

inter cooperation



Intercooperation's contribution to
**Gender Balanced
Development**

1 Vision and convictions

Intercooperation (IC) understands poverty and the process of marginalisation as the lack of access to and control over resources. This is due to unequal distribution of power, inter alia, between men and women. IC recognises the fundamental right of men and women to shape their development regardless of their age, class, religion as well as gender. Its vision is to create an environment within which this is possible.

Based on its experiences and the knowledge acquired to this day, IC has reached the following convictions:

- social values that attribute different roles, responsibilities and rights are context specific, dynamic, time bound, modifiable and therefore negotiable;
- equal opportunities for women and men can best be achieved by working with and empowering both men and women in a constructive way;

All IC's employees, at head office and in the delegations and projects, bear responsibility for making it possible that this vision becomes reality.

Development of the gender focus in IC

For IC, first "women in development" and later "gender balanced development", have been priority. In the late 80's, IC initiated a gender network among Swiss NGO's and played a significant role in promoting gender in Swiss development cooperation. IC was mandated by SDC to further gender related knowledge and capacities through documentation, dissemination of information and training. Since the state-of-the-art publication on gender analysis in 1992, IC's experiences have further evolved. In 1997, the first gender guidelines and working instruments were elaborated. Now, all IC staff have the promotion of gender balanced development as a responsibility in their terms of reference.

IC's dual gender commitments i.e., towards partners and within the organisation are:

- In partnership with national and international partners, IC promotes processes and strategies aimed at gender balanced development both within the organizations and in the programs and activities they implement. Intercooperation makes its vision and convictions known to its partners. It respects the partners' position and values and enters a process of dialogue and negotiation.
- Within the organisation, IC promotes the improvement of working conditions of women, their economic independence, their right to self-determination and the realization of their interests. It also creates conducive work conditions for men so that they can assume a greater participation in household and family affairs.

2

Definition and objectives

For IC, gender balanced development refers to development that mitigates gender related inequalities in opportunities.

Addressing inequalities or equity does not necessarily mean equal numbers of men and women in all activities, nor does it mean treating men and women in exactly the same way. It means recognising that men and women often have different needs and priorities, face different constraints, have different aspirations and contribute to development in different ways.

The objective of gender balanced development is to contribute to:

- effective poverty reduction and empowerment of the poor;
- increased livelihood opportunities for both women and men, including economic opportunities;
- good governance through participation of women and men, taking into account the needs and interests of the whole society.

Gender training and its impacts in the Southern Highlands Dairy Development Project, Tanzania

“Gender has been internalized by many villagers, group members and project staff and is there to stay. The project has portrayed the contribution of women in development activities and enhanced the position of women in the community. Women themselves expressed that they benefited relatively more from the project than men.” (Impact study of the Southern Highlands Dairy Development Project, 2003)

The positive impact in the field of gender at the closure of the project in 2003 is the result of a consistent adoption of a gender approach, which goes back to the mid-nineties, when the project did a gender analysis and initiated sensitisation.

Results in change of attitude became visible after the project introduced training on “gender and development”. Dairy farmers, women and men, refer to changes at household level as well as in the dairy farmers’ groups. Stepping out of traditional roles, discussing work and decisions at household level or speaking up as a woman in a group meeting, have become common behaviours – unthinkable until recently.

Dairy farmers’ groups attribute their various accomplishments and even prosperity to a large extent to gender related development. In their opinion, being gender sensitive improved their capacity to run a commonly owned dairy business. An increasing number of women got elected and took up leadership positions in the groups. Empowerment of women was another achievement of gender training.

SDC financed project

3

Gender approach in projects and programmes

Intercooperation addresses gender issues by consistently applying gender-differentiated strategies and procedures throughout the life cycle of projects and programmes. This approach includes:

- undertaking gender analysis relevant to the specific programme location;
- inclusion of focused activities to address identified gender issues;
- monitoring processes of social change from a gender perspective;
- adapting interventions and methods based on lessons learned.

In following a gender approach the main question is to understand the roles, rights, needs and interests of both men and women and taking them into account in the formulation of the project objectives and activities.

Since changing of roles and rights includes alterations in power relations, gender development must be promoted in a sensitive and gradual way. Experience has shown that empowerment of women only, can lead to backlashes and counter-productive results.

Practical experiences in the search for gender development in Latin America

PASOLAC in Central America and the IC Programme in the Andes, in collaboration with their development partners, use a two pronged strategy:

- provision of tailored support to women groups;
- differentiated support to both men and women to put in practice a more sensitive approach that values their roles.

An example from Ecuador illustrates the first approach – support to a women association for improved guinea pig rearing:

“My guinea pig rearing has become a micro-enterprise because it generates a profit which enables me to contribute to the education of my children and to avoid that family men migrate seasonally to find work. Further, we benefit from better nutrition and I use the manure in the fields” (woman producer from Tunguhara).

An example from Honduras highlights the second approach – a co-operative of small coffee growers:

Women in the past were not involved in decision making processes. Following joint action of a local NGO and a co-operative, positive change has taken place. The development of a woman’s enterprise which markets roasted coffee directly under its own label has been encouraged in parallel with the involvement of a women’s group in the overall co-operative. This combined with the evolving partnership between the women’s group and the Local Chamber of Commerce has resulted in the significant involvement of women in decision making at various levels, and in enhanced economic growth and additional employment.

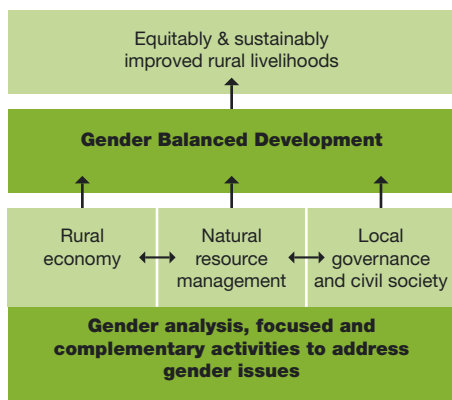
4 Gender and Intercooperation's working domains

Intercooperation's longest experience and greatest competence are in Rural Development. IC's three working domains, i.e.,

- natural resource management,
- rural economy,
- local governance and civil society,

correspond to the ecological, economic, social and organisational aspects of sustainable livelihood.

The particular strength of IC's work is that in most of its programmes, synergies are actively sought between the three domains. Gender and equity considerations, being transversal throughout and between the three domains, enable IC's activities and support to be mutually reinforcing. This leads to more appropriate and better impacts towards improved, equitable and gender balanced rural livelihoods.



Gender differentiated strategies in Nepal

Nepal-Swiss Community Forestry Project (NSCFP) has since 1990 supported the creation of forest user groups (FUGs) in hill districts. These groups are empowered to manage and utilise community forests to satisfy their livelihood needs. Through the groups, women, the poor and other disadvantaged groups should be able to have greater access to community resources and to obtain economic benefits.

Sustainable Soil Management Programme (SSMP) has since 2000 supported the creation of poor farmer groups in 10 hill districts who rely on rainfed agriculture. These groups consisting of men and women are empowered to identify their needs and formulate demands for support to improve their agricultural production.

Representation of women in FUGs and their committees is a main concern of NSCFP. The project learned that women representation is in itself not enough to assure improved livelihoods of women and the poor. Effective gender balanced development is constrained by the requirement for intensive support. The groups supported by SSMP have generally more active participation of women, due to the fact that the basic management unit is the household.

The recent collaboration by the projects in one district has enabled positive synergies to develop: governance coaching and the encouragement of pro-poor and pro-women participation in decision making; a wider range of options available on the interface of agriculture and forestry. Both aspects are positively contributing to the improvement of livelihoods specifically for the poor and women.

SDC financed projects

Competences and services

IC has developed competences in putting gender commitments in practice. It provides, in cooperation with partners, the following services:

- facilitation of gender analysis using participatory methods;
- programme development and planning, taking into account context specific gender and poverty issues;
- implementation of gender sensitive projects and programmes through multiple institutional partnerships;
- support for monitoring of processes of social change by and with stakeholders at various levels;
- capacity building through tailor-made learning events at different levels to civil society organisations and government institutions;
- studies and evaluations to analyse strengths and weaknesses of development interventions from a gender perspective;
- knowledge management, documentation of experiences and best practices in development processes aiming at the reduction of gender inequalities;
- quarterly electronic gender bulletin, summarizing project experiences with additional references.

Intercooperation (IC) is a Swiss foundation specialized in international and development cooperation. IC's principal working domains are: *natural resource management* (forestry, agriculture, environment), *rural economy* (savings and credit, small enterprise promotion, marketing of agricultural and forest products) and *local governance and civil society* (promotion of self-help groups and professional associations, municipal development, decentralisation). IC is a knowledge organisation and an executing agency, supporting partners in more than twenty countries of the South and the East. IC's principal mandator is the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). Additionally, IC works with and for many other government and private, Swiss and international institutions.

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Natural Resource Management
Rural Economy
Local Governance and Civil Society

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