

Karin Gaesing, Frank Bliss, Carolin Rosenberg

Conceptualisation and implementation of gender-transformative approaches in development cooperation



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**Conceptualisation and implementation of gender-
transformative approaches in development
cooperation**

AVE-Study 40b/2025

Ways out of poverty, vulnerability and food insecurity

Universität Duisburg-Essen
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List of abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AFAWA	Affirmative Finance Action for Women Entrepreneurs in
AfDB	African Development Bank
AFW	Western and Central African Region
AVE	Research project "Ways out of poverty, vulnerability and food insecurity"
BfdW	Brot für die Welt (Bread for the World)
BMZ	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
CSW	UN Commission on the Status of Women
CLIPs	Country-Level Implementation Plans
DAC	Development Assistance Committee of the OECD
DAWN	Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era
DG INTPA	European Commission's Directorate-General for International Partnerships
ECOWAS	Economic Community of Western African States
EGDC	ECOWAS Gender Development Centre
ECREEE	ECOWAS Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency
ECOW-GEN	ECOWAS Programme on Gender Mainstreaming in Energy Access
ESA or ESIA	Environmental and Social Impact Assessment
ESMP	Environmental and Social Management Plan
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FD	Financial Services Manager
FemDC	Feminist Development Cooperation
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FC	Financial cooperation
GALS	Gender Action Learning System
GAP	Gender Action Plan
GEF	Gender Equality Framework
GIL	Gender Innovation Labs
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (German agency for international cooperation); until January 2011 German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ)
GP	GIZ Global Programme
GTA(s)	gender-transformative approach(es)
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
JP GTA	Joint Programme on Gender Transformative Approaches for Food Security, Improved Nutrition and Sustainable Agriculture

JP RWEE	Joint Programme on Accelerating Progress Towards Rural Women's Economic Empowerment
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises
LARP	Land Acquisition and Resettlement Plan
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPHI	Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative
RGA	Rapid Gender Analysis
RGA-P	Rapid Gender Analysis on Power and Participation
RGAP	Regional Gender Action Plan
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SNRD Africa	Sector Network on Rural Development Africa
SNRD GTA-RD	SNRD Working Group on Gender-Transformative Approaches in Rural Development
TC	Technical cooperation
UN	United Nations
WB	World Bank
WEAI	Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index
WFP	World Food Programme
WHH	Welthungerhilfe
WHO	World Health Organisation
WIDF	Women's International Democratic Federation
WLiE	Women Lead in Emergencies

About the INEF research project

The aim of the research project "Ways out of poverty, vulnerability and food insecurity" (AVE), which has been funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) since 2015, is to develop recommendations for German official development cooperation (DC) on which measures can be used to reach poor, vulnerable and food-insecure population groups in order to effectively and sustainably improve their situation. In its first phase (2015-2020), the topical focus of the project was on land rights, land access and land use, social protection and the inclusion of poor population groups into value chains. The second phase of the research project, which ran until the end of 2023, focussed on holistic agricultural promotion, access to financial services for poor smallholder farmers and school meals as a contribution to poverty reduction and social security. Gender, participation and socio-cultural aspects were always at the forefront as important cross-cutting issues. At the beginning of 2024, feminist development cooperation became a central focus of the research. The primary aim here is to identify gender-transformative approaches and impacts and to examine how different development cooperation organisations deal with the topic. The research project's sectoral focus on agriculture, land access, food security and agricultural financing as well as rural development remains the same as before.

The research project was and is located at the interface between the specific conditions of poverty and food insecurity on the one hand and the - perhaps inadequate - tools of development cooperation on the other. Based on the analysis of previous problems with reaching the above-mentioned target groups through development cooperation and successful examples of poverty reduction, promising projects (*good practices*) are to be identified and examined in detail. In doing so, it is important to precisely analyse the circumstances of each respective success in order to work out the transfer conditions for a broader circle of DC measures in other situations and countries and to make them usable for those responsible in the ministry and in implementing organisations as well as for NGOs in the full awareness there can be no blueprints in DC.

From the outset in 2015, the continuous consideration and investigation of gender aspects as one of three cross-cutting topics (alongside socio-cultural aspects and participation) has played an important role for the "Ways out of poverty, vulnerability and food insecurity" (AVE) research project. From the literature review to the conceptualisation and implementation of on-site research work to the formulation of conclusions and recommendations, the living situation of women - and here mainly women farmers - with their desires and potential, with them being discriminated against, the obstacles and problems they are facing, their involvement in project measures and how they are affected by the project have been a main topic of AVE. In the on-site studies, women farmers and groups of women were explicitly interviewed and, where possible, women were also used as interviewers in order to find out about the perspectives and opinions of women. Experience has shown that they express themselves more freely when no men are present during the interviews, although interviews and discussion rounds with mixed groups were not avoided.

Summary

The aim of this study is to summarise and analyse the current practice of dealing with feminist development cooperation (FemDC) and the implementation of gender-transformative objectives and measures as well as the effects observed to date in German and international development cooperation, and to draw conclusions for German official development cooperation. The study focuses on the fields of food security, agriculture and rural development. Regionally, the focus is largely on the priority countries of the BMZ special initiative "Transformation of agricultural and food systems", i.e. primarily on Africa as well as South and Southeast Asia.

The study, the results of which are based on an intensive study of the literature, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with a total of 75 representatives of development cooperation organisations and the authors' many years of professional experience in development cooperation, comes to the following conclusions and recommendations for further work in German development cooperation:

1. While the contents of the BMZ's strategy on feminist development policy have met with unanimous approval and have given gender work a new impetus in many development cooperation organisations, the term "feminist" often causes problems. These arise above all in the dialogue with partner organisations in the Global South, some of which show a negative attitude towards the term. For this reason, terms such as gender-transformative impact, social inclusion and gender mainstreaming are preferred. We believe it to be more important to root the content of the strategy in the best possible way and to utilise the new momentum for gender work instead of insisting on terms.

2. For the implementation of gender-transformative approaches (GTAs) in societies in which gender equality plays only a subordinate role, if at all, development organisations need practical advice and guidance. Socio-cultural expertise, staff knowledge of the country and the collection and processing of socio-cultural and gender data are just as important for the design and implementation of GTAs as the recruitment of influential local personalities for gender issues and an appropriately long project duration that can facilitate social change.

3. The rooting of gender in the internal and external structures of development cooperation organisations through qualified or trained staff should definitely be continued. These positions should have a sufficient time budget – which is not usually the case so far – to be able to participate in networking activities beyond their project or sector.

4. The exchange of knowledge and experience with regard to GTAs should be further promoted in German development cooperation. This can take place in the form of actively working networks or by working out very useful documents such as gender analyses or methodological handouts which are publicly accessible beyond the immediate project context.

Criticism of the gender mainstreaming pursued by most organisations, which is often inefficient and not geared towards structural change, and in response to the gender backlash, led to the demand to bring the political role of gender back into focus and to strive for gender-transformative effects. Gender-transformative approaches (GTAs) aim at changing the underlying causes of gender inequality in a sustainable and context-sensitive manner in order to permanently dismantle gender-specific power hierarchies.

The BMZ's current FemDC strategy is based on a human rights-based approach that focuses on the needs of marginalised groups, with an emphasis on overcoming gender inequalities for women and girls. This is to be achieved through gender-transformative effects

in the context of development cooperation projects and an intersectional approach. The “three Rs” (rights, resources, representation) are placed at the heart of the strategy. The implementation of the strategy is binding for German development policy, while it is merely intended to serve as a guideline for NGOs.

At **GIZ**, the gender issue is institutionally rooted through gender focal persons in all departments and countries. In many cases, however, only a small proportion of these posts is earmarked for gender work. GIZ endeavours to support its staff in their work with GTAs by developing handouts and practical instructions. Many of GIZ's gender analyses, which are prepared for countries, sectors or projects, are also of high quality but are not systematically made available to the public.

Gender plays an important role at **KfW** for the analyses of target groups and affected persons and also for the *Environmental and Social Impact Assessments* (ESIA) and the *Safeguards* that are collected in the course of project appraisals to prevent or reduce harmful effects. However, like GIZ, KfW does not make its analyses available to a wider circle of users.

The **German NGOs** we interviewed, such as Brot für die Welt, Misereor, CARE Germany, Welthungerhilfe, Kindernothilfe and the umbrella organisation VENRO, unanimously support the FemDC strategy. However, many of them have partners who represent a traditional, patriarchal world view and are very opposed to the term “feminist”. In order to remain in dialogue with these partners, instead they speak of social inclusion or gender mainstreaming, for example. Some NGOs complain that due to the current budget cuts the implementation of GTAs will be the first measures to be cancelled or that related staff positions will be eliminated.

Two **regional organisations** were included into the study. One is the European Union as the largest ODA donor among the DAC members. The EU Gender Action Plan III points the way forward for German gender policy. As a regional organisation of some very important partner countries of German development cooperation, ECOWAS was examined, which focuses on gender mainstreaming both in its own structure and in its advice to member countries.

The **international development banks**, such as the World Bank, the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), primarily write in their programme documents about gender mainstreaming and the gender-transformative effects they want to achieve, but they do not use the word “feminist” in their documents, due to their very heterogeneous partner structures. Innovative approaches include the World Bank's *Gender Innovation Labs*, which carry out pilot projects and impact analyses and advise the organisation internally. Instead of integrating gender into the country programmes as a cross-cutting issue, as has been the case up to now, the World Bank is currently considering the idea of dealing specifically with gender priorities instead. The AfDB places great emphasis on strengthening the economic role of women, although such measures do not necessarily result in a change in power structures and the empowerment of women. The ADB emphasises that it implements projects and programmes through consultants who have expertise primarily with technical aspects but only to lesser extent with gender issues. As a result, there is often a gap between good gender-related concepts and their practical implementation.

The Rome-based **UN organisations** FAO, IFAD and WFP often work together to develop strategies and handouts on the topic of gender. The *Joint Programme on Gender Transformative Approaches for Food Security, Improved Nutrition and Sustainable Agriculture* (JP GTA), which publishes numerous very useful guidelines and high-quality reports, should be particularly mentioned here. Like the FAO's *Country Gender Assessments*, these are freely accessible.

However, also here the high-quality strategies and guidelines are not sufficiently reflected in implementation. UN Women carries out development policy programme work on gender equality primarily at regional and country level. However, in order to remain close to the target group, the organisation works closely with women human rights defenders and civil society in particular. More than other international organisations, UNDP considers itself to be committed to the mandates given by the countries, which is why striving for structural changes such as GTA is not always easy.

Just like the Rome-based UN organisations, other organisations also form **alliances and networks**. These are not always formally organised. So-called *Communities of Practice* are proving to be important for the exchange of experience, the generation of ideas and also lobbying. Internal organisational networks such as GIZ's *Sector Network on Rural Development Africa* (SNRD Africa), which has established a subgroup on GTA, also promote mutual exchange on GTA – digitally and through workshops.

1. Introduction

The aim of this study is to summarise and analyse the current status quo in dealing with feminist development cooperation and the implementation of gender-transformative objectives and measures, together with their intended effects in German and international development cooperation, and to draw conclusions for German official development cooperation. Our regional focus is largely on the priority countries of the BMZ Special Initiative "Transformation of agricultural and food systems", i.e. sub-Saharan Africa as well as South and Southeast Asia. As the research project is being carried out in close cooperation with the special initiative, accordingly the topical focus is on the development cooperation fields of food security, agriculture and rural development and primarily on countries in which German development cooperation in the fields of agriculture and rural development has one of its priorities and also mainly on countries in the first two phases of the research project.

The study included German governmental development cooperation organisations as well as NGOs, international organisations and development banks that are involved in agriculture, food security and rural development in the regions listed above.¹ Due to limited time and financial resources, we focused primarily on those organisations that we assume, based on past research, to be involved in gender-transformative approaches. Some organisations, in particular bilateral development cooperation organisations, could not be included due to a lack of access and a lack of responsiveness. The interviews conducted focused on employees who are responsible for gender issues in the organisation and/or work at departments that deal with agriculture, food security or rural development. As we mainly spoke to people who work on gender issues, this may imply a certain gender bias. In the period from February to September 2024 mostly virtual interviews were conducted with 19 employees of German state development cooperation organisations, 22 employees of NGOs, 21 employees of international organisations (including development banks and regional organisations) and 13 other experts on the topic, with some people being interviewed several times. A total of 75 people were interviewed. The study also draws on the many years of practical experience of the authors of this report, whether in research, as development policy experts, or as long-term experts seconded to a development cooperation organisation.

Although the study, which reflects the status of the topic in December 2024, does not claim to present a comprehensive inventory of global and German practice in dealing with transformative gender work and feminist development cooperation, it does cover the most important actors in German and international development cooperation as a whole. It does not report comprehensively on individual organisations but rather highlights their position and approach to GTAs and feminist development cooperation as well as particularly interesting and innovative approaches. So, if something is highlighted as being particularly good or outstanding or as being less successful or even problematic, this is done in the sense of a teaching example. However, this does not necessarily mean that the institution as a whole works particularly well or badly in terms of gender. Based on the information we have gathered, we also draw conclusions and recommendations for German development cooperation against the background of our own many years of experience.

The important topic of transitional aid and the inclusion of fragile states are excluded from our research project and, accordingly, from this study, because for reasons of security field

¹ The authors would like to take this opportunity to thank all current and former employees of the BMZ and the various national and international development organisations for the sometimes lengthy interviews and the provision of material.

research on site, which is particularly important in the empirical part of our work 2024-2025, is usually not possible in rural regions in these countries.

The topic of this study was dealt with in several steps, some of which happened simultaneously:

- (1) Listing of relevant development cooperation organisations and interview partners; contact research and establishment;
- (2) Review and evaluation of scientific publications on the topics of feminist development cooperation and gender-transformative approaches (GTAs) as well as concept papers, publications and websites of German governmental and some non-governmental development cooperation organisations and international organisations²;
- (3) Conducting mostly virtual interviews and discussions with employees of numerous development cooperation organisations and other development cooperation experts who work primarily on the topics of gender, agriculture, food security and rural development. Their anonymity is explicitly guaranteed in our reports;
- (4) Evaluation of the materials and preparation of the report.

The research project is based on an inclusive, non-binary understanding of gender, which recognises the existence of diverse gender identities and sexual orientations. At the same time, the research project focuses primarily on women and girls as a marginalised group, as they represent the largest discriminated group worldwide. In addition, the binary categories of female/male continue to dominate worldwide, especially in rural societies, and thus continue to shape development cooperation programmes and projects for poverty reduction and food security in rural areas, which are the focus of the research project. Another important category in the field of agriculture and rural development are disadvantaged socio-cultural and indigenous population groups such as landless and discriminated ethnic groups.

The report is structured in such a way that Chapter 2 begins by analysing the genesis of women's advancement in the international and German spheres, thus leading to the BMZ's FemDC strategy. Chapter 3 then examines its practical implementation by German governmental and non-governmental development cooperation organisations, with a particular focus on the path to feminist development cooperation via a transformative gender policy, due to the relatively short time between the presentation of the strategy and this report. Chapter 4 presents the approaches of other, particularly multilateral, donors. In Chapter 5 we look at alliances in the field of gender-transformative approaches, and in Chapter 6 we present working aids and tools of various organisations for formulating measures and indicators. The final Chapter 7 summarises the most important findings and proposes recommendations for German development cooperation immediately after each conclusion.

² Only documents released by the respective organisations or interview partners are cited in this study.

2. From the Women's Component via Gender Mainstreaming to Gender-Transformative Approaches

2.1 Gender Approaches in International Development Cooperation

The current approach of promoting the gender-transformative impact as an important element of feminist development cooperation (FemDC) builds on a wealth of experience and input by activists, researchers and development experts. Table 1 provides an overview of the approaches to promoting women in countries of the Global South that have been pursued at different times, but sometimes also simultaneously. The data in the Table refer to the approximate core time of the respective approach. However, some of the approaches or elements listed are still today pursued by development organisations and national institutions in poorer countries.

Tab. 1: Approaches to promoting women in countries of the Global South³ (the author's presentation).

Time	Approach	Characteristics
1940-70	Welfare	Focus on the reproductive role of women, no structural changes envisaged.
1970s	Equity (Women in Development, WID)	Aiming for equality between women and men, addressing women's reproductive, productive and social roles, women as decision-makers, access to resources.
1970s	Basic needs strategy, anti-poverty (WID)	Focus on income-generating measures, credit programmes for women; but also non-project-related women's components in projects such as crochet courses, etc.
1980-90	Efficiency (WID)	Intention to achieve equality for women through economic participation; but often exploitation of women for development without structural benefit for the women themselves.
1970s; from 1985	Empowerment	Achieving greater <i>self-reliance</i> among women through organisation and mobilisation.
1980 - 90	Gender and Development (GAD)	Gender as a cross-cutting task, addresses structural differences between the sexes by help of many analytical tools: the triple role of women, workload, decision-making power, access to and control of resources, practical and strategic gender needs.
1990 - date	Gender mainstreaming	Integrating gender into all projects and organisations, institutionalising gender focal persons.
2014 - date	Feminist DC	Focus and approach vary, depending on player; Common denominator: the aim is to achieve gender-transformative effects and structural change.

The development of the here presented approaches is closely linked to the respective orientation of the general development strategies (e.g. economically oriented development strategies such as the modernisation approach, the basic needs strategy, structural adjustment programmes) on the one hand and the institutionalisation of women's issues in the UN system

³ The table and the content of the chapter are mainly based on Bliss et al. 1994, Gaesing 2001, Kerstan 1995, Milward et al. 2015, Moser 1989 and Rodenberg 2023. In feminist development cooperation in particular, the strategy also includes other marginalised groups in addition to women.

on the other. Inspired by Ester Boserup's ground-breaking publication on the economic role of women (1970), attention was drawn to the productive role of women, and the promotion of women through income-generating activities began. The fact that economic advancement does not automatically go hand in hand with development towards gender equality was ignored. Gender equality was not pursued as a development goal in its own right.

The UN World Conference on Women in Nairobi in 1985 marked a turning point in this thinking. Women scientists and activists from the Global South in particular vehemently called for the empowerment of women (see Box 1). Closely linked to this development is the establishment of the *Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era* (DAWN) network which bundled the demands of women and introduced them into the international discourse. However, the approaches of "empowerment" and "gender mainstreaming" were only adopted by development organisations after the Fourth UN World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 and therefore took a long time to be implemented.

Box 1: The role of world conferences on women and international networks

The increased focus on gender equality issues in the international development agenda from the mid-1970s on was not least due to the strengthening of the global civil society women's rights movement. On the initiative of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF)⁴, the UN declared the year 1975 the International Year of Women. This became the start of an entire decade in which the social status of women was scrutinised at three UN World Conferences on Women – in Mexico City in 1975, in Copenhagen in 1980, and in Nairobi in 1985. In 1995 this culminated in the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action at the fourth and final World Conference on Women, which played a key role in establishing the issues of gender equality and women's rights on the UN agenda on a permanent basis.

The forums of non-governmental organisations that took place parallel to the UN conferences also provided an important platform for exchange and transnational networking of the women's movement. This was because the movement was by no means united in its experiences and demands. From the late 1970s onwards, feminists from the Global South in particular increasingly questioned and criticised the views of feminists from the Global North. This was accompanied by debates about white privilege, colonialism, racism and the question of class, the recognition of differences and the redistribution of global wealth. Despite these tensions, the UN conferences provided the framework for a purposeful and strategic "sisterhood" (Wichterich 2020). They fostered an understanding of the diversity of women's needs and realities and proved to be a crucial catalyst for addressing their concerns at the national level (Bunch 2009).

Feminists and groups from the Global South and individual socialist states in particular emerged as key players in setting issues and negotiating with governments. The DAWN network, founded in 1984 by female academics and activists from the Global South, played an important role in this. It drew attention to the role of the then dominant development paradigm and the associated economic policy in the perpetuation of unequal gender relations in developing countries. As an alternative, DAWN presented its empowerment concept at the third UN World Conference on Women in Nairobi in 1985, with the central demand for a

⁴ The WIDF was founded in Paris in 1945 on the initiative of women from the left-wing spectrum as an umbrella organisation for a large number of women's organisations. Women from 40 countries took part in the founding meeting.

change of power and system: alternative development paths instead of "a larger share of a poisoned pie" (Sen / Grown 1987). This focussed on the view that gender equality must go hand in hand with social and economic justice.

Civil society perspectives were also increasingly taken into account at other UN world conferences in the 1990s. For example, women's organisations played a key role in shaping the agendas and outcomes of the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna and the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo. They were no longer "just" participants on the sidelines but actively involved in the preparatory and negotiation processes.

Although gender mainstreaming, often in combination with empowerment, is an accepted and common strategy, gender mainstreaming in particular has been the subject of much criticism, which is well summarised in the analysis by Milward et al. (2015). Essentially, the criticism is that the political, socially transformative aspect has been pushed further and further into the background, while development cooperation organisations and local institutions in the Global South have developed ever more sophisticated methods and procedures for integrating gender into their organisations. The actual implementation of measures and thus the achievement of results was neglected. The authors therefore speak of a "'lost political' dimension" (ibid.: 77). In addition, the established gender work units, like their predecessors, the WID units, were often isolated within their organisations, were understaffed and had insufficient financial resources.

Based on this criticism and currently fueled by the "gender backlash" (see Box 2), calls for an emphasis on or a return to the political role of gender and the achievement of gender-transformative effects have become louder.

The growing importance of gender-transformative approaches (GTAs) in bilateral, multilateral and non-governmental development cooperation is reflected, among other things, by the growing number of national and international reference documents on gender equality, which emphasise the importance of GTAs. Although sometimes these approaches differ in detail, they are united by the basic assumption that although it is necessary to focus on combating the symptoms of gender inequality, such as unequal access to productive resources, this alone is not enough to achieve gender equality.

Rather, GTA aim to change the underlying causes of gender inequality in a sustainable and context-sensitive manner, in order to permanently dismantle gender-specific power hierarchies (McDougall et al. 2021: 366). These include, for example, discriminatory attitudes, gender roles and stereotypes, unequal socio-cultural norms and practices as well as discriminatory laws, which result in particular from patriarchal power relations and are maintained by them. Gender-transformative change therefore goes beyond isolated measures to eliminate individual gender-specific inequalities (ibid.: 366). Rather, it is about overcoming both formal and informal structural barriers to gender equality and thereby about promoting more equal power relations in households, communities and societies (McDougall et al. 2021; Wong et al. 2019). To this end, GTAs work at various interconnected levels (e.g. individual, interpersonal, household, societal, systemic) and also actively involve men and boys, male decision-makers as well as traditional and religious authorities in order to sensitise them to the issue and mobilise their support for social change.

Box 2: The gender backlash

Aust et al. (2020) define "backlash" as resistance to progressive social change. After much progress in the field of gender equality in the 1990s, researchers and practitioners have for some time been recognising a gender backlash, i.e. resistance to gender-related progress. This resistance, which is mostly but not exclusively expressed by men, is often fueled by the fear of losing privileges and power or by the desire to return to an idealised, supposedly better previous state. Gender backlash is often associated with the loss of the value of the family and thus social security (ibid.). The existence of non-binary genders, i.e. genders that go beyond the categories of man and woman, is also vehemently denied (ibid.).

In 2024, the *Institute of Development Studies* (IDS) in Sussex published a compilation of research on gender backlash with a focus on the Global South. Edström et al. (2024: 4ff.) differentiate between three different forms of gender backlash:

- (1) "Voice and tactics" – here, for example, victims of domestic violence are deprived of the voice of accusation by making the mostly female victims jointly responsible for the violence;
- (2) "Framings and direction" – ethnic or religious minorities and non-binary people are portrayed as inferior, hostile, etc.; gender equality, for example, is also labelled as "non-African", as something that destroys the traditional family;
- (3) "Temporality and structure" – gender backlash can occur for a short time, recur or become permanent.

2.2 The Genesis of the BMZ Concept for Feminist Development Cooperation⁵

Women were already included as a target group in German "development aid" in the 1960s and early 1970s. The focus then was on welfare measures based on the "typically female task field of reproduction"⁶ or on working women in the 1970s, for example in agriculture in sewing or knitting courses which the mostly male German project planners regarded as "typical women's work" instead of supporting and promoting them in their important role as agricultural producers⁷. It is noteworthy that the otherwise very committed Minister Erhard Eppler (1968-1974), to whom DC owes its partial transformation from a primarily foreign policy-led West German advocacy to a more clearly altruistic policy to improve living conditions in developing countries, hardly had women in mind as important actors in this policy. This only changed with Marie Schlei as minister (1976-1978), who in her contribution *Frauen in der Dritten Welt* (transl. *Women in the Third World*) (1978) pointed out to the particularly negative living conditions of women in the so-called "Third World" ("Women are the beasts of burden, the servants, the slaves, the cleaners ..."; quoted from Bohnet 2019: 104)

⁵ The authors would like to thank Prof Dr Michael Bohnet for interviews and for providing material from the decades between 1980 and the 2000s. He worked for many years as Head of the Evaluation Division and later Head of Department at the BMZ and represented the Ministry at the Beijing World Conference on Women in 1995, for example.

⁶ Rodenberg 2023, Bliss et al. (1994: 19-50).

⁷ This was already clearly stated by Ester Boserup (1970) and Diane Elson (1990) in her comments on male bias or internalised patriarchal views (male bias) in development cooperation.

and initiated the creation of a policy paper on the advancement of women. For the first time it called for the interests of women to be taken into account in as many projects as possible. This demand was de facto largely implemented in such a way that now a “women’s component” was added to some projects, but by no means to the majority.

This took place in such a way that an agricultural project in the context of which new cultivation techniques for growing the staple foods of maize, millet or rice were to be taught addressed exclusively men when it came to the new methods. Women, for example, were addressed by a component on “planting a herb garden”. However, the fact that women performed at least half, but often three quarters of the labour in the production of these three staple foods and that in a number of societies women also cultivated a large proportion of the land independently was completely ignored.

Little was to change with regard to such women's components until the early 1990s, although the promotion of women was finally defined as an independent policy field within German official development cooperation in 1988, with the first separate *Concept for the Promotion of Women in Developing Countries* (BMZ 1988). This was preceded by two evaluations, *Aus Fehlern lernen* (transl. *Learning From Mistakes*) (BMZ 1986) and a cross-sectional evaluation of *Die Auswirkungen von Projekten der ländlichen Entwicklung auf die die Lebenssituation von Frauen* (transl. *The Effects of Rural Development Projects on the Living Conditions of Women*) (BMZ 1987).

On the one hand, the studies confirmed that many projects had been planned and implemented without sufficient knowledge of the socio-cultural framework conditions of their respective environments and that those in charge de facto took little or no notice of women or their particular situation. On the other hand, it became clear that previous approaches had massively neglected the potential of women for rural development. In the following year, a compendium on the subject was published in which the BMZ presented its new policy for the advancement of women to the public for the first time (BMZ 1989a), and at the same time a first report to parliament on the implementation of the new concept for the advancement of women (1989b) was issued.

In line with the shift in international policy for the advancement of women (see Table 1) towards a gender approach, the causes of the systemic disadvantage of women in society was now supposed to at least be taken into account for development cooperation projects.⁸ As part of the BMZ research project *Approaches to the Advancement of Women in International Comparison* (1993-1994), the international “state of the art” was surveyed and, on the basis of secondary analyses and numerous surveys by actors from international and bilateral development cooperation organisations and NGOs, a comprehensive list of recommendations was presented⁹, which was incorporated into the development of the first BMZ gender concept for official German development cooperation¹⁰.

The BMZ's new gender concept, published in 1995, came at the right time, as the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 meant

⁸ Bliss et al. 1994: 34ff; von Braunmühl 2017; Rodenberg 2023.

⁹ By the final report Bliss et al. 1994, and for the World Conference on Women an English version was provided in 1995.

¹⁰ Right at the beginning of the studies a checklist on the promotion of women was proposed and implemented to supplement the BMZ evaluation grid. However, this means that previously, even with larger project and programme evaluations, the effects of development cooperation contributions on women had at best been unsystematically included into the studies.

that the concepts of empowerment¹¹ and gender mainstreaming were finding their way into (most) development policy institutions worldwide. The gender approach was now intended to influence social structures that led to gender hierarchies. This way, the BMZ had at least conceptually caught up with a "*like-minded group*" of international and bilateral donors, such as the "Nordics" (Norway, Denmark, Sweden) who were also to play a pioneering role in gender issues in subsequent years.

Under Ministers Klein (1987-1989), Warnke (1989-1991), and Spranger (1991-1998) gender mainstreaming was on the agenda, and the responsible department in the ministry was at times given co-signatory rights in the project approval process. However, due to its active involvement in decision-making processes, the department and its staff sometimes incurred the wrath of other departments or the organisations which were in charge of implementation (KfW and GTZ), by blocking the implementation of projects in which women were not at all or only insufficiently taken into account or even had to reckon with disadvantages. However, there remained the problem that the goal of explicitly supporting gender equality was not a particular priority for the management.¹²

Minister Heidemarie Wiecek-Zeul (1998-2009) focussed the BMZ activities primarily on economic, social, ecological and political global governance but also conceptually and as part of development cooperation projects promoted respect for human rights and the promotion of gender equality. In this context, explicit reference should be made to the Minister's initiatives against the circumcision of women and girls (female genital mutilation, FGM¹³) (Bohnet 2019: 184ff). However, it cannot be confirmed that gender mainstreaming had any explicit impact on significantly more projects pursuing gender equality as an objective (possibly also as a secondary objective) (Bliss 2021: 237-269).

Under Dirk Niebel as Minister (2009-2013) the structural reform of TC and the integration of private sector activities into development cooperation were key issues. Rural development also took centre stage again, with gender-related goals and activities associated with this. However, gender-transformative goals and indicators remained rare – and will remain so for the foreseeable future. The impact logic (logframes) of many TC and FC programmes mainly featured gender-responsive indicators, which was particularly evident from the numbers or percentages of female participants in training measures. In addition, instead of farmers often multipliers were named as the immediate target group, on the assumption that they in turn would train groups of farmers. Whether the knowledge was actually applied remained unclear, especially as many course participants did not even have land of their own. Observers also spoke of merely a theoretical cascade principle, as the multiplication of the messages often did not take place at all. Accordingly, many of the figures on women "reached" by projects were pure speculation.

Minister Gerd Müller (2013 to 2022) prioritised climate policy, sustainability in the sense of the SDGs and, above all, food security and employment were, although in terms of the

¹¹ A good definition of "empowerment" is provided by World Bank representative Deepa Narayan (2002 and 2005) who initially formulated it in terms of the need for change among poor people: "Empowerment is the expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives".

¹² This was repeatedly confirmed by the research team as part of the BMZ research project "Approaches to the Advancement of Women in International Comparison" (Bliss et al. 1994).

¹³ FGM (female genital mutilation), in the course of which the female external genitalia are sometimes completely cut away and the girls affected are severely injured, sometimes with fatal consequences.

volume of funding German development cooperation remained largely focused on emerging economies (Bohnet 2019: 227). The concept of gender does not appear in the *Development Policy 2030* concept drawn up in 2018. However, the "promotion of women" is justified on the basis of rights. In contrast, the statement on "equal rights, equal duties, equal opportunities and equal power for women and men" (BMZ 2018: 21) is included into the paper without any reference to measures.

Nevertheless, in the 10 years under Minister Müller some steps were taken to at least give greater consideration to the interests and needs of women in German official development cooperation. For example, Gender Action Plans (GAP) were drawn up for the first time, *GAP II* for the years 2016-2020 (BMZ 2016a), accompanied by annual roadmaps (BMZ 2016, 2017b, 2018, 2019, 2020), for which annual implementation reports are produced by 2018. *GAP II* included a three-pronged approach: (i.) gender mainstreaming as the integration of a gender perspective into all development policy strategies and projects, (ii.) the strengthening of women's rights and the elimination of gender-specific discrimination (empowerment), and (iii.) the consistent consideration of the topic in the policy dialogue with partner countries.

A *GAP III* was to be created in 2021. To this end, two evaluations were carried out in the previous year 2020, one of which focussed on the dissemination of the GAP in BMZ and the implementing organisations and on the extent to which the GAP was used in day-to-day work. On the one hand, it was found that the GAP was generally little known and very moderately used. Only those of the surveyed 100 DC staff who had already worked intensively on gender aspects had familiarised themselves more intensively with the papers and drawn benefits from them for their own work. In general, it also had to be noted that there were too many concept, strategy and guidance papers circulating in the Ministry and the implementing organisations to be taken into account more closely for day-to-day work (Bliss / Gaesing 2020).

In view of the feminist development cooperation formulated in a new BMZ strategy paper in 2023, under Minister Svenja Schulze, and of *GAP III* (BMZ 2024) which was drawn up three years later than planned, no official analyses or evaluations of its developmental impact are available to date.¹⁴

¹⁴ On the other hand, by the NGO scene, including a statement by VENRO (VENRO 2024a) of 2024.

3. German Feminist Development Policy and its Practical Implementation

3.1 Contents and Priorities of the BMZ Strategy “Feminist Development Policy”

With the publication of the *Feminist Development Policy – For Just and Strong Societies Worldwide* (BMZ 2023a) strategy in March 2023, the BMZ defined feminist development policy as a cross-sectoral guiding principle that applies to all instruments and regions of German development policy. This way the BMZ formulates the vision of a just society in which all people can equally and self-determinedly participate in political, economic and social life (ibid.: 5, 21). The aim of feminist development policy is the dismantling of discriminatory structures and the realisation of human rights for all. It is therefore not a strategy “by women for women”. Rather, the BMZ emphasises that feminist development policy and the **human rights-based approach** it is based on focus on the needs and vulnerabilities of marginalised groups as a whole.

Nevertheless, the BMZ strategy primarily focuses on overcoming gender inequalities and places women and girls “in all their diversity” (ibid.: 8), as the world’s largest disadvantaged population group, at the heart of things. However, instead of supporting women and girls within existing structures – as has often been the case in the past – feminist development policy is now focussing on unjust power structures and their transformation. The analysis of the initial situation presented in the strategy demonstrates an examination of various feminist movements which in turn adopt different perspectives for their central concepts and basic assumptions.¹⁵ The BMZ strategy names patriarchy and sexism as the causes of discrimination and oppression, just like classism¹⁶, ableism¹⁷ and racism.¹⁸ Power inequalities between the Global North and the Global South are also of colonial origin and characterised by colonial continuities, according to strategy’s assessment of the status quo.

With its feminist development policy, the BMZ is therefore focussing on systemic change, formulating a transformative orientation for German development policy. In the future, German development cooperation should have a more **gender-transformative** effect, i.e. aim to overcome the structural and systemic causes of gender-related inequalities, such as discriminatory social norms, gender roles and practices. In doing so, an **intersectional**¹⁹ **approach** must be pursued that takes the interaction of different discrimination characteristics into account. Furthermore, the BMZ formulates a **post-colonial and anti-racist claim** in its strategy for feminist development policy. Accordingly, the implementation of feminist

¹⁵ The Gunda Werner Institute for Feminism and Gender Democracy provides an overview of various feminist movements, their similarities and differences (Lenz 2018).

¹⁶ Classism is the discrimination and oppression of people because of allegedly lower social origin or position.

¹⁷ Ableism describes discrimination against people with disabilities.

¹⁸ From a feminist perspective, however, it should be criticised that the BMZ strategy fails to address the capitalist and neoliberal system of rule.

¹⁹ The concept of intersectionality, coined by US lawyer Kimberlé Crenshaw by the end of the 1980s, describes the overlapping of several dimensions of discrimination that reinforce each other. According to this concept, experiences of discrimination based on gender identity, origin, socio-economic status, disability or sexual orientation, for example, cannot be viewed in isolation from one another. Rather, they overlap and give rise to new forms of discrimination at the interfaces (Crenshaw 1989).

development policy is supposed to go hand in hand with, among other things, a strengthening of partner orientation and a reduction of the colonial continuities and racist thought patterns that continue to have an impact on German development cooperation. The strategy also attaches particular importance to **cooperation with (local) civil society**, especially women's rights, LGBTQI+ and other human rights organisations (ibid.: 11ff.).

The BMZ strategy formulates four Action Areas within which feminist development policy is to be implemented²⁰:

1. **Strengthening the "three Rs" (rights, resources, representation):** The first Action Area defines the so-called "three Rs" as central starting points for feminist development policy. In order to achieve gender equality, these should be specifically strengthened within the framework of German development cooperation. In the field of rights, this means working with partner governments to dismantle discriminatory laws and norms and promoting legal equality for women and other disadvantaged groups. Furthermore, their equal access to and control of resources such as education, healthcare, land and loans should be promoted. Under the heading of representation, the BMZ focuses on strengthening the equal participation of women and marginalised groups and their role as decision-makers in decision-making processes. In shaping this first field of action, the BMZ ascribes a crucial role to its implementing organisations GIZ and KfW which are called upon to systematically root the strengthening of the "three Rs" in the planning and implementation of projects and programmes.
2. **Anchoring the feminist approach across the BMZ portfolio:** In order to achieve the goals of feminist development policy, the BMZ has formulated the ambition to further develop the quality of its projects and programmes within the scope of Action Area 2. In particular, it emphasises a stronger rooting of gender-transformative and intersectional approaches as well as strengthening the participation of local actors in the entire project cycle. By 2025, 93% of the newly committed project funds are also to be used to promote gender equality, with the proportion of funds with the main objective of gender equality (GG2 marker) to be doubled to at least eight per cent.
3. **Expansion of international alliances and cooperation with feminist civil society:** Action Area 3 is subject to the maxim that strong allies and feminist alliances are necessary at international level in order to advance feminist agendas and strengthen the "three Rs". Consequently, the BMZ would like to advocate for the elements of a feminist development policy in the multilateral system and in international bodies and expand alliances with like-minded partners. In addition, civil society organisations, particularly in the Global South, are to be supported with incorporating their knowledge, experience and solutions into decision-making processes. Furthermore, a feminist perspective should also be consistently introduced in dialogue with partner governments, although goals and programmes should be designed in partnership, taking into account the respective country context.
4. **Further development of internal structures and competences:** By Action Area 4 the BMZ looks into its own structures, processes and working methods. According to the Ministry, these must be subjected to a continuous learning and adaptation process to

²⁰ The action areas are only presented in abbreviated form below. For a detailed description of all formulated strategic goals, see BMZ 2023a: 22-33.

make feminist development policy credible and realisable. In particular, the identification and change of power inequalities is emphasised, accompanied by an in-depth reflection on beliefs, attitudes and prejudices on the part of employees and within the working methods. In addition to measures such as further training opportunities, the promotion of a gender-equitable and diverse staff structure or the further development of existing tools and guidelines for programme planning and implementation, civil society perspectives and the knowledge and experience of local staff should be more closely integrated. Mechanisms for the financial support of local civil society organisations and actors should also be examined. In addition to the BMZ's work units, the implementing organisations are also called upon to drive forward a corresponding learning and adaptation process.

3.2 Implementation by German Official Development Cooperation

The FemDC strategy is binding for German governmental development cooperation, i.e. primarily GIZ and KfW, while it is merely intended as a guideline for German NGOs which are not obliged to align their work with the strategy. The following section describes how German governmental and non-governmental development cooperation deals with the FemDC concept and gender-transformative approaches and puts them into practice. This presentation does not claim to be exhaustive but focusses on the fields of agriculture, rural development and food security.

3.2.1 Implementation by GIZ

At GIZ, institutional engagement with the issue of women's advancement began in 1981 with the establishment of the Coordination Unit for the Advancement of Women in Developing Countries. In the 1990s in particular, GIZ developed numerous tools and guidelines to make it easier for project planners and implementers to realise the advancement of women in the context of projects.²¹ The introduction of the so-called F categories²² by the BMZ ensured that each project had to be categorised according to one of the three categories and that this categorisation also had to be justified in writing.

The shift towards the *Gender and Development* approach was ultimately followed by a combination of gender mainstreaming and an empowerment approach, which were also institutionalised at GIZ. Gender focal persons established gender at GIZ at all specialised and country departments. In addition, a Gender Coordination Group was established, made up of gender focal persons at divisional level. Concepts and tools have been continuously developed over the years and are largely based on BMZ guidelines.

GIZ's latest gender strategy dates back to 2019 and is entitled *Gender Reloaded: Vision needs Attitude - Attitude meets Action*. The current BMZ strategy on FemDC has not yet been incorporated into it. According to staff, the development of a new GIZ gender strategy is currently underway in order to apply it to GIZ's concerns. Individual departments, such as the G500 department, which covers rural development and agriculture, have already

²¹ These documents include Schneider / Schneider (1989): *Frauenförderung in der ländlichen Entwicklung* (transl. *Women in Rural Development*); manuals for the integration of women in different sectors such as food security, regional rural development, plant production, animal production and vocational training.

²² FR = there is a risk of negative effects on women without specific measures or there is a lack of information on the topic; FN = the programme has no effects on the situation of women; FP = the programme has positive effects on the situation of women.

developed working papers and handouts to operationalise gender-transformative approaches for their field.

At GIZ, discussions were held with the department in charge of gender on the one hand and with a number of gender focal persons on the other, particularly at divisional level.

Within GIZ, after the publication of the FemDC strategy, its content and the approaches and concepts mentioned therein, such as intersectionality and gender backlash, were initially discussed internally at organisational unit (OU) 0800, according to staff. OU 0800, the Evaluation Unit, is currently home to GIZ's Gender Ambassador²³, who is also the line manager of the Gender Commissioner.

The discussion was then continued with colleagues from the specialist and methods area (FMB) and the sector and global projects (GLOBE). After these overarching discussions, the circle was further extended and the individual departments analysed what FemDC meant for them, how to deal with it (in the projects) and what colleagues could be given for implementation. However, the discussion at the departments was less systematic and was primarily driven forward where there were very committed employees for the topic. In addition, GIZ's evaluation concepts have been reviewed to determine whether they are in line with the concept of a FemDC.

There are so-called **Gender Focal Persons** at all departments, often also called *Gender Focal Points* in the external structures. All divisions, staff units and countries have at least one gender focal person. GIZ currently employs a total of 257 gender focal persons at divisional, staff unit and country level. There are also a large number of gender focal persons for the individual projects. The gender focal persons at divisional and staff unit level are networked by the Gender Coordination Group and meet once a month to discuss the general direction, ideas, events and the likes. However, the people who fulfil this task are often only relieved from their duties to a very small extent. According to the employees interviewed, there is no fixed time budget for gender focal persons, and anything from zero to 100% of the job is possible. This task is often carried out in addition to the actual tasks and activities of the workplace. However, there has been a recognisable trend over the past 10 years for these positions to be filled by senior advisors rather than junior advisors, unlike in the past.

The gender work structure is handled very differently within the countries. We were told that only a few countries have full gender posts for local experts or experts from Germany. Despite a large number of projects, many countries are already well-staffed, with one expert with a 30% share of the position for gender, as we were told in at least one Asian country.

These restrictions have consequences for the projects themselves – although they have not yet been analysed in detail – but also for the external impact of German TC because, for example, the gender focal persons do not have the time to participate in the general exchange on gender issues in the relevant topical forums in a partner country.

However, the good networking of the gender focal persons at project and department level is seen as being very positive, the GIZ department G500²⁴ being particularly emphasised.

²³ In GIZ's gender architecture, the Gender Ambassador is the interface between the specialist and executive management levels and actively promotes the topic within GIZ. The Gender Commissioner is in charge, among other things, of giving company-wide advice on gender mainstreaming and of supporting the gender focal persons (GIZ 2019).

²⁴ The research project focused on G500 as the department in charge of rural development and agriculture.

Another example of the high priority given to the gender issue in G500 is the **SFF individual measure "Feminist Approaches to Resilient Agriculture and Food Systems"** which is located there.²⁵ It is divided into three work fields: (1) international alliances and partnerships, (2) knowledge management on feminist approaches, and (3) capacity building and advice on sustainable rooting.

Participation in **training and further education programmes**²⁶ on gender has not yet been mandatory within GIZ. Managers are sensitised to gender as part of a mandatory leadership training course. The topic is touched on in passing, for example as part of *Project Cycle Management*, but is not dealt with in depth. More specialised courses offered by the Academy for International Cooperation (AIZ), GIZ's central training institution, also focus on gender primarily with regard to project implementation processes. The situation is different at the various work units, where some informal working groups are very active and conduct very targeted discussions on gender-transformative indicators, for example. With G500, all new employees are also familiarised with the topic of gender in the course of a 2.5-hour gender onboarding session that is as practice-related as possible and involves employees from projects. The event is hybrid and has been held four times a year since 2023.

On the whole, it may be said that voluntary offers tend to harbour the risk of being accepted primarily by people who have a particular interest in gender issues. Third parties, who are more likely to need to engage with the topic, tend to not being reached this way.

With its **gender analyses**, German TC has an excellent set of tools for incorporating knowledge of gender conditions not only in one country (or parallel to individual, country-related analyses also for a region such as the ECOWAS member states or the Lake Chad region) but also focuses on one sector of cooperation (e.g. gender and administration in Jordan, gender and green energy in Senegal). In addition, every gender analysis must ultimately include a catalogue of measures "for the gender-sensitive/-transformative design" of the respective project (GIZ 2019). On the one hand, this must of course be project-specific. On the other hand, however, the catalogue can certainly be used for many similar projects, due to its usually very detailed list of suitable measures and supplementary presentation of indicators.

However, there is currently no systematic publication of the studies, some of which are very comprehensive and of the same quality as the best analyses by international organisations. There does not appear to be any official reason for this. It was noted during the discussion that the analyses also contain critical points and might be met with disconcertment by some partners. On the other hand, since the analyses are available to the project, i.e. primarily to the partners, this argument can only apply in exceptional cases. As a rule, the benefits of publishing the GIZ gender analyses would outweigh any disadvantages. The bottom line is that the analyses as a package would be a flagship project in the sense of *GAP II*²⁷. They would represent a considerable gain for the entire German (as well as international) development cooperation if they were widely utilised.

For some time now, there has been an initiative to create comprehensive gender analyses, e.g. for an entire country portfolio. In some African countries, such as Benin, a start has already

²⁵ The measure is financed by the Studies and Experts Fund (SFF), is planned for 01/2024 to 04/2026, and is equipped with three substantive staff positions.

²⁶ This includes, for example, onboarding, i.e. introducing new employees to all the knowledge they will need for their future work.

²⁷ Such lighthouse projects are no longer listed in *GAP III*, just as there is no longer a roadmap for the new GAP, which does not necessarily promote commitment and reduces the pressure to implement.

been made. According to this approach, project and topic-specific analyses are only provided as supplements.

However, the potential benefit of the numerous gender analyses is clearly limited, even within TC, insofar as the papers may still be taken note of in one country but less so in a region, and certainly not for the overall range of GIZ's gender work, as they are neither centrally recorded (at least no "register" is known) nor are they indexed according to content. For example, FGM may be addressed by a large number of reports, some of which are very recent, for a dozen countries, but there is hardly any chance of collating all the experiences and making them usable for a new project.

3.2.2 The Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW)

As a state development cooperation organisation, the **Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW)** is committed to the political guidelines of the BMZ, including the strategy for feminist development cooperation. The development bank has refrained from developing its own strategy - derived from this and adapted to FC. Instead, it works with handouts and working aids based on the conceptual guidelines as well as on the integration (mainstreaming) of gender aspects, for example in the mandatory target group and stakeholder analyses for "population-based" projects. Gender also plays an important role for ESA or ESIA (*Environmental and Social Impact Assessment*), which is widely used internationally in development planning and must be prepared for every project at KfW and the ESMP (*Environmental and Social Management Plan*) derived from it. Gender aspects are also a relevant point of discussion in the Terms of Reference (ToR) for *Peace and Conflict Assessments*, which are carried out in the context of projects in certain countries or in a region with a critical security situation.

In general, so-called *Safeguards* are relevant in the context of planning processes in FC, i.e. in addition to endeavouring to identify positive approaches to promoting gender equality, the assessments also focus in particular on the early recognition of possible direct or indirect negative impacts of planned development measures and on proposals as to how these could be counteracted.

Box 3: Environmental and social standards as a basis for FC programme appraisal

The *Environmental and Social Standards* are the criteria basis for the programme review. They consist of several packages, for example:

(i.) *Assessment and Management of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts (ESS1)*²⁸, which sets out the borrower's responsibilities for assessing, managing and monitoring the environmental and social risks and impacts associated with each phase of a project supported by the Bank (KfW) under the Investment Finance Programme in order to achieve environmental and social outcomes that are in line with the Environmental and Social Standards (ESS). It is important to note here that it is not KfW that bears these responsibilities, but the partner organisation applying for a loan (or grant in the case of very poor countries).

²⁸ ESS 1 and the other ESS standards at <https://www.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/environmental-and-social-framework/brief/environmental-and-social-standards> [09/2024]. Comprehensive explanations for partners on ESS1 can be found at <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/142691530216729197/ESF-Guidance-Note-1-Assessment-and-Management-of-Environmental-and-Social-Risks-and-Impacts-English.pdf> [09/2024].

In return, however, it can receive support from international consultants financed from the financing package or, if applicable, from non-repayable grants. Gender is not mentioned in the title of ESS1 but is a cross-cutting issue in the social sector.

(ii.) The *Labour and Working Conditions* (ESS2) which focus on the importance of job creation and income opportunities for poverty reduction and inclusive economic growth. KfW's borrowing partners should promote good labour-management relations and increase the development benefits of a project by treating workers in the project fairly and providing safe and healthy working conditions. Depending on the country, gender aspects also play an important role here in that, on the one hand, women should be specifically employed as part of the programme, but at the same time their working conditions, like those of men, should be safe and respectful.

(iii.) In the context of ESS3, *Resource Efficiency and Pollution Prevention and Management*, gender aspects are also relevant in many cases, insofar as men and women may be harmed in different ways by a project, e.g. as a consequence of environmental pollution.

(iv.) Under ESS4, *Community Health and Safety*, the risks and impacts of FC programmes on the health and safety of the communities affected by the project play an important role across the board, depending on the type of project. This is because the *Safeguards* under ESS4 are supposed to explicitly focus on those people who may be particularly at risk due to their particular circumstances, which in practice may apply more to women than to men, depending on programme and situation.

The *Safeguard* discussion is primarily concerned with the reduction or prevention of harmful (side) effects of development cooperation measures. When weighing the effort invested in identifying positive approaches against creating or supporting gender equality, e.g. in the context of gender and target group and affected person analyses, on the one hand, and carrying out comprehensive *Safeguard* assessments and developing protective measures where necessary, on the other, there is a real danger of neglecting the former in favour of the latter. The phenomenon that can be observed with development cooperation institutions worldwide, namely that employees who are particularly sensitive to gender issues are more committed than the average project manager, ultimately plays a decisive role with whether both aspects are given equal weight for the assessment. Also at KfW the question of (one's own) security (= *Safeguard* priority) could take precedence over the promotion of gender equality.

The programme appraisal, taking into account the World Bank's *Safeguards* and additional KfW measures, essentially comprises two tools with regard to gender:

(i.) The target group analysis or target group and stakeholder analysis, the binding nature and scope of which has been the subject of ongoing debate²⁹, is not subject to any standardised form but should be based on the complexity of a project. In simpler cases it can take the form of a desk study and be prepared by KfW project managers themselves as an annex to the appraisal report. In other cases, such as drinking water supply projects that are particularly close to the population, it is carried out as a target group and socio-economic analysis, e.g. on the basis of on-site household surveys. Here, gender aspects are always a central subject of the study.

²⁹ See Bliss / König (2003) and Bliss (2004) for the introduction within KfW.

(ii.) The *Environmental and Social Impact Assessment* (ESA) analyses the environmental impacts that could result from an FC project and the social impacts of the measure on the people involved (= planned beneficiaries of the project) or the affected population. The latter may be, for example, the neighbours of infrastructure buildings or other people or groups of people who may be temporarily affected by construction measures, necessary expropriations and/or resettlement. This naturally also includes women. Large infrastructure projects in particular, such as dams or power line projects, lead to adverse effects during construction, such as hazards caused by construction site traffic, but also social upheavals that may be caused by the (mainly male) labourers working on large construction sites.

Box 4: ESA in practice

On large construction sites, an ESA will, for example, investigate aspects of HIV prevention, analyse the effects of prostitution, including child and forced prostitution and drug trafficking, and propose suitable protective measures. Wherever people have to be resettled, poor households, households headed by women and persons or families belonging to disadvantaged minorities are particularly in need of protection, so that their interests can be heard and adequately taken into account. The management plan that forms part of the ESA identifies measures to prevent and minimise negative impacts in accordance with the results of the stakeholder analysis. Where this is not possible, damage is to be compensated to such an extent that people are to be restored to their previous status, i.e. as if there had been no negative impacts. Here too, special consideration should be given to poor people and households headed by women. In one case in Macedonia, for example, it was stated that in the event of expropriation becoming necessary or other recognisable damage they should receive independent procedural support to advise them until compensation will be received (see Frank Bliss, various *Safeguard* contributions for ADB, KfW and the World Bank).

In the ESA, gender equality also plays an important role e. g. with the implementation of construction measures. For example, the partner side is required to consistently prohibit child labour at the construction companies involved, but conversely to support the recruitment of women wherever possible for both simple activities and engineering services.

There is no strict control regarding the stringent consideration of gender aspects in the programme appraisal procedures from a technical perspective within KfW.³⁰ The intensity of the consideration of gender issues results on the one hand from gender classification to be carried out according to the GG categories and on the other hand from the complexity of projects and, if necessary, early agreements with the BMZ regarding the scope and depth of the gender analysis to be submitted. In practice – as reported by many international development cooperation organisations – the project manager's interest in and awareness of the gender issue also influences the way in which a programme review is designed. The

³⁰ In general, we are only aware of one case in the history of German governmental development cooperation when the women's division in charge at the BMZ had a so-called "co-signing right" at the beginning of the 1990s. This meant that the division could demand improvements to projects which, in the view of the officers, had given too little or insufficient technical consideration to women's aspects in the planning documents, without which a contract could be refused to GTZ or KfW. However, this right was soon cancelled (see also Bohnet 2022 and in conversation).

available working time for the individual aspects of the evaluation is also a factor that should not be neglected. In addition to gender, other important fields such as the environmental compatibility of FC programmes must also be assessed. In fact, this aspect is considered to be so important in comparison to gender that two separate competence centres with a total of 12 employees are currently working on this topic.

The competence centre in charge of gender issues (and e.g. poverty reduction) at KfW states that it can advise colleagues on request on all aspects of a gender analysis as well as on further consideration of the topic in the programme cycle. In the event of uncertainty regarding the significance of gender for a programme and for the evaluation of an externally or self-prepared gender analysis, the documents can also be submitted to the competence centre. The same applies to the completed module proposal before submission to the BMZ. Three people are currently available for this activity, although they work on gender together with other cross-cutting issues.

Project managers can also obtain practical advice within KfW's priority field competence centres. In these sectoral competence centres (e.g. for the priority fields of food and agriculture, energy, health, water and waste or environment and climate)³¹, *Gender Focal Points* act as contact partners who also provide advice and, if necessary, coordinate the creation of working materials or aids on gender for the respective priority field. There are currently 10 such working aids available, analogous to the ten priority fields of German official development cooperation, such as the working aid on *Gender and Agriculture with Central Issues* or *Gender and Health with Sectoral Issues*. In addition, KfW's gender experts and *Gender Focal Points* have also drawn up sample terms for the gender analyses to be prepared by programme managers themselves or commissioned by experts. These papers are not publicly accessible, although they could certainly provide other organisations with important suggestions.

In principle, a minimum level of gender competence should already be taught when joining KfW. With entry-level and trainee seminars, a unit on gender is included as part of the introduction to general development theory and policy. Neighbouring topics, such as human rights or poverty and inequality, are dealt with in the same context in terms of their gender relevance.

As noted with regard to the gender analyses by the GIZ, the corresponding analyses of the KfW as well as their target group and affected person analyses require a great deal of time of various participants and considerable financial resources without being consistently coordinated for a country or a region. If there were focal point-independent, overarching analyses on gender in a country or sector for a region (e.g. on agriculture and gender in the Lake Chad region or in the Mekong Basin), entire chapters in the individual programme-related gender and target group analyses could be omitted. Such an approach could also facilitate quality assurance.

In the case of KfW contracts (as well as those of GIZ) awarded to third parties, the question of the competence of the consulting firms in the area of gender must also be raised. Since the planning of FC projects focuses more on engineering services than TC, it was already criticised in the early 2000s that, despite detailed calls for tenders, socio-cultural aspects and gender were often neglected in comparison to the technical planning contributions, because the commissioned companies had too little relevant expertise (Bliss 2004). KfW is currently trying to solve this problem by encouraging bidding companies to form consortia. However, as companies specialising in gender and socio-cultural issues are extremely rare in Germany,

³¹ E.g. on the KfW homepage at <https://t1p.de/7wto1> [09/2024].

subcontracts are more likely to be awarded in these two fields, which may lead to integration problems. Alternatively, it is worth considering whether gender and target group/affected person analyses should not be commissioned separately from the technical studies. This would have the advantage that the technical implementation would not marginalise the "social issues" and thus also gender in the consulting reports (feasibility studies), which at least in the view of some consultants can sometimes be a major obstacle.

Even more so than at GIZ, both programme-related documents and in-house produced working aids or other instructions at KfW are only created for internal use and can therefore not be viewed by the public or other development organisations and used for their own development cooperation work. On the one hand, this reduces the availability of *good practices* even with German official development cooperation, and on the other hand it also considerably limits their international visibility.

3.3 Gender-Transformative Concepts and Activities at German NGOs

Due to limited resources and the selection criteria and restrictions outlined in Chapter 1, our research into the work of German NGOs does not claim to be exhaustive. Rather, the focus of the research on the consideration of FemDC and gender with NGOs is on organisations with a broad range of activities which are primarily active in rural areas or directly in agriculture, as well as on those that explicitly promote women as a target group and pursue feminist approaches. Here we limit ourselves to highlighting interesting, innovative approaches and individual aspects of gender work that were brought to our attention in the context of interviews with NGO staff, among others.

Currently the **Association for Development Policy and Humanitarian Aid (VENRO)**, the umbrella organisation for development and humanitarian NGOs in Germany, has 147 members. These include very large aid organisations that use donations, federal funding and other grants (including from the EU) to implement well over €100 million per year.³²

The FemDC is currently the subject of intense debate in many member organisations, and VENRO itself has also issued and continues to issue statements that deal immediately with the BMZ concept (VENRO 2024c, among others) or indirectly with the promotion of NGOs in the Global South, which should also be supported with the implementation of gender-transformative demands in line with the BMZ (VENRO 2023). VENRO called for gender budgeting as early as in 2016 (VENRO 2015a, 2015b). According to a spokesperson for the association, the BMZ's FemDC approach basically formulates many things that have been practised by at least parts of VENRO for a decade or more. Based on the experiences of its own members, the association has now also published a guideline to better design feminist development cooperation with its member organisations and beyond (see VENRO 2024b). However, the VENRO Executive Board is pessimistic about the future implementation of FemDC by the German government:

"The disproportionate cuts planned by the German government for 2025 in the budgets of the BMZ and the Federal Foreign Office show once again that there is a lack of will across departments to take feminist foreign and development policy seriously" (VENRO 2024d: 8).

³² Detailed income and expenditure plans can be found in the annual reports of the members, e.g. Brot für die Welt (2024), Welthungerhilfe (2024), Misereor (2024).

For **Brot für die Welt (Bread for the World, BfdW)**, one of the largest German NGOs in the field of development cooperation, gender equality is absolutely essential and a prerequisite for people to escape hunger and poverty. Equality is a human right. BfdW explicitly opposes patriarchal power relations and ways of thinking and behaviour that need to be abandoned and changed.³³ This basic position of the Church (Protestant) NGO, which is very strongly oriented towards gender equality and social change, is underpinned by a series of concept papers such as the 2021+ strategy paper³⁴, into which empowerment and women's rights were included as one of five strategic priorities, *Die Kluft zwischen Arm und Reich überwinden* (transl. *Bridging the Gap Between Rich and Poor*) (2019), *Geschlechtergerechtigkeit verwirklichen* (transl. *Realising Gender Equality*) (2018), or an older yet still important contribution on responsible *Land Use Rights From a Gender Perspective* (Wehrmann 2015). In February 2022, Carsta Neuenroth already supported Minister Svenja Schulze's plans to launch a feminist DC in a BfdW blog.³⁵

As BfdW has a broad range of partners, the demands of some partner organisations went beyond the FemDC concept and, according to statements by interviewed employees, were very clearly oriented towards working with LGBTQI+ groups, for example. Other partner organisations, on the other hand, represented a traditional patriarchal world view and had mainly men as contact persons for working with BfdW. BfdW staff emphasised that the partners needed to be met where they currently stood. "Learning from each other" between BfdW and its partner organisations is explicitly in the foreground. BfdW also endeavours to incorporate this opinion into German and international NGO networks and thus bring it to the attention of the BMZ.

In conversation with us, the gender officer of the large Catholic NGO **Misereor** confirmed the considerable resonance that the BMZ paper had had within her own organisation, even though Misereor itself had not yet produced its own position paper on a FemDC. It also became clear during the discussion that the term feminist development cooperation could not necessarily be used in cooperation with all partners. Instead, the desired changes in gender relations are specifically emphasised and the desired joint result is described qualitatively in project papers. A degree of initial scepticism among some Misereor employees regarding the meaningfulness of the term and concept of FemDC could thus be overcome.

Disadvantaged groups, in particular ethnic, social or socio-economic minorities as defined by the BMZ strategy, which was developed only later, have long played an important role for the projects supported by Misereor. As early as 2017 the organisation commissioned an internal working aid on how people who do not have a voice in public can still be reached by development cooperation contributions. There was also a training seminar for employees and experts on this topic.

As part of the *CARE 2030 Vision* (CARE 2021) adopted by the international CARE family, **CARE Germany** is focusing on the promotion of gender equality in both its humanitarian aid and development cooperation activities and is playing a pioneering role by making its tools and gender analyses, for example, publicly accessible. For example, the *CARE 2030* operational strategy adopted by CARE Germany formulates the goal of pursuing a gender-transformative approach with at least 30 per cent of all projects by 2025 and increasing this

³³ See BfdW at: <https://www.brot-fuer-die-welt.de/themen/gleichberechtigung/> [08/2024].

³⁴ https://www.brot-fuer-die-welt.de/fileadmin/mediapool/40_Ueberuns/Strategie_21_/BROT_Strategiebroschuere_2021.pdf [08/2024].

³⁵ "The future of development policy is feminist", at: <https://t1p.de/7xupa> [08/2024].

proportion to 50 per cent by 2030 (CARE Germany 2020). The NGO bases its work on a non-binary understanding of gender and takes an intersectional feminist view of gender equality (CARE Germany n.d.). The NGO's guiding concepts, such as the *CARE 2030 Vision* and the *CARE Gender Equality Framework* (GEF)³⁶, are based on central feminist principles such as intersectionality, participation and the questioning and transformation of existing power structures. The three central starting points for CARE to promote gender equality are (1) building agency, (2) changing relations, and (3) transforming structures (CARE 2023). In addition to the targeted empowerment of women and girls, there is also a focus on the inclusion of men and boys into reflecting on and the transformation of gender roles.

Before the project begins, CARE carries out a *Rapid Gender Analysis* (RGA), which forms the basis for project development. A publicly accessible online toolkit³⁷ provides background information and guidelines for the preparation of gender analyses. In some contexts, CARE uses the slightly expanded *Rapid Gender Analysis on Power and Participation* (RGA-P), which focusses even more strongly on aspects of power and participation than the usual *Rapid Gender Analysis*.³⁸ CARE makes its gender analyses available to the public together with other evaluation reports on the *CARE Evaluations*³⁹ platform. This way, the NGO contributes not only to an internal but also to an external exchange of knowledge and experience.

CARE has also introduced the *Women Lead in Emergencies* (WLiE) model (CARE 2020) in order to strengthen the participation and leadership responsibility of women in humanitarian emergency aid measures and thus to also contribute to gender-transformative effects in the longer term. The aim of this approach is to place the design and implementation of project activities and subsequent learning processes in the hands of the women involved.⁴⁰ To this end, CARE works with women's groups to strengthen their leadership skills and involve them more closely in decision-making in their communities.

Gender also plays a central role for CARE Germany's training and further education programme. For example, the NGO's onboarding programme includes the *Gender at the Center* module, a mandatory 30-minute online training course designed to give new employees a better understanding of the importance of gender in the organisational structure and projects. The interactive course uses practical examples to present CARE's 2030 *Theory of Change* and the *Gender Equality Framework* (GEF) and shows how the three fields of action – building agency, changing relations and transforming structures – can be integrated into project planning and implementation. For all programme, MEAL⁴¹ and advocacy staff there also happens a mandatory follow-up training on gender which, in addition to an in-depth look at the GEF, introduces other key gender-related approaches, guidelines and tools as well as monitoring and reporting mechanisms.

³⁶ <https://www.care.org/our-work/gender-equality/gender-expertise/gender-equality-framework/> [08/2024].

³⁷ <https://www.careemergencytoolkit.org/gender/gender-in-emergencies/8-key-tools-and-other-resources/> [09/2024].

³⁸ See, for example, the following analysis on Sudan: https://www.care-international.org/sites/default/files/2023-02/Rapid%20Gender%20Analysis_Kassala_Sudan_2023.pdf [09/2024].

³⁹ <https://www.careevaluations.org/> [09/2024].

⁴⁰ The WLiE model is described in more detail in Chapter 6.

⁴¹ MEAL = Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning.

In a statement published in April 2023, CARE Germany welcomed the commitment to a feminist foreign and development policy but also noted that the papers presented should be swiftly followed by concrete implementation instructions with indicators, timeframes and specific target markers (CARE Germany 2023). The NGO also criticised in particular that the guidelines for Feminist Foreign Policy of the Federal Foreign Office and the strategy drawn up by BMZ were developed in separate processes. This raises the question of coherence, particularly for NGOs such as CARE Germany, which work at the nexus between humanitarian aid and development cooperation.

Even though the programme runs practically in the name of **Welthungerhilfe (transl. World Hunger Aid, WHH)**⁴², the range of self-determined fields of activity and the range of partner countries in the NGO as well as in the two Christian aid organisations is relatively large. At WHH, which is very active in the agricultural sector, among others, with most of the supported projects women make up a large part of the target, often even the majority. For this reason, gender mainstreaming has generally been practised throughout the portfolio, with the aim of promoting gender equality. After the BMZ strategy on FemDC had been presented, our WHH interviewees were initially concerned that a quasi-literal transfer of the concept might cause considerable problems for some partner organisations. Even the call for the "empowerment of women and girls" was occasionally met with opposition from these organisations. Accordingly, "contextuality" has been upheld as a principle in comparable cases to date, i.e. the conceptual and content-related attitude towards the respective partners. For example, the equal participation of men and women and the elimination of discrimination against women had been mentioned. Intersectionality was also addressed in the case of problems affecting women as participants in projects.

New applications from partners are currently being reviewed, based on the basic principles of the BMZ's FemDC strategy. In this context, efforts are being made to make transformative effects concrete and to consider how to measure the corresponding impact. It should be emphasised from the discussions with WHH representatives that transformative approaches and the GG classification to be made in BMZ funding applications do not necessarily have anything to do with each other. GG2 could address women as the sole target group, but not necessarily aim to bring about structural changes in relation to men. Furthermore, the compulsory upgrading from Neutral to GG1 is of little use and in individual cases only conceals the inadequacy of the gender orientation

For **Kindernothilfe (transl. Children's Emergency Aid, KNH)**, its explicit human rights approach and in particular its focus on children's rights forms the normative basis for engaging with feminist development cooperation. KNH emphasises its intersectional perspective on women, i.e. it includes women and other marginalised groups by all their diversity and also takes into account people with disabilities and different sexual orientations. The employee in charge of gender is therefore also called the Diversity Manager and not the *Gender Focal Point*, as it is common with many organisations. However, according to a discussion with KNH employees, now the discrimination criterion of gender has more priority than before. However, due to the diversity of its local partners, the KNH, like other NGOs, often has difficulties with officially labelling its activities or goals as feminist or gender-transformative.

⁴² This summary is based on several discussions with WHH representatives as well as project and country package evaluations by co-author Frank Bliss.

In 2021 the KNH evaluated the gender impact of its self-help group approach which has been implemented in 22 countries worldwide and was also analysed in 2017 by the AVE project for Kitui in Kenya (Mahla / Gaesing 2017 and 2018) (Raab et al. 2021). The report particularly emphasises the increased self-confidence of women, their sometimes increased negotiating power in decisions or conflicts in the household and their improved participation in decision-making in their communities. For example, members of the self-help groups in Zambia were able to ensure that girls were able to return to school after a pregnancy, which had previously been unthinkable.

More recent approaches in the work of the KNH are explicitly intended to create gender-transformative effects, to question gender norms and to try to win over men as allies. Projects in Rwanda and South Africa, for example, aim to empower men to end male dominance and control behaviour as well as their violent behaviour towards women, children and other men. Men and women also learn to liberate themselves from rigid gender norms and traditional values that favour male violence. The programmes also work on a macro level to change norms there.

Among the range of VENRO members there is a group of NGOs that have set themselves the main task of supporting gender equality and may have been explicitly pursuing feminist development cooperation for years. These include the Marie Schlei Association in Hamburg and AMICA, based in Freiburg.⁴³ For them, the BMZ concept itself offers few new ideas but does have the advantage that their own topic is now tending to gain in importance and is at least being discussed on a much broader topical basis. However, it is clear that no additional funds will be made available to organisations that have already been working with BMZ funds in the wake of the FemDC.

BfdW, WHH, CARE and Misereor in particular generally receive significant federal funding, which is subject to extensive formalities for applications, implementation and reporting obligations, including accounting for the funds. Formalities such as the provision of receipts for informal services or the smallest expenses often have to be provided in practice by particularly poor population groups who are unable to do so. Here, consideration should be given to the proportionality of such requirements, as this approach may have considerable negative effects, particularly on work with social groups that are subject to multiple discrimination in the sense of the FemDC concept, such as extremely disadvantaged social, ethnic, religious or gender groups with marginal organisational capacity. At the same time there are many NGOs whose basic understanding is that they want to target particularly poor and disadvantaged people and generally also prioritise gender equality. The requirements of German budgetary law should be reconsidered in this respect and possibly replaced by more accommodating regulations.

As already mentioned, VENRO as an organisation is concerned about future development financing, particularly with regard to FemDC. With regard to the “voluntary” conceptual work, i.e. the substantive debate and concept development on FemDC within their organization, some VENRO members see considerable financing problems, also in view of dwindling German ODA funds. In general, already the opposite effect seems to have occurred. Two larger NGOs reported that for financial reasons the increase in personnel for the

⁴³ The Marie Schlei Association was founded in 1984 in memory of former development aid minister Marie Schlei. The organisation focuses on women's education (see: [https://www.marie-schlei-verein.de/\[08/2024\]](https://www.marie-schlei-verein.de/[08/2024])). AMICA was founded in 1993 as a women's rights organisation committed to helping women and girls in war and crisis zones (see: [https://www.amica-ev.org/wer-wir-sind/\[08/2024\]](https://www.amica-ev.org/wer-wir-sind/[08/2024])).

advancement of women and gender work initiated in 2020-2023 would have to be reduced again or reallocated in the near future.⁴⁴

The assessment of the BMZ strategy on feminist development policy varied considerably in the interviews with the NGOs. For those NGOs that had already dealt intensively with the question of how gender policy can be implemented as effectively and efficiently as possible before the BMZ strategy was presented and/or that have dealt more intensively with disadvantaged social groups and their integration in development cooperation measures, the feminist development policy of 2023 offers little that is new in terms of content, as our interviews show. However, we feel that our own goals in this field have been significantly strengthened, and we hope to receive clear impetus for their implementation.

For several NGOs interviewed, the term "feminist" in the BMZ strategy – more than its content – initially raised questions. However, they were less concerned with the discussion and programme development within their own organisation but rather with the question of what a commitment to the strategy and its style could mean for cooperation with their (partly Church-based)⁴⁵ partners.

In interviews with VENRO members of different sizes and orientations, two basic problems were also identified against the background of participation in projects with substantial gender relevance, in which the principles of feminist development cooperation are to be implemented:

(i.) For projects categorised as GG1 and even GG2, apart from minor deviations, no more planning funds can be made available than for more technically oriented projects, although the latter need to look less deeply into the social, political and economic structures. This is all the more true for projects that are to be implemented in fragile states or at least fragile contexts, but also in stable regimes with religious-authoritarian structures.

(ii.) Very complex accounting procedures are mandatory for all state funds which, for example, are always based on formal and correct invoices according to German criteria which must even be submitted in the original. However, such invoices cannot be provided, especially by partners belonging among the poorest of the poor and therefore women in particular who are based, for example, on self-organisation. Even smaller NGOs running formal accounting systems are not always able to provide "correct" invoices or receipts. This challenge arises, for example, when a woman who can neither read nor write has to provide a receipt for 75 Indian rupees (approx. €0.80) for her journey to a meeting by bus or *tuk-tuk*. NGOs also criticise the fact that it is unrealistic to expect village women who cook for other women at village meetings and receive an expense allowance of around €10 from a grassroots NGO to keep lists of participants when only three out of 25 women are able to write their names and sign the list.

The consequence is that even NGOs that are considered to work particularly close to the grassroots of the poor either have to pay for such measures from their own funds or forego working with the important target group of these often "invisible" women and girls. But even

⁴⁴ The question as to why no funds of their own could be used for this was answered by the remark that these would then be lacking in order to combine the state subsidies with the own funds, which in turn are a basic condition for the subsidies. The consequence would then be fewer project measures.

⁴⁵ Many projects run by Church development cooperation organisations are by no means aimed exclusively or even predominantly at members of their own religious community. However, they are at least partially initiated in consultation with a partner structure (e.g. diocese).

funds of their own may not be used for a publicly funded project because they cannot be included into the overall account if there are no receipts for this part of the expenditure.

4. Gender Approaches of Other Development Cooperation Organisations and Tools for Their Implementation

As already explained at the beginning of Chapter 1, we have only included and surveyed a selection of possible development cooperation organisations into this study. In comparison to the German practice, this study focuses on the one hand on those organisations that are trend-setting for German and international development cooperation in their gender work. These include the EU, the United Nations organisations concerned with agriculture, food security and rural development, and the World Bank. Secondly, the report includes organisations that are highly relevant for the priority regions of this study. These include the ADB, AfDB and, as a West African network, ECOWAS. Existing contacts that facilitated access to these organisations also played a role for the selection, albeit not the decisive one. For example, the planned survey of those bilateral development cooperation organisations that have made a name for themselves with gender-transformative or feminist development cooperation had to be cancelled due to access problems. The table "Gender approaches of selected DC organisations" in Annex 1 provides an overview of the main contents of this chapter.

4.1 European Union (EU)

Together, the member states and institutions of the European Union (EU) are the largest ODA donor among the DAC members (OECD 2024). The development contributions of the EU institutions alone amount to US\$26.9 billion (preliminary figures for 2023). At EU level, the *Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025*⁴⁶, entitled *A Union of Equality*, provides the framework for the European Commission's work on gender equality. Right at the beginning the strategy defines gender equality not only as a fundamental value and right within the EU but also as an "essential condition for an innovative, competitive and thriving European economy" (European Commission 2020b: 1)⁴⁷. On the first pages of the paper the strategy sets out a two-pronged approach to implementation, consisting of targeted measures to realise gender equality on the one hand and stronger gender mainstreaming on the other. The gender perspective is to be systematically included into all EU policy areas and processes. Implementation should be based on an intersectional perspective.

The *EU Gender Action Plan III (2021-2025)*⁴⁸ is closely linked to the strategy but focuses on the EU's external actions. It defines gender equality as a priority for all EU foreign and development policy strategies and measures and formulates five key fields of action:

- (1) By 2025, 85% of all new measures in the field of external relations are supposed to contribute to gender equality and the empowerment of women (GG1 or GG2 maker).
- (2) Cooperation with Member States and partners at the multilateral, the regional and the national level is to be strengthened and the EU's commitment and leadership role at the multilateral level is to be expanded.

⁴⁶ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0152> [09/2024].

⁴⁷ However, this was only formulated this way a few years after it had been cited in West African countries in particular as a reason for striving for more gender equality in national policies.

⁴⁸ https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-01/join-2020-17-final_en.pdf [09/2024]; in November 2023, the EU extended the term of *GAP III* until 2027.

- (3) Progress is to be accelerated by focussing on six key areas of engagement. These include (I.) combating gender-based violence, (II.) promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights, (III.) strengthening the economic and social rights and empowerment of women and girls, (IV.) promoting their equal participation and leadership, (V.) implementing the *Women, Peace and Security Agenda* and (VI.) overcoming the challenges and utilising the opportunities created by the green and digital transformation.
- (4) The EU is supposed to lead by example, for example by creating gender-equitable leadership with a balanced gender ratio at the highest political and management levels⁴⁹ and by expanding gender expertise and specialist knowledge among employees. Managers are also supposed to receive mandatory training on gender equality and the implementation of *GAP III*. In addition, the role and capacity of *Gender Focal Points* is to be further strengthened.
- (5) To strengthen public accountability and ensure transparency and access to information on EU gender equality policies, a quantitative, qualitative and inclusive monitoring system will be introduced.

By the *Gender Action Plan III* (GAP III) the EU is building on its previous commitment to promoting gender equality but is expanding it by an explicitly gender-transformative, intersectional and human rights-based approach. Taking into account overlapping dimensions of discrimination, the action plan focuses on overcoming the structural causes of gender inequality. It also explicitly emphasises the active participation of men and boys in challenging gender-specific norms and stereotypes as well as the role of young people as "drivers of change" (European Commission 2020a: 4).

Supplementary materials offer further explanations concerning the approaches of the Gender Action Plan. For example, the handout *Thinking out of the Box to be Gender Transformative in our Work*⁵⁰ explains the gender-transformative approach and its practical implementation in the project cycle in more detail. Good practice examples for the six key areas of engagement as well as so-called *Country-Level Implementation Plans* (CLIPs) for *GAP III* are also available on the online platform *Capacity4dev*⁵¹. There are also other sector-specific handouts and guidelines, such as the document *Because Women Matter: Designing Interventions in Food, Nutrition and Agriculture that Allow Women to Change their Lives*⁵² developed for INTPA⁵³ staff with the EU delegations.

Despite these existing knowledge products, one interviewed EU employee assessed the exchange of knowledge and experience within DG INTPA as having room for improvement. In particular, the transfer of internally and externally generated research results into the political practice is often insufficient, which is sometimes also due to the explicit reservations

⁴⁹ Which, as was shown in September/October 2024, was boycotted by the EU member states, with less than 40% of the new Commission being women.

⁵⁰ https://capacity4dev.europa.eu/library/think-out-box-be-gender-transformative-our-work_en [09/2024].

⁵¹ https://capacity4dev.europa.eu/groups/public-gender_en [09/2024].

⁵² <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/51ec7cf6-5a05-11e9-a60e-01aa75ed71a1> [09/2024].

⁵³ The *European Commission's Directorate-General for International Partnerships* (DG INTPA) is in charge of for the EU's international partnership and development policy.

of individual employees to utilise existing knowledge. In order to change this, the *Knowledge Centre for Agriculture and Food Security*⁵⁴, a sub-unit of the *EU Joint Research Centre*, is currently working on setting up a sub-page on gender.

Although the expansion of gender expertise through further training programmes is promoted in the course of *GAP III*, the existing programmes and measures are evaluated in a mixed way by an interviewed INTPA employee. For example, there are training courses on the application of the OECD-DAC gender markers (GG makers). Gender aspects are also part of the *Project Cycle Management Training* which provides information from a more technical perspective on how gender aspects should be formally considered in the project cycle. However, gender training in the field of agriculture and rural development has not been held regularly since 2019. Overall, the inclusion of gender aspects depends heavily on the individual skills and commitments of the employees. This assessment is confirmed by an externally commissioned evaluation of *GAP III* by the European Commission for the 2021-2022 implementation period, which identified a lack of gender expertise at all levels of the EU (European Commission 2023: 16). A survey among 110 delegation members also revealed that only around half of them were very familiar with *GAP III* (ibid.: 14). In addition, despite the existing guidelines at delegation level, there is still a lack of clarity about the EU gender marker system (ibid.: 26).

4.2 Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

The Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS) is an important regional economic organisation in which gender equality has recently gained considerable importance for concepts and day-to-day operations.⁵⁵ The organisation was founded to promote the idea of collective self-sufficiency among its member states. The integrated economic activities focused on the fields of industry, transport, telecommunications, agriculture, natural resources, trade, monetary and financial issues, energy as well as social and cultural affairs (see ECOWAS 2021). The aim of ECOWAS is to create a region that is governed according to the principles of democracy, the rule of law and good governance. German development cooperation works closely with ECOWAS in the field of promoting renewable energies. Gender aspects play an important role here. For example, support is given to businesswomen to enter into the selling and maintenance of solar home systems and technological equipment. In addition, efforts are made to employ female engineers in training and further education programmes.

ECOWAS is increasingly committed to gender equality within its own structure and in member states, with a current focus on supporting gender mainstreaming wherever possible (e.g. in all regional integration policies, strategies and programmes).

In order to strengthen gender aspects at all levels and in all fields of activity, the *ECOWAS Gender Development Centre* (EGDC) was established as a regional multipurpose agency tasked with contributing to gender equality and the empowerment of women in the ECOWAS region. The Centre supports the empowerment of women and men in the public and private sectors as well as within its own institution. The EGDC initiates and facilitates gender capacity building through training and knowledge transfer.

⁵⁴ https://visitors-centre.jrc.ec.europa.eu/en/media?science_area=300 [09/2024].

⁵⁵ Results of a study (gender analysis) based on interviews with numerous actors within ECOWAS (2021).

However, over the decades ECOWAS has certainly not been a domain for the employment of women in its member countries – with the exception of administrative activities, e.g. in the back offices of authorities or companies. For some years now ECOWAS policy has aimed to (i.) supply the entire population with electricity and at the same time (ii.) to increase energy efficiency in national economies and private households. For this very reason it is important to better reach women in their dual role as private (households) and business (mainly owners of SMEs) energy consumers and thus be able to involve them as important players in achieving the two core objectives.

However, for many women in ECOWAS member countries, as private and also business energy consumers, the use of electricity is still new and there is little knowledge of the circumstances of consumption. Currently almost no woman (and no man) has any idea how much her or his new fridge, fan or even air conditioning system consumes in kWh. This is where ECOWAS is currently active, also with the support of German TC, through the *ECOWAS Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (ECREEE)*, founded in 2008, not only to advise the population but also to motivate women from the business sector specifically for the rapidly expanding business sector of renewable energies, i.e. the sale of systems and even the assumption of technological maintenance.

Under its auspices, the *ECOWAS Programme on Gender Mainstreaming in Energy Access (ECOW-GEN)* addresses the obstacles to the equal participation of women and men in the expansion of energy access in West Africa. Specific recommendations, combined with training measures, provide approaches on how gender-specific aspects in the energy sector can be addressed at the decision-making level. It is important that all measures are also gender-responsive "from the inside", e.g. that conference chairs are held by women and that women and, wherever possible (i.e. available), especially female engineers also take part in the training courses.

Although ECOWAS has been strongly committed to promoting gender mainstreaming for more than 10 years now, the internal structure is still male-dominated, especially in technological fields and at higher management levels. However, more and more women are taking part in the training programmes. The proportion of female trainers is increasing, and the first female engineers are also taking part in the training programmes.

At the political level gender aspects are focussed on in the "Committee on Social Affairs, Gender and the Advancement of Women" (one out of the 14 standing committees of the Commission), which may not be in line with the call for gender mainstreaming. Although there are female members of the committees, councils, delegations, etc., they are still in the minority.

4.3 International Development Banks

In recent years, international development banks and UN organisations have been relatively well positioned, at least in terms of personnel and at headquarters, for gender-related tasks, partly due to pressure from *like-minded* member countries (Canada, Germany, Sweden, the USA and others are repeatedly mentioned in different contexts). The **World Bank (WB)**, for example, has gender teams at all levels from headquarters to regional and country level. In order to generate evidence on the impact of the Bank's gender approaches, so-called *Gender*

Innovation Labs (GIL)⁵⁶, financed by the *Umbrella Facility for Gender Equality*, were set up after 2012, which carry out pilot projects and impact analyses themselves and feed their experiences into project design, implementation and monitoring (World Bank 2023a: 32). This has recently led to studies on the empowerment of women through self-help groups in South Asia (Javed et al. 2022).

The recently adopted World Bank Gender Strategy 2024-2030 provides the framework for all of the Bank's gender goals and activities (World Bank 2024a). Into the *Result Framework* the seven indicators include the employment rate among the working-age population, people with a bank account and people who do not use the Internet.

Action plans such as the *South Asia Regional Gender Action Plan (RGAP) II 2023-2028* (see World Bank 2022) or the *Regional Action Plan for Western and Central Africa 2023-2027* (see World Bank 2023c), the former including a roadmap, provide a region-specific framework. In the latter plan, "frontier issues" such as social norms are at least openly addressed as a difficult field of intervention ("evidence suggests that AFW⁵⁷ has some of the most restrictive norms and individual attitudes in the world"; p.15-16). At the same time, it is openly admitted that more precise data is lacking for the region and needs to be collected as part of the implementation of the intended gender strategy, e.g. on gender roles and role models, women's work outside the household, control of income and capital, women's mobility and gender-based violence. The regional Gender Lab plays an important role here.

New in the discussion among the World Bank is the proposal of a *Country Engagement Review*, meaning that the common country programme frameworks (*Country Partnership Frameworks*) on gender should no longer deal with gender in general as a cross-cutting issue but should specifically address gender priorities and accordingly focus the respective programme on core outcomes for gender equality in this context (World Bank 2023b: 31).

In view of gender mainstreaming in the policy papers, the development banks jointly emphasise the need to carry out a gender analysis for every planning process and to classify all projects and programmes as a result – albeit according to individual categories.⁵⁸ The composition of the tools is then based on the categorisation.

Overall, the World Bank considers itself to be well positioned in terms of gender issues, both in its general programme work and with regard to its activities in vulnerable contexts⁵⁹: "Commitment to the gender strategy of World Bank Group management staff and partners has translated into progress following plans" (World Bank 2021: vii). However, as with other international organisations, in contrast to the sometimes excellent planning contributions there is a deficit, especially when it comes to the important monitoring of project implementation: "[...] less attention is paid to monitoring implementation. This reduces the Bank Group's ability to gauge the outcomes of projects [...]" (ibid.).

⁵⁶ World Bank Regional *Gender Innovation Labs* (GIL), a new name for evaluation and advisory teams for the operational units of the World Bank and national partners or "policy makers" (see <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/gender/brief/gender-innovation-lab-federation> [10/2024]).

⁵⁷ In the World Bank publication cited, AFW means Western and Central African Region.

⁵⁸ However, the OECD/DAC criteria according to GG0-GG2 are not necessarily applied (see OECD/DAC 2016). This allows for more than three-stage classifications and thus possibly for better adjustments to the planning tools. However, the consistent implementation of the assessment steps and depth of assessment associated with the criteria is crucial later on.

⁵⁹ See Evaluation World Bank (2023).

The **African Development Bank (AfDB)** is a relatively new player in terms of gender-transformative approaches. The overarching goal of the AfDB, based in Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire), is to support sustainable economic development and social progress in its member countries and thus to contribute to poverty reduction.

Currently, the most important cornerstone of the AfDB's activities focussing on gender equality is based on the *Affirmative Finance Action for Women Entrepreneurs in Africa (AFAWA)*, a holistic approach to support:

- (i) the development of innovative financial mechanisms for women-owned businesses,
- (ii) advising financial services providers (FSPs) to better understand the needs of the female business market, and
- (iii) with regard to governments and regional economic communities, commitment in favour of legal, policy and regulatory reforms, which in turn is supposed to help with the reduction of structural barriers that hinder access to finance for women-owned small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Between 2021 and 2026, US\$3 and US\$5 billion respectively have been or will be made available for this purpose. According to our interviewees, these funds, which are channelled through national FDs, primarily reach their target groups in small and medium-sized trade and commerce as well as in the agricultural sector, but not poorer groups ("the poorer 30% of female entrepreneurs") and women who carry out their businesses in unstable states and regions. The funding approach corresponds to the three basic pillars of the *AfDB Gender Strategy 2021-2025* (AfDB 2021), which are classified as being transformative and prioritise the empowerment of women through access to financing and markets. The second pillar is the development of skills to increase their employability and contribute to the creation of new jobs for women. Thirdly, the AfDB aims to support women's access to social services by providing the necessary infrastructure.

It was noted in a background discussion that, as in other comparable international organisations, AfDB employees in positions relating to gender work are primarily recruited from members of an educated elite who would seek to empower women primarily at the level of economic success. Gender equality is thus de facto promoted – as already emphasised very clearly in the AfDB strategy - above all by strengthening the economic role of women, which is particularly appropriate given that in an increasing number of (West) African development plans the increase in female employment is not only seen as an important condition for economic growth but in individual cases as the most important and realistically safest way of achieving this.⁶⁰

The idea of supporting, in particular, the revitalisation of those traditions that previously gave African women considerable structural positions of power, especially at the socio-political level, is more or less lost in the process. Closely interwoven with this is the problem that AfDB staff, like those of almost all ODA organisations, have less and less time and

⁶⁰ For example, in talks with government and business representatives in Senegal in 2019. The Senegalese gender strategy was already explicitly mentioned in 2015 (see RdS 2015). Most recently in December 2024 in an exchange between the INEF research team and high-ranking representatives of the Benin Ministry of Agriculture.

opportunity in their day-to-day work to look beyond the economic, social and socio-cultural environment of their own projects.⁶¹

The consideration of gender aspects in the strategy and activities of the **Asian Development Bank (ADB)**, which is probably the second most important international development bank after the World Bank, at least in terms of its field of activity, has substantially increased in importance, particularly in recent years, as has been the case with the AfDB. In 2019-2021, three policy papers in particular laid the foundations for a policy that has also placed gender equality at least on the extended target level for the ADB's most important field of activity, the promotion of social and economic infrastructure.

The political framework is provided by the general ADB development strategy *ADB Strategy 2030* of 2018, which already stipulates "Accelerating progress in gender equality" under Priority ii. out of the seven formulated "key operational priorities" after Priority i. "Addressing remaining poverty and reducing inequalities" (ADB 2018: VI, 15-16). The seven priorities are fleshed out in operational plans (comparable to the European and German Gender Action Plan), for gender the *Operational Plan for Priority 2* for the period 2019-2024 (ADB 2019). In 2021 the *Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Strategy* (ADB 2021) was added as a further policy document for the urban area.

Furthermore, two handouts were prepared, (i.) the *Guidelines for Gender Mainstreaming Categories of ADB Projects*, which specify four gender categories from I "gender equity theme" to IV "no gender elements" (ADB 2021a) and (ii.) the *Guidelines for the AT-Exit Assessment of Gender Equality Results of ADB Projects* (ADB 2022a). The former deals with the obligation and procedure to carry out a *Gender Assessment* as part of project planning and to carry out a mandatory categorisation. The latter obliges the management of each project – depending on classification – to examine and record the quality of gender consideration in the programme as well as development impacts in the field of gender. In addition, gender analyses for individual countries (such as for Tajikistan, see ADB 2022b) and gender analyses for projects classified in Categories I-III are carried out to support project planning.

For projects that do not contain any gender elements as a result of the appraisal, a justification must be provided as to why the project has no links to gender. The projects categorised as being gender-related must provide for "specific focused gender actions", and a separate *Gender Action Plan* as well as a *Gender Action Framework* must be drawn up. The latter includes the legal framework and institutional conditions in the concerned country.

If a project has other impacts, such as the loss of buildings or (agricultural) land, the ADB provides for a *Land Acquisition and Resettlement Plan* (LARP) where, for example, ownership structures are described in detail and compensation mechanisms are outlined in detail in the event of expropriations and expected damage. The LARP is based on the ADB's 2009

⁶¹ According to the authors' experience and confirmed by the statements of some interviewees, this is a trend that also runs through German development cooperation structures, starting with the BMZ, where exposure visits are becoming the exception and business trips to partner countries for field visits are increasingly having to be reduced for financial reasons. But even secondary (project) staff from the implementing organisations on the ground, whose feedback on gender or socio-cultural aspects of cooperation would be extremely important in the context of reporting, are increasingly prevented from travelling to the actual project area by management obligations – and if they do, it is less for discussions with members of the population and more for meetings with state partners and seminar events.

Safeguards, which are intended to ensure that all damages are compensated.⁶² In the LARP process, gender aspects are once again scrutinised in particular, such as the actual ownership and usage conditions and, if the checks are good, always directly with those affected at their homes and living areas. Women, especially single mothers or elderly women, are also provided with special independent assistance in the compensation procedures. Carefully developed and implemented LARPs by the ADB are currently probably one of the best *good practices* worldwide for safeguarding the interests of women affected in a project context.

In interviews with us, ADB observers spoke of the concept development and the improvements in the planning processes as a huge step forward at a development bank that was previously very focussed on technical implementation aspects and was considered anything but gender-sensitive. However, there is a consensus that many projects have not yet defined gender-transformative goals or targeted indicators. Typical indicators are still too often purely numerical targets such as "20% women involved" or, in one case in Cambodia, "10% of participants in the measures are women". In general it should also be noted that there is still no official basic understanding of "gender-transformative" and therefore certainly no common understanding among the teams.

As the management of the ADB is aware of these problems, the implementation of the 2019 gender requirements to date and the institutional aspects of the ADB are currently being reviewed as part of a comprehensive evaluation assignment based on five country examples. The results of the evaluation are scheduled to be presented to the board of directors in December 2024.

In discussions with ADB representatives it became clear that an international development bank with very different shareholders cannot adopt a new strategy without sometimes heated discussions in advance. The example of the bank and the consideration of the expanded gender concept in the ADB's conceptual structure (from a binary to a non-binary understanding of gender) desired by some Western donors could be used to show that, on the one hand, there was massive pressure by large donors to take this expanded understanding of gender into account ("in favour" of active use of the term by the USA, for example), and on the other hand, massive refusal by individual members to even discuss this (e.g. Indonesia, Malaysia and, at times, the Philippines).

Overall, the ADB's strategies must ultimately result in a compromise on content. When observing the decision-making processes with regard to the current gender positions, it is noteworthy that at the beginning of negotiation processes, not all actors (= stakeholders) within the relevant ADB bodies have to be fixed with regard to their positions and thus with a view to the desired end result. Persuasion is therefore possible and good arguments in favour of a clearer focus on gender equality are not always rejected in unison by all socially more conservative member countries, according to a high-ranking Bank employee. In the end, for example, the USA's concern regarding the use of the extended gender concept was not mentioned in the title of a policy chapter but was nevertheless taken into account in the end on the basis of the case studies that explain the policy and illustrate good practices.

In the field of development policy, the ADB published a comprehensive handout on gender budgeting in 2024, which explains the importance of the topic primarily in terms of the increasing inequalities in the world. On the one hand, gender budgeting may be expected to

⁶² The World Bank, which has even set international standards in this field with its *Safeguards* on "Involuntary Resettlement" or "Indigenous People" since the end of the 1990s, conducts similar assessments (see World Bank 2024b and 2024c).

increase tax revenues. "Over the long term, fiscal policies designed to promote gender equality can increase growth and development and, therefore, budget revenues" (ADB 2024: 9). On the other hand, the latter could help to reduce social inequality and thus also existing gender inequalities, according to the further argumentation. How this can be achieved in practice through tax measures is also explained. The increasing employment rate of women plays an important role here. Gender equality (including in employment) leads to economic growth, and this in turn contributes to greater gender equality (ibid.: 15).

The handout advocates in-depth analyses when drawing up budgets, both on the revenue and expenditure side, as certain tax models can have a significantly negative impact on women (as well as on poorer population groups), while others can improve their situation and a country's overall social policy (Anuradha et al. 2024). However, the paper is not limited to recommendations for third countries but also deals with gender-responsive budgeting for the ADB's own projects and programmes.

Our dialogue partners at the international development banks agreed that there is a gap between policy and practice when dealing with gender challenges, possibly even more so than with other cross-cutting issues. On the one hand, this may be due to the fact that gender aspects in planning processes and in view of social complexities in the context of programme implementation are much more complex to deal with than aspects of, for example, occupational health and safety based on fixed basic rules.

Basically, however, as has also become apparent for German institutions in both governmental and non-governmental development cooperation, the **depth of consideration of gender aspects** at the international development banks also depends on the attitude of the officers in charge: Those who have already dealt with gender and internalised the importance of gender equality for development cooperation impacts will deal more intensively with impact matrices and the required quantitative framework than other colleagues.

The frequent **time pressure** in planning and the general overload of many employees in view of the large number of sub-fields to be considered in a planning process are consistently mentioned in interviews. As a result, the categories are either ticked in such a way that more extensive substantive considerations (such as an in-depth gender analysis) are not necessary, or projects are classified as being at least gender-relevant (e.g. GG1 or comparable), but the steps to be derived from this are reduced to commonplace standard results and indicators (the usual one: "The project takes into account the interests of women farmers..."; "x% women are included in...").

A problem that is repeated in the reports of the institutions and addressed in our discussions and is therefore not limited to the planning activities of the development banks is the **lack of gender-disaggregated data** or any information at all on the target groups of projects.

4.4 UN-Organisations

The following comments on the UN organisations focus on those organisations that are primarily concerned with agriculture, food security and rural development as well as explicitly with gender and the advancement of women. The focus here is on concepts and activities relating to gender-transformative approaches and contributions.

The **Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO)** aims to achieve food security for all and to support access to sufficient quality food to lead active, healthy

lives.⁶³ In its *Policy on Gender Equality 2020 - 2030* the FAO sees itself in the key role of generating gender-based knowledge and developing innovative solutions to minimise discrimination against women and girls in rural areas. The organisation also partially lives up to this approach (FAO 2020).

On its website the FAO publishes up-to-date gender analyses (*Country Gender Assessment*) for numerous countries⁶⁴ and – often together with the other Rome-based organisations IFAD and WFP – high-quality and practical reports and handouts on gender in agriculture and food security. Particularly worth mentioning here is the *Joint Programme on Gender Transformative Approaches for Food Security and Nutrition* (JP GTA)⁶⁵ which, for example, compiled good examples of GTA (FAO / IFAD / WFP 2020), provided a practical guide to formulating gender-transformative indicators (FAO / IFAD / WFP 2022) and, together with the *Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research* (CGIAR) (FAO / IFAD / WFP / CGIAR *GENDER Impact Platform 2023*), published a guide to measuring gender-transformative indicators.

However, according to employees, these concepts and tools are not sufficiently reflected by the implementation of FAO programmes. Gender equality is not an explicit goal of the FAO in the member countries. Instead, the UN organisation's goals revolve around food and nutrition security, agricultural productivity and sustainable resource management, not gender equality and the empowerment of women.

In addition to a gender team at FAO headquarters in Rome and in the regional offices, *Gender Focal Points* are also active at the departments. The gender team in Rome organises and carries out gender training measures itself, produces training materials and manuals and plans to open a training centre in the near future. Gender work is significantly supported by the JP GTA, whose task is to improve the capacities of the Rome-based organisations FAO, IFAD and WFP to anchor GTA in their respective work. The three organisations involved learn from each other, as each works with different topics, structures and partners and also jointly organise high-level conferences on the topic.

The **International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)**⁶⁶ is a specialised agency of the United Nations that was established at the suggestion of the 1974 World Food Summit and focuses explicitly on the rural areas of poor countries and the promotion of agriculture there, because this is where the proportion of poor people in the world is highest, and the majority of these poor people live from smallholder farming. The consideration of gender is a very important part of IFAD's work, which is reflected by the fact that the organisation continuously develops its own action plans and handouts on these topics (see IFAD 2019, 2022 and 2024) and, together with other organisations such as the FAO, WFP and IFPRI, develops practical handouts for integrating GTAs into projects and programmes (see Chapter 6).

According to employees, IFAD does not describe its gender approach as “feminist” because the fund focuses on gender *equality* and does not believe that FemDC can or even wants to promote both genders equally. The IFAD calls its policy gender-transformative because it wants to tackle the reasons that perpetuate inequality and would therefore view a GTA as more holistic. On the other hand, however, the fund is a multilateral organisation and must negotiate and coordinate its terminology with the member states (“*walking on eggs with*

⁶³ <https://www.fao.org/about/about-fao/en/> [09/2024].

⁶⁴ <https://www.fao.org/gender/resources/country-assessments/en/> [09/2024].

⁶⁵ Further information on JP GTA can be found in chapter 5 of this study.

⁶⁶ Information on IFAD and gender at <https://www.ifad.org/en/gender> [09/2024].

terminology"). The oil-producing countries, for example, are very sensitive when it comes to gender terms.

Since 2016 IFAD has increased the inclusion of GTAs into its projects. According to the current target, 35% of projects should be categorised as being gender-transformative, although GTA is not necessarily the objective. Specifically, this categorisation means that the project must contribute to the three objectives defined in the fund's *Gender Policy*. These objectives are: (1) "equitable economic empowerment", (2) "voice and decision making", and (3) "workload and access to benefit". In addition, the project must include activities relating to "policy engagement for gender quality and women's empowerment" and use the empowerment indicator (*at base-term, mid-term and end-line*) in order to be classified as being gender-transformative.

IFAD does not apply the OECD gender markers (GG1 etc.) to its categorisation but has developed its own six-level classification, "gender-transformative" being the highest level 6. Gender must necessarily be integrated into all its projects; a gender-blind project concept will not be approved for implementation during the review. Reviews are carried out when projects are designed and also every year when the projects are evaluated. The proportion of gender-transformative projects has increased from fund to fund⁶⁷ in recent years: 15% in IFAD10 (2016 to 2018), 25% in IFAD11 (2019 to 2021), 35% in IFAD12 (2022 to 2024) and 35% planned for IFAD13 (2025 to 2027).

It is interesting to note that in 2018 there was a break in the implementation of GTAs, according to employees due to an internal IFAD reorganisation. Until 2018 gender was one of numerous technical teams that supported the development and implementation of projects. From 2018, the technical teams were spun off from the *Programme Management Department* and transferred to the *Strategy and Knowledge Department*. In the course of this, the technical department was split into two: one department dealing with "purely technical" topics such as value creation, market inclusion, irrigation, etc., and a second department responsible for "overarching" topics such as climate, gender and social inclusion, including youth and nutrition. Not only has the director of this new department since then always had a technological background in the field of climate and focussed on working on this topic. Now also the partner countries have come to consider the gender issue to be one of the mainstreaming topics that have to be "ticked off" in projects.

In addition, although every project must employ a *social inclusion specialist*, this person may come from the gender sector as well as from the fields of nutrition, social inclusion or youth. The constant rotation of employees and the implementation of numerous projects by consultants are also not conducive to the gender issue.

As the *United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women*, gender is anchored in all areas of **UN Women's** work. The organisation's task is to promote gender equality throughout the entire UN system. Furthermore, as part of its normative mandate, UN Women supports the development of global norms and standards and supports member states with complying with and implementing international obligations. UN Women also undertakes operational activities at regional and country level in the field of gender equality and the advancement of women. In addition to its headquarters in New York City, UN

⁶⁷ The IFAD fund is *replenished* every three years ("*replenishment period*"). Explanations can be found on the following websites: <https://www.ifad.org/documents/38711624/48037172/replenishment-definitions.pdf/5ebe1ccb-444b-648b-64de-7bdb87dd2064?t=1700653083215>; <https://www.ifad.org/en/replenishment> [09/2024].

Women operates through six regional offices and more than sixty country offices. In order to remain close to the target group, the organisation says it works closely with women human rights defenders, civil society organisations and the private sector in particular.

The current *UN Women Strategic Plan 2022-2025*⁶⁸ describes UN Women's strategic direction, goals and measures to promote gender equality. It defines four key topics:

- (1) the participation and involvement of women in public life and decision-making processes,
- (2) the economic empowerment of women,
- (3) ending violence against women and girls, and
- (4) security and humanitarian aid for women in the context of war and other disasters.

In the field of rural development, agriculture and food security, the nexus of climate change, environmental degradation and gender plays a central role in the work of UN Women. At the international level, for example, the organisation worked to ensure that gender-specific perspectives and issues were taken into account in the agreements on the three UN conventions on climate change (UNFCCC), desertification (UNCCD) and biodiversity (CBD). UN Women is also responsible for preparing, organising and evaluating the *UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)* which meets once a year. In addition to food security, social security and access to financial resources for women are key topics at the meetings, according to an employee of the *Women's Economic Empowerment Section* of UN Women.

UN Women is also involved in the *Joint Programme on Accelerating Progress Towards Rural Women's Economic Empowerment (JP RWEE)*⁶⁹ together with FAO, IFAD and the WFP, which aims to strengthen the livelihoods, rights and resilience of women in rural areas. To this end, the initiative focuses on four fields: (1) improving food security, (2) increasing income, reducing workload and promoting economic independence, (3) strengthening voice and leadership in local governance structures and rural producer organisations, and (4) developing and strengthening gender-responsive legal frameworks, policies and institutions. Programme measures implemented in the current phase (2022-2027) in Nepal, Niger, Rwanda, Tanzania, Tunisia and several South Pacific island states aim to achieve gender-transformative change. The methods used include the *Gender Action Learning System (GALS)*⁷⁰ and the so-called *Dimitra Clubs*⁷¹.

By the presentation of the *WFP Gender Policy* (see UN 2006 and WFP 2009), the **UN World Food Programme (WFP)**, as the world's largest humanitarian organisation, has been increasingly striving for gender mainstreaming in all WFP policies and programmes to be implemented since 2009 at the latest (see UN 2006 and WFP 2009), in line with the 2006 guidelines on gender equality and the empowerment of women to be striven for throughout the entire United Nations system. By the current *Gender Policy*, the programme pursues three

⁶⁸<https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2021/UN-Women-Strategic-Plan-2022-2025-brochure-en.pdf> [09/2024].

⁶⁹ <https://www.jprrwee.org/> [09/2024].

⁷⁰ GALS is a participatory planning method that is carried out with various stakeholders and extends over two to three years: <https://gender.cgiar.org/tools-methods-manuals/gender-action-learning-system-gals> [09/2024].

⁷¹ *Dimitra Clubs* are voluntary associations of groups (60% women) within the framework of FAO projects, primarily in countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, which aim to improve the situation of their communities through self-help: <https://www.fao.org/in-action/dimitra-clubs/en/> [09/2024].

goals: (i.) equal access to and control of (the necessary) resources for achieving food security; (ii.) progress towards achieving gender equality by addressing the root causes of gender inequality, and (iii.) economic empowerment of women and girls (WFP 2022: 3).

Unlike other UN organisations and international development banks, these targets pose a particular challenge because on the one hand the programme staff are aware that the sustainable gender impact of support measures generally requires a great deal of patience and, on the other hand, the WFP has to finance itself exclusively through voluntary contributions. In the absence of a core budget, food and cash donations must therefore also include funds for transport as well as the administration and monitoring of food aid (WFP 2024), and measures that go beyond emergency aid require the special willingness of donors.

Germany has been the second largest donor to the WFP since 2016, with contributions totalling €996,288,254 million in 2024 (see AA 2024; WFP 2025). Accordingly, it is not only since the presentation of the FemDC that the BMZ has shown great interest in ensuring that gender-transformative effects are also sought and achieved within the cooperation with the WFP. The cooperation shows, which is also confirmed by WFP gender and evaluation specialists in discussions, that the World Food Programme is now well conceptually incorporating the stated gender goals into its country strategies, but that the analyses of the specific gender situation in the partner countries could be improved in some cases and therefore not all opportunities for gender-transformative work are being used.

In three studies on school feeding in 2023-2024, the INEF research team found that thousands of cooks, who are usually particularly poor women, are not adequately remunerated in WFP-controlled programmes worldwide or that their remuneration depends on voluntary donations from the school environment (Bliss 2024; Bliss / Gutema 2023; Gaesing et al. 2023). This means that, for example, in long-term school feeding programmes, volunteer work and voluntary services from the school environment (parents, teachers, village communities) are promoted, but the bottom line is that women are exploited rather than strengthened in their economic role.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, *cash-for-work* measures are becoming increasingly important alongside school meals as part of social security contributions. Women benefit particularly from this, both as an explicitly prioritised target group, but also because as actors they primarily use their income for their households, their children and generally for improved nutrition for their families.

As between 700 and 800 million people worldwide are still estimated to have suffered from hunger in 2023 (see WHO 2024) and the WFP only ever has limited resources to deal with this dramatic problem, the organisation must decide for each measure whether the maximum number of people should be provided with food aid or whether fewer people should be supported, but more sustainably and with greater effort, for example to make a greater contribution to creating gender equality.

The **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** currently works in around 170 countries and territories with a mandate to eradicate poverty and end inequality. To sum it up, supporting policymaking to achieve the 2030 Agenda can be cited as a core task: "We help countries develop policies, leadership skills, partnerships and institutional capabilities to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals"⁷². Topics include poverty and inequality, governance, resilience, environment, energy and gender equality.

⁷² See <https://www.undp.org/about-us> [10/2024].

On the one hand, the UNDP's work starts at the level of government advice. On the other hand, our interviewees see UNDP's special role at the grassroots level, i.e. in direct contact with the people in the projects and programmes. According to one statement during our interviews, UNDP's work is best at the local level, i.e. the micro level, for example in the transformation of rural development, in value chain promotion, and in the creation of income for women, who make up the majority of the target groups.

In practice, UNDP does not use the term FemDC, nor do they speak of "transformative" gender goals because the latter term is too unclear, as was explained to us in an interview with UNDP employees. Instead, UNDP would take a descriptive approach to formulating goals. Ultimately, however, it is the same thing that could also be described as being transformative. However, UNDP wants to avoid getting lost in endless discussions and would rather focus on practical implementation instead. Nevertheless, gender policy at UNDP is initially geared towards incorporating the topic into all national strategies, the development of which is an important field of the programme's work. The aim is to achieve structural changes. However, this is not always successful because UNDP understands its work to be much more closely linked to the mandate of the countries than other UN organisations.

UNDP has a central gender team at its headquarters in New York City and a further five gender teams in decentralised *Support Teams* or *Regional Hubs*: Addis, Bangkok, Amman, Istanbul and Panama. There are also smaller gender teams in the individual countries, whose UNDP offices are set up very independently of the headquarters, but these are not counted among the 70 or so full-time gender specialists in the organisation.

5. Alliances and Working Groups on the Topic of Gender⁷³

In recent years a number of international alliances, initiatives and working groups have emerged with the aim of advancing feminist and gender-transformative approaches through networking, exchange of experience and advocacy work at the national, the regional, and the multilateral level. These exchange formats and alliances are sometimes organised more formally, sometimes less formally and bring together different actors or groups of actors, depending on context: Government representatives, for example, within the framework of alliances of like-minded states (often referred to as *like-minded groups*) as far as to multi-stakeholder partnerships involving state and non-state actors.

Interviews conducted with employees of various bilateral and multilateral organisations as part of this study clearly demonstrated the need for *Communities of Practice*. The interviewees reported that many development cooperation organisations have now recognised the importance of gender-transformative approaches and specify their application in their corresponding policy documents. However, there is often a lack of knowledge as to how these can be translated into concrete, context-specific measures and indicators and how gender-transformative change can be measured. Furthermore, although many organisations already have good examples of gender-transformative project design and implementation, knowledge of good approaches has so far been insufficiently shared, both within and between organisations.

Against this backdrop, some interviewees emphasised the important contribution made by the *Joint Programme on Gender Transformative Approaches for Food Security, Improved Nutrition and Sustainable Agriculture* (JP GTA). The programme is a joint initiative of the three Rome-based UN organisations FAO, IFAD and WFP and is implemented in close cooperation with the European Commission's Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA) which is funding the JP GTA with €5 million. The aim of the JP GTA is to support the participating UN organisations with anchoring gender-transformative approaches in their policy dialogues, programmes, working methods and institutional structures. At the same time the programme aims to strengthen the cooperation between FAO, IFAD and WFP with regard to gender equality and the fight against hunger in the long term and to promote synergies. To this end, the *Joint Programme* develops knowledge products and tests approaches in the context of activities in Ecuador and Malawi, carries out training measures and is committed to strengthening awareness of and capacities for gender-transformative approaches at the institutional level of the participating UN organisations as well as of EU and partner organisations

Several publications document the application- and practice-oriented knowledge gathered within the framework of the JP GTA. These include, in particular, a compendium of 15 *good practice* examples of gender-transformative approaches in food security and agriculture (FAO / IFAD / WFP 2020), a guide for formulating indicators that reflect changes in gender-specific social norms (FAO / IFAD / WFP 2022), and guidelines for measuring gender-transformative change (FAO / IFAD / WFP / CGIAR GENDER Impact Platform 2023). By these publications

⁷³ The following chapter presents an exemplary selection of networks and working groups on the topic of gender. These are formats that were highlighted during the interviews conducted for this study.

the JP GTA provides valuable orientation knowledge as well as concrete tools that are fed into the design of policies and catalogues of measures.

One example is the development of the aforementioned *EU Gender Action Plan III*, to which the JP GTA contributed its knowledge of gender-transformative approaches as well as specific tools and frameworks as part of consultation processes. The GIZ also includes the knowledge of gender-transformative approaches compiled by the JP GTA into its working documents and guidance for staff. For example, the handout *How to Foster Access to Finance for Women in the Agri-Food Sector* (Huber 2024) refers to the good practice examples collected in the compendium under further reading. Similarly, a presentation by the G500 department on gender-transformative approaches in rural development, agriculture and food security, which is only available internally, sets out the characteristics of gender-transformative approaches with reference to the JP GTA compendium, among other things.

There are also internal voices from the *Joint Programme* that rate its outcomes as being inadequate in view of the high financial volume behind it. Nevertheless, the JP GTA clearly demonstrates the benefits that coordinated cooperation between different organisations can bring: In addition to the formulation of a common understanding, the pooling of expertise and resources can help to ensure that gender-transformative and feminist approaches are systematically and sustainably integrated into programmes and political dialogues. At the same time, implementation could, if really wanted and if the resources are provided, promote the exchange of experience and the development of common guidelines and tools as well as the coherent implementation of gender-transformative approaches. In particular, the exchange between bilateral and multilateral donor organisations on successful strategies and best practices is important and should be intensified accordingly in order to further increase the effectiveness and reach of these approaches.

Germany is also actively involved in international alliances, initiatives and working groups on the topic of gender. For example, the BMZ and, with its consent, the GIZ are part of the *OECD-DAC Network on Gender Equality (Gendernet)*⁷⁴ and the *Gender Expert Group* of the EU member states. These networks are made up of representatives of the member states who deal with gender issues. They discuss and comment on internationally applicable directives, strategies and guidelines. In addition to the exchange of information and experience they also discuss how gender issues can be placed at international conferences and symposia. Working groups on specific key topics are also sometimes set up as part of these formats.

One example is the *EU Member States' Gender Experts' Working Group on Gender-Transformative Approaches*. The paper it published in July 2024, *Gender-Transformative Approaches: From Theory to Impact* (EU 2024a), is particularly meant for supporting the political discourse on gender-transformative approaches. In addition, a short version of the document is available (EU 2024b) which offers a condensed and concise presentation to reach decision-makers in particular with a limited time budget. However, as not all participating countries take a transformative approach to gender policy, the papers are no official EU documents but merely working papers. GIZ is also a member of the *EU Practitioners Network - Gender Working Group*. In this network, the implementing organisations exchange information on gender mainstreaming in their work and on current topics, such as the implementation of transformative approaches, and share examples of good practice.

In addition to such multilateral forums for exchange, in recent years more and more formats have also emerged within organisations that aim to strengthen transformative

⁷⁴ <https://www.oecd.org/en/networks/dac-network-on-gender-equality.html> [08/2024].

approaches to promoting gender equality within organisations. One example is the working group *Gender-Transformative Approaches in Rural Development* (SNRD GTA-RD) of the GIZ network Rural Development Africa (SNRD Africa)⁷⁵. The aim of the working group, which was founded in November 2020, is to support and promote the integration of gender-transformative and intersectional approaches in the field of rural development within GIZ. Thanks to its cross-country, cross-project and cross-departmental structure, the working group facilitates an exchange of knowledge and experience that includes a variety of perspectives from different rural contexts.

Box 5: Networking on GTA by the example of the GIZ Global Programme “Responsible Land Policy”

The example of the global programme (GP) “Responsible Land Policy” shows how efficient networking can be in the field of gender. In 2022, for example, a gender narrative was initially developed for the GP, in which gender aspects are emphasised as driving factors for development over and above purely cross-cutting issues in the sector. By applying gender-transformative approaches (*Reach-Benefit-Empowerment* matrix and the four *quadrants of change*) to the sector, an orientation framework was provided for further action in the GP.

At the end of 2023 a two-day workshop was organized with all *Gender Focal Points* of the country teams on the topic of implementing gender-transformative measures in the GP. Guided by the gender narrative, experiences were exchanged on how to apply the *Reach-Benefit-Empower* matrix and the four *quadrants of change*, and ideas were developed for further project work in the countries. In a digital follow-up a few months after the workshop it was concluded that the GP had already contributed a great deal to the topics of rights and resources (part of the “three Rs”) but that the FemDC approach had raised the level of ambition. To achieve this, the GP networks with other projects in the respective country in order to achieve greater impact and to address systematic barriers to participation and the intersectionality of exclusion mechanisms. The gender network for the transnational exchange of learning experiences is institutionalised as an important committee in the GP.

However, it is not only *Communities of Practice* on gender-transformative approaches that offer guidance to development cooperation organisations and provide forums for coordinating policies. The *CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women’s and Girl’s Empowerment in the Context of Food Security and Nutrition* (CFS 2023), adopted by the *Committee on World Food Security* (CFS) in October 2023, were also seen by interviewees as a decisive milestone and important point of reference for promoting gender equality in the context of food security. Various international organisations, including UN Women, and the EU are currently working to identify points of overlap between the voluntary guidelines and their fields of activity and to find starting points for putting them into practice.

At the same time, the process of developing the voluntary CFS guidelines shows very clearly how challenging and demanding it is to formulate common standards and recommendations for action on gender equality in the multilateral system in view of the

⁷⁵ The *Sector Network Rural Development* (SNRD) *Africa*, which has existed since 1995, is an internal GIZ expert network that deals with rural development and the sustainable management of natural resources in Africa. The network brings together experts from GIZ and its national partner organisations, who contribute their expertise in various working groups (see <https://www.snrd-africa.net/> [08/2024]).

increasing gender backlash (see Box 2 in Chapter 2.1). For example, interviewees who were involved in the negotiation process reported the challenge of bringing together 139 CFS member states, some of which hold very different views on gender, behind a common formulation. The result of such arduous and often lengthy negotiations is therefore often a minimum consensus that does not meet the ambitions and expectations of all stakeholders. Furthermore, although voluntary guidelines may point the way to the promotion of gender equality and thus provide a certain orientation framework, ultimately they are no binding agreements. Rather, the implementation of concrete measures depends much on the extent to which the respective stakeholders seriously support the voluntary guidelines and the corresponding resources by help of which they drive them forward.

The statements on the voluntary guidelines are almost representative of networking in general. This always seems to depend on whether or not there are people who coordinate and drive it forward. Overall, too little information is available on the impact of the networks on work with the topic of gender. Both running projects and those in the planning stage can only benefit from an examination of the results and effects of relevant networks.

6. Handouts and Tools for Identifying Gender-Transformative Measures and Creating Gender-Transformative Indicators

A very common means of integrating gender issues into projects and programmes in principle and to varying degrees is the classification of projects according to **gender categories** and the mandatory written justification of this classification. For example, KfW and GIZ use the gender makers GG2 (gender is the main objective; plausibility of gender objectives is demonstrated by gender-related results chains and a gender reference in the indicators), GG1 (gender is a key objective; at least one gender-related indicator at module objective level, and one indicator at output level) and GG0 (gender is not an objective of the measure) developed by the OECD (see Brüntrup-Seidemann et al. 2021, OECD DAC 2016). The mandatory written justification of the categorisation in the respective category encourages those in charge to deal with the gender relevance and the desired or possible gender impacts of the project. The categorisation of all projects according to one out of the three gender equality categories also enables statistics to be kept on gender-relevant projects and targets to be set for such projects.

Other organisations use a broader classification system with four to six categories that allow for a finer grading of projects. For example, the ADB developed a system of four categories, ranging from I (*gender equity theme*), II (*effective gender mainstreaming*), III (*some gender elements*) to IV (*no gender elements*) (ADB 2021a). As the categorisation must be coordinated with the *Gender Equity Thematic Group Secretariat* in the corresponding topical *Service Advisory Cluster*, the content-related discussion of the gender topic is at least theoretically guaranteed.

The IFAD uses an even finer grading system with six categories, of which only classifications 4 (*partial gender mainstreaming, moderately satisfactory*), 5 (*gender mainstreaming, satisfactory*) and 6 (*gender transformative, highly satisfactory*) are mentioned in gender-relevant documents. The organisation therefore differentiates according to the way in which gender measures are implemented. The fund also sets quotas for the gender quality of its projects. For example, 90% of all projects should at least fall under category 4, 60% should at least fall under category 5 and thus implement gender mainstreaming in all measures and at all levels, whereas 25% of all projects should have a gender-transformative impact (category 6) (IFAD 2019).

IFAD's finer gradation can be more differentiated than three-stage classifications and may therefore result in better adjustments to the planning tools. However, consistent implementation of the assessment steps and depth of assessment associated with the criteria will be crucial later on.

Some DC organisations have developed tools and guidelines to help identify gender-transformative measures and create gender-transformative indicators for impact measurement. We have relevant documents of this kind from GIZ, IFAD et al, UNICEF and CARE, although our research does not claim to be exhaustive but aims to present qualitatively interesting approaches.

GIZ has adopted the *Gender Equality Continuum* developed by the OECD (2022), which categorises the various possible impacts of development cooperation measures. In terms of impact measurement, a distinction is made between

- Negative or harmful for gender equality

- Gender neutral or blind
- Gender sensitive
- Gender responsive
- Gender-transformative.

The *Reach-Benefit-Empower*⁷⁶ tool, which is used by GIZ and others, also provides support with the formulation of measures and the identification of indicators for impact measurement, by looking at what is to be achieved with regard to women and marginalised groups. The "Transform" dimension is currently being added to this tool. *Reach* is the lowest level at which women are included. However, it is generally not enough to simply reach, address and inform women. For example, the indicator that women took part in a meeting usually says nothing about whether they made contributions, whether their statements were documented, and whether they were significantly involved in decision-making. Even participation in a training course does not automatically mean that women are able to apply what they have learnt and will subsequently benefit from it themselves.

Benefit – i.e. a concrete benefit for women – goes one step further. But even an income for women through the introduction of savings and credit groups and the support of income-generating activities, as it was confirmed in numerous discussions with development cooperation experts, does not automatically lead to an improvement in the position of women, to their empowerment and to a reduction of structural disadvantages. The third stage – *empowerment* – is achieved if, in the above example, the benefits or gains of a measure are also directly available for women and if they can freely decide on them.

The *Quadrants of Change*⁷⁷ are a practical tool for deciphering the very complex structural change in the field of socio-cultural norms and factors. The four quadrants map the following dimensions: *Individual, relational, sociocultural, systems & structures*. The dimensions can also be placed in relation to each other, and these relationships can then be analysed. Self-confidence and personal values and attitudes play a role at the individual level, power relations and decision-making powers are important at the *relational* level, informal norms and stereotypes come into play in the sociocultural dimension, and the fourth dimension (*systems & structures*) is all about formal requirements, i.e. laws, strategies and institutions. GIZ (2024) applied this and other analyses and planning tools in a very illustrative way to the field of access to financial resources for women in the agricultural and food security sector.

FAO et al. (2023) propose a different approach to identifying and developing gender-transformative measures by further developing the *Quadrants of Change*. They identify five *spheres of influence*, within which they identify four *key dimensions*. The result is a kind of matrix (see figure in Appendix 2), whereby very practical tips for the formulation of gender-transformative measures and their measurement are given as suggestions in the overlapping fields of the matrix. The areas of influence are as follows:

⁷⁶ The application of the tool [01/2025] is explained in the following publication: https://gender-works.giz.de/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/G500-Orientierung_DE.pdf [01/2025]. It was developed in 2017 by Ruth Meitzen-Dick for IFPRI, UN Women, IFAD, FAO and WFP: <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/CSW/62/EGM/EP14%20%20Ruth%20MeitzenDick.pdf> [01/2025].

⁷⁷ The following link provides information on the application of the *Quadrants of Change*: https://www.giz.de/de/downloads/giz2020_en_Gender-Transformative_Change.pdf [01/2025].

- the individual area (men and women),
- the budget,
- the social community (including leaders, groups, local services providers),
- the area of organisations (public and private sector, research and development organisations, civil society),
- the macro level (government, donors, development banks).

Four key dimensions are relevant across these five areas of influence:

- formal social institutions such as policies and laws,
- balance of power,
- individual and collective agency,
- informal social institutions such as general and gender norms.

In their handout, FAO et al. (2023) also provide detailed information on how gender-transformative impacts can be measured. Using practical examples, they pose a series of questions and assumptions that lead to the formulation of indicators. This way, the complex and multidimensional socio-cultural reality can also be broken down and analysed in a way that is understandable for laypeople, at least this is the hope of those who developed the handout.

In 2023, GIZ drew up internal guidelines for the formulation of **gender-specific indicators** based on, among other things, a working aid for the creation of a gender-sensitive, impact-oriented monitoring system (Hinrichsen et al. 2014). The paper distinguishes between non-personal and personal indicators. The former indicators include the development of laws and concepts for training courses. The use of the SMART criteria⁷⁸ in the formulation is strongly recommended.

In the older GIZ manual (2014) the personal indicators are further divided into three groups: gender-differentiated, gender-selective and gender-open indicators. In addition, nine gender-relevant impact dimensions are identified, for which indicators are developed. These are:

1. legal and political framework conditions,
2. participation and representation of women,
3. financial allocation and public budgets,
4. institutional strengthening of gender mainstreaming,
5. technical capacities for sector-specific gender mainstreaming,
6. access to benefits and services,
7. gender relevance of benefits and services,
8. gender knowledge among the population / target group,
9. employment and income.

In both documents all types of indicators are illustrated with examples, to make it easier to formulate your own context-specific indicators.

A widely known gender analysis tool used by numerous organisations is the **Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI)**. WEAI⁷⁹ was jointly launched in 2012 by IFPRI, the *Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative* (OPHI) and *USAID's Feed the Future*. It is a comprehensive measurement tool for measuring the empowerment and involvement of women in agriculture and the household compared to men. This tool can be used both for an initial analysis of the current situation and for evaluations.

CARE developed the WLiE model (CARE 2020) in particular for the purpose of incorporating GTAs into emergency aid measures. This comprises five steps: (1) Women reflect on their own beliefs, norms and values regarding women's leadership; (2) women are supported with analysing their own situation and the local realities that affect their participation in humanitarian action; (3) women learn how to identify the issues they want to address and how to develop strategies to bring about change; (4) women take action to remove obstacles to their leadership in humanitarian action and to improve their own lives and those of their communities; (5) women are supported with discussing and reflecting on their achievements to date and with adapting their strategies and activities where necessary.

⁷⁹ More information on WEAI in Quisumbing et al. (2023) and at <https://www.ifpri.org/project/weai/> [10/2024].

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 The Controversies Surrounding the “Feminist” Label

A number of state development cooperation organisations such as German, Canadian and Spanish development cooperation as well as, earlier, the Swedish cooperation have deliberately opted for the term "feminist development cooperation" or "feminist development policy" in order to go one step further than the generally accepted gender mainstreaming. The reasons given for this step include dissatisfaction with the progress of gender mainstreaming in the implementation of development cooperation contributions (see Chapter 2.1). Furthermore, the move towards feminist development cooperation should be seen as an active response to the gender backlash (see Box 2). Development Minister Schulze also stated in a press release on the publication of the BMZ strategy (BMZ 2023b):

"The BMZ wants to bring about a change in perspective through its strategy for a feminist development policy. So far, support for women and girls has mostly happened within the existing, often patriarchal social structures. Germany's realigned development policy is to contribute to changing unequal power structures."

In addition, some governments apply the political strategy of wanting to position themselves as progressive states and standard-setters at the international level (Zhukova et al. 2022).

In the interviews with employees of some development cooperation organisations it was also mentioned that the move towards FemDC was a conscious decision and was intended to give gender equality an active and politically clear new impetus. The introduction of the FemDC concept, it was stated, had led to more motivation to work in an integrated way, i.e. together across several projects in order to achieve more impact together. It has given new impetus to the existing gender debate in the organisations. As a result, gender mainstreaming alone is increasingly being questioned and gender-transformative approaches are being rethought and discussed.

While the content of the FemDC strategy was met with unanimous approval in the organisations surveyed, its designation as feminist DC was not received positively everywhere. Although some organisations certainly place feminist elements at the heart of their strategies, they do not describe them as feminist. For example, the EU speaks of gender-transformative effects, intersectionality and a human rights-based approach, but does not use the term "feminist".

Also the GIZ has reacted rather cautiously to the introduction of the term and is currently discussing the label under which the new gender strategy, which is currently being developed, should be placed in order to make it as broadly applicable as possible. Employees of some German NGOs take a similar view. The word "feminist" would tend to generate resistance by some local partner institutions. On the other hand, they want to ensure that they continue to work with them and read their strategies. LGBTQI+ would also be perceived as a label from the Global North and would be rejected as such by some partners.

Employees of the NGO Brot für die Welt note that at project level they are waiting for the BMZ to specify how the concept will be implemented in practice and how the funds will be allocated. So far, they rather see it as "a collection of buzzwords" that first need to be explained in more detail.

Employees of some NGOs sometimes even go as far as to draw up two different contracts with their partner organisations or to prepare reports in order to do justice to both sides: the

local partners and the BMZ. The FemDC strategy would certainly meet their own requirements, but this would have to be communicated to the partners in other words in order to remain in dialogue and to achieve gender-related progress. Instead of feminist or gender-transformative, it would then be written in terms of social inclusion and/or gender mainstreaming, for example.

Against this background, the question must be asked as to the motives behind labelling German development cooperation explicitly "feminist" if this can clearly make cooperation with numerous partner countries and organisations considerably more difficult. In the consultation process with the BMZ, some organisations did raise this objection, as we were told, although it was explicitly not about the content of the concept but initially only about the choice of words.

International organisations such as the UN agencies and the major development banks have similar problems with the term "feminist". Multilateral development banks such as the ADB, World Bank, but also the FAO or IFAD have to coordinate the wording in their policy and strategy papers precisely with the countries from which they receive funds or whose members' votes they value when voting. IFAD employees confirmed that there is a lot of wrangling over terminology within the organisation. This is why the term "feminist development policy" is not used in IFAD documents. Some of the partner countries are generally dismissive of the term and are therefore not ready to discuss it. For this reason, alternative terms such as "gender mainstreaming" or "gender-transformative approaches", which have already been used by other development cooperation organisations, are used.

Even a supposedly clear term such as "transformative" is used and understood differently in the practice of several of the organisations we looked at. Many interviewees stated that the term "transformative" is unclear, both in the general discussion and within the institution.

"Strict" definitions only accept "transformative" to mean significant contributions to the "three Rs", i.e. in the sense of the BMZ concept of "actively changing existing gender inequalities" (2023a: 17). On the other hand, there are voices that in difficult socio-cultural situations accept a change in awareness among relevant actors as "transformative", even if this does not yet have any actual impact in the sense of the "three Rs". For example, in very traditional and patriarchal contexts, measures can already be seen as transformative that in other contexts could only be described as gender-sensitive or at best gender-responsive.

Recommendations

Ultimately, the content of a concept is more important than its "label". For this reason, building on the basic acceptance of feminist development policy, an approach should be developed to more or less consistently pursue the content of the FemDC, but to do so without causing potential uncertainty on the side of partners.

It is also important to institutionally root FemDC in German governmental development cooperation in such a way that it is widely accepted and survives possible changes of government. Using Sweden as an example, Towns et al. (2014) show that a strong focus on rooting the content and a decentralised implementation structure are conducive to the continued existence of FemDC's topical priorities, even if it is no longer referred to as such today. In addition, the "new momentum" that has been expressed by almost all development cooperation organisations should be used to address the gender issue more intensively, to discuss it anew and to take a gender-transformative approach.

7.2 Few Approaches to Implementing FemDC Strategies in Different Socio-Cultural Contexts

Since 1983 the BMZ has been discussing how to simplify the well-recognised, complex problem of having to deal with socio-cultural factors almost all the time in the practical work of development cooperation. Particularly in the past there have been many discussions with the aim of finding "planning shortcuts" in order to avoid having to invest "disproportionate effort" in project and programme planning.⁸⁰ However, no such path has been found, although repeated attempts have been made to develop generalised cultural schemes that would apply across the board to entire regions of the world instead of a specific analysis for a country or province.⁸¹

This also poses a considerable problem for the planning and implementation of FemDC. In the BMZ strategy, the question of how the objectives of gender-transformative or even feminist development cooperation can be realised in the socio-cultural field of tension of a partner country is only addressed as a challenge but not discussed further. Despite the immense challenges, this is also a problem that is rarely addressed in the literature. What is particularly lacking in the FemDC strategy are references to the methods by way of which this policy could be implemented in view of the largely patriarchal societies characterised by religious and social ("cultural") norms that persist in many countries.

It is recognised that a FemDC is difficult to implement under these conditions. However, the implementing organisations and all NGOs that feel committed to the strategy feel more or less left alone when it comes to implementing the core elements of FemDC. Statements on the actual social, political and economic conditions responsible for the lack of gender equality almost everywhere in the partner countries remain marginal remarks. At best there are only implicit references to the effort required, the material resources needed, the lack of qualified personnel and where both of these important factors are supposed to come from.

The political objectives and many core statements of the BMZ strategy for FemDC, particularly in the area of empowerment of women and girls, have been known for years. More than just individual elements have for decades been included into sector strategies, into the mission statements of participating organisations and, at least to some extent, into more recent project planning documents. The transformative gender goals envisaged in the strategy, including work in the interests of disadvantaged social groups of all kinds, appear imperative for human rights reasons alone. However, they can only be implemented if there is at least a minimum probability that the relevant actors in the partner countries will listen to what is being said and, building on this, will engage in constructive dialogue. Alongside the actual formulation of objectives, this would be the second core task of a strategy paper, which has not yet been solved by the presentation of *GAP III*.

Conservative to fundamentalist Islamic contexts, which can be found in numerous countries around the world in development cooperation, are particularly challenging when it comes to the planning and implementation of gender-transformative approaches, which is why they are dealt with in more detail in our context.

⁸⁰ See Simson 1983; Bliss 1986, 1991; Schönhuth 1990; more recently the BMZ participation concept 1999.

⁸¹ Rather entertainingly ironic by Richard Lewis, among others, also for Germany ("They don't like being rushed", 1996: 201) or the soon abandoned attempt on behalf of the BMZ in the 1990s to develop a box ticking system of cultural characteristics.

Women's and girls' rights are particularly restricted in countries with an Islamic-Salafist basic orientation or at least strong social Salafist forces. Consequently, a FemDC should also focus particularly on those countries that still feel committed to the extreme Islamic doctrines of the influential medieval religious teacher al-Gazali (in: Bauer 1917), which clearly place men above women, give them the right to punish them and treat wives as slaves. In many societies such norms are not questioned but accepted as a given.⁸²

What is particularly problematic is that his sermons can now also be found in the most remote mosques, which are currently being built everywhere in many West African countries, for example financed by the Gulf States. This can even be observed in Parakou, a city in Central Benin with a majority Christian population, where hate speech is echoed by the mosques' imams who are also paid from abroad.

The Bonn-based Islamic scholar Christine Schirrmacher (2015) makes it very clear in her book *Politischer Islam und Demokratie* (transl. *Political Islam and Democracy*) that almost all Islamic states, despite making certain concessions to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which they have ratified almost unanimously and thus at least formally endorse, do not deviate from the principle of regarding Sharia law as the basis of the national legal system. As a result, apart from a few exceptional cases (such as Tunisia and, a distant second, Morocco), women are disadvantaged in comparison to men even on the basis of national constitutions, which is clearly expressed in the laws and the daily legal practice.⁸³

As in Europe or on the African continent, there have also been various attempts by Islamic states to produce a "regional translation" of universal human rights standards. Firstly, the *Cairo Declaration of Human Rights* should be mentioned. On 4 August 1990 it was adopted by 45 foreign ministers of the 57 states belonging to the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). The fact that the declaration makes human rights subject to Sharia law was seen as particularly problematic by international human rights activists.

Secondly, 22 states adopted the *Arab Charter on Human Rights* on 15 September 1994, but it did not enter into force due to a lack of ratification. However, a second version of the *Arab Charter on Human Rights* in the version of 22 May 2004 was finally ratified by a sufficient number of states. This Arab League document, which has been in force since 15 March 2008, incorporated numerous human rights contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the human rights covenants signed in 1966 (which came into force in 1976). However, there was still criticism that, among other things, the Cairo Declaration retained the problematic Sharia reservation and that universal norms relating to women's rights were relativised or not taken into account in the declaration. In addition, there is a lack of reporting obligations and there are no regional institutions for complaints in the event of non-compliance with the Charter.⁸⁴ It should also be noted that the criticism of the Charter hardly came from the concerned countries themselves but predominantly from abroad, whereas in

⁸² These statements are no unimportant sentences from an old man at the beginning of the 12th century. On the Qatar channel El-Jazeera, for example, Yūsuf 'Abdallāh al-Qaradāwī (died 2022) was able to proclaim such extreme positions on women for years and to not only incidentally justify or even advocate Islamist terrorism (Fernandez 2022; El-Wereny 2018).

⁸³ For example in inheritance law, which puts women at a disadvantage, or by the obligation of a married woman to present her husband's authorisation when taking up gainful employment.

⁸⁴ Concise basic information on the topic can be found at: https://www.institut-fuer-menschenrechte.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Publikationen/E-Info-Tool/e-info-tool_abc_of_hr_for_dev_coop_the_arab_hr-system.pdf [01/2025].

the countries themselves critical voices were rejected by the ulema (Islamic authorities) as illegitimate interference in the internal affairs of the Islamic community.

Feminist development cooperation therefore comes up against limits in cooperation with Islamic partner countries⁸⁵. Of course, it must be taken into account that the Islamic world is very differentiated. For example, Afghanistan cannot be equated with Indonesia, and Yemen cannot be equated with Jordan. Nevertheless, many countries lack the understanding of gender equality that characterises feminist development cooperation, even at the level of formal institutions in the legislature, executive and judiciary. In fundamentalist countries such as Afghanistan or Yemen this is aggravated by the fact that the "divine law" defined in Sharia law, for example, determines everyday practice. This is not only interpreted by religious scholars (*ulema*), the majority of whom are old men, but has also shaped traditional local and regional characteristics and interpretations in the patriarchal social structure, which are often even more opposed to gender justice than the Sharia and its majority interpretation by the *ulema*.

One aspect that is often overlooked or neglected in gender and socio-cultural analyses and is also not addressed in the FemDC strategy is the fact that it is not only men who discriminate against women or have conflicts with them. The following points are therefore important when working within a patriarchal environment: on the one hand, the fact that conflicts can also and especially take place between women themselves, due to the overall situation that disadvantages women, as well as between the genders, and on the other hand the fact that generational conflicts also occur in more traditional societies, for example between grandmothers and mothers when it comes to raising children (see Bliss 2019)⁸⁶. Both fields of conflict can be very powerful for the success of a measure that aims to have a gender-transformative impact. However, both types of conflict usually elude external observers and, in particular, those people travelling through a region in a hurry to assess projects on site and draw up planning matrices.

When implementing GTAs in very traditional, patriarchal societies, an additional complicating factor is that staff are often not sufficiently trained for the socio-cultural context. The relevant preparatory regional studies are increasingly being cut back. When it comes to training new employees, the NGO CARE, for example, stands out positively, as the topic of "gender" is firmly rooted in its onboarding programme. The deficits on gender and socio-culture are even greater in the realm of consulting firms that carry out studies and projects on behalf of KfW or GIZ.

Recommendations

In the socio-cultural contexts outlined above it would be necessary to think very thoroughly about starting points in order to enter into a dialogue despite the problematic initial situation. It is important to find a language and approach that does not immediately block the other side. Topics must be identified also the other side might find interesting enough to at least listen to them. Last but not least, personalities need to be identified who have a certain

⁸⁵ In descending order, seven Islamic countries - Syria, Yemen, Indonesia, Afghanistan, Jordan, Iraq and Morocco - are among the 11 most important recipient countries, although the humanitarian share of development cooperation is likely to dominate here in some cases. For the individual volumes of ODA funds, see <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/165836/umfrage/empfaengerlaender-deutscher-entwicklungshilfe/> [08/2024].

⁸⁶ Other INEF studies in Benin and Burkina Faso have also repeatedly addressed these problems.

authority but are not among the most hardened traditionalists and who, under certain circumstances, could be involved in gender-sensitive processes, at least initially.

The necessary approaches require additional, different personnel than those that have dominated the field of development cooperation to date: Religious, cultural and social scientists, experts in communication, education and psychology. These people should also have considerable knowledge of the country and accompany the dialogue throughout. Project staff should receive a comprehensive socio-cultural introduction to a country or regional context that also includes gender aspects.

In the few examples when such a dialogue has been sustainably successful, such as the broad acceptance of the renunciation of FGM in Mauritania, the success was painstakingly achieved by experts (Islamic scholars, country experts) and with very careful exploration of the possibilities and years of interaction. In the early 2000s the actor Karlheinz Böhm, who is highly respected in Ethiopia for his charitable work and personal charisma, managed to bring together influential religious and other traditional dignitaries together with other experts on the country and convince them of the harm and nonsense of female genital mutilation. They in turn then campaigned for the abolition of FGM, which is now at least prohibited by law in Ethiopia.

Socio-cultural changes develop over longer periods of time. For this reason, measures designed to initiate and accompany such processes must also be thought through and planned for the long term. The very good example of German cooperation with religious officials in Mauritania took two conventional phases to "get off to a good start", and now, after 20 years of intensive cooperation, the structures created through dialogue are effectively in place.⁸⁷

If gender and transformative approaches are to be taken seriously in German official development cooperation, the necessary budget must also be made available. This concerns two things: the increased planning costs for projects and, in particular, the massive expansion of support for civil society structures in partner countries that articulate efforts for change, bring them forward at a political level and also involve unheard women, girls and all other disadvantaged social groups in national participation processes. The promotion of such organisations per se is more important than their involvement in projects.

7.3 In Germany, Gender is Often Dealt With as Secondary Activity and by Inadequately Qualified Persons

In its external structure GIZ has established the position of a Gender Focal Person who should be appointed for each project as well as at the country office. However, with a few exceptions (e.g. India, Pakistan, Vietnam), many Gender Focal Persons at country level are not full-time and only work 10-30% of their time as part of their gender job description, in some cases apparently even without any time compensation. Despite the general statements on the importance of gender aspects in the work of German development cooperation and thus also of TC, the assumption of gender-related tasks is therefore primarily carried out as a secondary activity. As a rule, Gender Focal Persons are also appointed within each project team, although here, with the exception of GG2 projects, this work must be carried out entirely alongside the

⁸⁷ In an analysis, the Orchid Project (2019) found that 70.6% of 40-49-year-old women in Mauritania still underwent FGM, while "only" 55.8% of 15-19-year-olds still did. Despite the significant reduction, the figures are still alarmingly high in absolute and relative terms, but they are a clear sign of the significant long-term success of the campaigns against FGM.

actual tasks. It is worth noting that this work is made more difficult by the fact that most of the APs in the projects and even many at the country offices have no prior qualifications or experience in dealing with gender issues.

However, if there are one or more GG2 projects in the GIZ portfolio in a country, there is an opportunity to deploy a gender specialist as a focal person for the entire programme. In view of the substantive challenge, this should also be possible in the complex financing network between individual projects alongside each other and with the financing of the country office by the individual projects.

Unfortunately, it should also be noted that numerous gender analyses are only insufficiently used. This is not only due to a lack of interest on the part of project managers. One point that is repeatedly criticised by them is that gender analyses and project-related gender reports are sometimes written in a language and (project) reality that makes it difficult for project staff to use the documents for the design of project measures.

Recommendations

The approach of employing a Gender Focal Person at country offices as well as for projects and departments should definitely be continued. In our opinion, it is important to provide this position with a sufficient time budget that allows for networking activities in addition to advising the sector or project. The person should also be adequately trained for the job or receive further training.

In general, the trend to apply cost-cutting measures in the project and in the organisations to the topics of gender and socio-culture should be counteracted, and these fields, which are essential for the adequate implementation of gender-transformative approaches, should also be left out of the staffing process.

7.4 Knowledge and Experience in the Field of Gender are Often not Shared

The research for this study revealed clear differences in the structure of the various websites of the organisations and in the availability of information they make publicly accessible. In our experience, for example, some organisations provide the e-mail addresses of contact persons for gender and FemDC freely on their websites, while others provide neither names nor contacts. We never received a reply to the "infomail" addresses displayed, regardless of the organisation. This circumstance also influenced the selection of the organisations investigated if the necessary contacts could not be obtained from other sources.

As with the contacts, a number of organisations also handle the information on their development cooperation and gender approaches, methods, instruments and projects in a similar way. We would like to make positive mention of the FAO and IFAD which, in addition to project documents, also publish handouts on numerous approaches and methods, whereas other organisations regard these as internal documents. In addition, the FAO currently publishes *Country Gender Assessments* for 43 countries⁸⁸. Other organisations do not even share their gender analyses in-house.

⁸⁸ <https://www.fao.org/gender/resources/country-assessments/en> [10/2024].

Another positive example is CARE: the NGO makes its gender analyses and evaluation reports available to the public via its own online database⁸⁹. In addition, handouts, guidelines and checklists on key tools for project planning, implementation and evaluation are publicly accessible at the *CARE Emergency Toolkit*⁹⁰ knowledge database which is organised in a very systematic and intuitive way. This means that even external stakeholders can easily find and use these materials and reports.

In addition, many of the interviews conducted as part of this study clearly show that there is often a lack of knowledge and experience sharing both within and between organisations. In particular, environment analyses are often not collected systematically and - if at all - are only made available within the organisation. At GIZ, for example, the dissemination of information is handled very differently. While some projects only publish the now standard one- to two-page *fact sheets* on their websites, the Global Programme on Food and Nutrition Security, Enhanced Resilience, for example, also publishes important background reports.

There are also considerable deficits in the exchange of proven tools for project planning, implementation and evaluation as well as examples of good practice, particularly in the field of gender-transformative approaches. In some cases this even leads to different departments within the same organisation developing their own concepts and working materials in parallel processes.

This results in considerable efficiency losses, as limited resources are used for the multiple development of similar approaches. In addition, innovative approaches and best practices often remain unused, as they are not shared across departmental and/or organisational boundaries. This makes it difficult to learn from mistakes and to scale successful projects. In the long term, such a lack of exchange impairs the effectiveness of development cooperation and can hinder the achievement of overarching goals, such as the promotion of gender equality.

There are almost always gaps in the data required for the conceptualisation and implementation of measures, as not all social and economic areas can be fully mapped, especially with regard to gender relevance. In particular, the available depth of data on socio-economic and socio-cultural conditions and thus on gender is too limited in many countries, due to ethnic, cultural, demographic and geographical diversity, to be able to cover the specific knowledge requirements of a regional programme.

The planners of German TC and FC as well as NGOs also utilise existing data from third-party donors. By the gender analyses, at least the GIZ fills one of the above-mentioned gaps on a project-related basis. However, these analyses are not sufficient, as feminist development cooperation as defined by the BMZ would require extensive knowledge of minorities of all types and the corresponding power structures and vulnerabilities in the intervention area (from the country level to the district).

Recommendations

A systematic and regular transfer of knowledge and experience is essential to ensure the quality and sustainability of development cooperation. This includes organisations systematically collecting their knowledge and ideally making it publicly accessible, such as GIZ's gender analyses, some of which are very up-to-date and informative.

⁸⁹ <https://careevaluations.org/> [09/2024].

⁹⁰ <https://www.careemergencytoolkit.org/> [09/2024].

An exchange of experience in existing or newly created networks must be encouraged. It should be noted that a network can only work actively and fruitfully if it is moderated and fed with material and ideas.

The problem of the general data situation described above, and particularly in view of the complexity of the socio-cultural and gender conditions, makes it imperative to carry out project and programme-specific data collections at the earliest possible stage, ideally at the beginning of the appraisal or feasibility study phase.

Accordingly, a socio-cultural inventory/analysis would have to be carried out integrated or in parallel with each project, in which the ethnic and socio-cultural heterogeneities in a region are analysed and presented in addition to the question of power and interest relations. Sociocultural and gender analyses may, for example, also be carried out by trained local experts who can help implement the results at project level.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Gender approaches of selected development cooperation organisations (the authors' own presentation).⁹¹

Organisation	Main strategies and programmes for gender equality	Gender approach and its implementation	Relevance for German development cooperation
European Union (EU)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 (2020) • EU Gender Action Plan III (2020) • Country-Level Implementation Plans (CLIPs) for EU GAP III • Sector-specific handouts and guidelines, e.g. <i>Because Women Matter</i> (2019) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two-pronged approach consisting of stronger gender mainstreaming and specific measures to realise gender equality (<i>Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025</i>) • Gender-transformative, intersectional and human rights-based approach (EU GAP III) • Working group of EU member states on GTA • Knowledge exchange, gender expertise and transfer of research results into political practice still need to be expanded • Training and further education programmes on gender available, but not sufficient overall 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Largest ODA donor among the DAC members • Coordination of German development policy priorities with EU • EU GAP III as an important reference document for German development cooperation

⁹¹ The table deals with international organisations and development banks that are also or primarily concerned with agriculture, food security and rural development or primarily with gender. It does not provide any comprehensive inventory but rather highlights key gender approaches and core statements. The arrangement of the organisations corresponds to the arrangement in Chapter 4.

Organisation	Main strategies and programmes for gender equality	Gender approach and its implementation	Relevance for German development cooperation
<p>ECOWAS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>ECOWAS Programme on Gender Mainstreaming in Energy Access</i> (ECOWAS GEN) • Gender aspects are bundled at a political level in the "Committee for Social Affairs, Gender and the Advancement of Women" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing commitment to gender equality within its own structure and in the member states with a focus on gender mainstreaming • Regional multipurpose agency ECOWAS <i>Gender Development Centre</i> (EGDC) to strengthen gender activities and capacities • Internal ECOWAS structure still male-dominated; low representation of women, especially in higher management positions and in technical areas; women in the minority in committees, councils, delegations, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 of the 12 ECOWAS member states are bilateral partner countries of the BMZ • Close cooperation between ECOWAS and German development cooperation in the field of promoting renewable energies with a strong gender focus • Influencing and advising member states on gender (mainstreaming)
<p>World Bank</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>World Bank Group Gender Strategy 2024-2030</i> (2024) • Regional gender action plans • <i>Gender Innovation Labs</i> (GIL) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender teams at all work levels (from head office to regional and country level) • In view of gender mainstreaming in the policy documents, implementation of a gender analysis in every planning process • <i>Country Engagement Review</i> to specifically address gender priorities and align core outcomes with gender equality • Due to country ownership, conciliation in the event of differing interpretations of gender equality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important trend-setting donor • Germany is one of the five leading members in terms of capital and voting rights • Germany finances individual strategic positions and posts in the World Bank

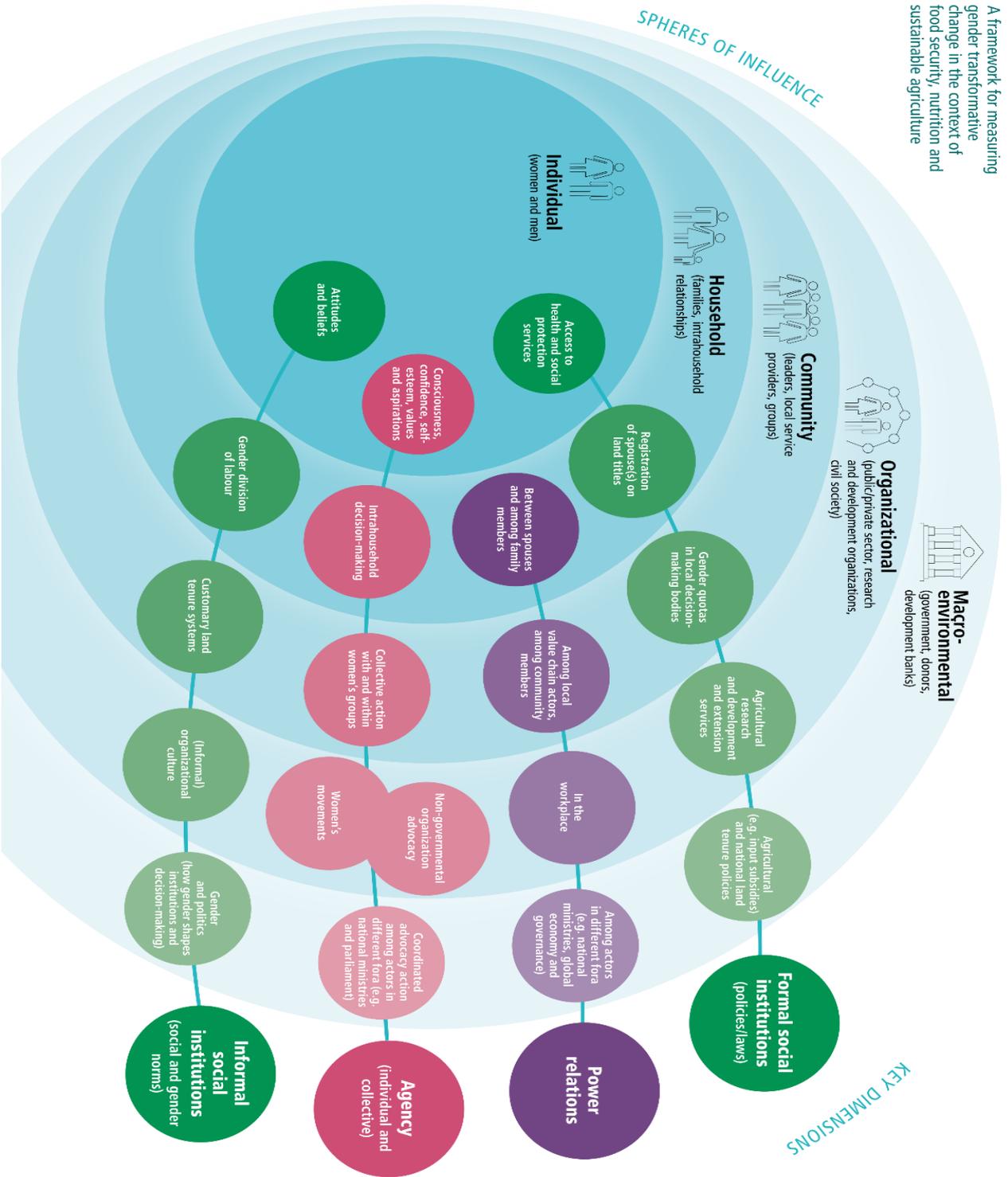
Organisation	Main strategies and programmes for gender equality	Gender approach and its implementation	Relevance for German development cooperation
<p>African Development Bank (AfDB)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The African Development Bank Group Gender Strategy 2021-2025 (2021)</i> • <i>Affirmative Finance Action for Women Entrepreneurs in Africa (AFAWA)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on strengthening the economic role of women; socio-political aspects take a back seat in the promotion of gender equality • In view of gender mainstreaming in the policy documents, conduct a gender analysis in every planning process • Unlike the WB or ADB, the AfDB is rather weak in terms of documentation and monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • German development cooperation focus on Africa • Germany is the largest European shareholder • Outstanding German role in the African Development Fund
<p>Asian Development Bank (ADB)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>ADB Strategy 2030 (2018)</i> • <i>Strategy 2030 Operational Plan for Priority 2: Accelerating Progress in Gender Equality, 2019-2024 (2019)</i> • <i>Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Strategy (2021)</i> • <i>Guidelines for Gender Mainstreaming Categories of ADB Projects (2021)</i> • <i>Guidelines for the AT-Exit Assessment of Gender Equality Results of ADB Projects (2022)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the ADB's most important field of activity (promotion of social and economic infrastructure) gender equality at the extended target level • Preparation of gender analyses for individual countries and for projects classified in categories I-III; preparation of a separate gender action plan and <i>Gender Action Framework</i> • Despite improved planning procedures, many projects have not yet defined gender-transformative goals and targeted indicators • No official basic understanding of "gender-transformative" • Different positions of the shareholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • German development cooperation focus on South and Southeast Asia • Close cooperation between German FC and ADB • German ADB representation quite influential

Organisation	Main strategies and programmes for gender equality	Gender approach and its implementation	Relevance for German development cooperation
<p>FAO</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>FAO Policy on Gender Equality 2020-2030</i> (2020) • Gender analyses for numerous countries (<i>Country Gender Assessments</i>) • Various practical handouts and reports on gender in agriculture and food security, developed in the context of the <i>Joint Programme on Gender Transformative Approaches for Food Security and Nutrition</i> (JP GTA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender teams at head office and in regional offices • <i>Gender Focal Points</i> in the departments • Organisation of gender training courses and creation of training materials and manuals by the gender team at the head office • JP GTA concepts and tools are not sufficiently reflected in the implementation of programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Networking and exchange on food security and agriculture, especially with German TC • Consideration of handouts and reports by German DC
<p>IFAD</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Gender Policy</i> with a focus on economic and political • Various action plans and handouts on gender, e.g. <i>Mainstreaming Gender-transformative Approaches at IFAD - Action Plan 2019-2025</i> (2019) and <i>Gender Transformative Mechanism (GTM) Theory of Change</i> (2024) • Various practical handouts and reports on gender in agriculture and food security, developed in the context of the <i>Joint Programme on Gender Transformative Approaches for Food Security and Nutrition</i> (JP GTA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender-transformative approach • Leading the development of methods and instruments for formulating and measuring gender-transformative activities and impacts • Six-level gender categorisation system • Mandatory consideration of gender aspects in all projects; review of gender integration in the project concept and later in annual evaluations • Instead of a <i>Gender Focal Point</i>, there is a <i>Social Inclusion Specialist</i> who works with a focus on nutrition, gender, social inclusion or youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Germany one of the fund's most important donors • Consideration of handouts and reports by German DC

Organisation	Main strategies and programmes for gender equality	Gender approach and its implementation	Relevance for German development cooperation
<p>WFP</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>WFP Gender Policy 2022</i> • Various practical handouts and reports on gender in agriculture and food security, developed in the context of the <i>Joint Programme on Gender Transformative Approaches for Food Security and Nutrition (JP GTA)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since 2009, increased gender mainstreaming in all WFP policies and programmes to be implemented • Additional increased efforts to explicitly focus on gender in new projects (steering committees, female cooks) • Financing exclusively through voluntary contributions reduces independent policy; balance between emergency aid and long-term measures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Germany is the second largest donor to the WFP • Close cooperation with both BMZ and BMEL
<p>UN Women</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>UN Women Strategic Plan 2022-2025 (2021)</i> • UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) • <i>Joint Programme on Accelerating Progress Towards Rural Women's Economic Empowerment (JP RWEE)</i>, together with FAO, IFAD and WFP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender qua mandate anchored in all areas of work, in particular promotion of gender equality throughout the UN system, development of global norms and standards, support for member states in complying with and implementing international obligations • Overcoming the structural causes of gender inequality • Increased consideration of an intersectional perspective • Focus on the nexus of climate change, environmental degradation and gender, among other things • Little specific material on individual countries; more strategic papers than concrete, own analyses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of the most important multilateral partners of German development cooperation for the promotion of gender equality and implementation of femEZ through a standard-setting and coordinating mandate in the UN system

Organisation	Main strategies and programmes for gender equality	Gender approach and its implementation	Relevance for German development cooperation
UNDP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Gender Equality Strategy 2022-2025</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Around 70 gender specialists; central gender team at the head office in New York City, a further five gender teams in the <i>Regional Hubs</i> (Addis Ababa, Bangkok, Amman, Istanbul and Panama) • Smaller gender teams in the UNDP country offices • Endeavour to integrate gender policy into national strategies • So far rather descriptive formulation of objectives, hardly any reference to "transformative" gender objectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • World's most regionally present development organisation for the eradication of poverty and inequality • Coordination of SDG implementation • Important data source for development and gender indicators

Appendix 2: A framework for measuring gender transformative change in the context of food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture (FAO et al. 2023: 14).



Previously published in the series:

Note that while all publications listed below are available in German, only those listed with an English title are also available in English. Publications marked with an asterisk are additionally available in French.

AVE-Studies

AVE-Study 1/2017	Mahla / Bliss / Gaesing: Wege aus extremer Armut, Vulnerabilität und Ernährungsunsicherheit. Begriffe, Dimensionen, Verbreitung und Zusammenhänge
AVE-Study 2/2017	Bliss / Gaesing / Mahla: Die Verstetigung von Armut in Entwicklungsländern. Ursachenanalyse und Gegenstrategien
AVE-Study 3/2017	Hennecke / Schell / Bliss: Landsicherheit zur Überlebenssicherung. Eine Studie zum Kommunalen Landtitelprogramm für indigene Bevölkerungsgruppen in Kambodscha
AVE-Study 4/2017*	Bliss: Home-Grown School Feeding as a "Good Practice" for Poverty Alleviation and Nutrition Security in Cambodia
AVE-Study 5/2017	Heinz: Benachteiligte Gruppen in der internationalen Entwicklungszusammenarbeit
AVE-Study 6/2017	Mahla / Gaesing: Der Selbsthilfegruppen-Ansatz am Beispiel von Kitui in Kenia. Armutsbekämpfung durch Empowerment
AVE-Study 7/2018*	Hennecke / Bliss / Schell: Landzuteilung für die Ärmsten. Untersuchungen zu Sozialen Landkonzessionen in Kambodscha
AVE-Study 8/2018	Mahla / Gaesing / Bliss: Maßnahmen zur Ernährungssicherung im entwicklungspolitischen Kontext
AVE-Study 9/2018	Hennecke / Bliss: Wer sind die Ärmsten im Dorf? Mit dem ID Poor-Ansatz werden die Armen in Kambodscha partizipativ und transparent identifiziert
AVE-Study 10/2018	Gaesing / Mahla: Hunger Safety Net Programme. Soziale Sicherung in Turkana County im Norden Kenias
AVE-Study 11/2018	Bliss: Gesundheitsfürsorge für die Ärmsten: Der „Health Equity Fund“ (HEF) in Kambodscha
AVE-Study 12/2018*	Mahla: Förderung von Agropastoralismus. Armuts- und Hungerbekämpfung durch integrierte ländliche Entwicklung in Samburu/Kenia.
AVE-Study 13/2019	Gaesing / Gutema: Bodenfruchtbarkeit und Ernährungssicherheit in der Amhara Region in Äthiopien
AVE-Study 14/2019	Bliss: Zum Beispiel Soja. Eine erfolgreiche Wertschöpfungskette im westafrikanischen Benin
AVE-Study 15/2018	Heinz: Verstetigte Armut als Herausforderung für die Entwicklungszusammenarbeit. Gibt es eine Kultur der Armut?
AVE-Study 16/2019	Bliss: Soziale Sicherung in Dürregebieten in Äthiopien durch das Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP)
AVE-Study 17/2019	Gaesing / Bliss: Entwicklung, Landrecht, Gender und Bodenfruchtbarkeit in Benin

AVE-Study 18/2019	Gaesing / Gutema: Reduzierung der Vulnerabilität durch nachhaltiges Ressourcenmanagement: Das Sustainable Land Management Project (SLMP) in Äthiopien
AVE-Study 19/2019*	Herold: Improving Smallholders' Food Security and Resilience to Climate Change: The Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Extremes and Disasters (BRACED) Programme in Burkina Faso
AVE-Study 20/2019	Gaesing / Agbobatinkpo-Dahoun: Förderung der Bewässerung im Tal des Flusses Ouémé in Benin
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