TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY

CAPITALIZATION OF SDC
EXPERIENCE IN GENDER
MAINSTREAMING

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LIST OF CASES

ABBREVIATIONS

CADELT   Cellule d'Appui au Développement local/Tillabéri – Support to
         Local Development in Tillabéri (Niger)
CEDAW   Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination
         against Women
COOF   Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
         Coordination Office
Eco-Lan Sustainable Land Use Project (Ukraine)
GDP   Gross Domestic Product
HQ   Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation Headquarters
IWRAW   International Women's Rights Action Watch
NGO   Non-Governmental Organisation
OSCE   Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PCM   Project Cycle Management
PROINPA Fondación para la Promoción y la Investigación de Productos
         Andinos – Foundation for the Promotion and Investigation of
         Andean Products (Bolivia)
RHDP   Rural Health Development Project (Nepal)
RHEP   Rural Health and Environment Programme (India)
SDC   Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SECO   State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (Switzerland)
SIDA   Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
VFFP   Village and Farm Forestry Project (Bangladesh)

Introduction

Gender Mainstreaming in SDC, 1998 – 2004

Since 1993 when SDC formulated and began implementing its first gender policy entitled «Gender Balanced Development», SDC and its partners have undertaken a variety of initiatives to promote gender as a transversal issue in their development co-operation. In 1998 SDC did a review of gender experience at that time[1]. The new document draws together the knowledge and experience of working with gender issues accumulated from 1998 to 2004.

In June 2003, the Gender Unit organised a workshop on the «Capitalization of Gender in SDC» held over four days from 15th – 19th June 2003 in Fribourg, Switzerland. The workshop was attended by almost 70 participants, made up of SDC staff from Bern and a range of Co-operation Office (COOFs) from Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Mediterranean and Eastern Europe, as well as representatives from partner organisations in Switzerland and partner countries. It presented an occasion not only to discuss and share the rich experience related to working with gender issues, but also an opportunity to document selected examples of this practice. This document draws on the outcomes of the discussions of the workshop, as captured in both the Conference Report and the Record of the SDC Story Telling Experiences[2]: at the «Gender Capitalization Workshop» – Fribourg, Switzerland June 15th – 19th 2003, as well as the case studies written up for this event.

However, a reflection on SDC experience of working with gender would be incomplete without mentioning a number of key initiatives undertaken by the Gender Unit. Building on what had been done previously, since 1998 the Gender Unit has undertaken a number of initiatives to consolidate gender as a transversal issue in SDC and its activities[3]:

- Between 1997 and 2004, the Gender Unit supported two training workshops each year (one in English and one in French) entitled «Gender in Development Co-operation». The aim of each workshop was to introduce SDC staff and Swiss as well as local partners to methodologies to incorporate a gender perspective in their work as a regular part of their practice. Over the 7 years, there have been 169 participants in the training. While an evaluation of the training is planned for 2005, there is no doubt that it has had a variety of impacts. These range from raising awareness about gender as an important issue in development co-operation to providing the opportunity for participants to think through practical interventions which were subsequently discussed, reformulated and implemented in SDC partner countries. The training has been not only an important capacity-building activity. It has also been a forum for discussion and sharing of experience, as well as an opportunity to explore ideas about working with gender in development. This forum has also provided one of the spaces where the Gender Unit is able to share its experience with other SDC staff and partners, and to disseminate crucial information about policy, guidelines and resources that can be used to support the gender mainstreaming process.

- Out of the training and demands for better co-ordination around gender issues in SDC, an internal gender network was constituted in 2002 to discuss gender issues affecting staff in SDC and act as a sounding board to the Gender Unit. The members of the network act at the same time as Gender Focal Points in their respective divisions.

[1] Accessible on the SDC website under www.deza.ch/themes/genderequality/ strategy/reviews
[2] Storytelling Initiative 2003 – 2004, Sparknow London.
[3] In these initiatives, the Gender Unit was supported by the Gender Policy and Planning Team at the Development Planning Unit, University College London.

A key initiative of the Gender Unit over 2002 – 2003 was the formulation of a new SDC Gender Equality Policy. The policy was developed through a series of consultations with Gender Focal Points and other SDC staff, both in HQ and in-country. The new policy was launched in 2003. It sought to build on SDC's experiences in addressing gender issues over more than a decade. The policy clearly gives the key reasons why SDC must work with both women and men, and to promote equality between them. These are

- SDC is committed to gender equality because it is fundamental to women and men's human rights – and in practice, unequal power relations in society mean that women and men's opportunities to exercise their socio-economic and political rights are unequal.
- SDC is committed to gender equality because it represents a cornerstone of good governance, as women and men's development priorities will only be served if both women and men have the opportunity to participate in formal and informal decision-making processes.
- It is recognised that sustainable development depends on the contributions of both women and men. These contributions can be maximised by ensuring both that we assist women and men in carrying out their existing, traditional roles, and by improving women and men's opportunities to carry out new roles from which they have previously been excluded.
- It has become increasingly clear that, if SDC is to effectively combat poverty, it is vital to understand and respond to the different ways in which women and men experience poverty, and to recognise the fact that women, and female headed households, are frequently on the frontline in the fight against poverty.
- Working with a gender perspective, and employing gender methodologies, improves the efficiency and impact of SDC supported interventions by ensuring that the design of interventions reflects the realities of the women and men with whom we work, and identifies and monitors inequalities and social injustice.
- Efforts to promote gender equality reflects Switzerland's national and international commitments, to equal opportunities and to gender equality, such as the Beijing Platform for Action, and the Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women CEDAW.

(Source: Gender Equality, a key for poverty alleviation and sustainable development, pg 3 – 4.)

Another related key initiative was the development and production of the «Gender in Practice» Toolkit over 2001 – 2003. The Toolkit drew on the methodologies applied in the training and their integration with key procedures used in SDC, in particular PCM and its different components. It was developed in consultation with Gender Focal Points and selected staff in HQ and in-country, and was launched in 2003 in five languages and is available on the SDC website. The Gender Toolkit provides a key resource for SDC staff and its partners, giving guidance on how to mainstream gender in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of SDC programmes and in the organisation arrangements involved in development co-operation.

The development of both the Gender Equality Policy and the Toolkit built on SDC's experience of working with gender at different levels. Before exploring this practice, there are four further points to make about gender mainstreaming in SDC.

■ The Gender Unit has played a crucial supporting and catalytic role in the process of gender mainstreaming. The members of the Gender Unit not only make inputs in meetings and documents of all kinds, as well as have informal consultations in HQ. They also travel regularly to the COOFs, visiting programmes, running workshops, consulting and being consulted on why and how and when to address gender issues in SDC development co-operation. Despite the obvious increase in mainstreaming work, the Gender Unit is still only 160%. In 2001 during an SDC restructuring it was re-located in the Governance Division. This is considered a strategic position from which to implement the strategy of the Unit, which is a crucial contribution to the consolidation of gender as a transversal issue in SDC. It is also an important centre for the co-ordination of the depth and breadth of this experience in SDC, as the activities which went into this document and the production of the document itself demonstrates.[4]

■ Initiatives to address gender as a transversal issue in SDC activities are decentralised so that groups and individuals in SDC and its partner organisations have a high degree of autonomy in how they take gender issues on in their work. The result is an innovative range of initiatives and a wide interpretation of incorporating gender as a regular part of SDC development co-operation.

■ There is an on-going debate amongst SDC and its partners around the extent to which it is appropriate to foster change and challenge traditional social relations, including those of gender – especially where such challenges may be viewed as «natural», or «western», or an imposition from outside. These assumptions can be countered by arguments that social relations are socially-constructed (not «natural») that what is «traditional» is not automatically «good», since it usually represents the interests of particular, rather than all, groups in a society. It is now obvious that in many countries there are significant civil society pressure groups as well as, in many cases, government impetus to challenge social and gender inequalities. Furthermore, though we often stress that change must come from within, development co-operation can have an important role as a catalyst in this process.

■ Fourthly, in compliance with Swiss equality law (1981) and the Swiss Government's ratification of the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women CEDAW (1997), SDC is committed to equal opportunities in HQ and in COOFs. SDC also works to promote equal opportunities among its partner organisations.

Structure of this capitalization document

The Gender Equality Policy identifies five guiding principles that are designed to help SDC and its partners think about how to promote gender equality most effectively through all the interventions that SDC supports. These principles provide the structure of this report, to illustrate how they can be taken on, separately and together, in SDC interventions. Thus sections of the report are the following:

- **Doing gender aware analysis as the basis for all interventions**
- **Maintaining flexibility in implementation**
- **Taking a multilevel approach**
- **Undertaking specific actions for gender equality**
- **Promoting equal opportunities in organisations**

Each section contains a narrative text running alongside the two or three cases which most directly illustrate that principle in practice. Cases appear in the text against a blue background. Because cases often reflect more than one principle, cases will also be referenced in the narrative of other sections, as appropriate. Table 1 summarises which principles each case demonstrates, with the cases along the side and the principles along the top. A selection of quotations from the storytelling experience[5] in the conference have also been made and placed in the appropriate sections. These appear against a gray background. At the end of each section there is a brief review of the lessons learnt about the operation of the principle in SDC development co-operation and some recommendations about how practice around that principle can be strengthened. In the last chapter you will find a concluding summary and recommendations. This summary can be ordered seperately and will give you a good overview of the whole capitalization report.

DOING GENDER AWARE ANALYSIS AS THE BASIS FOR ALL INTERVENTIONS

The first guiding principle of the SDC Gender Equality Policy is that all interventions must be based on gender aware analysis. This is justified in the policy as follows:

«No context is free of gender relations. Therefore, a gender aware analysis at micro-, meso- and/or macro-levels, according to the intervention, is mandatory prior to the formulation of any country programme and its associated procedures. Similarly, gender needs to be incorporated at the project design stage and reflected in the project cycle. Such an analysis identifies problems and needs of different groups of women and men, as well as key gender inequalities and issues in the context. The analysis leads to the formulation of effect assumptions for different groups of women and men. This allows programmes/projects to identify strategic ways to contribute to the reduction of gender inequalities through a cross cutting approach and/or identifying specific gender actions.»
(SDC Gender Equality Policy, 2003, pg 5)

In our efforts to carry out gender aware analysis, SDC and its partners have learnt a number of lessons. These lessons relate to how to do a gender aware analysis, when to do it and what one can get out of it for the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of SDC programmes at different levels.

«SDC should make gender aware analysis an obligatory procedure in the inception phase of the projects – we could just introduce it as a cross-cutting theme and make a sensitisation process and afterwards we could put a full stop if we can't make it an obligation.»
Lamia Raei, SDC Jordan

Reflections on how to carry out gender aware analysis

SDC experience demonstrates that a gender aware analysis can be done in a range of different ways. As part of their strategy to consolidate gender as a transversal issue in SDC, the Gender Unit has undertaken a number of initiatives to ensure that staff and partners have access to tools and methodologies to carry out gender analyses, including through training and more recently, the Toolkit. However, there is a wide interpretation of how to undertake a gender aware analysis, among both those who have attended SDC training and those who have not, but may have attended other trainings or got hands-on experience in other organisations before SDC. The result is a variety of innovative practice.

Choice of information
Although SDC experience exhibits a great variety in the choice of information in a gender aware analysis, there are some common themes. These are also apparent in the Toolkit and in the training. For example, the central part of the gender training workshops is dedicated to exploring the rationale for mainstreaming gender in development and linking this rationale to a set of questions which form the basis of a gender aware analysis. The rationale developed in the training is reflected in the «why» of the Gender Equality Policy: because women and men have different gender roles and unequal access to and control over resources, they have different gender needs…and face different and often

unequal constraints and opportunities in meeting their gender needs.

Thus a key component of gender aware analysis is to understand women and men's different gender roles in the household and in the community, their different and unequal access to and control over resources, the felt needs and the constraints and opportunities they perceive in meeting them. The methodology imparted during the training has now been reinforced by the Gender Toolkit (see sheets 3, 4 and 5 for guidance on doing a gender aware analysis).

As discussed at the beginning of this section, SDC experience demonstrates that these dimensions of gender aware analysis have been interpreted and implemented in a number of interesting ways. For example, in the Eco-Lan project in Ukraine (**see case study 1, pg 10**) which aims at encouraging the adoption of organic agriculture, the following information was collected at farm level:
- the daily activities of farm women and men (on a given day in the week before the survey) using a 24 hour activity chart.
- an annual production cycle for some of the main farm crops specifying who makes what inputs throughout the year.
- the main farm resources (such as credit, land, or use of machine) specifying who uses each resources, and who decides on how it should be used, listed in a matrix.

The Mali case (**see case study 2, pg 16**) illustrates a gender aware analysis at macro-level with the aim of developing a monitoring system. In this case, the focus was on

- Past and current gender roles of women and men, their evolution and change factors.
- Access and control over resources and decision-making at household level.
- Main stakes in the sector – opportunities, challenges, visions.
- Access and control over programme resources.
- Participation in decision-making in organisations, relationships, including power, between organisations at different level (community, region, State).

Much of the SDC experience also emphasises how important it is not to treat women and men as homogeneous categories. For example, in Ecuador (**see case study 7, pg 44**) gender aware analysis was done recognizing the differences between, indigenous, mixed (mestizos) and «white» women and men in the knowledge that power relations reflected not just gender, but also class and ethnic dimensions.

Clearly the kind of gender disaggregated information collected depends on the purpose of the programme and of the gender aware analysis in the programme. However, what SDC experience emphasises is that this information is not just quantitative. This point was made strongly in the SDC Peru case in noting the limitations of quantitative indicators, like the number of women participating in the public sphere, «without qualifying the forms and levels of their participation» (**see case study 9, pg 56**). Another example from the Sanbasur project in Peru shows that the analytical focus on the income poverty of women, a quantitative indicator, to the exclusion of other aspects of women's poverty, meant that the project affected women's material conditions but failed to challenge power relations between women and men, and thus had a limited impact on gender equality. Qualitative information is also necessary to capture the nature of the structural relations of power intrinsic in gender inequalities.

Choice of method

The practice of gender aware analysis also demonstrates a range of different approaches to carrying it out. One issue which has frequently been identified in SDC's experience is the difficulty that SDC staff and partners have in translating training in gender and gender aware analysis into practical actions in their daily work. This problem is not unique to SDC – recent evaluations on European Commission and Swedish SIDA development co-operation also identified this issue as a key challenge.

In the Eco-Lan case (**see case study 1, pg 10**) the approach was to undertake short, practical training in gender aware analysis with SDC and project staff so that they could immediately put the tools with which they had been provided into practice in a field research exercise (eg. the 24 hours chart, the production cycle matrix). In small groups, the team was able to cover 2 – 3 farms per day, talking to both women and men farmers. In this way the application and purpose of abstract concepts and tools quickly became clear to the participating staff during field exercises in an intervention with which they were familiar. Similar efforts to link capacity building to practical field research activities are also evident in the work to mainstream gender into the SDC supported CADELT programme in Niger (**see case study 6, pg 37**).

While the Eco-Lan team used a method of researchers interviewing individual women and men, in Mali the information was collected through focus group discussions with separate groups of female and male key informants. The results were also shared and interpreted with a group of women and a group of men, before they were shared with the whole community.

Again the programme and the purpose of the gender aware analysis has driven the choice of method. More than anything, SDC experience shows that there is a need to engage in a demystification of gender tools and their use, without de-politicising or simplifying

gender issues. The political dimension of implementing these methods is apparent at a number of different levels. The choice to interview women and men separately in Mali is cognisant of the power relations in that society where women may be reluctant to discuss or disagree with men in a public forum. Recognition of different power relations between women and men has implications for the choice of research methods to ensure that different groups of women and men are reached and given the opportunity to articulate their particular needs and opinions.

At another level, the training and field research experience of the project team, can lead to a level of consciousness among the team that could lead to real political commitment and «ownership» of gender issues, perhaps beyond the life of the project. Engaging directly with women and men themselves also has transformative potential, depending on how the results of gender aware analysis are shared with the target groups (local women and men), and how they are involved in subsequent phases of the project.

A final issue relates to the use of gender experts in initiating and undertaking the gender aware analysis. In the Eco-Lan case an external consultant was invited to work with a local consultant with very good results. In addition to a growing pool of international gender experts, in most SDC countries at the turn of the millennium there is an experienced cadre of local gender expertise which can act as a resource to SDC activities. However, it must be acknowledged that local gender specialists are also acting from a particular position in the society or community and may not necessarily perceive hidden power relations or discriminations. It will therefore be important to explicitly address such local power relations in the analysis.

Gender mainstreaming in the Eco-Lan project, Ukraine:
The experience of a gender diagnosis
By Irina Belyavskaya (SDC, Ukraine)

Synthesis: This case study shows how in the absence of a gender aware analysis a project can inadvertently distribute project costs and benefits unequally by placing unrealistic burdens on women, which ultimately could jeopardise the outcomes of the project. It also shows how it is possible to do a gender aware analysis even after the design of the project, and that the information generated can contribute to recommendations to increase the effectiveness of the project at the same time as addressing gender inequalities among the target groups. It also demonstrates how gender aware analysis can be carried out through «learning on the job», combining short training and field research in a practical manner, which at the same time raises consciousness and increases «ownership» of gender as a transversal issue in the project.

Eco-Lan is an SDC supported project, working with two agricultural colleges – Illinzi College, in Ukraine, and Zollikofen, in Switzerland. Its aim is to encourage the adoption of organic farming in Ukraine in order to meet two goals: to generate farm income by taking advantage of the higher prices for organic produce, and to preserve the soil environment in Ukraine through the practice of organic farming. The current focus of the project's activity is in Winitsa Oblast, a predominantly agricultural region in western Ukraine where the Ukrainian partner organisation (Illinzi College) is based.

The main project activities, which had already been carried out before and since SDC's involvement in 2002, have focused on piloting the organic production of grain crops for the export market. Grain has been targeted because there is a secure export market for organic grain crops. It was considered that promoting

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organic production of other agricultural goods typically produced in Winitsa, such as vegetables or dairy or meat, would be more risky, because these perishable items are more difficult to export, and the potential domestic market for organic produce is uncertain. One of the main challenges faced by the project is adapting organic approaches for use in the very large field sizes typical of Ukraine, which are a legacy of the old collective farm (kolkhoz) system. These large fields make it difficult to use manual approaches to weed and pest management (rather than using chemicals, which are prohibited under organic farming).

In addition to research activities, the project has also managed an exchange programme for agricultural students and farmers to visit and work on organic farms and colleges in Switzerland. To date, the proportion of girls going for student exchanges to Switzerland through the project has been low – around 2 – 3 out of the 15 visiting Switzerland annually – much lower than the proportion of female to male students in the college. The project staff has tried to encourage more girls to apply to the scheme, but have not been successful. They consider that this may be the result of parents worrying about allowing their daughters to travel abroad.

Currently extension services carried out by Illinzi College to disseminate information on organic farming, tend to reach men who are considered to be «farmers», rather than «farmer's wives». There are however some independent women farmers and women running large farm enterprises are reached by extension services and training.

In early 2003 the SDC staff managing the project decided to undertake a gender aware analysis of the rural population of Winitsa Oblast as well as a gendered review of project activities so far. This was felt to be necessary as no needs assessment or social analysis of

the target group had been undertaken to inform project design. In March 2003, therefore, a team made up of staff from SDC, Illinzi, Zollikofen and two consultants spent a week designing and carrying out a «gender aware analysis visit» (GAV), holding discussions with project staff and with men and women in family and commercial farms in the area.

The field survey methods included a number of tools designed to reveal women and men's different roles, access to and control over resources and needs, with a particular focus on agricultural development. Some of the tools used were a 24 hour activity chart to list the daily activities of farm women and men (on a given day in the week before the survey); an annual production cycle for some of the main farm crops specifying who makes what inputs throughout the year; and a matrix listing the main farm resources (such as credit, land, or use of machine) specifying who uses each resources, and who decides on how it should be used.

To carry out the survey, the team split into groups, each of which surveyed 2 – 3 farms

per day. Their findings were then consolidated and analysed during a half day workshop. The field survey led to a number of findings, both about the project, and about its potential impact on women and men.

- There is a clear gender division of labour in many areas of work on family farms. For the main part, men use farm machinery, for work such as ploughing, seeding, harvesting and application of fertilisers and pesticides. Almost without exception women do not operate farm machinery, although in some cases women may assist manually on farm machines. Women's manual workload is greater and when men are involved it tends to be older men (grandfathers). Women also tend to have a bigger role in animal husbandry (pig farming and, in particular, milking cows) and vegetable growing for household consumption.
- In farm enterprises which employ men and women, jobs follow the gender division of labour observed in farm households. Men are employed as machine operators/drivers and women predominate in hand-work teams and animal husbandry. «Male» jobs on farm enterprises are better paid than «female» jobs with salaries about 1.5 higher salaries than women.
- Women in farm households are more likely to manage the household accounts. However men are more likely to make decisions about investments and expenditures, or about how land is used. It should be noted, however, that sharing of decision-making between men and women varied amongst the households visited.
- Women spend significantly more time than men in household chores and taking care of children, and also tend to be more involved in voluntary work with neighbours, such as maintenance of cemeteries, roads and churches.
- Both men and women identified access to affordable credit as a key problem. Most

men and women said that if they could get credit or additional income they would spend it on farm machinery or their children's education. Some women said they would also like to invest in other areas (animal husbandry, or fruit trees) or in home improvements.

The findings of the GAV review showed that the project would soon have to face a number of challenges. The central challenge was that, in its current form, the project is likely to provide benefits and support to men's farm work (mainly mechanised production of grain crops), while imposing extra work burdens on women (manual work such as weeding). Further, because organic agriculture relies on crop rotation, an addition problem is that all crops will have to be farmed organically to maintain soil purity. However, while organic grain crops will be able to command higher prices in export markets, this will have to support the loss in production and additional (mainly women's) manual work for vegetable crops. These will be sold in the domestic market in which demand and prices for organic produce are currently uncertain. On the basis of the findings, therefore, the GAV team made a number of recommendations.

→ **Lessons and implications for SDC**   1

Firstly, it was recommended that project activities should focus on the entire farm production system to benefit both men and women. The extra time that must be spent by women on manual work to support organic grain production means that they have less time to spend on their other farm work, and other housework and community activities. Currently the project does not offer support in undertaking these other activities. It was therefore recommended that the project should offer support to women's other farm activities to allow them time for extra handwork on bio-crops (e.g. technical support/advisory services for women to save time and labour on vegetable gardening or animal husbandry). In addition it was recommended that the project should explore the scope for bio-production and on-farm processing of «women's products» (meat, dairy, vegetables) with Zollikofen, as well as grain production, and undertake market research for «women's» bio-products to see if there is a domestic or export market for them. Secondly, it was recommended that the project should work to ensure that extension services reach both men and women farmers, by making attendance of training by both men/women farmers from participating farms mandatory. It was felt that this can be justified to farmers on the basis of risk prevention: that both male and female household members need to be acquainted with the relevant approaches and technologies in order to ensure that the farm is viable even when one farmer (the man or women) is absent or ill. To this end it was also recommended that training is designed so that both men and women can access it (i.e. hold training in non-peak agricultural seasons, and in locations close to farms to ensure that both men and women can reach training and balance training time with other tasks such as childcare).

Timing and level of gender aware analysis: what can be learnt?

A point re-iterated by both staff and partners is that it is never too late to carry out a gender aware analysis! Ideally, as stated in the Gender Toolkit, gender aware analysis should *be an integral part of the wider situational analysis* at micro-, meso- and/or macro levels for any SDC supported intervention. In this way, analysis can reveal key factors which have implications for the design and subsequent implementation of country programmes, sector programme and projects. For example, in Ecuador (**see case study 7, pg 44**) «mainstreaming gender starts first with a gender disaggregated analysis providing the basis to plan the project objectives an its strategies, and making women's needs visible.»

As the Eco-Lan case illustrated (**see case study 1, pg 10**), incorporating gender issues from the beginning not only affects an intervention scope for promoting gender equality, but could also affect the viability of the intervention. In this case, a failure to understand the different roles of women and men in agricultural work from the outset of the project meant that the project was in danger of overlooking the agricultural work that women were involved in and placing unrealistic work burdens on women during weeding seasons. This not only jeopardised their willingness to participate in the project but also ate into the time available for the other vital community, productive and reproductive roles that they undertake.

Alpha literacy programme in Burkina Faso (**see case study 3, pg 21**) is another example of how gender aware analysis can be integrated later on in the project cycle. Gendered research and analysis were undertaken during the ongoing implementation of the literacy programme. The analysis identified the factors that have made some women more able to benefit from the project than others. The research also highlighted both the positive impacts and the additional burdens that the literacy programme has placed on women – findings from which the Alpha programme can learn as future activities are planned and designed. This also shows how gender aware analysis is not only relevant for initial project design, as a one-off exercise.

While the gender aware analysis in Eco-Lan focuses on the local context, the Mali case (**see case study 2, pg 16**) focuses at the macro-level. This case also shows how it is possible to integrate gender into systems for monitoring the performance of an SDC country programme – i.e. the extent to which the country programme was serving the expressed needs of Malian women and men. This was achieved through a consultative process whereby the priorities and concerns of women and men were articulated and developed into indicators for monitoring SDC progress in its key sectors of intervention at the country level.

The Alpha Programme in Burkina Faso (**see case study 3, pg 21**) illustrates how the gender stakes in a sector, the education sector, can be explored through a gender lens. In the same way, all the cases documenting sectoral projects give an indication of the sort of gender stakes that could be drawn out of a gender aware analysis at sectoral level. The discussions in the conference also revealed that sector experts might resist taking on gender issues because they fear losing power/control of interventions in their field. Technically, there is also often the problem that gender activities are dealt with separately from the main activities in sectoral interventions (e.g. gender assessments or evaluations are separated from the main baseline assessments/evaluations). Sheet 6 in the Toolkit was developed as a guide to the sort of questions that would be relevant at sectoral level and that should be integrated into a wider situation analysis in the sector.

The cases also demonstrate how important it is to understand gender relations in key policies in a country. In Mali, women and what the case refers to as «ordinary» men both have real concerns about being excluded from the benefits of decentralisation.

Similarly, the importance of understanding how gender relations interact with key development processes, with implications for sector or country programming, is also clear from different cases, e.g. in the Rural Health Development Project in Nepal (**see case study 5, pg 33**) the implications of war and male out-migration on gender relations and how the project has responded to this. Similarly, the South African case (**see case study 8, pg 51**) demonstrates the importance of incorporating gender into an understanding of the priority issue of HIV/AIDS. The case argues that because of budget constraints, «we have witnessed the increasing trend to put gender mainstreaming on the back seat in favour of HIV/AIDS mainstreaming. This is itself ironic as HIV/AIDS and gender are inextricably linked».

However, even for those interventions where analysis has successfully focused on gender issues, an additional challenge is to ensure that the lessons from such analysis are translated into action. The Niger case (**see case study 6, pg 37**) highlighted how this does not always happen. A key challenge for SDC and its partners, therefore, is to ensure that gender aware analysis is translated into action, and maintained through monitoring and evaluation.

Formulation of qualitative gender indicators to monitor SDC programmes in Mali
By Dicko Abdel Kader (SDC, Mali)

Synthesis: This case study illustrates that focus group discussions can be used as a very good vehicle for understanding gender division of labour, access and control over resources and gender relations in a particular society. It demonstrates that the manner of organising the focus groups requires attention to gender relations, so that both women and men's views can be elicited. The findings coming out of the focus group discussions highlight the similarities, differences and often conflictual views of women and men on a wide range of issues. In many instances these reflect key arenas where power relations are manifested and negotiated. The question is to what extent these are in fact addressed within the programmes. In this case gender aware analysis is perceived as generating meaningful and community-defined indicators to monitor the country programme for its impact on gender inequalities.

In Mali, SDC interventions have gender as a transversal theme. In the new Country Programme 2003 – 2007, one of the objectives of the gender strategy is to develop a common monitoring framework (and associated skills) for all programmes. So far, two levels of monitoring have been defined in consultation with the programmes:

- Gender monitoring, i.e. the monitoring of efforts (processes and products) to mainstream gender, and
- Gendered monitoring, i.e. gender disaggregated monitoring of the programme cycles and their impacts on women and men in target groups.

Indicators for gender monitoring, as well as a participatory methodology to collect gendered indicators from the field, were defined during a workshop.

Collecting the information: the process
The adopted methodology was based on the use of focus groups. For each programme, the team organised two focus groups where

women and men met separately. These were run either simultaneously or consecutively, and were attended by 5 to 10 people; leaders of peasants associations, opinion leaders, community leaders, artisans etc. Both the male and female groups tried to answer the same questions, based on a grid where the following themes were tackled:

- Past and current gender roles of women and men, their evolution and change factors
- Access and control over resources and decision-making at household level
- Main stakes in the sector – opportunities, challenges, visions
- Access and control over programme resources
- Participation in decision-making in organisations, relationships, including power, between organisations at different level (community, region, State)

For each theme, the animators introduced a number of hypotheses to launch the debate, followed by some keys questions to verify the hypotheses. These assumptions were focused on two scenes: the endogenous scene and the co-operation/sector scene.

After the group discussions, the outcomes for each theme were written on a large sheet of paper and organised in three columns: current situation, perceptions/opinions and visions/ wishes. The next day, the two groups of women and men were brought together to share the results. The outcomes of the shared discussion were immediately typed in so that they could be shared with the whole community. All discussions were recorded in an audio form too.

Outcomes of the exercise
Results from the discussions on the **co-operation/sector scene** show that women and men share a number of views but, also, that their views can differ and sometimes be in conflict. Women much more than men raise issues related to gender-based inequalities and exclusion.

In the economic field for instance, they share the view that the small business sector should be supported in a professional manner, including marketing, skills development and some level of regulation. However, men are more interested than women in the normative aspect of the sector, arguing that the market, and not the business people, should influence the kinds of businesses that are supported. Women mention that the reproductive role is a handicap for business inasmuch as it is the sole responsibility of women.

On political and decision-making issues, the results clearly illustrate that both women and men question the decentralisation process and its potential for community-based decision-making. Yet, women and men do experience political power (or their exclusion from it) in different ways. Elected men talk mainly about institutional and legal issues – e.g. tax collection – and think that the participation of women will come «naturally». «Ordinary» men feel marginalized and ill-informed. Elected women argue for the revision of the mechanisms set up for financing decentralised projects so that they are able to also take on board women's specific needs. «Ordinary» women refer to the need for women and girls to be educated and informed so that they can participate.

On health issues, women address power relations in the household, when they discuss their need to be able to argue the use of contraception and protected sex with their husband, and argue for a change in men's attitude on this subject. They talk also about polygamy and its impact on sexual health. Men say that they are ill-informed about contraception and female genital mutilations issues, as this kind of information is provided to women only. They do not comment on polygamy.

On the management of environmental resources, men and women argue for better targeted and more participatory actions that take on

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2 board their timetable and needs. Women demand that they get equal access to tools and equipment (stores). They also directly refer to power relations in the workplace: «When the stock manager stole 10 of our millet bags, we complained but we were told that they would cut our tongues. No man defended us».

Regarding the **endogenous scene**, the same pattern of similarities and differences, including conflict and inequalities, emerges.

Women demand more sharing of the reproductive role and more access to information. Men recognise the need to involve women in the public sphere, as long as they let men lead the process and do not take the place of men. Whilst men argue that women must be consulted on the management of the households budget and should be allowed to own land, women's responses suggest that they are not consulted by men on these issues.

Finally, concerning women and men's participation in programmes, women insist that they are consulted separately from men and that they are given the opportunity to make their own plans. They need to be strengthened to play a greater role in organisations, rather than «their traditional» role of organisers without decision-making power. They mention that they have less time than men to be trained. Men accept that women can play whatever role they wish but that this should not be «imposed» where women do not have the skills to carry out roles. They recommend that women organise themselves on their own before they join mixed organisations.

→ **Lessons and implications for SDC**

Focus groups have proved a useful way to get the disaggregated views of women and men. However, the approach also had its limitations inasmuch as the exercise is «in between» evaluation and planning. The small number participating and questions of their representation may also bring subjectivity to the results.

The focus groups highlighted that the most dynamic and informed groups tend to be consulted by programmes, thus excluding less organised and less educated groups, amongst the women. They also revealed that women and men often have diverging views of a problem or situation, which needs to be taken on board in planning. It is recommended to use focus groups at different stages of the planning cycle as it makes it possible to check if the programmes are still in tune with the context.

An analysis of the group findings shows the importance of the institutional and political context for mainstreaming gender, for instance decentralisation in the case of Mali. This is a crucial finding as programmes sometimes tend to work in isolation from the wider context and ignore the constraints and opportunities it may offer to addressing gender issues. An additional challenge for SDC is to develop indicators from the experience shared by the women and men who participated in the focus groups.

The focus groups also shed a gendered light on the issue of skills transfer and capacity building in the sense that women are often less involved in higher posts in organisations and therefore benefit less than men from training opportunities and information. Therefore, programmes should find women «where they are» and develop ways to support them so that they can then be integrated into mixed structures and so that female to male subordination can be challenged.

Insights in the knowledge derived from gender aware analysis

The knowledge that has been gained through gender aware analysis in SDC programmes and projects provides some interesting insights into the kind of information that can be gained from these initiatives and its significance for the implementation of the full range of SDC policy, programmes and projects. This section draws out a selection of these insights from the SDC cases documented and presented in this volume.

Difference, inequality and subordination

All the cases in this document demonstrate the interaction between difference, inequality and subordination in gender relations in the different contexts in which SDC works. For example, with respect to difference, the Eco-Lan case clearly shows how women and men perform different gender roles and have different levels of access to and control over resources. As discussed before, it also demonstrates how overlooking this difference marginalizes women from the project, exacerbates their inequality as well as threatens the effectiveness of the project. It is clear from SDC experience that difference most often also reflect inequalities.

Most of the cases also highlight that it is not just difference in gender roles that is an issue here. It is also the lack of value attached to women's gender roles and their unequal access to and control over resources that is important for programmes and projects to address. For example, both the Mali and Burkina Faso cases bring to light gender inequalities in a range of different spheres in which women and men live their lives. They reflect the unequal positions of power which women hold in those societies, and the constraints that women face in meeting basic needs as well as in participating in decision-making in the private and public spheres.

However, the cases also illustrate that difference, inequality and subordination are not only a function of gender relations, and warn against the dangers of treating women and men as homogeneous categories. For example, the case of Gram Vikas (**see case study 4, pg 29**) clearly shows that while women and men in the villages where Gram Vikas works have different needs and problems with reference to sanitation and involvement in decision-making processes, it also demonstrates that women from scheduled castes also have particular needs and problems which are distinct from those of other women in the villages. Similarly, many of the other cases illustrate the intersection between gender and other social relations: Navsarjan, India to illustrate the intersection of gender, class and caste (**see case study 12, pg 76**), South African to illustrate the intersection of gender, class and race (**see case study 8, pg 51**), and Ecuador to illustrate the intersection of gender, class and ethnicity (**see case study 7, pg 44**).

However, it should be stressed that understanding the differences between diverse groups of men and women should not mean reinforcing these differences or divisions. As the case of Navsarjan illustrates, working with diversity can actually provide the opportunity

to identify common interests and build alliances between diverse groups of women or men around issues of common interest – in this instance, issues such as drinking water, non-payment of minimum wages, or reproductive health, which are priorities for all women. This strategy dimension will be developed in the next section.

> «Generally speaking, when we talk about gender, we think it's only about women, and we think that things should only be done at the level of women. Now the analysis has shown there is far more inequity at women's level, but we realise that very often the problem stems from the males, and this shows us we should involve men in the debate and make them realise that they have to deal with the problem. Now women have gained access to a higher position in society, but in other areas there is still a lot of work to be done. This leads us to ask the question – «what is gender?» It's an analysis of relations between men and women, according to the way I understand things. Based on this analysis, we have to detect where the imbalances and inequities are, and therefore we need to act.»
> *Catherine Timbo, SDC Niger*

Women and men raise different issues

The exercise to formulate monitoring indicators for the Mali country programme (**see case study 2, pg 16**) shows quite clearly that the issues of concern expressed by women and men in diverse sectors (such as small business development, health, the environment), were different in many aspects and were actually in conflict in some instances. This is a function of their different experience, perceptions and different sources of information. The research in Mali also demonstrates the different issues expressed among women and among men of different classes. The case highlights the importance of overturning the assumption that

households, or communities can be seen as homogenous units with common interests and priorities.

More than this, it is clear that women and men speak from different positions of power, and that they recognise this in different ways. In the Mali case, women were much more aware than men of their (women's) subordination in specific contexts.

The cases also demonstrate the danger of undertaking a narrowly focused or partial gender diagnosis. In the Alpha programme, women discuss the impact of literacy on their reproductive, their productive and their political roles, often highlighting the negotiation necessary with their husbands as they take on new activities. Similarly, in the Mali case, women are also concerned with the impact of programmes on their reproductive roles. These cases highlight the fact that because women and men balance a number of different gender roles, it cannot be enough to look at one of these roles in isolation because it is the primary focus of an intervention. Not recognising the other gender roles may jeopardise the success of the programme. As the cases show, women do not have the choice to relinquish the activities associated with these gender roles, and negotiating to share them with husbands is often fraught with difficulties.

**Women's testimonies on literacy:
training on gender relations in
Burkina Faso**
By Boly Koumba (Alpha, Burkina Faso)

**Synthesis: This case demonstrates the use of
gender aware research to assess the impact of
a sector programme. The research not only
highlights the «gender stakes» in the education
sector, showing the importance of women's
literacy in the context of gender relations in the
household, the community and in the economic
sphere. In so doing, it also captures the linka-
ges between women's literacy and poverty
alleviation in meeting a range of practical and
strategic gender needs.**

Burkina Faso is a culturally diverse country,
with over 60 ethnic groups. Its predominantly
rural economy employs over 85% of the wor-
king population and contributes up to 40% of
the GDP. Women represent 54% of the wor-
king population, up to 83% in the agricultural
sector, and they produce 60% of the national
agricultural outputs. Paradoxically, they also
represent over 51% of the poorest groups of
population, and 85% of illiterate people are
women. Yet, women are the cornerstone of
society in the current socio-economic context.
They are caught in a vicious circle … «poor
because they are not educated, non-educated
because they are poor».

SDC action in the filed of literacy/non-formal
education is based on a strong partnership
with local actors working in all corners of the
country in different local languages. In its
2000 Country Programme, SDC identified
access to education for women, girls and
boys, including addressing their access of and
control over resources, as a focus of interventi-
on. A key assumption – based on local part-
ners' experiences – is that patriarchy in the
North and East of the country are characteri-
sed by highly centralised and hierarchical
forms of power which negatively influence

women's access to information and education.

In 2000, six partners of the Alpha literacy pro-
gramme supported by SDC joined forces to
carry out a research on impacts of literacy of
women's empowerment and socio-economic
status. This took the shape of a six-month long
study in different regions of Burkina Faso. In
addition to women, men were included in the
study in order to compare their view points to

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that of women.[1] The thrust of the study was to highlight success stories of how women had managed to go over the many obstacles they had faced on their way to literacy. It aimed to find answers to a number of key questions: What is the use of literacy in vernacular languages? What does it teach you? What happens to learners after the literacy course is over? Is it possible to use literacy skills in efficient ways? Who is better placed than successful women learners to encourage other women to join literacy classes?

An underlying aim of the capitalization was to develop a pedagogical instrument for local actors – particularly women – to use in policy dialogue with other development partners. Similar study of success stories of men and literacy is planned.

The study managed to identify a series of interlinked factors, which constitute important leverage for mainstreaming a gender perspective in women's literacy programmes and bring positive results to women.

Working towards parity in literacy centres to create a critical mass of women;
Flexible timetables for women to combine literacy and reproductive work. On this issue, there is also women/men dialogue around the sharing of domestic tasks (wood, water, children) to create space for women's literacy, emphasizing its positive impact on the family;
Adaptable contents linked to practical and usable skills;
Women only centres, using women and/or male literacy officers;
Mechanisms to lighten women's domestic duties (wells, mills);
Women's access to key posts in literacy associations and their use of decision making power;
Mechanisms/resources for income-generating activities (tools, credit);

According to the women in the sample, other very important factors are directly linked to their own personality and immediate environment:

- Their motivation, determination and assiduity with homework and playing «deaf ears» to the critiques, jokes etc
- Belonging to a women's group, as literacy becomes an important asset not only to the individual but to the group and creates positive peer pressure;
- Support from their husband – and other family members – has been instrumental for most women. In some case, husbands even shared domestic tasks;
- Domestic help (daughters, co-wives) to free time to attend the classes.

«If I failed, I would have felt ashamed in my village. So I decided to succeed so I would not disappoint others.»

«Many people tried to dissuade me, but I did not listen to them. I knew what I wanted and why, I did not care about the rest.»

«I never thought of giving it up. On the contrary, I worked hard, I did not sleep and I revised after the classes to be sure I would understand it all.»

Positive impacts have been registered on different aspects of women's, family, economic and personal life.

In the area of *health and hygiene*, women reported that literacy alerted them to the connection between hygiene and health, and issues of primary health care, particularly for children. There were also other positive impacts such as less practice of excision and more use of contraception.

[1] Chemins de vie, expériences réussies des femmes alphabétisées au Burkina Faso: Eléonore d'Achon, Mouniratou Tangara and M. Luce Fiaux, Coopération Suisse/programme Alpha, 2000.

The women are now also more inclined to send their daughters to school, monitor their children's homework and encourage other women to follow in their tracks. All women report an *improvement in their marital life*, mainly because their access to education gave them more access to economic resources. There is more dialogue between men and women and more sharing of domestic tasks building solidarity and increased their capacity to solve conflicts.

Women feel *more socially integrated* and able to take charge of their life, as they can now read, write letters, take notes, generate and circulate information etc. In their associations, it is literate women who obtain responsibilities/posts. In *economic terms*, some women started new income-generating activities and others report an improvement in their traditional activities (e.g. using newly learnt agricultural practices). *Protection of the environment* has been very positively impacted by literacy (use of compost, tree planting, and to a lesser extent, the use of low-wood stoves).

The most important impact is on the *valorisation of women* and the *improvement of their status*. This is confirmed by women in the sample who say they have lost their timidity, they can now express themselves in public, and their husbands «grant» them more freedom and mobility to participate in meetings or travel alone for their business as they can see the benefits of it. The increased financial contribution to the household also gives them more decision-making power, and they can buy, sell and invest as they wish. In their social environment, women also say that they enjoy a new status and are listened to, are consulted for advice etc.

→ **Lessons and implications for SDC:**

■ Support peasants organisations to develop their own adapted methods and trainers;
■ Define the articulation between literacy and local development as a strategic focus;
■ Support peasants organisations to do action-research on the reproductive role of women and its link to infrastructures and social dialogue;
■ Develop political dialogue on the relation between women's empowerment and a more just and balanced society;
■ Work on ways to sustain and capitalise women's motivation and determination.

Generally, the experience of the Alpha programme in Burkina Faso shows that, contrary to the current pessimism of some international agencies and NGOs, women's literacy is a key factor of empowerment and socio-economic development for women themselves and their family. However, it also shows that fighting illiteracy must include a fight against the exclusion and marginalisation of women and a constant support to help them identify and find solutions to their problems.

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Lessons learnt and recommendations

The experiences described above show how many SDC supported interventions have been able to practically integrate gender concerns into analysis both at the micro- and macro level, as well as at different key moments in the project cycle. The experience also shows that there are a variety ways of doing gender aware analysis, as long as it captures the heterogeneity of women and men and brings an understanding of at least three dimensions of the articulation of power intrinsic to gender relations. These are:

■ the gender division of labour,
■ the access to and control over resources,
■ and the expressed needs and perceptions of both women and men.

An appreciation of these dimensions expressed by women and men themselves is crucial to understanding difference, inequalities and subordination in the local, sector or country context.

Without this understanding, the cases show that interventions can be designed which not only ignore gender differences, inequalities and subordination, but might actually make them worse. They also demonstrate that overlooking gender relations can also undermine the effectiveness of the intervention.

As the experience demonstrates, there are many ways in which to carry out the gender aware analysis. Whatever the choice, it is not just the information that comes out of the gender aware analysis that is important. The process of carrying out the gender aware analysis itself can have a powerful impact on both project staff and local women and men (target groups). In this sense, for example, using training combined with collection of data in the field was an effective strategy beyond just collecting information.

Although the many cases demonstrate that it is never too late to take gender on, doing a gender aware analysis is clearly more effective if done as part of the wider situation analysis at the start of a programme or project. Gender is often taken on in activities, for example, after the Terms of Reference have already been drafted.

Four challenges come out of this:

■ The first is how to ensure that sectoral, country programme and project staff take responsibility for gender issues (reflected in the Terms of Reference). Staff should have the resources and the capacity to use and feel ownership of gender and planning tools.

■ The second related issue is how to avoid having separate, marginalized, gender tools for situation analysis at different levels.

■ The third is that sufficient forward planning is necessary so that gender aware analysis is not skipped due to time pressure.

■ Finally, integrating gender in PCM also requires support and allies, including from internal sources (particularly at management level), external expertise (particularly at the beginning of the process), and among partners (policy and community level). Additional resources may be needed too (if external expertise or specific activities are used for instance).

In order to ensure that this policy principle is properly reflected in future SDC activities, the following recommendations are made:

1. Heads of COOFs and Sector staff in HQ take the responsibility, as appropriate to ensure that a gender aware analysis is carried out at the beginning of any new interventions. In the case of country or sector programmes, a gender aware analysis should be incorporated in an understanding of policies and development processes affecting country or sector programmes.

2. To ensure that attention to gender aware analysis is included in the Terms of Reference for critical review stages of programmes and projects.

3. To create forums for sharing good practice at country level, per sector and in projects among SDC staff and its partners.

4. To offer a range of more formal training to develop gender sensitivity and disseminate conceptual tools to work practically with gender as a transversal issue, including techniques for gender aware analysis. These could be open training, sector specific or programme and project specific training, in response to the requirements of SDC staff and its partners.

5. Through all these activities, to use, review and where appropriate develop, the relevant sheets in the Toolkit.

6. To develop a local list of gender experts in the countries and regions in which SDC operates as a resource to the COOFs and SDC partners.

7. To ensure that gender analysis is translated into action, and maintained through monitoring and evaluation.

«We noticed that the project (support to Roma families) was not really meeting its objectives for some strange reasons, and we were not really able to say why until we realised that we had to take the beneficiaries – the Roma kids – and look at them as boys and girls, the various roles they play in the family and the various expectations their parents have from them – from the girls and from the boys – also looking at their local communities, where their place is, what the various expectations are, what their rights are, what their obligations are, and once we diagnosed that kind of situation, then an intervention to first improve the impact of the overall project and second to address the impact of the specific issues, problems that arose from this diagnosis, relating to both to Roma girls and to Roma boys. And now we are in front of a new project proposal – an extension – where all these things will be taken into consideration.»
Frosina Georgievska, SDC Macedonia

FLEXIBILITY IN IMPLEMENTATION

The second of the guiding principles outlined in the SDC Gender Equality Policy is that flexibility needs to be adopted in promoting gender equality. This is because:

«Like any social change, changes in gender relations challenge traditional forms of power. Therefore, they can provoke resistance and they take time. Approaches to gender must be flexible and context specific. Cooperation offices and partners can choose how to strategically work with women and men as long as they contribute to gender equality. In many parts of the world, women and men are actively seeking to construct more equal gender relations. It is important that interventions build on endogenous strategies and incorporate women's and men's common as well as conflicting/different interests.»
(SDC Gender Equality Policy 2003, pg 5)

In keeping with SDC development co-operation and the statement of this principle, the Gender Unit has always stressed the need for flexibility in the treatment of gender as a transversal issue in policies, programmes and projects. To this end, whilst the policy makes a firm commitment to gender equality, it provides guiding principles rather than «blue prints» for strategy. Similarly the Toolkit is organised around key questions, rather than attempting to prescribe specific responses or actions.

This chapter attempts to capture the wide range of strategic choices and entry points that SDC and its partners have used to address gender inequalities in policies, pro-grammes or projects. It also discusses the trade-offs and limits to this flexible approach. Finally, it explores methodologies that are important when taking a flexible approach to strengthening gender as a transversal issue in development co-operation.

«We have traditions which give power to men over women. If a man marries a woman he feels that he owns her, she has to do everything for him. If the woman wants to get education or training she has to have her husband agree to it. That's the problem. The men don't want to give access to information and knowledge to the women because they don't want to open their eyes, because otherwise they might take precedence over them. That's what they tell us. So we have to use other methods. So we have to train and raise awareness – raise men's awareness – so that the men become more aware of the new roles for women in the fields of education, health, household work and so on. But men keep saying that they want to maintain power and keep their position. So we don't challenge that. We say «it's okay, you can keep that» but we say that women have to be educated and trained so that they can become even more useful for the men! And then, if we manage to get the women into training programmes, we tell the women – «well you are also human beings like the men are.» And we tell the women – «you can be even more useful, if you express your potential. And you can reach a certain kind of equality.» So that's what we have to do. We have to take the initiative. We're now noticing that women are beginning to emerge, but there are only very few. We are continuing our action in that direction.»
Nagernagar Ngartel, SDC Chad

Strategic choice in the definition of entry points

In the face of power relations of gender, class, ethnicity and caste in different contexts, SDC experience demonstrates that the choice of the entry point for gender aware interventions is a crucial strategic decision. The cases high-light at least four criteria for selecting strategic entry points which provide initial room for manoeuvre in potentially conflictive situations. These entry points allow programmes to be established and/or developed so that ultima-tely they lead to actions which do challenge gender inequalities and subordination.

«Uncontested domains»
Gram Vikas, an SDC partner in Orissa, India, coined the phrase of an «uncontested domain» as an effective entry point to ultimately reach more challenging results for changes in gen-der relations. An «uncontested domain» can be defined as an arena in which women have a recognised legitimacy, or where no

changes in the gender division of labour are at stake or an arena which is new and in which no clear gender division of labour has been established. In other words, it refers to «…areas where men have no apparent clashes of interest with women». (**see case study 4, pg 29**).

In their work with tribal, dalit[1] and marginali-sed communities in Orissa, the provision of water and sanitation was an entry point to address two critical issues. Firstly, it was a response to combating water borne diseases, a main contributing factor to the morbidity and mortality in the State. The ailments suffe-red as a result of no or poor water and sani-tation reflected a gender, class and caste bias. Secondly, the provision of water and sanitation was also intended to challenge the wide inequalities in gender, class and caste in the way it was provided.

[1] Dalits, were termed «Untouchables» in the Hindu Caste system. During the freedom movement, Gandhi called them «Harijan» or Children of God. Their own leaders called them dalits or bahujan, in a people's movement for rights, in the 80's. They are designated Scheduled Castes under the Constitution of India.

The fact that in this context, water and sanitation was an «uncontested domain» for women and men of the same caste made it an acceptable point at which Gram Vikas could enter the community. Even though it was a long process to persuade women and men of all castes/classes of the relevance of this provision, it was an issue where the men did not resist the involvement of women in the village. As such, targeting a practical gender need seen as a legitimate concern of women, provided a good platform for the subsequent changes that happened in the villages.

Similarly in Nepal (**see case study 5, pg 33**) the entry point was the existing Mothers' Groups in the villages. Clearly linked to the reproductive role of women, this was a legitimate forum through which to engage and address women that was not contested by either men or women in the community.

Both cases show how the notion of an «uncontested domain» is also relevant across not just gender, but class and caste. In both examples above, women from different classes and castes were able to come together to support their interests as women around the family needs of water, sanitation and health. Similarly, the Navsarjan case in India (**see case study 12, pg 76**) also demonstrates the possibilities for women to join forces over divisions of class and caste to address issues like drinking water, the non-payment of minimum wages and reproductive health, which are priorities for all women.

Institutionalising gender in patriarchal rural communities: Creating spaces through «uncontested domains»
By RV Jayapadma and Liby T Johnson (Gram Vikas, Orissa, India)

Synthesis: This case highlights the complexity of working with gender, class and caste. It shows how changes in power relations between women and men from can be achieved through using an «uncontested domain». In this instance, actions targeting water and sanitation were such an arena where there was little apparent conflict around women's involvement. However, the case demonstrates that many constraints to women's participation did emerge and this conflict was mediated over time as trust between the local partner and the community was established. It shows that addressing resistance to change is always a strategic choice. With patience, flexibility, knowledge of

social relations in the community, and through listening to women and men, the local partner with local women and men were able to transform conflict into a positive force for change. Armed with new information about water and sanitation, women collectively took on the risk to defy existing power relations (e.g. their stand on the consumption of liquor) in order to improve the lives of their families and communities.

Gram Vikas is a non-partisan, secular, voluntary organisation working with tribal, *dalit*[2] and other poor and marginalized communities in Orissa. Their mission is to enable poor and marginalized rural communities to achieve a dignified quality of life through a process which is sustainable, socially inclusive and gender equitable.

In 1991, when Gram Vikas conducted a study on the reasons for poverty and backwardness in Orissa, we found that one of the main contributing factors was the extent of morbidity and mortality, over 80% of which could be traced back to water borne diseases. This resulted in loss of productivity and erosion of the meagre savings of families. What came to light only later were the complex ailments related to reproductive and gynaecological ailments resulting from poor sanitary facilities, which women were reluctant to speak about. There were additional sanitation problems in multi-class and multi-caste villages where dalits, living on the edge of villages, did not have access to the main pond in the village and had to make do with a smaller, murkier pond or well. We felt that to make any dent in improving conditions in these villages it was imperative to begin with the basics and enable access to protected water and sanitation. Therefore, the core thrust of the Rural Health and Environment Programme (RHEP) designed by Gram Vikas is to harness the physical, natural, social and human capital in every village through convergent community action, to create a spiralling process of development. Sanitation infrastructure

[2] See footnote 1, pg 27.

4 and supply of piped drinking water are only the rallying element to bring people together, cutting through barriers of patriarchal systems, caste, politics and economic differences.

To this end, RHEP is built around a number of principles including:
- Inclusion of all with 100% agreement and participation of adult men and women in the village.
- Equitable financial participation with contribution by all families in the village to a Corpus Fund, with the poor paying less than the rich.

- Sharing of costs through mechanisms whereby the villagers find the means to finance at least 30 – 40% of the total cost of establishing water and sanitation facilities.
- Strengthening village institutions: RHEP is driven by elected self-governing institutions in each village that represent all sections, across gender, caste and class differences
- Participation of women. Women have equal representation in all village institutions. Self-help groups are formed to increase role of women in the economic sphere.

Given the divisions in rural communities, achieving this has been by no means easy. In the pilot phase of the programme when we experimented with five villages, the intervention took over three years to take root. Initially, with most of our staff being men, the main points of contact were male leaders in the village. Women were considered «unapproachable» because of social taboos preventing them from interacting with strangers, especially males.
In most villages, building consensus was the biggest stumbling block. Men said: «Our forefathers shat under the open sky for centuries – disease doesn't spread that way». Field staff faced ridicule for talking about defecation, for even suggesting that the same source of water would be used by people of different castes or that the poorest families would have the same level of services. The villagers were suspicious and called them «lepers» and «thieves». Some field workers tried reasoning with women, and faced withering stony silence, or ridicule. Slowly the resistance crumbled, and we noticed that this was more likely in villages where women took the lead, as illustrated by the case of Samiapalli.

When Gram Vikas suggested that all adult men and women must participate in the decision making process related to water and sanitation, there was a great level of apprehension, but not very strong resistance. In our understanding this was so because we were dealing

A journey towards dignity

In 1992, RHEP came to Samiapalli village, in Ganjam district of Orissa. Samiapalli has 76 dalit families, 74 of them living below the Poverty Line. At the start of RHEP there were problems in getting people together for meetings as most men would be drunk by early evening. The efforts to raise the Corpus Funds and generate people's contribution were also not making much headway, as most of the resources the families had went into liquor consumption. The field workers were at a point of giving up when the women decided to take action, and went collectively to the liquor vendor, and demolished all his pots and bottles. They called a village meeting and declared that no one would be allowed to consume liquor in the village. Seeing the women's united stand the men complied and work progressed rapidly.

Beginning with water and sanitation, the programme has enabled the creation of a village level organisation, controlled, operated and managed by the people themselves. This organisation has, today, replaced Gram Vikas as the villagers' interface with the outside world. The village also has a Corpus Fund, raised and owned by themselves, which has grown from the initial size of Rs.100'000 to over Rs. 300'000 today. In addition, the women of the village have come together to save close to Rs. 90'000 in their three savings and credit groups.

«Our toilets are better than our houses»

The development story of the village did not stop with this. To improve the quality of their lives, they decided that they needed better houses. They lived in mud and thatch houses of less than 10 sq.m, which had to be repaired each year, and the new toilets were better than their houses. Armed with a loan support arranged by Gram Vikas (Rs. 22'500 per house of at least 41sq.m each) and their own labour and dedication, all the families in the village today own permanent, disaster proof houses. Their investment paid rich dividends in October 1999 when a killer super cyclone devastated every other village in the area; the houses of Samiapalli were left undamaged.

with «uncontested domains» – such areas where men have no apparent clash of interests with women.

In spite of this, getting women to a common platform was a challenge. Hidden behind their veils, women were reluctant to attend meetings, and share the same platform as their father- or brother-in-law. In one of the earlier villages, Samantrapur, over 140 meetings were held before women attended. Recognising this, the first step was to work with a separate general body of women in each village while carrying out concurrent dialogue with the men to persuade them that the intervention would succeed only with equal participation of men and women at every stage.

What has been learnt

> There are remarks one still hears from men in villages where work has just begun – «Gram Vikas says we must involve women to make decisions, but this is just for RHEP, not for other activities». Little do they realise that once the dent is made, the «cracks» open wider and wider, as evidenced in the «older» RHEP villages.

However, although the RHEP have initiated change processes by creating spaces through «uncontested domains», there is still a long way to go in ensuring that the space for expression and consultation is not confined to RHEP. Strong women's groups have been able to come together to address some difficult issues that challenge patriarchal dominance such as early marriage of girls, ownership of property and domestic violence. There are still significant challenges in the broader political sphere. In a large number of villages, men use women only as a cover, effective power and control remains with men. Political control and power remains one of the most «contested domains» and a long way needs to be trudged before women can share a fair part of this.

Contextual realities and emerging priorities

SDC experience also shows how the particularities of the context and emerging priorities influence the definition of the entry point for gender. In the Nepal case (**see case study 5, pg 33**), the out-migration of men, exacerbated by the civil war, effectively left a majority of women and children in the remote rural villages that were the target for the health programme. In this instance, the programme had to work with women, and Mothers' Groups were the vehicle chosen to do this.

The South Africa case shows how an emerging priority can become an entry point for strategies to address gender inequalities. In that country, it was noted that «where the word gender used to appear it has now been replaced by HIV/AIDS» (**see case study 8, pg 51**). There was therefore a potential for SDC to piggy-back gender on HIV/AIDS rather than replacing one transversal theme by another. In this case, the argument about the crucial links between gender and HIV/AIDS still has to be won. Nevertheless, given the importance of the issue, it is increasingly recognised that actions to address gender inequalities also have to address the AIDS pandemic in the country.

A similar case could be made for other countries where human rights, environmental management, ethnic/caste conflict and/or poverty are sited as priority issues. In Tajikistan, actions around gender equality are linked to human rights and governance issues (**see case study 11, pg 70**). Similarly, SDC, India's focus on discrimination has included making partnerships with organisations like Gram Vikas and Navsarjan, who are also interested in addressing gender inequalities alongside inequalities of caste and class.

Prioritising projects making progress on gender equality

As the experience of Ecuador (**see case study 7, pg 44**) shows, another way to define entry points is to prioritise projects where progress has already been made on addressing

gender inequalities or projects that are more relevant to gender. The case illustrates that, in practice, this strategy is only likely to work where there is a strong commitment to promoting gender equality from COOF staff and leadership.

Respecting self-determination

Clearly the most effective entry points are those which are defined by those women and men who are directly concerned by the interventions. The theme of participation is one which has always been important in SDC development co-operation. However, SDC experience in most of the case studies demonstrates that women and men do not have equal opportunity to express their views and make decisions about their priority needs. Where women are given that opportunity along with men (some of the strategies that have been implemented to achieve this will be discussed in the next chapter), the cases demonstrate that their priorities can change and inequalities in relations of gender, class and caste can be challenged.

Both the Gram Vikas, India and RHDP, Nepal, experiences (**see case studies 5, pg 33**) demonstrate a number of issues in this respect. Firstly, once women were collectively convinced of and mobilised around the need for water and sanitation or health respectively, collectively they were able to insist on the control of men's consumption of liquor. This had implications for men's increased involvement and commitment to the programme in the Gram Vikas case and for domestic violence in the RHDP case. In some of the villages where the RHDP operated, women also had the confidence to confront Maoist insurgents who wanted to stop the programme. In both cases women were empowered to address strategic gender needs within the respective programmes, which would have been impossible at the start of the programme.

Secondly, the success of the first entry point can trigger a range of new entry points to meet practical gender needs, both within and out of the original programme. Thus in the

Gram Vikas case, the success with the toilets led to both women and men seeking to meet other practical gender needs like housing. In the RHDP case, the equal participation of women in a Village Development Committee completely changed the health priorities and projects at the local level.

Thirdly, in the long term the success and confidence built up in previous phases can provide entry points for women to address a range of problems reflecting deeply unequal power relations. In the Gram Vikas case, women were able to address issues of early marriage of girls, ownership of property and domestic violence.

Finally, in the long term the Gram Vikas case illustrates that local committees with equal numbers of women and men can take over the process themselves, determining their own agendas and replacing the NGO to become the main interface with the outside world.

Community Empowerment for Health: Experiences of Gender Mainstreaming in the Rural Health Development Project in Nepal
By Harka B.Thapa and Biren P. Bangdel (RHDP, Nepal)

Synthesis: This case demonstrates the need for flexibility in working in remote rural areas among populations of complex gender, class and ethnic relations, where uncertainty and conflict are exacerbated by civil war. With men migrating, women were targeted in their traditional roles in Mothers' Groups but given training and institutional support to join Village Development Committees. Their participation resulted in a re-prioritisation of health needs, as well as their involvement in decision-making arenas which they had not been part of before. Some women were also empowered to defend the programme against Maoists who threatened a field worker and closure of the programme.

In Nepal, one of the most pressing features of rural poverty is poor access to health services. This is evidenced by one of the world's highest maternal mortality rates (estimated at 539 deaths per 100'000 live births, compared to 6 per 100'000 in Switzerland). In an effort to increase access to primary health services, the Nepali Government has introduced Sub-Health Posts (SHP) in each Village Development Committee (VDC)[3]. However, despite this effort, village facilities are still often under-resourced, many health institutions are located three/four hours walking distance from villages and the focus is only on curative care, with limited emphasis on preventive care.

The Rural Health Development Project (RHDP) is a bilateral project jointly funded by His Majesty's Government of Nepal (HMG/N) and the Swiss Co-operation Office (SDC) working to respond to some of these issues in the two remote districts of Dolokha and Ramechhap. The main goal of RHDP is to improve the health status of women, children, adolescents and men through the participatory development of a locally adapted and affordable health system. Since RHDP was introduced in 1990, the number of VDCs increased from 20 to 49.

About 80% of RHDP's working areas (villages) take about one to two days walk to reach from the district headquarters. As is typical in rural Nepal, the health facilities in these districts are very poor. Health workers and community members have had to work and live in fear from both security forces and Maoists, although the situation has improved due to the recent cease-fire. Male out-migration is very high, and has increased due to the Maoist insurgency[4], thus making women and children the majority of the local population. This makes women the major working partners and beneficiary groups of RHDP.

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[3] VDC- is the smallest unit
[4] Nepal is affected by the seven year-old «People's War» initiated by Maoist groups. Though this war has contributed in bringing awareness among the rural people about the systematised suppression by the state and the powerful elites, it has also severely hindered the mobility of rural people, destroyed key infrastructure and blocked outreach activities of different institutions.

RHDP works through two main approaches: empowerment of the community for health, in particular support to women to seek their rights and to participate in the improvement of their own and their community's health conditions; and capacity building of the local health service providers. While implementing these activities, RHDP has had to respond to a number of gender issues, and in doing so, has learnt a number of lessons about working with women and men in community health management.

To achieve this, RHDP works through the existing Mothers' Groups, which had already been formed by the VDC wards[5] to select one Female Community Health Volunteer (FCHV), but which had become inactive. RHDP therefore worked to re-activate them through facilitation inputs and training programmes, ensuring that women from all groups, especially poor, marginalised and minority ethnic groups were represented. The typical approach taken to do this is illustrated by the case of Orang VDC in Dolakha.

Orang is a remote village which takes almost two days walk to reach from the district headquarters at Dolakha. Orang already had a Mothers' Group, but it had never met as a group since its inception, nor had it initiated any activity. On the first visit to the village by the RHDP's field facilitators, women hesitated to talk to them. However, after regular visits by the field facilitators, some women came forward and became interested in organising themselves. After several rounds of awareness programs, women decided to form groups and started holding monthly meetings in which they extensively discussed social and health related issues.

Mothers' Groups were facilitated to select active members to be in the executive committee of the VDC. They were given a three-day training focusing on leadership, communication, mobilisation of both group members and local resources, problem solving and conflict management. They were also provided training on the use of different Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) tools to help them analyse different health problems, seek solutions and make action plans. As a result, they constructed a small-scale drinking water scheme, started providing health education on personal hygiene and environmental sanitation and family planning, taking children to the health centre for regular immunisation and sending their daughters to schools.

Achievements and lesseons learnt
In the past five years more than 441 such Mothers' Groups have used the PRA tools provided, and have mobilised village men and local institutions (schools, health-posts, VDCs etc.), to implement more than 700 health activities, such as small-scale drinking water schemes, community clinics and pit latrines. There has also been much control on using alcohol and gambling in the villages due to the anti-alcohol and gambling campaign carried out by women's groups, meaning that abuse of women has reduced and men have started to carry out new activities.

In addition to this special focus on women's groups, the other major achievement of RHDP has been to address membership of the main local health agencies, the Health Post Management Support Committees (HPMSC). Most of the members are male, from higher status groups, and not representative of the whole VDC. In its efforts to strengthen these committees, RHDP works to make membership more representative. So far 49 committees have been reformed and are actively working with members comprising of almost 50% men and 50% women.

A number of lessons have also been learnt by RHDP about the links between existing gender relations and the conflict situation with the Maoist movement. The situation worsened over the last two years, with a state of emergency imposed throughout the country which confined the free movement of field staff. Firstly, with many men leaving their villages, this means a higher workload for some of the women left behind, which limits the time that they have for activities such as RHDP meetings and training.

Secondly, in some areas women were seen as more neutral by the conflicting parties and could more easily continue their work in the field as health workers. In these cases, local women played an important role in protecting

[5] Each VDC comprises of 9 wards equivalent to one village or cluster of villages.

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After the VDC committee of Himaganga increased the number of women members, management training was given to the new committee. This resulted in changes in the emphasis given to local health priorities discussed by the committee. New priorities like women's health, toilets in public schools and health institutions, health campaigns and establishment of community clinic were raised. The men, who had not been very much concerned about women's health before, became aware of special health problems like prenatal and post natal issues, family planning, immunisation and other serious problems for women in the area. They set up a community drug financing scheme in the health post from where the people could get the medicines throughout the year. The new formation and approach of the committee led to the feeling of ownership towards the management of local health institutions, and the improvement of the general health of the population has been tremendously enhanced. One positive impact was that no epidemic diseases have occurred in the RHDP working areas over the last three years due to the active participation of both women and men members in the implementation of personal hygiene and environmental sanitation programs.

RHDP activities against conflict. For example in Jhule, a RHDP village, the field worker was asked by Maoists to immediately discontinue the training that he was conducting for Mothers' Group members, and to go with them. In response, all the women stood up and asked Maoists whether they could provide similar training for them. Finally after hot arguments with the Mothers' Group, the Maoists had to leave the training venue and the field worker continued the training. This showed that the women who, before RHDP's intervention, used to run away or hide from outsiders, are now capable of voicing their genuine concerns.

On the basis of these lessons, RHDP has concluded that, while empowerment processes can be time consuming, they bear fruit in the end if properly designed and if both women and men are empowered to deal with gender issues. Furthermore, an important factor for RHDP in achieving this has been ensuring that the male/female facilitators come from the same community and have built up trust with the local people, including family members of women in the process of gender sensitisation.

Strategic choice in the framing of strategies

SDC experience points to at least three issues which are crucial in framing the form and content of strategies. These are:

- using pilot programmes,
- working with a combination of gender specific actions and gender mainstreamed actions, and
- addressing multiple forms of inequality.

One key lesson which has been learnt by SDC is the need to be aware that increased gender equality cannot be achieved overnight in most situations. In many cases promoting gender equality involves challenging a status quo which has been firmly in place for a long time – and therefore sustainable change is likely to be very gradual. This implies a need for flexibility within time-bounded SDC policy, programme and projects, recognising their contribution to long term change. In this context, the use of pilot programmes may be useful.

Two cases refer to the use of pilot program-mes to address gender inequalities. Gram Vikas (**see case study 4, pg 29**) used a pilot phase in which they worked with 5 villages over 3 years before the programme took root. In one village, over 141 meetings were held before women would attend public meetings. Similarly, the Peru case also argues for «…the need to start with pilot projects before gender and empowerment strategies are scaled up…» (**see case study 9, pg 56**).

Almost all the cases refer to the need to use both « gender specific strategies and gender integrated programmes» (see for example, Niger, **case study 6, pg 37**). The South Africa case refers to the need for «dual strategies by working with women and men in some cases, and in others, working separately with women» (**see case study 8, pg 51**). Similarly the Tajikistan case outlines a working with gender specific actions at policy and pro-gramme levels, and gender mainstreaming in the country programme (**see case study 11, pg 70**). While this may seem an obvious

lesson, some cases still point to the translation by partners of the treatment of gender as a transversal issue as specific projects for women or gender which cannot be dealt with in the mainstream (**see case study 9, pg 56**).

Furthermore, SDC and its partners often face the difficulty of simultaneously confronting multiple forms of inequality (gender, race, caste, age etc). In practice, many of us feel that we have to prioritise one form of social identity/inequality in a given context. However, a counter-argument is that, in reality, it is not possible to prioritise social identities given that as women and men, our identities are simultaneous and inter-linked. In this light, some partners argue that multiple identities need to be confronted by any intervention and entry points for gender can be through other specific identities (such as caste in India, **see case study 12, pg 76**). Also, experience has shown that while individual interventions are valuable in challenging social relations, social change requires collective action on a wider scale. Therefore there is a need for interventions focussed on individuals (like women's empowerment through literacy) to be complemented by activities aimed at enabling conditions, for example supporting policy or legal reforms. A discussion of the range of multi-level strategy experience in SDC is located in the next section.

Integration of gender in the Tillabéri local development programme
By Catherine Timbo (SDC, Niger)

Synthesis: This case demonstrates the importance of monitoring whether gender is being mainstreamed from one phase of programme to the next. It also shows how remedial action, combining gender specific and gender integrated programmes are necessary to combat gender «evaporation» and deviation, sustaining gender mainstreaming over time.

Gender has been a focal area of interest of SDC development programme in Niger since 1993. It first started with the creation of the Women's Programme for Niger (WPN) which, for 7 years, succeeded in training a large number of programme staff and community-based officers in basic gender issues, using experimental techniques and specific materials on gender relations in Niger. In 2001, a participatory evaluation highlighted the fact that effects on the integration of gender as a transversal theme were still rather low, due to a number of factors including a resistant national context and low competence for the operationalisation of gender amongst partners. In 2002, the WPN became the Gender Programme of Niger and was given a clear mainstreaming mandate at two levels: to support the integration of gender as a transversal theme in all programmes, and to verify that all programmes contributed to the reduction of inequalities between women and men addressing the strategic interests of women in order to improve their social position and status in Niger. Its strategy has 4 entry points:

■ Provision of technical assistance by the gender programme officer to all programmes;
■ Creation of «spaces» for SDC staff, partners (including government, NGOs and grassroots women and men) to exchange on gender;
■ Support to women as role models in politics, community leadership;

■ Financing of women NGOs and associations.

Support programme to Tillabéri local development (CADELT)

This programme started in 1998, at a time when SDC commitment to gender mainstreaming was already bearing fruit. Gender was therefore integrated in the programme's conceptual frame from the start.

The programme works in a region that is characterised by very high male migration,

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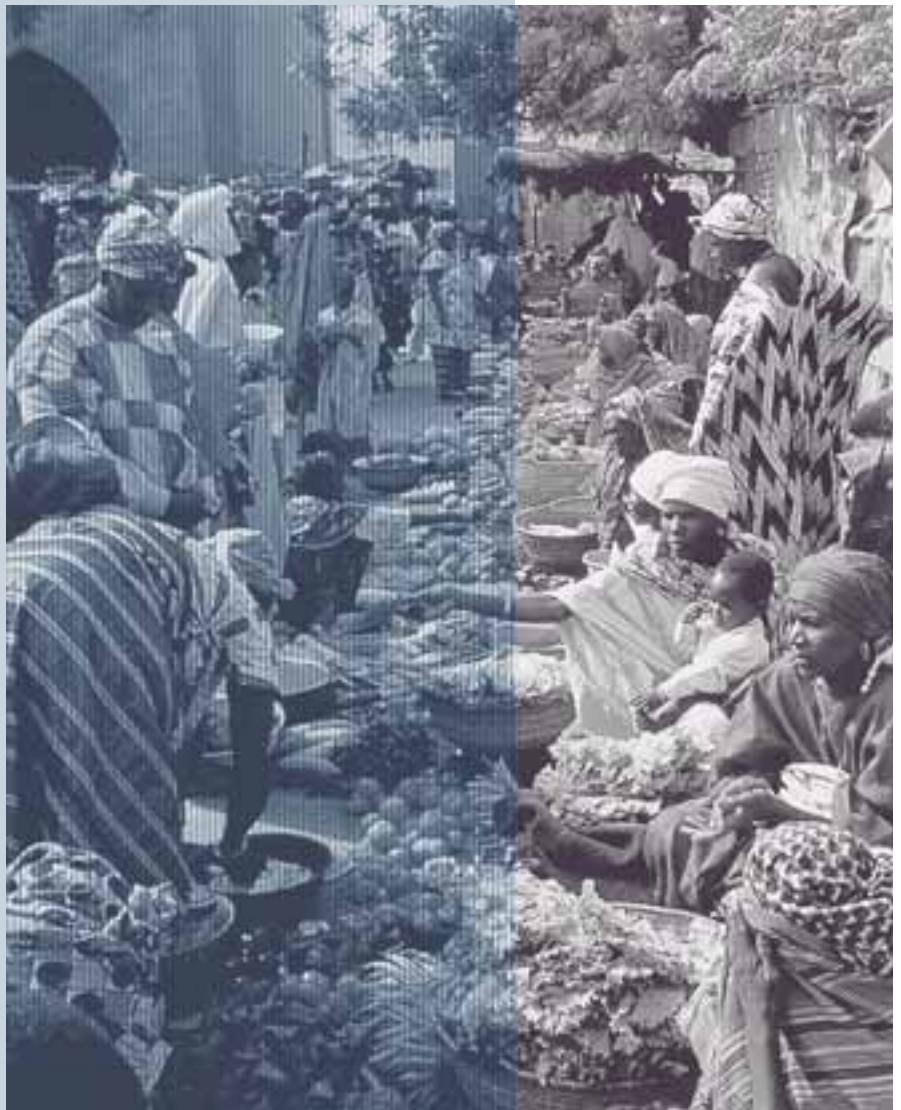
extreme poverty, a degrading natural environment and a generally low level of access to basic resources for the whole population. The region is isolated and there are very few development interventions – including from State – to target its 55'000 strong population. Though agriculture is the traditional source of income and food, the conditions have forced people to migrate for gold/mineral seeking. The potential for irrigation – linked to the river overflowing annually – is not exploited and agricultural techniques are ancestral.

Socially, the region is characterised by a multi-ethnic composition – including the nomad/sedentary dimension – and some persisting forms of slavery. Between the various groups, land ownership is a key stake, and the political and social climate is fragile. There are many female-headed households amongst the Sonrai and Touareg, due to male migration. They are involved in multiple economic activities – petty trade, agriculture, gold seeking. Compared to Peulh women, whose movements are restricted by their Muslim religion, Sonrai and Touareg women enjoy better freedom of

movement. However, their living conditions are precarious. Girls have limited access to school and are subjected to genital mutilation, forced feeding and early marriage.

The CADELT programme follows a local development approach, combining empowerment measures with the provision of basic services including improvement of roads and ponds, communication, water systems, credit and food security. «Balancing» power between different stakeholders – including between women and men – is an important objective of the programme. Gender mainstreaming and the promotion of democracy/governance are considered as two transversal themes. On the gender axis, in its first phase, the programme worked at several levels.

To have an impact **at grassroots level**, it has supported capacity building of resource people amongst local women and men, and some local female and male students. This has led to a diagnosis of further specific actions/options with the potential to act as leverage for gender.

At the **institutional level**, several routes have been followed. The 3 programme staff were trained from the very beginning of the project in basic concepts, including the application of gender tools in the field, with the support of the Gender Programme manager. Procedures were targeted too, and led to disaggregated information on women and men' needs, as well as to the explicit mention of actions to tackle discrimination such as:

- Fight against girls' genital mutilations and other forms of discrimination against women.
- Promotion of women and men's better access to popular saving schemes.
- Participation of women in all levels of decision-making and inclusion of their needs in all activities.

■ Reinforcement of legal knowledge of women and men to encourage their wider participation in community and political life.

At the end of the first phase, it became clear that some aspects of the programme had omitted gender and that some processes were not equitable from a gender perspective. For instance, women complained about the labour intensive approach used for infrastructure works as they saw little of the financial rewards associated with such aspects of the programme. A monitoring framework was thus developed in the second phase of the programme, looking at each component of the programme (water, infrastructure, credit etc.)

Aiming to «re-balance» power between ethnic groups and women/men, CADELT organised meetings whenever key decisions were to be made. It used a quota system and built the capacity of some women to ensure their participation in these events and in various committees associated with the programme. CADELT has also recently started to support the creation of a cadre of women leaders in order to create local women's expertise to act as leverage in the process of social change.

For the future, the programme has identified the need to bridge the gap between women and men in terms of access to information at field level. Programmatic issues include an intensified use of the monitoring framework to allow a constant re-reading of the local scene. Finally, it is necessary to carry on specific studies to supplement self-evaluation exercises to synchronise actions and needs.

What has been achieved and learnt?
At CADELT level, most staff is gender sensitive. Gender is visible in programme documents and a monitoring instrument has been created. Also, mechanisms exist to promote the participation of women and different ethnic groups in all activities including in theatre groups and in

the identification of local problems. Finally, women leaders are now emerging. Weaker points are linked to an insufficient translation of diagnosis into actions; the lack of skills to identify specific gender stakes, and the lack of systematic use of existing gender mainstreaming tools.

At SDC Niger level, conclusions from the experience of mainstreaming gender in programmes are that gender is necessary to tackle social justice and to make programmes efficient and sustainable. Resources are needed, both for gender specific and integrated programmes. Process-wise, it is clear that gender is best integrated at the very beginning of a programme and that it requires constant checking against evaporation and deviation. Tools must be adapted to staff jobs and responsibilities and training is necessary to ensure that they are owned and used by the teams.

At all stages, it is important to create alliances and synergies with competent local resources on gender mainstreaming. It is also essential to create spaces where development partners – SDC connected and others – can exchange experience..

A «gender officer» is instrumental to create and maintain the necessary momentum. However, at country level, programme managers and the head of COOF have a key monitoring role. The role of Headquarters is fundamental too and yearly visits are useful to identify good practice, provide methodological support and promote gender at Headquarters

Finally, internal equal opportunities issues must be addressed to firmly ground gender «at home» as well as in programmes. The fact that there are no women in programme teams is a handicap for gender mainstreaming at grassroots level.

Views on the limits of flexibility

As discussed previously, a central aspect of SDC's approach is to foster development from the bottom up. Nevertheless, it does this recognising that there is a tension between the interests and needs of local men and State women, their State and civil society organisations, and SDC's own vision of development. SDC experience highlights that there is a delicate balance between a focus on the priorities and views of local partner organisations and of women and men at the grassroots, and SDC's own gender equality policy priorities. SDC priorities may not be shared by Swiss and local partners or by communities at the local level, or they may be interpreted by the different actors in very different ways.

Much of SDC practice demonstrates that it is possible to meet bottom up objectives at the same time as promoting SDC's own policy objectives. The two do not need to be mutually exclusive. Working towards both goals does require a level of flexibility as was talked about earlier, but it also requires negotiation and adaptation. Nevertheless, some partners feel that SDC policy priorities are too easily diluted in discussions and policy dialogue with local partners in the name of «adaptation»

and that SDC as an organisation must make a clear stand for what it believes.

The Gram Vikas case is a good demonstration of how a local partner with strong commitments to gender equality can negotiate its agenda in a community fraught with divisions and inequalities. Supporting a bottom up approach, they nevertheless came in with a clear statement of conditionality related to requirements on the representation and participation of women in decision-making bodies at the village level. Through the entry point and strategies discussed above, it was possible to get these conditions accepted over time, without losing the support of local men and women. RHDP in Nepal was able to negotiate similar conditions with the Village Development Committees. These cases also demonstrate that, despite the argument coming from resisting corners that «gender is imposed by donors», the principle of gender equality is promoted independently from donors by an increasing number of indigenous organisations.

In other cases, the experience has been that a top down introduction of gender equality goals may create resistance which can damage the cause of gender equality. This can lead to the problem, which has been noted by staff in a number of COOFs, of «gender fatigue» among Swiss and local partners. For example, in the experience of COOF Bolivia (**see case study 13, pg 84**) it was felt that overemphasis on gender as an issue being promoted by SDC from the top-down, was leading to resistance amongst some project partners. In such situations, repeated discussion of gender issues, without a deepening understanding with concrete examples of their relevance, means that partners become increasingly resistant to addressing gender issues rather than increasingly aware of and committed to dealing with them.

A similar trend can be found elsewhere. The Macedonia case mentions how SDC HQ, COOF staff and local partners are becoming

«tired» of the issue, after one and a half year of a high profile in the Country Programme. «It has become very important to think of strategies to keep up momentum, but in subtler way, so progress is made towards gender equality, without overuse of jargon» (**see case study 10, pg 62**). Both cases make suggestions of how to maintain flexibility and adapt and link to endogenous strategies of gender equality to ensure that resistance does not build up against gender as an externally imposed priority.

The experience of the COOF in Bolivia (**see case study 13, pg 84**) demonstrates how compromises can be made. In order to ensure local «ownership» of gender equality as a policy priority, the COOF aligned SDC's Gender Equality Policy with the policy priorities and methodological approaches of partners. Working with PROINPA, a local project organisation, the COOF supported PROINPA's own approach to working on gender issues, through focusing on their participatory methodologies and extension approaches, rather than by introducing SDC's own methodologies.

In the Macedonia case, the suggestion is for positive and concrete examples to illustrate the different needs of women and men, and the implications of interventions in discussions with partners. Having gender disaggregated data on the problems to be addressed and on the results of programmes and projects is more effective than appealing to «higher» principles.

> «I think we need to change attitudes and ways of thinking and practices, and the best way to do this is to start with lived experience, not with theoretical statements. Let's work with our hearts and minds to change attitudes, and afterwards this can yield much more important changes in gender attitudes.»
> *Rosario Jacome, SDC Ecuador*

Reflections on some methodologies essential to flexibility

The strategic definition of entry points for SDC programmes is based on a good understanding of the gender relations in a particular context. As the discussion on page 27 shows, it is not possible to define an «uncontested domain» or the relevance of gender in contextual realities and emerging priorities without this. Thus, as was extensively discussed in the previous chapter, the starting point for defining strategic entry points and strategies is a gender aware analysis.

Another key methodological consideration in formulating and developing flexible strategies is a good monitoring system. As discussed in the previous sections, challenging and maintaining changes in social relations requires inputs over long periods. Monitoring is a key

tool to ensure that changes are in process and are being sustained. From a gender perspective, this implies the need for «constant checking against evaporation and deviation». (**see case study 6, pg 37**)

This importance of tracking change has already been demonstrated in the cases of Mali and Burkina Faso (**see case studies 2 and 3, pg 16 and 21**), where research on gender carried out after the implementation demonstrated the progress of SDC programmes in addressing gender inequalities, based on the views of women and men at the grassroots. What the Niger case (**see case study 6, pg 37**) demonstrates is that this sort of information needs to be collected on a regular basis through a monitoring system.

After Phase One of the CADELT programme in Niger it was clear that gender concerns had been excluded from the programm e and that some procedures were even resulting in inequalities. A monitoring framework was thus developed in the second phase of the programme to track changes in all its components. This included regular meetings when key decisions had to be made, taking active steps to ensure that women were equally included in these events.

In Ecuador an annual evaluation of each project is carried out to monitor the progress of the mainstreaming strategy. «A gender expert with a backstopping mandate has provided technical assistance throughout the process» (**see case study 7, pg 44**). Since a gender disaggregated analysis is done at the beginning as the basis for planning, baseline data is available for the annual assessment. For example, after a review of progress in the Licto rural development project SDC responded flexibly to changes in the activities and the budget.

Therefore, in the context of any intervention it is important to determine both what kind of change in gender relations are proposed and should be tracked, and how they should be tracked. With respect to what kind of gender information is needed, the Mali and Burkina Faso cases demonstrate the importance of involving women and men in the choice of indicators. Measuring change requires that the full range of groups of women and men have «voices» and are reached by SDC interventions (e.g. in Gram Vikas, India the importance of consultation with Dalits and other marginalised groups was stressed). It is crucial to distinguish between cause and effect in attempts to identify changes in gender relations.

Monitoring should of course be ethical, in that the subjects of research are fully informed and not put in a position of conflict with other groups (e.g. other household or community members) as a result of the data collected from selected household and community mem-

> «I feel that a common difficulty many of us face is «what approach should be adopted to implement our programmes on gender?» What tools do we have? What methods do we have? And I really do feel there are shared difficulties. The methodological approach, the techniques to be used, the tools, whether we're especially focusing on men or women. It's a shared difficulty. It's a major challenge for the bodies responsible for gender at whatever level we're talking about.»
> *Toure Adama Moussa, SDC Mali*

bers. SDC experience demonstrated that we also need to be careful about the importance of linking with other donors, national departments, especially for national level context monitoring.

In terms of how information should be tracked, many of the lessons from the previous chapter on doing gender aware analysis apply here. As indicated in the Ecuador case, monitoring changes in gender relations requires the collection of «differentiated» baseline data in a systematic manner, using both quantitative and qualitative approaches to ensure that deeper processes of change can be revealed (e.g. women and men's roles and relations in decision-making, or changes in status), as well as more direct measures of change that can be reflected numerically (e.g. gender balance in staff).

In most interventions, we find it useful to carry out both «gender» and «gendered» monitoring (i.e. monitoring the extent to which gender is mainstreamed as well as monitoring all interventions in a way that reveals the different impacts and results for women and men). In the Ecuador case (**see case study 7, pg 44**), reference is made to the need for gender specific as well as gender disaggregated indicators. This involves the use of a range specific gender monitoring tools such as specific studies on gender relations, or trend analysis to assess changes in SDC interventions.

Sheets 11 and 12 in the Toolkit are a guide to the sort of questions and indicators that are important for monitoring and evaluation.

The Niger experience also discusses the responsibility for monitoring in the COOF. While they argue that the «gender officer» is «instrumental to create and maintain the necessary momentum…at country level, programme managers and the head of the COOF have a key monitoring role» (**see case study 6, pg 37**).

Besides the value of learning and tracking changes from monitoring, the Macedonia case makes an additional strong argument for monitoring the measurable results of SDC and partner policy, programme and project impacts on gender equality. «The use of the term gender without accompanying actions and visible and measurable results, threatens to become just another declarative statement without a meaning, creating even bigger resistance and fortifying the existing prejudices» (**see case study 10, pg 62**).

Is gender reality a reality? To what extent? Lessons learnt from Ecuador
By Holger Tausch (SDC, Ecuador)

Synthesis: This case highlights the importance of monitoring the mainstreaming strategy in the different projects in the country programme, using annual «evaluations». To carry this out, it emphasises the need for gender disaggregated baseline and monitoring data. It also emphasises the need to remain flexible in response to the findings, to adapt strategies and budgets accordingly. It argues that changes in relations of power across gender, class and race/ethnicity are possible, and defines a number of additional conditions to this success.

Since 2000, SDC in Ecuador has been implementing a gender strategy in the three focal areas of its Country Programme: employment and income-generation, environmental management and local development. A decision was taken to prioritise projects that had already made progress on gender and those more relevant to gender. The aim of this approach was to concentrate efforts on projects where gender equality was most likely to bear fruit. Gender mainstreaming focuses both on changes within the (prioritised) projects themselves and on processes associated with the planning cycle. To monitor the strategy, each

In the Licto rural development project, a gender aware analysis identified that the white and mixed groups dominated the structures of power which excludes indigenous people. This led to an institutional and political decision to intervene in favour of the indigenous populations, and women amongst them. An alliance was built with the local indigenous organisation, CODOCAL, in order to challenge the traditional trilogy of power: economic elite, political and church leaders. An operational arm of the organisation was created to work on irrigation issues. A gender strategy was formulated to address and change gender relations and promote empowerment. The project leaders worked closely with the population. Mechanisms to report on progress and changes were built in and they informed the need for changes in the strategies. SDC responded flexibly to proposed changes in the activities and the budget.

project evaluates its achievements on a yearly basis and a gender expert with a backstopping mandate has provided technical assistance throughout the process. Mainstreaming gender starts first, by a gender-disaggregated analyses providing the basis to plan the project objectives and its strategies and making women's needs visible. During implementation, the focus is on the use of approaches to strategically «diffuse» traditional power structures which tend to exclude some groups in society, including women. This means explicitly confronting power as a social construction and, within this, confronting unequal gender relations as socially constructed and therefore, as «transformable» (able to be transformed).

A closer look at impact on gender relations highlights some key factors for change:

- Leadership and political will are essential factors to support gender mainstreaming in projects, to the point that «it is better not to start mainstreaming if commitment is not available as this will lead to a loss of time and resources»;
- Changes in power relations are possible between women and men, indigenous people and mixed (mestizos) and white groups, and between people on the «fringes» and the various centres of power (centre/periphery, urban/rural);
- Gender specific indicators as well as gender-disaggregated indicators are needed. The latter systematically compare women/men in all aspects of the project, whilst the former measure the impact of actions specifically aiming to change relations between women and men. Positive gender changes benefit the whole population and they are more likely to happen when unequal gender relations are specifically targeted.
- Changes in the management and norms of peasants' organisations are also significant, including a revision of access to the organisations to allow more women to become

members, assistance with watering for pregnant women and alternating women/men in the seats of president and vice-president.

- Targeting women for capacity building has led to a revision of the methodologies of training (e.g. indigenous women, more than men). Once tools were adapted to suit women's needs, they induced great changes both at home and in the community.
- Resources linked to production – skills, credits, agricultural inputs – were oriented to suit women's production (e.g. crops and animal husbandry which they control) as this was the only way to give them greater access to resources and reach a balance with resources allocated to men.

7

In the Nabon project, a gender analysis and the use of gender specific indicators revealed that women had limited access to time, and income from craft work. A specific demand of women was for family rather than community-based water reservoirs – which was taken on board by the project – and micro services. Based on this, the project built indicators to capture various changes. With the use of these indicators, it was possible to measure changes in the projects resulting in the use of labour falling from 3 to 1 person. Also in this process, women – particularly those on their own – had gained autonomy since they did not need to request assistance anymore. Changes in the reservoir system also made it possible to access water every 6 days – instead of 9, thus increasing the quality of crops. Time used by watering session went down from 7 hours to 30 minutes, leaving time for other activities (childcare, domestic work, craft and other agricultural work for women, and agricultural and casual work for men)

In the Coricam project (rural development), capacity building made it possible for women to move from their private/individual sphere to a public and mixed environment. Women gained bargaining power at home – with their father/parents or husband – leading to discussions around the introduction of technological changes in their plots. In the mixed interest groups, they gained confidence to express themselves, tried new technologies, which brought more outputs, and earned them more respect in the family and community.

7

Lessons from SDC Ecuador

The incorporation of gender in projects must be seen as a medium to long term process which requires the individual and institutional commitment of everyone. It also needs a specific and high quality technical assistance. Leadership at the highest level is a key asset, as is flexibility in implementation. A multi-level strategy is most effective, targeting simultaneously programmes/strategies, projects and target groups.

One must be prepared for many forms of changes, including the formulation of new tools and/or the revision of existing ones. Above all, gender mainstreaming implies a «re-reading» of the projects' base-line analysis conceptual framework, strategies etc. through a gender lens for the purpose of mainstreaming. This can lead to a total re-thinking of projects, including the need for them to be «demand-led» . Staff competence is a sine qua non condition for effective mainstreaming and must be anchored in the gender stakes and issues relevant to each project. It is possible to break resistances and achieve a change of attitude amongst project staff and partners via an open dialogue to diffuse the idea that development is always «beneficial» to all people and discuss how projects can create or exacerbate inequalities between women and men.

Cross-cutting social realities (gender, race, religion etc.) must be reflected in monitoring. Monitoring systems must inform projects about the achievements of equity in processes and impacts too.

Some keys challenges faced by SDC Ecuador

- Changes in projects and target groups are not sufficient to have the long lasting and profound effect needed to balance gender relations. There is much self-exclusion of indigenous people and women, and strategies must be defined and integrated in projects to work on the psychological and cultural dimension of exclusion.
- Projects must «meet women and their demand where they are». This involves challenging traditional power structures.
- Responding to demand is itself de-stabilising for many projects which tend to respond to institutional demand. «Gender-disaggregated demand» introduces yet another layer of complexity and is therefore still weak. This is mainly due to the very technical skills of staff. In this context, it is a real challenge to truly promote women and men's equal access to participatory diagnosis and decision-making of projects.
- The interdisciplinary nature of gender is still under recognised and synergies between actors and sectors are still weak. Gender experts must be integrated in teams working at different key moments of the planning cycle.
- Finally, successes and lessons now need to be extended from the prioritised projects to the rest of the interventions.

Lessons learnt and recommendations

SDC experience confirms that working towards gender equality is a process which requires flexibility and time. Addressing often multiple forms of oppression around not just gender, but also class, caste and ethnicity, requires not only careful gender aware analysis but also strategic choice about the entry point for interventions. A range of options, not mutually exclusive, has emerged from SDC experience:

■ focusing initially on «uncontested domains» which after the programme/project is consolidated, can assist in addressing more conflictive and challenging gender needs;

■ being directed to focus on particular issues because of contextual realities or emerging priorities;

■ prioritising projects, sectors or actions where progress has already been made on gender equality;

■ respecting women and men's self-determination and being direct by the expressed needs and interests of women and men themselves where conditions for their equal «voice» have been established.

The SDC experience also points to three other strategic choices which «frame» strategy development in order to strengthen gender as a transversal issue. The first is the choice of whether or not to use pilot projects to build trust and open up spaces for women's participation, particularly in contexts of extreme oppression. This provides a flexible framework to respond to challenges and to learn in a difficult context. The second is the development of a two pronged strategy: developing gender specific actions and gender mainstreamed actions. The decision of what to target is informed by gender aware analysis and consultation with partners and grassroots women and men. The third is the strategic choice in dealing with women and men in situations where caste, ethnicity and class are also forms of oppression. Various cases show

how it is not possible to deal with one aspect of women and men's identity without understanding and addressing the other forms of oppression which are also central to that identity.

This chapter also touched on the delicate balance that is necessary in weighing the expressed interests and need of local partners and women and men at grassroots' level against the priorities of SDC's gender equality policy. There were demands from local partners that the policy priorities be clearly visible and discussed, but they also demonstrated a range of experience in addressing resistance to gender and avoiding «gender fatigue» among SDC HQ, and Swiss and local partners.

At least two methodological requirements emerged as fundamental to adopting a flexible approach to strategies for gender equality. The first is, as stated above, a gender aware analysis in which women and men at the grassroots have been involved, so that there is a good understanding of the situation and challenges to be faced. The second is the need for a monitoring system which will track changes and feedback into experience, allowing for learning and adaptation of strategies. In this respect, both «gender» and «gendered» monitoring are important, both requiring the regular collection of gender disaggregated data.

MULTI-LEVEL APPROACH

The third guiding principle of the SDC Gender Equality Policy
is that activities need to be undertaken at a number of, mutually
reinforcing, levels. This is because:

«The promotion of gender equality is effective and
facilitates social change when the different levels
of intervention are tackled; policy dialogue and
framework conditions at the macro level, institutional
development and relations between and within organi-
sations at the meso level and women and men in
households/communities at the micro level. This
principle applies to all SDC interventions: bilateral and
multilateral development as well as humanitarian aid.»
(SDC Gender Equality Policy, 2003, pg 5)

In using a multi-level approach to promote gender equality, SDC has an important role to play in helping to form links and networks between the wide range of actors who are working to improve the lives of women and men, as well as supporting their activities at a range of different levels – from the macro-policy level, down to the micro-level.

«In March of this year we got the Bosnia & Herzegovina Equality Law, so we introduced this to people so that they would know already what it would mean to have this gender law at the State level. We realised we needed to do something concrete after this sensitisation. We took one of our agriculture projects. This region is specific because it has a huge number of women refugees from Srebuniza, but they employed just one woman educated in working with women. She specifically designed a project for them. In the end, she created 600 jobs mainly for these women refugees. After 2 years of the project, these women were capable of sustaining their families. Afterwards, they decided to have an association of the women producers, because until then, there was only one association dominated by men. To start with, they worked absolutely without our help, the project developed very organically. At some stage though, we advised them that it may be good to have a joint association rather than to work separately from men, because women and men share many common interests. As soon as they realised that, they increased their presence in the local markets and they are now in the process of creating a producers' marketing group, and this group is going to represent the interests of both women and men producers. They are now aiming to have one joint association which is not going to have in the title any kind of masculine or feminine designation.»
Almira Drino, SDC Bosnia & Herzegovina

Reflections on SDC contributions to the national level

Not all countries with which SDC works have such strong national frameworks for gender equality as South Africa (**see case study 8, pg 51**). As the case illustrates, South Africa has a strong constitutional framework for gender equality. 30% of Members of Parliament are women and there is a strong legislative framework to address gender inequalities related to issues like domestic violence, customary marriage, termination of pregnancy and employment. In line with its international obligations, it has also set up a range of organisational structures in government to address gender equality within its public sector and in mainstream policies.

However, where these structures do not exist or do not work well, SDC experience shows that there is a contribution to be made. In Tajikistan (**see case study 11, pg 70**) although the Government has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimi-

nation against Women (CEDAW), the International Bill of Human Rights, and a number of policy commitments to gender equality, their legislative framework does not reflect these obligations. Thus, the COOF has supported the OSCE to provide expertise to assess the situation. This will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. Similarly, the Macedonia case also argues that more support to countries on «the implementation of various conventions on human rights and gender equality» (**see case study 10, pg 62**) greatly facilitates overall development.

The situation in Peru perhaps presents the more usual national framework. The case (**see case study 9, pg 56**) refers to a «start-stop» process of incorporating gender into national legislative and policy frameworks. While platforms exist for monitoring CEDAW and Beijing commitments, the political commitment to gender is weak resulting in a lack of clarity

and guidance within government programmes and partners.

Despite the strong constitutional and legislative frameworks, South Africa shares something with all these – and probably other – cases of SDC experience: there is a gap between legislative and policy frameworks for gender equality, and mainstream development policy formulation and implementation. Both the South Africa and Peru cases hint at the marginalization of gender equality issues in mainstream policy. Both point to the continuing inequalities between women and men in their countries, despite relatively positive national frameworks for gender equality.

The case has already been made for donor co-ordination around gender equality (**see Chapter «Flexibility in implementation», pg 41**), but it is an important point to make here as well. In many countries, there are a range of other bilateral and multilateral agencies involved in gender mainstreaming activities. In order to avoid duplicating activities, and to share resources and information, it is common for these agencies to set up coordinating groups and forums on gender. It is therefore important, where these forums exist, for SDC to participate in them in order to define their own special niche for working towards gender equality, and to identify resources and partners with which it can work. Where such forums do not exist, it may be feasible for SDC to take a role in initiating their creation, or at least lobbying for their creation. This makes it possible to contribute to the coordination of gender mainstreaming activities from the local level up to the macro-policy level, as is discussed in the Niger case study (**see case study 6, pg 37**).

As this whole document indicates, there is a great variety in the success of SDC Country Programmes to contribution to making the links between constitutional and legislative frameworks and policy practice. These strategies will be discussed in section 3. However, it would be true to say that most programmes do not work directly with the national bodies responsible for implementing international commitments on gender equality. The «national machineries» for gender mainstreaming, are, as outlined in the Beijing Platform for Action, a «central policy coordinating unit inside the Government» to support government-wide mainstreaming of a gender-equality perspective in all policy areas, and to ensure the implementation of the eleven substantive areas outlined in the Platform for Action.

Certainly in the formulation of Country Programmes there is a case for SDC to at least consult actors such as the «national machineries» to ensure that their strategic focus can contribute in some way to the strategies adopted by these agencies. This is not only important for SDC's gender mainstreaming initiatives. Such recognition and consultation also strengthens the position of these «national machineries», which are often weak and overlooked by other government departments. This may also be a case for SDC Country Programmes to give them more direct support in some cases.

Maintaining the Momentum: Gains and challenges in achieving gender equality in post-apartheid South Africa
*By Nomfundo Mbuli (SDC, South Africa)*

Synthesis: South Africa is an illustrative case of the gap between a constitutional and legislative framework which represent great opportunities for the advancement of women's rights, and the implementation of policy which is lagging behind. SDC Pretoria in its engagement with this reality, is an excellent example of a COOF that is engaged with the crux of the challenge of gender equality in a particular context. The case shows how gender mainstreaming is often threatened by the introduction of other cross-cutting issues, or new priorities on the development agenda. In this case it is HIV/AIDS, in others it could be human rights.

The first financed SDC programme in South Africa started in 1981 during a period of brutal State repression, mass detentions and increasing violence in the country. At the time, a state of emergency was declared by apartheid Government in response to popular resistance. The Swiss Government did not want to support an apartheid Government that denied its people basic rights and therefore support was directed to South African NGOs, community organisations and disadvantaged people who were striving to overcome the repressive apartheid regime. From 1986 to 1994, SDC provided support in education, democratisation, as well as in the reintegration of refugees and returnees from exile.

With the new democratic dispensation in 1994, the Government of Switzerland decided to expand the programme to include governance and democracy, education and HIV/AIDS, and land reform. The aim was to support the transition from apartheid to a more integrated democratic State. In terms of gender, as this paper will illustrate, the context for SDC's interventions in these areas has been characterised

by a tension between the high-level political commitment and the efforts to make those commitments a reality in women's lives.

After decades of a politically oppressive regime, the central task of the new Government was to unify a deeply fragmented country
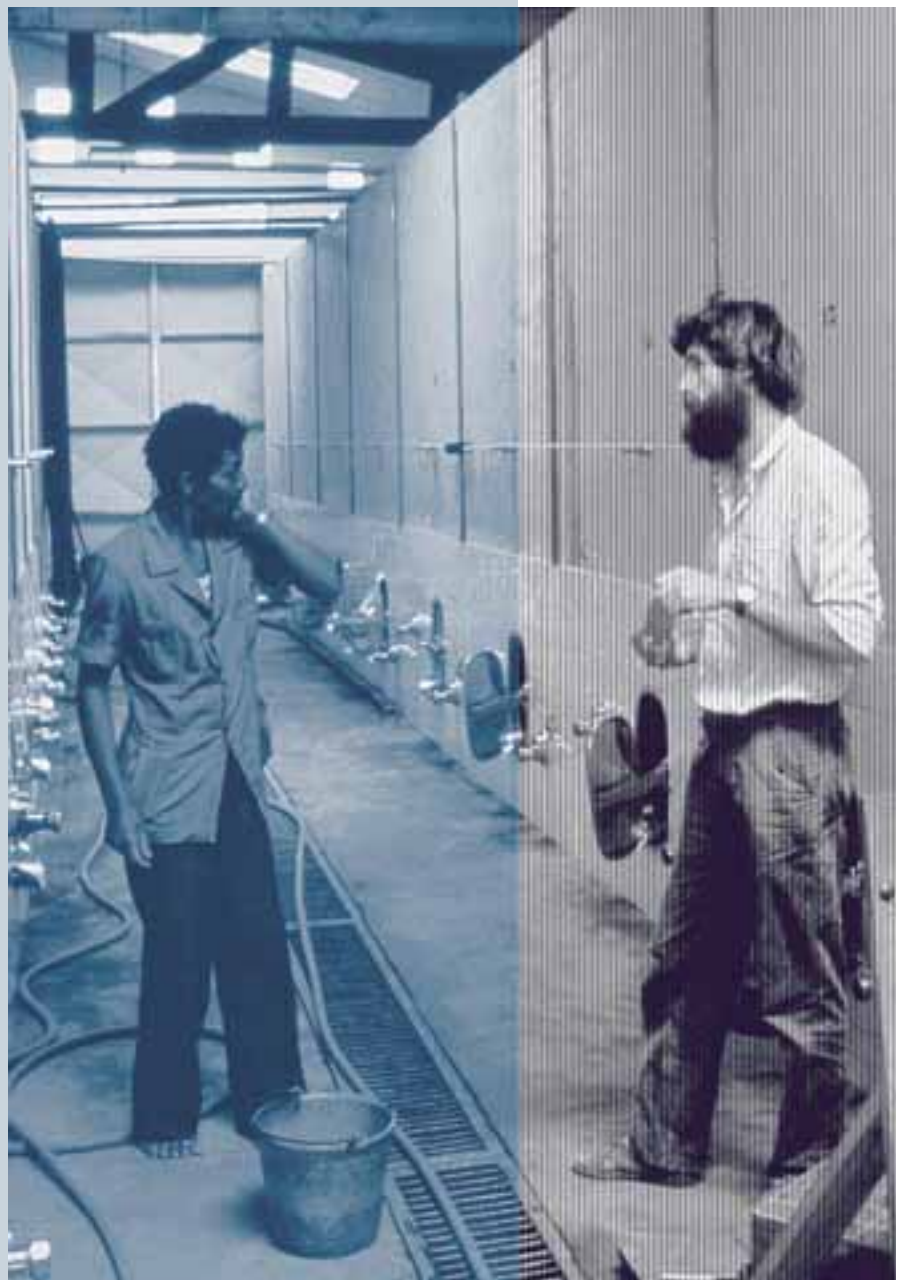
along race, class, gender and economic divides. Emerging from a history of abuse and disregard for human rights, South African women and men together drafted one of the world's most progressive constitutions committing to eradicate poverty, and address social inequalities. In the drafting of the first democratic Constitution, women's rights and gender activists insisted on the mainstreaming of gender considerations in the constitutional provisions. As a result, South Africa can boast a constitution which enshrines gender equality as a basic right.

One of the gains of the democratic dispensation is that women hold 29.8% of seats in Parliament and comprise 28.2% of local councillors. This compares favourably with countries in the region which achieved independence long before South Africa. The high levels of women's participation and representation in

Parliament have had a positive impact on public policy and have helped to change perceptions of women and raise awareness of their rights.

Parliament has passed a number of acts that deal with women's status directly – for example: free health care for pregnant mothers and their children under the age of six, the Child Maintenance Act (1998), the Domestic Violence Act (1998), the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act (1998), the Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act (1996) and the Employment Equity Act.

Building on this progressive Constitution, the South African Government created several institutions through which Government can meet its constitutional and international obligations on gender equality. These include the Office on the Status of Women, in the President's Office, the Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on the Quality of Life and Status of Women, and the Commission on Gender Equality. These organisations are tasked with investigating, monitoring, protecting and mainstreaming gender equality in the State and society. Furthermore, each minister must include a gender focal point officer, tasked with mainstreaming gender in his or her department. In practice, however, the gender units often become «dumping grounds» for all gender-related work. As a result the task of mainstreaming gender has not been without its problems and challenges.

While the Constitution and laws represent major victories for women's empowerment, the sad reality for the majority of women is that the struggle against violence, unemployment, illiteracy and general poverty continues daily. Nowhere is the gap between Government's legislative and gender-sensitive framework and the reality of women's lives more stark than in the violence perpetrated against women every day as illustrated by the stories of many

Renata de Lange's ex-partner refuses to pay maintenance for their 10-year-old son, even though he has a well-paid job. Under the Maintenance Act she is entitled to the monthly maintenance. Despite a court order he still refuses to pay. After attempts from Renata to contact him, he convinces a magistrate that she is stalking and harassing him. The magistrate grants him a protection order. She is no longer allowed to contact or approach him.

Ruth Magkalemela's husband works on a gold mine in Johannesburg. Twice a year he makes the four hour trip to rural KwaZulu-Natal to visit his wife and two children. Ruth has seen the posters and heard the messages about AIDS. During his next visit she tries to convince her husband to use a condom, but he refuses. She falls pregnant and when the baby is born the doctors tell her that she and the child are HIV positive.

Beatrix Vollenhoven has been married to her partner for three years. Since their honeymoon he beats her regularly, abuses her emotionally and frequently denies her money to buy groceries or clothes. Beatrix is unemployed. Once the beatings were so bad, she got a protection order against him. But six days later, she took him back. One week later she is back at the clinic after he whipped her with a leather belt and raped her. Beatrix knows she could get him arrested but she does not want to see him go to jail. He is the father of her children and she loves him.

women living in South Africa today (see box), which remind us of the varying levels of success of post-apartheid gender policies. These stories are real, even if the names are not.

The new democratic dispensation inherited a culture of disrespect for human beings, of violence against the powerless as well as a militarised society. Today, South Africa has one of the highest incidents of violence against women, in its various forms. According to one survey, 40–60% of intimate relationships are abusive. While the Domestic Violence Act has been enacted to provide protection to women who are emotionally, physically and economically abused by their partners, whether married or not, women are often unwilling to use this legislation against their partners, because of their low socio-economic status and dependence on their abusers as breadwinners.

While HIV/AIDS represents a challenge to all South Africans, women are more greatly affected by HIV, in part due to their low socio-economic status and lack of power even in stable relationships. According to the joint Nelson Mandela Foundation/Human Sciences Research Council national HIV study, 12.8% of women are HIV positive, compared to 9.5% of men.

Lessons for SDC Pretoria
The integration and implementation of gender provisions within COOF programmes by some of our partners is guided by the national framework which employs dual strategies by working with women and men in some cases, and in others working separately with women.

One example is our partner organisation, the Southern Cape Land Committee Trust (SCLC), a land reform organisation working in the rural areas of the Western Cape where there are many obstacles to securing women's rights to land. By ensuring that women participate in their programme, SCLC has made immense

progress in this regard. However, it has also experienced difficulties. It was realised that in the absence of monitoring tools for mainstreaming, there is a danger of only using numbers as a measure of success.

Most programmes have interpreted mainstreaming to mean a 50/50 women/men participation in programmes. In fact, there is an additional task of ensuring that the 50/50 split means that women reap the same benefits as men from a programme in a tangible way. Qualitative indicators are needed to monitor that such goals are achieved.

Another obstacle to translating gender-sensitive policy and legislation into reality has been inadequate funding. South Africa needs to match its gender commitments with effective budgets. In view of these limited resources, we have also witnessed the increasing trend to put gender mainstreaming on the back seat in favour of HIV/AIDS mainstreaming. This is in itself ironic as HIV/AIDS and gender are inextricably linked. We therefore need to meaningfully incorporate and monitor both gender and HIV/AIDS into our programmes.

South African women can today claim rights that are guaranteed and protected by the Constitution. South Africa is still faced with many challenges. To achieve a society free of racism and sexism the country must undergo a paradigm shift with regard to how people relate to each other. While more work lies ahead, much has already been achieved to ensure that women like Beatrix, Ruth and Renata can see tangible changes in their life circumstances. In this context, development cooperation from agencies like SDC should continue to strengthen local efforts in an attempt to improve the lives of women.

8

Views on and from partners in country programmes

The choice of and relationship with partners (Swiss, national state agencies and NGOs) is obviously key to the success of gender mainstreaming. In the SDC Peru case (**see case study 9, pg 56**), partners were considered uncommitted to gender equality, despite years of effort by SDC to raise the issues with them. In the case of Macedonia (**see case study 10, pg 62**), working in fields such as economic sustainability or environment and infrastructure, lack of gender awareness among both Swiss and local partners led to problems in achieving concrete results for gender equality.

Out of this experience, local SDC staff, both in the conference and documented in the cases, have asked for a revision of criteria in the choice of partners. At country level, for example, the Peru case calls for choosing partners «…on the basis of knowledge of gender issues and other experience in dealing with inequalities between women and men» (**see case study 9, pg 56**). The Ecuador case argues as forcefully that «it is better not to start mainstreaming if commitment is not available as this will lead to a loss of time and resources»

(**see case study 7, pg 74**). As the case study of Bolivia shows (**see case study 13, pg 84**), choosing to work with partners who also prioritise gender equality means that outcomes are improved. This is because such organisations are genuinely committed to addressing gender concerns, rather than paying lip service to them because they are seen as a priority for donors. In addition, organisations who are already committed to gender equality tend to have the capacity, or are willing to build their capacity, to address gender concerns. This is also illustrated in the case of Macedonia (**see case study 10, pg 62**) where partners in their work on strengthening civil society either had experience of working with gender or were enthusiastic about taking the issue on.

SDC's experience shows that many of our local partners do have gender competence, though this tends to be stronger in the civil society sector – and weaker within the State. However, competence amongst our Swiss and international partners is mixed. Southern partners, in particular local gender officers find it difficult to work with Swiss organisations that are gender blind. In the Macedonia case (**see case study 10, pg 62**), a gender blind Swiss partner combined with resistant State organisations that did not see gender as a priority issue for the country, left very little room for manoeuvre. SDC needs therefore to ensure that Swiss partners take on board their own national legal framework around gender equality. This was a plea made by many southern partners at the Fribourg conference.

It could also be argued that by choosing to work with gender aware partners, SDC is sending a clear message to other national government and non-government organisations about their commitment to gender equality and to working with organisations that also prioritise this issue. For example, fighting discrimination was identified as one of the main themes of the SDC India Country Programme 2003 – 2010. Their selection of partners like Gram Vikas and Navsarjan are indications of this commitment.

Many participants at the Fribourg Conference on the Capitalisation of SDC Experience in Gender Mainstreaming in June 2003 suggested another approach for encouraging partners to build their capacity and activities around gender issues. This is for SDC to further explore the scope for using rewards or sanctions with partners who do or do not make efforts to improve their performance on promoting gender equality. The Peru case (**see case study 9, pg 56**) also makes this point.

However, as raised in the discussion on the limits to flexibility (**see Chapter «Flexibility in implementation», pg 40**) this approach must be used with caution. Unless used sensitively (perhaps with a stress on rewards rather than sanctions), project partners may see gender equality as an issue which is being forced on them.

Partners also raised another issue in the Fribourg Conference that related to how Swiss development co-operation can send out conflicting messages about gender equality when communicating with partners. This is a particular danger when the stance of different sections of the COOF (for example SECO, SDC or staff working on Humanitarian Assistance) have different levels of commitment or support for gender issues. In the Macedonia case, the initial reluctance of SECO to address the issue «meant that roughly a third of the country programme has not been exposed to any kind of gender perspective» (**see case study 10, pg 62**). This also gave confusing messages to partners. This situation has changed since SECO has been more proactive in addressing gender issues. Similarly, differences can emerge between SDC at HQ and COOF level in country visits. It is clearly important that these different sections of Swiss development co-operation work towards building a common understanding of, and stance on, gender issues.

«We have a project called «Project for the Reduction of Violence Against Women (PROVAW)» to reduce the impact of violence against women. The project is implemented by an international NGO and the co-operation office has the task to monitor and supervise the project. So in order to start the project we have made some assessments, to reveal the importance of the problem of domestic violence. One of our aims was to strengthen local NGOs and local communities. Initially we identified several local Tajikistani NGOs working in the field of women's empowerment and violence, but NGOs are very young and have no real knowledge on gender-based violence. They are also very weak in terms of their own management. So the project had to build capacities on both levels: management and also gender-based violence.

But there was an additional problem. The project was designed by people working in this international NGO, and some people left. So the international NGO lost the capacity that was being put to work on the topic. At the same time, as the training was with the local NGOs the staff of the implementing agency had to be built. So they were more or less on the same level. So the project design was to work on different levels and on different sectors as well. Different levels means the community level but also on the level of the regions and even at the national level. And regarding sectors, it should be the project aim to address the problems of violence by raising awareness but also of course then to give a kind of support to survivors of violence because there is a need for counselling, medical, psychological and also legal support.»
Hans-Peter Reiser, SDC Tajikistan

Making gender a transversal theme: challenges for implementation in Peru
By Cesarina Quintana (SDC, Peru)

Synthesis: This case study very clearly illustrates that little can be achieved in reaching the goal of gender equality without the two key requirements. The first is a qualitative and quantitative understanding and targeting of the root causes for gender inequalities. The second is the political commitment of SDC and its partners. While this case highlights a number of successful initiatives in addressing gender issues, because of the absence of these requirements, the authors of this report concede that «…power relations between women and men have not been touched».

SDC has been working in Peru for nearly 40 years. Since 1993, the gender regional strategy has influenced the integration of gender in all interventions, with varying degrees of success.

Peru is characterised by very unequal gender relations in most areas of life. 16% of women are illiterate (up to 25% in rural areas) compared to 5% of men (9% in rural areas). On average, girls enjoy 6 to 9 years of education, compared to 8 to 9 years for boys. In rural areas, these figures go down to under 3 years for girls and nearly 5 years for boys. Women and men also have poor access to reproductive health services (infant mortality rates are very high). Fertility rates vary greatly between women (5.1 for uneducated and rural women compared to 1.8 for educated women). Though the number of women in the labour market has increased, women remain in low pay and low skill jobs, mainly in the informal sector and without any social security. Their average income per year is 42% less than men's. Violence against women is rife. Women's political representation has recently increased following a positive action bill, but they remain a minority (23 women and 97 men in Congress).

Peru has known successive waves of «start-stop» gender policies and initiatives at planning level. Policies that followed Beijing in 1995 were not implemented and the move has been towards watering down their contents. Today, anti-poverty and safety net actions for

women dominate the work of Government machinery, which has weakened its political position and visibility over the years. However, there are also positive signs. Various platforms exist for the monitoring of CEDAW and Beijing, violence was tackled during 2000 (a year against domestic violence), and several bills on discrimination and equal opportunities have been proposed. But the assimilation of gender equality with other forms of equality has damaged the process of their adoption.

SDC's approach to gender

SDC' office in Peru has promoted gender for 10 years. However, the operationalisation of gender mainstreaming in programmes is not yet a reality. There is a lack of tools and strategies to incorporate gender in the planning cycle and amongst partners. Currently, gender is more likely to be «ticked» in logical frameworks/plans to mean the participation of women and/or the production of resources for mainstreaming (videos, manuals etc.). Hence, gender related indicators are basic and mainly quantitative.

Ways should be found to:
- make visible women's contributions, opinions and needs in comparison to men's;
- include women in decision-making processes and negotiations linked to projects;
- promote gender equality in all aspects of organisational processes and issues.

Achievements and issues to resolve:
Despite many years of gender efforts, SDC has the feeling that partners are not committed to the theme and do not own it. There is a tendency particularly amongst some key civil servants, to consider women rights and gender equality as specific themes that require specific projects and cannot be dealt with in the mainstream. Generally, a weak national political framework for gender in Peru is a handicap for mainstreaming in SDC interventions.

What has been learned?
From the very beginning of the identification process, gender inequalities that the project can target and contribute to reducing, must be made visible.

9

The Sanbasur case study

This basic sanitation project has been implemented since 1996 and has benefited 10'000 rural poor families so far. It has two main components: infrastructure (drinking water systems, sewage) and education aiming to change hygiene-related knowledge and practices. Several factors have contributed to some level of gender integration:
- A gender expert in the team provided technical assistance, prepared training modules and IEC materials (radio programmes, videos etc.);
- Local actors were sensitised to «gender, sanitation and environmental issues;
- In the process of redefining responsibilities in sanitation, women and men negotiated, participated and organised themselves, and women gained access to the public sphere;
- Women got involved in traditional male dominated areas such as plumbing;
- Women and men were involved in the project's sustainability (e.g. in maintenance).

The project also shows weaknesses, amongst them:
- The diagnosis did not identify the specificity of women's poverty beyond their unequal access to income, yet there are obviously factors at play linked to their subordination to men, their lack of autonomy etc.;
- There is a lack of gender disaggregated indicators, qualitative as well as quantitative;
- Women are referred to as beneficiaries which suggests a «welfare» attitude and which does not see women as actors and key assets for the success of the project;
- Women's participation in the public sphere is only measured in numerical terms without qualifying the forms and levels of their participation; The project has not changed women's position. Power relations have not been touched upon. Only material conditions of women have changed;
- There has been no improvement in women and men's access to water for productive purposes.

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Following on, partners should be chosen partly on the basis of the knowledge of gender issues and their experience in dealing with inequalities between women and men. At the level of international partners and donors, synergies and co-ordination mechanisms are essential. In particular, they can be used to develop national level gender indicators.

If in the process of implementation, the project is only careful to treat women and men equally, without taking on board their unequal starting point, it can contribute to the perpetuation of inequality. You cannot treat unequal people equally without a prior treatment of inequalities. Projects most likely to improve women and men's lives are those which try to transform women's position in relation to men, to their community and to society in general.

Developing and disseminating theoretical thinking on gender issues is clearly not enough. An operational strategy is part and parcel of the mainstreaming process and appropriate tools and instruments need to be developed alongside all strategies. There is scope for mainstreaming gender in all sectors and themes aiming at changes at a deeper and more structural level of society. In this process, there is a strong link between changes in gender relations and empowerment. There is often a need to start with pilot projects before gender and empowerment strategies are scaled up and become «models».

The resistance of some men to social change is one of the main obstacles for gender mainstreaming. How to involve men is an unresolved issue. On a national level, the lack of clarity and guidance from Government sends confusing messages to the population as well as to development agencies. There is a danger in mixing gender with other social relations in the Peruvian context, in particular gay issues, as this creates a backlash.

At public policy level, it is still not understood that gender mainstreaming calls for transparency and accountability and requires new ways of doing politics and development. A key lesson is that each country is different and needs to anchor its strategies in its own context. This means that SDC probably has to mentor its partners in civil society as well as Government until they are able to take gender on board themselves. In the meantime, it may be necessary to establish a system of reward/sanctions for projects that promote/do not promote gender equality.

Reflections on multi-level and flexible strategies

SDC experience demonstrates that confronting multiple forms of oppression requires not only flexible but also multi-level strategies. Only in this way can strategies addressing gender equality reinforces each other and create the conditions to ensure sustainable change. A key dimension of this is to implement strategies which «prepare the ground» to enable women as well as men to participate fully and equally in programmes and projects. Almost all the cases demonstrate this multi-level principle in action. For example, in the Macedonia case at the levels of SDC (HQ and COOF) and programmes/projects; in Niger case at the levels of the grassroots, COOF and its programmes/projects; in Tajikistan at the levels of Government legislation and the programmes/projects in COOF; and in Bangladesh at the levels of COOF and partners. At least four sets of strategies emerge from SDC practice as useful in this respect.
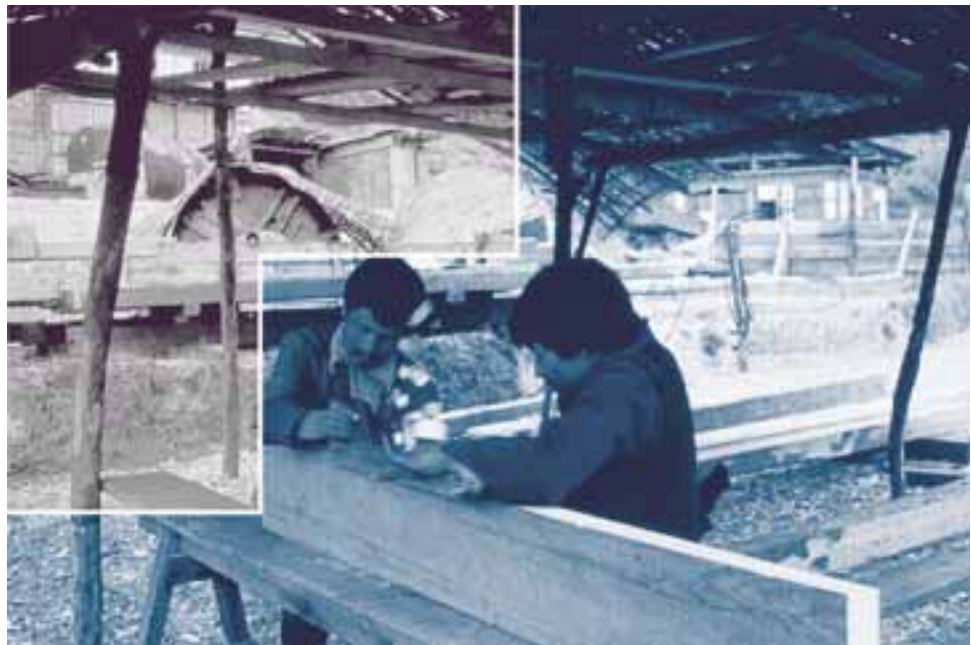
Building support and alliances

Even in those SDC cases where apparently «uncontested domains» were being targeted, the importance of building trust and alliances at grassroots level was paramount. In the Gram Vikas case, this required great patience in the face of initial ridicule of community women and men. Given the cultural constraints of the context, Gram Vikas held separate meetings with women and men to impart information and discuss the links between the health conditions in the villages, and water and sanitation. Eventually, programme staff was able to build consensus among women, and make allies of them. It was then the choice of the women to collectively take on the men to get them to commit to and participate in the programme. In the RHDP areas of Nepal, patience and persuasion of women were also necessary to resurrect the Mothers' Groups.

At national level, building support and alliances is an important part of the policy dialogue process. As discussed in the Macedonia case

(**see case study 10, pg 62**), a key strategy that can be used in this context is the use of positive concrete examples. These include showing how gender issues have been relevant in SDC supported projects in similar sectoral areas, or in similar contexts. The Macedonia case argues that being able to back up the rhetoric on gender equality with concrete examples and results is more likely to convince partners as to the relevance of gender sensitive approaches.

At the level of SDC staff and partners in the country programme, the Gender Programme in Niger (**see case study 6, pg 37**) is committed to creating «spaces» for SDC staff to exchange on gender issues and practices with their Government and non-governmental partners. Similarly the Ecuador case argues that «it is possible to break resistances and achieve changes in attitude amongst projects staff and partners via an open dialogue to diffuse the idea that development is always «beneficial» to all people and to discuss how projects can create or exacerbate inequalities between women and men» (**see case study 7, pg 44**). This kind of forum at the level of the country programme can be a useful mechanism for exchanging information and experience, and building motivation and support for gender aware initiatives.

SDC experiences such as that of Macedonia (**see case study 10, pg 62**) is a positive example of building support and making alliance at regional level by networking horizontally between the South Eastern European COOFs which have Country Programmes with gender as a transversal issue. This is a network set up between four COOFs in the region developed by those project officers working with gender issues in their Country Programmes. The case demonstrates that such networks can serve an important function in the sharing of information on tools, methodologies, and good practices, as well as raising the morale and enthusiasm of those working on gender equality issues by building relationships with other similarly committed staff members.

Building gender aware institutional capacity

Many of the cases reflect a concern for changing the rules and procedures in grassroot interventions. For example, in both the Gram Vikas, India and RHDP, Nepal cases programme staff negotiated a 50% participation of women and men in decision-making committees. Similarly, the Ecuador case points to the need to change the management and norms of peasant organisations to allow more women to become members and ensure practices like alternating

women/men as president and vice president. (**see case study 7, pg 44**).

At the national level, some SDC COOFs are supporting legal frameworks and their enforcement in practice. As stated earlier, in Tajikistan, SDC supported an assessment of Tajik legislation to see the extent to which it reflected CEDAW commitments (**see case study 11, pg 70**). In India, by providing legal aid, Navsarjan set a precedent for a new legal Act concerning the protection of Dalit and Adivasis communities (**see case study 12, pg 76**).

At the level of the COOF, the case of Tajikistan also illustrates how introducing responsibility for gender mainstreaming into the job description of programme staff is an important intervention. The Peru case emphasises the point that even in programmes where efforts were made to integrate gender into a sanitation programme (Sanbasur), women were still referred to as «beneficiaries» which «suggests a «welfare» attitude and which does not see women as actors and key assets for the success of the project» (**see case study 9, pg 56**). Attention to language in SDC documents is more than a «politically correct» issue. It says a great deal about staff and consultants' attitudes to women and to gender

equality. There is clearly an important link here between institutional expressions related to gender and organisational and human capacity.

Building organisational and human capacity

At the grassroots level, in the Gram Vikas case, the NGO insisted on the creation of elected self-governing bodies in each village that represent all groups in the village, across differences of gender, class and caste. In RHDP, after the reform of the Village Development Committees to include 50% of women, both women and men were given a range of new skills in training workshops, including leadership, communication, problem solving, mobilisation and conflict management skills, as well as PRA tools to assess local problems and seek solutions. It is clear from the number of projects that were generated and implemented that women and men were able to translate these skills in a range of practical initiatives.

The Ecuador case makes an interesting point about sustaining changes in gender relations at grassroots levels, pointing to the need for another kind of capacity building process among women and men. «There is much self-exclusion of indigenous people and women, and strategies must be defined and integrated in projects to work on the psychological and cultural dimension of exclusion» (**see case study 7, pg 44**).

At the level of the COOF and its Country Programme and partners, many of the cases echo the findings of the Peru case that there is a lack of tools and strategies to incorporate gender in the planning cycle and amongst partners. The Gender Programme of Niger (**see case study 6, pg 37**) demonstrates the importance of human capacity building at different levels. At the level of the Gender Programme, they were committed to provision of technical assistance by the gender programme officer to all the programmes. At the level of the CADELT programme, capacity building was carried out at both the grass-

roots and institutional level. The lesson the Gender Programme drew out of this experience has echoes in other SDC programmes and projects. They found that while most staff is gender sensitive, there is difficulty in translating the gender diagnosis into practice. The lesson they emphasise is that training must ensure that tools are adapted to staff jobs and responsibilities to ensure that they are owned and used by staff in their work. The Eco-Lan case (**see case study 1, pg 10**) demonstrates how training can be combined with actually doing a task in the project cycle, in this case a gender analysis.

Using gender experts

The use of gender experts was discussed in Chapter 2 in relation to doing gender aware analysis. SDC may assist COOF staff and partners by providing international and/or local consultants or organisations with gender expertise in different forms, as support to their gender mainstreaming initiatives. In the Ecuador case, a local gender expert was given a backstopping mandate to provide technical assistance to the projects prioritised for gender mainstreaming (**see case study 7, pg 44**). Similarly in Peru a gender expert in the Sanbasur team provided technical assistance, prepared training modules, material for radio programmes and videos (**see case study 9, pg 56**). In most SDC countries, there are local consultants and organisations who are well versed in gender tools and concepts, and who are also familiar with the local context.

Specialist international consultants can also be useful to SDC programmes. As discussed previously, Eco-Lan used an international consultant in its project to introduce gender aware analysis and practice. In Tajikistan, COOF provided support for an international gender expert to review Tajik legislation.

Mainstreaming Gender in the Macedonian Country Programme: Experience and Challenges
By Frosina Georgievska (SDC, Macedonia)

Synthesis: This is a good example of a coherent, multi-dimensional strategy for gender mainstreaming in the face of uncooperative partners. While some civil society partners are enthusiastic, there are a number of other Government and Swiss partners, who in their different ways are obstructing the process. The strategy seeks to integrate gender into «moments forts» within the COOF and in its relations with SDC HQ, and through networking with other COOFS in South Eastern Europe. In relationships with partners, the strategy proposes various concrete means to strengthen partner commitment to gender equality e.g. lobbying and capacity building.

The Republic of Macedonia was created in 1991 after the break-up of the former socialist Yugoslavia. Macedonia, as in many other developing or transition countries, greatly relies on foreign donors' assistance[1]. Support from Switzerland, through SDC and SECO, was first established in 1997. When the Macedonian Country Program (CP) 2000 – 2004 was written, it defined three main areas of intervention – civil society/rule of law, economic sustainability and environment and infrastructure – and two transversal themes – regional/European integration and gender mainstreaming, which was also highlighted as one of the priorities of the program.

To implement the CP commitments to gender mainstreaming, the first step was a two-week gender diagnosis of the general Macedonian context and of the SDC supported projects/programs, conducted using both local[2] and international experts[3]. This served as a basis to start making the «vague» term «gender mainstreaming» a reality in the Macedonian CP.

The main findings regarding the national context were that some steps have been made towards greater representation of women in politics, drafting a national action plan for gender equality, institutionalizing dialogue on gender equality and enhancing the capacity of civil society. However, while the needs of different groups of women and men are quite varied in Macedonia (reflecting ethnicity, religion, income, age, etc), the links, information sharing and networking among the various representative civil society actors in the fields of women's rights and gender equality need to improve in order to ensure coherent growth of a more representative women's movement.

The main findings about the SDC portfolio[4] were that all the three areas of intervention were open to processes of gender mainstreaming and social change. However, it also showed that many project partners lacked the

[1] Main donors in Macedonia are the EU countries, the USA and the UN institutions (UNDP, IMF/World Bank). Switzerland is ranked immediately after them.
[2] Mrs. Biljana Bejkova and Mrs. Jagoda Gligorovska
[3] Mrs. Marni Pigott
[4] Only the SDC-supported projects were subject to the gender diagnosis, since SECO, although formally agreeing to gender being a transversal theme, at the beginning did not see it of primary interest for its part of the support.

competence needed to develop gender sensitive approaches, work plans and strategies in practice. There were also some very gender aware project partners[5] whose experience SDC could draw on.

In response to the findings of gender diagnosis, gender training on gender concepts and tools was organized for COOF staff and partners. At the end of intense discussions, the majority of the participants agreed that Swiss-supported development work in Macedonia should acknowledge that men and women, girls and boys with various roles and needs have to be taken into consideration if the intervention is to have a meaningful impact and truly contribute to the achievement of the overall CP goal.

Since these initial activities, gender mainstreaming activities have continued at two levels: the level of COOF, internally, including SDC Headquarters, and the level of the programmes/projects supported by SDC in Macedonia.

The COOF has been using almost all its «moments forts» throughout the year, such as planning sessions, various assessments and reviews, to discuss progress on this issue, and to plan for further action. Examples in 2002 were the Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment and the Mid-term Review of the Macedonian CP, for both of which the concept of and specific actions for gender mainstreaming were discussed and recommendations were made. The COOF has also integrated the gender perspective into its internal procedures and documents, such as project proposal reviewing, credit proposals, support to specific gender actions, and project monitoring and review, and into local and national policy dialogue.

At the level of SDC's partners, yearly planning workshops have been an important tool for gender mainstreaming. Setting gender goals

and objectives[6], looking for synergies between projects, and building gender competence have been some of the specific issues discussed at these events. Furthermore, in their everyday work the COOF provides specific project-by-project support to partners by making two local gender consultants available for individual consultations, specific advice or coaching, as well as by making itself available as a resource centre for gender literature, and SDC gender tools, instruments and guidelines.

Another initiative has been to share experiences and contact with the other South-East European countries working with SDC which have CPs with mainstreaming gender as a cross-cutting issue. This led to the creation of a network[7] between four COOFs (Tirana, Bucharest, Sofia and Skopje), to structure the exchange of knowledge on gender.

Challenges for gender mainstreaming
However, despite the successes and progress outlined above, the Macedonian programme continues to face challenges for gender mainstreaming. One that is still being faced is how to mainstream gender with equal success in all three areas of intervention. So far it is clear that civil society partners know more about gender, and are more willing and better prepared to work with COOF on this theme. Many local partner NGOs already had capacities and for other NGOs for whom it was a new issue, they tuned in with enthusiasm. In contrast, in the areas of economic sustainability and environment and infrastructure, there is more reliance on partnerships with State institutions, which are more reluctant to cooperate on gender mainstreaming, often on the basis of personal beliefs or the conviction that «gender work is really not a priority for the country in the difficult times of transition». This is sometimes exacerbated by «gender-neutral» or even gender-blind support provided to the local projects by Swiss partners.

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[5] E.g. Foundation Open Society Institute Macedonia, which is at the same time one of the biggest SDC partners in Macedonia.
[6] For example, one annual planning workshop was used as a forum to define the gender objectives for each of the three main sectors of intervention.
[7] See the text by Mrs. Ventseslava Yanachkova from COOF Sofia for an in-depth description of this network.

10 Another challenge was that, although SECO did not oppose the gender mainstreaming efforts, in the beginning it was not actively supportive, which effectively meant that roughly a third of the CP had not been exposed to any kind of gender perspective. This undermined a unified image of the Swiss development programme in Macedonia, and led to a confusing approach to partners on gender. However, recent changes in SECO policy towards gender have meant that their commitment to mainstreaming gender in the Macedonian CP has become much stronger and more visible.

Another issue is that, after one and a half years of gender having a high profile, there has been evidence, at the Mid-term Review of the CP, and later at the 2002 annual planning workshop that some SDC HQs and COOF staff and local partners are becoming «tired» with the issue. It has thus become very important to think of strategies to keep up momentum, but in subtler ways, so progress is made towards gender equality, without overuse of jargon.

Even though Swiss development cooperation in Macedonia has invested great effort in promoting discussion on gender issues, there still remains a lot to be done in the domains of prejudices and stereotypes especially. Macedonian society is still quite «traditional» and patriarchal, and the general progress of the country greatly depends not only on donor money, but also on a positive shift in mentality, with more acceptance of and respect for differences. Getting the message across to partners and colleagues is not always easy, but positive concrete examples always help to illustrate the need and the implications. Policy discussions with State officials using disaggregated data and gender language also helps the process. Supporting the country in the implementation of various international conventions on human rights and gender equality also facilitates the overall development.

Another important observation is that the commitment to mainstream gender does not, and should not mean extra work. A lot can be done already if the sensitivity is there, as well as the ability and willingness to integrate the perspective and experience of the women and men concerned. The use of the term without accompanying actions and visible and measurable results threatens to become just another declarative statement without a meaning, creating even bigger resistance and fortifying the existing prejudices. The momentum within the Swiss cooperation programme in Macedonia has to be sustained, not by imposing, but by helping to create or develop the commitment to gender equality.

Lessons learnt and recommendations

SDC's development co-operation illustrates a rich and varied experience of working with gender as a transversal issue in accordance with the multi-level principle. Reinforcing processes and creating synergies are valuable outputs from such strategies when addressing deeply entrenched power relations of gender, class, caste and ethnicity.

A point that is repeatedly made by SDC staff and partners is the need for context specific actions. Nevertheless, this chapter indicates that there are some general lessons that can be learnt about working in a multi-level manner.

Firstly, the experience in the chapter indicates that there is work to be done in achieving gender equality within SDC itself at HQ and COOF levels, as well as in the countries in which SDC works, its local and international partners and at grassroots among the target populations of its programmes/projects. In the introduction to this document, a summary was given of the range of initiatives which the Gender Unit has put in place in order to address the «gender deficit» in the organisation, with some outputs being useful to partners as

well (e.g. training, the Gender Equality Policy, and the Toolkit). The cases demonstrate a range of other initiatives that are being taken at the level of COOF by staff in-country.

Secondly, the cases demonstrate the varying national legislative and policy frameworks within which SDC's country programmes find themselves, from very clear on gender equality commitments to a patchy and/or «start-stop» (a phrase coined in the Peru case) experiences, which require very different responses from SDC COOFs. These responses have to be based on informed judgements, that is, a gender aware analysis as part of a wider situation analysis. These should also include discussion with the «national machineries» for women/gender in the Government structure, a national level resource that is often overlooked in consultations with national partners and policy dialogues.

Thirdly, in all countries in which SDC works, there is a gap between constitutional and legal commitments to gender equality, and mainstream policy formulation and implementation. It is here that SDC can make a real contribution in its Country Programmes.

Fourthly, an important entry point for doing this is in the choice of Swiss and local partners. The cases demonstrate a number of

suggestions about the criteria to select partners and how to develop the kind of relationship with partners that will be beneficial to the gender mainstreaming endeavour. These include:

- selecting partners who already have some experience in working with gender mainstreaming;
- selecting projects where some progress on gender equity has already been made;
- selecting partners who may not have gender experience but are willing to dedicate resources to acquiring it with SDC support;
- using a system of rewards and sanctions with partners to encourage them to take the issue seriously, ensuring that this is done sensitively and in a consultative fashion to avoid resistance.

Finally, given the continued inequalities in the society and the institutions of most countries in which SDC works, over the years, SDC and its partners have developed a variety of strategies to influence the processes and capacities which contribute to real changes in the material conditions of women and men at the grassroots. These include:

- building support and alliances at grassroots level, among Government and non-governmental partners and among COOFs in the same region;
- building institutional capacity by working towards change in the rules and procedures of Government structures, village level structures and structures in COOFs and partner organisations;
- building organisational and human capacity at grassroots, among COOF staff and among partners;
- using local and international gender experts as appropriate to support and backstop COOF staff and partner organisations.

SPECIFIC ACTIONS FOR GENDER EQUALITY

The fourth guiding principle of the SDC Gender Equality Policy also calls for gender specific actions, where appropriate, in addition to treating gender as a cross cutting issue in sector interventions:

«Specific actions to reduce gender inequalities (e.g. gender gaps in education or political representation) and/or to address gender issues (e.g. women trafficking) reinforce the impact of working with women and men in interventions or complete a cross-cutting approach. They are planned on the basis of a sound gender analysis. Specific gender actions can involve working either with women and/or men.»
(SDC Gender Equality Policy, 2003, pg 6)

Much of SDC experience with gender involves both gender mainstreaming and gender specific actions. As discussed in (**Chapter «Flexibility in implementation» pg 36**), these are referred to in different ways as both «gender specific strategies and gender integrated programmes» (**see case study 6, pg 37**); in the South Africa case as «dual strategies by working with women and men in some cases, and in others, working separately with women» (**see case study 8, pg 51**); or in the Tajikistan case as gender specific actions at policy and programme levels, and gender mainstreaming in the country programme (**see case study 11, pg 70**). In fact, only one of the cases, Bolivia, took an explicit decision to work only with gender mainstreaming, and not to work with gender specific actions, on the basis that they did not have the experience and that such projects «might create resistance against promoting gender balanced development rather than enhancing it» (**see case study 13, pg 84**). However, even in this case, there was some recognition of the benefits the Country Programme had got out of working with specific actions in other cross-cutting issues like governance.

Gender specific actions can be any of the following types of actions:
- Some specific actions can be programmes and projects, with their own budget and plans, and often they are overseen by the gender officer at country level;
- There are specific actions within mainstream programmes, that may have budget lines within programme budget (but not always) and are overseen by a sectoral programme officer;

- In SDC Toolkit, specific actions can also be linked to institutional strengthening, with a budget line in the country programme and overseen by a regional/country desk or sectoral programme officer.

SDC's experience shows that special actions focused on gender equality might focus on women, women and men, or on men at these different levels. What is important is that these specific actions are identified and designed on the basis of sound gender analysis which identifies a gender issue or gap that would be best dealt with by a specific action. A better understanding of the situation also makes the decision to work with women, women and men, or men, a strategic choice. SDC, like other agencies, has struggled to shift the focus of gender equality work from women to both women and men. Yet, while there is general recognition as the Peru case identifies, that one of the obstacles to social change and gender equality is the resistance of some men, there are also many who would agree with the author's conclusion: «How to involve men is an unresolved issue» (**see case study 9, pg 56**).

Nevertheless, SDC development co-operation does have some experience to offer on the issue of choosing strategically *with whom to work and at what level.*

«There are many problems with men in Russia – battered wives, abused children, the social and economic system is dire in Russia and the problem goes beyond gender issues. Women are well-organised and strong in Russia, and we're under the impression that men in Russia are the ones who have the problems, so I think we should take care of men's problems. But men have to begin by becoming aware that they have problems, and in fact Russian men – with a few exceptions – are not ready to admit that they are the ones who create problems.»
Dorothea Kolde Korovine, SDC Russian Federation

Strengthening gender specific institutions to tackle gender problems

The Tajikistan case demonstrates how SDC can contribute to gender specific actions at a national and institutional level (**see case study 11, pg 70**). Since its emergence as a country in 1999, the Government of Tajikistan has ratified CEDAW and the International Bill on Human Rights. At a national planning level, it has also set up a number of plans on the role of women in society and equal opportunities, and it has set up a Committee on Women's and Family issues. The COOF has provided support through the OSCE to hire an expert to assess the extent to which legislation is compliant with CEDAW. The findings indicate that women's rights are not protected because enforcement and implementation of the law is weak, and women themselves are not in a position to exercise the rights they have under the law. Along with other international agencies and local NGOs, SDC is lobbying the national government to strengthen the law on gender equality and is taking a number of steps towards enforcement in certain areas, as will be discussed in section 3.

This is in fact a range of specific actions within a mainstream programme. In the context of multiple oppressions of gender, class and caste, the Navsarjan case demonstrates gender specific actions working through Legal-Aid Cells (**see case study 12, pg 76**). As the case so powerfully shows, both women and men in Dalit and Adivasis communities face discrimination and violence. However, Navsarjan's work has found that women, who are also subordinate to men in their own communities, face terrible violence and degradations, including sexual assault and rape, carrying out scavenging and a range of gender discriminatory rituals. Navsarjan has learnt that «to address issues of violence and atrocities, there needs to be effective legal intervention» (ibid). Their legal aid work has contributed to setting precedents, the placing of a new Act on the statute books

and the enforcement of current legal principles. The case also highlights how much men, but particularly women from these caste communities, risk when they take a public stand.

In the previous chapter, an argument was made for the benefits of consultation with the «national women's machineries» which exist in most Governments. Gender specific actions at this level could also relate to strengthening these institutional structures so that they can play a more effective role in gender mainstreaming in their country.

The case has already been made for donor co-ordination around gender equality (**see Chapter «Flexibility in implementation», pg 41–47**), but it is an important point to make here as well. In many countries, there are a range of other bi-lateral and multi-lateral agencies involved in gender mainstreaming activities. In order to avoid duplicating activities, and to share resources and information, it is common for these agencies to set up coordinating groups and forums on gender. It is therefore important, where these forums exist, for SDC to participate in them in order to define their own special niche for working towards gender equality, and to identify resources and partners with which it can work. Where such forums do not exist, it may

be feasible for SDC to take a role in initiating their creation, or at least lobbying for their creation. This makes it possible to contribute to the coordination of gender mainstreaming activities from the local level up to the macro-policy level, as is discussed in the Niger case study (**see case study 6, pg 37**).

Addressing gender equality through the Tajikistan Country Programme
By Dilbar Turakhanova (SDC, Tajikistan)

Synthesis: This case demonstrates a multi-level, multi-sector strategy directed at both gender specific and gender mainstreaming ends in a society struggling between old and new inequalities. The programme seeks to address sensitive and complex political domains such as gender equality in legislation and violence against women. Although it is a new program-me focusing mainly on the creation and streng-thening of institutional structures, a great deal has been achieved in 5 years. An important challenge is how the programme will be able to sustain and institutionalise the changes it is seeking to support.

The Swiss Cooperation Office (COOF) in Tajikistan was set up in 1999. However, Swiss Cooperation has been working with Tajikistan since 1993, gradually expanding from humanitarian assistance to long term technical and financial cooperation. Today development co-operation in Tajikistan is based on the Mid-Term Regional Program for Central Asia, supporting three areas in Tajikistan: governance, economic cooperation and disaster reduction.

One of the crosscutting issues in the regional programmes is mainstreaming gender into all programs and projects. The COOF in Tajikistan is approaching gender equality through a number of activities. These include: support to initiatives in promotion of gender equality at the policy/national level; a gender-specific program aimed at reduction of levels of violence against women (PROVAW) and its impact on the lives of women, their families and society; and gender mainstreaming into Tajikistan Country Programme.

Support to Initiatives in Promotion of Gender Equality at the Policy/National Level

The Government of Tajikistan (GOT) has made a number of national and international policy commitments to gender equality. Tajikistan has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the International Bill on Human Rights. There is also a positive policy environment at the national level, with a National Action Plan on Advancement of the Role of Women in Society 1998–2005, the State Programme on Ensuring Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities of Women and Men 2001–2010, and the establishment of the Committee on Women's and Family Issues.

To help build on this positive process, the COOF (with the funds of PD IV) supported the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in providing expertise to assess the extent to which Tajikistani legislation is compliant with CEDAW. The findings were that, while, as noted by the consultant (Executive Director, IWRAW Asia Pacific), the State has provided the normative standards for equality, this has not protected the rights of women in Tajikistan because enforcement and implementation of the law is weak and women are not in a position to exercise the rights provided for in the law[1]. The report was shared with the GOT and NGOs, and was widely discussed by the public.

In the meantime Ms. Rano Samieva, a Tajikistani Parliamentarian, had drafted a new law on gender equality. The draft law is still under review with the GOT officials, but the international community in Tajikistan (including SDC) keep on putting pressure on the Parliament and GOT to adopt it. The Network on Violence Against Women (made up of 5 Tajikistani NGOs) are also lobbying for domestic violence legislation through holding a public hearing.

Gender-Specific Programme aimed at the Reduction of Levels of Violence Against Women and Its Impact on the Lives of Women and their Families (PROVAW)

The Civil War, economic collapse and resurgence of some traditional values in Tajikistan have all led to the lowering of women's status in society and increased tensions at the household level. The result has been rising levels of violence against women.

In order to contribute to the reduction of levels of violence against women, the COOF is co-financing research on the prevalence of violence against women. It is supporting three OSCE Projects on recovery from the trauma of the experience after Civil War in Tajikistan, and on providing women with the knowledge about their rights and the Project on Reduction of Violence Against Women in Tajikistan.

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[1] Report on the Compliance of the Law of the Republic of Tajikistan with the UN Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women by Shanti Dairiam, June 2002, OSCE Project.

The Project's overall goal is to reduce levels of violence against women and its impact on lives of women and their families. The project has three objectives: (i) to improve access to quality services for the survivors of violence (legal, medical, psycho-social and counselling); (ii) to raise awareness about violence and its negative consequences on lives of women, the family and community; and (iii) to enhance partners' capacity to deal with VAW at different levels. Because of the structural and multi-dimensional nature of family based gender violence, the project is designed within a multi-sectoral and multi-level framework.

During the pilot phase (2001–2003), considerable experience was gathered at community level, which mainly focused around raising awareness of the community about violence against women as well as other gender discrimination. However, there was an imbalance between preventative and service delivery components of the project, and the Project concentrated only on building capacity of local NGOs. Therefore, during the current one-year bridging phase (2003–2004), in which the COOF is directly responsible for the project implementation, they are working with: local NGOs to raise awareness on VAW issue at the community level; with the Committee on Women's and Family Issues under the GOT to start the Model Crisis Centre; and are establishing a Network on VAW to lobby for domestic violence legislation. In July 2004, the new implementing partner – Winrock International – will start the implementation of the Project's main phase (2004–2007).

Gender Mainstreaming into Tajikistan Country Programme

A number of activities have also been undertaken aimed at mainstreaming gender into the work of SDC Tajikistan more generally.

Since the COOF was established, the staff have been provided with three gender trainings on gender mainstreaming in SDC, the role of the SDC Governance Division in this domain and technical tools on gender mainstreaming.

In addition to these training initiatives, other mainstreaming activities have also been carried out, including the introduction of gender specific questions into the Terms of References of almost all project reviews comprising Governance Strategy. Furthermore, a backstopper mandated to support PROVAW also reviewed other programs from a gender perspective and recommended that in order to effectively mainstream gender issues into projects, it was necessary to conduct sectoral gender analysis and develop project specific gender strategy as a kind of guideline for gender mainstreaming. It is foreseen that after the completion of the assignment with PROVAW the backstopper will provide continuous support on gender mainstreaming for all programmes of Switzerland.

Challenges for gender mainstreaming

In their experience in tackling gender equality through the Tajikistan country programme, a number of lessons have been learnt so far regarding factors that need to be in place to help with gender mainstreaming.

- The political commitment of the Government of the recipient country.
- The commitment of SDC/SECO partners/implementing agencies to gender equality and respect of Switzerland's values in this regard.
- Gender knowledge among staff and personal commitment to the topic.
- The responsibility to mainstream gender in the project/program has to be introduced into the job description of responsible programme staff along with other responsibilities.
- Each project/programme needs to have gender budgets for gender equality activities to be realised.
- The capacity of National Programme Officers and Managers in gender mainstreaming has to be built.
- There is a need to conduct an assessment of at least one project/programme to demonstrate the impact of the programme/project on women and men.

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Promoting women in leadership and decision-making

In most cases, the equal involvement of women in decision-making is recognised as key to both gender mainstreamed projects and gender specific actions. In some cases, a gender specific action may appear as a component of a mainstream programme. In the previous chapter, the actions taken by programmes like Gram Vikas, India and RHDP, Nepal to include 50% of women in decision-making bodies addressing health and sanitation respectively was discussed. In both these cases, the process involved negotiation with both women and men, separately and together. For example, in a village in which Gram Vikas was working, women were veiled and were reluctant to attend public meetings which their father- and brother-in-law would also be present. They had to hold separate meetings with women «while carrying out concurrent dialogue with men to persuade them that the intervention would succeed only with equal participation of women and men at every stage» (**see case study 4, pg 29**)

Some SDC cases have taken gender specific actions in this area as well. In Niger, the Gender Programme specifically targeted women as role models in political and community leadership (**see case study 6, pg 37**). This was carried through in the CADELT programme. CADELT supported the development of «a cadre of women leaders in order to create local women's expertise to act as leverage in the process of social change» (ibid). To strengthen this process, the Gender Programme in Niger has also funded women's organisations and associations.

«In the province where I worked, we had approximately 40 – 45 women groups at the grassroots and we wanted to set up a federation of women, but we realised that to do so, it was important to work together with men and so start with the spouses of the female leaders so that they could work hand in hand. We worked together with the grassroots and dealt with inter-relations. In certain areas, it was just men who were organised around projects of technology and the like. We needed to create spaces for women. Organisational spaces perhaps but equal space in any case. For example, technology may have an impact on research and transfer of technology. We needed to create training spaces for women to enable them to acquire skills, to receive the same training that men had been receiving for years.»
Rosario Jacome, SDC Ecuador

Addressing specific gender problems and gender gaps

Violence against women has emerged as a key theme in SDC experience. In some cases, the issue was addressed indirectly through other programmes, for example, through Gram Vikas, India and RHDP, Nepal (**see Chapter «Flexibility in implementation»**). However, in both SDC Tajikistan and Navsarjan, India, the issue of violence is being tackled directly. The experience of Navsarjan has already been discussed above. In Tajikistan, a multi-sectoral and multi-level programme is being put in place.

Violence against women was identified as a priority problem, linked to the civil war, economic collapse and the resurgence of traditional values in the political transition of Tajikistan. The COOF's initiative supported a study on violence against women, co-funded with OSCE. A three-pronged strategy has been set up: first to target the full range of services for survivors; second to raise awareness among women and men at all levels in the society about the issue; and third to enhance the partners' capacity to deal with the issue. All these actions are linking into institutional and organisational initiatives for change. Thus, for example, they are working with the Committee on Women's and Family Issues to start a Model Crisis Centre, and supporting the establishment of a network to lobby for legislation to address domestic violence.

Examples of other gender specific problems being tackled by SDC are Female Genital Mutilation in Niger. The COOF has identified it as a key social issue and is working towards combating the practice (**see case study 6, pg 37**).

Other SDC COOFs have selected to address particular gender gaps. Thus, in Burkina Faso, in the face of wide disparities in the literacy levels between women and men, the women's literacy was targeted directly (**see case study 3, pg 21**). The case demonstrates a number of

positive impacts. The Alpha programme has created a critical mass of literate women, which has not only benefited individual women, but also generates peer pressure for change in a number of areas. Some women have been able to move into income generation activities and other problems, like environmental management are now being addressed by women. Research on the impact of the programme also showed changes in household relations, meeting a range of additional strategic gender needs. Dialogue and communication between women and men in the household improved, with many women relying on men to take over certain domestic duties so that they, the women, could attend classes. Women are also now sending daughters to school.

Work in SDC South Africa provides another example of a gender specific action related to a gender gap in the ownership of land. The COOF strategically chose to work with a partner, the Southern Cape Land Committee Trust, which is working to secure women's rights to land.

**Mainstreaming Gender Through
Legal Intervention.
Navsarjan's Experience**
By Manjula Pradeep[2] (Navsarjan, India)

Synthesis: This is an example where through support from an NGO, some of the most disenfranchised groups in society develop a level of consciousness about their rights and are willing to fight for them, including getting redress from the legal system and the police. Combining campaigning with programmatic work, this case challenges the perception that working on a more «political» level is only possible with the involvement of men, or that the women have to be literate and of a particular social status in order to be in a position to speak for themselves.

Gujarat State in North West India has been witness to many disasters – some natural and some man-made. Two such disasters, fresh in the minds of any citizen of India, are the earthquake in 2001 and the communal riots in 2002. But who has suffered the most from these disasters? As we look deeper into the affected communities at the worst form of violence, atrocity and discrimination it is Dalits[3], Adivasis[4] and religious minorities[5] and in particular their women and children who suffer most. This is due to both State and societal discrimination – Gujarat stands 3rd in terms of atrocities against Dalits and 1st in atrocities against women in India.

Navsarjan is a voluntary organisation promoting social justice for Dalits, Adivasis, women and the poor in Gujarat. Since its inception 14 years ago, Navsarjan has expanded to work in 2'284 villages in 11 districts. It has a team of 165, which includes both men and women, and its activities include both «Movement Based» work and Programmatic work. The former includes campaigns for abolishing the practice of manual scavenging in Gujarat[6], the implementation of land reforms, primary education for Dalit children and the empowerment of women. In addition Navsarjan is an active member of the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR). The programmatic work includes Legal-Aid
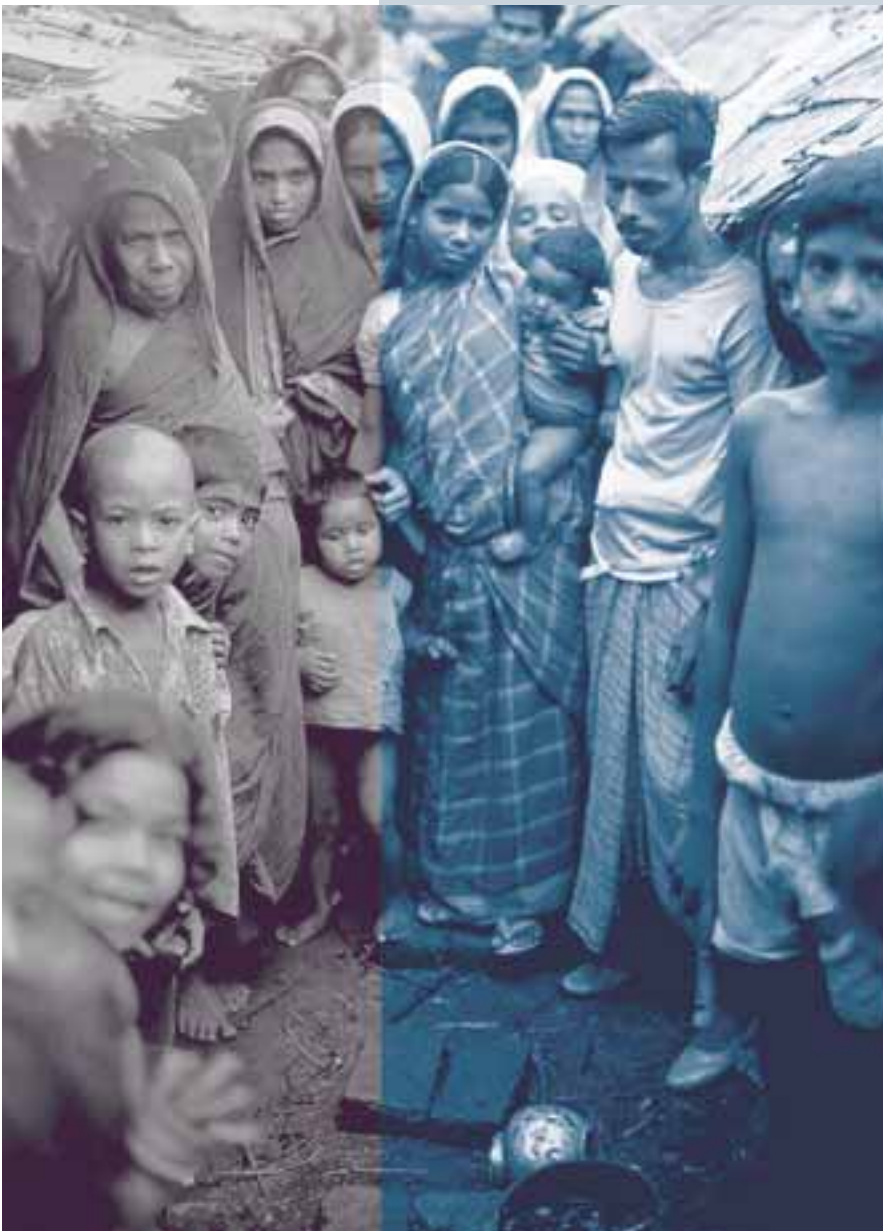
Cells, where the victims not only come to get legal aid but also receive emotional and social support, a Vocational Training Centre, Research and Documentation, and Earthquake and Communal riots rehabilitation.

The social empowerment of the Dalits through mass mobilisation and awareness building, to which Navsarjan contributes, began in the 1980s, building on the Dalit panther[7] movement. One key event which gave impetus to the movement by highlighting the grievous nature of atrocities on Dalits in Gujarat occurred in January 1986. Four Dalit youths working for justice, self-respect and dignity for their community in the village were shot dead by the members of the dominant castes. While community leaders were unwilling to seek legal justice, it was Dalit who took the decision to file a police complaint and gave statements in Court[8]. The result was that thirteen of the accused were sentenced to life imprisonment. This was a historical judgement which meant that the judiciary and the Police in the State had to recognise the plight of the Dalits in Gujarat. This change was backed up by the Central Act for the Protection of Dalits and Adivasis named as «Atrocity Act, 1989».

Many of the founder members of Navsarjan supported the Dalit women in the Golana incident, and learnt critical lessons from it. One of the key lessons learnt was that to address the issues of violence and atrocities, there needs to be effective legal intervention. But it also became very clear to Navsarjan that Dalit woman who bear the triple burden of caste, gender and class also have tremendous courage and commitment to fight for their rights. Navsarjan also learned that women in the Dalit movement take added risk and many times face more isolation and suppression by their own community as well as by the society. Navsarjan's experience working through legal aid cells has highlighted many of the burdens faced by these women including that:

- Though illegal, the practice of scavenging is still widespread amongst Dalit women.
- More than 60% of Dalit women are illiterate.
- Almost 75% of Dalit women work as daily wage agricultural labourers earning wages far below the Government wage rate.
- During atrocities such as social boycotts, mass attacks, or social excommunication, women are the ones who become targets of sexual assaults and rapes. They also have additional burden to see to the welfare of their families in such emergency situations.
- Despite the practice of «untouchability», sexual abuse of Dalit women is very high. Most of the time because of fear of dominant castes, these incidents are not reported or the police does not file the complaint.
- The patriarchal values have also influenced Dalits who have started following the dominant castes in sex-based discrimination traditions and customs such as the purdah system, dowry, or rituals to be observed by women after the death of their husbands. There is tremendous resistance within Dalit communities when legal aid cells have intervened in the cases of dowry deaths, domestic violence and right to property.
- The issues of Dalit women have remained more or less sidelined in the women's movement.

In view of these barriers, Navsarjan stresses the importance of recognising and supporting the leadership of Dalit women. Dalit women have shown tremendous courage and wisdom to empower themselves and also their community (**see boxes pg 78**).

Since 2000, Navsarjan has taken up a special programme for women's empowerment where it has begun the process of training and sharpening the competencies of the Dalit women.

In addition, Navsarjan has learnt that there are possible areas of cooperation with other

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[2] Ms. Manjula Pradeep is on deputation from Navsarjan as Programme Officer in SDC India. Before joining SDC, she was Programme Director for Women's Empowerment in Navsarjan. She has worked in this field for almost 11 years.

[3] Dalits are people deprived of their rights as equal citizens, discriminated against because of their birth in a particular caste in India. They constitute 16.48% of the total population in India.

[4] Adivasis (the «original inhabitants») are officially known as «Scheduled Tribes» in India. Adivasis are mainly foresters surviving on forest products – but Independence laws have been enacted which are forcing them to move out of the forests. This has made them vulnerable and susceptible to exploitation and oppression.

[5] Muslims and Christians are the two main religious minorities in Gujarat.

[6] Dalit scavengers' traditional occupation is to dispose of human excreta, and waste. In return, they receive daily leftovers from the dominant castes and a meagre payment between Rs. 25 – 30 every month. As per Govt. census 2001, there are 173'778 scavenger women in Gujarat. Many scavenger children work with their parents, mainly due to discrimination practised by teachers in Govt. schools.

[7] By substituting the word «Black» for «Dalit», the reader can compare the phenomenon to the American Black Panthers and Black literature. A similar movement has surfaced amongst the discriminated castes in social and literary affairs in western India. Like the American movements, the Dalit Panthers and the Dalit School of literature represent a new level of pride, militancy and sophisticated creativity.

[8] There are Sessions Courts in India in each District, where proceedings for cases of grievous nature are held.

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women that go beyond castes, class and religions. Women from other communities join with the Dalit women on issues like drinking water, non-payment of minimum wages, or reproductive health, which are priorities for all women.

Almost 60% of the Indian population experience discrimination in various forms. Fighting discrimination is one of the main orientations in the new Country Programme of SDC India for 2003 – 2010. Having selected Navsarjan as a strategic partner will help SDC India not only to understand and deepen its knowledge on the issues of discrimination but will also help in identifying and focussing on target groups within the discriminated communities who need substantial support to get justice and dignity.

Box 1

Shakriben from Dedhiya Vasajda village was the first Dalit to become a Sarpanch (Village Head) in her village but was suspended by the Panchayat (village council) and her husband was attacked and brutally injured with sharp weapons. She filed an atrocity complaint and appealed against the suspension order, with immediate support from the legal aid cell. Her appeal was accepted and she was reinstated as Sarpanch. Later, she also won the atrocity case and three of the accused were sentenced to not less than 5 years imprisonment. For the first time in Gujarat, the Dalits boycotted the non Dalits by not selling milk to them and stopped carrying dead animals in the village. Shakriben became a leader to be reckoned with not only in her village but also in the surrounding areas.

Box 2

The son of Valiben, a Dalit widow from Dhandhuka town, was badly beaten up when in police custody, suspected of stealing a bicycle. He later died in mysterious circumstances. An atrocity complaint was filed. The police tried to bribe the widow offering her Rs. 500'000. The widow said, «I want justice, not money». She got little support from her community, but some from the legal aid cell. The offenders are still not punished, but she is very firm in her decision to fight until she dies.

Responsibility and budgets

A number of trade-offs around who has the institutional and financial responsibility for gender specific actions emerged in discussion at the Fribourg Conference. One argument put forward was that getting rid of specific actions, as in the case of Bolivia (**see case study 13, pg 84**) often meant getting rid of budget for gender, as gender in mainstream was not clearly budgeted for. Vice versa, the presence of specific actions often meant that mainstream programmes felt gender/women was dealt with already. In terms of the responsibility of the gender officer, the tendency may be for a gender officer to be solely focused on specific actions with a budget to work with, but not work on mainstreaming. In contrast, a gender officer with no specific actions who is supposed to only intervene in a transversal way into other programmes has no proper resources.

Lessons learnt and recommendations

The choice of what to address through mainstream interventions and what to address through specific actions is a strategic choice, based on sound gender analysis of the society and the organisations with which SDC is working. In addition, only this kind of analysis can indicate why and when it may be necessary to work with women and men together or separately. This implies the co-operation of staff/partners who have a thorough knowledge of the context, and consultation with women and men about their gender roles, access to and control over resources, their different needs and different levels of participation.

In taking a decision about gender mainstreaming or gender specific interventions, it is important to recognise a number of concerns among SDC staff. There is an apprehension among SDC staff about balancing gender issues with other transversal themes. Whilst some feel that dealing with gender issues makes their work more complex, others think it makes it more effective by linking actions to the realities of women and men. Given the reality of heavy workloads in COOFs, some argue that the way forward is to integrate gender into on-going work rather than add it on as an extra task, which means that gender principles should be internalised by all staff. However, this process often needs to be boosted by specific «gender activities». This will demand inputs of staff time and a commitment to making resources available for these activities is necessary.

There is also a concern among SDC staff that because gender specific actions had their own budgets, staff on mainstream programmes and projects felt that gender/women had been dealt with. In this case, there was the tendency for the gender officer to focus only on specific actions. On the other hand, a gender officer initiating no specific actions who is working in a transversal way in other

programmes/projects, has no proper resources. SDC experience would suggest that it is never an either/or situation. On the one hand, often taking gender specific actions can contribute to gender mainstreaming actions by building experience, knowledge and capacity around an important gender issue in a particular context. On the other hand, gender mainstreaming actions can often lead to the identification of issues which require more gender specific actions.

Addressing specific gender problems or gender gaps, which highlight women's subordination and inequality, also need to include men. SDC experience shows that interventions that aim at changes in the activities and status of women imply corresponding changes in the status and behaviour of men. This can take the shape of special activities with men to sensitise them to the necessity for actions to improve gender equality, to build their commitment so that they are willing to make such changes. An important priority issue which demonstrates these processes is found in the many SDC initiatives to address the equal representation of women and men in leadership and decision-making. Addressing violence against women or gender gaps like literacy also highlights these concerns. In many contexts, the fact that men have to change is under-recognised. As a result, interventions fail to respond to the needs and fears of men who think they may lose out and therefore resist change.

However, sometimes it is also necessary to recognise that it is counter-productive to the reduction of gender inequality to involve men in women-oriented interventions. There is a danger that men might take over, with the result that women's position is not improved, or is even worsened by the intervention. In general, SDC experience is that it is important to consult women about involving men in women-focused interventions. Many mixed women/men's projects fail to challenge power relations – for example in micro-enterprise interventions, which often involve women working in production, while men dominate

in more profitable areas such as marketing. Including men in women's projects can prove problematic, especially where women beneficiaries themselves are reluctant to have men involved.

SDC experience in implementing gender specific action in the context of the multiple oppression of gender, caste and class relations, demonstrates the importance of all these issues. It also highlights that by the very nature of gender as a power relation, addressing gender specific issues, like mainstreaming gender in policies, programme and projects, can also contributes to a wider view of social justice.

SDC experience also demonstrates that, like mainstreaming gender in SDC policies, programme and projects, gender specific actions also require a flexible and multi-level approach. As the cases show, a multi-level treatment ranges from strengthening or creating national institutional frameworks, to affecting real changes in equality in the lives of women and men at the grassroots.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN ORGANISATIONS

The final guiding principle of the Gender Equality Policy is that it is of key importance to address the treatment and expression of gender equality in organisations. This is because:

«According to Swiss national policy, SDC commitment to equal opportunities must be reflected at Headquarters and in cooperation offices. In addition, SDC promotes equal opportunities within its partners, whether public or private. This implies the active promotion of equal rights for women and men at work and the protection of workers against all forms of gender based discrimination and harassment, including sexual harassment. It also implies taking positive action measures when needed to ensure gender balance between women and men, and paying attention to the gender mix of working teams in so far as it impacts on programme/project achievements.»
(SDC Gender Equality Policy, 2003, pg 6)

The SDC Gender Equality Policy stresses the need to match efforts to promote gender as a transversal issue in all development co-operation issues, with efforts to address equal opportunities in SDC as an organisation and in the partner organisations with whom it works.

SDC experience shows that this principle does not only have to do with workplace issues, but it also can have an important bearing on the quality and effectiveness of doing development co-operation.

«We also stressed the fact that in the last SDC co-ordinators' workshop, which took place in Sarajevo last week, among 40 co-ordinators, only 2 were women. So this is also an SDC and Swiss problem, not only a problem from the «less-developed countries». And it was so obvious. Believe me, I was there.
Lamia Raei, SDC Jordan

Equal opportunities and its links to programme performance

The final line in the Niger case states «the fact that there are no women in programme teams is a handicap for gender mainstreaming at grassroots level» (**see case study 6, pg 37**). This made it difficult for the programmes to reach women in communities. Similarly, in pilot phase of the Gram Vikas RHEP, it is noted that «…with most of our staff being men, the main points of contact were male leaders in the village. Women were considered «unapproachable» because of social taboos preventing them from interacting with strangers, especially males» (**see case study 4, pg 29**). On the other hand, in the context of Peshawar, Pakistan, it was acknowledged that having a women sector officer in a context where very few women held such positions, was a role model for women at grassroots as well as in formal organisations. These cases point to a direct link between the staff of a programme and its effectiveness, perhaps not only in addressing gender issues.

All these issues were widely discussed in the Fribourg conference, though it does not come through so clearly in the documented cases in this volume. The exception is the gender strategy in SDC Bolivia, which explicitly chose to target «improving the gender balance among project and COOF professional staff» (**see case study 13, pg 84**) along ensuring that programme and project activities are gender sensitive. This was carried out in the staff development goals of PROINPA, one of their partners. Emphasis was placed on giving women in the organisation access to training in order to increase the proportion of highly qualified female professionals.

In the discussions regarding equal opportunities in the Fribourg conference, there was a strong message from partners to SDC that its credibility in working with and often persuading partners about the priority of gender equality had to be matched with its own treatment of women and men as «employees», or potential employees in the case of recruitment. As far as the efficiency argument is concerned, experience shows that ultimately only an understanding of gender relations in the specific cultural context will assist in highlighting the need for project staff of a particular sex.

However, while equal opportunity is an end in itself within SDC and partner organisations, it cannot be assumed that all female employees will be gender aware – or that all male employees will be gender blind. Thus another link between equal opportunity and the performance of SDC development co-operation initiatives is the gender awareness of staff, both women and men. Giving both women and men access to capacity building opportunities in relation to gender mainstreaming as well as other topics of importance to SDC, is also a key dimension of equal opportunities policy.

Advances and limitations of the gender strategy in the SDC Programme for Bolivia
By Jorge Blajos and Willi Graf (SDC Bolivia)

Synthesis: This case demonstrates the room for choice at COOF level in interpreting the gender equality policy. It is also an example of a COOF that has prioritised equal gender balance among project and COOF professional staff alongside a gender mainstreaming strategy. Gender specific actions were ruled out on the basis of lack of experience and concern about creating resistance. The case then shows how a local partner took these priorities on in its practice, emphasising how much can be achieved when a COOF and its partner share the same approach to gender. The conclusion is to view gender, along with the other cross-cutting issues of governance and the environment, as «working principle» that is linked to the goal of poverty alleviation. Whether this approach will lead to different outcomes in practice is still to be shown.

The SDC programme in Bolivia, in addition to working in three focal sectors, includes three crosscutting themes: gender, the environment, and good governance. This paper argues that some interesting differences can be observed in how these three themes have been implemented. To address environment and governance, the programme outlined strategies for mainstreaming these themes across all areas of intervention, and also planned specific projects related to each theme. In contrast, the strategy for gender as a crosscutting issue was not to create specific gender projects but to mainstream the gender dimension in all projects as a crosscutting theme. The decision not to develop specific gender projects was based on the feeling that, firstly, there was sufficient experience from past projects to promote collective learning about the subject, and that secondly, having specific «gender» projects might create resistance against promoting gender balanced development rather than enhancing it.

Under the leadership of the COOF, therefore, and with the support of a steering group composed of experts on the subject, a strategy for mainstreaming gender was designed on two levels: assuring that program and project activities are gender sensitive and; improving the gender balance among the professional staff in the COOF and in the projects. One example of how SDC has used this approach to promote gender at the project level is the case of PROINPA.

PROINPA
The main objective of the *Foundación para la Promoción y la Investigación de Productos Andinos*[1] (PROINPA) is to enhance the competitiveness of priority crops, and improve food security and the conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources to benefit small-scale farmers in the Andean region. PROINPA did this by promoting technological innovation and dissemination.

The move to include a gender approach in PROINPA's projects was triggered by SDC's support to a small extension project promoting the use of protected planting patches *(camas protegidas)* in the high altitude areas of Bolivia. The basic technology of *camas protegidas* consists of preparing small planting patches protected by walls from the wind and often freezing temperatures of the Bolivian High Plateau (altiplano) close to homesteads. In these patches, farmers grow high quality potato seed for subsequent planting on open fields. This technique reduces the cost of high quality seed by self-multiplication. Given the important role of women in seed management, and their control over the space near the house, it was considered essential to fully involve women on the technology adaptation and extension process. Follow-up studies revealed that the adoption rate of the technology was

high and that women yielded most of the benefit. In many cases the women decided to use the camas protegidas to grow vegetable crops or other high value products instead of potato seed, a perfect example of technology adaptation by end-users.

In contrast, in many of PROINPA's other, earlier activities, although the gender dimension was mentioned in research activities, implementation was generally limited to the more or less accidental incorporation of women in a few numbers of activities. However, in this project, PROINPA had a strong commitment to participatory research, with male and female farmers participating in research activities according to their roles and competence. PROINPA had also recognized that it needed to seek a gender balance in its staff. Therefore, the development of a gender strategy was an organic process for PROINPA, in line with its institutional goals for staff development, where specific emphasis is placed on giving women training opportunities in order to increase the proportion of highly qualified female professionals.

The *camas protegidas* case became a learning ground for developing PROINPA's gender strategy allowing them to conceptualize a clear operational approach to gender. The institution presently applies a gender focus in research and technology transfer in a number of ways. In research, female participation is often crucial to the recovery of local knowledge from women and men (Participatory Improvement Project and Local Farming Committees) and subsequently in the testing and evaluation of new options. In technology transfer, the methodology of Farmer's Field Schools provides an instrument for full participation of men and women and has actually become an instrument for the empowerment of women.[1] In addition, gender indicators have been developed for transfer and research activities, applying indicators defined by national policies – for example, 30% or more of the participants in Farmer

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13 Field Schools must be women. The gender focus is also systematically applied in the elaboration of proposals for new projects submitted for financing.

PROINPA is now working towards the principle that a gender approach should not require a gender specialist – rather, the application of a gender focus should be the result of implementing the principles of participatory research and extension. To this end, PROINPA's technicians and researchers shall steadily refine these instruments as they gain experience. In this way new, methodologies will grow out of PROINPA's own experience and the interaction with farmers and other allies, instead of being the repetition of a model conceived elsewhere and perhaps developed out of a researcher based vision.

Lessons learnt

The SDC's mid-term review, carried out in 2000, showed that PROINPA is illustrative of SDC's wider application of its gender strategy across its portfolio of project. Progress was made both at the level of gender sensitivity in the field work of the projects and in gender balance among staff. However, the analysis on crosscutting themes conducted by the COOF for the preparation of the next country strategy document (CORLAP, 2003) concluded that

while many projects had solid gender instruments, many also suffered from a sort of gender fatigue, and that there was a general feeling that SDC was reaching its limits in promoting gender through a *top-down approach*. It was felt, in contrast, that the governance theme and in particular the issue of decentralization was the «strongest» crosscutting theme because of the firm support for this trend among partners and the obvious need for projects to cope with decentralization. To have specialized projects in the subject not only helped to develop and visualize competence but has also promoted horizontal exchange between projects, whereas the work on the gender topic was perceived as basically vertical. In this light, the analysis of the implementation of the three crosscutting themes in the Bolivia programme 1998 – 2003 raises some issues:

- While a COOF can effectively contribute to the development of specific attention to crosscutting themes, the extent to which this can be done depends largely on the dynamics that exists in the society, meaning that a top-down approach will have limited acceptance from partners and project executives.
- When interests coincide between strategic objectives of partners (such as PROINPA and SDC in the case of developing gender strategies) chances of a long-lasting impact of SDC support are high.
- Specific projects around a theme have the advantage of developing clear-cut, easy to transmit results and stimulate horizontal exchange about the theme. In the case of the gender strategy of SDC in Bolivia, this would probably have enriched the process of promoting gender balanced development in Bolivia.
- It is doubtful whether SDC staff is fully focused on comprehensive strategies and implementation mechanisms for crosscutting themes such as gender, when it appears to be difficult enough for them to clearly work

out strategies and monitoring instruments for the principal lines of work in the four key sectors of the programme.

On the basis of these findings, the plan for crosscutting sectors in the definition of the next Bolivia Country programme is to turn governance into a principal line of work (what used to be called a sector) with fully-fledged programmes, coupled with a second line of action with the working title «local economic development». The overall goal of these will be to contribute to poverty alleviation. Empowerment will be the most important strategic principle to achieve this goal. Gender and the environment (especially with regards to natural resources preservation) will be other principles linked to this goal. It is anticipated that by turning «crosscutting themes» into «working principles», the result will be a better concentration on the main objectives both conceptually and in terms of human resources.

Promoting equal opportunities in the workplace

SDC experience highlights a number of key issues to be considered in promoting equal opportunities in SDC and its partner organisations. Two aspects emerge as important in this respect. As already indicated, there was much discussion in the Fribourg conference about organisational structure relating to women and men's position in SDC hierarchy, both at HQ and COOF level. There was also discussion about the organisational culture in SDC and its partner institutions. One participant told the story of her first visit to an SDC COOF where she noticed that on the labelling of the pigeonholes in the office, all the men were addressed by their titles and all the women by their first names only. When queried, it was explained as «something to do with hierarchy» . An apparently small incident like this is an indication of the «shared symbols, language, practices…and deeply embedded beliefs and values» (Newman, 1995, p11) or organisational culture and what it reflects about gender relations in the work environment. Two more specific themes concerning equal opportunities can also be drawn out of SDC experience.

Participatory methods and practices

Initiated by a COOF workshop with partners, the Village and Farm Forestry Project (VFFP) in Bangladesh is an example of how a project can take the issue of gender mainstreaming forward. The VFFP Gender Audit demonstrates the use of a tool which can link equal opportunities with the programme delivery in an organisation. The case description gives a good idea about the sort of information that would be necessary for the design of an equal opportunities policy (**see case study 14, pg 89**). Dimension 2 of the methodology focuses on issues related to organisational structure (including issues of recruitment and promotion), organisational culture and the sorts of human resource and family friendly

policies that are in place. This information indicates that such an audit goes beyond numbers, and looks at the positions of women and men in the organisation as well as a range of qualitative issues.

Sheet 9a and b in the Toolkit also give some guidance as to the sorts of questions which need to be addressed in developing an equal opportunities policy. Other approaches to organisational analysis are to treat it as a theme in gender evaluations (as recently carried out by SIDA, or the European Commission), or to use diagnosis tools which have an organisational dimension (e.g. the «web of institutionalisation», Levy, 1998).

The VFFP Bangladesh case makes some interesting points about the process of doing the gender audit. They point to the value of using an experienced local «outsider» which greatly facilitated the exercise. The participatory approach was also much appreciated and useful in consolidating the understanding of gender itself. They also point to the importance of preparation and to follow-up. With respect to the latter, arrangements to monitor concrete results are viewed as very important. The whole exercise and the way it was carried out contributed to creating enthusiasm and motivation to address gender mainstreaming.

This also points to the benefits of more participatory and democratic work environments in which women and men at all levels can be informed and participate in issues that affect their working life. In organisations where women and men form different castes, ethnic groups and/class work together, communication and participation can be even more complex.

Recruitment and retention of women staff

With respect to recruitment and retention of women staff members, in the Niger programme, many «cultural» reasons were given to explain why there no women staff «in the field». These included working conditions

which women could not easily match with their family responsibilities, husbands – or fathers – unwilling to let the women travel far in often unsafe conditions, a «habit» of men rather than women getting «hands-on» jobs within technical cooperation programmes etc. Yet there are some trained women in Niger, but they are not recruited, or retained by SDC programmes (except in traditional administrative jobs).

The point that was made during the discussions at the Fribourg Conference was that SDC had to think about what it can do to proactively recruit and keep women within its ranks, including promote them, given the social and cultural constraints in Niger. Affirmative action was mentioned, as was the possibility to change working conditions and procedures (e.g. reduce distances women had to travel and include this in women's job descriptions) in order to attract and retain women.

Mainstreaming Gender using a Gender Audit as starting point
By Bhuiyan Muhammad Imran, Alain Cuvelier (VFFP, Bangladesh)

Synthesis: This case is a very good example of how a partner organisation can take a pause and examine itself through a gender audit. The reflections on the methodology of the gender audit show the kind of information that is important to understand on the programmatic and organisational dimensions of the project. It also shows that there is a need for careful preparation, expert-level facilitation and above all a concrete plan for follow-up. This experience also demonstrates that a participative self-diagnosis like this can raise consciousness and enthusiasm for gender mainstreaming. Whether these positive outcomes will transform the project will clearly depend on what comes next.

Bangladesh, like other countries in South Asia, has a culture of gender inequality, both in rural areas where literacy remains low, but also among educated women and men. Women are often deprived of basic rights, such as mobility outside the home, ownership of land and assets. They have limited access to services such as education and health, and limited control over resources, even those generated by them. They suffer more than men from malnutrition and illnesses, and often face mental or physical violence. Bangladesh remains one of the few countries in the world where life expectancy for women is less than that for men.

This explains why gender is one of the most important crosscutting issues of the country programme of SDC in Bangladesh. To this end, in 2000, the COOF initiated a process of mainstreaming gender in its different programmes and projects. This process started with a workshop with SDC partners in 2000, which developed a plan of activities to integrate gender into each programme.

Two representatives from the Village and Farm Forestry Project (VFFP) who attended this workshop went on to develop a yearly plan of action as a first step toward gender mainstreaming in VFFP. However, the concept of gender analysis and mainstreaming was not shared with the whole project staff and there was no awareness creation or capacity building. Although gender was a real concern for VFFP, the reality was that gender equality remained an issue dependant on individual and personal sensitivities.

It was therefore decided to start the process with a gender audit of VFFP with the aim of assessing the strengths, weaknesses, challenges

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and constraints of VFFP concerning gender (both at organisation and programming levels) and make recommendations for improvements. The audit used a participatory methodology devised by the Commission on the Advancement of Women, InterAction[2]. It is a self-assessment characterised by experiential learning and sharing amongst project participants, VFFP and partner NGO staff. The auditor, a local gender consultant, acted as facilitator in this process.

The Gender Audit unfolded in two steps:

- The first stage aimed at collecting basic data and information on two «dimensions» (see below) in order to assess the range of understanding, attitudes, perceptions and reported behaviour among project and partner staff
- The second stage was more an analytical step focused on the review of findings gathered during the first stage, through discussions with staff

Dimension 1: Programming

Aspect	Type of information sought
Programme Planning and Design	Frequency and extent to which gender sensitive procedures and methods are used to conceptualise and design projects in the field.
Programme Implementation	Extent, intensity and frequency of gender responsive implementation in field projects.
Monitoring and Evaluation	Extent to and intensity with which gender-disaggregated data and information is incorporated in the monitoring and evaluation of projects and programme outcomes.
Partner Organisations	Frequency and extent to which gender equity is integrated in the partner organisations and their local affiliates.

Dimension 2: Organisation

Aspect	Type of information sought
Gender Policy	Nature, quality, and extent of support for the organisation's gender policy.
Organisation Structure & Human Resources	Extent of gender balance in the organisation's management and staffing patterns. The level, extent and intensity of gender sensitive human resource policies, family friendly policies, and gender considerations in hiring and personnel reviews.
Advocacy and Communication	Quality and frequency of gender sensitivity in the organisation's communications and advocacy campaigns.
Financial Resources	Amount of financial resources allocated to carrying out gender activities.
Organisation Culture	Extent and intensity of gender sensitivity in the organisation norms, structures, systems, process and power relations.
Internal and External Pressures	Nature and intensity of the internal and external forces that compel the organisation to become gender sensitive.

[2] Morris Patricia T. (1995), The Gender Audit, a process for organisational self-assessment and planning, Commission on the advancement of Women, InterAction, American Council for Voluntary International Action, Washington.

A total of 81 project staff, 13 partner NGOs, and 158 beneficiaries participated in the audit through group discussions, individual interviews, field observations and questionnaires. The audit lasted one month from the first information collection at project level (including a test of the methodology) up to the first draft report. It is noticeable that the audit was not met with any form of resistance, but rather was welcomed enthusiastically.

Lessons from the experience of implementing a gender audit
As well as producing practical recommendations (which were integrated in the VFFP's yearly plan of activities 2003), various lessons have been learnt from the experience of implementing this first gender audit.

Firstly, it became clear that without the support of a competent local specialist, who was experienced in gender audit, we would not have been able to carry out such a process. Secondly, the organisation of a gender audit, using an external facilitator and a participatory approach, was an event felt as important by all staff. It forced them to «revisit» what they understood by gender, and acted both as an eye opener and a means to internalise as well as institutionalise a process of gender mainstreaming.

However, though enthusiasm and seriousness towards gender have increased thanks to the audit, its impact would have been better if we had prepared the audit better especially in terms of giving staff background information on what the gender audit's objective was and what it would entail. This lack of preparation sometimes provoked tensions and misunderstanding.

Another lesson has been the need to maintain a certain pressure after the audit itself, in order to maintain its impetus in the long run. The «after audit» must therefore be tracked either

by a consultant or a core team of the project, in order to implement the necessary improvements identified. This process of internalisation of gender by project and partner NGO staff is not an easy one, and requires continuous support efforts.

Furthermore, it is hard to translate some of the recommendations of the audit into concrete actions. The «after audit» requires another process for defining measures, approaches and tools in order to facilitate the implementation of these recommendations.

The audit also highlighted the need to pay more attention to the empowerment of the women at the beginning of interventions. However, the experience of VFFP also showed the danger that such an audit can lead to attempts to push the project into roles which are outside its remit – for example a proactive advocacy role at national level. It is thus important not to make gender into an exclusive agenda, but to relate and integrate it within other crosscutting issues such as poverty, human and institutional development, or sustainability.

Overall, the gender audit was an exciting experience for VFFP, raised enthusiasm and sincere willingness to mainstream gender throughout the project and its partners. A gender audit has proven that it is an excellent starting point for this process.

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Lessons learnt and recommendations

Working towards equal opportunities within SDC is important to its credibility in promoting gender equality with its partners – just as it is important to SDC partners' credibility in promoting gender equality at grassroots. The SDC Gender Equality Policy identifies equal opportunities in SDC as a key principle. There is a case to be made for the explicit identification of equal opportunities as one theme in a gender mainstreaming strategy at COOF and partner levels as well.

The limited documented experience that SDC has in this area also indicates that equal opportunities can have practical consequences for the performance of projects. For example, the sex of field staff may be significant in their ability to talk to men or women in communities.

Undertaking a gender audit with the help of an «outside» facilitator/expert, is one way for SDC and partners to undertake a self-diagnosis of the treatment of gender in both programmatic and organisational dimensions. If done in a participative manner, with good preparation, follow-up and monitoring, a gender audit can provide a good basis on which to formulate an equal opportunities strategy for the organisation. This involves attention not just to numbers of women and men. It also includes attention to issues like their recruitment, their promotion, their access to training, their positions and a range of qualitative factors relating to organisational culture.

CONCLUDING SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN SDC, 1998 – 2004

This document reflects on the knowledge and experience that SDC and its partners have accumulated between 1998 and 2004, in their work on gender as a transversal issue. It draws its material from the written cases and discussions that came out of the workshop on «Capitalization of Gender in SDC» organised by the Gender Unit from 15th – 19th June 2003 in Fribourg, Switzerland.[1] This event was itself a unique opportunity to review, share and document the experience of SDC and its partners over the last 6 years.

Since 1993 when SDC formulated and began implementing its first gender policy entitled «Gender Balanced Development», SDC and its partners have undertaken a variety of initiatives to promote gender as a transversal issue in their development co-operation. In 1998, SDC did a review of gender experience up to that time. Since then a number of key initiatives have been undertaken by the Gender Unit to consolidate and develop this early work. These include:

[1] These are documented in the Conference Report «Capitalization of Gender in SDC» and the «Record of the SDC Story telling experience (Sparknow, London) at the «Gender Capitalization Workshop 2003».

- The continuation of *two training work-shops each* year (one in English and one in French): These workshops are open to SDC staff and partners and aim to introduce them to methodologies to incorporate a gender perspective in their work as a regular part of their practice. The training has been not only an important capacity-building activity. It has also been a forum for discussion and sharing of experience, as well as an opportunity to explore practical strategies to further participants' work with gender in their programmes and projects.
- The formulation of a new *SDC Gender Equality Policy*: The policy was developed through a series of consultations with Gender Focal Points and other SDC staff, both in HQ and in-country. The new policy was launched in 2003. It sought to build on SDC's experiences in addressing gender issues over more than a decade.
- The development and production of the «Gender in Practice» Toolkit: The Toolkit was elaborated over 2001–2003 and draws on the methodologies applied in the training and their integration with key procedures used in SDC, in particular PCM and its different components. It was developed in consultation with Gender Focal Points and selected staff in HQ and in-country, and was launched in 2003 in five languages.

Initiatives to address gender as a transversal issue in SDC activities are decentralised so that groups and individuals in SDC and its partner organisations have a high degree of autonomy in how they take gender issues on in their work. The result is an innovative range of initiatives and a wide interpretation of incorporating gender as a regular part of SDC development co-operation.

The Gender Unit has played a crucial supporting and catalytic role in this process. The members of the Gender Unit make inputs in meetings and documents of all kinds, as well as have informal consultations in HQ. They also travel regularly to the COOFs, visiting

programmes, running workshops, consulting and being consulted on why and how and when to address gender issues in SDC development co-operation. Despite the obvious increase in mainstreaming work, the Gender Unit is still only two full-time staff. In 2001 during a restructuring of SDC, the Gender Unit was re-located in the Governance Division. This is considered a strategic position from which to implement the strategy of the Unit, which is a crucial contribution to the consolidation of gender as a transversal issue in SDC. It is also an important centre for the co-ordination of the depth and breadth of this experience in SDC, as the activities which went into this document and the production of the document itself demonstrates.[2]

In compliance with Swiss equality law (1981) and the Swiss Government's ratification of the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (1997), SDC is committed to equal opportunities in Headquarters and in COOFs. SDC also works to promote equal opportunities among its partner organisations.

A final reflection concerning the «politics» of working with gender is important to make in this summary. There is an on-going debate amongst SDC and its partners around the extent to which it is appropriate to foster change and challenge traditional social relations, including those of gender – especially where such challenges may be viewed as «natural» or «western», or an imposition from outside. These assumptions can be countered by arguments that social relations are socially-constructed (not «natural») and that what is «traditional» is not automatically «good», since it usually represents the interests of particular, rather than all, groups in a society. It is now obvious that in many countries there are significant civil society pressure groups as well as, in many cases, Government impetus to challenge social and gender inequalities. Furthermore, though we often stress that change must come from within, development co-operation can have an important role as a catalyst in this process.

[2] In carrying out is work, the Gender Unit has secured support from the Gender Policy and Planning Team at the Development Planning Unit, University College London (training and backstopping, including organisation and documentation of the conference, documentation of capitalisation experience) and from BRIDGE, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex (tailor-made documentation).

The following sections summarise the lessons learnt from the experience of SDC and its partners. Like the document itself, it is structured around the five guiding principles outlined in the Gender Equality Policy, 2003. These principles, separately and together, are designed to help SDC and its partners think about how to promote gender equality most effectively through all the interventions that SDC supports.

Doing gender aware analysis

SDC experience demonstrates that without designing and implementing programmes and projects based on a sound gender aware analysis, interventions can not only ignore gender differences, inequalities and subordination, but they might actually make them worse. They also demonstrate that overlooking gender relations can also undermine the very effectiveness of the intervention.

Although many cases demonstrate that it is never too late to take gender on in the programme or project cycle, doing a gender analysis is clearly more effective if it is done as part of the wider situation analysis at the start of a programme or project. This makes it imperative to incorporate attention to gender in the Terms of Reference for a situation analysis.

SDC experience demonstrates there are many ways in which to carry out the gender analysis. Whatever the choice, it is not just the information that comes out of the gender analysis that is important. The process of carrying out the gender analysis itself can have a powerful impact on both project staff and local women and men. In this sense, for example, using training combined with collection of data in the field was an effective strategy beyond just collecting information.

The experience shows how many SDC supported interventions have been able to practically integrate gender concerns into analysis both at the micro- and macro levels, as well as at different points in the project cycle. Despite the variety in carrying out a gender aware analysis, there are some common elements in all. The gender aware analysis captures the heterogeneity of women and men and brings an understanding of at least three dimensions of the way the power in gender relations is articulated in different contexts. These are:

■ the gender division of labour,
■ the access to and control over resources,
■ and the felt needs and perceptions of both women and men.

An appreciation of these dimensions expressed by women and men themselves is crucial in understanding difference, inequalities and subordination in the local, sector or country context. SDC experience highlights four challenges that come out of this.

The first is how to ensure that sectoral, country programme and project staff take responsibility for gender issues. Staff should have the capacity to use and feel ownership of gender and planning tools. The second related issue is how to avoid having separate, marginalized, gender tools for situation analysis at different levels. The third is that sufficient forward planning is necessary so that gender analysis is not skipped due to time pressure. Finally, integrating gender in PCM also requires support and allies, including from internal sources (particularly at management level), external expertise (particularly at the beginning of the process), and among partners (policy and community level). Additional resources may be needed too, for instance external expertise or specific activities that need to be implemented to support a gender aware analysis.

Doing a gender aware analysis as part of a wider situation analysis is the basis on which to design and implement programmes and projects which encompass the remaining guiding principles in SDC's Gender Equality Policy.
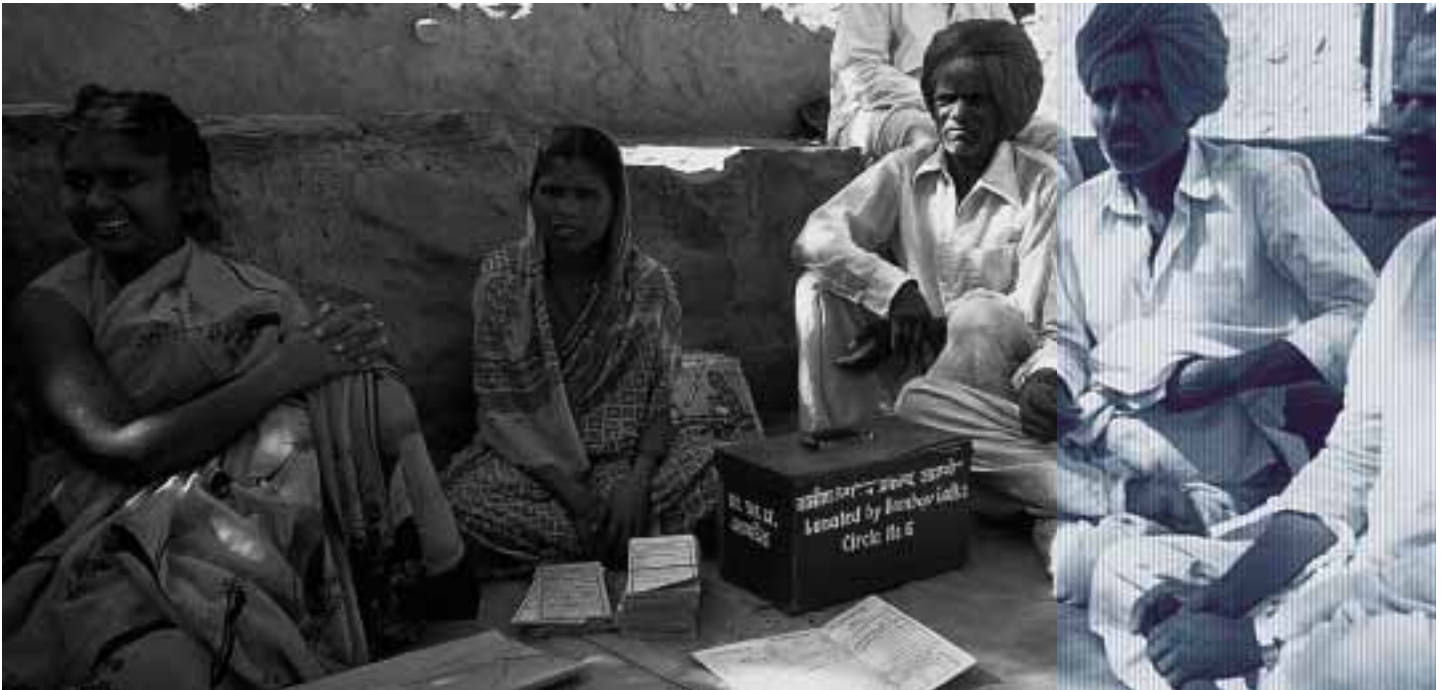
Flexibility in implementation

SDC experience confirms that working towards gender equality is a process which requires flexibility and time. The need for flexibility emerges at different levels in the relationship between SDC and its partners, and between partners and women and men in communities.

SDC's experience demonstrates the delicate balance that is necessary in weighing the expressed interests and need of local partners and grassroots' women and men against the priorities of SDC's gender equality policy. On the one hand, different cases show how with flexibility and negotiation, a situation can be reached where either partners or women and men at grassroots can take on SDC principles in their own way. They also demonstrate a range of experience in addressing resistance to gender and avoiding «gender fatigue» among SDC HQ, and Swiss and local partners. On the other hand, local partners were also emphatic that SDC's policy priorities be clearly visible and openly discussed in policy dialogue and in negotiations with partners.

The SDC experience points to three strategic choices that need to be exercised with flexibi-lity. These strategic choices «frame» strategy development in order to strengthen gender as a transversal issue.

- The first is the choice of whether or not to use pilot projects to build trust and open up spaces for women's participation, particularly in contexts of extreme oppression. This provides a flexible framework to respond to challenges and to learn in a difficult context.

- The second is the development of a two-pronged strategy: developing gender specific actions and gender mainstreamed actions. The decision of what to target is informed by gender aware analysis and consultation with partners and grassroots women and men.

- The third is the strategic choice in dealing with women and men in situations where caste, ethnicity and class are also forms of oppression. Various cases show how it is not possible to deal with one aspect of women and men's identity without understanding and addressing the other forms of oppression, which are also central to that identity.

Addressing multiple forms of oppression around not just gender, but also class, caste and ethnicity, requires not only careful gender aware analysis but also strategic choice about the entry point for interventions. A range of options for entry points, which are not mutually exclusive, has emerged from SDC experience:

■ To focus initially on «uncontested domains» which, after the programme/project is consolidated, can assist in addressing more conflictive and challenging gender needs;

■ To focus on particular issues because of contextual realities or emerging priorities;

■ To prioritise projects, sectors or actions where progress has already been made on gender equality;

■ To respect women and men's self-determination and to be directed by the expressed needs and interests of women and men themselves where conditions for their equal «voice» exists or has been established (for example, through a pilot project).

At least two methodological requirements emerged as fundamental to adopting a flexible approach to strategies for gender equality. The first is, as stated above, a gender aware analysis in which women and men at the grassroots have been involved, so that there is a good understanding of the situation and challenges to be faced. This gender aware analysis needs to be extended to an organisational analysis of partner organisations and the institutional framework at national and local levels.

The second methodological requirement is a monitoring system that will track changes and feedback of experience, allowing for learning and adaptation of strategies. In this respect, both «gender» and «gendered» monitoring are important, both requiring the regular collection of gender disaggregated data. While the cases demonstrated a range of different methods for collecting and disseminating this data, they all showed how important it is to understand the process of implementation and its impact on gender relations.

Multi-level approach

SDC's development co-operation illustrates a rich and varied experience of working with gender as a transversal issue in accordance with the multi-level principle. Reinforcing processes and creating synergies are valuable outputs from such strategies when addressing deeply entrenched power relations of gender, class, caste and ethnicity.

A point that is repeatedly made by SDC staff and partners is the need for context specific actions. Nevertheless, this chapter indicates that there are some general lessons that can be learnt about working in a multi-level manner.

Firstly, the experience in the chapter indicates that there is work to be done in achieving gender equality within SDC itself at HQ and COOF levels. In the introduction, a summary was given of the range of initiatives which the Gender Unit has put in place in order to address the «gender deficit» in the organisation, with some outputs being useful to partners as well (e.g. training, the Gender Equality Policy, and the Toolkit). The cases also demonstrate a range of other initiatives that are being taken at the level of COOF by staff in-country which are summarised below.

Secondly the cases demonstrate the varying national legislative and policy frameworks within which SDC's country programmes find themselves, from very clear on gender equality commitments to a patchy and/or «start-stop» (a phrase coined by the Peru COOF) experiences, which require very different responses from SDC COOFs. These responses have to be based on informed judgements, that is, a gender aware analysis as part of a wider situation analysis. These should also include discussion with the «national machineries» for women/gender in the Government structure, a national level resource that is often overlooked in consultation with national partners and policy dialogues.

Thirdly, in all countries in which SDC works, there is a gap between constitutional and legal commitments to gender equality, and mainstream policy formulation and implementation. SDC can make a real contribution by including support to bridge that gap in its Country Programmes.

Fourthly, an important entry point for doing this is in the choice of Swiss and local partners. The cases demonstrate a number of suggestions about the criteria to select partners and how to develop the kind of relationship with partners that will be beneficial to the gender mainstreaming endeavour. These include:

- selecting partners who already have some experience in working with gender mainstreaming;
- selecting projects where some progress on gender equity has already been made;
- selecting partners who may not have gender experience but are willing to dedicate resources to acquiring gender capacity with SDC support;
- using a system of rewards and sanctions with partners to encourage them to take the issue seriously, ensuring that this is done sensitively and in a consultative fashion to avoid resistance.

Finally, most countries where SDC works experience continued inequalities in society and institutions. Over the years, SDC and its partners have developed a variety of strategies to influence the processes and capacities which contribute to real changes in the material conditions of women and men at the grassroots. These include:

- building support and alliances at grassroots level, among Government and non-governmental partners and among COOFs in the same region;
- building institutional capacity by working towards change in the rules and procedures of Government structures, village level structures and structures in COOFs and partner organisations;
- building organisational and human capacity around working with gender mainstreaming at grassroots, among COOF staff and among partners.
- using local and international gender experts as appropriate to backstop and support COOF staff and partner organisations.

Specific actions for gender equality

The choice of whether to address gender inequalities through mainstreaming gender in other interventions or taking gender specific actions is a strategic choice, based on sound gender analysis of the society and the organisations with which SDC is working. In addition, only this kind of analysis can indicate why and when it may be necessary to work with women and men together or separately. This implies the co-operation of staff/partners who have a thorough knowledge of the context, and consultation with women and men about their gender roles, access to and control over resources, their different needs and different levels of participation.

In making a decision about gender mainstreaming or gender specific interventions, it is important to recognise a number of concerns among SDC staff. There is an apprehension among SDC staff about balancing gender issues with other transversal themes. Whilst some feel that dealing with gender issues makes their work more complex, others think it makes it more effective by linking actions to the realities of women and men. Given the heavy workloads in COOFs, some argue that the way forward is to integrate gender into on-going work rather than add it on as an extra task, which means that gender principles should be internalised by all staff. However, this process often needs to be boosted by specific «gender activities». This will demand inputs of staff time and other resources initially, and thus a commitment to making resources available for these activities is necessary.

There is also a concern among SDC staff that because gender specific actions had their own budgets, staff on mainstream programmes and projects felt that gender/women had been dealt with. In this case, there was the tendency for the gender officer to focus only on specific actions. On the other hand, a gender officer initiating no specific actions who is working in a transversal way in other programmes/projects, has no proper resources. SDC experience would suggest that it is never an either/or situation. On the one hand, often taking gender specific actions can contribute to gender mainstreaming actions by building experience, knowledge and capacity around an important gender issue in a particular context. On the other hand, gender mainstreaming actions can often lead to the identification of issues which require more gender specific actions.

Addressing specific gender problems or gender gaps, which highlight women's subordination and inequality, also need to include men. SDC experience shows that interventions that aim at changes in the activities and

status of women imply corresponding changes in the status and behaviour of men. This can mean the need for special activities with men to sensitise them to the necessity for actions to improve gender equality, to build their commitment so that they are willing to make such changes. The many SDC initiatives to address the equal representation of women and men in leadership and decision-making demonstrate these processes at work. Addressing violence against women or gender gaps like literacy also highlights these concerns. In many contexts, the fact that men have to change is under-recognised. As a result, interventions fail to respond to the needs and fears of men who think they may lose out and therefore resist change.

However, sometimes it is also necessary to recognise that it is counter-productive to the reduction of gender inequality to involve men in women-oriented interventions. There is a danger that men might take over, with the result that women's position is not improved, or is even worsened by the intervention. In general, SDC experience is that it is important to consult women about involving men in women-focused interventions. Many mixed women/men's projects fail to challenge power relations – for example in micro-enterprise interventions, which often involve women working in production, while men

dominate in more profitable areas such as marketing. Including men in women's projects can prove problematic, especially where women beneficiaries themselves are reluctant to have men involved.

SDC experience in implementing gender specific action in the context of the multiple oppression of gender, caste and class relations, demonstrates the importance of all these issues. It also highlights that by the very nature of gender as a power relation, addressing gender specific issues, like mainstreaming gender in policies, programme and projects, can also contribute to a wider view of social justice.

SDC experience also demonstrates that, like mainstreaming gender in SDC policies, programme and projects, gender specific actions also require a flexible and multi-level approach. As the cases show, a multi-level treatment ranges from strengthening or creating national institutional frameworks, to affecting real changes in equality in the lives of women and men at the grassroots.

Equal opportunities in organisations

Working towards equal opportunities within SDC is important to its credibility in promoting gender equality with its partners – just as it is important to SDC partners' credibility in promoting gender equality at grassroots. The SDC Gender Equality Policy identifies equal opportunities in SDC as a key principle. The implementation of this policy is particularly important to promote more participatory and democratic working environments in which women and men from different castes, ethnic groups and classes can be informed and participate in issues that affect their working life.

In this respect, there is some concern among SDC staff and partners relating to the recruitment, retention and promotion of women staff members. While there is appreciation of the social and cultural constraints that affect the appointment of women, particularly at field level, there is also a desire for a more proactive stance on this issue by SDC.

The limited documented experience that SDC has in this area also indicates that equal opportunities can have practical consequences for the performance of projects. For example, the sex of field staff may be significant in their ability to talk to men or women in communities.

Undertaking a gender audit with the help of an «outside» facilitator/expert, is one way for SDC and partners to undertake a self-diagnosis of the treatment of gender in both programmatic and organisational dimensions. If done in a participative manner, with good preparation, follow-up and monitoring, a gender audit can provide a good basis on which to formulate an equal opportunities strategy for the organisation. This involves attention not just to numbers of women and men. It also includes attention to issues like their recruitment, their promotion, their access to training, their positions and a range of qualitative factors relating to organisational culture.

Recommendations

Based on this review of SDC experience in working with gender as a transversal issue, a number of recommendations can be made. Most of them are not new, in the sense that they have been considered «good practice» in work with gender equality. However, what this reflection on SDC practice does is reinforce their importance in SDC and its ability to implement SDC's Gender Equality Policy in accordance with its guiding principles.

The recommendations are structured around the spheres of the «web of institutionalisation»[1], as used in the conclusions and summary of discussion in the conference. These four spheres represent a set of issues which are essential to the institutionalisation of gender equality in practice.

«Delivery» sphere

This sphere deals with mainstreaming gender equality in the formulation and implementation of programmes and projects. It is also concerned with the way in which gender is addressed in the underlying theory, methodology and applied research on which interventions are based. Three recommendations emerged as relevant in this sphere.

1. Heads of COOFs and sector staff at HQ take the responsibility (as appropriate) to ensure that.
■   a gender aware analysis is carried out at the beginning of any new interventions;
■   in a continuing programme/project where a gender aware analysis has not yet been done, a gender aware analysis is carried out at the next most appropriate point in the programme cycle;
■   In the case of country or sector programmes a gender aware analysis should be incorporated in an understanding of policies and development processes affecting country or sector programmes.

Section II summarises the kind of information and understanding about gender relations that is important.

[1] The «web» was used in the conference and the subsequent report, as a mechanism for summarising the discussion. For more details on the web itself, see Levy, Caren 1997 «Institutionalisation of Gender through Participatory Practice», in I Guijt and M Kaul Shah (eds), The Myth of Community, IT Publications.

This analysis is then useful for making strategic choices about

■ What gender issues will be addressed through gender mainstreaming activities and what will be addressed through gender specific actions.

■ Whether there is a need for a pilot programme in either of these initiatives.

■ Whether the interventions will target women, women and men, or men in its different components.

2. Based on the gender aware analysis, Heads of COOFs and sector staff take responsibility for setting up a monitoring system for programmes and projects, which includes both gendered and gender indicators.

■ Mechanisms for the regular collection and use of quantitative gender disaggregated data need be identified.

■ Mechanisms for the regular collection and use of qualitative gender disaggregated data need also be identified, so that changes in power relations can be monitored.

3. The Gender Unit with support from local gender officers develop a list of gender experts in the countries and regions in which SDC operates as an advisory and backstopping resource for the programmes and projects of COOFs and SDC partners.

Organisational sphere

This sphere addresses gender equality in the procedures, mainstream job responsibilities, staff development and the related equal opportunity policies in SDC and in its partner organisations. There are eight recommendations to come out of this capitalization process.

4. It is proposed that gender be systematically integrated into the overall SDC controlling system. This is not only important for SDC to be able to track its own policy priorities and meet its international reporting requirements. It is also an important mechanism for the regular capitalization

of gender in SDC, as COOF-level experience of working with gender equality could otherwise be «lost», given the decentralised nature of SDC and the regular rotation of senior staff.

5. The selection criteria for identifying international and local SDC partners should be institutionalised in the procedures of SDC to include attention to gender equality, whether insisting on proven experience of working with gender mainstreaming or securing agreement that this will be developed or acquired.

6. Gender must be integrated into the Terms of Reference for all the moments forts in a programme cycle, with particular attention to the situation analysis, the annual reviews and evaluations.

7. Gender Focal Points, in discussion with Heads of COOF and with support from the Gender Unit on request, develop a short- term strategy of how they are going to work in COOF and with partners.

8. At COOF level, Gender Focal Points with support from Heads of COOF create a forum for sharing good practice and building political commitment at country

level, per sector and in projects among SDC staff and partners. These could be set up on a regular basis, separately or as part of other discussion arenas, or linked to moments forts in the programme cycle.

9. The Gender Unit creates a database to document the institutional memory of working with gender equality.

■ Other useful resources to include in the database are the list of local gender experts (advisors and trainers), relevant reading and useful internet connections to gender related information in the fields in which SDC works.

■ The Gender Unit develops a strategy for the collection and compiling of information for the database as well as for its dissemination.

■ An important part of this strategy is the system of communication to share experience between the Gender Unit and Gender Focal Points. An internet mechanism must be created to enable direct communication between the Gender Unit and Gender Focal Points, as well as among Gender Focal Points themselves.

10. The Gender Unit develops a medium-term training strategy which identifies issue based training workshops in Switzerland,

for example, on gender in monitoring, gender in HIV/AIDS etc, and support to gender training in COOFs.

■ Decisions as to the topics one should focus on in Switzerland should come from an evaluation of past and current training experience in SDC, and consultations with key SDC staff and partners on their training needs and interests.

■ Decisions as to how to support local-level training should be developed with the Gender Focal Points, using the network established in 8. As this report demonstrates, there is already a great deal of experience of gender training at local level. Examples include general gender training, training for gender analysis, sector specific or programme/project specific training. The Gender Equality Policy and the Gender in Practice Toolkit offer additional resources for local training initiatives.

11. COOFs undertake a gender audit of their organisational structure and culture with a view to developing a local equal opportunities strategy for the office and with partners.

Policy sphere

This sphere is concerned with the main-streaming of gender equality in SDC policies, including sector and other transversal policies, in the way SDC resources are allocated and spent, and in the statements of political commitment by leadership in SDC and its partners.

12. SDC management and sector staff at HQ take the responsibility (as appropriate) to ensure that gender equality is integrated into all policy documents.

13. The Heads of COOFs and sector staff at HQ take the responsibility (as appropriate) to ensure that gender is incorporated in the Country Programmes and Strategies, providing a gender-sensitive framework for programmes and projects.

14. Heads of COOFs and sector staff at HQ take the responsibility (as appropriate) to ensure that gender inequalities are discussed as part of policy dialogue with partners, to identify problems in a gender sensitive manner and to build political commitment to address gender equality.

15. As there is a «corruption clause» in agreements between SDC and its partners, there should be a «gender clause» incorporated as a regular clause in agreements to unambiguously indicate SDC's political commitment to gender equality, in line with its policy.

Citizen sphere

This sphere is concerned with women and men's experience at the grassroots, their political constituencies and how representative their political structures are at all levels. In the development co-operation relationships, this is largely the sphere in which SDC partners operate at the grassroots. SDC's influence on this sphere will come mainly through the implementation of the recommendations in the previous sphere. However, two further recommendations are important for their implications at the grassroots level.

16. In line with the Gender Equality Policy as well as the governance priorities of SDC, SDC managers at COOF level ensure that their partners address the political structures at local level to ensure the equal participation of women as well as men in their class, caste, and ethnic diversity. This includes attention to identifying entry points through which to address power relations (see Section III), for example, through «uncontested domains» to create the «space» for women to express and act on their interests in situations of inequality.

17. In addition to recommendation 5 concerning the selection of partners, SDC also ensures that its partners are well connected to women and men, and their organisations, at grassroots-level, or are willing to take steps to create and sustain these connections. There is much to learn from the strategic choice of partners to achieve policy ends, for example, SDC India's priority commitment to address discrimination and its choice of partners who have knowledge and commitment to deal with gender, class and caste discrimination.