



# Gender & Poverty Reduction

## Improving Poverty Reduction Strategies through Gender Equality

### Poverty comes in two genders

More than two-thirds of the world's 1.3 billion extremely impoverished people are women. Women and men are usually poor for different reasons. Women often have to live with greater social constraints than men do. Legal restrictions on the ownership of land or access to loans, for example, mean that women have fewer possibilities than men of improving their lives economically by their own efforts. What is more, the obligations dictated by their reproductive responsibilities, such as household duties and caring for children, leave them less time for other pursuits. In other words, they suffer from *time poverty*, with the result that their needs



are not the same as those of men. For the most part, these facts are not sufficiently taken into account when new strategies to reduce poverty are designed. One reason is that data on poverty – based primarily on household surveys – are rarely differentiated according to gender. Households are usually considered as a unit, and it is the male heads of household who tend to be involved in the process of data collection. However, only gender-differentiated data can provide a sound basis for analyses that will more precisely reflect real-life situations and thereby serve as an accurate and meaningful foundation for the configuration of efficient poverty reduction measures.

### Gender-sensitive advisory services for the Cameroonian poverty reduction strategy

In 2007, the Government of Cameroon marked the official kick-off to the revision of the national Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), which had been in effect since 2003. One of the crucial shortcomings of the initial strategy was its inadequate differentiation between men and women – in regard to analytical considerations as well as implementation.

In order to provide the Government of Cameroon with sound advice, GTZ first commissioned two studies in cooperation with the World Bank. The purpose of these was to examine and assess the magnitude of gender-specific inequality in education, the labour market and earnings, in order to determine how and to what extent these factors impede economic growth and poverty reduction. A data survey conducted in the cocoa sector revealed that women farmers are severely disadvantaged in their access to agricultural extension services, their control over marketing and the income they generated. Such obstacles prevent these women from fully participating in required work processes like production and distribution, which impairs overall productivity in this sector.

The policy recommendations arising from these studies were then discussed with representatives of the national PRSP steering committee in Yaoundé. Several of these recommendations were then integrated into the second version of the poverty reduction strategy. Unlike its predecessors, this revised strategy stresses the importance of women's empowerment in sections addressing secondary education, vocational training and employment promotion.

## Poverty reduction strategies are more successful when contributing to the elimination of inequality between men and women

A comprehensive, gender-specific understanding of poverty improves national development strategy efforts in terms of both justice and efficiency. Gender equality is not only a human right and value in and of itself – it also harbours major social, economic and financial benefits: granting women comprehensive access to education will have a positive impact on any economy's human capital. When given the opportunity to unfold their full economic potential, women can increase production and household income. This increases productivity throughout the entire economy, promotes economic growth and reduces poverty.

### Gender-differentiated monitoring of the Zambian development strategy

The need for concrete measures to promote equality and the empowerment of women is anchored in the Zambian poverty reduction strategy for 2006–2010 as spelled out in the Fifth National Development Plan (FNDP). The declaration of commitment by the Zambian Government and the related planning for policy implementation mean that information systems must be adapted and the FNDP monitored accordingly. Improved data collection is needed in order to assess trends more accurately and make better use of funding.

To this end, GTZ commissioned a study for the Ministry of Finance and National Planning (in charge of the FNDP), that outlines the gender-differentiated data collection processes of various Zambian governmental and non-governmental organisations. Moreover, it assesses these methods and defines measures for eliminating identified deficiencies. The study yielded positive responses from the institutions themselves as well as the donor community. For example, the latter is using the results of the study as a basis for a new programme designed to address the problems described above. Furthermore, the Gender in Development Division (GIDD) within the Zambian Cabinet Office revised the performance indicators for the FNDP. This enables GIDD to deliver data of much better quality. Zambia's Performance Assessment Framework Indicators for budget aid for 2010 are to be calculated on a gender-differentiated basis as well.

## What does this look like in practice?

Most assessments of poverty reduction strategies in recent years concluded that the gender dimension was either only being considered in a few sectors, such as primary education and health, or was being entirely neglected. The necessity for targeted promotion

of women's interests in any economic sphere, if mentioned at all, arose only in connection with support for microenterprises. While this is especially the case with first-generation PRSPs, it also holds true in part for PRSPs of the second or even third generation. Generally, key sectors such as agriculture, food security, water, the environment, energy and transport still make little or no effort to analyse inequalities between men and women or to identify concrete needs and strategies to eliminate such inequality. Sensitive issues such as reform of property and inheritance laws, which in many countries explicitly discriminate against women and exclude them from economic participation, are often entirely ignored. Gender-differentiated indicators that would serve to monitor implementation are integrated only rarely.

Women and men alike should contribute to shaping poverty reduction strategies and benefit equally from their successful implementation. These purposes call for targeted capacity building efforts among representatives from governmental ministries and parliaments. It should be noted that women's networks and NGOs will also need to improve their analytic capacity for gender-sensitive planning and implementation of sectoral policies.

## The Role of the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ)

GTZ supports its partner countries as follows:

- Collecting data for gender-differentiated surveys and defining appropriate indicators
- Preparing gender-differentiated needs assessments in sectors that have so far been neglected
- Advising how to establish systems for gender-sensitive monitoring of the effectiveness of poverty reduction strategies
- Building capacities in the field of gender responsive budgeting to ensure that national budgets are designed to meet the needs of both men and women.

## Literature & Links

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Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische  
Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH  
Dag-Hammarskjöld-Weg 1-5  
65760 Eschborn/Germany  
T: +49 6196 79 - 0  
F: +49 6196 79 - 11 15  
E: [info@gtz.de](mailto:info@gtz.de)  
I: [www.gtz.de](http://www.gtz.de)

### Für further information please contact:

Christine Brendel  
Programme Director 'Promoting Gender  
Equality and Women's Rights'  
T: +49 (0) 61 96 - 79 - 4121  
F: +49 (0) 61 96 - 79 - 80 4121  
E: [christine.brendel@gtz.de](mailto:christine.brendel@gtz.de)  
I: [www.gtz.de/gender](http://www.gtz.de/gender)

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