

The project has demonstrated that decisions which seem to be gender-neutral may actually have quite different effects on the women and men of the community, respectively - for better or worse. Examples from Swedish society can illustrate the need for a gender analysis in all areas of societal development. Analysis can reveal that

even in areas considered neutral from a gender equality perspective, there are unforeseen consequences, as the following examples illustrate.

- As waste has become a valuable resource, Swedish municipalities have taken a growing interest in waste management, encouraging or requiring households to sort their refuse and separate plastic, metals and combustible and biodegradable/compostable matter. In Swedish households, women are the ones who wash used packaging and take them to the recycling stations. Each new requirement regarding sorting at source means more responsibility for Swedish women.
- Among young people, more girls than boys use public libraries. Equipping libraries with Internet terminals has attracted boys to the libraries.

(Source: KommunAktuellt 39/97)

Sex-disaggregated statistics improve accuracy

For some years now, Sweden has successfully supported the production of sex-disaggregated statistics in many countries. Statistics Sweden (SCB), which has many years' experience in this area, has been the Swedish partner in these projects.

SCB's booklet, "Women and Men in Sweden: Facts and Figures", was distributed at the Third Conference on Women in Nairobi, 1985, where it received much acclaim. It has since served as a model for many countries' statistics on women and men. The most recent edition was presented at the Beijing conference in 1995.

Today, roughly two dozen booklets and fact sheets have been produced by offices of statistics around the world with Swedish support. Among the most recent publications are "Women and Men in Russia" and corresponding publications for the City of St. Petersburg and the Leningrad, Murmansk and Kaliningrad regions.

A lack of statistics which represent the real situation of women and men, respectively, can be problematic. It is difficult to make decisions and set priorities on the basis of statistics that fail to provide a clear picture of the status quo.

Let us consider an example: It has been found that 40 per cent of the children and adolescents in a given region do not finish their primary education. The figure is disturbing and calls for corrective measures. But what measures? It is hard to say before we have a better idea of which pupils leave school, and why. If, for example, we find that 70 per cent of the school-leavers are girls who leave school because they are pregnant, the measures called for will be quite different than if the 70 per cent are boys who are forced to quit their studies in order to earn money.



In Botswana, sex-disaggregated statistics revealed the surprising fact that fewer men than women could read and write. Women were also better represented among those taking part in literacy programmes.

When inquiries were made as to the reasons for this pattern it was found that many men shunned the classes because they were held in classrooms for children. When the venue of the literacy training was moved to workplaces, it was easier to recruit men.

Gender-sensitive administration of the law

"After participating in your training programme, our attitudes toward women changed". So wrote two male judges recently in a letter to the Bombay Women's University.

A year had passed since the two judges had taken part in a training

course on the human rights of women, arranged by the university in cooperation with Sida.

Participants were inspired to examine their reactions and prejudices regarding a number of social phenomena, to discuss them and to see them in the perspectives of gender equality and human rights. The course also gave students the opportunity to familiarize themselves more deeply with the United Nations declarations and conventions on human rights.

To date (March 1998), some forty judges and senior law enforcement officers and prison wardens have taken part in the training. Many more are on the waiting list.

Positive articles in Bombay newspapers have aroused even broader interest. Among other things, the press has noted that the notion of gender equality has led to court findings which are much less tradition-bound. This is of great strategic importance inasmuch as court findings based on new thinking will have the force of precedent.



Rural development for the benefit of all

Both women and men were involved in the planning and execution of a successful agricultural project in the Babati District of Tanzania.

Roughly 80 villages participate in the project, which was started in 1992. Early in the planning phase, groups of women and men of the villages were interviewed separately. The groups discussed the aspects of agriculture they considered most in need of development.

Women's and men's priorities differed. Since both women and men had been consulted - unlike many projects, where only men are involved - the project could be planned on the basis of both groups' needs and priorities.

Execution of the project required gender awareness training of local leaders, district officials and politicians, and field staff. A training programme, which proved very successful, was carried out within the framework of the project.

Focus on poor neighbourhoods promotes gender equality

Many of the women in the poor areas of Nicaraguan towns are small-scale entrepreneurs. They have market stalls or are the proprietors of small shops. Many of these women support their families singlehandedly.

Projects in many parts of the country aim to improve the standard of housing and neighbourhoods in general - streets, water, sewage, and so forth. But it is difficult to find financing for such projects. Small-scale entrepreneurs have the same difficulty.

Sida supports a project in five

towns in Nicaragua: Estelí, Ocotal, Somoto, León and Chinandega. The aim is to improve local infrastructure and housing and to develop small businesses. Households in which women support the family have priority.

Today (March 1998), more than 200 projects are under way to improve streets and roads in and around the five towns. More than 2,500 loans have been extended to home improvement, and over 8,000 loans to small businesses. Seventy per cent of the borrowers are women.

The infrastructure projects are led by neighbourhood committees in which both women and men participate and have been able to express their respective priorities and needs.

The formation of the committees has strengthened local democracy and helped reconcile villagers after the civil war of the 1980s.

The project has been under way since 1993. An external evaluation found that the project has improved the lot of both women and men in terms of housing and household economy. The project has also contributed to a greater measure of equality between women and men.

One problem, however, is that men tend to end up in advisory and decision-making bodies, whereas women organize most of the practical work. Since men tend to give priority to other infrastructure projects than women, more equitable representation in decision-making bodies is desirable.



Sex education for both girls and boys

Sexuality is sometimes difficult to bring up. In many cultures it is virtually tabu to talk about it, and no sex education is offered in the schools. At the same time, unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease are major problems.

With Sida's support, the Swedish Association for Sex Education,

other boys, and girls with other girls.

The project has been successful. One key to success may be that a conscious effort has been made not to make demands of



RFSU, has been cooperating for over a decade with sister organizations in Tanzania and Zambia to offer such counselling. The project in Tanzania initially addressed only young mothers whose pregnancy had forced them to leave school. Soon prime emphasis was put on training young change agents who could educate their friends and others in their own age.

Efforts were made to recruit both girls and boys. Generally speaking, sex education - to the extent it is offered - often focuses on girls. Boys' need of information and advice is often neglected, as is the question of their responsibility in the event of pregnancy. It has also been found that boys find it easier to discuss such things with

participants or to be judgemental. Instead, the focus is on raising their level of consciousness in ways that young people understand and appreciate.

Better treatment of young men in prison

Sida tries through various means to combat negative discrimination and acts of aggression against men.

In South Africa Sida supports a project called Juvenile Justice, which seeks to promote better treatment of young suspects and convicts - women and men. Today, police, prosecutors

and prison staff treat young men and boys very harshly.

Young women of the same categories are treated considerably better, which, of course, is good. Female criminals are also relatively few in number.

The aim of the project, which is being undertaken by the South African administration, is to ensure decent treatment of women and men alike in all aspects of law enforcement.

Building networks in Kazakhstan

Since 1989 and the upheaval in the countries of the former Soviet bloc, the number of women in politics has declined markedly.

The change may be attributed to at least two factors: The economic chaos and sudden poverty a good number of people have experienced has made putting food on the table more important for many women than participation in decision-making bodies. Secondly, a glorification of the role of housewife has taken place over the past decade. This is perhaps an understandable reaction to the former regime, in which all citizens, women and men alike, had a duty to contribute to the economy.

In Kazakhstan, Sida is supporting a project which aims to stimulate women's participation in politics and economic enterprises. The central Asian republic is endowed with many highly educated and dedicated women who are organizing in order to consolidate their influence in society.

The project takes the form of organizing various fora for discussion among women on politics, journalism and private enterprise.

The main emphasis rests on creating networks and teaching women networking skills. A manual for networking is currently being prepared.



Women and men influencing the treaty

In December 1996 a treaty was signed which brought an end to the civil war in Guatemala. The people of Guatemala had not known peace for some 36 years.

The process leading up to the agreement, which Sweden supported financially, involved broad sectors of the population. Women and men representing various stakeholder groups - indigenous peoples, farmers and private enterprise - were able to express their views and influence the terms of the agreement through participation in a national-level process.

The terms of the treaty are quite detailed. There are provisions concerning human rights, repatriation of refugees, the role of the military in a democratic society, amendments to the constitution and, not least, a timetable for realization of the objectives set out.

Gender equality, while not a major issue in the agreement, is addressed in the treaty.

The agreement should not be seen as an end, but as a beginning. A number of commissions have been appointed to ensure that the terms are observed and the objectives realized. One such commission is the Women's Forum. Its purpose is to examine the implementation of the agreement from the point of view of gender equality.

"Are women and men treated differently when it comes to their right to own land?" "How does the law protect a housemaid whose employer beats her?" Questions like these are raised with a view to correcting possible shortcomings. Discriminatory laws are to be revised, and new legislation introduced - all aiming toward the goal of ensuring gender equality.

The Women's Forum comprises organizations from all sectors of society, both urban and rural. Women participate in the work of other commissions, as well.

The work leading up to and following the peace agreement represents the broadest endeavour ever made to involve the women and men in Guatemala in genuinely democratic participation.

Training small-scale entrepreneurs

For nearly twenty years Sweden has supported training programmes for small-scale entrepreneurs. The training aims to create new jobs.

The programmes focus on extremely small businesses - from single persons to businesses employing a handful of people. Many of the enterprises operate in the informal sector. Programmes also address unemployed people who are interested in learning to start a business.

Courses teach basic business skills - purchasing, marketing, financing, accounting, cost analysis, pricing and inventory management routines.

Participants also learn how to apply for loans and how to contact lending associations and institutions.

The programmes are open to women and men, but women have tended to predominate (60 per cent in 1994). One reason for this is that a good number of small businesses are operated by women, particularly in



the informal sector. Secondly, women are eager to receive the training offered.

The courses are given by local associations of entrepreneurs and chambers of commerce, other NGOs and public bodies. The teachers have in turn completed a training course offered by the International Labour Organisation, ILO, who also provide the course materials.



Examples that lead to change

Bina works for a local women's rights organization in Dhaka, capital of Bangladesh, in a project which Sida supports to help women who have been victims of violence. She works with girls who have about the same experience as she, herself. They support each other, discuss their experiences and look ahead.

Bina is 17. Her face is badly scarred after she and her sister were attacked. Influential men in Bina's home village made sexual demands on the two girls, which they refused. One night, men broke into their home. They attacked the girls with a canister of concentrated acid, and Bina's face was burned as she was defending her sister.

When Bina travels in Bangladesh and tells her story, she receives strong responses from women and men alike. Increasingly, men, too, repudiate the tradition that women shall do men's bidding without question. Both women and men express a need to change a male role which they feel has become distorted.

That women who have experienced what Bina has been through become visible and command respect is an important step in combatting gender-related violence.

Equitable re-training of military employees

Many Russians have lost their jobs as a consequence of the dismantling of the former Soviet industrial-military complex. To help solve this problem, over the past decade Sweden and other western countries have organized retraining programmes for former military officers in Russia.

Particularly research institutes and industries with military affiliations

employed many women. In order to help them as well as their male colleagues, a special training institute, Women and Management, was founded in St. Petersburg in 1991.

Since its founding the institute has trained more than 4,000 highly qualified unemployed women. Many have gone on to start their own businesses or have found jobs in large and medium-sized companies.

Sida has financed an exchange programme between Women and Management and the Stockholm International Business Institute, SIBI, in order to enhance the capacity of the former with respect to accounting and financial aspects of management.

Women's knowledge important to research and science

Why is infant mortality so high in the South? Are there any simple measures

arrived at a simple, but effective method: Instead of placing newborns in a separate bed, they were laid on their mother's stomach. If this was not appropriate - in the case of a caesarian section, for example - the baby used the father's body warmth.

Newborns treated in this way were found to be healthier, and the survival rate improved.

The results of this study have been widely reported; they have influenced procedures in a growing number of hospitals.

Swedish development cooperation has long recognized the importance of including midwives in various research projects. Midwives play a key role in maternity care, both before and after birth, but in poor countries they have low social status. Despite their unique wealth of knowledge, midwives are seldom included in research projects.

The project described here is one of several which aim to involve more women in scientific research. Women formulate different questions than



that "can help reduce it?"

Questions like these were asked by a midwife participating in a study on the care of newborns.

Her study focused especially on the problems of maintaining babies' body temperature. If the hospital does not have enough incubators or blankets to warm all the babies in need, the risk is great that some of the newborns will be chilled and die.

The study explored various ways to prevent this from happening and

men do - just as researchers in the South formulate different questions than their colleagues in the North. All perspectives are important; none should be left out.

Looking forward



Without speculating all too wildly on future trends, a tendency toward a more intense focus on the roles and attitudes of men can be discerned - especially in areas relating to the family.

Progress has already been made in calling attention to the key role men play with respect to sexuality, reproduction and the family - and the key role they thereby play with regard to women's health. Much work remains, however, before men are adequately engaged in promotion of gender equality.

Male roles have to change

It is also clear that lasting improvements for women, and greater respect for their human rights, cannot be achieved without changes in men's attitudes and behaviour.

Thus, it is especially important to increase men's involvement in efforts to achieve gender equality. To identify

"allies" among male ranks is an important task. Positive male role models are urgently needed.

It is also important to call attention to the gains gender equality offers men. Take, for example, the quality of life a close relationship with one's children can give men.

Increased male commitment

There are several positive examples of men's involvement in work toward gender equality.

In Zimbabwe, for example, a forum for women and men working together toward gender equality has been organized.

In Alexandra, a suburb of Johannesburg, a network of men are committed to combatting violence against women. In late 1997, the network organized a march and manifestation in Pretoria, with President Mandela as one of the speakers.

Networks of men in Namibia and Nicaragua are also working to deter violence against women.

Conferences with a focus on men

UNICEF held a conference on the theme of men's responsibilities and fathering in Jamaica in 1995. In 1997, UNIFEM organized a conference on men and violence in Asia.

A Nordic conference on men was held in Stockholm the same year, and Sweden is working to arrange a global conference on men.

In *Men on Men*, a book the Swedish delegation presented at the United Nations Conference on Women in Beijing, eight Swedish men give their personal views on equality, masculinity and paternity.

Necessary to share power

Over the past decade equality between women and men has increased notably in, for example, education and health care. But the picture is still negative when it comes to the influence women yield in politics and the economy relative to men.

This is the case nearly everywhere one turns. As the United Nations Development Programme, UNDP, put it: Women are still denied access to the corridors of power - economic as well as political. The need for male allies is especially acute in these contexts.

Sida moves forward

The prime challenge, as Sida sees it, is to devise more effective ways of incorporating gender equality into day-to-day operations. Objectives

need to be defined or clarified in measurable terms, and methods refined.

Sida is also working to change attitudes toward women as a group. It is still far too common, even in Sweden, for women to be considered deviations from the "norm", or a group having "special interests". Despite the fact that women make up more than half the population, they tend to be considered a category alongside ethnic minorities, groups with disabilities, and other much narrower segments of society.

Making men the norm - whether consciously or unconsciously - causes many problems, not least in the context of development cooperation. Such a bias distorts our assumptions about society and the women and men in it. This necessarily hinders achievement of results.

It is also increasingly important that we move beyond talking about "women's issues" and instead concentrate on treating those issues as issues of public concern, that is, of importance to everyone, both women and men.

Sida will continue to focus on men and the male role. Equal participation in socio-economic development on the part of women and men requires a change in men's attitudes and behaviour as well as a more equitable distribution of power.

This calls for changes in both attitudes and behaviour, and an awareness of the rewards sharing power offers both sexes.

That, as we see it, is the challenge of the future.

"Women's equality must be a central component of any attempt to solve the world's social, economic and political problems."

(Kofi Annan, International Women's Day, 8th March 1997)



Further reading

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Internationally Sweden has long been in the forefront when it comes to mainstreaming gender equality in development cooperation and in developing effective methods to obtain gender equality.

To ensure adequate and sustainable results in development cooperation women as well as men must be involved in and benefitted by the activities. **Striking a balance** highlights the importance of women's and men's equal participation in development cooperation, and gives examples of Swedish efforts toward the implementation of the United Nations declarations on human rights in this area.



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