

Sida's Action Programme for

Promoting Equality Between Women and Men in Partner Countries

Policy

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SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
COOPERATION AGENCY

Department for Policy and
Legal Services

An introduction to:

**SIDA'S ACTION PROGRAMME FOR PROMOTING EQUALITY
BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN IN PARTNER COUNTRIES**

Sida's Action Programme is comprised of three parts: an Experience Analysis, a Policy and an Action Plan. The three parts of the Action Programme have been documented separately.

The Action Programme has been produced over a period of 18 months. The process of development of the Action Programme has provided an important opportunity for the active involvement of all departments within the organization in the further development of approaches to promote equality between women and men in Sida's development cooperation.

The Action Programme covers a 5 year period from 1997 - 2001. It will be reviewed, and revised as necessary, during the implementation period. A formal evaluation will be carried out at the conclusion of the period.

1. Policy on promoting equality between women and men

This document presents the goal of equality and places it in the context of the other overall goals of Swedish development cooperation. It provides the rationale, starting points and priorities for the promotion of equality between women and men in Sida's development cooperation. It contains brief guidelines on approach and methodology as well as on roles and responsibilities, competence development and resources within Sida.

2. Experience analysis on promoting equality between women and men

This part of the Action Programme builds on past analyses as well as a process of consultation with all operational departments carried out in 1996. It identifies the constraints and potentials for promoting equality between women and men based on past experience. It places particular emphasis on identifying "best practices".

3. Action Plan for promoting equality between women and men

An overall Action Plan has been prepared. In addition, each department within Sida has prepared a concrete Action Plan for promoting equality within the context of the sector/issue with which it is working. The individual Action Plans are comprised of:

- i) an *introductory overview* on the equality perspective in relation to the sector/issue;
- ii) a *strategy* for how equality will be promoted in the policy development/dialogue and operational programmes of the departments. The Action Plans should establish clear, measureable goals and plan to develop impact indicators for monitoring and evaluation.

These Action Plans will be translated into more concrete activities in *annual plans* of the departments and followed up in *annual reporting*.



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WOMEN AND MEN IN PARTNER COUNTRIES**

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PREFACE

The promotion of equality between women and men has been an important issue for Swedish bilateral development cooperation since the 1960s. The objective itself has remained unchanged over the years - stated clearly as the *promotion of equality between women and men*. There has, however, been considerable development of strategies and methodologies as increased knowledge and experience has been gained. An important example of methodological change includes the shift in the 1980s from the focus on separate, special efforts for women to a *mainstreaming strategy* with support to *special efforts to promote equality* as an important complement to this strategy. Another is the move from an exclusive focus on women to a *focus on women and men* and the relationships between them - a gender approach.

With the establishment of the new organization Sida in July 1995 equality between women and men was endorsed as one of four priority areas for the organization. Preparations were begun for the development of this Action Programme which clearly establishes the policy, strategies and concrete actions to be taken over the coming five year period.

In May 1996 the Swedish parliament endorsed the promotion of *equality between women and men in partner countries* as one of the overall goals of Swedish development cooperation. This is a significant political signal of the importance placed on equality between women and men. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs has prepared a policy on promoting equality between women and men in all Swedish development cooperation - bilateral, multilateral as well as through NGOs. This policy provides overall guidelines on how equality should be promoted.

An important starting point for the development of the Action Programme is the international strategy for promoting equality between women and men which was developed and endorsed by national governments at the Fourth UN Conference on Women, the *Platform for Action*. Sida's work with equality will build on the political commitments made by partner countries in Beijing. Strategies and actions will be based on the national reports and follow-up plans of governments and NGOs. The priorities and initiatives of partner countries will be supported and partnerships developed around the implementation of the Platform for Action.

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EQUALITY BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN: A GOAL FOR SWEDISH DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

In May 1996 the Swedish Parliament established the promotion of equality between women and men as a goal for Swedish development cooperation. The establishment of the goal consolidates a long tradition of emphasis on equality within Swedish development cooperation since the 1960s. It is, as well, a clear illustration of the political consensus within Sweden on the importance of equality between women and men for development, both within Sweden itself and in Swedish development cooperation. The goal is formulated as: *"the promotion of equality between women and men in partner countries"* (Bill 1995/96:153).

Rationale: a precondition for just and effective development

The focus on equality between women and men within Swedish development cooperation is based on two important premises: Firstly, the long standing conviction that equality is *a matter of human rights*; and secondly the increasing recognition that equality - equal rights, opportunities and obligations for women and men - is *a precondition for effective and sustainable people-centred development*.

Equality between women and men is thus seen within Swedish development cooperation, as within Sweden as a whole, as an important societal issue and not a "women's issue". Equality should be treated as a crucial factor for development and an integral part of political and economic development and of efforts to secure human rights and democratic systems of government. The whole of society - both women and men, and in particular leadership levels, should be engaged in promoting equality.

Motivation for a focus on equality in Swedish development cooperation

Despite the efforts made to improve the situation of women and increase equality between women and men, progress has been slow and uneven. Serious gender disparities continue to persist. The 1990s have given evidence of serious problems in denial of human rights to women as well as increased violence against women. The UNDP Human Development Report (1995) establishes clearly that there is no country in the world where equality between women and men has been achieved in all areas of societal development. It points to serious inequalities in relation to all variables used to measure human development. Of particular concern are the serious gender-based inequalities in relation to political participation and decision-making. Less than 10% of parliamentary seats and less than 6% of minister positions worldwide are held by women.

The past decade has, however, also shown many positive developments at international, regional and national level which should be supported. Equality between women and men is firmly placed on the international agenda. National governments made international commitments to equality at Beijing and in many of Sida's partner countries national-level strategies to follow up these commitments are being developed. Many national governments today have policies and institutional mechanisms for the promotion of equality; and movements of women's groups, research institutions and NGOs at national level are increasing their potential to influence governments. The growing strength and influence of networks at national, regional and international level is a positive sign. The development of research and tools such as gender sensitization and training programmes, sex-disaggregated statistics, indicators and indices is an important step forward.

Development cooperation has an important role in promoting and facilitating these efforts.

Within development cooperation serious efforts have been made to focus on equality between women and men, particularly over the past 10 years. While considerable advances have been made, especially in relation to institutional development within agencies, there is still need for much improvement before equality can be said to be an integral aspect of development cooperation at all levels. Far too often equality between women and men remains a marginal rather than central issue.

Swedish international commitments

During the past decade there has been a marked increase in attention to equality between women and men in international fora. There is growing consensus among the majority of the member states of the United Nations on the importance of equality for just and effective development and the steps needed to be taken to deal with unacceptable gender inequalities.

Sweden participated actively in promoting attention to equality between women and men in all the important UN conferences held during the 1990s on environment (Rio, 1992), human rights (Vienna, 1993), population (Cairo, 1994), social development (Copenhagen, 1995), human settlements - Habitat (Turkey, 1996) and the follow-up to the Jomtien conference on education held in Amman (1996). Sweden's commitment to equality at Beijing - and at the other important UN conferences - involves both implementation of the recommendations on equality within Sweden and increased support to efforts of partner countries through multilateral, bilateral and NGO development cooperation.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE EQUALITY GOAL

Equality between women and men in the context of the other goals of Swedish development cooperation

The overriding goal of Swedish development cooperation has been since 1962 (Bill 1962:100) to *"improve the standard of living of poor people"*. This goal has been further defined over the years with the addition of sub-goals: *the growth of resources; economic and social equality; economic and political autonomy; a democratic development of society; sustainable use of natural resources and protection of the environment; and the promotion of equality between women and men in partner countries*. All subgoals are subordinate to the goal of poverty reduction and must contribute to the achievement of this overall goal. There is no internal ranking between the sub-goals and that there should be optimal integration of the sub-goals.

The goal of equality between women and men has implications for the cooperation with Eastern and Central Europe even though the overall goals of this support differ in some respects from the goals of the Swedish development cooperation in countries in the South. Promotion of equality between women and men has not been established as a specific goal but equality shall be taken into consideration in relation to other goals. Development cooperation with Eastern and Central Europe shall contribute to: *lasting common security; a profound democratic culture; a socially sustainable economic transition; and an environmentally sustainable development*.

An overall Swedish policy on promoting equality between women and men in development cooperation

A policy for equality between women and men in Swedish development cooperation was prepared by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in June 1996. This policy provides the rationale, principles and guidelines for working with equality and makes specific demands on all actors in Swedish development cooperation. It calls for increased knowledge on the underlying causes of gender disparities and the development of methodologies to address them. Equality between women and men is clearly established as an important criteria for overall country strategy development - influencing the choice of sectors to support in a country, the choice of interventions within sectors, and the approach taken in provision of support. The policy makes concrete demands on agencies working with Swedish development cooperation including the preparation of a concrete Action Programme indicating how the goal will be implemented.

Equality within Sida itself.

Increased understanding of and commitment to equality between women and men generally - within Sweden and within Sida - is a prerequisite for development of competence to promote equality in development cooperation. A greater emphasis will in the future be placed on the linkages between Sida's internal equality and efforts made in development cooperation.

STARTING POINTS

National priorities and initiatives

Since the responsibility for equality between women and men lies with national governments, it is important that Sida's support to promotion of equality is guided by the priorities and initiatives identified by national governments. In supporting equality at country level the national goals and priorities as reflected in national policies and strategies will provide the basis for development of Sida's support. It is also important that Sida is aware of and guided by the priorities and initiatives of other actors at national level in civil society and NGOs. This requires an active dialogue with networks at different levels in partner countries.

Commitment to the priorities established in Beijing

Great importance is given to the *Platform for Action* in Sida's development cooperation since it represents the political commitment of national governments to promote equality between women and men. Taking the Platform for Action as the basis for establishing Sida's priorities ensures that they are in conformity with the priorities established by partner governments and not only based on Swedish perspectives.

Twelve common "*Critical Areas of Concern*" were identified in the Platform for Action as areas needing particular attention. These are: poverty, education and training, health, violence, armed conflict, economy, power and decision-making, institutional mechanisms for gender equality, human rights, media, environment and the girl child. The Critical Areas of Concern were established without any internal ranking since priorities will differ from one national context to another. While Sida's development cooperation covers all these areas specific priorities are set within each national context based on locally identified needs. Specific emphasis should, however be placed on empowering women to

participate more fully in political decision-making since this is a precondition for advancement in all the other Critical Areas of Concern.

In establishing Sida's overall priorities, however, particular attention is given to those Critical Areas of Concern which were emphasized in the Beijing process by governments and NGOs in many of Sida's partner countries. These are areas where donor support can facilitate the creation of preconditions for equality.

Equality between women and men as an important societal issue

Equality between women and men is seen as an important issue for the whole of society and not as a women's issue. Gender disparities are important hindrances to development. Efforts to reduce disparities are not only important for improving women's situation but also for promoting societal development. Treating equality as an important societal issue requires that it is raised at high levels within governments, that cooperation is established with all actors in civil society and that men are actively involved in dialogue on and promotion of equality.

Support to the *empowerment of women* is central to the promotion of just and sustainable development. Empowerment of women concerns women gaining increased power and control over their own lives. It involves awareness-raising, building self-confidence, expansion of choices, and increased access to and control over resources. Donors can play an important facilitating role.

Achieving the goal of equality is, however, also dependent on men taking responsibility for promoting equality. The need to engage and actively involve men was raised in the Platform for Action. Increased efforts will be made to identify men's roles, responsibilities and needs and to inform and engage men. Since attention to the role and responsibilities of men is a cornerstone of Swedish equality strategies, and Sweden played a very active role in Beijing in promoting attention to men, Sida will be actively involved in discussions and support methodology development in this area.

Gender: a focus on both women and men

An important principle of Sida's policy for working to promote equality between women and men is the need for a gender approach, i.e. *a focus on both women and men and the relationships between them* rather than an exclusive focus on women. This is necessary both to understand and tackle the structural causes of inequality rather than the symptoms, and to be able to ensure that both women and men are engaged in, and take responsibility for, promoting equality. It is important to emphasize that a gender approach often involves giving more attention to men since an adequate understanding of men's attitudes and behaviour is important for effective inputs for equality.

The objective of utilizing a gender approach is to promote gender-sensitive development, i.e. development policies and interventions which give adequate attention to both women and men. Women and men often have very different needs and face different cultural, physical, economic and institutional constraints. A clear understanding of structural and systemic constraints is particularly important in order to allow for both women and men to contribute and benefit effectively.

PRIORITIES

Structural causes of inequality

The knowledge and experience gained over the past decade have shown that it is important to focus on the structural and systemic causes of gender inequalities. Three areas in particular need to be highlighted - disparities in relation to: *i) human rights of women; ii) equal participation in political decision-making; iii) equal participation in economic decision-making and economic independence.*

Other major gender inequalities are expressions of disparities in relation to these overall structural problems. *Violence against women* arises from lack of respect for women's human rights; gender disparities in relation to *poverty* arise from women's lack of economic independence and exclusion from economic decision-making; and the *failure to involve women in conflict resolution and rehabilitation efforts* has to be linked to their underrepresentation in all areas and levels of political decision-making. These three overriding areas of human rights and equitable political and economic participation, and the specific problems arising because of failure to secure them, are therefore priority areas for support from Sida.

Socio-cultural factors also contribute to the structural causes of inequality. Negative attitudes and practices lead to the subordination of women and can negatively impact on women and girls through their lives. The Platform for Action calls for the eradication of such negative attitudes and practices. It is important that efforts are made in development cooperation to support local initiatives to combat such socio-cultural hindrances to equality between women and men.

Poverty-related gender inequality

In the development of the Platform for Action many of Sida's partner countries were particularly concerned with poverty-related gender inequality. For example, African partner countries highlighted gender inequalities in relation to *education, sexual and reproductive rights, sustainable livelihoods, health and the girl child*. These particular areas of concern have long been priority areas for Sida support to promotion of equality between women and men. Continued support will be given to national level initiatives to implement the recommendations from Beijing.

A specific initiative in five countries

Efforts will be made to find ways to support implementation of the Platform for Action in all partner countries. A specific initiative to promote increased partnership around the implementation of the Platform for Action is being developed in five countries, one in each of the following regions - Southern Africa (Namibia), Eastern Africa (Tanzania), Asia (India), Central America (Nicaragua) and Central and Eastern Europe (Estonia). The initiative will take different forms in each country because of varying priorities, potentials and constraints. However common to all countries is the effort to link institutions, organizations and individuals in Sweden and the five countries to promote mutual exchange and support on the follow-up to the Platform for Action and promotion of equality.

APPROACHES FOR PROMOTING EQUALITY.

Mainstreaming

An important internal goal in working to promote equality between women and men is to mainstream a gender perspective into the policies and programmes arising from the other goals of Swedish development cooperation, in particular in relation to the overall goal of poverty reduction, but also as more specifically related to socially sustainable economic development, democratic development, promotion of human rights, and environmentally sustainable development. An equality perspective will pervade the implementation of the Action Programmes prepared for the other prioritized issues within Sida: promoting sustainable livelihoods and combatting poverty; peace, democracy and human rights and environmentally sustainable development.

Since mainstreaming entails rethinking development goals, strategies, institutions and processes so that the priorities and needs of both women and men are better reflected and gender disparities addressed, it is no longer enough to focus on equality at the level of projects and programmes. Equality between women and men as an overall goal of Swedish development cooperation must be mainstreamed into *the development of and dialogue on all overall policies and strategies*.

It is crucial for effective work with promoting equality between women and men that there is adequate attention to equality at *country programming level*. Equality must be identified as a priority issue for national development and adequate analyses made of the problems, potentials, priorities and the actions needed. Only with gender-sensitive country analyses, results-analyses and country strategies in place will it be possible to achieve sector analyses and sectoral policies and programmes which give adequate attention to equality. The Platform for Action must be utilized effectively in all efforts made, and in particular as a strategic instrument for policy dialogue and high level government-to-government consultations.

Analysis of the situation of women and men, that is, analysis of the roles, responsibilities, access to and control over resources and decision-making processes, needs and potentials of both women and men, was clearly established in the Platform for Action as the first important step in a mainstreaming approach. This requires that *attention to equality between women and men is an integral part of all analyses* carried out, for example the analyses of objectives, participants, stakeholders, risks and sustainability within the Logical Framework Analysis methodology, as well as the overall analyses of poverty, economic and political development carried out within the context of country strategy development. In most cases attention to equality can be an integral part of existing analyses; in other cases it may be necessary to carry out a separate analysis of the situation of women and men.

A basic methodological requirement laid down in the Platform for Action is that this analysis is *carried out before decisions are taken on actions in any area of development*. This analysis should be carried out in policy development, country strategy development and at project and programme level. It facilitates assessment of potential impact of interventions on women and men and the most effective means of ensuring that both women and men can exert influence on, participate in and benefit from development processes.

Specific support to promotion of equality between women and men

Inputs specifically aimed at promoting equality between women and men are an important complement to Sida's mainstreaming efforts. There is no contradiction between mainstreaming and special inputs to promote gender equality. Where gender disparities are identified it is important to address these disparities. Special inputs to promote gender equality will be targetted at the structural causes of inequalities and not only at symptoms and effects of inequalities. Such inputs will be supported at international, regional and national levels. They can be directed to promotion of empowerment of women as well as to increasing the involvement of men in promotion of equality.

Attention to equality in cooperation and coordination with other actors

Much of Sida's development cooperation involves contact and cooperation with other international organizations - bilateral agencies, the UN system, financial institutions such as the World Bank and IMF, EU, OECD/DAC, the Nordic bilateral agencies and NGOs. A holistic and effective approach to promoting equality between women and men requires that equality is given adequate attention in all forms of cooperation and coordination. Particular emphasis is given to mainstreaming equality into all cooperation and coordination within the EU.

Increased attention will be given to influencing organizations which receive Sida support. In multi-bilateral cooperation and support through NGOs increased demands will be made in relation to mainstreaming an equality perspective. The issue of institutional capacity to work with promoting equality between women and men will be highlighted in general dialogue and negotiations on particular support.

Sida will continue to participate in specific coordination efforts on equality between women and men - the Nordic cooperation on equality, the expert groups on equality at the OECD/DAC and the European Commission, and the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women.

ROLES , RESPONSIBILITIES AND RESOURCES WITHIN SIDA

In keeping with the mainstreaming strategy, the overall responsibility for ensuring that adequate attention is given to equality between women and men in policy development/dialogue and in the development of programmes and projects lies with the *heads of departments* within Sida. In order to ensure that is a priority within Sida a *solid basis of tangible support from top-level management* is needed. Management levels within Sida are expected to develop strategies for providing leadership, setting standards, demanding accountability and rewarding effort.

All personnel working with development cooperation within Sida are expected to have the professional competence to promote equality between women and men in relation to whatever issues they are working on. Methods to ensure increased accountability will be developed. Departments within Sida have responsibility to ensure the necessary awareness, commitment and capacity is developed. This requires competence needs assessments and development of specially tailored training inputs.

While the responsibility for promoting equality between women and men is spread throughout the organization there is a continued need for specialist resources and organizational structures to facilitate the work. Specialist resources should be of

sufficient number, be strategically placed, have adequate status and resources and have a catalytic/advisory focus in their mandate. An Equality Network composed of resource persons from all departments within Sida plays a supportive role in the promotion and follow up of efforts to mainstreaming equality into all policies and programmes.

Much of Swedish development cooperation is channelled through consultants - individuals and institutions. Increased demands will be made for evidence of competence in relation to equality between women and men.

LINKAGES WITHIN THE SWEDISH SOCIETY

Closer cooperation and exchange with *Swedish NGOs* will be beneficial for both Sida and its NGO partners. The equality network of NGOs and the Swedish resource base on equality is one means of facilitating such exchange and cooperation.

The provision of information to the general public on efforts to promote equality between women and men is a priority area. Attention to equality will be increasingly mainstreamed into information activities within Sida. In addition specific information materials should be developed which focus on the promotion of equality.

The Swedish Council for Women in Development (KIB) has an important role to play in spreading information on efforts to promote equality within development cooperation.

Increased contact will be developed with individuals and institutions working with equality within Sweden. Exchange and cooperation will include follow-up to the Beijing conference, the partnership initiatives undertaken in Sida's development cooperation, as well as specific issues such as mainstreaming and gender training.



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