

A decorative graphic on the left side of the page, consisting of a white line that curves upwards and then downwards, with several colored dots (yellow, green, red, blue, purple) scattered along its path. The line itself is composed of several overlapping, teardrop-shaped segments in blue, green, purple, and yellow.

GUIDANCE ON

GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION **FUNDAMENTALS**

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are:

- fundamental human rights
- essential for sustainable development that leaves no one behind
- drivers of economic growth
- impacted by development policies and programmes.

For these reasons, development partners must design their policies, systems and programmes in ways that contribute to transformative change for gender equality.



Leadership commitments and policy frameworks recognise the importance of gender equality. Development partners mirror their policy commitments in their institutional set ups and human resource policies.



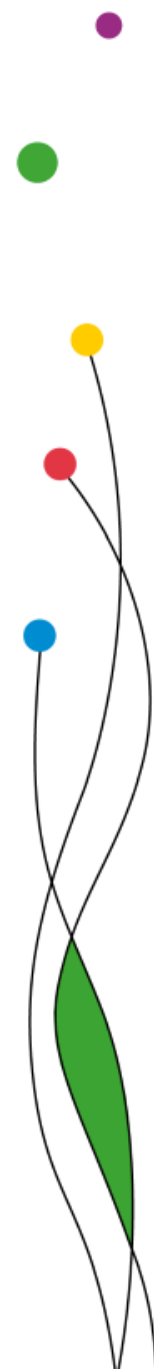
Gender equality is incorporated throughout the programme cycle – from analysis, design and implementation, to learning and evaluation. Financing for gender equality is in place.



All development activities include gender equality as an integrated or principal objective, supporting transformative change. Women are involved in all decision-making processes.



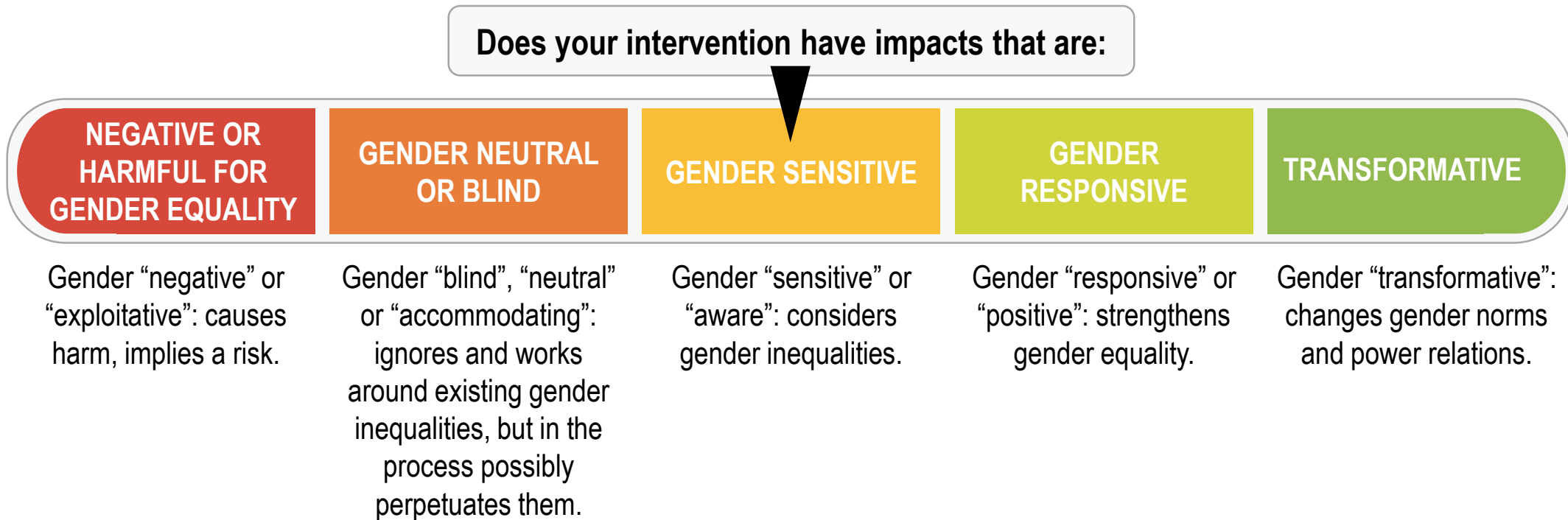
Development co-operation activities advance gender equality, which drives inclusive economic growth and sustainable development.



TOWARDS TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE

Development policies and programmes have an impact on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls – whether positive or harmful, intended or not.

A **helpful tool** for thinking about gender equality and for identifying the possible impact of a development intervention is the [gender equality continuum](#). It categorises gender equality objectives and impacts on a scale, from harmful to transformative:



BASIC STANDARDS

Basic standards for gender equality in development co-operation can be drawn from several agreements and global processes, including but not limited to:

- The [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women \(CEDAW\)](#) (1979), which defines what constitutes discrimination against women and establishes an agenda for national action.
- The [Beijing Platform for Action](#) (1995), which defines the full implementation of the human rights of women and of the girl child as an “inalienable, integral and indivisible part of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.”
- [Sustainable Development Goal \(SDG\) 5](#), to *Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*, refers to gender equality as “not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world” (2015).
- The [OECD DAC Recommendation on Ending Sexual Exploitation, Assault and Harrassment](#) (2019), which sets out the first international standard to be applied when working with civil society, charities, and other bodies running development programmes or delivering humanitarian aid.



BASIC STANDARDS

The OECD's [Guidance for Development Partners on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls](#) is a handbook containing the fundamental areas and actions needed to ensure development co-operation contributes to gender equality:



Sections A.1. and A.2 of the [OECD DAC Peer Review Analytical Framework](#) also describe the Development Assistance Committee's expectations with regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, including that members' policies set out a clear approach to reducing gender inequalities and leaving no-one behind; and that guidance is provided and used to integrate cross-cutting issues such as gender equality and women's empowerment into programming.



GOOD PRACTICES



Leadership and policy frameworks

Leadership commitment to gender equality and a **sound policy framework** that recognises the importance of this issue are cornerstones of an effective development co-operation programme.

- The United Kingdom's [International Development Gender Equality Act](#) (2014) requires a gender equality perspective to be integrated into all development co-operation and humanitarian response, and also requires reporting on progress on gender equality.
- Sweden adopted a [feminist foreign policy](#) in 2014, applying a systematic gender equality perspective in all areas of its foreign policy. A [Handbook](#) and [Action Plan](#), focused on working methods for implementation and achieving change, and a [Feminist Trade Policy](#) (2019), were developed to complement this approach.
- The European Union's (EU) [Gender Action Plan \(GAP\) III](#) highlights that, in addition to human rights-based and intersectional approaches, a gender-transformative approach is required to address the root causes of gender inequality, advance the effectiveness of the EU's engagement on gender equality and accelerate progress towards meeting international commitments.

See also a checklist for leadership and policy frameworks from the Guidance [here](#).



GOOD PRACTICES



Planning: Analysis and design of development programmes

Well-designed **programming informed by thorough gender analysis** that responds to the context and circumstances of the planned activity, along with **indicators and identification of results**, form the backbone of effective and impactful programmes.

- The EU conducted [gender analyses](#) in a range of sectors in Malawi to understand barriers to gender equality within these sectors and more broadly, and to enable vulnerable or marginalised communities to participate in policy development, planning and implementation.
- The Mission Strategy of Ireland’s Embassy in Ethiopia used a [gender equality theory of change](#) to guide its work on gender mainstreaming and dedicated gender equality programming. This tool helps to build linkages between expected results and the activities that aim to achieve those results.
- The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) has created a system for designing and reporting results using “[basket indicators](#)”. These are selected in the design-stage to enable partners to tailor reporting systems to their own programmes, increasing autonomy for partners, and to capture contextual measures of gender equality while still contributing to the MFA’s evaluation and monitoring framework.

See also a checklist for planning, analysis and design of development programmes from the Guidance [here](#).



GOOD PRACTICES



Programme implementation

Implementing programmes that accelerate gender equality requires **effective partnerships and a twin-track approach** involving dedicated support for gender equality together with a holistic approach to gender mainstreaming. This ensures that what is planned at the design stage is put into practice, tracked and adjusted so that the expected outcomes are achieved.

- Canada focuses on partnering with local women's rights organisations for programme implementation. This is carried out through initiatives such as the [Women's Voice and Leadership Program](#).
- [EUROsociAL+](#) is a European Union flagship programme that uses triangular co-operation to improve social cohesion in Latin America, supporting public policies that address inequalities, such as gender inequality.
- Belgium maintains that a holistic, multilevel and multi-sectoral approach to gender mainstreaming can help achieve gender equality. It also recommends shifting responsibility from a sole gender expert to all staff. This is set out in their [2019-2023 Gender Strategy Paper](#).

See also a checklist for programme implementation from the Guidance [here](#).



GOOD PRACTICES



Financing

While not an end goal, **financial resources** for gender equality are necessary to deliver change, and there are opportunities to **increase the quantity and quality** of these resources. In this context, the [DAC gender equality policy marker](#) is a helpful accountability tool.

- In Sweden's International Development Co-operation Agency (Sida), a programme officer [applies the DAC gender equality policy marker](#) to all new programmes. The statistics team also checks programme descriptions and documentation weekly to ensure the marker score is correct. Staff are trained in the DAC markers, and on why reporting is important.
- Japan's International Cooperation Agency (JICA) issued a [gender bond](#) in 2021, raising USD 181 million to promote women and girls' empowerment and education. Bond proceeds will be allocated to projects meeting the criteria of the DAC marker.
- The United Kingdom's [Work and Opportunities for Women \(WOW\)](#) initiative aims to improve women's access to economic opportunities through business interventions in supply chains and economic development programmes by partnering with and providing innovative funding support to key businesses, organisations and programmes.

See also a checklist for financing gender equality from the Guidance [here](#).



GOOD PRACTICES



Results monitoring and evaluation

Gender equality change can be measured using existing frameworks and indicators, while maintaining flexibility to **track progress and adjust to unexpected or negative outcomes**.

- Finland, UN Women Nepal and their partners are exploring a mix of tools to better measure and influence change in gendered power relations and social norms through the use of [storytelling](#). This methodology aims to identify and understand pathways for change at the individual and community level.
- Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) uses an [Investment Performance Reporting system](#) that assesses progress against quality criteria such as gender equality. It also measures performance and collects the results of projects from their delivery partners; provides DFAT with an overall assessment of the effectiveness of the development programme; and feeds into policy dialogue and planning processes for advancing gender equality. Performance is tracked annually.
- Global Affairs Canada's [Gender Equality and Empowerment Measurement \(GEM\) tool](#) uses feminist methodology to capture qualitative and descriptive data on gender equality and empowerment outcomes of development programming.

See also a checklist for results monitoring and evaluation from the Guidance [here](#).



GOOD PRACTICES



Organisational frameworks, human resources and capacity development

The **internal set-ups** and **human resource policies** of development partners need to **mirror their policy commitments to gender equality**. Organisational frameworks that enable staff to work towards gender equality through incentives and accountability systems are essential for transferring those values to development efforts.

- Germany's development agency *Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ) has an overarching Gender Strategy, linked to the organisation's long-term corporate and human resources strategies, [explicitly connecting gender equality to its overall strategic framework](#):
 - Dedicated staff are hired to implement the various elements of the strategy, while transparent staff responsibility systems promote accountability.
 - Digital instruments provide easy access to company-wide knowledge products and exchange platforms, to help staff implement the strategy.
 - Several incentive mechanisms are in place, such as a Gender Award, for which staff teams compete, submitting their contributions for achieving gender equality.

See also a checklist for an institution that delivers for gender equality from the Guidance [here](#).



MEASURING SUCCESS

How do we know if development partners are moving in the right direction towards more gender-responsive development co-operation activities, and ultimately, transformative change for greater gender equality and empowerment of women and girls?

- ▶ Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are **institutionalised in strategic frameworks** on development co-operation.
- ▶ Efforts to achieve gender equality enable **long-term and holistic approaches and responses** and address root causes of inequalities, especially those intersecting with gender.
- ▶ When **designing and implementing programmes**, gender equality goals are clearly set within the political and socio-economic context of both the partner country and relevant sector.
- ▶ **Official development assistance (ODA)**, and increasingly other official flows (OOFs), are screened against the OECD DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker, and growing shares have gender equality as either a significant or principal objective.
- ▶ Gender equality is **addressed holistically within the institution**, as an internal value issue that goes beyond development policy and programming and relates to, for example, human resource policies.



RESOURCES

The OECD's Guidance for development partners, [Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls](#) (OECD, 2022) is a practical handbook for development partners to draw upon in their efforts to advance gender equality.

This [analysis of DAC member policies to support of women's economic empowerment](#) is the first in a series of thematic papers linked to the Guidance on gender equality. It highlights examples of good practice and offers policy options for development partners to support the advancement of women's economic empowerment.

This [OECD working paper](#) unpacks the deep-rooted linkages between gender inequalities and fragility.

This [snapshot](#) provides an overview of development finance for gender equality, broken down by partner and sector. It includes 2019-20 data.

Relevant evaluations can be found at the [DAC Evaluation Resource Centre \(DEReC\)](#).

Relevant topics in this series

[Partnering with the multilateral system](#) is critical for effective implementation.

[Managing for sustainable development results](#), including results-based management, helps organisations reach their objectives.

Evaluation [forthcoming]

Engaging in fragile contexts [forthcoming]



DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION FUNDAMENTALS

This series unpacks development co-operation standards and illustrates how DAC members are applying them. Applying standards can help all actors to fulfil their ambitions and commitments.

Each *Fundamentals* document introduces a key aspect of effective development co-operation, sets out *basic standards*, offers *good practice* examples, and identifies *relevant resources*.

Other topics in this series, which will be expanded and updated over time, can be found on the [Development Co-operation TIPs • Tools Insights Practices](#) peer learning platform. For comments, contact DCD.TIPs@oecd.org.

