

OECD work on gender equality in developing countries

Did you know?

On average, women in developing countries get married 6½ years earlier than in OECD countries.

There are still 800 million people in the world lacking basic literacy skills. Women account for two-thirds of the total.

Young women in sub-Saharan Africa aged 15-24 are between two and six times as likely to be HIV-positive than men of a similar age.

About one-half of aid to basic education and basic health targeted gender-specific concerns.

Progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment is vital for improving economic, social and political conditions in developing countries. The OECD helps show how governments can take gender equality into account in development policies and practices. OECD countries are encouraged to give aid in a way that supports gender equity.

The Gender, Institutions and Development database

In large parts of the developing world, traditions and socio-cultural norms still trap countries in poverty as they bar women from economic activities: more discrimination – less economic growth – more poverty.

To help governments choose effective policies, the OECD has created the *Gender, Institutions and Development Database* (GID). It includes comparative data for 161 countries on the socio-economic status of women. Its innovation is the inclusion of institutional variables that range from intra-household behaviour to social norms. Information on cultural and traditional practices is coded to measure the level of discrimination, making the GID a unique tool for a wide range of analytical queries and allowing a case-by-case adaptation to specific research or policy questions.

By identifying cultural and traditional practices that discriminate against women, from forced marriages and female genital mutilation to restrictions on inheritance and ownership rights, the GID helps design effective policies. More funding will be effective only if the underlying causes of discrimination are addressed. The *Gender, Institutions and Development database* can be accessed free of charge at www.oecd.org/dev/institutions/GIDdatabase.

Gender equality and aid

The *Network on Gender Equality* (GENDERNET) (www.oecd.org/dac/gender) is a forum where gender experts from development co-operation agencies meet to stimulate fresh thinking and new approaches to investing in gender equality and women's empowerment.

The OECD asks countries to provide information on aid in support of gender equality. In the OECD's *Creditor Reporting System database* (www.oecd.org/dac/stats/crs/gender), donor countries are asked to indicate for each individual aid activity whether or not it targets gender equality as one of its policy objectives. A study conducted in 2005 showed that two-thirds of aid in support of gender equality was in the social sectors, especially basic education and basic health. About one-half of aid to basic education and basic health targeted gender-specific concerns, while little was reported as targeting gender equality in the sectors of transport, communications and energy infrastructure.