

Gender matters





Gender equality – a human right

Discrimination based on gender is one of the main causes of poverty, and a major obstacle to equitable and sustainable human development. The work of promoting gender equality, which concerns men as much as women, is fundamental to development.

Gender equality – a question of power and rights

The principal argument for working with gender equality is that it is a human right. The first article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which the governments of the world have adopted, states: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” Yet in almost every society, inequality between women and men, girls and boys, is rooted in countless customs and social structures.

Access to power and resources is crucial to the exercise of human rights. In most societies, men as a group have more power than women, who are often excluded and oppressed by patriarchal structures. This is particularly evident in the economic and political sphere, where participation by women is restricted. In most societies, decisions at all levels – in the family, at village level, in parliamentary assemblies and in economic life – are made far more often by men than by women.

But power structures are more complicated than this. An imbalance also exists in terms of power and access to resources within both groups. Moreover, some women have more power than some men; variables such as class, age, ethnicity, disability, and sexual orientation affect the way in which power is distributed among groups and individuals.

Violence is an extreme expression of unequal power relations. The UN definition of gender-related violence in the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, adopted in 1993, is “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to

result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.”

Most acts of violence against women are committed by men. But women can also be guilty of violent behaviour. They may, for example, engage in institutionalised violence, cruel or brutal practices conventionally regarded as legitimate expressions of societal norms. Female genital mutilation or honour killings are two examples. Though the victims of gender-related violence are primarily women and girls, men and boys may also be affected. Hate crimes against homosexuals are a case in point.

Sida’s main strategy for counteracting unequal power relations between women and men is to promote human rights for all. Improving opportunities for poor women and poor men alike to participate in and influence society is crucial to the task of reducing poverty.

Women and men experience poverty differently

Poverty is generally defined as a lack of money and resources. However, it is equally about the absence of power and choice. Gender is an important variable in any analysis of the nature of poverty – and of its causes and effects – as the situation will generally be different for women and men.

According to reports published by the World Bank and others, inequality of conditions between the sexes tend to be greatest in the poorest families. Researchers like Amartya Sen and Naila Kabeer have shown that fami-

lies seldom distribute resources evenly or fairly. Girls and women often eat last – and worst. They have less money to spend, are more poorly educated, and enjoy less freedom of movement than male family members. Because of the unequal distribution of power and resources both within families and societies, women in some households could be classed as poor, even though their husbands and sons are not.

As a group, female-headed households – single women and their children – are often described as “the poorest of the poor”. Images of destitute women with their starving children, the helpless victims of war and famine, have for decades given visual expression to poverty in its most extreme form. It has even been said that widespread poverty results in a larger proportion of households without male providers. But the truth about single mothers – or grandmothers – is not always so clear-cut. The perception of single mothers as victims may be rooted in traditional patriarchal values regarding unmarried mothers – a highly stigmatised group often held up to public shame, even in Sweden until just a few decades ago.

Poverty is greatest when people are helpless to control the circumstances under which they live. Women who for economic or social reasons are compelled to live in forced or violent

marriages could be regarded as even poorer than single mothers, who, in spite of everything, are free to manage their own lives.

Experience of poverty is highly gender-related. Men, women, boys, and girls feel about and are influenced by poverty in very different ways, and their strategies for rising above it will therefore differ. Though women and men may live under the same economic conditions, inequality still exists if men have higher status and positions. Discrimination in all areas of society, vulnerability to violence, norms and values governing what women and girls can and cannot do, mean that women are often even harder hit by poverty than men.

Male vulnerability should also be highlighted in poverty analyses. In times of crisis, more men than women fall into destructive patterns of behaviour such as crime, alcoholism, and violence. Poverty analyses must include men who have become unemployed or been demobilised, who have resorted to criminal activities, or who have dangerous and exploitative jobs. Men, too, are discriminated against on various grounds, and analyses should also discuss imbalances of power between groups of men.

It is thus important to counter the view of poor women as victims as it clouds the issue of women’s own opportunities. Much ingenuity and

GENDER & EQUALITY: TERMS FOR A NEW ERA

Equality

All people are of equal value regardless of gender, religion, ethnicity, sexuality, class or caste, etc.

Gender equality

Gender equality means that women and men, girls and boys have equal rights, opportunities, and obligations in all areas of society.

Gender equity

The principle and practice of fair allocation of resources, programs and decision-making to both women and men according to the norms and values of the specific community.

Gender roles

Gender roles are culturally and socially conditioned conceptions of how women and men are or ought to be, or what is called female and male characteristics.

Gender

Gender is an overarching, fundamental variable that cuts across all other classifications of people. Gender systems are rooted in a place, time and culture and determine what is expected of and valued in a woman/man and girl/boy in these specific contexts. Gender relations are not fixed but learned through socialisation processes. Gender systems are institutionalised through child-rearing ideologies and practices, education systems, political and economic systems, legislation, and culture, religion and traditions.

Sex

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

Intersectionality

All humans are divided by culture and society into several different categories based on, for example, gender, ethnicity, class, or sexual orientation. An intersectional approach to analysing the disempowerment of marginalised women or men attempts to capture the consequences of the interaction between two or more forms of subordination.

Empowerment

Empowerment refers to a person’s enhanced ability and opportunity to be able to change her or his life. The empowerment of women is a point of departure in international development work. The Platform for Action drawn up at the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing is an agenda for women’s empowerment.

Photo: Louise Gubb



Raphakisa Botha is hanging up washing in the yard. He is an active member in the organisation Men As Partners, MAP. Sida supports MAP’s work, which involves challenging the attitudes and behaviour of men who endanger the health and security of women and children.



Dhaka, 19 July 2005. Sammilito Nari Samaj, an umbrella organisation for women's movements in Bangladesh, demonstrates for women's rights.

CULTURE IS NO REASON FOR DISCRIMINATION

- Cultures are created by historical and geographical circumstances and processes and as such are dynamic, interactive, and constantly changing.
- Women and men are products of their culture, but they are also participants in the creation of culture. Harmful traditions can and have been changed. Foot binding and widow burning are now extremely rare.
- Respect for culture is sometimes held up as a reason for not addressing gender discrimination even when it involves violence against women. But similar arguments are seldom put forward for harmful customs which are gender neutral, such as slavery.
- Women's movements or other organisations that promote women's rights are found in most cultures.
- Cultures have a tendency to favour certain groups over others.

strength is needed to survive, and support dependents, when living in extreme poverty. It is therefore crucial that development initiatives acknowledge the resources that women are themselves able to mobilise in the fight against poverty. Agriculture in Africa, managed for the most part by hard-working, poor women, is one example.

Gender equality, context, and culture

In countless declarations and conventions, the world's governments have agreed that equality between women and men is a non-negotiable principle. However objections that gender equality is a "Western invention" or "not part of our culture" are occasionally raised in international contexts. Carrying on discussions on the subject in relation to specific cultures and traditions is often a difficult and delicate task.

In such contexts, a firm defence of the equal value of all human beings is needed. At the UN Fourth World Conference on Women, held in

Beijing in 1995, it was also agreed that no government would be allowed to plead national customs as an excuse for not guaranteeing human rights and freedoms for all (Platform for Action, par. 9).

Moreover, the concept of gender equality is perceived in different ways. When evaluating Sida's work on gender equality,* the evaluation team in Nicaragua was told that the concept lacks meaning among primary stakeholders. Women and men understood it to mean 'sameness', implying no difference whatever between men and women, and the term was therefore considered absurd. On the other hand, they responded to the notion of *inequalities* between women and men, since these could easily be identified as unjust. In South Africa, black women stressed that gender equality could not be understood separately from respect for racial and cultural differences, tolerance for diversity, and the restoration of human dignity for all.

* Mikkelsen et. al, 2002.

Background: From Women to Gender

The prevailing view of women and men has shaped the character and direction of development aid and cooperation from the start. In the Western world, women were long regarded primarily as 'housewives'. This notion informed donor interventions in developing countries, and resources were mainly targeted at men, who were to be responsible for the projects. Women were perceived as victims in need of help, particularly when caring for children.

The rapidly growing women's movements of the 1970s challenged this view. The UN First World Conference on Women, held in Mexico in 1975, broke new ground; women from all over the world assembled and demanded gender equality. After the conference, the UN proclaimed a Women's Decade: Women in Development (WID).

During the UN International Women's Decade, many donor countries and non-governmental organisations made a concerted effort to make women more visible. They were to be incorporated into development cooperation projects and programmes, and a number of new strategies were designed. One of these was aimed at getting more women to enter working life on the assumption that if women played a greater part in the production process, they would be on a more equal footing at home. The resulting rise in production would in turn benefit economic development as a whole.

A large number of women's projects were initiated, primarily with the aim of enhancing women's ability to provide for themselves and strengthen their role and status in society. Ministries of women's affairs and women's institutes sprang up in many countries.

But the focus on a women's perspective – WID – had its limits. Many 'sewing machine projects' aimed at boosting productivity did badly as the participants were not given training in professional entrepreneurship. Moreover, projects were often a direct transfer of Western models to societies with completely different traditions and gender roles. In many cases they merely added to women's existing workload; from having pre-

viously worked at home, they now had two jobs, while men's roles remained unchanged.

Meanwhile, the Western model was coming under criticism from women's movements in the South. It was pointed out that women are not the same the world over. They have different needs and use different strategies. White, Western, middle class women could no longer speak for them all.

The UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing marked the transition to a new perspective: gender and development. Relations between women and men took on a new focus. The issue of power and gender took centre stage. Women's and men's respective responsibilities, rights, opportunities and access to resources, and how these differed, both from each other and in a variety of contexts came under the spotlight. The new gender perspective underlined the need to take account of the actual context and of how gender relations are impacted by other variables such as age, class, ethnicity, religion, and disability. The assumption that the same solutions could be applied anywhere in the world was no longer tenable. What's more, it became apparent that relations between women and men are social constructs, and can therefore be changed – as shown by the fact that they vary, often widely, from culture to culture.

A further consequence of these fresh insights was a radical shift in focus away from the conventional 'victim' thesis to a new perception of women as powerful, independent agents. Empowerment became the new keyword.

New strategies for change were developed in the wake of the Beijing conference. Women's projects would no longer be 'add-ons' to mainstream programmes, with little chance of affecting the rest of society. All development cooperation would instead incorporate a gender perspective. All undertakings and institutions would be assessed on the basis of how they affected women and girls, men and boys respectively. Gender equality would be integrated as an objective in all development programmes, projects and initiatives, an entirely new approach to development.

THE UN AND GENDER EQUALITY – MILESTONES

1945 The UN is founded. The Charter of the United Nations is the first international legal document to establish the principle of equal rights for women and men.

1951 The International Labour Organisation, ILO, adopts a convention on equal remuneration for women and men for work of equal value.

1952 The UN General Assembly adopts a convention on women's political rights, including the right to vote.

1967 The UN General Assembly adopts a declaration to abolish discrimination of women.

1975 International Women's Year. The UN First World Conference on Women is organised in Mexico City. A Platform for Action for gender equality, development and peace is adopted.

1976 The UN International Women's Decade – Women in Development, WID – is launched.

1979 The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, CEDAW, is adopted by the UN General Assembly.

1981 CEDAW comes into force after being ratified by 20 countries. Sweden is the first country to ratify CEDAW.

1993 The UN World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action states: "The human rights of women and of the girl-child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights". The General Assembly adopts the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

1994 At the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, the right to abortion becomes a matter of controversy. Women's right to abortion in countries where abortion does not conflict with the law, and to reproductive health is acknowledged in the Programme of Action, which also establishes that women's status in the family and in society must be improved.

1995 The UN Fourth World Conference on Women is arranged in Beijing. A Platform for Action that is adopted at the conference, the Beijing Declaration, proposes a number of measures in twelve strategic areas: Women and poverty; Education and training of women; Women and health; Violence against women; Women and armed conflict; Women and the economy; Women in power and decision-making; Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women; The human rights of women; Women and the media; Women and the environment; The girl-child.

2000 UN Member States agree to work together to eradicate extreme poverty. They formulate the eight Millennium Development Goals. Goal 3 reads as follows: Promote gender equality and empower women.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR SIDA'S WORK

One goal

To help create conditions that will enable poor people to improve their quality of life.

Two perspectives

The perspective of the poor
The human rights perspective

Eight central component elements

Respect for human rights
Democracy and good governance
Equality between women and men
Sustainable use of natural resources and protection of the environment
Economic growth
Social development and social security
Conflict management and security
Global public goods

SIDA'S PROGRAMMES FOR GENDER EQUALITY

Since the 1960s, Sida has attached particular importance to the work of promoting gender equality. Strategies and methods have developed with the continual acquisition of knowledge and experience.

1983 – Plan of action for women-oriented development assistance is adopted.

1996 – Gender equality becomes one of the overall goals of Sweden's development cooperation.

1997 – Women and Men. Sida's Programme for Gender Equality is adopted. The programme introduces gender mainstreaming as a strategy in development cooperation. Special initiatives to promote gender equality are seen as an important complement to the main strategy.

2003 The Swedish Parliament adopts a **Policy for Global Development**. Sida meanwhile draws up its **Perspectives on Poverty**, a policy document that addresses disparities between women's and men's experience of poverty and the opportunities available to women and men respectively to improve their lives.

2005 – Sida's revised policy – **Promoting Gender Equality in Development Cooperation** – is presented.

Sida's commitment to gender equality

Gender equality is crucial to development and poverty reduction. Sida integrates a gender perspective in all development cooperation and seeks to highlight gender equality concerns, including controversial issues, in international fora.

In 2003, the Swedish Parliament adopted a new Policy for Global Development. In place of the six previous development objectives, the policy lays down a single goal for development cooperation: to help create conditions that will enable poor people to improve their quality of life. The policy also identifies eight 'central component elements' for development cooperation. One of these is equality between women and men. Gender equality is referred to here as a human right and a basic precondition of poverty reduction.

In 2005, in response to the new policy for global development, Sida reformulated its own policy for promoting gender equality in development cooperation. Though the goal – equality between women and men – remains the same as in previous policy documents, the poverty perspective is more clearly delineated. A new feature is Sida's five points of departure for gender equality promotion:

1. Gender equality strengthens Sida's poverty reduction efforts.
2. Gender equality is crucial to the achievement of sustainable democratic development.
3. Unequal power structures for women and men hinder economic and democratic development.
4. Gender relations vary from society to society. Sida takes this into account, without, however, compromising human rights principles.
5. Equal economic opportunities for all is fundamental for achieving sustainable and democratic development and pro-poor growth. Sida should promote and address the importance of women and men equally owning and controlling resources such as land, housing and money.

Gender mainstreaming – a strategy and an approach

The Beijing conference marked the adoption of gender mainstreaming in Sweden and internationally. Under this new strategy, all policy initiatives, programmes and projects are assessed from a gender perspective *before* implementation. Whatever the area – infrastructure support, education or tax legislation – every undertaking must be analysed for its differential impact on women and men.

Interventions must then be designed in such a way that women and men can influence, take part in and contribute to the development process. Subsequent evaluation of a completed programme or project must include an analysis of its effect on living conditions for women and men respectively.

Three approaches in Sida's work and interventions are equally relevant to working towards gender equality:

- Actively applying and integrating a gender perspective in all development cooperation,
- targeting specific groups or issues
- conducting a gender-aware dialogue with cooperation partners (governments, organisations, other donor countries and the international community).

Gender mainstreaming is not just a matter for individual experts. Responsibility for its implementation lies with everyone involved. The strategy was designed to ensure that gender equality concerns are not overshadowed by other political issues and activities. It also prevents gender equality from being seen as merely a 'women's issue'. A holistic perspective is consistently adopted when compiling data and information: determining whether



Janylkan Usenova is a politician in Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan. She is firmly supported by her voters in a poor district just outside the city. Many families have been given the chance to build their own houses and move from the primitive caravans that used to be their homes, thanks to political decisions adopted by the local district council on Janylkan's initiative. Sida supports initiatives aimed at increasing women's political participation.

women and men experience different conditions, obstacles and opportunities in their efforts to rise above poverty is intrinsic to every inquiry.

In recent years, Sida and other international actors have evaluated gender mainstreaming as a strategy. Criticism has focused on the danger of gender equality being overshadowed by other goals once implementation has begun. Efforts may not be followed up and properly consolidated, particularly if measurable goals are lacking and there is no clear division of responsibility. If no one is accountable, the issue easily falls between several stools.

To counter this, Sida has drawn up the following guidelines for gender mainstreaming. Efforts should be made in all interventions to:

1. allocate the necessary time and resources for gender mainstreaming in all initiatives,
2. identify realistic, clear, and measurable goals,
3. plan and conduct activities that move gender equality work forward,
4. integrate a gender perspective

into all studies and assessments serving as a basis for planning and decision-making.

Gender equality in poverty reduction and country strategies

Analyses of all aspects of society are essential to poverty reduction. Poor women and men are particularly affected by the way their societies function. Sida contributes to the development of partner countries' poverty reduction strategies, and emphasises gender as an important dimension of poverty in these processes.

Sweden's own strategies for bilateral development cooperation are also increasingly based on joint analyses of gender and poverty. An example is the country strategy for Burkina Faso, adopted in 2004.

A country strategy's primary task is to provide knowledge of and guidelines on how development cooperation can contribute most effectively to reducing poverty in the society concerned. It also includes proposals for specific interventions. Examples of areas in which gender equality is of particular

INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE

Sida is highly active internationally – within the UN family, in the EU and in OECD-DAC. The agency seeks to strengthen the status of gender equality issues in development cooperation. Sida also engages in continual dialogue with partner countries on these issues.

Sida supports the international dialogue by:

- contributing to international policy and methods development in the gender equality sphere,
- providing resources in the form of expertise,
- actively pursuing central gender equality issues as part of poverty eradication, e.g. the importance of a gender equality perspective in all development initiatives, and of women's sexual and reproductive health and rights,
- building and participating in alliances between like-minded governments to promote gender equality.

Networking – A strategic method for promoting gender equality

An important part of Sida's gender equality work is to support and make use of different types of networks. Sida has long supported the construction of networks in which international and Swedish organisations jointly develop knowledge of and expertise in gender equality.

Supporting a variety of networks is also strategic because it provides Sida with knowledge of different dimensions of the debate. This also enables Sida to influence and apply its gender equality perspective to a larger group and in the global debate. Sida supports research networks in Sweden, the United Kingdom, Africa, and Asia.

Photo: Trygve Balstad/PHOENIX



A young family in Zambia. Everyone should have the right to decide if and when they want to have children. Sida works actively for the promotion of sexual and reproductive rights.

relevance include economic justice, sexual and reproductive rights and education. If women's economic, legal, and social status is strengthened – in other words if women are empowered – their productive potential is released. The result is economic growth and development in all areas of society.

Examples of gender equality work

Education

In 2004, statistics released by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other organisations, showed that approximately 120 million children are not enrolled in basic education. Well over half – 57 per cent – are girls. The higher the level of education, the fewer girls there are.

Many parents living on small margins – and even those with better means – choose to invest more in the education of their sons than that of their daughters. A common justification is that it is a waste of time and money to educate girls since they are going to get married in any case. Instead, girls are forced to stay at home and do housework or even help earn money for the family.

Education for all children is also a matter of political will. Even the poorest countries are usually able to offer primary, and even lower secondary, education to all children. In some countries, however, the will is lacking.

It is vital to emphasise that education is not only crucial to development; it is also one of the most important factors in economic growth.

Research into development issues has shown that the returns on investment in education, particularly that of girls and women, are considerable: better health, increased productivity, and lower rates of infant mortality.

Sida accordingly seeks to improve educational opportunities for women and men, girls and boys. The agency extends support for education and educational reform in a number of countries, and places very high priority on the goal of education for all. The gender distribution of teaching staff has been shown to play a key role: countries in which the proportion of female teachers is small also have a smaller percentage of girl pupils.

Economic justice

Ownership and control of material resources is a condition of empowerment and self-determination. Yet in many countries, women's right to own or inherit property or money is curtailed, or denied altogether. One of Sida's tasks is therefore to support equal rights for women and men with regard to ownership, inheritance and participation in the labour market. Sweden's country strategy for Kenya, for example, is aimed particularly at promoting women's economic rights. Another example is Sida's support for a helpdesk designed to promote the property rights of African women.

Initiatives and projects that serve to enhance women's participation in the economy have visibly improved gender equality.

A good example are the numerous Sida-funded microcredit projects. These make small loans available to women who want to start up their own business. Many such projects have benefited women substantially in

terms of enhanced economic power and greater influence within the family and in society as a whole.

Experience of decades of development cooperation has shown that children also tend to benefit when women's economic status is raised.

Sexual and reproductive rights

The UN International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo in 1994 marked an important step towards international consensus on sexual and reproductive rights. It was established that all human beings have the basic right to decide freely on matters relating to their bodies, their sexuality and choice of partner. Everyone is also entitled to information and counselling on issues relating to sex and partnership, and to basic sex education in school.

These rights also presuppose the right of women and men to decide freely the number and spacing of their children. This means access to contraceptives, and free and safe abortion. At present, there is no global consensus on these issues; the United States, some Islamic states and the Catholic Church are strong opponents of family planning services and abortion clinics, often advocating abstinence as the only method of preventing unwanted pregnancies.

Some 20 million unsafe abortions are performed annually around the world. Many of these lead to complications and approximately 70,000 women and girls die each year.

Sida and Sweden actively pursue the issue of free and safe abortions in international fora such as the UN and in the context of development cooperation. Much of Sida's work involves shedding light on the problems that

Photo: Pietro Gennini/Phoenix



Education for all is one of the important goals of development cooperation.

POVERTY ANALYSIS WITH A GENDER PERSPECTIVE

No analysis of poverty and its expression in a society can be considered complete without a gender perspective. The following questions should form part of any poverty assessment,

1. The sexual division of labour.

What work and tasks are, as a rule, conducted by men or women, girls or boys? Which of these are paid? Which of these give status and respect? Is there a division of labour between the sexes in all activities, or are there tasks that are carried out by women as much as by men?

2. Access to and control of resources.

Resources can be divided into three categories – economic, political, and time. Questions to ask are: Who controls property and income, who has access to political power and representation, who controls their own time, who has more or less leisure time?

3. Gender roles and responsibilities.

This dimension concerns the social relationships between women and men, girls and boys. How are families organised? How is sexuality perceived and talked about?

4. Practical and strategic gender needs.

What needs do women and men express? Are their needs different? Here, it is important to differentiate between practical needs for daily life, such as safe drinking water or health care, and strategic needs such as strengthening legal rights and equal pay for equal work.

5. Living conditions and position in society.

Women and men may share the same conditions but still be unequal in terms of access to power, rights, and resources.

DID YOU KNOW THAT...

... men often define poverty as a lack of self-respect, while women often define it as a lack of food for the children. This emerged in the World Bank report "Voices of the Poor".

... half the world's population is female, but more than 99 per cent of the world's total wealth is owned by men and 90 per cent of the world's income is earned by men.

... every minute, one woman dies somewhere in the world as a result of pregnancy- or childbirth-related complications.

... one reason why many girls in developing countries leave school early is that schools lack clean, working, safe toilets, and there is no water for personal hygiene.

... there is a direct correlation between the number of years a woman has attended school and the number of children she gives birth to. The longer the schooling, the fewer and the healthier the children.

... the right to abortion can mean a great deal in a poor country. In Romania, maternal mortality rates have fallen by more than 300 per cent since 1989 when the right to free abortion was guaranteed in legislation.

... as women's influence in the home and society increases, more children are enrolled in school, fewer go hungry and the economy of families – and thereby of society in general – is stronger.

Photo: Kina Roberts



– We are here for the afflicted, so that battered and vulnerable women can come to us and feel safe, says Soledad Marisol Rodríguez Herrera, one of the first policewomen in Nicaragua.

arise when people lack sexual and reproductive rights. These efforts are more important than ever in an international climate where such issues are downplayed and given low priority.

Sida also extends support for a programme for safe abortions through the international organisation Ipas, targeting more than ten countries, primarily in Africa. The programme, run in collaboration with health ministries, aims to strengthen the countries' capacity to perform safe abortions.

Violence

Factors such as poverty, powerlessness, alcoholism, and unemployment can aggravate and trigger gender-related violence. Many development projects focus on victims of violence by supporting shelters for battered women and other initiatives. Prominence

must also be given to men's role, both as perpetrators and as important agents for change.

Many preventive interventions targeting men have been initiated in recent years. For example; Sida supports several projects involving efforts by men to change the traditional view of masculinity in countries such as South Africa, Ukraine and Nicaragua.

Priority should be given to structural change so that gender-related violence is no longer acceptable or can be explained away as a 'family problem'.

This can take the form of support for legislative reform, training programmes for the police and judiciary, or follow-up initiatives aimed at ensuring enforcement of existing laws against women battering and other gender-related offences.

Literature

Cover picture:
Benjamin Gomez from Guatemala
and his daughters take pride in his
weaving.

Photo: Sean Sprague/Phoenix

- Sidas policy: *Promoting Gender Equality in Development Cooperation*, Sida 2005.
- Mikkelsen et al.: *Mainstreaming Gender Equality. Sida's support for the promotion of gender equality in partner countries*. Sida Evaluation Report 02/01. Sida 2002.
- UN Conventions, declarations and action programmes can be downloaded at www.un.org/womenwatch
 - Platform for Action, Beijing 1995
 - Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 1979.
- Download a web-based manual on gender mainstreaming at www.sida.se.

Discrimination based on gender is one of the greatest obstacles to development. Gender equality is a human right and an effective means of fighting poverty. And that means poverty in all its forms – lack of food and water, education, health, opportunities to earn money, power and influence, and democracy. Sida's efforts to reduce world poverty thus go hand in hand with the fight for gender equality. This text presents the international agreements on gender equality and Sida's approach to and strategies for integrating gender equality in all aspects of development cooperation.

Halving poverty in the world by 2015 is possible. It calls for cooperation and sustainability. The partner countries are responsible for their own development. Sida provides resources and develops knowledge and expertise, making the world a richer place.



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