

Progress towards gender equality in the perspective of Beijing + 5

Beijing and the DAC Statement on Gender Equality

Extract from the DAC
Statement on gender
equality (1995)

"While maintaining efforts to integrate women in development, the gender equality objective recognises the vital necessity that women and men, in equal partnership, take the responsibility to define the development agenda, set the vision and goals, and develop strategies."

In 1995, inspired by the *Beijing* process, Ministers and Heads of Agencies endorsed the statement *Gender Equality: Moving Towards Sustainable, People-centred Development*. This affirmed the DAC's commitment to gender equality as a vital goal for development and to gender mainstreaming as a strategy to improve development results, tackle gender disparities and uphold respect for women's human rights.

This overview note is the result of an assessment on progress achieved by Members over the last 5 years. It was requested by the DAC and carried out by Members of the DAC Working Party on Gender Equality. It offers insight into advances towards the nine gender equality priorities in the DAC Statement and identifies successful strategies and remaining challenges. It also looks at mainstreaming gender considerations in the education sector, because girls' education is such an important means of empowering women, and the DAC chose this proxy as an equality indicator.

Progress on the DAC Gender Equality Goals

All Member countries of the Working Party on Gender Equality (WP-GEN) have made real strides over the past five years in implementing the Statement.

- This is true both internally in their organisations and in their development co-operation activities.
- However, as Members gain experience with mainstreaming strategies and share lessons, it is also clear that challenges remain, in particular between policy and the reality of implementation in the field.
- Implementation of the goals has been uneven across the DAC and some goals have been easier to work with than others.
- This is a reminder that policies and advances at the policy level must be backed up by leadership from senior management, as well as resources, operational plans and tools.

Members have used the DAC Statement with effect, often in conjunction with the *Beijing Platform for Action*, to advocate for stronger internal commitment to gender equality.

- It has led to important changes in three-quarters of Member agencies.
- It has also given weight and impetus to the work on gender and has formed the basis for many Members' gender policies.
- Virtually all gender units have increased in influence over the past five years.

It is an encouraging sign that some gender units have moved to more strategic and crosscutting locations within their organisations closer to decision-making power. Some Members report gender as central in key policy documents on human rights, poverty and other areas.

Influence and progress also hinge on resources.

- Gender mainstreaming requires more resources not less as all staff assume some responsibility for gender issues and gender units shift to more catalytic, advisory and supportive roles.
- Many Members report both increases in gender specialist staff and in budget allocations over the past five years, though others still struggle.

The overarching goal: Endorse gender equality as an overall strategic objective for promoting the role of women and therefore sustainable people-centred development

Over half the Members have established gender equality as a strategic objective.

"The DAC Statement has led to a shift towards a focus on gender equity and balance in the mainstream of development co-operation as well as the involvement of men to achieve gender equality. This contributes to the overall goal of strengthening women's autonomy – in line with the outcome of the Beijing Conference and policies of other gender sensitive donors". WP- GEN Member

- For these organisations, this policy commitment is a clear signal to the entire organisation that gender issues are relevant to *all* employees' work.
- Moreover, in the remaining agencies gender equality is supported and visible in policies and practice.
- This growing commitment of *all* Members to a mainstreaming strategy has resulted in heartening progress, with clear mainstreaming policies increasingly evident.

Most Members use the twin-track approach set out in the *Beijing Platform for Action* and the DAC Statement.

- This involves the integration of gender equality concerns into all work *and* initiatives targeting women to remedy inequalities.
- Policies need the backing of operational plans and tools to assist non-gender specialist staff, and senior management must lead the wider adoption of responsibility and accountability.
- Efforts to ensure implementation are now a priority.

Good practice

Some Members integrate socio-cultural analyses into the drafting of their country programmes. One Member made participatory approaches compulsory at all levels, along with target group and gender analyses. Staff training is enhancing capacity.

Good practice

Members have carried out advocacy work on gender and economic reform within the Special Programme of Assistance for Africa. A Task Force of Members is focusing on introducing gender equality into sector-wide approaches (SWAPs) for education, agriculture and health.

Lessons learned

Successful SWAPs need a partnership led by Government that consults and works with groups from civil society, including women's advocacy groups, and multi- and bi-lateral donors.

Goal 1: Re-emphasise the socio-cultural aspects of development and the general need for a more people-focused approach which integrates social, economic and political analyses

Strong progress in this area is particularly evident in strategies to systematically integrate the analysis of socio-cultural factors and to assess the socio-cultural impacts of projects.

- The majority of Members demonstrate their commitment to people-centred development by using or supporting the development of participatory methods in order to strengthen local ownership and project sustainability.
- Such approaches do not automatically lead to the inclusion of women's voices however.
- Members' on-going work on developing gender-sensitive methods is therefore crucial.

Goal 2: Reconsider the impact of non-project forms of co-operation, such as sectoral programme assistance, structural adjustment, public expenditure reviews, on men and women

Some agencies have taken up the challenge to extend gender equality principles to the macro- policy and programme levels. However, this is the area where least overall progress has been made.

- Organisations have moved towards programme assistance and sector wide approaches at different rates.
- Whilst many have found this shift to a more macro-perspective quite challenging, initiatives to share good practice and build capacity among Members and with partners are encouraging.

Goal 3: Include gender implications in analyses, policies, country and sector strategies

Members have made the most progress with this goal, which is central to a gender mainstreaming strategy. Particular advances include:

- The integration of gender implications in sectoral and country strategies, where previous work had been limited.
- Capacity building for non-gender specialist staff, the development of implementation tools, monitoring of results and the introduction of staff incentives. For those organisations making slower progress, these are urgent priorities.

Good practice

The following initiatives have produced successful results:

- A human rights fund promoting local awareness of CEDAW in partner countries.
- A Gender Equality and Peace-building Framework as an agency tool to guide development activities.
- Support for Central African women's grassroots organisations participating in peace-building initiatives.

Lessons learned

- Engendering policy dialogue with partners requires preparation and patience.
- Commitment on both sides has to be firm.
- The involvement of civil society actors is crucial.

Goal 4: Emphasise these principles in continuing and emerging areas of co-operation, in particular participatory development and good governance, human rights, and conflict resolution

Many Members have taken up the challenge to ensure that a gender perspective is incorporated into the newer areas of co-operation and partnership. Most progress has been made in:

- Women's enjoyment of human rights.
- Good governance and democracy.
- Conflict-resolution and peace-building.
- Participatory approaches and poverty reduction.

But, there is an urgent need for the development of good performance indicators for these and other emerging areas of work.

Goal 5: Help partners strengthen their institutional capacity to incorporate actions in favour of women and to develop new instruments for addressing gender equality

With the emphasis on leadership by partners and local actors, DAC Members play a supportive role in building national capacity to address gender issues.

- A number of initiatives build expertise in the analysis and reduction of gender inequalities, particularly through advisory support, providing training and the dissemination of guidelines and other tools.
- Partners are mainly from developing countries (governments, national women's institutions, NGOs and women's organisations). But several Members are helping to improve the capacity of multi-lateral partners, including the World Bank, by various means including seconding social development professional staff.
- This is a challenging area and Members will need to devote increasing amounts of reflection and resources to making partnership a reality.

Goal 6: Increase policy dialogue with partners

There has been a general surge of interest in policy dialogue.

- Half of Members now routinely mainstream gender into negotiations with developing country partners.
- Good practice – such as how to strategically involve women's organisations, NGOs, and multilateral organisations – needs to be shared with the remaining Members.

Goal 7: Focus on local communities' abilities to identify gender priorities and support actions in partnership with aid agencies

Efforts have focused on the development and increasing use of participatory approaches, such as participatory poverty assessments.

- These approaches seek to identify the priorities of communities (including women) in order to secure local ownership of development decisions.
- Successful strategies to strengthen capacity within women's organisations and communities include gender training using local gender experts. Other strategies seek to encourage women's participation in community decision-making.

Goal 8: Emphasise gender equality in competence development, management responsibility, accountability, and adequate monitoring and reporting of results. This could involve increased financial commitments and re-writing job descriptions and responsibilities to include gender criteria

These crucial aspects of institutional mainstreaming strategies indicate how organisations prioritise gender equality concerns in practice. Progress has been uneven on the different elements of this goal.

Good practice

Competence development

- Gender training should be a requirement for all staff.
- Revision of job descriptions to explicitly include responsibility for addressing gender issues

Staff incentives

- Staff performance appraisals that include the number of projects considering gender; an annual allowance is distributed.
- Incentives given to programmes from a Women in Development fund.
- Award ceremonies for excellence in promoting gender equality.

- Systematising monitoring and reporting and securing senior management commitment have proved disappointing.
- Staff competence development has been strong in some places but many agencies are struggling with resources.
- Even in those agencies with increased staffing, further resources are needed for the gender mainstreaming tasks in hand.

Achieving senior management commitment presents a challenge for Member agencies.

- This is desirable not only in terms of resources but also in the returns from strong leadership on spreading responsibility and accountability.
- Innovative work on making staff accountable needs accelerating.

In order to be successful, gender mainstreaming strategies require systematic monitoring and reporting mechanisms to anchor accountability and measure performance right from the start.

- This is generally a problem area with agencies, not just in relation to gender equality.
- But some progress has been made, particularly in the regular use of input indicators such as the DAC gender equality marker.

Competencies in monitoring and evaluation need building and good practice needs sharing. Further multi-donor work on developing gender-sensitive methods and impact indicators needs encouragement.

DAC Guidelines and Sourcebook

The policy document *DAC Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development Co-operation (1998)* has given weight and direction to Members' internal advocacy efforts:

'The references throughout the text to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, DAC High Level Meeting statement and the DAC Strategy for the 21st Century are already a step to mainstreaming because it links and highlights international commitments with a gender perspective'
WP-GEN Member

The accompanying *DAC Source Book on Concepts and Approaches Linked to Gender Equality (1998)* also received an enthusiastic welcome.

These have been translated into Japanese, Portuguese and German. The Spanish version has been distributed in Latin America and is currently being reprinted.

DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker

This marker was designed to harmonise with the twin-track mainstreaming approach in the DAC Statement. Criteria include the need to:

- Apply gender analysis.
- Be explicit about promoting gender equality in the project concerned.
- Address gender equality through a series of project design features.

The shift to the new marker has been gradual but the vast majority of Members now use it. Several of those using the marker have made a very positive step by attempting to extend its use into project monitoring and implementation, rather than only at the design stage.

A major policy objective: closing the gender gaps in education

The removal of gender gaps in primary and secondary education is an important goal of the DAC *21st Century Strategy* and the proxy indicator it chose to demonstrate progress towards gender equality¹. Most Members report that gender equality is taken up in policy dialogue with partners in the education sector.

- Innovative work has moved beyond a narrow focus on enrolment ratios to examine achievement, quality of teaching and of learning materials.
- Huge progress is required however in order to attain the goal of universal primary and secondary education by 2005.

Key issues and strategies applied to address them include:

- **Gender gaps in the access and enrolment of girls:** Gender sensitisation training with parents and teachers, and the provision of segregated dormitories and sanitation facilities. Techniques to address negative cultural attitudes on girls' education.
- **Retention and completion differences:** Scholarship programmes that benefit girls and women as well as boys and men.
- **Girls' achievement and the quality of teaching:** Recruitment of more women teachers and their increased involvement in decision-making and improved teacher training that involves gender-sensitisation.
- **Quality curriculum and learning materials:** These can reinforce negative gender-stereotypes. Strategies used to avoid this include the study of gender-stereotyping in text books, the development of gender-sensitive curriculum and materials and the inclusion of women's groups in curriculum and review committees.

¹ Education is necessary but not sufficient for empowerment of women and equality.

Conclusions

The DAC and its Members have seized the impetus of the Beijing process. The climate for gender mainstreaming is improving with a clear and growing commitment of all Members to gender equality. There is progress across the DAC gender equality goals with all agencies able to identify innovative practice under certain goal areas. However, implementing a gender mainstreaming strategy to support gender equality goals is a longer and more difficult process than some had anticipated. Much more on-going effort is required. There is increased demand for the services and expertise of gender equality units and specialists. Commitment to mainstreaming needs to be followed through by adopting fully resourced and effective mainstreaming strategies, including monitoring mechanisms. For it to work, donors need to identify more clearly the practical benefits mainstreaming brings to development results. Improved data, increased involvement of women in decisions about development activities and a clearer understanding of impacts can only improve the overall quality. There needs to be a stronger emphasis in the DAC and its Members, as they strive toward partnership, on monitoring progress in meeting the gender equality goals.

Priorities for Future Action

The following are priorities for the future:

- Promote positive attitudes and visible commitment of senior and middle management, crucial for gender mainstreaming success.
- Ensure Gender units have adequate human resources in terms of both number and capacity so that they can fulfil their catalytic, advisory and supportive roles.
- Disseminate proven operational tools and develop new ones. Whilst non-gender specialist staff may be committed to gender equality goals they may not know how to best integrate gender into their work.
- Gender specialists need to shift towards working in partnership at the country and programme assistance level as well as at the project level in order to make a comprehensive difference.
- Carry out engendered policy dialogue and gender-sensitive participatory approaches, essential for local ownership of development initiatives that further gender equality.
- Systematically monitor and report on progress, fundamental to reinforcing accountability for gender equality.
- Develop additional good impact indicators, including qualitative ones, particularly for poverty reduction, governance and emerging areas of work.
- Establish adequate financial budgets, essential to support gender mainstreaming, including a specific budget for mainstreaming activities and training.
- Demonstrate impact of gender mainstreaming on the quality and results of development activities.

The full report is available on the WP-GEN website:

www.oecd.org/dac/gender



About the OECD

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) brings together 29 member countries in a unique forum in which to discuss and develop a broad range of policies. At its core, the OECD is a knowledge-based organisation, producing rigorous, objective and comparative policy analysis. It draws on lessons of policy experience from Member countries, and an increasing number of Non-Member countries. It assists them in finding common answers to common problems and working to co-ordinate domestic and international policies in the context of globalisation. In addition, the OECD is one of the largest repositories of internationally comparable economic and social statistics.

About the DAC

The Development Assistance Committee (DAC) is the principal body through which the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and its Member states deal with co-operation with developing countries:

- The DAC supports efforts to strengthen local capacities to participate in the global economy and for people to overcome poverty and participate in their societies.
- The 1996 landmark report, *Shaping the 21st Century: The Contribution of Development Co-operation*, set forth a new vision for a global partnership in favour of people-centred and sustainable development.

About the Working Party on Gender Equality

The Working Party (WP-GEN) is a community of gender equality advisers and specialists from DAC Members and observers who meet regularly to collaborate on a common agenda related to development co-operation and gender mainstreaming. It has three core responsibilities:

- **Contributing to improving the quality of development co-operation:** for example the WP-GEN has a close relationship with the United Nations Inter Agency Committee for Women and Gender Equality (IACWGE) to ensure agencies work towards coherent policies.
- **Providing strategic support to the policies of the DAC:** for example WP-GEN representatives have worked within the DAC Informal Network on Poverty Reduction to engender the DAC approach to poverty reduction.
- **Meeting the needs of its Members:** the WP-GEN provides a unique forum much valued by Members and observers as it enables experiences and good practice, innovative ideas and cutting-edge research to be shared. WP-GEN Task Forces have undertaken innovative work in such challenging areas of co-operation as gender equality and macroeconomic assistance, programme aid and sector investment.

www.oecd.org