

SUPPORTING GENDER EQUALITY IN POST-CONFLICT CONTEXTS

Summary

Gender equality (SDG 5) and peacebuilding (SDG 16) are key aspects of global sustainable development. However, the achievement of both goals poses ongoing challenges for the international community. Progress is only slowly being made towards the realisation of gender equality, while the number of violent conflicts has risen in recent years. In post-conflict contexts, it is particularly obvious how interdependent the two goals are: it is impossible to support gender equality without taking account of the gender-specific implications of a conflict, while peace can only be lasting and inclusive if the gender dimension is borne in mind.

Gender mainstreaming, meaning the systematic integration of a gender perspective into all development policy strategies and projects, is intended to enable German development cooperation to take account of these context-specific gender aspects throughout its work. Against this backdrop, the question that arises is to what extent the gender mainstreaming process used in German development cooperation results in the implementation of activities in post-conflict contexts that contribute to gender equality and thereby support the building of peaceful and inclusive societies. A DEval evaluation analysed this on the basis of 47 German official development cooperation projects in 11 post-conflict contexts.

The findings of the evaluation are that the specified procedures for gender mainstreaming make it possible in principle to implement projects that support gender equality in post-conflict contexts, and that relevant outcomes can be achieved. In practice, however, the procedures are rarely used in a way that consistently anchors the promotion of gender equality in the projects. Consequently, their potential is not being maximised systematically enough.

The evaluation therefore recommends:

- The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (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 and should also reflect these goals in its country strategies.
- The implementing organisations should ensure that the promotion of gender equality is coherently anchored in projects which pursue it as either a principal or a significant objective, and should operationalise it with meaningful gender indicators.
- As part of a further training concept, the BMZ and the implementing organisations should offer their staff (ideally) mandatory continuing education courses on the gender-conflict nexus.¹

Goals of German development cooperation

There are both normative and instrumental reasons to incorporate the gender-conflict nexus 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. First, the UN Security Council resolution 1325 (United Nations Security Council, 2000) along with other multilateral agreements and national self-commitments constitute the normative frame of reference for German development cooperation. Second, women’s political participation following the negotiated resolution of a conflict is associated with a longer-lasting peace (Shair-Rosenfield and Wood, 2017). This further underscores the relevance of a gender-sensitive approach in peacebuilding and conflict prevention for the success of development cooperation measures. 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

¹ This term refers to the fact that experiences of conflict vary depending on gender. The gender-conflict nexus is a significant topic for German development cooperation in that the organisations involved should deal appropriately with the different needs and interests resulting from gender-specific experiences of conflict.

institutions or reforming existing ones, it can be possible to strengthen gender equality within these processes. Development cooperation can help to ensure that this window of opportunity is used for societal transformation.

Resolution 1325 of the UN Security Council: the “Women, Peace and Security” Agenda

In the year 2000, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted UN resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) on women, peace and security. The resolution and its follow-up resolutions call for the strengthening of women’s participation in all peace and security processes and for comprehensive measures against sexual and gender-based violence during conflicts. Germany has produced three National Action Plans (NAPs) since 2012 to implement this resolution. The third NAP 2021–2024 was adopted in February 2021.

Gender mainstreaming, meaning the integration of a gender perspective into all development policy strategies and projects, is formalised in a process in German development cooperation and is part of the BMZ’s three-pronged approach to supporting gender equality (together with targeted empowerment measures and development policy dialogue). The aim is to make the different life situations, needs and interests of all genders an integral component of German development cooperation. This should not only strengthen gender equality but also enhance the achievement of other development policy objectives.

Evaluation

The evaluation investigated to what extent the process of gender mainstreaming in German bilateral development cooperation leads to the planning and implementation of activities that contribute to gender equality in post-conflict contexts. This was considered in terms of two dimensions:

1. the process dimension, meaning the level of planning and activities
2. the outcome dimension, meaning the level of project outcomes

The theory-based evaluation approach chosen makes it possible to compare the conceptual-theoretical assumptions about the functioning of the gender mainstreaming process with the reality of practical implementation in German development cooperation and the outcomes achieved. A multi-method design was used to perform analyses of strategy papers and procedural documents. The evaluation team analysed 47 projects in 11 post-conflict countries (Burundi, Colombia, Ethiopia, Georgia, Liberia, Nepal, Pakistan, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Uganda and Ukraine) and conducted case studies in four countries (Colombia, Liberia, Pakistan and Sri Lanka).

Gender mainstreaming process: essentially adequate but only partially successful

The evaluation finds that the existing procedures for gender mainstreaming are essentially adequate for supporting gender equality in post-conflict contexts. Analyses on the outcome level show that in areas such as “overcoming trauma” and “increasing income”, individual projects achieve relevant outcomes which not only meet practical needs but also contribute to empowering women and changing gender roles.

However, the procedures and analytical tools are rarely used in a way that consistently anchors the gender-conflict nexus in the projects. This becomes evident in the conception of projects, the formulation of indicators and the collection of gender-disaggregated data. Consequently, the potential of the projects is not being maximised systematically enough. There is a gap between the BMZ’s declarations of intent and commitments, on the one hand, and how these are actually realised in development cooperation projects, on the other.

Knowledge and competence as important factors

The success of gender mainstreaming is influenced by the organisational factors “individuals”, “institutionalisation”, “resources” and “gender climate in the organisation”. The overall analysis demonstrates that the gender-and-conflict competence of staff, particularly managers, and the availability of resources are the most important factors for successful gender mainstreaming. A higher degree of gender-and-conflict competence correlates with greater commitment to systematically anchoring gender in projects and addressing specific thematic aspects.

Figure 1: Organisational influencing factors on successful gender mainstreaming



Source: own presentation

The evaluation finds the levels of gender-and-conflict competence among staff at the BMZ and in the implementing organisations to be heterogenous. Knowledge on the theme of "supporting gender equality in post-conflict contexts" is held by donors, research institutions and civil society organisations worldwide. However, it is not easy for staff to access this available knowledge and relevant experience. It follows that those responsible for planning and implementing projects are not always able to benefit fully from the body of experience available.

Gender-and-conflict competence of local partners is essential

The organisations and institutions with which the projects cooperate in the partner countries play an important part when it comes to the planning and implementation of activities. On the one hand, they are frequently in direct contact with the target groups. On the other, gender roles and norms as well as power relations between women and men are also anchored in the institutions and organisations in the partner countries. It is therefore important for the sustainability of projects that partners support the objectives of gender mainstreaming.

Recommendations

To ensure that projects in post-conflict contexts contribute to gender equality, the evaluation makes recommendations (a) on steering by the BMZ, particularly in terms of strategy formulation and portfolio steering, (b) on structures and the process of planning and implementing projects, and (c) on knowledge and competence:

- In the course of the "BMZ 2030" reform process, 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 within the core area of "Peaceful and inclusive societies" and in the quality criteria of "Conflict sensitivity" and "Human rights, gender equality and disability inclusion".
- The BMZ should anchor the promotion of gender equality in its country strategies, which are the binding basis for programme design, and operationalise it with targets and indicators on the basis of countrywide gender analyses. In post-conflict contexts, the BMZ should always examine whether to commission a project that pursues gender equality and peacebuilding in parallel as principal objectives.

- The implementing organisations should ensure that the promotion of gender equality is coherently anchored in all sections of the module proposal for projects pursuing gender equality as a principal or significant objective, and should operationalise it with one or more meaningful gender indicators. The implementing organisations should include gender-and-conflict competence as a criterion in the selection of implementing partners for projects working closely with target groups in post-conflict contexts. If there are no local implementing partners that possess such competence, the implementing organisations should offer opportunities to build and develop the requisite skills.
- As part of a 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 which provide application-oriented guidance on promoting gender equality in post-conflict contexts.
- The BMZ (possibly in cooperation with the EU Gender Expert Group) should commission an application-oriented research project in order to synthesise knowledge and experience on promoting gender equality in post-conflict contexts.

References

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