

## **Gender in SDC<sup>1</sup> : Policy and Toolkit**

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Migration and development cooperation are linked in terms of national politics. More money for cooperation programmes means less emigration from poor regions in the South to the rich countries in the North. We all know that our State has a very ambivalent attitude towards migration – as long as there is a value added in terms of economic growth immigration is easier to be accepted than if immigrants are identified with poor people depending on welfare and social assistance. The State can accept migrants as labour force as long as the labour market can integrate them. But it tries to get rid of them as soon as they lose their economic value. Each Nation-State is challenged to find instruments and strategies to handle this field of conflict, to channel the moving people. In order to maintain the national identity differentiation to the other and the alien, the State searches for legitimate ways of manipulating frontiers. And States try to argue in terms of humanism and democratic tradition. As these elements are not always very easy to manage States do also argue that it would be better if people did not leave their home country, if State activities could prevent them from migrating. That is how we can understand the link between migration and cooperation, between migration politics and politics of foreign affairs and economics. More support on site would downsize the potential emigration. And what is SDC doing in this field of action?

<sup>1</sup> Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

SDC has to do with migration – not only in the above mentioned sense of migration as a national challenge, but in terms of access to mobility. To fight poverty SDC supports interventions which enhance the access of the poor to all kinds of resources, one of them being mobility. Access to mobility is a question of power relation and in so far has to be considered also in terms of gender inequality.

“The issue of spatial mobility is inextricably linked to the social and economic empowerment of women. Access to transport facilities by men and women is unequal and in many cases discriminatory to women. Restrictions on the physical movement of women define their entitlements to income and employment opportunities and to other services like education and health. Lack of access to safe and secure transport also impinges upon the physical security of women outside their immediate surroundings, reinforcing the cultural restrictions traditionally imposed on them” (Source: *Women’s Empowerment and physical mobility, implication for developing rural transport in Bangladesh*).

SDC supports this kind of projects in order to promote instruments which the poor can afford, and means for transport which are accessible to discriminated groups as well. And since gender is a transversal theme for all its interventions SDC pays specific attention to gender inequalities, which entails gender analysis of the contexts, planning of intervention, methods of monitoring and evaluation and so on. The aim is to improve the mobility of women – if we do think in terms of migration, we encourage women to move as a way to improve their situation.

After this short introduction – which might not be more than some thoughts about political dynamics of a Nation-State – I would like to quickly present the SDC Gender policy and the tools for its implementation.

Gender has been integrated as a cross-cutting issue in SDC’s activities since 1990. The first SDC policy for gender-balanced development was formulated in 1993, and implemented to different degrees in countries and regions. The general level of gender awareness and competence is increasing in SDC and in partner institutions, and gender is gradually incorporated in their development approach and tools. Considering this evolution, a new gender policy is necessary to ensure

a more systematic integration of gender in the full range of SDC's activities. Since 2003 SDC has been leading this new policy.

*The aim of the new SDC policy is to ensure that all SDC interventions increase women and men's opportunities to exercise their rights equally and gain equal access to, and control over, the benefits of development. The strategy to achieve this aim is to mainstream the empowerment of women and men as active participants in transforming gender relations in a process of constructive engagement and, where possible, collaboration.*

### **The reasons why Gender policy is important for SDC:**

- Gender equality is embedded in human rights.
- Gender equality through the empowerment of women and men is critical for good governance.
- Women's and men's dynamic contribution to society as individuals, workers, and citizens is critical for sustainable development.
- Empowerment of disadvantaged groups is a key strategy for social change and poverty alleviation.
- The integration of gender is part of broader empowerment strategies and positively affects operational performance and the impact of development interventions.
- Gender equality is embedded in Switzerland's national and international commitments.

### **SDC Guiding principles**

- All interventions are based on a gender-aware analysis
- Flexibility in implementation
- Multilevel approach
- Specific actions for gender equality
- Equal opportunities in organisations

It is nice to have a policy, but it is also important to have some guidelines, tools, instruments to be able to implement the policy. SDC therefore developed a Toolkit, which you can get at the following address: DDC – Centre de distribution – Tel. 031 322 44 12 [info@deza.admin.ch](mailto:info@deza.admin.ch) (available in French *L'égalité homme-femmes en pratique. Un manuel pour la DDC et ses partenaires*, German, English, Spanish and Russian). DDC, 2003, Section Gouvernance, Unité Genre.