

## GENDER IN ON-GOING PROJECTS

The following are two examples of projects that integrated gender successfully.

### Rubbish collection – Burkina Faso

As part of the solid waste management project in the municipality of Bogandé, Helvetas supports the Women's Association of Bogandé in generating income through the collection of rubbish. The rubbish collectors are trained in facilitation techniques, IEC, social marketing of drinking water, hygiene and sanitation provision and the administrative management of the household waste management project.



A local women's organisation are providing services to their municipality

Photo: Helvetas BF

### Vocational Education programme with Gender and Social Equity Focus – Nepal

In Nepal, a vocational education programme ensures that women and representatives of marginalised groups participate in the trainings by offering the training providers an incentive for being inclusive in the trainee selection. This way, half of all trainees are women and around 80% come from disadvantaged groups. The trainings provide relevant and practical skills which are sought on the labour market and are no longer than 3 months, to ensure that women are able to participate.



One of the former trainees of SKILL Nepal now has her own electronics shop together with her husband. photo: Silvia Voser

## HELVETAS WORKING APPROACH GENDER



Photo: S. Opladen

## CONVENTIONS PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY

Instrumental in bringing the government and public's attention to the need to address women's subordinate position have been the UN Convention of the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979, ratified by 180 countries) and the Beijing Platform for Action (PFA, 1995, ratified by 189 states).

Gender equality is also a key element of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), where it states that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights".

At the **UN Vienna Conference** in 1993, steps have been taken to recognize women's rights as human rights and to acknowledge violence against women as a violation of women's human rights. Furthermore, the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women have been integrated into the **UN Millennium Development Goals (Goal 3)** in 2000. **SDC** has formulated its first gender policy in 1993 and is committed to promote a gender balanced development, which is in accordance with the Swiss equality law (1981) and the Swiss Government's ratification of CEDAW in 1997.

## TOOLS AND RESOURCES: REFERENCE LIST

- DFID (2008) *The Gender Manual: A practical Guide* (<http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/publications/dfid-gender-manual-2008.pdf>)
- Oxfam (2003) *Oxfam's Policy on Gender Equality* ([http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/issues/gender/downloads/gender\\_policy2003.pdf](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/issues/gender/downloads/gender_policy2003.pdf))
- SDC (2003) *Gender in Practice, Tool-Kit for SDC and its partners* ([www.sdc.admin.ch/en/Home/Themes/Gender/General\\_and\\_thematic\\_tools](http://www.sdc.admin.ch/en/Home/Themes/Gender/General_and_thematic_tools))
- UN (2001) *Gender Mainstreaming: Strategy for Promoting Gender Equality* ([www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/factsheet1.pdf](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/factsheet1.pdf))
- WB (2001) *Gender Mainstreaming Strategy Paper* (<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTGENDER/Resources/strategypaper.pdf>)

## CONTACT

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## STRIVING FOR EQUALITY BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

In most developing countries small isles of seeming affluence contrast with an otherwise poverty struck environment which is characterized and perpetuated by discrimination, marginalization, vulnerability and injustice. The poor are deprived of their right to a life in dignity and security, lack access to education, water, health, justice, markets and financial services and are subjected to corruption and arbitrariness. Whereas in many countries large layers of population are equally affected by poverty and deprivation, poverty nevertheless does have a distinct face and it is female. In countries all over the world, women are more likely than men to live in extreme poverty and lack opportunities and power to secure their basic rights.

Adhering to the fundamental values of human rights, Helvetas contributes to overcome gender related poverty and discrimination by actively promoting gender equality as an essential prerequisite for sustainable development and mainstreams gender in all its programmes and projects. This issue sheet documents Helvetas' approaches and experiences towards equality between men and women based on Helvetas' Gender policy and strategy.

## INTRODUCTION

Gender is understood as the socially constructed identities of women and men in a given society, context and time. Gender is hence determined by the notion of tasks and roles attributed to women and men in society, both in public and private life. These roles are constantly being shaped, redefined and reproduced at family, household or societal level.

In many instances personal relationships between men and women are characterised by power imbalances which still hamper the progress of human development at large. Often women have less decision-making power than men, lower access to information and knowledge and hence less recourse to legal recognition and protection.

Additionally, women in most developing countries spend a tremendous amount of time on domestic activities such as household work, child education and care work, besides their engagement in subsistence agriculture. This “double-load” from occupation and family further limits their ability to generate income and to participate in community or national decision-making resulting in women’s poor representation in politics and business. This systematic discrimination leads to women’s increased vulnerability to poverty, violence and diseases and results in their disproportionate high representation of the world’s poor.

The gender-disaggregated statistics of UNDP 2010 confirms that:

Of the world’s one billion poorest people, three-fifths are women and girls.

Of the 774 million adults in the world who cannot read, two thirds are women.

54 percent of the 72 million children who are out of school are girls.

On average, only 17 percent of parliamentarians worldwide are women.

Women spend at least twice as much time as men on unpaid domestic work

Almost all recent armed conflicts have been characterized by systematic sexual violence against women

In many countries HIV/AIDS spreads more rapidly among women than men. In sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, 57 percent of those living with HIV are women, and young women aged 15-24 are at least three times more likely to be infected than men of the same age.

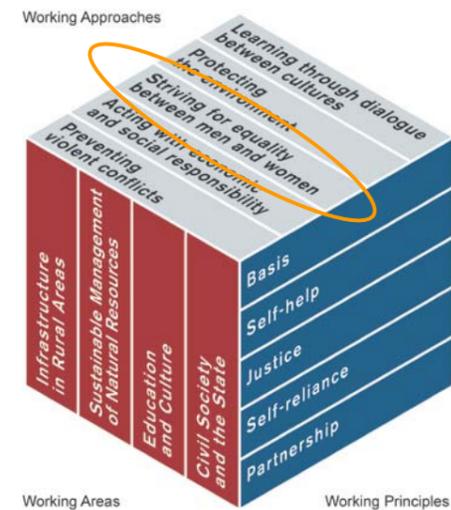
## VISION & GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Helvetas has the **vision** of a society, which grants everyone, both men and women, the right of self-determination and enables them to participate in shaping their social and political environment.

It is commonly understood that the integration of gender issues makes a key contribution to the relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of any development intervention. Helvetas recognises the different gender roles and needs and access to and control over resources of both women and men and therefore promotes gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty and to facilitate a development that is sustainable.

In order to strive for gender equality, Helvetas advocates the following guiding principles, which are in line with the

**Foreign Programme Strategy** where gender is included in the cube as one of the five transversal working approaches.



With all due respect for the cultural differences in the relationship between men and women, Helvetas stands for equal rights and equal opportunities. Existing gender-specific prejudices have to be addressed and the various forms of gender discrimination overcome.

No context is free of gender relations. Every intervention affects men and women differently as they have different needs, interests, roles and resources, which may be reinforced by class, race, caste, ethnicity or age. Helvetas recognizes the need to understand the social dimensions of poverty and with it, the context-specific gender relations.

Helvetas programme and project interventions strive to ensure that women, as well as men, are involved in setting goals and in planning so that development meets priorities and needs of both men and women and benefits them both equally.

Gender-related issues and questions are continuously a subject of constructive debate within Helvetas as well as with its partner organisations with the aim to learn from each other and to develop competences.

## HELVETAS' COMMITMENT

In order to work towards a society in which women and men have the same rights it is necessary to ensure a systematic integration of gender into all activities. Helvetas therefore identifies three components which are interlinked and reinforce each other:

- Engendering all steps and processes of the programme/project cycle
- Engendering the organisation
- Gender specific activities

## ENGENDERING THE PROJECT CYCLE

Engendering all steps and processes of the Project Cycle Management (PCM) aims at involving women as well as men in setting goals and in planning so that development activities meet priorities and needs of both men and women.

## 1) Problem Identification/ Gender Aware Analysis

A gender aware analysis at the beginning of any new intervention helps to avoid interventions that may not only ignore gender differences, but might actually make them worse. Gender aware analysis need to bring an understanding of at least the following three dimensions of the way power in gender relations is articulated:

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

## 2) Implementation

Helvetas strives to ensure that both men and women are participating equally in the decision-making processes and are treated with equal respect.

## 3) Monitoring

Gender sensitive indicators are essential in measuring an intervention's expected results by gender group. Indicators include quantitative as well as qualitative disaggregated data, which allow for the monitoring of men's and women's participation as well as the effects on power relations and give feedback of experiences, allowing for learning and adapting the intervention strategies, where necessary.

## 4) Evaluation

Engendering the Terms of References ensures the integration of gender issues in the evaluation's objectives. The evaluation team is gender sensitive and, whenever possible, composed in a gender balanced way.

## ENGENDERING THE ORGANISATION

Engendering the organisation means the institutionalisation of gender concerns within Helvetas itself. It is relating to taking account of gender equality in administrative, financial, staffing and other organisational procedures with the aim to contribute to a transformative process of the organisation in terms of procedures, attitudes and culture. To that end Helvetas has appointed Gender Focal Points (men and women) in all country programmes who formulate Gender Action Plans, supervise their implementation and regularly meet and exchange (last in a Workshop in Burkina Faso in 2010). At Head Office the Gender Group brings up issues of interest. Policies against sexual harassment and mobbing are in place, staff and partner receive training on gender issues and awareness raising events are regularly staged at Head Office. The web based Community of Practice “Gender in Helvetas” enables Helvetas staff to share good experiences, relevant reading and digital stories with regard to gender issues.



## GENDER SPECIFIC INITIATIVES

Sometimes, integrating gender as a transversal theme in projects is not enough to address inequalities, but context-specific actions are needed to empower women. Women, for instance, are traditionally often excluded from decision-making at the community level and their confidence can be undermined by limited language and literacy skills. Therefore, specific actions may be required to develop their self-confidence needed for dealing with village authorities, such as special trainings in leadership skills, confidence building and communication. Experience has shown that women's participation in decision-making in formal as well as informal political structures is a key factor for achieving gender equality. The examples below illustrates Helvetas' gender specific activities.

### Caravans for gender equality - Vietnam

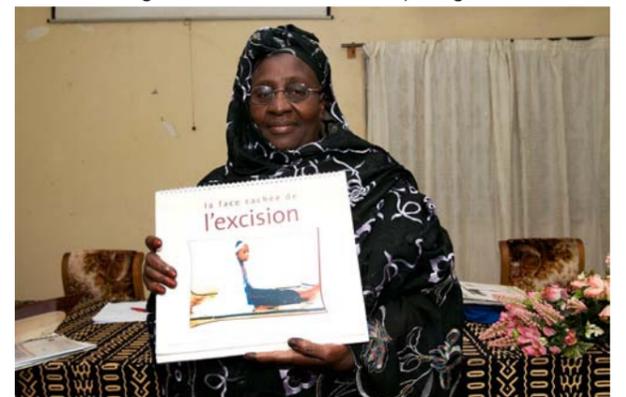
In Vietnam Helvetas works with the Women's Union to raise awareness on women's rights, domestic violence, and gender equality through interactive theatre



Interactive theatre in Vietnam on women's rights and domestic violence gives the audience an active role. Photo: Helvetas VN

### Female genital mutilation - Mali

In Mali Helvetas supports local partners in awareness raising campaigns against harmful practices of female genital mutilation through the SILE (Support of local initiatives against female circumcision) Programme.



Awareness raising on the harmful sides of female genital mutilation using a book. Photo: Sülükno Gondrez, Helvetas Mali

Event “Gender Equality: Women in leading positions” with the participation of Greenpeace and the equal opportunities commissioner of the City of Zürich at Helvetas Head Office in November 2010, organised by the Helvetas Gender Group. Photo: Helvets