



25 examples of ways in which gender equality can reduce poverty

Gender equality enriches the world



This is the picture in the world today

Power

Half of the world's population are women. Nevertheless, men have 84 per cent of the seats in the world's parliaments. Investment in gender equality will increase the influence of women.

SOURCE: INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

HIV/Aids

Young women (15 – 24 years of age) in Africa south of the Sahara run three times the risk of being infected by HIV than young men. Efforts to change traditional roles of the sexes reduce the risk of being infected for both women and men.

SOURCE: UNFEM

Children

Every year, some 14 million girls between the ages of 10 and 19 give birth.

SOURCE: UNFPA

Abortion

In 28 per cent of the world's countries, women have the right to abortion. In one third of all countries, it is prohibited to carry out abortion under any circumstances.

SOURCE: UNRISD

Ill-treatment

One third of all girls and women throughout the world have been beaten or sexually exploited in their lives.

SOURCE: UNFPA

Ability to read

Of the world's 920 million adult illiterates, 600 million are women.

SOURCE: UNFPA

Loans

Less than 10 per cent of the loans which are earmarked for small-scale agriculture in the African countries are given to women. Of all credits in the entire agricultural sector, only one per cent goes to women.

SOURCE: UNFPA

Missing girls

In Asia, at least 60 million girls are "missing" due to prenatal sex selection, infanticide or neglect.

SOURCE: UNFPA

Trafficking

Each year, up to 800,000 people are trafficked across borders — as many as 80 per cent of them women and girls, mostly exploited in the commercial sex trade.

SOURCE: UNFPA

Health

Every minute a woman dies from the complications of childbirth or pregnancy, and another 20 are seriously injured or disabled.

SOURCE: UNFPA

Food

In developing countries, rural women are responsible for 60 to 80 per cent of food production, but many governments still prohibit a woman from acquiring or disposing of land without her husband's permission.

SOURCE: UNFPA

Violence

Violence kills and harms as many women and girls between the ages of 15 and 44 as cancer.

SOURCE: UNFPA

Work

Women who are gainfully employed throughout the world earn on an average between 73 and 77 per cent of what men earn.

SOURCE: UNFPA

Genital mutilation

Three million girls and women are subjected each year to genital mutilation in Africa and the Middle East.

SOURCE: UNICEF

School and education

117 million children are still out of school, 62 million of them girls.

SOURCE: UNICEF

War and peace

During conflict and its aftermath, women and young people are particularly vulnerable; 80 per cent of the world's 35 million refugees and internally displaced persons are women and children.

SOURCE: UNFPA

Child marriages

In the next 10 years, 100 million girls are likely to be married before the age of 18.

SOURCE: UNFPA

We work with gender equality to end poverty

Many women in the world live in poverty. They lack freedom of choice, power and material resources. Traditional gender roles and norms stand in the way of development. For girls and women the consequences are often negative and sometimes disastrous. However, boys and men also suffer from gender imbalances and traditional injustices.

Therefore, the work of reducing poverty is inseparable from the aspiration to achieve greater equality between women and men. For many years, gender equality was a typical women's issue. Today, working with gender equality is part of all Sida's efforts to reduce poverty. It is a question of human rights. It is also an important component in the development of society – contributions that promote equality between women and men have proved to be among the most effective ways of reducing poverty. Our contributions are targeted at girls and boys, women and men. For when we – women and men – work together, we achieve better results.

This enriches the world, both from a human point of view and economically. In this brochure you can read about 25 projects which show how we, and our partner organisations, support gender equality in other countries. You will also meet some people who describe how they work to enrich the world.

Maria Norrfalk
Director General, Sida

Please visit our website at www.sida.se
where you will find more information about the
projects and our work.



Gender equality and democracy as weapons against poverty in Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan, which was formerly part of the Soviet Union, is one of the poorest countries in Central Asia. However, during recent years the country's economy has improved and the government has a specific strategy to combat poverty. Important components in this strategy are the development of democracy and gender equality, and Sida is supporting several projects in which female and male politicians, journalists and election workers are participating.

After the bloodless revolutions in Georgia and the Ukraine, it was Kyrgyzstan's turn in 2005. Once again, it was the misuse and abuse of power, corruption, and a disputed election result in the parliamentary elections that triggered off the uprising. Many women were candidates in the elections, but not one of them was elected and many women participated actively in the revolution. This had the result that Kyrgyzstan plans to rewrite its constitution and a new election will probably be held in 2006. Then, a number of the women who are currently participating in the project "Promoting Gender Equality in Politics in the Kyrgyz Republic" will stand for election again.



During her five years in parliament in Kyrgyzstan, Asel Mambetalieva, who is a lawyer, participated in the formulation of several laws intended to protect the poor and people without any rights, but she lost her seat in the last election as a consequence of the activities of corrupt politicians who "bought votes" for dollars. Now she is hoping for a new election next year and is already planning her election campaign.

Women and men must cooperate

Bubusara Orozbekova is one of the politicians who stood for election but was not elected to parliament this year. She is planning to make a new attempt in the next election. She is a gynaecologist and the director of a hospital in Osh, and she also runs an organisation that has poverty reduction as its goal. An important part of the organisation's work is to give women living in the mountains, without roads, access to medical services.

"Here in Kyrgyzstan it is still the men who have the power and earn the money. I am convinced that if women had a stronger position, and if women and men worked together, the problems of violence in the home, prostitution, HIV/Aids and drugs would diminish," says Bubusara. She has a great deal of support from her family in both her political and medical work, particularly from her daughter Meerim who worked actively in her election campaign.

Better living standards with gender equality

Meerim is only 19 years old but is already an experienced political fieldworker. She holds courses in



poverty reduction and runs projects in matters related to gender equality in the rural areas of southern Kyrgyzstan. She wants to convince the citizens of Kyrgyzstan that women are needed in politics to enable the country to overcome the economic crisis. She works together with her brother and a group of young people.

“I want to be a politician – our country needs more women in politics. Many people do not believe that women can be good leaders, and I want to show them that they are

wrong,” says Nazgul Aldrahmamova, and the boys in the group nod in agreement. During the election campaign they all became convinced feminists. They are also certain that the standard of living in Kyrgyzstan would improve if there was greater equality between women and men in the country.

“Foreign investments would increase if there were more women in politics. Other countries would see this as a sign of development and start believing in us,” says I’lyazbek Suvankulov.

“Can you think of voting for a female politician?” “What would you say if your wife earned more than you?” These are two of the questions that Nazgul Aldrahmamova uses to start up a discussion on gender equality and the position of women. The goal is to change attitudes and the traditional patterns of both women and men.



In the large towns it is natural that married women go out to work but in the rural areas in Kyrgyzstan many men force their wives to stay at home. Therefore Meerim Orozbekova and her friends have chosen to hold their courses on gender equality in the villages. “It is important to work in the schools – the young people are more receptive to change,” says Meerim.

Profits to be gained through gender equality

Studies show that programmes to enhance gender equality increase the productivity and profits of companies. With the aim of supporting businesswomen and women in power in Archangelsk in Russia, networks have been formed and workshops have been arranged. Participants in the network come from Sweden, Finland, Russia and the Faroe Islands.

Networks give power

In the Middle East, women parliamentarians from several countries have formed networks to strengthen their participation in politics, as well as that of other women.

Equality in government budgets

The governments of South Africa, Uganda, Tanzania, Namibia, Sri Lanka and Barbados are working with gender equality in the government budget planning process in order to show the actual effects of different parts of the economy on the lives of women and men.

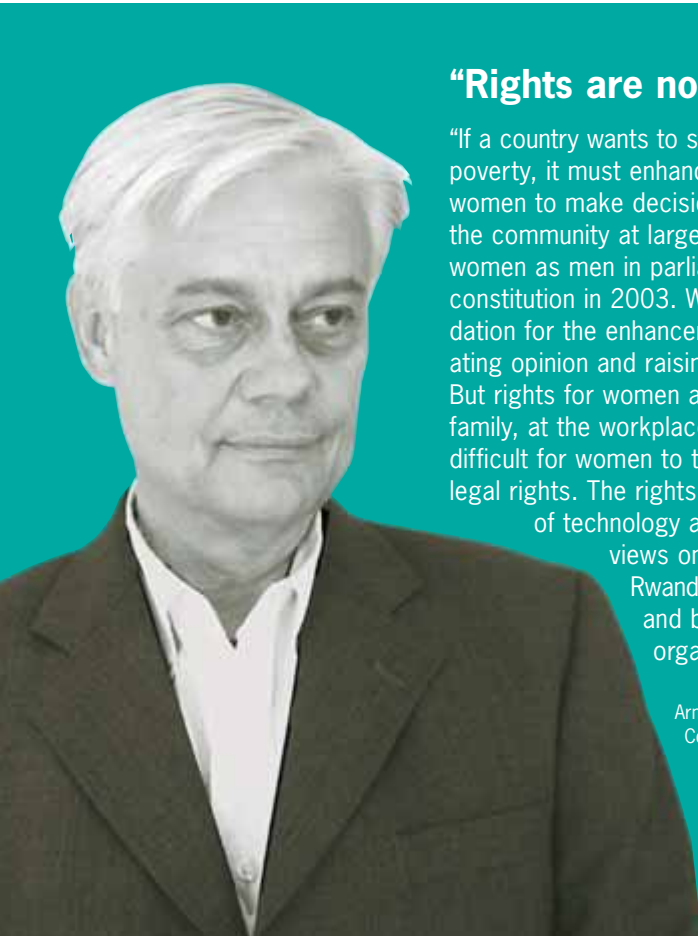
Influence leads to independence

By strengthening their influence on cooperative farms in North-East Palestine, women have become full members in what was previously an entirely male cooperative. The women have started bee-keeping activities, developed new products,

“Rights are not enough”

“If a country wants to stimulate growth and welfare and to reduce poverty, it must enhance the rights and possibilities available to women to make decisions – not just in their families but also in the community at large. In Rwanda today there are just as many women as men in parliament, thanks to a change made to the constitution in 2003. Women’s rights form a very important foundation for the enhancement of gender equality, not least by creating opinion and raising awareness of the conditions of women. But rights for women are not enough. Social pressures in the family, at the workplace and in the religious communities make it difficult for women to take advantage of their new political and legal rights. The rights need to be supplemented with knowledge of technology and society, more self-confidence and new views on the role of men. Female politicians in Rwanda are expressing a need for new knowledge and better contacts with different women’s organisations.”

Arne Ström, Sweden’s Development Cooperation
Counsellor in Kigali, Rwanda



become independent, and started a “social security” fund. Some of them will also stand in the local elections.

More female politicians

In the latest local elections in Banja Luka in Bosnia & Herzegovina, the proportion of women councillors increased by 9.7 per cent. Today, the proportion of women sitting on the town council is 35 per cent. This is far above average for the country and is a result of the programme “Women Today”.

Women’s views on the radio

In Zambia poor women in rural areas can ask questions of those in power – and get answers – in special radio programmes. The women meet in so-called listener groups and discuss questions relating to their everyday lives. Their questions, and the answers, are then broadcast on the radio.

Tomorrow’s leaders

In Palestine young women are being trained to be tomorrow’s leaders at a centre for gender equality.

Read more about these projects at www.sida.se

“Women’s needs must be visible”

“I have worked with a programme of support for the local population in a decentralisation project in Bangladesh. In this programme one requirement specified by Sida was that the female population should be represented at meetings of the local community to the same extent as men and be given the opportunity to present their priorities for the community. Otherwise, how could they make their needs visible, and exert an influence on the decisions that were made in their community?

In my opinion, the most important question of all for women in the world is still education. An ever increasing number of girls are starting school today, but far too many are still being forced to drop out to work in their homes. This minimises the possibilities available to them to exert an influence on the choices they make in their lives, for example if and when they want to marry. When a woman is given the chance to earn her own living, she has greater possibilities to make decisions that concern her life. Her self-esteem is strengthened and she can become a positive model for others.”

Johan Norqvist, programme officer at Sida’s NGO Division



Increased rule of law makes Nicaragua more equal

"Previously, most people considered that men had the right to decide over their family, and no one else should get involved. But we have laws that show that women and men have equal rights. What we do as local legal advisors is to ensure that the laws function in reality", says Melba Estrada Guillen. She is participating in the drive for local legal advisors that Sida is supporting, to increase legal security throughout the country. This is something that also contributes to strengthening women and reducing poverty.

"It was the local council of our village that appointed me as legal advisor. It is a good thing that we are many women advisors; this contributes to strengthening the position of women in society", says Melba Estrada Guillen.



In the drive, "Rural Judicial Facilitators Program", access by poor people to fair, impartial contacts with municipalities, local administration of justice and other institutions is being developed. The 650 local legal advisors work in the very poorest areas of Nicaragua, and as expert support they have the local judges.

The advisors solve local conflicts in families and between neighbours. But their most important function is to be the link between the villagers and the courts, and to be the extended arm of the judges in the villages. They also

"Equality means that both men and women have the same rights and duties. Before I started as a judge in the municipality, not a single man had been convicted for violence against women; it was a matter of women having to adjust and accept whatever happened. Today, we work in a different way with these matters", says Lesbia Malena Tinoco Castellano, judge in Nicaragua.

contribute to strengthening the feeling of security through giving information about important laws, for example, on the responsibility of men for their children, violence, ownership.

Easier to obtain maintenance for children

Outside Melba Estrada Guillen's house, the horse stands harnessed. Here, up in the mountains in the northern part of Nicaragua, a horse or donkey is often the only way of getting to isolated villages. Getting to the nearest police or authority can take a whole day.

"Because we exist, poor people can save time and money compared with having to go to the nearest police or court", says Melba.

Many conciliations are to do with neighbours who have fallen out on account of minor matters. More serious is violence against women and children. The situation can often lead to the woman being forced to





flee with the children, or that the man abandons the family. Many men also refuse to acknowledge their paternity.

Previously, women who were subjected to this were almost without recourse, but for some time there has been a law that states that men have a duty to maintain their children. There are also specially trained police who support women and children subjected to abuse.

Promises instead of conflicts

"When a conflict arises, I meet the parties separately. We talk and we write out an agreement in which each one states what they have promised. If it is a matter of maintenance, we sit down together and go through how much the father is able to pay per month. If he then does not pay, we help to carry the matter on to the family court", explains Melba.

The fact that many of the legal advisors are women is of considerable importance according to Melba,

because they contribute to strengthening the situation of women in society.

"There have never been any problems for me in talking with the men. Of those conciliations I have had so far this year, everything went well. I have never felt frightened or threatened.

Most families in the poor parts of Nicaragua support themselves on a little agriculture and growing coffee. Many can save both time and money through solving small conflicts on the home front using local legal advisors, instead of being forced to travel long distances to police and courts.



"In the beginning there were many people who did not like women police. They did not think that we would manage to do as much as the men. But now they have seen what we can achieve. We are there for the afflicted, for ill-treated and vulnerable women to be able to come to us and feel confident. If they can feel secure it is better for their children – and for the whole country", says Soledad Marisol Rodríguez Herrera, policewoman in Nicaragua.

Land survey with gender equality

The Russian land survey has integrated gender equality among its staff and in its activities. Now analyses are being made that define the ownership of land by women and men, which makes it easier to introduce programmes to improve equality.

The right to be healthy and to own land

Toady considerable efforts are being made to develop maternity care services and child care services in rural areas in Burkina Faso. At the same time women's rights are being strengthened, for example in respect to access to land to farm. All in all this contributes to reducing poverty.

The end of genital mutilation

Female genital mutilation and forced marriages are on the way out in Senegal. This is the result of the education programme that a network, Tostan, is working with in order to strengthen the rights of women.

Ombudsman for Indian women

In Guatemala the "ombudsman for Indian women" is working to strengthen women's rights, for example through educational activities, legal assistance and counselling services. The institution has field offices in different parts of the country and also takes cases to court.

"Gender equality is not a women's issue"

"Sida works with gender equality at four different levels, all of which are equally important. We give support in the form of direct contributions, for example to the work being done by countries to develop governmental and private institutions for gender equality. We also include a gender equality perspective in contributions in other fields – for example, a road construction project is given an additional dimension by considering the differences in the ways in which the project affects women and men. We also conduct a dialogue with the governments of the countries we cooperate with so that they understand that programmes for gender equality are important to combat poverty. It is also just as important to keep the issue on the agenda with our Swedish partners: municipalities, companies and NGOs. I am pleased to see that today more people understand that gender equality is not a women's issue. When men and women participate equally in working life and in the home, understanding is enhanced. It is particularly gratifying to see that men are actively involved in gender equality work, for example in networks in the Ukraine and South Africa, where men try to influence each other to reject destructive men's roles."

Anders Rönquist, officer responsible for gender issues at Sida's Africa



Rights on the radio

In Cambodia a programme for local co-determination is being introduced. To this end there are theatrical activities for educational purposes, ring-in programmes on the radio, and television films, all with human rights and gender equality as common themes. Through the theatrical activities alone, the programme has reached some 2 million of the poorest people.

Stronger position for teachers

What rights and opportunities do women teachers in West Africa have? A network, "Promotion of Women in Education In West Africa", in which 13 countries are participating, is working to raise awareness and to strengthen the social and financial status of teachers.

Sexual rights are being strengthened

In Abkhazia in Georgia, an organisation, Avangardi, has started a women's clinic which makes it possible for women and girls to have gynaecological examinations, and to be given support and more knowledge in respect of their sexual and reproductive rights. At the clinic they can also talk about matters that are normally taboo, for example men's violence against women.

Drama on rights

With the aid of drama as a training method and mobile teams, values relating to human rights, gender equality and HIV/Aids are being strengthened in communities and among refugees in Georgia.

Read more about these projects at www.sida.se

"Knowledge is power"

"Gender equality is a cross-cutting policy issue, like HIV/AIDS. HIV and poverty in our context has the face of a young girl or woman, whose circumstances force her to drop out of school, without food, clothes, shelter or access to health services. Such a girl is more vulnerable to high-risk sexual behaviour so as to feed herself and siblings – she has no choices. This connection between gender, HIV and poverty is unquestionable. I believe gender equality is the key to change, and it has to start at policy level. My work involves gender and HIV mainstreaming as a vehicle through support to community based NGOs who in turn engage local decision makers to monitor gender and HIV issues at grassroot level. The most important thing to me is passing on any knowledge I acquire every day to those around me, and also linking people up with resource systems. Knowledge is power. I always hope that in so doing, someone can interrogate their own situation, and embrace this opportunity to emancipate themselves".

Hazel Chinake, Programme Officer (responsible for HIV/AIDS and Gender issues), Swedish Embassy, Harare, Zimbabwe.



New gender roles and attitudes to reduce violence and HIV/Aids in South Africa

"I have seen at close quarters the damage caused by traditional gender roles. Women are physically abused, HIV/Aids is spread, and families are broken up. I decided to do something about it," says Rraphakisa Botha, who works full time in two organisations: South African Men's Forum and Men as Partners Programme (MAP).

"It is almost the same as apartheid. Many fought till they died and never experienced freedom," says Rraphakisa. Nonetheless he is con-

An investment for society

MAP's work is based on challenging attitudes and behaviour that put the health and safety of women and children at risk. The focus of the organisation is on making men better fathers and partners. The project, which is receiving support from Sida, also includes training in gender equality for activists who are working to reduce the incidence of HIV/Aids through the Treatment Action Campaign.

"Working with gender equality is an investment for society as a whole. Without the rigid gender roles the number of murders would diminish drastically and the rate at which HIV/Aids is spreading would slow down," says Dean Peacock, head of the Men as Partners Programme.

A new role for men reduces poverty

In the opinion of Dean Peacock, when 25 per cent of the sexually



"It took several years before I dared to do household chores while others were watching. Now I do it deliberately, to provoke discussion and change," says Rraphakisa Botha.

vinced that a change is on the way, but it will take time. The patriarchy has deep roots in South Africa and violence is widespread. Even today, school books are still being printed in South Africa that maintain that men are the heads of families.

The MAP programme holds demonstrations in Soweto to exhibit gender equality. Participants are encouraged to start making small changes. "Go home to your wife and tell her that you love her," says one of the speakers.





active population is infected with HIV, it is time to rethink.

“I don’t dare guess how many human lives have been claimed, and are still being claimed, by traditional men’s roles,” he says. The belief that “real men” do it without condoms limits the possibilities available to women to discuss safe sex, and contributes to the rapid spread of the HIV infection. Every year between 2 000 and 3 000 men come to MAP’s

weeklong courses which include, among other things, activities such as changing diapers and cooking food. The doors are open to everyone, but Dean Peacock prefers to work with organised groups such as trade unions and churches. Within the framework of MAP there are a number of support groups that meet every week where men who are struggling with their lives are given the opportunity to speak their mind.

Every year between 2 000 and 3 000 men come to MAP’s weeklong courses. The goal is to change traditional gender roles and make men into better partners, thereby reducing violence and the spread of HIV/Aids.

Men's centres make men better partners in the Ukraine

Ukraine is undergoing a process of development that intends to make poverty a thing of the past. However, there are many obstacles to development: the alcoholism and short life expectancy of men, women’s exposure to violence, and the insecure childhood of boys and girls in families that have broken up. A group of dedicated men therefore started a men’s centre for men in crisis, with support from Sida.

Today there are men’s centres in four places in the Ukraine. At these centres fathers-to-be can participate in training programmes in parenthood, and men in crisis can receive support. The project also trains police officers in ways to act when intervening against violence in the home. The goal is to change stereotyped men’s roles and to reduce alcoholism and violence, which are obstacles to development. Similar work is now being done at men’s centres in Russia and Moldova.

Christian feminists' network

In Asia a Christian feminists' network is working to increase gender equality and to break patriarchal structures, both in society and in the church. Important issues for the network are the right of women to their own interpretation of the Bible and ways in which women contribute to development.

Support for victims of trafficking

More than 50 projects are taking place in the world with support from Sida that assist girls, boys and women who have been exploited for sexual purposes or labour through trafficking.

Support after the tsunami

The Ache region in Indonesia was severely hit by the tsunami. To reduce the vulnerability of women, efforts are being made in the fields of reproductive health services and psychosocial services, sanitary articles are being distributed, and programmes are being implemented that have the aim of preventing violence against women in the region.

Equality in sexuality

Sex education in schools is not a matter of course in India. To increase gender equality and to reduce the risk of HIV/Aids and unwanted pregnancies, an Indian organisation, MAMTA, and the Swedish National Association for Sexual Education,



“Without gender equality resources are wasted”

“I have worked with training programmes in gender equality in several places in the world. In brief they are based on helping people to see the structure that they themselves are part of - distributing “gender spectacles” if you like. Of course, initially it is not popular. Neither women nor men want to see that there is a problem, or even worse, that they themselves are part of it. If you want to reach people, you cannot beat them on the head with the Women’s Convention.

You must meet them in their own real life situation and help them see how they can gain from gender equality. In Georgia, for example, many unemployed men are sitting at home, feeling depressed. When they manage to discard the image of what a “real man” works with, they can find meaningful things to do. And when they think about the future they wish their sons and daughters to have, they find the motivation to think in new ways. It is important to work with gender equality since everyone should have the right to development and since it is a waste of human resources if people remain stuck in unproductive gender roles.”

Nina Strandberg, Sida, programme officer for Georgia

RFSU, are working with information and counselling services for young people, both boys and girls.

Improved literacy

Literacy rates among women in Afghanistan are extremely low. However, programmes to educate girls are providing results. The number of girls attending school has increased dramatically in recent years, from 3 to over 35 per cent. This enhances the possibilities

available to girls to acquire an education and, later on, a profession.

New attitudes and gender roles

In order to reduce the spread of HIV/Aids, young men in Zambia, Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda are being encouraged to give up ingrained gender roles and to change their attitudes to gender. The project "Young Men as Equal Partners" also involves male teachers, health workers and young women.

Read more about these projects at www.sida.se

We are many working with gender equality to end poverty

Gender equality is a human right as well as an effective way of combating poverty. And this applies to poverty in all its forms – lack of food and water, education, health, possibilities to make a living, power and influence, democracy, and so on. Our struggle for gender equality is therefore intimately related to the struggle against poverty.

If you want more information on gender equality, poverty reduction and conditions in the world, visit www.sida.se or the websites of our Swedish partner organisations. Gender equality enriches the world, both from a human point of view and economically!

Africa Groups of Sweden

www.afrikagruppen.se

Diakonia

www.diakonia.se

ECPAT Sweden

www.ecpat.se

Forum Syd

www.forumsyd.se

Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation

www.iktk.se

Kvinnoforum

www.kvinnoforum.se

LO-TCO Secretariat of International Trade Union Development Cooperation

www.lotcobistand.org

Ministry for Foreign Affairs

www.ud.se

National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations

www.lsu.se

NBV Educational Association of the Sobriety Movement

www.nbv.se

Niyo

www.niyo.se

Olof Palme International Centre

www.palmecenter.se

PMU InterLife

www.pmu.nu

Swedish Association for Sexuality Education

www.rfsu.se

Swedish Committee for Afghanistan

www.sak.se

Swedish Committee for UNICEF

www.unicef.se

Swedish Cooperative Centre

www.utangranser.se

Swedish Male Network Association

www.man-net.nu

Swedish Mission Council

www.missioncouncil.se

Swedish National Committee for UNIFEM

www.unifem.se

Swedish Organisations of Disabled persons International Aid

www.shia.se

Swedish Red Cross

www.rodakorset.se

Swedwatch

www.swedwatch.org

United Nations Association of Sweden

www.fn.se

UNDP Sweden

www.undp.se/mdg

Zenit – a global meetingplace for young people

www.zenit.sida.se

The world has become a better place to live in

When newspapers and the television report on wars and terror, environmental disasters and starvation, it can be difficult to believe that the world has become a better place to live in. But this is actually the case.

Average income in many poor countries has increased. Infant mortality has been halved and more mothers survive childbirth than before. Today, eight children in ten go to school. In the last 30 years the proportion of democratically elected governments has increased from 27 to 70 per cent.

But in many countries the lack of equality between women and men is an obstacle to development. Therefore, working with gender equality is part of all Sida's efforts to combat poverty and Sida's contributions are directed towards girls and boys and women and men.

This contributes to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals which the countries of the world agreed on in the UN – eight goals that can change the world.

It is possible to halve poverty by 2015. It requires cooperation and perseverance. The partner countries are responsible for their own development. Sida provides resources and develops knowledge and expertise.



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