



# SUPPORTING GENDER EQUALITY IN POST-CONFLICT CONTEXTS

*Executive Summary*  
*2021*

# IMPRINT

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Background, objectives, and object of the evaluation

As gender equality (SDG 5) and peacebuilding (SDG 16) are both key aspects of sustainable global development (United Nations, 2015), they are also goals of international and German development cooperation. The achievement of these two goals poses ongoing challenges for the international community: progress is only slowly being made towards the realisation of gender equality, yet at the same time, the number of violent conflicts has risen in recent years. The present evaluation takes up this thematic area and analyses to what extent the gender mainstreaming process used in German bilateral official development cooperation is suited to post-conflict contexts and supports the planning and implementation of activities that contribute to gender equality and the building of peaceful and inclusive societies.

The evaluation devotes particular interest to the intersection of these two goals. The nexus approach calls attention to the fact that all genders<sup>1</sup> experience violent conflict in different ways. While men mostly tend to be involved in conflicts as active combatants, women are more likely to suffer from its indirect consequences. One of these can be poorer health care, with the result that armed conflicts reduce women's life expectancy even more than men's. Moreover, in the context of armed conflicts, even outside of direct combat situations women (more than men) are frequently affected by violence, including sexual and gender-based violence. In addition, other social characteristics such as religion, ethnicity or sexual orientation can contribute to multiple or intersecting experiences of discrimination.

At the same time, women and men are confronted with different and sometimes changing gender roles and norms in the different phases of a conflict. For example, in some conflicts women may be active as combatants. Or they may take charge of managing the family's finances in their husband's absence. Based on this softening of traditional gender roles and norms, it is possible that the post-conflict context – despite the frequent persistence of threats and stresses – may also yield opportunities to redefine gender roles and norms. When societies are coming to terms with their recent conflict-affected past, negotiating how they will live together in future and which ground rules will apply, establishing new institutions and reforming existing ones, it can be possible to strengthen human rights, gender equality and disability inclusion in these processes. Development cooperation can support this.

For development cooperation, there are both normative and instrumental reasons to incorporate the gender-conflict nexus<sup>2</sup> and the resulting gender- and conflict-specific practical needs and strategic interests of women and men into the planning and implementation of development cooperation projects in post-conflict contexts. On the normative side, firstly, these are UN Security Council resolution 1325 and its follow-up resolutions (United Nations Security Council, 2000, 2008, 2009a, 2009b, 2010, 2013a, 2013b, 2015a, 2019a, 2019b) in which the “Women, Peace and Security” Agenda was established, along with other multilateral agreements and national self-commitments on the thematic area of the gender-conflict nexus, which constitute the normative frame of reference for German development cooperation and for the strategies of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). Turning to instrumental motivations, secondly, some studies have shown that gender-sensitive approaches in peacebuilding and conflict prevention increase the chances that success will be more sustainable; also that interventions are more effective if – ideally right from the start – they address the different gender-specific needs and interests (Demeritt et al., 2014; O'Reilly et al., 2015; Shair-Rosenfield and Wood, 2017; UN

<sup>1</sup> This evaluation is based on a non-binary understanding of gender; going beyond the masculine and the feminine, gender identities are understood as diverse and fluid. At the same time, within development cooperation practice gender is mostly thought about in terms of the categories “women” and “men” (within which “girls” and “boys” are also subsumed). The present evaluation reflects this practice by focusing on the diverse experiences of women and men. While the evaluation team is conscious of the limitations of this approach, a merely linguistic modification to broaden it beyond “women” and “men” would distort the results of the data collection and not do justice to the theme.

<sup>2</sup> The term “gender-conflict nexus” refers to the inherent connection between gender and conflict; that is to say, experiences of conflict differ according to gender. This gender-conflict nexus has consequences for German development cooperation, since this should deal sensitively and appropriately with the different needs and interests of the genders that result from their specific experiences of conflict.

Women, 2015). This is particularly evident if, for example, untreated traumas prevent women or men from participating successfully in project activities, or if due to a conflict the target groups include numerous women-headed households and gender-specific barriers prevent them from participating in development cooperation measures.

The German government has anchored the “Women, Peace and Security” Agenda in its policy guidelines on “Preventing Crises, Resolving Conflicts, Building Peace” (Bundesregierung, 2017a) and the joint interministerial strategies that have emerged from them to support (1) security sector reform (Bundesregierung, 2019a), (2) dealing with the past and reconciliation (transitional justice) (Bundesregierung, 2019b) and (3) promoting the rule of law (Bundesregierung, 2019c). In its National Action Plan (NAP II), it has described the realisation of the Agenda in more detail (Bundesregierung, 2017b).<sup>3</sup> A study commissioned by the Federal Foreign Office also reveals that Germany’s commitment to the implementation of Resolution 1325 has increased since 2018, but that the international community does not perceive Germany as an active trailblazer. On a similar note, it finds that in comparison to other international actors who have been working on the issue for decades, Germany’s approach does not yet display the same consistency and coherence (Auswärtiges Amt, 2020a).

In its strategy papers on “Development for Peace and Security” (BMZ, 2013a) and “Gender Equality in German Development Policy” (Gender Equality Strategy) (BMZ, 2014a) which are key reference documents, the BMZ emphasises that both policy themes are central overarching goals of German development cooperation. This is supported by the second Development Policy Action Plan on Gender Equality 2016-2020 (Gender Action Plan, GAP II) (BMZ, 2016a), which implements the standards of the Gender Equality Strategy and defines priority themes and strategic objectives. From this it can be concluded, firstly, that the thematic area should be part of the policy dialogue, and secondly, that projects should be designed and implemented in a gender- and conflict-sensitive manner. If gender equality is a principal or significant objective, then projects in post-conflict countries should be shaped to reflect this in every phase – from conception and early planning, through definition of the target group, to reporting and evaluation.

Even though the gender-conflict nexus is relevant in many development cooperation contexts, there are only a few evaluations which analyse how donors respond to this nexus or address it in their projects. Since many current and future challenges in post-conflict contexts can only be dealt with successfully by German development cooperation if these linkages are taken into consideration, it is relevant and useful to carry out an evaluation of the extent to which the nexus is included in the planning and implementation of projects in post-conflict contexts.

In order to assess whether gender mainstreaming is being translated into practice successfully, two dimensions were examined:

- The first dimension covers whether the process as such allows the actors to identify and integrate women’s and men’s gender- and conflict-specific experiences, needs and interests within the framework of a German development cooperation project (process dimension). This comprises the levels of (a) planning and (b) output (activities).
- The second dimension encompasses whether the intended gender- and conflict-related effects actually occur (outcome dimension).

Both dimensions are indispensable before it is possible to talk about successful gender mainstreaming.

The object of the evaluation is thus the process of gender mainstreaming used by German bilateral official development cooperation in post-conflict contexts. The point of gender mainstreaming is to allow the actors involved (especially the BMZ and the state implementing organisations) to adopt and apply a gender perspective. Bearing in mind the specificities of post-conflict contexts, it is of the utmost importance that the process enables actors to identify and integrate those needs and interests of all genders arising from their

<sup>3</sup> NAP II (2017-2020) was valid up to the end of 2020. NAP III (2021-2024) is currently being developed by the ministries involved, under the coordination of the Federal Foreign Office.

experiences of conflict, and to plan and implement projects in a gender- and conflict-sensitive manner. The success of the gender mainstreaming process in German development cooperation is ultimately demonstrated in the form of positive contributions to gender equality in post-conflict contexts.

The process of gender mainstreaming was analysed on the basis of a total of 47 projects in 11 post-conflict contexts. The evaluation focused on projects of German bilateral official development cooperation as well as measures under other budget titles, such as Special Initiatives (title: SI) or Transitional Development Assistance (title: TDA), being implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and the development bank of the Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW), and hence in a broader sense subject to the same steering logic as bilateral official development cooperation. Multilateral or civil society projects were not part of the evaluation; a civil society perspective was included, however, both within the composition of the evaluation's reference group and by means of interviews in Germany and the partner countries. Despite the focus on post-conflict contexts, many of the evaluation findings can also be applied in part at least to gender mainstreaming in other contexts, since the process of planning and implementation of projects for all partner countries follows a similar course.

The findings and recommendations of the evaluation are addressed on the one hand to the BMZ for the steering of projects and the ongoing strategic development of gender mainstreaming, and on the other hand to the implementing organisations GIZ and KfW, which are responsible for practical implementation. They are to be supported in changing structures and processes in such a way that the goals of German development cooperation in post-conflict contexts can better be achieved and that, in the medium term, a greater contribution is made to supporting gender equality. In the course of the "BMZ 2030" reorientation process (Doc. 162),<sup>4</sup> corresponding reference and anchoring points are being established via the quality criteria "Human rights, gender equality and disability inclusion" and "Conflict sensitivity" and via the new strategy on the core area of "Peace and social cohesion".

### **Methodological approach**

The evaluation is based on a gender-sensitive, conflict-sensitive and human-rights-based approach and heeds the do-no-harm principle. Since one of the aims of the German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval) is to contribute, through its evaluation work, to strengthening evaluation capacities in the partner countries of German development cooperation as well as in Germany itself, two workshops on the evaluation approach known as Inclusive Systemic Evaluation for Gender, Equality, Environment and Marginalised Voices (ISE4GEMS) (Stephens et al., 2018) were organised in Colombia and Germany as part of this evaluation. ISE4GEMS is a human-rights-based and gender-responsive evaluation approach developed by UN Women. It is explicitly underpinned by systemic thinking and, in addition to the gender dimension, also pays particular heed to marginalised groups and environmental aspects.

At the same time, the evaluation follows a theory-based evaluation approach. It centres on a theory of change which charts the assumed process flows and causal pathways that lead to achievement of the expected results. In this case, the theory of change describes how gender mainstreaming is implemented in the process of planning, implementation and post-implementation in the German development cooperation projects carried out in post-conflict contexts and how this is intended to generate effects that promote gender equality. This approach makes it possible to compare the conceptual-theoretical assumptions about effects with the reality of practical implementation in German development cooperation.

<sup>4</sup> In order to preserve the confidentiality of unpublished documents passed on to the German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval), these are cited in the text in the form "Doc." plus a consecutive number and are not listed in the Bibliography.

With regard to post-conflict status,<sup>5</sup> 11 countries (Burundi, Colombia, Ethiopia, Georgia, Liberia, Nepal, Pakistan, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Uganda and Ukraine) were identified as having experienced violent conflicts of high intensity in the period 2000-2015. For seven countries, a desk study (26 projects) was conducted in which project documents and evaluations were analysed to determine whether and to what extent they coherently address the gender-conflict nexus and/or describe the (successful) promotion of gender equality when reporting on project outcomes. In addition, detailed case studies (21 projects) were undertaken in four countries (Colombia, Liberia, Pakistan and Sri Lanka). These countries were selected according to the following criteria: (1) relevance of the portfolio with regard to both gender equality and peace and security, (2) volume of the Official Development Assistance (ODA) funding allocation, (3) existence of different types of cooperation, and (4) each location in a different region. The case studies form the core of the study about the practical implementation of the gender mainstreaming process.

The German bilateral official development cooperation projects we studied had been assigned a policy marker for peace and security (PS) and for gender equality (GE) as a “significant” (i.e. subsidiary) or a “principal” objective (PS1 or PS2 and GE1 or GE2). They were active in the different priority areas applicable in the respective countries, particularly in the sectors of “Peacebuilding and conflict prevention”, “Sustainable economic development”, “Health” and “Vocational education and training” but also in “Energy” and “Infrastructure”, and were delivered by either GIZ or KfW. Due to the focus of the evaluation, projects financed via the Special Initiative on Displacement and via Transitional Development Assistance were also included in the analysis.

A multi-method design was used to perform extensive analyses of primary and secondary data. BMZ strategy papers and procedural documents (such as manuals and guidelines) were analysed to review how they anchored the gender-conflict nexus (65 documents), and a total of 344 project documents (including preliminary appraisals, module proposals and evaluations) were analysed, in order to be able to comment on the quality of implementation of the gender mainstreaming process.

In addition, 302 interviews were conducted, 258 of which related to the case studies and were conducted with the various stakeholders (BMZ, GIZ, KfW, political partners, local implementing partners)<sup>6</sup> in order to survey their views on the process. The other 44 related to the desk study countries and involved decision-makers in the BMZ and the implementing organisations. Furthermore, 90 representatives of the target groups were invited to contribute their perspective<sup>7</sup> by means of a storytelling approach. These interviewees identified the greatest perceived change in their personal lives, and how the development cooperation measure in question may have contributed to it.

A portfolio analysis, which was based on the database of the Creditor Reporting System (CRS) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) supplemented by data from the BMZ’s list of measures, made it possible, firstly, to compare the BMZ’s commitment to gender equality on the global level with that of other international donors; secondly, it served as a basis for assessing the ministry’s efforts on the gender-conflict nexus in the 11 post-conflict countries. Triangulating the findings of the different methods allowed for deeper insights and more valid results than would have been possible if only one method had been adopted.

<sup>5</sup> For the purposes of delimiting its object of study, the evaluation defines the status of a post-conflict context in terms of two criteria: (a) a country or an area within a country has been affected by a massive outbreak of violence or war (intensity), and (b) the last outbreak of widespread violence occurred (taking 2018 as the baseline year) at least three but no more than 18 years previously (time).

<sup>6</sup> When considering partners, the evaluation distinguishes between political partners and implementing partners. While the political partners are principally involved in negotiations between governments (and not necessarily in the implementation of projects), the implementing partners deliver projects locally and are supported by German development cooperation in the implementation of programmes and projects. Responsibility for implementation rests with the respective implementing organisation, although in the case of Financial Cooperation, KfW is less intensively involved in implementation.

<sup>7</sup> “Storytelling” is a survey method in which respondents are asked to give their views (“story”) about an issue, in this case the “changes” that have “occurred in their life situation due to the projects”, within the structure of narrative interviews. The method allows interviewees to decide for themselves which topics they wish to mention (Davies and Dart, 2005).



## Overall assessment

The evaluation finds that the procedures currently specified for gender mainstreaming in German bilateral official development cooperation are fundamentally suited to the purpose of supporting gender equality. Studies at the outcome level also show that in areas such as “overcoming trauma” and “increasing income”, individual projects achieve relevant outcomes which, as well as satisfying practical needs, also contribute to empowering women and changing gender roles.

However, in practice the methods and analytical tools are rarely used in a way that systematically anchors the gender-conflict nexus in the projects. As a result, gender mainstreaming in German bilateral official development cooperation in post-conflict contexts is only partially successful. Therefore the potential of the projects is not being maximised in a systematic enough way. A considerable gap exists between the BMZ’s declarations of intent and commitments, on the one hand, and how these are actually put into practice in the given development cooperation projects, on the other.

The following barriers stand in the way of more effective anchoring of the gender-conflict nexus in bilateral development cooperation projects in post-conflict contexts:

- The BMZ’s Gender Equality Strategy, with its three-pronged approach consisting of gender mainstreaming, empowerment and development policy dialogue, emphasises that the ministry considers gender equality a goal in its own right and a guiding principle for its work. However, it is one of many cross-cutting themes that must be borne in mind when drafting development project concepts and realising them in practice. A tension exists between the multiplicity of cross-cutting themes and the high workload of staff, with the result that not all themes can be dealt with in equal measure, and priorities have to be set.
- The anchoring of the gender-conflict nexus depends very heavily on the commitment and interest of the responsible staff members in the BMZ divisions running the projects (especially the country officers), and of those in the two implementing organisations. Weighed against a multitude of other themes that have to be dealt with in the course of project conception and implementation, the theme of “gender equality” often ends up as a low priority. The evaluation found that commitment is greater when staff have prior experience and knowledge in the thematic area of “gender and conflict”. Overall, the competence of staff from the BMZ and from implementing organisations with regard to the gender-conflict nexus can be characterised as heterogeneous.
- In the country strategies, the promotion of gender equality or the gender-conflict nexus within priority areas is not usually anchored by means of targets or indicators. As a result, this important steering document does not make explicit the binding requirement to contribute to certain “gender objectives” against the backdrop of the post-conflict context. Consequently, since the objectives from the country strategy are reflected in the wording of programme objectives and these in turn are reflected in the wording of module objectives, when it comes to developing module proposals, there is no clear framework specifying which “gender objectives” a project should contribute to within its priority area.
- Despite the BMZ’s goal, described above, of supporting gender equality in post-conflict contexts, there is only one project in the countries we studied and during the time frame of the study in which this theme and peacebuilding are pursued – in a single phase – as joint principal objectives (PS2/GE2 marker). This constitutes a challenge, because PS2/GE2 projects are geared towards working specifically on the gender-conflict nexus with the political partners, the implementing partners, or indeed the target groups.
- Knowledge and practical experience on supporting gender equality in post-conflict contexts may be obtainable from German bilateral official development cooperation projects or indeed from other donors. However, staff of the implementing organisations (especially in the partner countries) and the BMZ do not find it easy to access, notwithstanding the approaches to internal knowledge management that exist, within the implementing organisations especially. It follows that those planning and implementing projects are not always able to benefit fully from the body of experience available.

## Assessment against OECD-DAC criteria

The findings of the analysis relating to the evaluation questions were assessed using the OECD Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) evaluation criteria of “relevance”, “coherence”, “effectiveness” and “efficiency”. German development cooperation projects in post-conflict contexts frequently concentrate on reconstruction, and therefore activities are often geared more towards immediate needs. Moreover, the present evaluation is first and foremost a process evaluation and did not look at effects occurring beyond the immediate scope of the given project. For these reasons, the criteria of “sustainability” and “impact” were not an explicit part of the analysis.

The evaluation finds the criterion of “relevance”, i.e. the question of whether the procedure and the projects themselves are consistent with normative and strategic frameworks, target group needs and appropriate design, to be “partially fulfilled”. The assessment firstly covers the relevance of the procedure in light of the normative and strategic framework documents as well as the needs of the target groups. This is rated as “mostly fulfilled”. Secondly, and more importantly, it considers the relevance of the projects actually implemented to an improvement in gender equality, which is rated as only “partially fulfilled”.

Coherence, which means that the procedure and the projects are embedded in the context of German development cooperation as a whole (internal coherence) and of the activities of development partners and other donors (external coherence), is rated as “partially fulfilled”, whereas the effectiveness of the procedure and the projects in German development cooperation is rated as “mostly fulfilled”. This assessment is based on examining the extent to which the actual procedure implemented corresponds to the intended process, i.e. the extent to which German bilateral official development cooperation projects achieve the BMZ’s self-set objective of contributing to gender equality in post-conflict contexts.

A further aspect examined for the “efficiency” criterion was the extent to which the procedure for planning and implementing gender-related activities leads to economical and timely outcomes regarding the promotion of gender equality. This criterion is assessed as “partially fulfilled”.

## Main findings

### *Anchoring of the gender-conflict nexus in relevant strategies*

In its policy guidelines on “Preventing Crises, Resolving Conflicts, Building Peace” (Bundesregierung, 2017a) and in the NAP II (Bundesregierung, 2017b), the German government has set itself the goal of implementing the “Women, Peace and Security” Agenda. Consequently the themes of “Gender” and “Conflict” are included in the relevant BMZ strategies on “Gender Equality in German Development Policy” (BMZ, 2014a) and on “Development for Peace and Security” (BMZ, 2013a). In the GAP II (BMZ, 2016a), “armed conflict, peacebuilding and displacement” is even treated as a sectoral thematic area in its own right, which underlines its importance.

Even though there are indications in more recent strategies of the German government and the BMZ that progress has been made conceptionally and gender-specific needs are anchored in many thematic areas, the documents currently available still do not make any such linkage between gender and conflict. Thus, in the 2017 Guidelines and in the NAP II, the issues are largely dealt with separately, while in the GAP II, a direct linkage between gender and conflict only occurs in the area of sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls in violent conflicts. The gender- and conflict-specific practical needs and strategic interests in post-conflict contexts go much further, however, and encompass such aspects as (new) income-earning opportunities, access to training, land or factors of production, and co-determination at the municipal level.

In the country strategies, which are binding upon the implementing organisations and indicative for module proposals, support for gender equality is not usually being anchored with targets and indicators in the various priority areas, although this is stipulated in the GAP II, and in the Gender Equality Strategy that has been in effect since 2014. One reason for this might be that the country strategies have not yet been updated since the Gender Action Plan entered into force.



The absence of gender targets and indicators has several consequences:

- Firstly, there is no clear reference framework specifying which gender equality objectives a module should contribute to in its priority area, taking account of the specific challenges of the post-conflict context<sup>8</sup>, because the objectives of a country strategy are supposed to be reflected in the wording of programme objectives, and these in turn in the wording of module objectives. It is rather the case that the “gender objective” is defined from scratch in each new module proposal. For the purposes of a coordinated German development cooperation approach to supporting gender equality in a country, this is inefficient and inhibits any potential synergies between the respective projects.
- Secondly, the lack of gender objectives in the country strategy makes it more difficult to ensure continuity in the work on gender equality in view of the rotation of BMZ country officers.
- Thirdly, it constrains the BMZ’s ability to supply information about the contribution made by German development cooperation to supporting gender equality in post-conflict contexts, and hence also on progress in implementing UNSCR 1325 and the corresponding NAP.

### *The portfolio*

The portfolio analysis encompassed projects financed via bilateral Technical and Financial Cooperation, the Special Initiative on Displacement, and Transitional Development Assistance. It shows that in the 11 selected countries, the vast majority of funding went to projects that pursued support for gender equality as a subsidiary objective (GE1 marker). In relation to the total financing in these countries, the share allocated to German bilateral official development cooperation with a GE1 marker has risen since 2008 and remained largely unchanged at that level since 2011. The adoption of the BMZ’s Gender Equality Strategy and Gender Action Plan have not led to any demonstrable increase.

For the BMZ portfolio in the 11 post-conflict countries during the period under review, the share of projects that pursue support for gender equality as their principal objective (GE2 marker) is low. Since 2014, they have constantly received less than 3 per cent of the total disbursements. During the period under review, in the 11 countries there was only one project with the PS2/GE2 marker, indicating joint principal objectives.

The evaluation considers this to be a problem: as gender roles and norms are embedded in society and its institutions, a need is seen in post-conflict contexts to work specifically on the gender-conflict nexus with political partners, local implementing partners and target groups, and to support the implementation of the “Women, Peace and Security” Agenda, which is also acknowledged by many of the partner countries.

At the same time, it is reasonable to assume that the goals of “peacebuilding” and “gender equality” can mutually reinforce each other. Supporting the latter, overcoming images of masculinity that promote violence and preventing gender-based violence represent a direct contribution to peacebuilding. Establishing dialogue formats and participatory and inclusive processes can, in turn, contribute to supporting gender equality. All of these would be proper fields of action for a PS2/GE2 project.

It must be noted as a caveat, however, that there can be circumstances in which the promotion of a PS2/GE2 project does not seem opportune, be this for political reasons in the partner country, due to the specific orientation of the German portfolio, or because of other donors’ engagement in this area. Therefore, in countries with a post-conflict context, the promotion of such a project should be carefully examined and the resulting decision, including the justification, should be documented.

<sup>8</sup> GEO projects, i.e. projects that have no implications for the thematic area of “gender”, must heed the do-no-harm principle; in other words, they must ensure that they do not increase inequality between the genders.

### *Planning and implementation of projects*

The evaluation finds that the formal process of planning, implementation, reporting and evaluation, including its analytical tools, such as peace and conflict assessments, gender analyses and target group and stakeholder analyses, is essentially adequate for anchoring the gender-conflict nexus in the projects. It enables the various stakeholders to come to grips with the thematic area of “gender”, and as a result – to varying degrees – to plan, adequately resource and implement gender-related activities in post-conflict contexts.

Commitment to the theme on the part of all stakeholders (and primarily – because of their role-model function and decision-making powers – the managers or decision-makers in the BMZ and in the implementing organisations) is a necessary prerequisite, but is only present to a limited extent; the same applies to the requisite systems to incentivise such commitment. However, this is not necessarily attributable to a lack of interest but rather, to high workload due to all the themes that need to be taken into account in the planning and implementation of projects. The consequence is that key stakeholders both in the BMZ and in the implementing organisations do not prioritise the thematic area in a form that promotes effective implementation, over and above formal anchoring in projects.

An important gateway point for the anchoring of the gender-conflict nexus in projects is the request for and ensuing discussion of the preliminary appraisal at the beginning of the conception phase of a project. This is because, at this early stage, adjustments are still being made and can be incorporated into the subsequent project appraisal. Once the module proposal has been worked out, the project has been designed in detail and intensive discussions with the partners have taken place, it is very cumbersome to go back and make further substantive changes later on.

The analysis of the anchoring of the gender-conflict nexus in the module proposals of the GE1 and GE2 projects we studied revealed that, in most cases, these only fulfil the minimum standards with regard to gender. This means that gender equality is mentioned in the relevant places, gender- and conflict-specific needs are discussed at least briefly, and gender-related indicators are formulated at the outcome and output levels. Often, however, these mostly quantitative indicators only stipulate that women should participate in defined activities; sometimes they also contain a qualitative reference to gender. Moreover, only a small proportion of projects report data disaggregated by gender, despite the fact that standards specifying this are in place. The BMZ has recognised the problem of defining indicators and commissioned a study in 2019 to develop proposals for making improvements.

Although the recommendations from analytical tools such as gender analysis or peace and conflict assessment are partially incorporated into the module proposal, they rarely elaborate on the linkage between gender and conflict. This means that the specific needs and interests of the different genders in post-conflict contexts are rarely named explicitly, and are not therefore incorporated sufficiently into project planning. The results matrix often proves to be unspecific on the matter of how the project is to make a concrete contribution to gender equality.

It is striking that the potential of projects for the transformation of gender roles and norms seldom comes to bear. Hence, the opportunity to incorporate the gender- and conflict-specific needs and interests of the target groups into the planning of projects, and to resource them appropriately, is not sufficiently utilised. As an additional consequence, some pressing post-conflict problems such as the traumatisation of parts of the target groups go unrecognised, even though dealing with these can be a vital prerequisite that enables the target groups to participate in the project activities successfully, or at all.

Some projects have recognised gender competence and conflict sensitivity as important criteria for their work in post-conflict contexts and have therefore established these as selection criteria for local implementing partners. This is an appropriate procedure to do justice to the specificities of the post-conflict context, provided that suitable implementing partners are available.

In many post-conflict contexts, sexual and gender-based violence is widespread as part of a continuum of violence after the conflict has ended. This is an environment to which development cooperation projects must react, in order to minimise the risk that the projects could leave target groups or staff exposed to sexual violence or exploitation. While prevention measures in the form of awareness-raising workshops are quite

widespread and the majority of staff rate them positively, gaps are found in the provision of complaint mechanisms and in awareness of their existence. Above all, the target groups are not sufficiently well informed about complaint mechanisms. Furthermore, there are instances where the respective responsibilities are unclear. This is not conducive to the timely and consistent institutionalisation of such a system in line with the relevant recommendations of the OECD-DAC Recommendation on Ending Sexual Exploitation, Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harassment in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance (OECD DAC, 2019a).

### ***Knowledge and experience***

Knowledge and practical experience on supporting gender equality in post-conflict contexts may be obtainable from German bilateral official development cooperation projects or indeed from other donors. However, staff of the implementing organisations (especially in the partner countries) and the BMZ do not find it easy to access. At the same time, however, knowledge and practical experience are found to be key factors for addressing the gender-conflict nexus appropriately within projects. Indeed, the evaluation found that better-informed staff turn out to be better champions of the theme.

The different organisations' offers of further training on gender equality in post-conflict contexts were dissimilar at the time of data collection. At the BMZ, the topic is part of the mandatory preparatory programme for new staff. KfW offers its staff further training courses on gender, which also cover the gender-conflict nexus. These are obligatory for new staff and entrants coming from different careers, but not for individuals who have already been working at the bank for some time and frequently hold decision-making roles or quality assurance responsibilities. Similarly at GIZ, which anchors the thematic area of "gender" comprehensively within its organisation and provides a broad range of training through the Academy for International Cooperation, participation in relevant course offerings is not mandatory. Moreover, these courses are not as yet tailored to the specific challenges of working in post-conflict contexts.

Both intra- and inter-organisational learning pose a challenge. Although the exchange of learning experiences is enshrined in the reporting system, such exchange barely takes place between the BMZ and the implementing organisations regarding their experience with the gender-conflict nexus. As a result, experience and knowledge can only be used unsystematically for the planning and implementation of projects. At the same time, there is nevertheless a great need for the exchange of practical experience on how gender mainstreaming activities can be effectively implemented within development cooperation projects in post-conflict contexts.

The new quality criterion "Human rights, gender equality and disability inclusion" provides an opportunity for the various organisations to offer a course concept with, ideally, mandatory training for staff with country and thematic responsibilities within those organisations. For example, the BMZ plans to integrate further training on the quality criterion "Human rights, gender equality and disability inclusion" into existing offerings such as the mandatory preparatory programme for new staff members. It is crucial that as many decision-makers as possible take part in relevant further training on this thematic area.

### ***Outcomes with regard to gender equality***

The evaluation finds that the projects mostly address practical gender- and conflict-specific needs. In doing this – and particularly where it is done by promoting income-generating activities – they also have indirect effects on gender roles and norms. Especially in the narrative interviews with the target groups, a majority of the women reported that their self-esteem had been strengthened by participating in the project, and that having their own income had upgraded their role in the family and community.

Few of the projects under review are carrying out activities which specifically deal with gender relations and gender roles in the post-conflict context, and which sensitise women and men to the possibility of non-violent relations within society. These activities – in the examples that exist – are rated very positively by the target groups. An important topic for post-conflict contexts, trauma work, also shows effects in relation to women's self-esteem. According to the women's own statements, only this work empowered them to regain control of their own lives.

In both areas, however, German development cooperation fell short of its potential in the projects under review, since these thematic areas were not systematically planned for or implemented. It was also rare for projects to deal with the strategic interests of women and men in post-conflict contexts. The evaluation findings therefore suggest that the projects studied might have had more potential for effects with regard to gender equality than were in fact realised.

## Recommendations

There follows a summary of the evaluation's recommendations (a) on steering by the BMZ, by means of strategies and portfolio design, (b) on structures and processes for the planning and implementation of projects, and (c) on knowledge and competence. An account of how the recommendations are derived from the findings is given in Chapter 7.

### *Steering by the BMZ*

#### **Recommendation 1:**

**As part of the “BMZ 2030” reform strategy, the BMZ should anchor the promotion of gender equality in post-conflict contexts and the implementation of the “Women, Peace and Security” Agenda at the strategic level.** To this end,

- the **strategy on the core area of “Peace and social cohesion”** should deal with the issue of “supporting gender equality in post-conflict contexts” thematically and, as far as possible, operationalise it with a corresponding indicator, and
- the **performance profiles for the quality criteria “Conflict sensitivity” and “Human rights, gender equality and disability inclusion”** should incorporate the gender-conflict nexus as an important theme.

#### **Recommendation 2:**

**The BMZ should consistently anchor the promotion of gender equality in its country strategies for post-conflict countries. In its priority areas (since “BMZ 2030”: “core areas”) it should define targets and indicators referring to gender equality.** These should be suitable for monitoring and assessing the achievement of this objective.

#### **Recommendation 3:**

**In post-conflict contexts, the BMZ should support the preparation of a countrywide gender analysis as a basis for defining gender targets in the individual priority areas (since “BMZ 2030”: “core areas”) of the country strategy.** The countrywide gender analyses should be prepared in coordination with other EU donors where possible and used collectively for a better coordinated approach. They should serve as the starting point for more focused gender analyses at module level in future by reflecting the countrywide framework and addressing specific challenges of post-conflict contexts, such as sexual gender-based violence and traumatisation of the population.

#### **Recommendation 4:**

**In every post-conflict country the BMZ should examine whether to promote a PS2/GE2 project that pursues peace, security and the promotion of gender equality as its principal objectives and supports the implementation of the “Women, Peace and Security” Agenda.** If the outcome of this examination is negative, this should be documented, including the justification.

### *Structures and processes for planning and implementation*

#### **Recommendation 5:**

**When a preliminary appraisal is requested for projects in post-conflict contexts with a provisional GE1 or GE2 marker, the BMZ should insist that the implementing organisations clearly articulate the approach whereby a project will respond to the gender- and conflict-specific needs and interests of the target groups and contribute to gender equality.**

#### **Recommendation 6:**

**The implementing organisations should ensure that the promotion of gender equality is coherently anchored in all sections of the module proposal for projects with a GE1 or GE2 marker, and should operationalise these objectives with one or more meaningful gender indicators.** In order to allow the BMZ to monitor this anchoring, the two implementing organisations should routinely provide the responsible country officers with outlines of the recommendations from peace and conflict assessments and gender analyses.

#### **Recommendation 7:**

**The implementing organisations should include gender-and-conflict competence as a selection criterion when choosing local implementing partners for GE1 or GE2 projects in post-conflict contexts.** If local implementing partners are suitable in principle but none of them possess such competence, the implementing organisations should raise their awareness of the thematic area and offer them opportunities to build and develop the requisite competence.

#### **Recommendation 8:**

**German development cooperation (BMZ and the implementing organisations) should implement the OECD-DAC Recommendation on Ending Sexual Exploitation, Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harassment in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance, adopted in 2019, with a view to systematically institutionalising protection and complaint mechanisms against sexual misconduct.** The distribution of responsibilities between local implementing partners, implementing organisations and the federal ministries involved in implementing the German government's policy guidelines on "Preventing Crises, Resolving Conflicts, Building Peace" and the National Action Plan (NAP) should be clearly stated.

### *Knowledge and competence*

#### **Recommendation 9:**

**Under the further training concept for the quality criterion "Human rights, gender equality and disability inclusion", the BMZ and the implementing organisations should offer (ideally) mandatory continuing education courses for those with country, project or thematic responsibilities, which should include application-oriented guidance on supporting gender equality in post-conflict contexts.**

**Recommendation 10:**

**The BMZ (possibly in cooperation with the EU Gender Expert Group) should commission a highly application-oriented research project in order to synthesise knowledge and experience on supporting gender equality in post-conflict contexts.** On the one hand, this knowledge should be incorporated into the BMZ's strategy documents and decisions (strategic orientation/portfolio design/implementation of core and initiative areas); on the other hand, it should be made accessible to implementing organisations, civil society organisations, partners and other donors in a targeted manner, for example in the form of specialist conferences.

This is an excerpt from the publication "Supporting Gender Equality in Post-conflict Contexts". Download the full report here: <https://www.deval.org/en/evaluations/our-evaluations/supporting-gender-equality-in-post-conflict-contexts>