



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
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Swiss Agency for Development  
and Cooperation SDC

# Status Report on Gender Equality 2018 **Breaking New Grounds**





# Foreword

We cannot achieve sustainable development without achieving gender equality in the same go. This was the widely shared consensus when drafting the sustainable development goals (SDG). The strong SDG 5 on gender equality and women's empowerment and gender-specific targets across the other development goals demonstrates the firm commitment. Where do we stand four years into the Agenda 2030?

The 2018 edition of the WEF Gender Gap Report shows that there is still a 32 percent average gender gap worldwide, despite a slight improvement. The largest disparity with 77 percent is in political empowerment, followed by the economic participation and opportunity gap at 42 percent – with an impressive 202 years required to close it – while the educational attainment gap and the health and survival gap are significantly lower (at 4% and 5%, respectively). Despite huge achievements in many areas and almost parity in education, the gender gap in economy and politics persists as a universal trend.

We have the numbers and there is broad consensus: Promoting gender equality and women's empowerment is not only the right thing to do, but it is also smart economics with much to gain. If women fully participated in the labour market, the Global Domestic Product could raise up to 26 percent. Then why is progress so slow? There are a number of reasons: First, women still bear a disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care work, which is a structural constraint to women's economic and political participation in all regions of the world. Second, newer data analysed by the WEF suggests that automatisations has a disproportionate impact on jobs traditionally performed by women. At the same time, women are under-represented in growing areas of employment that require Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) skills and knowledge. Last, we know that gender-based violence and sexual harassment in public and at home, at the workplace or in politics continuous to be a serious obstacle to women's full participation and empowerment. The #Metoo campaign has shown it clearly. Sexual exploitation and abuse in humanitarian, conflict, and development contexts where power imbalances and dependencies are particularly stark continue despite our claims for zero tolerance.

The picture of where we stand in 2019 is therefore an ambiguous one. Clearly, on a global level we can feel a backlash brought about by the rise

of anti-democratic, authoritarian, and conservative trends in many countries around the world. Hard-fought basic women's human rights, such as women's control over their body, sexuality, and own choices of the life they want to lead, are about to be undermined in the name of conservative interpretations of what women's prescribed role in family and society should be.

Yet, more than ever, gender equality is omnipresent as a topic. It is not only prominent in politics and the economy but also hotly debated and negotiated in media and TV talk shows, newspapers, music, film, theatre, sport, the academy, and so on. Young women and men are not willing anymore to accept gender-based disadvantages and discrimination, be it politically or economically, or sexual transgressions and harassments. The normalcy of today's debate might be the biggest success of gender mainstreaming.

At the same time, the normalcy cannot and should not conceal the fact that for many women and girls – in Switzerland, but more so in our partner countries in the South and East – gender equality is not a reality. They face violence, economic hardship, and dependency and they have no political voice.

This report presents Switzerland's contribution in 2018 to achieve gender equality through its international cooperation. The presented project cases show the diverse topics and approaches that the SDC and its partners work on to tackle the manifold gender gaps. They illustrate what progress has been achieved, what changes have been induced and what obstacles women and men continue to face. We aim for transformative changes towards more and lasting gender equality. We wish you a good reading.

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# Main Messages

## **1 SDC's contribution towards global and local gender equality**

Building on the SDG 5 for gender equality and women's empowerment, the SDC is focusing on three main thematic areas: sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), women's economic empowerment and women's political participation. In 2018, the SDC has assessed the effectiveness of its gender equality work during the past 10 years. The results show that 73 percent of gender-specific (principal) and 31 percent of transversal (significant) have contributed to structural changes towards gender equality, while 14 percent have reinforced existing gender inequalities because no gender analysis has been conducted. The report also shows that the effectiveness over time has increased, which implies that the institutional efforts for gender mainstreaming have been bearing fruits. To achieve transformative gender equality results, better gender analysis, capacity building for staff and partners, and strategic policy dialogue are required.

## **2 Financial commitments to gender equality**

Out of the total SDC commitments in 2018, CHF 777'728'608 (68%) were assessed as gender equality focused interventions (equivalent to 4% gender-principal and 64% gender-significant interventions)<sup>1</sup>. This is CHF 101'714'507 more than in the previous year. However, the proportion of gender-principal interventions remains low. It is comparable to the average official development assistance data assessed by the OECD DAC.

## **3 Sexual and gender-based violence – inclusion of men and boys**

Tackling SGBV and protecting sexual and reproductive health of women through a comprehensive psychosocial approach is a special concern of the SDC and one of the three thematic priorities. In 2018, over 118'000 women and men who were subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence have received psychosocial, medical, and/or legal support from SDC interventions. A highlight of the past year was the conference "Men Move! Policy debates and good practice on Engaging Men

and Boys in development cooperation," which focussed on learning and experience with men's engagement for violence prevention. Actively engaging men and boys is a critical factor for transformative change.

## **4 Women's economic empowerment – financial inclusion is needed**

The SDC and its partners focus on strengthening women's economic empowerment through a variety of approaches. For example, in 2018, the SDC and its partners contributed to the creation of more than 16'000 new jobs for women in Honduras, Georgia and Armenia. Furthermore, nearly one million youth received skills training in Bangladesh. A climax of the past year was the SDC's Saving and Credit Forum on "Women's Financial Inclusion – How to reach 1 billion women." Formal financial inclusion is a catalyst for women's economic empowerment.

## **5 Women's political participation – the added value of Gender-Responsive Budgeting**

Women still face numerous obstacles in achieving equal political participation and representation at the local and national level. In SDC supported provinces in Benin, 8 percent of the local council members were women, while the national average is 4 percent. In addition, the SDC initiated a joint learning journey on gender-responsive and socially inclusive budgeting by their Gender and the Governance networks. Findings show that gender-responsive budgeting not only contributes to gender equality but also facilitates the inclusion of socially disadvantaged groups.

## **6 SDC contribution to gender equality – breaking new grounds**

Given that the SDC and its partners work around the world, the SDC contributes to narrow the gender gap. In order to have more impact and become more transformative, financial commitment for gender equality has to increase, in both gender-principal and gender-significant interventions. Furthermore, to create an enabling environment that allows for structural change, it is vital to systematically engage men and boy as allies and agents of change, and to address the recognition, reduction and redistribution of unpaid care work within the SDC's operations. With such an approach, the SDC can break new grounds to a more inclusive world where "no one is left behind".

<sup>1</sup> Data assessed according to the OECD DAC criteria for the Gender Policy Marker (see Chapter 3). The numbers are based on the SDC's internal statistics.



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# 1 Trends in Gender Equality in the Global Context

The guidance 'Leave No One Behind' is at the centre of the Agenda 2030 and a global commitment to an inclusive development. With this argument, it is no longer possible to ignore gender inequality and its development consequences. Yet, to this date, no country has been successful in fully closing the gender gap<sup>2</sup>. Nevertheless, the figures over the past years show positive and encouraging trends towards greater gender equality.

The Social Inclusion and Gender Index of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Global Gender Gap Report show the stickiness of reaching equality between women and men: According to the last report, it will take at least more than 200 years to achieve gender equality<sup>3</sup>. While there are strong global efforts to reach the Agenda 2030 and in particular 'Goal 5 - Achieve Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls', political commitment, legal reforms, and gender-responsive or transformative programmes are not yet in place in many countries. According to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Report 2018<sup>4</sup>, even though some forms of discrimination against women and girls are declining, gender inequalities persist, especially in the area of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), economic and political participation. Moreover, to reach equality and empowerment of women, it is key to engage men and boys as agents of change. As stated by the Commission of the Status of Women 2018<sup>5</sup>, it is important to engage men on gender equality to better understand and address root causes of gender inequality, such as unequal power relation, social norms, practices, and stereotypes that lead to discrimination against women and girls.

SGBV is a 'burning issue' worldwide, as the high resonance of the #metoo movement is showing. The movement reminds that all forms of gender-based violence are rooted in unequal gender power relations and discrimination against women and girls.

Globally, 20 percent of adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 who are in a sexual relationship have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by their intimate partner. Although child marriage and the risk of getting married at a young age have declined, the practice is still wide spread. The number of female genital mutilation in 30 executing countries has declined in the last couple of years, but more than 200 million girls and women living today in 30 countries have undergone the procedures. SGBV is linked to women's subordinate status in society and men's position of power<sup>6</sup>. In order to break up these social norms and to tackle SGBV effectively, men and boys have to be an active part of any intervention. Moreover, SGBV in the form of sexual exploitation and abuse continues to be pervasive in international cooperation, which may be seen as a risk sector for such incidences, as multiple dependencies and power imbalances are particularly pronounced in humanitarian and development interventions and peace missions.

Progress was made with regard to paid employment. In 2018, the gender employment gap has been reduced. However, figures show that women are still 26 percent less likely to have a job than men<sup>7</sup>. Moreover, if they are employed, they often find themselves in low-skilled occupations, are more exposed to informal employment, work under vulnerable circumstances, and earn less than men. Under the SDG Goal 8, according to the SDG report 2018, women on average earn 12.5 percent less than men. Women still perform the main bulk of unpaid care work – 76 percent, according to the latest figures of ILO<sup>8</sup>,- because women are often perceived as care-givers and men as bread-winners. This means that women have less time than men to perform other activities, such as income-generating activities or paid work. In many cases, women compared to men tend to have less access to services and resources, such as formal financial services, to meet their needs. Financial inclusion is crucial for sustainable development and a catalyst for economic empowerment among women.

2 [World Economic Forum \(2018\): Gender Gap Report 2018.](#)

3 [OECD \(2019\): SIGI 2019 Global Report. Transforming Challenges into Opportunities. Social Institutions and Gender Index.](#)

4 [UN \(2018\): The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2018.](#)

5 [Commission on the Status of Women \(2018\): Economic and Social Council. United Nations.](#)

6 [Rose, S. D. \(2013\): Challenging Global Gender Violence. Procedia Social and Behavioral Science, 82, pp. 61-65.](#)

7 [ILO \(2019\): A Quantum Leap for Gender Equality: For a Better Future of Work for All.](#)

8 [ILO \(2018\): Care work and care jobs for the future of decent work.](#)



An analysis of new data by the World Economic Forum (2018) suggests that automatisations has a disproportionate impact on jobs traditionally performed by women. At the same time, women are under-represented in growing areas of employment that require STEM<sup>9</sup> skills and knowledge. Moreover, the new publication of OECD (2018) shows a digital gender gap. Globally, around 327 million (26%) fewer women than men own a smartphone and have access to the internet. Causes of gender-based digital exclusion are hurdles to access, affordability, lack of education, and technological literacy<sup>10</sup>.

Women's political participation is still low<sup>11</sup>. In national parliaments, female participation has increased from 19 percent in 2010 to 23 percent in 2018<sup>12</sup>. Despite this positive trend, women have more difficulties to have a voice in political decision-making processes, such as public budget planning and allocation. 'Gender-Responsive Budgeting' is a tool to ensure that public resources are committed towards gender equality. Participatory, inclusive, and transparent state-citizen budget processes and public finance reforms are often undermined by power dynamics, as the real decision-making on allocation of resources often happens behind closed doors where powerful and hidden stakeholders gather<sup>13</sup>. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to empower and enable women and girls to raise their voice and actively participate in all areas and on all levels of decision-making.

To achieve lasting change to empower women and girls, it is necessary to address structural issues such as discriminating social norms as well as cultural and religious practices and attitudes. This is a prerequisite to 'Leave No One Behind'.

#### **Prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse**

Sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment are forms of gender-based violence rooted in unequal power relations and gender-based discrimination. International cooperation may be seen as a risk sector for such incidences, as multiple dependencies and power imbalances are particularly pronounced in humanitarian and development interventions and peace missions. Any kind of violence is unacceptable and must be rejected. The SDC stands for a zero tolerance culture, and strongly condemns any form of exploitation based on gender power imbalances. As a response, the Swiss Foreign Ministry has adopted a new Code of Conduct for staff and partners and initiated a dialogue with implementing partners. In October 2018, Switzerland, together with 21 other OECD countries, attended and contributed to the "Putting People First" summit in London. The event dealt with common standards and zero tolerance for all types of SGBV. As a result, a joint declaration defining various measures for prevention, accountability and the protection of victims and groups at risk was commonly agreed upon and signed<sup>14</sup>. Based on these standards, the OECD is currently developing a recommendation for donors and other stakeholders.

9 STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

10 OECD (2018): Bridging the digital gender divide. Include, Upskill, Innovate.

11 World Economic Forum (2018): Gender Gap Report 2018.

12 UN (2018): The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2018.

13 SDC (2018): Input Paper: Socially Inclusive and Gender Responsive Budgeting.

14 FDFA (2018): Press Release 'International cooperation: Switzerland calls for zero tolerance and prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse'.

# 2 The SDC's Contribution and Priorities 2018

Gender equality is essential to achieve sustainable development. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its Goal 5 on gender equality is the cornerstone of Switzerland's engagement. Based on the Dispatch on Switzerland's International Cooperation 2017 – 2020<sup>15</sup>, the SDC's contribution to close the gender gap is guided by focusing on three strategic areas: The prevention of sexual and gender-based violence, the economic empowerment and the political participation of women. The SDC works to promote gender equality in situations of fragility and conflict, in humanitarian and development contexts, and thus creates new opportunities for empowering women economically and promoting women's voices and leadership in political and economic decision-making. During the last year, the SDC deepened its knowledge on the topics of 'Engaging Men and Boys', 'Financial Inclusion' and 'Gender-Responsive Budgeting'.

Engaging with men and boys has emerged as a vital strategy to tackle and prevent SGBV and to address stereotype gender roles and social norms through more gender transformative approaches. Therefore, the SDC has increased its engagement to work with men on gender equality. To strengthen this thematic commitment and foster mutual learning, the SDC organised jointly with its partner organisation IAMANEH Switzerland the "International Conference on Engaging Men & Boys"<sup>16</sup> on June 7 and 8, 2018 in Basel, Switzerland. The conference focused on a broad and comprehensive picture of engaging men and boys, spanning policy and practice, including an emphasis on working with perpetrators and male survivors of violence. One outcome of the conference was that engaging men and boys is indispensable to advance gender equality, but in order to reach men and boys appropriate communication is needed. This communication goes hand in hand with an understanding of men's needs and concerns when they engage themselves for more gender equality.

Women's financial inclusion: Lack of access to comprehensive financial services reduces women's abili-

ty to climb out of poverty and is a major factor contributing to their economic marginalisation. Current research supported by the SDC, shows that access to the whole range of formal financial services – in particular micro-insurances, saving, loan and credit schemes for low income households – increases women's possibility to build assets. This in turn is a precondition and provides the safety to plan for the future and further investments, and prevents the relapse into poverty or debts cycle<sup>17</sup>. To further expand knowledge on how to strengthen women's financial inclusion in SDC programmes, the SDC Gendernet and SDC Employment & Income Network initiated a joint learning project on "Women's Financial Inclusion" and organised a Saving and Credit Forum on "How to Reach 1 Billion Women" on November 2, 2018 in Bern, Switzerland<sup>18</sup>. The conference showed different factors that foster women's financial inclusion. One of them is that women need convenience, confidentiality, and security to enter into the formal finance market and that they need products that are tailored around the principles of a trustful relationship. The digitalisation of finance services can be a tool to address these specific needs of women.

Socially inclusive and gender-responsive budgeting: Whereas most governments express commitment to gender equality goals, there are often inconsistencies between policy statements and the ways in which public finances are raised and spent. Opportunities for participation and consultation in the formulation of budgets and spending priorities, or planning of decentralisation and fiscal reforms are generally very limited. The different priorities of socially excluded groups, or of women, are therefore not reflected in the way finances are allocated and used. To strengthen capacities on gender-responsive and socially inclusive budgeting, the SDC Gendernet and SDC Network on "Democratisation, Decentralisation and Local Governance" initiated a joint learning process to analyse and propose how gender-responsive and socially inclusive budgeting can be integrated into local governance processes<sup>19</sup>. One of the key findings was that gen-

15 [FDFA \(2016\): Dispatch on Switzerland's International Cooperation 2017-2020. Key points in brief.](#)

16 [SDC/IAMANEH Switzerland \(2018\): Men Move! Policy debates and good practice on Engaging Men and Boys \(EMB\) in development cooperation. Conference Report.](#)

17 For more information, see: [PARE-Project.](#)

18 For more information, see: [Women's Financial Inclusion - how to reach 1 billion women.](#)

19 For more information, see: [Socially Inclusive and Gender Responsive Budgeting Survey.](#)

der-responsive budgeting requires technical skills. Yet, it is never just a technical exercise, but a highly political process where local power relations are negotiated through budget decisions. At the municipal level, where the SDC is mostly operating, such initiatives can promote more gender-responsive services and empower women to participate in local decision-making; however, to achieve and sustain transformative change, local level activities have to be embedded in national level reforms and be backed by a legal framework. Also, the more developed approaches to gender-responsive budgeting can lead the way for socially inclusive public finance management more broadly, by focusing on the specific needs and the empowerment of those most left behind. Gender-responsive budgeting is thus also an instrument to make sure we leave no one behind<sup>20</sup>.

### **Strategic gender policy dialogue**

As programmatic work is more effective in combination with a strategic policy dialogue, the SDC has continued to engage in international platforms to influence global processes for gender equality:

**Commission on the Status of Women:** In the realm of the 62<sup>nd</sup> Commission on the Status of Women on rural women in March 2018 in New York, the SDC organised together with FAO the side event “Participation of rural women in governance: challenges and opportunities”. The debate focused on how to enable women to have an equal voice to men in rural institutions and organisations<sup>21</sup>.

**As chair of the OECD DAC Gendernet:** The OECD platform for development agencies for joint learning and for the development of standards for effective gender equality policies and programming, the SDC has a critical role in shaping the agenda. In 2018, the topics dealt with were women’s economic empowerment, policy approaches addressing the uneven distribution of unpaid care work in low and middle-income countries, the improvement of the application of the gender policy marker, and the launch of a new workstream on gender and financing, including blended finances.

**Engaging the private sector for women’s economic empowerment:** On November 1, 2018, the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) jointly with the Swiss Forum on Foreign Policy *foraus*, the Global Compact Network Switzerland, and UN Women, organised a high-level conference on “Women’s empowerment in the world of work”<sup>22</sup> in Bern, Switzerland. The conference engaged Swiss private sector actors in a debate on why women are still highly under-represented in the global labour market, and on effective tools to foster women’s economic empowerment worldwide.

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20 See: [SDC Working Paper ‘Socially inclusive & gender responsive budgeting’](#) (April 2019).

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21 See: [UN Women side Event](#).

22 For more information, see: [Conference Website](#).

**Women, Peace and Security:** With the official launch of the fourth Swiss National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (NAP) in November 2018 in Geneva, Switzerland has reaffirmed its longstanding commitment for the Women, Peace and Security agenda. The fourth NAP builds on key findings of reviews and assessments of the third NAP. Discussions also took place with the parliamentary foreign affairs committees and revealed broad political support for the issue. Elements from the Civil Society Alternative Report on the National Action Plan 1325 were also included as part of a broad consultation process. New aspects covered by the fourth NAP include systematic linking with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), more activities in the area of security policy, reference to areas of domestic policy, and closer cooperation with Swiss non-governmental organisations. The fourth NAP 1325 runs for a period of five years (2018-2022) and sets the following substantive priorities:

1. Effective involvement of women in conflict prevention
2. Women's participation in and influence on conflict resolution and peace processes
3. Protection against sexual and gender-based violence in conflict, refugee and migration contexts
4. Women's participation in peace missions and security policy
5. Multi- and bilateral commitment by Switzerland to women, peace and security

## The SDC's effectiveness in the field of gender equality

In June 2018, the SDC published the fifth Report on Effectiveness: Swiss international cooperation in the field of gender equality (2007 – 2016). The study, executed by external experts, evaluated projects and gender policy dialogues executed in the period from 2007 – 2016<sup>23</sup>. Some key findings of the Report are:

**73 percent of gender-specific** (principal) and **31 percent of transversal** (significant) projects **contributed to structural changes towards more gender equality**. 50 percent of the projects contributed to stronger decision-making and political participation (household and political level), 40 percent helped preventing gender-specific violence and 30 percent contributed to economic empowerment.

**Gender-specific projects are more effective** because they are based on a detailed gender analysis. However, effective transversal projects do not only produce positive gender results, but also contribute to better achieving a project's overall goals.

The study also found **projects that reinforced or even increased gender inequalities (14.5%)**. The main reasons were the absence of a gender analysis and, consequently, gender questions being neglected. These examples are from older projects, but remain important for SDC's institutional learning.

The report shows a **clear positive trend over time** showing that the institutional efforts to implement gender mainstreaming have been bearing fruits.

The report recognised **the SDC's effective role in gender policy dialogues** and found that combining policy dialogue with project implementation, in particular on national level, enhances their effectiveness.

**Main challenges** identified were widespread under-reporting on gender, limited capacities for gender analysis, a lack of clear gender objectives, and the absence of a systematic theory of change approach. Hence, a more gender-transformative approach in all programmes and capacity building for staff and partners for better gender analyses are some of the main recommendations.

<sup>23</sup> For more information, see: [Report on Effectiveness. Swiss international cooperation in the field of gender equality 2007-2016.](#)

## Methodological notes on this report

Measuring gender results remains challenging. Changing gender roles, attitudes and norms in a complex environment with different actors and initiatives are difficult to capture. It is not easy to identify why particular changes have happened and which factors have contributed positively or negatively to specific changes (attribution gap). For this report, the gender results data were drawn from the Annual Reports<sup>24</sup> and the Gender Reference Indicators. As the latter are still new, the data were of different quality. In addition, the aggregation of data across regions and over time is often not possible due to different contexts, indicators, and monitoring systems. Therefore, the SDC decided to illustrate the gender results through exemplary projects in this report.

This second status report draws from gender results from different SDC interventions. These interventions were selected based on the following criteria: 1) thematic focus (according to the three strategic areas and their Gender Reference Indicators), 2) geographic region, 3) gender-principal and gender-significant interventions, and 4) development, humanitarian, and global programmes. The data of the different interventions were collected by means of a questionnaire and a literature review. The data were analysed, and case studies elaborated. These case studies are presented in Chapter 4. As illustrative examples, they give in-depth information on the respective gender gap, the SDC's and its partners' activities, their achievements and challenges in terms of achieving gender equality.

### Capacity building through mutual learning

As every year, the SDC Gendernet organised a **Gender Learning Day** with Swiss partner NGOs in September 2018. The aim was joint learning and sharing experiences on "Gender Analysis" – a key issue for implementing gender transformative programming. The exchange on the Gender Learning Day 2018 brought about the following key points that support practitioners in doing a meaningful gender analysis:

- Due to restrictions in the field, strategic decisions might have to be taken on what is feasible. Practical tools for analysis can be applied as complicated or as simple as needed – the most important thing is that gender is considered and some kind of gender analysis is done.
- Gender analysis is an ongoing process. For a successful analysis and implementation of the results it is vital to involve the key stakeholders and to keep the conversation about gender ongoing.
- International obligations and national legal frameworks should be leveraged – it gets difficult for local authorities to argue based on their own policies, if practitioners use them.

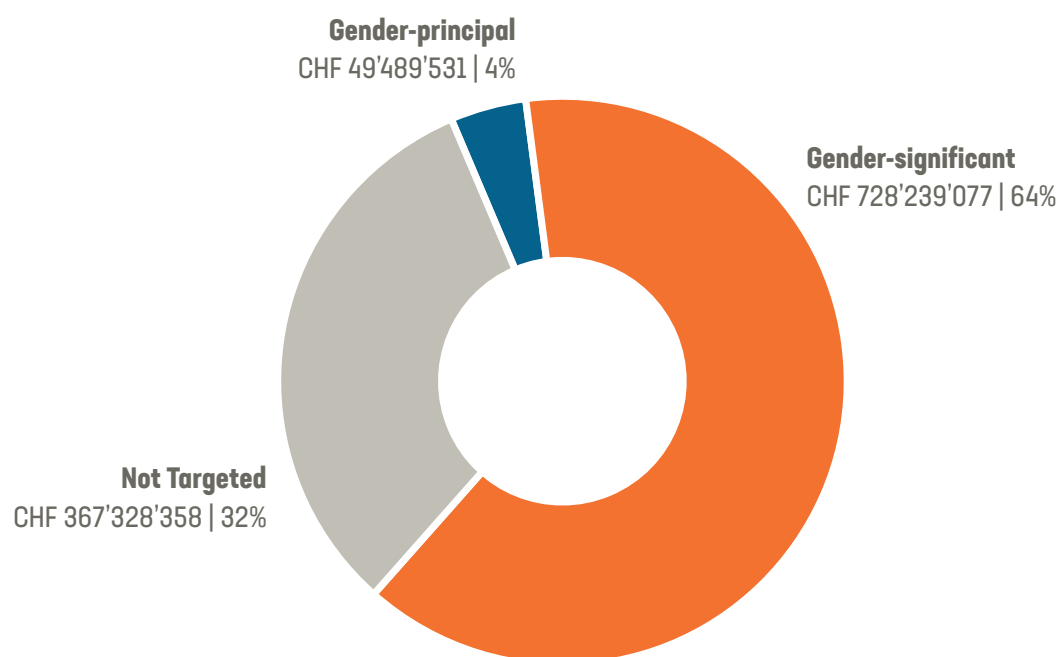
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<sup>24</sup> On a yearly basis, the Annual Reports present the results of the Country Cooperation Strategies.

# 3 The SDC's Financial Commitments to Gender Equality

In 2018, the SDC committed a total of CHF 1'145'056'966, including bilateral interventions, the SDC's global programmes, humanitarian interventions, and institutional contributions to Swiss non-governmental organisations. This is CHF 121'985'829 more than in the previous year. Not only the overall commitment but also the amount committed to gender equality focused<sup>25</sup> interventions increased by CHF 101'714'507 from 2017 to 2018. This means that CHF 777'728'608 (68%) of all SDC funds were directed to gender equality focused interventions, either as gender-principal or as gender-significant interventions. However, CHF 367'328'358 (32%) of all bilateral funds remain not targeted. A closer look to the gender equality focused interventions is needed: Only CHF 49'489'531 (4%) were committed to interventions where gender equality is a core action (gender-principal interventions) while CHF 728'239'077 (64%) of all funds were committed to interventions where gender equality is a transversal topic (gender-significant interventions) (see Figure 1). Additionally, the SDC contributed CHF 16'000'000 for multilateral aid to UN Women and CHF 16'000'000 to UNFPA.

**Figure 1:** Allocation of the SDC's committed bilateral funds in CHF in 2018



As Figure 2 demonstrates, the goal of the SDC is to allocate 10 percent of all bilateral funds to gender-principal interventions and 75 percent to gender-significant interventions. Even if more bilateral funds were directed to gender equality focused projects and programmes, the figures from 2018 show that the SDC has not reached the goals yet. It lags behind especially with regard to gender-principal interventions. In comparison with 2017, the committed funds to gender-principal interventions decreased from 4.8 percent to 4.3 percent. For the gender-significant interventions, the figures show an increase of 3 percent compared to 2017, from 61 percent to 64 percent.

<sup>25</sup> Gender equality focused interventions comprise gender-principal and gender-significant interventions. The wording has changed from the previous 2017 report, from gender-responsive interventions to gender equality focused interventions.

The temporal expenditure pattern of the SDC's bilateral funds to gender equality has one turning point with a significant decrease from 2016 – 2017. The main reason can be attributed to the adjustment of the SDC Gender Policy Marker<sup>26</sup> to the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Gender Policy Marker and, therefore, to the implementation of the new minimum criteria. In the coming years, the SDC is challenged to further increase its efforts and commitment to invest in gender-principal and gender-significant interventions with a transformative impact.

**Figure 2:** Trends in bilateral funds committed to gender equality focused interventions

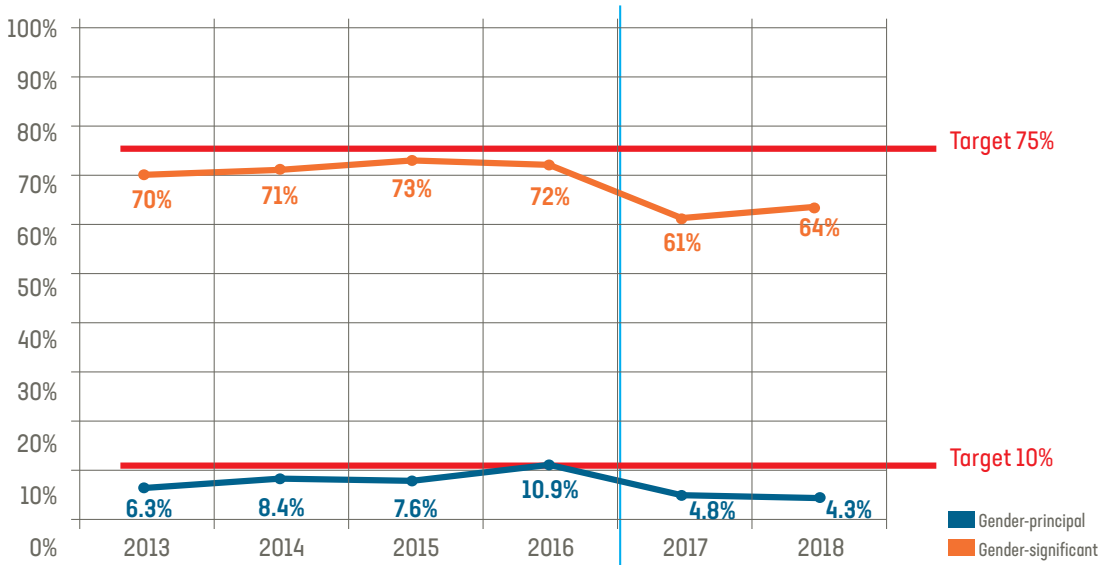
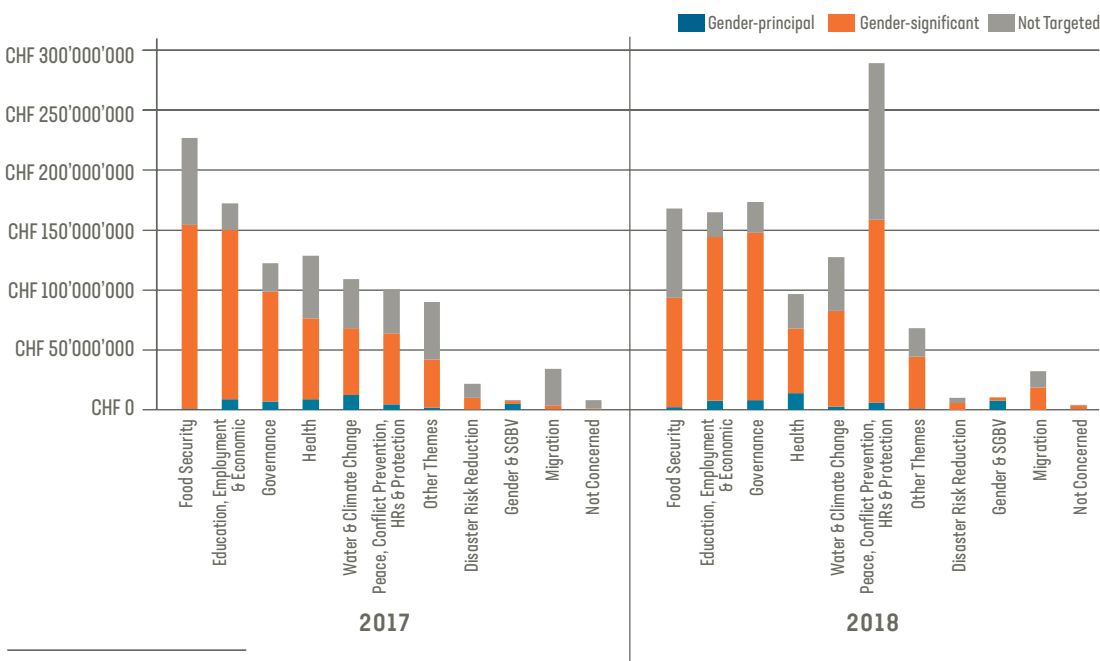


Figure 3 allows a more detailed look at the thematic distribution of the bilateral funds. In 2018, the three major areas of committed bilateral funds were the thematic areas of peace, conflict prevention, human rights and protection (CHF 289'364'499), governance (CHF 173'386'284), and food security (CHF 168'164'411). The data shows that funds for gender equality focused were committed to interventions in every thematic area. The two areas that committed most funds in 2018 are peace, conflict prevention, human rights and protection (CHF 158'701'597), and governance (CHF 147'851'418), distributed these funds mostly to gender-significant interventions. Taking a look at gender-principal interventions only, a slightly different picture appears: Most funds to gender-principal interventions in 2018 were awarded in the area of health (CHF 13'863'384), governance (CHF 8'159'168) as well as education, employment, and economic development (CHF 7'800'000). Two out of the eleven thematic areas, namely disaster risk reduction and migration, did not fund gender-principal interventions in 2018.

**Figure 3:** Allocation of the SDC's committed bilateral funds per thematic area in the years 2017 and 2018



26 For more information see: [Gender Policy Marker](#).

The biggest shift from 2017 to 2018 was in the thematic area of water and climate change. In 2017, water and climate change (CHF 12'282'486) was the major contributor to gender-principal interventions, followed by education, employment, and economic development (CHF 8'755'400), and health (CHF 8'736'500). In 2018, water and climate change invested only CHF 2'537'656 CHF in gender-principal interventions. This 80 percent drop can be explained by the fact that a programme or project can run over several years, while the Policy Marker registers the whole amount only for the starting year of a programme.

Figure 4 presents the details of committed gender-principal interventions in the thematic area of health, as health was the major contributor to gender-principals interventions in 2018. It includes different intervention fields: CHF 5'283'000 (38 %) of these funds went to projects related to reproductive health and rights; CHF 2'931'085 (21%) to strengthening the health system; CHF 2'340'000 (17%) to basic nutrition; CHF 2'250'000 (16%) to prevent and combat sexual transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS; CHF 699'300 (5%) to primary health care; and CHF 360'000 (3%) to medical services.

**Figure 4:** Allocation of the SDC's committed bilateral funds 2018 to gender-principal interventions in the thematic area of health

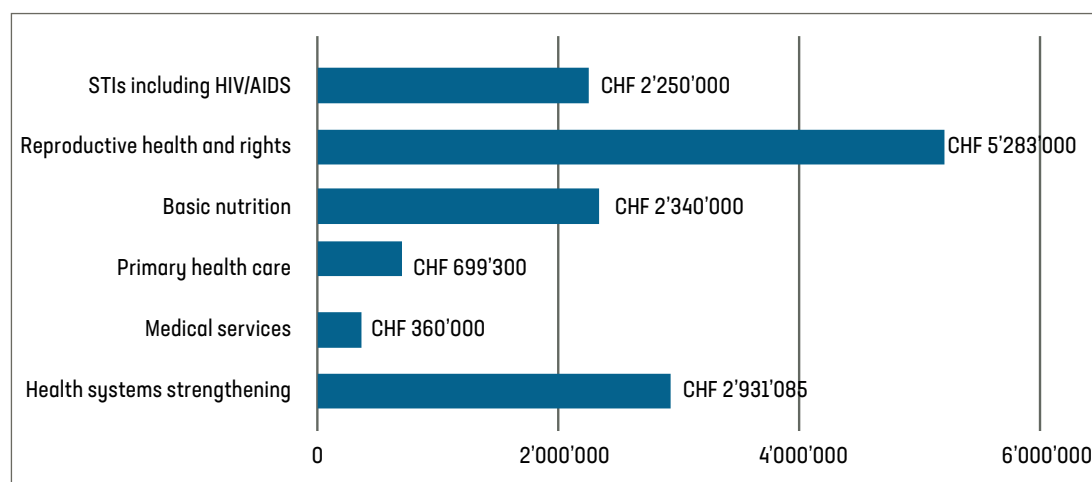
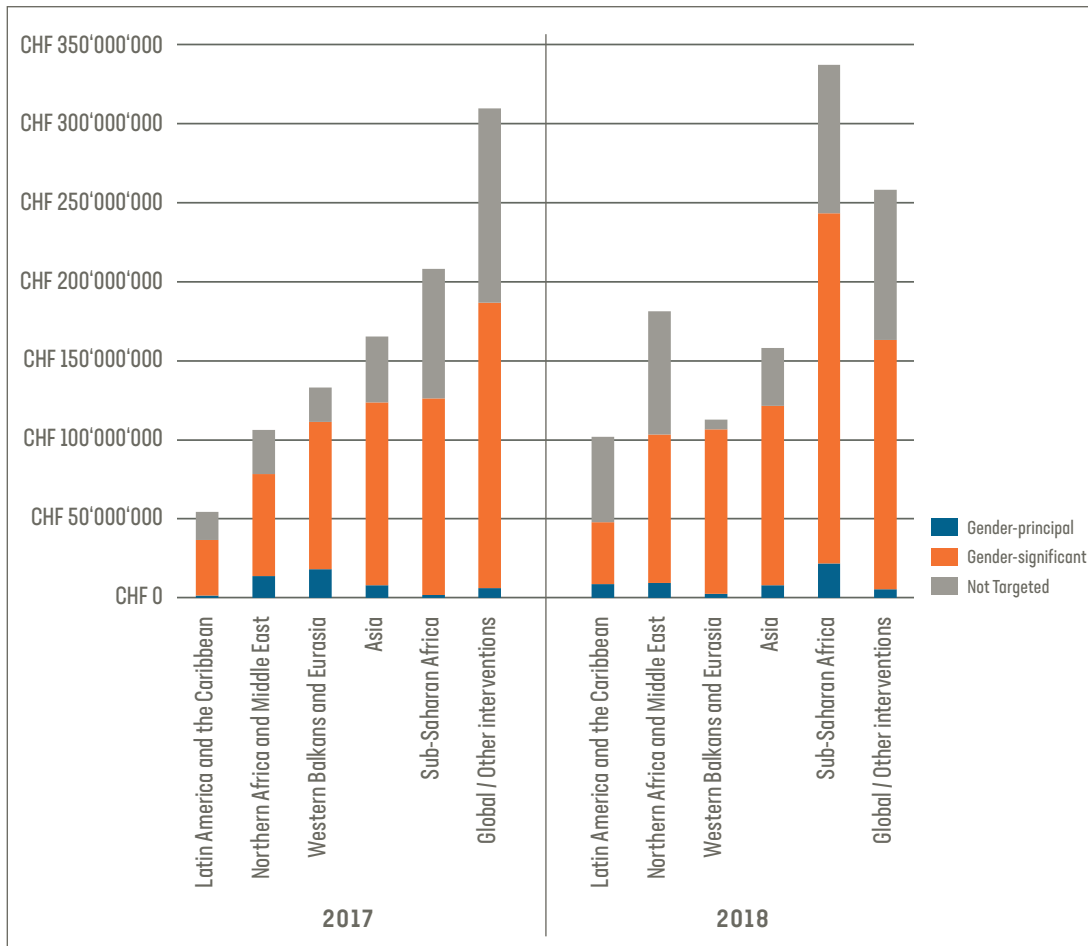


Figure 5 shows the geographical distribution of the bilateral funds in 2017 and 2018. In both years, the highest amount of the total gender equality focused funds was committed to Sub-Saharan Africa and to global and other interventions. The latter are programmes and interventions without a specific regional focus. The biggest difference between the two consecutive years lies in the commitments in Sub-Saharan Africa. In 2018, over CHF 115 million more were committed to this particular region compared to 2017, including around CHF 20 millions for gender-principals interventions. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the overall gender-equality-focused interventions increased by over CHF 11 million. However, considering the overall growth in committed bilateral funds in this region, this increase is relatively small and a majority of funds in the region remains not targeted.



**Figure 5<sup>27</sup>:** Allocation of SDC’s committed bilateral funds 2017 and 2018 per thematic area



**The Gender Statistics of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC)<sup>28</sup>**

The OECD DAC consists of 30 members and has - for more than 50 years - grouped the world's main donors defining and monitoring global standards in key areas of development. Switzerland has been part of the DAC since 1969. Strategic priorities of the DAC are the promotion of effective development policies and the development statistics. According to the latest figures, DAC members committed around CHF 44.8 billion (38%) of their bilateral allocable aid per year to gender-significant or gender-principal interventions in 2016-2017. Never before have the committed funds to gender equality focused interventions been higher. However, the funding for gender-principal interventions remain low at 4 percent (CHF 4.7 billion per year), and 62 percent (CHF 73 billion per year) of the committed aid did not target gender at all.

According to data from 2015-2016<sup>29</sup> the thematic distribution of the DAC committed funds to gender-principal interventions includes: government and civil society (28%), population policies/programmes and reproductive health (26%), followed by health (14%). Aid integrating (mainstreaming) a gender equality perspective in the economic and productive sectors reached USD 12 billion on average per year in 2015-2016 - a rise from USD 8.8 billion in 2013-2014. However, support focussing on gender equality and women's empowerment as the primary objective in these sectors decreased to only USD 460 million on average per year in 2015-2016. This represents only 1 percent of total aid to the economic and productive sectors.

The DAC also tracks flows of private foundations. In 2017, the 26 private foundations reporting their activities to the OECD Development Co-operation Directorate for the first time committed USD 1.2 billion to gender equality and women's empowerment, corresponding to 16 percent of the total development flows by these foundations.

27 The numbers for 2017 do not include funds to European countries, Switzerland and "not specified". Those for 2018 do not include funds to European countries, Switzerland, the Pacific/Oceania Region and "not specified" countries.

28 For more information, see: [OECD Aid in Support of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment](#).

29 There are no figures available for the years 2017-2019.



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# 4 The SDC's Gender Results 2018

This chapter presents a selection of gender responsive interventions of the SDC's bilateral portfolio and their results. The SDC's focus is on three main intervention areas: sexual and gender-based violence, women's economic empowerment and women's political participation. This chapter presents a selection of gender responsive interventions of the SDC's bilateral portfolio and their results. The twelve selected examples cover the three main intervention areas of the SDC (sexual and gender-based violence, women's economic empowerment, women's political participation) and the respective Gender Reference Indicators.

Moreover, the examples highlight how the SDC has supported and strengthened gender equality in 2018. These examples present interventions in various geographical locations, implemented in partnership with different actors. Some examples address gender equality directly and explicitly, while others imply indirect influences. This means that in some examples, the gender dimension does not appear at the first glance, but exists in a transversal way. However, all sampled cases emphasise the SDC's contribution to a more equal world in terms of gender in which no one is left behind.

First, this chapter provides a map with an overview of the selected examples and the SDC's priority countries and regions. Thereafter, twelve sampled cases will be presented grouped by the three main thematic areas and marked as either gender-significant or gender-principal interventions. Each thematic area is introduced briefly and shows key results of SDC interventions in 2018.

# Results Map of the SDC's Gender Equality Focused Interventions

The map provides an overview of the countries, in which the SDC and its partners are implementing interventions. The map is not exhaustive.<sup>30</sup>

## Georgia

Women's rooms for municipal decision-making power and female entrepreneurship in Georgia (see Example 5, p. 34).

## Egypt

Improved financial inclusion of female entrepreneurs through micro-finance institution in Egypt (see Example 7, p. 38).

## Mali

"Circles of Peace" for inter-ethnic social cohesion and women's leadership in Mali (see Example 12, p. 50).

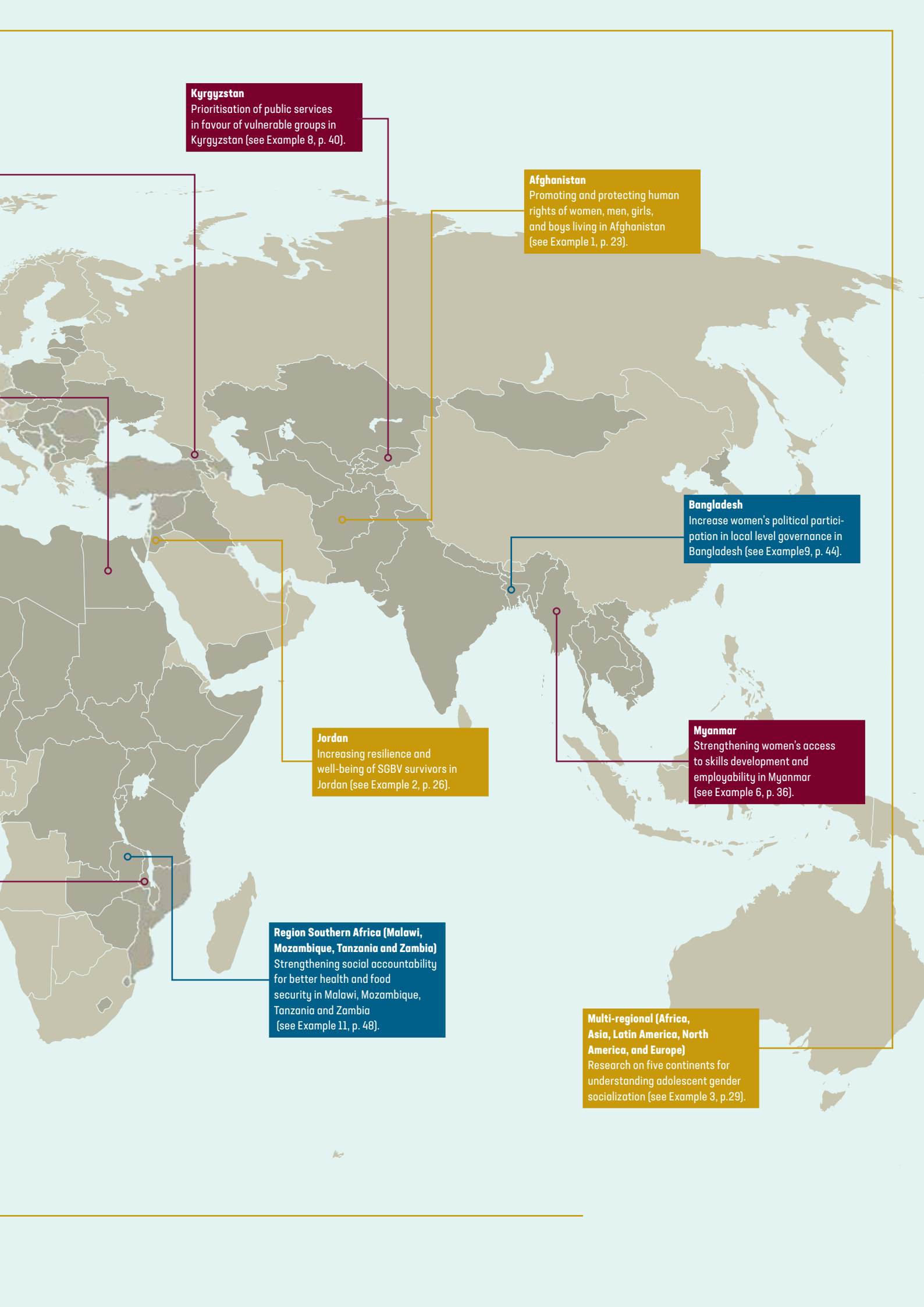
## Niger

Universal and equitable access to safe drinking water and toilets in Niger (see Example 10, p. 46).

## Malawi

Empowering women to secure seeds and food sovereignty - a case from Malawi (see Example 4, p. 32).

<sup>30</sup> The data used for this map are based on a selection of the SDC Gender Focal Point.



**Kyrgyzstan**  
Prioritisation of public services in favour of vulnerable groups in Kyrgyzstan (see Example 8, p. 40).

**Afghanistan**  
Promoting and protecting human rights of women, men, girls, and boys living in Afghanistan (see Example 1, p. 23).

**Bangladesh**  
Increase women's political participation in local level governance in Bangladesh (see Example 9, p. 44).

**Jordan**  
Increasing resilience and well-being of SGBV survivors in Jordan (see Example 2, p. 26).

**Myanmar**  
Strengthening women's access to skills development and employability in Myanmar (see Example 6, p. 36).

**Region Southern Africa (Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia)**  
Strengthening social accountability for better health and food security in Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia (see Example 11, p. 48).

**Multi-regional (Africa, Asia, Latin America, North America, and Europe)**  
Research on five continents for understanding adolescent gender socialization (see Example 3, p.29).

# 4.1 Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

## Why action is needed

Tackling sexual and gender-based violence and protecting sexual and reproductive health of women is a major concern of the SDC and represents one of the three thematic priorities. SGBV is a global issue, especially against women and girls. Worldwide, 35 percent of women have experienced either sexual and/or physical violence. In most cases, the intimate partner is the perpetrator<sup>31</sup>. Besides violence from intimate partners, women are exposed to other forms of violence like forced marriage, honour killing, female genital mutilation, trafficking, and sexual harassment. Furthermore, the emerging and ongoing digitalisation of society entails new forms of violence such as online bullying, harassment, and stalking<sup>32</sup>. SGBV has a negative impact on affected individuals' physical and mental health<sup>33</sup>. To eliminate SGBV, a multidimensional approach on different scales is needed which includes the national, community, and household level. Nowadays, 46 out of 173 countries still have no law on domestic violence and 41 countries have no laws on preventing sexual harassment. Here, action on a national level is needed. Additionally, the inclusion of boys and men into gender equality interventions is an effective way to prevent and reduce SGBV<sup>34</sup>. Rigid socio-cultural norms may lead to power imbalance between women and men. Men usually have more agency and decision-making power, which leads to a reinforcement of the patriarchal structure and gender inequality. Actively engaging men and boys enhances equality between women and men and helps to overcome prevailing socio-cultural restrictions.<sup>35</sup>

## The SDC's achievements

To respond to the multidimensionality of SGBV, SDC interventions act on different scales and in various areas. They reach from access to psychological, medical, legal, and financial support, to prevention and reduction of violence; and from women's rights, to sexual and reproductive rights. In 2018, substantial results have already been achieved. Over 165'000 women and men subjected to physical, sexual or mental violence have received psychological, medical and/or legal support from SDC interventions in several countries.<sup>36</sup> For example in Bolivia, over 9'000 women received care and protection after a situation of violence in the first six months of 2018. Additionally, in Burkina Faso, over 1'500'555 persons have been sensitised on SGBV, of which 53 percent were men.

A last year's highlight was the conference "Men Move! Engaging men and boys in gender and development," organised by the SDC and IAMANEH<sup>37</sup>. This two-day conference with international outreach was the first event in Switzerland tackling this issue. The ground-breaking conference fostered exchange and discussion around research, sharing good practice and practical experience in engaging men and boys for a gender-transformative approach in different countries and regions. It stimulated critical debates on societal and structural barriers inhibiting effective integration of men and boys in gender equality work in different development fields such as health, economic development or migration. The conference's second day was dedicated to SGBV, related challenges, and opportunities to work with men and boys for violence prevention. It became obvious that many states of the Northern and Southern hemisphere face similar challenges and there was consensus that advancing gender equality is not possible without getting men and boys involved. Action on all levels, state and civil society, is needed. Education, sport, and culture are fields that are particularly appealing to many men and boys and which constitute entry points to address, debate and transform social and gender norms.<sup>38</sup>

31 [World Health Organization \(2013\): Global and regional estimates of violence against women: prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence. Department of Reproductive Health and Research.](#)

32 [MenEngage and UN Women \(2015\): Men, Masculinities, and Changing Power.](#)

33 Kosterina, E. et al. (2018): The role of gender-based violence, health worries, and ambivalent sexism in the development of women's gynecological symptoms. In: *Journal of Health Psychology*, 1, 13.

34 [UNFPA \(2017\): Worlds Apart. Reproductive health and rights in an age of inequality. State of World Population Report 2017.](#)

35 [UNFPA \(2013\): Engaging Men and Boys: A Brief summary of UNFPA Experience and Lessons Learned.](#)

36 [SDC \(2019\): Berichterstattung Umsetzung Botschaft über die internationale Zusammenarbeit 2017-2020. Reporting zu Wirkungsziel 7: Gender.](#)

37 For more information, see: [Menmove Conference.](#)

38 [SDC \(2018\): Men Move! Policy debates and good practice on Engaging Men and Boys in development cooperation. Conference Report.](#)

## **Gender Reference Indicators:**

### **Support and Response Capacity**

This indicator is about access to comprehensive quality support services, including psychosocial, legal, and economic support. These services are the basis to improve the well-being of persons having experienced violence. This indicator also measures response capacities of service providers (government and civil society).

**Indicator (ARI G1):** Persons (f/m) subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence having received psychological, medical, and/or legal support.

### **Access to Justice**

Access to functional and gender-responsive justice systems (informal and formal) contributes to claim rights and combatting impunity.

**Indicator:** Persons (m/f) subjected to violence and discrimination have access to functional (informal and formal) justice systems to claim their rights.

### **Prevention and Reduction of Violence**

To reduce acceptance of SGBV, sensitisation and awareness on SGBV and women's and human rights are crucial.

**Indicator:** Persons (m/f) sensitised on SGBV.

### **Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights**

Women and men are able to exercise their sexual and reproductive rights freely and have access to professional reproductive health care services to improve their health.

**Indicator (ARI H2):** Number of births attended by skilled health personnel.

## **Example 1: Gender-Significant Intervention**

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# **Promoting and protecting human rights of women, men, girls, and boys living in Afghanistan**

The SDC, together with other development partners, supports the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) in implementing the National Human Rights Programme (NHRP) in Afghanistan. The programme contributes to a just and democratic society where human rights are protected, respected and fulfilled. On the one hand, AIHRC advocates and collaborates with the Afghan government; on the other hand, it contributes to raise awareness of human rights within Afghan communities. On SGBV in particular, AIHRC monitors the cases' instances, investigates and follows up on cases and refers them to appropriate justice mechanisms. Furthermore, the programme produces annual reports on the condition of women and elaborates recommendations for the attention of the government. Additionally, the programme ensures a multitude of activities to support women affected by SGBV by working with a multi-stakeholder approach and a variety of civil society organisation partners.

### **Implementing partners**

The implementing partner for this project is the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC).

2018, AIHRC provided training, workshops, and awareness-raising sessions on human rights for 4'966 women and 7'662 men.

### **Finances**

### **Beneficiaries**

During the current project phase in 2018, AIHRC registered and investigated 7'120 human rights violation cases. Thereof, 5'138 cases involved SGBV affected women. During the first six months of

The project is part of a comprehensive programme (November 2002 – December 2027). In 2018, the project was in its fifth phase (June 2015 – December 2018). The SDC's contribution for this phase comprised CHF 1'850'000 of which CHF 600'000 were spent in 2018. Other donors that financially

support the NHRP are Australia, Canada (lead donor), Denmark, Finland, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, and the United Kingdom.

## Gender analysis

### Women do not enjoy their rights and are subjects to violence

Although the long-lasting war has ended in Afghanistan, violence persists. In a context where gender disparities are still deeply rooted, studies report that 87 percent of Afghan women experience at least one form of physical, sexual or mental violence. In the past 12 years, many efforts were devoted to improving freedom of expression, good governance, access to education and health care, etc. The Afghan Constitution guarantees equal rights for women and men, but reality speaks another language. Very often women do not enjoy their human rights and are subject to violence. Gender roles are mostly defined by traditional norms and differ between rural and urban areas. In urban areas, women are relatively active in communities and participate in decision-making processes like parliament and private sectors. In rural areas, in contrast, women's role is rather restricted, focusing on household, care work and agriculture. The main obstacles for women's participation in decision-making are socio-cultural norms, insecurity due to armed conflicts, and traditions. Moreover, there is a lack of information on sexual harassment and many women keep accepting the dominance of their male counterparts.

## Activities

### Engaging and supporting SGBV affected women

In 2018, one programme activity consisted of receiving complaints and supporting SGBV affected women. AIHRC investigated the cases and referred them to the Criminal Justice. The programme also offered legal support to SGBV survivors and followed up on them. Moreover, AIHRC monitored the human rights situation in the country and made recommendations to the government for action. Another project intervention involved the provision of awareness and training programmes on human rights and gender equality through public campaigns. Furthermore, the organisation led advocacy initiatives on violence against women and drew attention to orphanages and women in detention centres. Advocacy efforts were done by supporting civil society organisations in producing shadow reports on different topics, including women's rights and violence against women. Finally, the programme also focused on legislation reforms for an alignment with human rights standards. Even though the SGBV work concentrat-

ed on women, the programme also involved men and boys in all its interventions.

## Results

### Improved access to justice and reformed legal framework to better protect SGBV survivors

The programme has shown positive and important results. AIHRC has enabled access to justice to SGBV affected individuals and monitored detention facilities and prisons. The results indicate that more women have reported cases of violence against them, but only half of the cases were registered. Once reported, AIHRC supports and renders legal aid. In 2018, the programme organised five conferences to inform on the situation of women and to raise awareness on the topic. Moreover, AIHRC launched a campaign to eliminate violence against women, and broadcasted key messages through television, radio, billboards, and interviews. During the reporting year, more than 42 women who had suffered SGBV were introduced to safe shelters, and 131 vulnerable people were connected to charities for support. In 2018, the Afghan Penal Code, which outlawed honour killing, has been reformed. Moreover, it clearly defined rape as a criminal act and stipulated the punishment for perpetrators. Through advocacy work, the Afghan government ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture.

## Challenges

### Customary norms and limited access to conflict affected areas as well as rural and remote areas

The security deterioration in the country represents a major challenge. It is an obstacle to reach out to the public and to travel, that is to conduct SGBV investigations and provide remedies for the survivors. Additionally, there is a lack of available justice institutions, particularly in rural and remote areas, and weak capacity of justice professionals. Another challenge involves the prevalence of customary norms. It hinders women to file complaints and bounds them to customary justice. These norms are mostly unaccountable and notorious for women's and human rights violations.

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# Increasing resilience and well-being of SGBV survivors in Jordan

Due to the deteriorating socio-economic situation facing Syrian refugees in Jordan, cases of domestic violence and gender-based violence are on the rise with families increasingly relying on negative coping mechanisms including early marriage. The SDC's funded project on "Delivering case management and gender-based violence cash assistance within a survivor-centered approach for Syrian refugees and host community women in Jordan" focuses in particular on prevention, protection and empowerment. The project has been implemented through an integrated approach of a SGBV-centred case management. This approach included cash transfer, raising awareness, and strengthening capacity for community based organisations in the most affected areas of the Syrian crisis such as Irbid, Mafraq, Ramtha, and East of Mamman.

## Implementing partners

The implementing partner for this project is the International Rescue Committee (IRC).

## Beneficiaries

At the end of the project phase in 2018, a total of 4'918 individuals were directly benefiting. 12 per cent of these beneficiaries were men.

## Finances

The project phase of 12 months was completed in 2018 (November 2017 – October 2018). From the total costs of CHF 1'043'624, the SDC paid 50 per cent. The other half was equally shared by the Department for International Development (DFID) and the Bureau of Population, Refugee and Migration (BPRM).

## Gender analysis

### Increase of women's vulnerability to SGBV through forced displacement

In 2018, 660'422 Syrian refugees were registered in Jordan. The Syrian crisis and its subsequent economic difficulties, overcrowded households and stressful living conditions have increased domestic violence. Because of displacement, women and girls find themselves more isolated and vulnerable to harassment and exploitation by power holders, such as landlords. Nearly 40 percent of Syrian-refugee households are female-headed, taking on new roles and responsibilities. Heads of households decide on income and expenses, assume responsibilities outside the home, and fulfil traditional gender roles at the same time. With men struggling to find

work, women are forced to generate income and assure the families' basic needs. Simultaneously, women continue to perform care duties. Linked to these challenges, families often rely on negative coping mechanisms putting them at risk of SGBV, for example through early marriage. This is perceived as a way to protect girls, while also reducing the financial burden on families. Furthermore, Syrian refugees are often unaware of confidential and supportive SGBV services, if they are available. Community-based organisations and community structures lack systematic capacity building on SGBV response and referral mechanisms.

## Activities

### Prevention, protection, and empowerment of female refugees and host communities

The project provides protection and focuses on psychosocial support (PSS) services to both Syrian refugees and host communities with a focus on women and girls in urban areas. IRC provides survivor-centred and confidential services. Unconventional cash assistance is also offered as part of the case management service consisting of two types: The first one is a regular cash assistance, which is based on standard monthly payments over six months. The second is a one-off emergency cash payment, which is higher than the standard assistance. It is designed to respond to life-threatening SGBV-related risks. PSS services and capacity-building activities are provided including parenting sessions, women's networking and adolescent girls' groups. Additionally, community centres offer informal education activities as well as information sessions on available services. Awareness on SGBV, gender equality as well as legal and health related issues is raised through home visits, community meetings, campaigns, and events. Thereby, gender discussion groups are organised to inform wom-

en on cash assistance and financial management aiming at maximising benefits and lowering risks. The project also provides specialised SGBV case management and PSS capacities to local partner staff. To ensure sustainability, the project includes a local 'Training of Trainers' approach based on IRC's knowledge on life skills and supportive care for adolescent girls (including parenting). Furthermore, the training strives for an engagement of men in achieving gender equality. Another focus is on changing male perceptions in order to reduce SGBV risks and consequences. For this purpose, the project targets male community leaders to disseminate information on awareness sessions.

## Results

### Increased women's confidence and positive change of perception

In the project, a survey was conducted. The results of the survey showed that after receiving the psychosocial support, 93 percent of the interviewed survivors reported improvement of their well-being. The top two increased abilities of well-being were "coping with stress" (97%) and "feeling more confident" (95%). 85 percent of SGBV affected women reported that cash assistance helped them to meet at least one pre-identified urgent need. More than 500 women and men participated in PSS and life skills activities. Their learning outcomes comprised information on access to services and support. 62 percent of community members demonstrated a positive change in perception related to harmful

gender norms and/or SGBV as a result of participating in IRC community-based activities, visits, outreach events, and discussion groups. During trainings on SGBV, 13 out of 21 male and female participants showed positive changes in their perception (expressing feelings, understanding SGBV as a result of power imbalance, and negative effects of early marriage). Moreover, these activities influenced attitudes towards women's participation in income generation and shared responsibility for decision making, including financial decisions. The majority of trained partner staff improved their knowledge on SGBV and PSS topics.

## Challenges

### Mobility and positive discrimination

Women and girls expressed that they found it difficult to access the women's centres. Mobility for women and girls has been an obstacle to participation in the offered sessions. Additionally, targeting women as cash recipients was seen as undermining men's power and was therefore increasing the risk of violence against women and girls. Engaging and communicating with men for a better understanding helped to cushion some challenges.

### Sources

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SDC (2017): Credit Proposal.

SDC (2018): Questionnaire Annual Report on Gender Equality 2018. SDC Cooperation Office Jordan.





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### **Safe spaces empower women and girls economically**

Yemen is beaten seriously by a conflict and a humanitarian crisis. Even before the current armed conflict, women faced systematic discrimination in all fields. Since the conflict escalated in 2015, the inequality between women and men increased, including SGBV. Yemen is globally the worst performing country in terms of gender equality<sup>39</sup>. As SGBV is multi-dimensional, a holistic response is needed. The SDC, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) support, together with implementing partners, women and girls affected by SGBV. The interventions are placed on individual and community levels. The project creates safe spaces for women and girls where, on the one hand, they receive psychological, medical and legal support, and on the other hand, they have the possibility to get skills training including financial literacy and vocational training. In 2018, 13'778 women and girls and 995 men have profited from this intervention. The project enhances female economic empowerment and opens the door for a sustainable perspective. Furthermore, the project works in the community and focuses on the inclusion of men, through workshops with gender experts, community committees as well as members of the men2men network. The group developed and implemented 12 community dialogues in which roots and causes of SGBV were discussion subjects. Key decision-making stakeholders like imams and members of the local governing councils were involved in these dialogues, which address sensitive topics like girls' education, child marriage and SGBV. The project still faces challenges, especially due to the political instability and armed conflict. Other challenges involve a lack of recognition of SGBV by decision makers as well as difficulties - linked to weak capacity - faced by humanitarian actors and implementation partners to address SGBV issues. The reduction and prevention of SGBV and better awareness on gender equality can only happen, if social norms change. For that purpose, women and men plus girls and boys must move together in the same direction.

39 World Economic Forum (2018): Gender Gap Report 2018.

# Research on five continents for understanding adolescent gender socialisation

The “Global Early Adolescent Study” (GEAS) is a multi-national research project that follows the experiences of adolescent girls and boys at selected sites in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas. The project investigates how gender norms evolve through adolescence, how these norms influence the health of girls and boys, and how gender socialisation varies by site and over time. In so doing, the GEAS identifies the factors that hinder or conversely support healthy development in early adolescence. Key research topics include sexual and reproductive health, mental health, body comfort, school retention, as well as gender-based and interpersonal violence. In addition, the project evaluates the impact of gender equality interventions in several of its research sites. The GEAS forms part of the Human Reproduction Programme, which is co-sponsored by UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO, and the World Bank.

## Implementing partners

The GEAS is implemented by the John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in Baltimore, in cooperation with a vast network of research institutions and development partners spanning five continents.

## Beneficiaries

Within the project period lasting from 2014 to 2022, the longitudinal study follows 15'000 adolescents at the age of 10 to 14 years. In 2018 alone, 14'500 boys and girls were interviewed. The purpose of the GEAS, however, is not to create direct benefits for the respondents, but to provide a sound data base for future evidence-based policy-making. Indirect beneficiaries in 2018 include political stakeholders and fellow researchers, among whom the first results were disseminated.

## Finances

Each year, the SDC contributes CHF 1.25 million to the core funds of the Human Reproduction Programme, out of which different research projects such as the GEAS are financed. In 2018, these core funds of the Human Reproduction Programme amounted to USD 26.3 million. The overall GEAS budget (2014 – 2022) totals CHF 1.5 million.

## Gender analysis

### Closing the knowledge gap on early adolescence

In early adolescence, the lives of girls and boys change drastically in both physiological and social dimensions. While physiological processes of change are basically the same all over the world, norms, attitudes, and resulting behaviours vary considerably across cultures and between genders. For instance, boys are more likely to engage in health-harming behaviours such as heavy smoking, alcohol consumption, and illicit drug use, while for girls, early pregnancy and school drop-outs are among the fundamental issues. In settings where girls and boys attend school in equal numbers, boys tend to fall behind girls in terms of educational achievement. Yet, it is still poorly understood how young adolescents assume socially defined gender roles in this crucial phase of their development and how this process differs between cultures. Closing this knowledge gap is an essential precondition for effective gender-responsive policy-making in different parts of the world.

## Activities

### Investigating gender socialisation and sexuality

In 2018, the three-year longitudinal study phase was initiated, during which the same adolescents will be interviewed repeatedly at different points in time. The interviews are conducted with an equal number of respondents of both genders, so that the project ensures that the experiences of boys

are also included. Revolving around gender socialisation, the interviews encompass the influence of caregivers, peers, and the broader social context (schools, neighbourhoods, media, and cultural setting). In this way, the study enables a nuanced understanding of gender socialisation in adolescence as an evolving process that varies across different cultural settings.

One of the distinctive features of the GEAS is the segmented project design, whereby the researchers at first developed and practically validated the instruments that are used in the current phase of the study. The approach of the first phase included in-depth interviews with an equivalent number of boys and girls as well as with their caregivers. In this manner, the researchers ensure that the study design is informed by the perspectives of both genders.

## Results

### Disseminating Research Results for Policymaking

A major achievement of GEAS was the pronounced gender focus in the revised edition of the *International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education*, which was published in January 2018. In addition, the *GEAS Tool Kit* was published, which provides a useful resource for reviewing gender socialisation of young adolescents. Moreover, the researchers disseminated their results by means of various publications in scientific journals and through conference presentations.

In addition to publishing and presenting, the researchers held stakeholder workshops in six

countries (Egypt, China, India, Kenya, Bolivia, and Ecuador) in which they gathered policy-makers, researchers, and donors. In this way, findings and implications were shared directly with the relevant stakeholders to achieve maximum impact on policy-making.

## Challenges

### Facing the Difficulties in Adolescents' Lives

The GEAS researchers were facing three major challenges in their work: First, different donors had different interests, and negotiating these was challenging in the beginning of the project. Second, in some of the research sites it was difficult to secure technical and ethical clearance for the study. At present, both of these challenges have been resolved. The remaining challenge is that the project seeks to capture the complex health and social problems that young adolescents are facing in both their families and their communities. However, the GEAS research team works hard to provide a representative gender-disaggregated data foundation. Thus, there are grounds for hope that some of the adolescents' challenges might be overcome in the future through evidence-based gender-responsive policy-making.

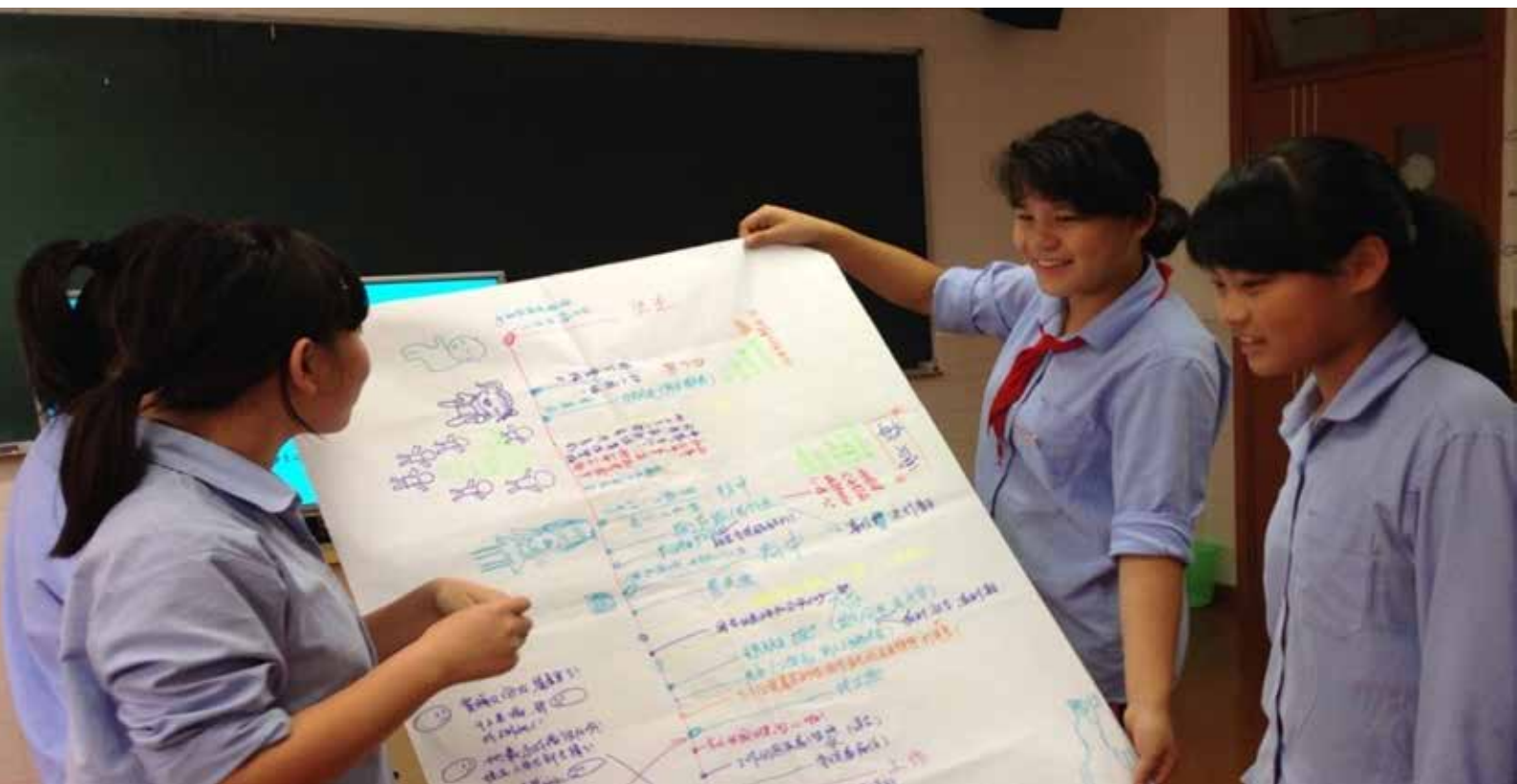
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## 4.2 Women's Economic Empowerment

### Why action is needed

For the SDC, engaging with the private sector is key to reach the targets outlined in the message and the SDGs. An important aspect for the SDC and its partners is the economic empowerment of women, to ensure an inclusive and equitable economic growth. In 2018, 3.5 billion people were part of the global labour force, but only two out of five were women. The data shows that the gender gap in the labour force participation is closing slowly. Furthermore, in low- and lower-middle-income countries, women are more likely than men to be in informal employment<sup>40</sup>. This gender disparity in economic participation and opportunity goes hand in hand with women's engagement in unpaid care work. Women usually spend twice as much time on childcare and household chores than men do<sup>41</sup>. Wage work has a positive impact on women's lives that goes beyond the economic sphere<sup>42</sup>, but economic empowerment is not limited to having a paid employment. It also includes control over income and assets, access to markets and formal financial services as well as access to education and skills training<sup>43</sup>. Financial inclusion fosters asset ownership and resilience against shocks. Moreover, it strengthens the ability to invest in savings and plan for the household's future. This provision is a catalyst for women's economic empowerment<sup>44</sup>. Women are confronted with barriers to access financial services, as the data from Sub-Saharan Africa shows. Between 2011 and 2014, the share of individuals with a bank account increased from 24 percent to 34 percent. In the same time span, the proportion of women holding bank accounts augmented from 21 percent to 30 percent. Additionally, during the same period, the amount of women using informal financial services has grown<sup>45</sup>.

### The SDC's achievements

The SDC's effort in strengthening and supporting women's economic empowerment has shown good results. The SDC's promotion of women's economic empowerment is manifold: It mainly includes, but is not limited to access to

land and professional skills, decent employment, and financial inclusion. In 2018<sup>46</sup>, the SDC and its partners were involved in the creation of more than 16'000 new jobs for women in Honduras, Georgia, and Armenia. Simultaneously, nearly one million youth received skills training in Bangladesh. Thereby, 57 percent of the participants were women. In Mozambique over 4'500 small-scale farmers gained access to formal financial services or participated in saving groups supported by the SDC and its partners. 60 percent of the participants were women.

A highlight of the past year was the Savings and Credit Forum entitled "Women's Financial Inclusion – How to reach 1 Billion Women"<sup>47</sup> as part of a learning journey on the SDC's achievements in this regard. A high point of the forum was the key note speech by Mary Ellen Iskenderian, CEO of Women's World Banking, an important partner of the SDC. A key issue dealt with were the gender digital gap and women's financial inclusion or how to engage youth to overcome the gap early on. The presentations and discussions at the forum generated some key points for further development in this area. One aspect to be mentioned concerns the increasing digital financial services, which are promising for women's financial inclusion. However, this new opportunity comes along with a set of challenges in the field of women's low mobile phone ownership, limited digital literacy and lack of trust in new digital tools.

To overcome these constraints, more action is needed to lower barriers to access financial services, to develop gender-sensitive financial products, and to reflect on how social norms restrict women's participation in the financial sector. Changing social norms remains a key factor in fostering women's economic empowerment and financial inclusion, irrespective of current technology development. Men and boys must contribute to shape the discussions around social norms, which may pave the way to a gender equal use of gender responsive/targeted financial products. In order to reach this goal, boys and men have to be an integral part of financial inclusion projects and programmes. Furthermore, policies need to address systemic constraints that prevent women from accessing financial services and economic opportunities.

40 ILO (2019): *World Employment Social Outlook. Trends 2019*.

41 World Economic Forum (2018): *Gender Gap Report 2018*.

42 Kabeer, N. (2012): Women's economic empowerment and inclusive growth: labour markets and enterprise development. SIG WORKING PAPER 2012/1. School of Oriental and African Studies.

43 Golla, A.M. et al. (2011): *Understanding and Measuring Women's Economic Empowerment. Definition, Framework and Indicators*. International Center for Research on Women.

44 Demircuc-Kunt, A. et al. (2013): *Financial Inclusion and Legal Discrimination Against Women. Evidence from Developing Countries*. The World Bank.

45 Otchia, C. S. (2018): *Gender-based Barriers and Opportunities to Financial Inclusion. New Evidence from Ghana*. In: *Financial Inclusion for Poverty Alleviation*. Ed. M, Uruguchi.

46 SDC (2019): *Berichterstattung Umsetzung Botschaft über die internationale Zusammenarbeit 2017-2020. Reporting zu Wirkungsziel 7: Gender*.

47 For more information, see: [Women's Financial Inclusion - how to reach 1 billion women](#).

### **Gender Reference Indicator: Access to Natural Resources**

Women and men have equal access, ownership and rights to natural resources such as land and water to improve their income and livelihood.

**Indicator:** Number of persons (m/f) that have established secure (individual, collective, customary) access to land.

#### **Example 4: Gender-Significant Intervention**

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## **Empowering women to secure seeds and food sovereignty – a case from Malawi**

Women are central to agriculture and make a strong contribution to food security and nutrition at both the household and community levels. In Africa, women represent 70 percent of farmers, yet only 15 percent are landholders, and they face obstacles to access agriculture services. Thus, the SDC supports a regional project called “Seed and Knowledge Initiative” (SKI) to revive and enhance traditional seed and knowledge systems and to deepen understanding about their functioning, within the context of sustainable agricultural, cultural, and ecological practices. The initiative’s long-term vision is to collaborate with communities, national and regional partners towards a future where small-holder farmers, and women in particular, are empowered to secure seed and food sovereignty on all levels.

### **Implementing partners**

SKI consists of 13 partners, in four countries: Malawi, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The focus of this example lies on Malawi where the implementing partner is Soil, Food & Healthy Communities (SFHC).

### **Beneficiaries**

At the end of 2018, the project has reached 6’750 women and 2’250 men in all four countries.

### **Finances**

The ongoing project started in August 2013 and ended in February 2019. The total amount of cost is CHF 4’680’000. During 2018, the amount of budget allocated was CHF 1’205’000.

### **Gender analysis**

#### **Women’s constraints to access land and other important resources for food sovereignty**

In the context of Southern Africa, women are responsible for reproductive tasks such as food preparation, but not for food purchases. This is particularly the case in the rural areas where the majority of the population lives. This unequal division of labour within households is reflected in malnutrition, as women tend to have less access to assets and resources. In Northern Malawi, families

with a high gender imbalance also show a high level of food insecurity. In Malawi, farmers have a long experience in working with using and testing new crops. Therefore, when introducing new crops, women and men in Malawi are generally more open to testing and using new crops. Some crops show fast and positive results in nutrition, others may need more investment and are more time consuming. Women reported that men would sell the crops and use the gain for purchasing goods that would not benefit the household, such as alcohol.

### **Activities**

#### **Increase women’s decision-making power over agriculture, food security, and income**

The regional project has four interrelated objectives addressing and expanding the vision on multiple levels. The partner organisation SFHC works on farmer to farmers teaching on agro ecology, nutrition, and local food market development to improve food security, nutrition, and livelihoods of over 6’000 farm families in Malawi over five years. Food insecure women, men, and youth will learn from fellow farmers about ways to sustainably manage their soils, increase the diversity and amount of food, and improve young children’s nutrition. Farmers and young people are also developing local food enterprises to improve incomes and boost local rural economies through the support of the project. The project organises „Recipe Days“, where women and men gather, cook together, learn from each other, and discuss about their issues on food security, including the unequal distri-



bution of household work. The project pays special attention to increasing the interest of male participants in order to be able to change perceptions and ways of doing things.

## Results

### Sharing and learning from each other contributed to positive change

In 2018 in Malawi, the intervention “Recipe Days” has shown a meaningful and tangible positive change within rural households when it comes to food preparation, allocation of labour, scarce or limited finances in prioritising nutrition, and overall harmony within households. “Recipe Days” create a space where gender role transformation can happen much easier. Consequently, these transformations lead to improved food security and nutrition within the household. At the beginning, men did not often participate in those information days; they felt uncomfortable taking up an activity that was usually done by women. However, over time, their participation grew and men occasionally made up half of the total participants. Additionally, this helped the men appreciate the reproductive roles as well as the importance of nutrition and food security for households. Their overall support in sharing unpaid care work grew. The project also continued with trainings and the promotion of seed custodians of traditional crops, of whom the majority were women. Furthermore, the project hosted a “Community of Practice” meeting to share experiences in addressing malnutrition as well as how to successfully deal with gender inequalities.

## Challenges

### Behavioural change is a long-term investment

In Malawi, throughout the project, one of the challenges was to work individually with women on household level and to reach the projects’ objectives. The exchange between women and men was missing and one of the root causes, namely the inequality at the household level between women and men, was not addressed. The “Recipe Day” has mitigated this by creating a space for exchange between women and men. Even though the public learning days have increased the number of male participants, the participation of men is still low and inconsistent. The “Recipe Day” is a great space for role transformation, yet it needs extensive follow-up by community organisers so that learned skills and behaviours can be translated into daily practice.

### Sources

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SDC (2018): Questionnaire Annual Report on Gender Equality 2018. SDC Cooperation Office Zimbabwe.

SDC (2019): [Project Database - Seed and Knowledge Systems](#).



### **Gender Reference Indicator: Vocational Skills Development**

Women have access to and attend vocational training and, as a result, gain an income. However, there are gender-specific obstacles in the transition from vocational skills training to job and income.

### **Example 5: Gender-Significant Intervention**

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# **Women's rooms for municipal decision-making power and female entrepreneurship in Georgia**

The SDC and its implementing partner Mercy Corps Europe enhance female economic empowerment through the "Alliances Caucasus Programme" (ALCP). This is a ten-year market development programme that seeks to improve agricultural income in rural areas of Georgia as well as in the bordering regions of Armenia and Azerbaijan. Since 2011, ALCP has been working towards strengthening market access and cross-border trade in livestock, honey, and related market systems. As much as ALCP is an agro-economic programme, it is also a showcase for successful gender-inclusivity, as it incorporates gender in every step of the project cycle: Before implementation even started, several gender studies had been conducted, and the local staff received training on gender concepts and tools. Today, ALCP's "Women's Rooms" in municipal buildings serve as valuable resource centres, which increase women's entrepreneurial skills and their access to services on the municipal level.

### **Implementing partners**

The SDC's implementing partner in this project is Mercy Corps Europe.

### **Beneficiaries**

In ALCP's current reporting period (April 2017 – October 2018), over 21'000 persons generated tangible positive income changes due to improved services and markets, thereof 30 percent women. 677 individual business consultations were delivered, thereof 71 percent to women.

### **Finances**

The budget for 2011 – 2018 was CHF 15'031'000, and the budget for 2018 alone was CHF 1'980'000.

### **Gender analysis**

#### **Progressive national policies versus lack of implementation**

Georgia's national gender equality legislation is very progressive, including for instance gender-responsive budget regulations. On the municipal level, however, these laws are not effectively enacted. Regional and village governments do not take into account that women and men might have different

needs, interests and perspectives. Thus, potential synergies between gender-related and local development programming remain unexploited. Ministries lack gender-sensitive outreach strategies and often do not collect gender-disaggregated data, which could allow for an analysis of the different needs of women and men. Demonstrating the impact of policies on women and men is also relevant. In addition to this governmental lacuna, women are facing time poverty due to unpaid work that restricts their mobility. Hence, women rarely partake in meetings and are less informed than men about existing municipal services. Consequently, lack of women's access to municipal services and decision-making has become a pervasive constraint for gender equality. Moreover, women often do not gain a regular independent income, which limits their options for accessing financial services that could foster their economic empowerment.

### **Activities**

#### **Financial literacy trainings and business consulting**

ALCP works towards enhancing women's municipal decision-making and agricultural market access in a variety of ways. The most prominent activity is the establishment of so-called "Women's Rooms" (WR) in municipal buildings. The rooms serve as resource and training centres, featuring computers with free internet access, a library, as well as a chil-

dren's corner. In general, all genders are welcome to use the resources provided. In 2018, 31 percent of the users were men and boys. However, many of the activities organised in the WR target primarily women: In 2018, WR delivered 677 business consultations, thereof 71 percent to women. The WR teams organised 150 information events with nearly 3'000 participants, out of which 65 percent were female. WR also supported 235 individuals, thereof 131 women (56 percent), in submitting a business proposal to a state-based entrepreneurship fund. Currently, there are 28 WRs across Georgia, including eight that were established in 2018. Their "First Annual General Meeting" 2018 helped strengthening the WR network, involving Georgian officials of the municipality and national level as well as representatives of UN Women.

In addition to the WR activities, ALCP disseminated the content of the Georgian Gender Equality Law in popular language among the rural population, sensitised business owners on the importance of gender issues, and analysed the financing patterns of 142 female entrepreneurs, which will inform the development of gender-sensitive financial interventions.

## Results

### Increased access to financial services and involvement in decision-making

The operation of the WRs significantly improved women's participation in public life. Through the training and services provided, women's financial literacy increased as a consequence of the delivered business consultations. Women are now more confident in municipal level decision-making and actively access municipal services, submitting applications to local governments for civil budgeting initiatives and community livelihood projects. Out of 48 projects submitted by women in 2018, 34 were funded. These 34 projects were funded with a total of nearly CHF 250'000.

In 2018, ALCP enabled 21'000 rural people to generate higher incomes through better access to services and markets in the livestock and honey sector, thereof around 6'300 were women. 176 full-time job equivalents were created; out of these, 59 were for women. The total net income changes attributable to ALCP along the livestock and honey value chains amounted to CHF 640'000 in 2018, thereof CHF 169'000 for women. Through their higher and regular income, women can access credit more easily. In 2018, women used their loans mainly for agricultural investments and for purchasing labour saving goods. Numerous women stated that their greater financial independence and stability has had a positive impact on their status within the family, increasing their level of household decision-making and reducing the incidences of domestic conflicts. Finally, women now also have more time for leisure activities and socialising despite their greater economic involvement.

## Challenges

### Sustainability and scale

Frequent change of local decision-makers and limited national upscaling opportunities are among the major gender-related challenges of ALCP. To address these, ALCP continuously creates gender awareness among newly employed officials and works with the SDC and UN women to foster the national expansion of WRs. Acknowledging that continuous capacity enhancement of the local implementing staff is critical to keep all project interventions gender-sensitised, ALCP provides support to relevant project staff to consistently improve their knowledge of the gender tools applied by the programme.

### Sources

Alliances Caucasus Programme (2019): [Online presence](#).  
SDC (2018): Questionnaire Annual Report on Gender Equality 2018. SDC Cooperation Office Georgia.

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**Gender Reference Indicator: Vocational skills development**

Women have access to and attend vocational training and, as a result, gain an income. However, there are gender-specific obstacles in the transition from vocational skills training to job and income.

**Indicator (ARI EV3):** Number of women (and men) who gained access to wage employment or entrepreneurship after attending vocational training

**Example 6: Gender-Significant Intervention**

# Strengthening women's access to skills development and employability in Myanmar

In Myanmar, half of all female citizens are not part of the workforce. Women in particular face challenges such as poor skills levels, limited access to vocational skills development training, gendered occupational segmentation, gender wage gap, and bearing the sole responsibility of unpaid care work. The SDC funded "Vocational Skills Development Programme" (VSDP) addresses these issues by strengthening inclusive access and completion rates for quality "Technical Vocational Education and Training" (TVET) with the practical skills needed in a modern economy. The focus is on socially excluded groups, including women from disadvantaged backgrounds.

## Implementing partners

The implementation partner of this project in Myanmar is Swisscontact/Inbas.

## Beneficiaries

During the current project phase in 2018, 1'390 women and 1'905 men benefited from this intervention.

## Finances

The SDC-funded project has an overall duration of 12 years (December 2013 - November 2025) with a total funding of CHF 60 million. The current second phase started on May 2018 and will last until April 2022 with an estimated amount of CHF 5'200'000 for 2018.

## Gender analysis

### Economic progress and persistence in gendered stereotypes

Despite economic progress, gendered occupational segmentation and women's concentration in the informal sector sustain concerns about job stereotyping, quality, and economic sustainability. Skilled women tend to occupy middle-management and lower positions rather than senior management positions. The majority of the offered TVET courses are

male-dominated. Women bear the responsibility for unpaid care work in addition to their paid jobs. Gender wage gaps continue to prevail, in particular due to women who work in low wage jobs. For people older than 15 years, literacy in 2014 was estimated at 90 percent with large regional and gender discrepancies. Rural areas in Shan State have the lowest female literacy rate, with 52 percent compared to male literacy (64%). The progress in women's education and the larger proportion of women in higher education do not seem to translate to post-education employment, which implies lower labour force participation and higher unemployment for women.

## Activities

### Facilitating access to women and men and increasing female job opportunities

VSDP has been identifying and developing skills development opportunities that facilitate access to both women (49%) and men (51%) from disadvantaged backgrounds. The programme implements a number of measures to ensure sensitive solutions to women's participation including regular training on gender equality and social inclusion. In addition, VSDP actively promotes these topics with its private and public-sector partners. The selection process for sub-contractors considers their track record on gender and social inclusion. The selection of programme partners (hotels and others) includes the promotion of "equal pay for equal work". Gender awareness training is planned for all VSDP stake-

holders including learners, staff, master instructors in Swiss hospitality, local vocational training instructors, hotel supervisors, etc. The apprenticeship pilot was launched in 2018, which aspired to translate the Swiss dual education approach into Myanmar. It aims at providing training and employment opportunities in a higher economic segment, which results in better remuneration. The pilot identified one male-dominated (agricultural, machinery, mechanic) and one gender-neutral occupation (cook)<sup>48</sup>.

## Results

### Increased skills development courses and improved employability

In 2018, a significant achievement of VSDP was the understanding of policy-makers of the Myanmar Department of TVET regarding the benefits of implementing female-oriented courses in their colleges and institutes. More skills development courses were offered in 2018, targeting women, focusing on typical female occupations (Beautician, Tailor) or focusing on gender-neutral occupations (Receptionist, Waiting Staff, Room Attendant, Commis, Sales clerk). Moreover, the programme implemented measures to ensure sensitive solutions to women's access and participation. First, a new training for sales clerks was introduced to maintain gender balance between learners. Second, the annual income of training graduates who entered (self-) employment after the training was four times higher for women and three times higher for men than before. This considerable increase was also linked to women and men who find employment for the first time as a training result. Nevertheless, women still earn less than men on average. Third, the gender discrepancy of wages was found in particular between different occupations. Fourth, across all components,

an average of 72 percent of training beneficiaries entered (self-) employment within six months after graduation (71% women / 73% men). The highest proportion of (self-) employed graduates after the training (25%) were in full-time positions, although there were significant differences between the occupations. Furthermore, Swisscontact elaborated a "Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Strategy" as a reference for programme implementation and a "Gender Guide" for skills development programmes which was applied throughout the project cycle.

## Challenges

### Inclusion of women in skills development to foster employment opportunities

There are two possible strategies to enhance women's skills development to foster employment and income. The first is to professionalise traditional female occupations and thus raise the potential productivity and income. The second strategy is to promote women's access to male dominated professions, which have potential for higher income and more career opportunities in those professions. The second option is challenging for different reasons: The division of labour and the different interests to work in traditional male or female-oriented occupations is deeply rooted in the Myanmar society. To integrate female learners into male-oriented occupations for the vocational training is still demanding. Both the number of selected women as well as their acceptance by male co-workers is still low. Experience showed that there are still many obstacles of the participation of women in male-dominated occupations. It is still difficult for women to find suitable employment in male-dominated occupations, irrespective of their skills.

### Sources

SDC (2018): Questionnaire Annual Report on Gender Equality 2018. SDC Cooperation Office Myanmar.

SDC (2018): Project Factsheet on Vocational Skills Development Programme (VSDP), Myanmar.

World Bank (2019): [Labor force participation rate](#).

48 Gender-neutral occupations are employments where the ratio between women and men is roughly balanced.



**Gender Reference Indicator: Financial inclusion**

Formal financial services such as a saving, insurance, loans and bank account etc. are key elements for sustainable economic empowerment and asset building

**Indicator (ARI E2):** No. of persons (m/f) accessing a formal financial service (savings, insurance, loan, leasing, payment and transfer service, bank account).

**Example 7: Gender-Significant Intervention**

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# Improved financial inclusion of female entrepreneurs through micro-finance institution in Egypt

The social and economic turmoil surrounding the 2011 Egyptian revolution affected the women-focused micro-finance institution Al-Tadamun hard. For five years, SECO supported technical assistance of Al-Tadamun through the overall 'Micro, Small & Medium Enterprise Technical Assistance Facility' (MSME TA). The intervention aimed at supporting the institution to better serve and expand financial services to its female clients and thus improve the financial inclusion of women entrepreneurs/MSMEs in Egypt. By the end of the project implementation in 2017, Al-Tadamun was able to increase the number of its female borrowers.

## Implementing partners

This project, implemented by SECO, is part of the Swiss Cooperation Strategy portfolio which is implemented jointly by SECO and SDC in Egypt. The project ended in 2017 and was evaluated in 2018. It was included in the mapping exercise SDC conducted on financial inclusion in 2018 and was found to give valuable insights to be featured in the realm of the SDC Gender Status Report 2018. SECO's implementing partner is the International Finance Corporation (IFC).

## Beneficiaries

By the end of the project in 2017, 106'443 women borrowers benefited from Al-Tadamun's facilities. Since the institution provides loans to women only, no men were targeted.

## Finances

The Project was running from 2013-2017. It is a sub-project of the overall multi-donor project MSME TA Facility. SECO contributed CHF 6'300'000 to the total budget (CHF 31'000'000) of the overall project.

The MSME TA Facility provided CHF 555'000 to the project budget of CHF 805'000 of the sub-project.

## Gender analysis

### Limited access to finances for women affects entrepreneurial prospects

In Egypt, women represent 23 percent of the total labour force. There is a horizontal segregation of the labour market, with lower female participation in the formal sector. While women make up for 30 percent of micro, small and medium enterprise owners, they only have access to 10 percent of commercial financing in total. In addition to a weak entrepreneurial ecosystem in general, financing is one of the major obstacles faced by female entrepreneurs. Interwoven legal and societal constraints limit women's entrepreneurship prospects and access to finances. Barriers to women accessing finances include the inability to meet collateral requirements, negative attitudes towards women, cultural constraints that make it difficult for women to transact in business, and limited business/management skills as well as financial illiteracy. Female micro-credit programmes are seen as a strategy to overcome these barriers. The specific financial services aim at enhancing women's financial inclusion and thus encourage women's empowerment. However, science discusses the hypothesis that financial inclusion leads to empowerment critically<sup>49</sup>. For example, being the loaner does not automatically mean to have control over the use of loan funds or the financial benefits of her activities. Some wom-

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<sup>49</sup> See for example Kuumori, J. G. et al. (2014) or Shaanta, M. et al. (2015).

en might even be subject to harassment and abuse due to their new role in the family. This shows that an inclusion of the partners and communities surrounding the individual female loaners is important to achieve the aspired results. Additionally, the motivation of the lending institution is crucial. If profit is the main institutional orientation, the danger is that pressure through indebtedness disempowers women. Micro-finance is then becoming a means of making profit on the back of women's reliability.

## Activities

### Technical assistance to Al-Tadamun micro-finance foundation

Al-Tadamun is a micro-finance foundation aiming at increasing the income of women micro-entrepreneurs. Due to the economic impact of the 2011 Egyptian revolution, Al-Tadamun was forced to close a number of branches, slow down disbursements, and focus on collecting delinquent loans. More significantly, the crisis revealed a number of internal issues within Al-Tadamun's operations that had gone unaddressed during earlier periods of high growth. As a sub-project of the MSME TA Facility, technical assistance was provided to Al-Tadamun in addressing these internal weaknesses.

The project supported Al-Tadamun in its efforts to (1) build resilience; (2) diversify product offering; and (3) enhance institutional capacity. This should ultimately allow them to regain their status as one of the key players in the micro-finance industry in Egypt evidenced by improved portfolio quality and increased outreach.

## Results

### Increased number of female borrowers

In 2018, the external evaluation found that the technical assistance for Al-Tadamun was highly successful. Al-Tadamun has rebuilt its loan portfolio, with current numbers comparable to those before the 2011 Egyptian revolution. Additionally, the portfolio quality improved considerably. After losing almost 50 percent of its staff at the wake of the crisis, Al-Tadamun has attracted, trained and kept new staff members who are taking on new responsibilities in an increasing number of branches that the institution has been able to open. Al-Tadamun has improved systems and human capacities to grow and mitigate possible future risks. At the end of the project implementation, Al-Tadamun disbursed 359'376 loans amounting to a total value of CHF 79'053'935 to female clients. Al-Tadamun increased the number of its female borrowers from 42'572 to 106'443 by the end of the project implementation. This enabled Al-Tadamun to better

serve and expand financial services to its female clients, thus improving the financial inclusion of women entrepreneurs/MSMEs in Egypt.

## Challenges

### Strengthening capacities remains important

The project is completed and was generally very successful. However, moving forward and strengthening capacities within Al-Tadamun – in terms of risk and HR management – remains important. The newly developed individual loan will have to be monitored and more support might be needed by Al-Tadamun in developing and launching new products. Furthermore, research shows that financial inclusion does not automatically entail women's empowerment. The involvement of men and entire families of the female borrowers throughout the process turned out to be crucial for the envisioned women's empowerment.

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### **Gender Reference Indicator: Unpaid care work and domestic work**

Women's and men's unpaid care and domestic work load is reduced and redistributed due to rural infrastructure development, i.e. water, electricity, energy efficiency, climate adaption, labour saving technologies or child care services. This indicator addresses time poverty of women as critical for better access to education, economic activities, and political engagement.

**Indicator (ARI G2):** Average number of hours of unpaid domestic chores and care work reduced per day for women (and men).

## **Example 8: Gender-Significant Intervention**

# **Prioritisation of public services in favour of vulnerable groups in Kyrgyzstan**

Due to their normatively ascribed role as caretakers, the lack of public services discourages women's engagement in employment or other occupations. The "Public Service Improvement" (PSI) project in Kyrgyzstan aims at improving the system of service management at the local level, responding to the demands of citizens in a timely and efficient manner. PSI prioritises the funding of services that cater the needs of vulnerable groups and promotes women's participation in decision-making processes. As a result, a shift of care-work to public services is made possible.

### **Implementing partners**

The SDC's implementing partners of the PSI project in Kyrgyzstan are Helvetas and the Development Policy Institute.

### **Beneficiaries**

In 2018, a total of 275'685 individuals benefited from the project. Thereof, 138'861 (50.4%) persons were women and 136'824 (49.6%) were men.

### **Finances**

PSI is an SDC-funded ten-year project. It is ongoing and currently in its first phase of implementation (2015-2019). In 2018, the SDC financed the project with CHF 1'062'233. The budget of the first phase is CHF 4'431'000. The overall budget of the multi-year project is CHF 10'431'000.

### **Gender analysis**

#### **Lack of public services and women's relief from domestic obligations**

According to the legislation of the Kyrgyz Republic, women and men have equal rights. However, due to the existing socio-cultural context, women are the main caretakers in and of the families, responsible for domestic chores and the care for children and elderly people. Due to the lack of services that could shift care work (pre-school and school educa-

tion services, in-house access to water etc.), many women are not able to engage in paid employment or other occupations. It is especially difficult for mothers with children with special needs, since education services catering to them are non-existent in rural municipalities. Furthermore, women remain excluded from most decision-making processes and are underrepresented at all levels of political governance.

### **Activities**

#### **Support for services related to women's concerns/needs**

The PSI project works on two levels: At the local level, the project focuses on tangible public service improvements for citizens and supports service providers to deliver better municipal services. At the second level, the project will tackle the issues of governance structures locally and nationally by strengthening various interaction systems of citizens' input, municipal oversight over public service providers, and the interaction system between local and national stakeholders.

Through a citizen-centred approach in the selection of services to be improved, it is assured that the selected services are based on real needs and the priorities of the population. The municipalities then receive grant support from the project. The project specifies that those services that address the needs of vulnerable groups (defined as women, marginalised groups and ethnic minorities) will be prioritised for funding.



In 2018, the PSI project has thus continued to support municipalities in improving services prioritised by local communities, many of which primarily focus on issues directly and indirectly related to women's concerns, namely pre-school education, sanitation and health care via access to clean water. Gender and social equity elements have been introduced in the group working on monitoring and evaluation as well as in the capacity building activities. The PSI requirements promote a 30 per cent gender quota for each working group of the partner local municipalities to ensure female participation in decision-making processes within the communities. Special trainings were provided to advance governance and management skills of local municipality employees.

## Results

### Improved infrastructure contributes to better living conditions and economic opportunities

As a result of the introduction of gender and social equality elements into the project, women have succeeded in the prioritisation of public services for improvements corresponding to their needs. The education services for children of pre-school age and children with special needs has shifted care work to public services and freed up time for paid employment and/or occupations for the mothers. Therefore, the project has had an unintended outcome of creating conditions for women to advance their socio-economic standing within their communities. The improvement of access to water resulted in better living conditions: people were able to install flush toilets, showers, and water machines. Improvement of street lightening has contributed to more safety and mobility of community members, especially women and children who were sometimes afraid to walk alone in dark streets.

## Challenges

### Decline in women's participation in decision-making processes

A decline was observed in women's participation in decision-making processes on a local level. The sphere of governance is mostly dominated by men and frequently women's needs and interests are under-represented. Thus, the promotion of women on decision-making positions is crucial for positive changes in communities and to enhance empowerment for socio-vulnerable groups. In order to improve the situation on the ground, the project sets special requirements to promote gender equality through local municipalities. Also, it prioritises the cooperation with municipalities with a greater gender balance. Special attention will be given to include gender sensitive budgeting trainings in the

second phase of the project. Overall, it needs to be acknowledged that the outsourcing of care work to the public sector, without addressing the division of labour at home by engaging men and boys bears the risk of not being gender transformative as women will be the ones to fill the care gap in case of budget cuts.

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## 4.3 Women's Political Participation

### Why action is needed

Women's political participation is the third pillar of the SDC's strategic goal of the dispatch. Women still face serious obstacles in terms of equal political participation and representation on local and national levels. Globally speaking, by the end of 2018, only 24 percent of national parliamentarians were women. Only in Rwanda, Cuba, and Bolivia more than half of the members of parliament are female<sup>50</sup>. Women's low participation in national parliaments goes hand in hand with their presence as heads of states. In 2018, among 149 analysed countries, women were heads of state or prime ministers in only 17 nations<sup>51</sup>. Furthermore, a study from 2018 shows that numerous women in parliament were exposed to SGBV<sup>52</sup>. Women are not only under-represented in politics on the national level, but also on local levels and as voters. Women face structural barriers and capacity shortages to run for office. On average, they have less years of education, a weaker political network and less financial resources than men to become a political leader<sup>53</sup>. One key area to close the gender gap in the political sphere is to integrate Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB). The budget determines where the money comes from and where it goes and represents the most explicit statement and prioritisation of a government. GRB does not mean to create separate budgets for women and men, but it must ensure that the public resources are committed towards gender equality. A state may have compelling gender-mainstreamed policies on paper, but implementation without the necessary budget will not take place. GRB does not only contribute to gender equality, but it simultaneously considers disadvantaged groups in the society and thus contributes to a sustainable development<sup>54 55</sup>.

### The SDC's achievements

Switzerland and especially the SDC focuses on women's political empowerment and dedicates special attention to women's political participation and representation as well as to responsive approaches in local and national governance, peace and state-building processes. The SDC has achieved promising results in 2018, especially in the field of political participation at the local level and in gender-responsive public finance management. In SDC-supported provinces of Benin, for example, 8 percent of the local council members were women, while the national average was 4 percent. Furthermore, the SDC's GRB at the local level displays a direct impact for women. The local governance programme in Myanmar, for instance, aligned the budget for the first time regarding GRB. Moreover, in Macedonia, 130 elected municipal councillors received training regarding GRB and 1'700 women were directly involved in outreach actions linked to GRB information<sup>56</sup>. To foster this change and to further increase the awareness, a webinar and an e-discussion was held during the last year<sup>57</sup>. The three-day e-discussion focused on the current practices of the SDC and key international development actors regarding gender-responsive and socially inclusive budgeting in order to design a programme framework, guidelines and support tools. 73 participants from 28 countries attended the e-discussion. As an outcome of this e-discussion activity, participants made recommendations on how the SDC and its staff could further strengthen women's political involvement and agency through GRB. Thereby, the following key issues were raised: (1) Emphasise the importance of gender-responsiveness and inclusion in the own organisations, and collect and consider gender-sensitive data on the SDC's own budget and budgets of its country offices. (2) Raise awareness on relevance of capacity building for SDC members and partners in implementing GRB. (3) Provide guidance to assure that in all SDC governance projects, gender is mainstreamed in the public finance management cycle.

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56 SDC (2019): Berichterstattung Umsetzung Botschaft über die internationale Zusammenarbeit 2017-2020. Reporting zu Wirkungsziel 7: Gender.

57 See 'Joint e-Discussion on Gender Responsive and Socially Inclusive Budgeting (GenderNet and DDLGN)'.

### **Gender Reference Indicator: Political participation and decision-making**

Women equally participate and have equal influence in local governance and politics to have their voice heard. 30 percent representation is an indication for having voice and influence.

**Indicator (ARI G3):** Number of municipal governments with at least 30 percent representation of women/either sex (or percentage of women and men in local governments).

#### **Example 9: Gender-Significant Intervention**

## **Increase women's political participation in local level governance in Bangladesh**

Local governments in Bangladesh have traditionally been almost exclusive male domains. Women's access exists, but active and meaningful participation is lacking. Therefore, the SDC funds the project "Sharique", which has developed a proven capacity development model for urban municipalities, thus strengthening participatory and inclusive development planning, transparent budgeting, taxation, and the representation of women as well as poor citizens in decision making and service delivery. During this exit phase, the model will be internalised and applied in two additional districts by national training institutions at the benefit of 800'000 citizens in order to influence planning and provision of public services.

### **Implementing partners**

The implementing partner of the Sharique project is HELVETAS.

### **Beneficiaries**

In 2018, 14'157 women and 18'934 men were beneficiaries of the project.

### **Finances**

The SDC-funded project Sharique started in 2006. The current fourth phase of this project is an exit phase (March 2017 – December 2019). The total amount of budget allocated for this current phase by the SDC is CHF 5'650'000. In 2018, CHF 1'570'000 were financed.

### **Gender analysis**

#### **Differences in power and perception between women's and men's roles**

In Bangladesh, most girls are likely to be married before adulthood. Numerous girls and women have little choice over major decisions in their own lives. Sex-selective abortions of girls are still happening. Furthermore, girls do not receive the same nutritious food compared to boys in the common household. Girls and women's mobility is often restricted, and if they leave their houses, they may be teased or harassed. Bangladesh's society is based on patriarchal structures where men are the breadwinners of the family and women mostly have re-

productive and care duties. Male responsibilities include road repairing, construction work, participation in marriage, cultural events, funerals, and related rituals. Additionally, men have access to and control over most resources and services and are often the decision maker within the household. Thus, women compared to men have an inferior status in society. According to the Constitution of Bangladesh, "women shall have equal rights with men in all spheres of state and public life". However, the constitution also recognises religious laws, which are unequal and discriminatory towards women. At local, sub-district and national levels, reserved political office and parliamentary seats for women are guaranteed by law. Even though women are represented in the institutions and occupy seats, there are clear differences in power and access to resources between reserved and general political office and parliamentary seats.

### **Activities**

#### **Strengthening women's political empowerment**

Sharique supported local citizens to understand their rights and express demands for governmental services. Moreover, Sharique assisted elected representatives to fulfil their duties responsibly. Thus, the overall system was expected to function in a more transparent, accountable, participatory, and efficient manner. Through the 'Ward Platforms', Sharique supported women to participate in decision-making on development activities. It focused on women's leadership, whilst recognising that this was only one aspect of women's political empowerment. Sharique ensured that national actors use

and institutionalise tested capacity development tools. To support the local citizens, 1'512 ward platforms (comprising 15-25 women and men) will be established in two districts and trainings provided on "Local Government Self-Assessment", "Roles and Responsibilities of Union Parishad", "Ward Shava Participation", "Guidelines on Safety Net Programs" and "Participatory Gender Analysis" (PGA).

The project involved men and boys through its capacity building, local governance processes, and community-based awareness sessions. It supported male councillors of local government institutions (LGI) to change their attitudes towards female LGI councillors and built gender-sensitive local government institutions through sensitisation of both women and men. Sharique has been increasing female participation in different "Local Government Forums" to give women stronger voices in the council meetings of LGI. Moreover, women now successfully express their opinions more open during consultations.

## Results

### Increased number of women actively take part in decision-making processes

The presented results focus on the period from January to June 2018. The PGA training raised awareness through participatory discussions on existing inequalities in terms of the social status of women and men in the family as well as on social and union levels. In the training, the participants committed to create more conducive environments to increase equal gender opportunities. For the formation of wards, the project made sure that members were village representatives. Even though female participation in wards only comprised 36 percent, women were able to raise their voices. The participation of women regarding gender-responsive budgeting was

also more than 30 percent. They actively contributed in budget planning and included their needs. The training on "Social Safety Net" focused on the legal process of committee formations. Furthermore, the participants also learned to get more active and approach Union Parishad to seek information about social safety net programmes. In general, Sharique's intervention has increased both women and men's participation in local decision-making process.

## Challenges

### Rooted social norms and obstacles for women's active participation

Some women in the project area were very interested to serve their community by engaging themselves in Ward Platforms. However, their family members did not support them. As a result, they could not be involved in Ward Platforms. Furthermore, in a few unions of Barishal, the influence of religious leaders is considerable. In those unions, mobility of women is very limited. Sometimes women did not want to participate in trainings in the presence of men. Additionally, the peer learning events were a challenge and causing conflicts: If husband and wife found themselves in different districts, the husbands were not satisfied and hindered their wives to participate. The project therefore tried to improve open communication with the husbands to dispel misconceptions and tackle gendered stereotypes.

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© Sharique



**Gender Reference Indicator: Decision-Making in the Management of Services and Resources**

Women equally participate and have equal influence in decision-making functions in the management of resources and services such as water, health and education to have their voice heard.

**Indicator:** Percentage of women in decision-making functions in the management of resources and services (water, health, education/parents committees).

**Example 10: Gender-Significant Intervention**

## Universal and equitable access to safe drinking water and toilets in Niger

In Niger, women often lack basic public services, like access to drinking water and toilets. Women participation in decision-making process is key to ensure that their needs and demands are covered. Hence, the SDC funds the programme “Rural Hydraulic, Support for the Water and Sanitation Sector” (PHRASEA) that contributes to providing women and men with universal and equitable access to safe drinking water through adequate sanitation and hygiene services. The project in particular focuses on two major interventions regarding gender equality, first, improving the nutrition and hygiene, second, saving time – in particular for women and girls to be freed from water chores.

### Implementing partners

The implementing partners are HEKS/EPER.

### Beneficiaries

In 2018, 32’718 (52%) women and 30’202 (48%) men benefited from the project.

### Finances

The overall duration of the project is almost 9 years (April 2012 – December 2021) with an estimated budget of CHF 34’484’193. The first phase ended in March 2017. The second phase started in April 2017 and will be completed in December 2021. In 2018, the SDC supported the project with CHF 3’400’000.

### Gender analysis

#### Insufficient or unequal access to water and sanitation services

Only half of the population has access to water and only 7 percent benefit from sanitation systems. In particular, women and girls are affected by this, because they are responsible to collect drinking water from far away and need to relieve themselves outdoor. The sanitation systems in rural areas are poor, with waste most often dumped around homes. The

inadequacy or even lack of family latrines increases the women’s domestic workload. Indeed, women are responsible for the hygiene and well-being of the family. Traditionally, men embody the authority within the household, set the rules and manage the family assets. As for women, they have the social responsibility of the functioning of the domestic life, carry out the housework, and take care of the children. Nonetheless, this image is misleading today, as the vast majority of households are supported by women through their income-generating activities. At the community level, women’s participation at the political, public, and private sector level is progressing. Often, women’s working hours are not considered in the programming of activities.

### Activities

#### Increasing access and empowering women to be part of decisions

At the household level, the project promoted private water connections to reduce the burden and promote better access to drinking water for women and girls. Furthermore, the project plans fences around pastoral wells, for hygienic reasons. The project will increase the production of public latrines in pastoral settings, mainly for women living in the area. At the village level, the project identifies women village leaders and empowers them to influence gender relations. Moreover, women and men from different villages exchanged their

experience on women's involvement in water and sanitation governance at the local level. To raise awareness on gender equality as well as to combat stereotypes and prejudices, radio programmes are organised, facilitators trained, and an organisation will be hired to follow up on the monitoring of the gender mainstreaming in the project. Throughout the project, it is ensured that there are always a female and a male facilitator and that women are asked for their opinion on infrastructure decisions. Moreover, many women are involved in the establishment of water point management committees and associations of public water service users to be part of decision-making processes.

## Results

### Greater involvement of women in the decision-making process

During the reporting period, roles assigned to women and men have gradually changed in the governance process in rural water and sanitation issues. In the context of Niger, women are actively involved in decision-making and play an important role in the management of water works, whereas previously they were assigned the role of hygienist in management committees, where they had less influence in decision-making processes.

In terms of sanitation, the construction of family latrines has allowed women to be able to meet their natural needs at any time of the day in a safer environment. Previously, since they had to wait for the night to relieve themselves discreetly in the nature, they adopted practices of partial deprivation not to "risk" to have to leave in full day to relieve themselves. Women's rights have been strengthened by the systematic construction of separate public latrine blocks for women and men's blocks for public latrines that are relatively distant from each other in order to make access more discreet, for reasons of modesty and safety. Similarly, the construction of separate (and remote) sanitary blocks is observed in schools: there are three blocks for girls, boys, and teaching staff. Similarly, gender sensitiveness has materialised, by respecting the working hours of farming women and men in order to ensure the availability to take part in village meetings, to defend the opinions and interests of everyone.

## Challenges

### Time and religious-based obstacles for women to actively participate in decision-making processes

In 2018, during the agricultural period, women arrived late for sanitation initiation sessions because they were farming. Therefore, time and season selection for meetings and training sessions need to reflect women's and men's availability. Furthermore, with the pretext of the Muslim religion, some men were reluctant to let their wives participate in public meetings in the villages. Thus, inclusion of men and awareness raising on attitudes towards women needs to be taken into consideration.

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© Moumouni Magawata, Helvetas PHRASEA



**Gender Reference Indicator: Gender-Responsive Public Finance Management**

Measuring resources available for gender equality and the participation of women in public finance management to improve gender-responsive planning, decision-making, and public spending (gender budgeting initiatives).

**Indicator:** Number of municipalities that conducted (one or more elements of) a gender budgeting process.

**Example 11: Gender-Significant Intervention**

# Strengthening social accountability for better health and food security in Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, and Zambia

The SDC supports the regional project “Strengthening Social Accountability and Oversight in Health and Agriculture in Southern Africa”. It aims at improving food security and health outcomes in a systemic and gender-responsive way. Linking government stakeholders with the civil society, the project raises awareness for the necessity of gendered pro-poor planning and builds capacities for its effective implementation. While in the first phase the project had focused on poverty-sensitive policymaking, it is now embarking on its second phase in which gender-responsive public services – including gender budgeting – are a central concern.

## Implementing partners

The main implementer of the project is the Partnership for Social Accountability, which consists of four collaborating organisations: ActionAid International, the Public Service Accountability Monitor, the Eastern & Southern African Farmers’ Forum, and the Southern Africa HIV and AIDS Information Dissemination Service.

## Beneficiaries

The project provides training and services to government departments, parliamentary committees, civil society organisations, smallholder farmer groups, and journalists in Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, and Zambia. In 2018, the project engaged 1539 beneficiaries, thereof 802 women and 737 men. Indirect beneficiaries include citizens of those four countries, particularly women and those at the lower end of the economic scale.

## Finances

For the entire project duration of ten years, the SDC budgeted CHF 15’000’000. The estimated spending for 2018 amounts to CHF 1’700’000.

## Gender analysis

### Misuse of public funds and lack of gender-responsive governance

In the Southern African Development Community, heavy investments have been made to tackle food security and health challenges. However, the impact of these expenses has been limited due to cases of corruption and weak accountability. Fraud often remains unpunished because the civil society lacks the capacity to effectively monitor budgeting processes and hence is unable to challenge the authorities. Moreover, governmental decision-makers rarely consider gender issues in their policies. For instance, a recent policy aimed at improving health insurance coverage in Zambia focused on formal employment only, thus neglecting the informal sector which is largely composed of women. Consequently, gender-responsive budgeting is needed to ensure women’s political participation, resulting in a more equitable distribution of funds as well as in greater transparency and social accountability – which is beneficial for both women and men.

## Activities

### Strengthening capacities of governments and the civil society

The project pursues a systemic approach, not only targeting government stakeholders but also ac-



tively engaging the civil society. For instance, the implementers brought together government stakeholders and community members for the joint development of District Development Plans in all four countries – this is an important step for achieving greater transparency. In addition, social accountability trainings were carried out separately with government officials, civil society organisations, farmer groups, and the media, involving both female and male participants.

In 2018, the project piloted a gender-budgeting training in Zambia with 11 participants, thereof 9 men. Moreover, in Zambia and Malawi the general awareness for gender issues was raised during workshops with journalists. From the beginning of the second project phase in May 2019, gender will be among the focal points in all four countries. In collaborations with governments, the project will work towards improving gender responsive public services, predominantly through gender budgets, while simultaneously supporting civil society actors to address gender inequality within their own organisational structures.

## Results

### Challenging authorities, gendering media coverage

In all four project countries, the participation of citizens in public resource management increased. While civil society initiatives for the most part resulted in fruitful collaborations with the governmental bodies, in some cases more confrontational measures had to be taken. For instance, due to citizens' actions in the Tanzanian project region, several local government officials were disciplined and some were even removed from their positions after they were found guilty for misappropriating public funds.

The project's media initiatives have been very ef-

fective, not only with regard to social accountability in general, but specifically concerning gender issues. Through the training, journalists realised that the allocation of public funds affects women and men differently, and hence they changed their way of investigating and writing about social accountability. One of the trained journalists from Malawi received the 2018 Southern Africa Media Award in Social Accountability Reporting for an article on gender-based sexual violence. A training beneficiary from Zambia became aware of the widespread gender-based violence in his home community, and his investigations effectively helped to prevent rape cases, which had been a frequent threat for women and girls before.

## Challenges

### Making gender-responsive budgets work

While the project has been very effective in increasing rural people's political participation in general, implementation stronger focus on gender-responsive public services, through budgeting initiatives among others, is a pending issue. Hence, it is of utmost importance for the project to implement its gender focus that has been planned for the new project phase starting in May 2019.

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**Gender Reference Indicator: Participation in peacebuilding and state-building**

Women and men equally participate in peacebuilding and state-building processes to have their voice heard.

**Indicator:** Increased number and influence of women and civil society actors in peace-, mediation and reconciliation processes (on local and national levels).

**Example 12: Gender-Principal Intervention**

## “Circles of Peace” for inter-ethnic social cohesion and women’s leadership in Mali

In the wake of the 2015 peace and reconciliation agreement, Mali is currently recovering from the crises of its recent past. However, women have been marginalised in the peace process, and inter-ethnic tensions persist. The FDFA’s Human Security Division supports PRECOFEM, the “Programme de renforcement de la cohésion sociale par les femmes artisans de paix au Mali” which addresses both problems by “Circles of Peace”. These circles stimulate dialogue between women from different backgrounds and enable the participants to advocate for their inclusion in Malian peace making and governance. The “Circles of Peace” are an important contribution to the implementation of the Swiss National Action Plan 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

### Implementing partners

The programme is implemented by the Malian branch of the pan-African network WILDAF – “Women in Law and Development in Africa”, an association of different non-governmental organisations that promote and protect women’s rights.

### Beneficiaries

In 2018, 100 women were chosen as beneficiaries of the programme. In the selection process, the implementers carefully ensured maximum ethnic and regional diversity so that the women’s network spans all over the country and across different social groups. While the project has not had male direct beneficiaries at the time of writing, a new youth project was planned in the course of 2018. This project, called “Youth Circles of Peace”, foresees 50 percent male participants out of 200 beneficiaries and will be launched in 2019.

### Finances

The PRECOFEM expenses covered by the FDFA in 2018 amounted to approximately CHF 125’000. Since the beginning of the project in 2015, the FDFA has contributed about CHF 500’000.

### Gender analysis

#### Marginalisation of women despite suitable political instruments

The socio-cultural context in Mali is not very favourable for women’s leadership: Even though there are matriarchal communities in Mali who assign female leaders a predominant role, women are commonly perceived as social rather than political actors. This belief is illustrated by the revised family law adopted in 2011, which in contrast to the previous version stipulates “obedience” of the wife to the male household head. Against this background, it is no surprise that the post-crisis peace process is a male-dominated endeavour. In the official structures established after the 2015 peace agreement, women account for merely 3 percent. On the other hand, Mali has progressive gender-responsive legislation: Sex-based discrimination is banned by the constitution, and the country foresees a 30 percent gender quota for national institutions. In addition, Mali ratified the Maputo Protocol on women’s rights, and even the economic development strategy recognises the value of enhanced gender equality.

Against this background, Malian women’s organisations are mobilising for a gender-responsive peace-making process, for their long-term inclusion in governmental bodies, and for women’s rights in general. However, these organisations often lack expertise, for instance regarding negotiation, implementation, and follow-up of peace agreements. The “Circles of Peace” support women’s claims and help provide female leaders with the necessary knowledge and skills.

## Activities

### Strengthening women's participation in the peace-making process

PRECOFEM organises "Circles of Peace" throughout the country, each bringing together 10 to 15 respected women from different backgrounds. Through a holistic approach using methodologies like storytelling and role plays, women bridge ethnic, regional, and religious boundaries. In this way, they learn about each other's histories, current living conditions, and future aspirations for their communities and the country. The subsequent mediation and reconciliation training, certified by an officially recognised diploma, strengthens the participants' role as peacemakers and active agents for women's political representation in their home communities and on the national level. For maximum impact, PRECOFEM selects highly respected women as training beneficiaries so they are in a position to exert influence on the male-dominated traditional and administrative authorities.

## Results

### Mutual trust and political involvement

Since 2015, PRECOFEM has mobilised over 300 Malian women from all regions of the country and from Malian refugee camps in neighbouring states. The programme has been effective on the individual, the interpersonal, and the political level. On the individual level, women have advanced in dealing with their traumatic experiences, recovering their self-confidence and, in the words of a beneficiary, "leaving the hatred behind". For instance, one participant burned her venomous personal diary that she had intended to pass on to her children, stating that she had now come to realise the value of reconciliation. On the interpersonal level, the women overcame ethnic and regional prejudice because of the exchange, and they established strong relationships of trust be-

tween them. They are now supporting each other in their work on the political level, advocating together for their rights and for their involvement in the peace-making process. As a striking success, "Circles of Peace" unified the female leaders of three armed women's groups who are now advocating together for lasting peace and for the inclusion of women in this process. Locally, the "Circles of Peace" women are touring villages in all regions of the country to make the key messages of the peace agreement understood by the local population.

## Challenges

### Prevailing insecurity and the tricky issue of inclusivity

The "Circles of Peace" are facing two major challenges. First, in several regions of the country, the security situation remains tense, thus inhibiting women's movement and complicating the organisation of activities. Second, it is a difficult balancing act to include men in the programme whilst maintaining a protected female space for overcoming gender-based traumata and for strengthening women's networks.

The exclusive nature of the present peace-making process is not a challenge for women only but endangers the success of the entire endeavour. Hence, it is necessary to continue strengthening women's capacities whilst including men so that their efforts for lasting peace in Mali will succeed. The envisaged "Youth Circles of Peace" addressing both genders are a promising step in the right direction.

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# 5 Conclusion and Outlook

Through joint efforts with its implementing partners in 2018, the SDC has achieved respectable results. Guided by the Agenda 2030, the SDC's interventions pursue the global objective of 'Leaving No One behind'. Against the background of this commitment, it is no longer possible to ignore gender inequality and its development consequences. Sustainable development and gender equality are closely interlinked and have to be discussed together. The SDC contributes to gender equality in different geographical locations and on different scales, from the household to the global level. The SDC's interventions focus on three main thematic areas to tackle gender inequality: sexual and gender-based violence, women's economic empowerment, and women's political participation. During the last year, the SDC has shed light on the topics of 'Engaging Men and Boys', 'Financial Inclusion' and 'Gender-Responsive-Budgeting' and discussed these important issues with a broader audience.

2019 pivots important milestones for the current message and framework credit for Swiss international cooperation, but at the same time already sets foot onto the journey of the next phase 2020-2024. With the global face-to-face meeting in April 2019, the SDC gender focal points have the opportunity to consolidate their results thus far, and to

define their strategic orientation with regard to the next message. Furthermore, the global face-to-face is also an opportunity to put the recommendations of the "Report on Effectiveness on Gender Equality" published last year into concrete actionable steps. The OECD DAC peer review has shown that such actionable steps to enhance Switzerland's ambitions on gender equality globally are needed: Only 2% of the ODA of Switzerland are targeted at women and girls.

The global work of the SDC and its partners makes a valuable contribution towards closing the gender gap and implementing the Agenda 2030. "Let's be Gender Transformative" not only marks the topic of our global face to face, but also leads the way forward if we really want to make a difference in today's world for gender equality and a more inclusive world where no one is left behind. We stay committed to increase the financial commitment for gender-transformative interventions, especially for gender-principal projects, and for engaging men and boys, which is a vital strategy for sustainable impact. We also wish to explore bold ideas such as a "Gender Fund" to leverage our collaboration with the private sector, and to stay curious for new partners and ideas.

# Abbreviations and Acronyms

DAC	OECD Development Assistance Committee
FDFA	Federal Department of Foreign Affairs
GRB	Gender-Responsive Budgeting
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PSS	psychosocial support
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SECO	State Secretariat for Economic Affairs
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
WHO	World Health Organisation





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