



# GENDER STRATEGY

## LUXEMBOURG DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION



Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs  
Directorate for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Affairs

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## FOREWORD



**Despite their enormous potential, the countries targeted by Luxembourg Development Cooperation face socio-economic challenges that could be better addressed if everyone had access to the same opportunities. Unfortunately, gender equality and the empowerment of women are still far from being a reality in all areas. In health, education, employment and governance, for example, deep inequalities are still present. On the path to empowerment, all individuals, but especially women, girls and minority groups, face obstacles as a result of discriminatory gender traditions and stereotypes in many settings, preventing them from participating in and benefiting from work to achieve peace and sustainable development.**

Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are not merely fair demands and inalienable human rights; they can act as a catalyst for equitable and sustainable development and they constitute major prerequisites for the eradication of poverty. These themes therefore lie at the heart of our development cooperation challenges and, specifically, this new Luxembourg Development Cooperation gender strategy.

This strategy underlines the commitment of Luxembourg Development Cooperation to:

- improve the lives and status of women, girls and minority groups worldwide,
- include men and boys in the attainment of these objectives,
- abide by our commitment,
- protect the dignity of all persons.

Luxembourg's Directorate for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Affairs is committed to giving all people, irrespective of gender, the means to realise their full potential and become competent leaders for future generations.

Minister Fayot stresses the importance of the new gender strategy: "I am convinced that societies that strive for gender equality and women's empowerment create strong communities, stable economies, resilient countries and sustainable positive change. This strategy is therefore the basis and guiding principle of any investment by Luxembourg Development Cooperation, to ensure that the relevant policies are coherent and to strive for sustainable development that leaves no one behind."

# INTRODUCTION

This strategy sets out the long-term approaches, priorities and guidelines of Luxembourg Development Cooperation in the field of gender equality<sup>1</sup>, the empowerment of women and combating all forms of gender-based violence. It is in line with the priorities of the Luxembourg Development Cooperation general strategy, “The road to 2030”, and takes into account its other fundamental cross-cutting themes, namely respect for human rights, protecting the environment and combating climate change. These are closely linked to the challenge of gender equality.

The strategy is also in line with Luxembourg’s feminist foreign policy<sup>2</sup> and seeks to contribute to the attainment of the 2030 Agenda, as well as to compliance with international agreements on gender in the international, European and national legislative frameworks. A medium-term action plan, with a clear results framework to monitor progress, will sit alongside the strategy.



- 1 In referring to the term “gender”, this strategy does not restrict itself to seeing gender identity in binary terms (namely, male and female), but takes into account the multiplicity of sexual identities and expressions of gender present in our communities, aiming to promote such diversity.
- 2 Luxembourg systematically recognises and defends the rights of women and girls as human rights, and promotes greater participation by women at all levels of responsibility. Luxembourg is committed to strengthening the social, economic and political role of women and to working to achieve equal opportunities.





# ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

## COMBATING GENDER-BASED INEQUALITY AND VIOLENCE: A PERSISTENT CHALLENGE

**Gender, as a concept, refers to the roles, behaviours and attributes that a given society at a given time considers appropriate, generally in line with the perceived biological sex. Gender is an identity that is learned, changes over time and varies widely within and across cultures; it is socially and culturally constructed. Gender is also defined by relationships between people and may reflect the distribution of power in those relationships<sup>3</sup>.**

Gender equality is a fundamental human right. Achieving gender equality requires a comprehensive approach that takes account of individuals in all their diversity.

The EIGE defines gender inequality as any legal, social or cultural situation in which sex and/or gender determine different dignity and rights for women, men and any other sexual minorities<sup>4</sup>, which are reflected in their unequal access to or enjoyment of rights, as well as the assumption of stereotyped social and cultural roles. In fact, inequality is at the root of gender-based violence.

The gender dimension is a cross-cutting principle for Luxembourg Development Cooperation, in view of the negative impact gender inequality has on development. Despite the significant work done to date, gender inequality and gender-based violence, as well as stigma, still remain and have serious consequences for society in general and individuals in particular, including their physical and mental health: mutilations and physical injuries that may result in death, depression, chronic pain, sexually transmitted infections such as HIV/AIDS and increased exposure to the impacts of pandemics.

In recent years, progress on gender equality has been hampered by forces in the global political and economic landscape that have been particularly difficult to mitigate or combat. Twenty-six years after the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, progress has been far too slow in general, and in some settings has slowed to a halt or even started to go backwards. Persistent conflicts, the global financial and economic crisis, volatile food and energy prices, climate change and COVID-19 (which is not neutral from a gender perspective) are increasing inequality and vulnerability and, overall, are having specific adverse effects on women and girls and other marginalised groups. Fragile progress towards gender equality is threatened by the rise, in many areas, of reactionary movements specifically directed against women's rights. Discriminatory norms, gender-based violence and stereotypes remain pervasive, reflecting deep-rooted gender discrimination in individuals' beliefs, as well as in institutions and societies.

<sup>3</sup> Definition based on the United Nations definition – please refer to the chapter on sources consulted.

<sup>4</sup> Examples of sexual minorities: members of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and other communities; LGBTQI+.

The accumulation or combination of more than one form of discrimination or domination gives rise to “multiple” discrimination or “intersectional discrimination”.

Gender inequality is multidimensional and affects all individuals, irrespective of sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Luxembourg Development Cooperation recognises the diversity to be found in terms of gender identity or expression, age, origin, social background, disability, status and sexual orientation, etc. Throughout this strategy, therefore, the term “in all their diversity” is used to point to all elements of human diversity. In general, women and girls, in all their diversity, as well as other marginalised groups, bear the most severe and most direct consequences of gender-based inequality and violence. They continue to face discriminatory practices to a disproportionate extent in all aspects of their social, economic, public and private lives, both in the context of development and humanitarian action and through the link between humanitarian action, development cooperation and peace (triple nexus). This inequality remains widespread in the areas of access to rights, social services, resources and control, economic opportunities, power and decision-making and political opinion. This is due to cultural and social norms that assign a lower value (in terms of ability, capability and roles) to women and to all those who do not follow traditional norms, i.e. to more than half the world’s population. In order to understand the effects of discriminatory gender norms and respond effectively to them, it is important to adopt a gender perspective in examining the realities facing the peoples of the world.

The COVID-19 pandemic, which broke out in 2020, confronts women and girls with specific economic, health and social risks (ranging from job losses to increased violence against women and unpaid domestic work) that are often disproportionate, due to inequality and unequal social norms and power relations that are deeply rooted in traditional gender roles.



Although women are at the forefront of the COVID-19 response, especially as health workers, innovators and leaders, their contributions remain less visible and less appreciated. Only 3.5 per cent of teams working on COVID-19 across 87 countries have gender parity. Since the rights and needs of women and teenage girls in emergencies are often neglected, COVID-19 may also be described as a “phantom pandemic” in relation to its impact on worsening violence against women, suspending sexual and reproductive health services, and the increased need for psychosocial support. The fragility of health care systems will have a direct impact on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda in general. To design policy responses that will reduce vulnerability and rectify inequality, it is essential to understand the pandemic’s differentiated impacts and to ensure that women and girls play their full role in this respect, as health workers, community workers, etc., and are protected from its impacts.

In this context, it should be recognised that gender inequality may also have a detrimental effect on men and boys, who are often restricted to traditional models of masculinity (such as being breadwinners). Gender roles and stereotypes are socially and culturally constructed. It is therefore possible to deconstruct these inequalities in order to build an egalitarian society. To enhance the effectiveness of gender equality programmes, it is necessary to take into account the issues of combating stereotypes, stigmatisation and (multiple) discrimination, together with a full understanding of the indivisible nature of human rights. Moreover, achieving gender equality is a collective responsibility: men and women must thus work together to transform institutions and systems.



Gender-based violence prevents millions of people from fully participating in society, undermines their empowerment and, as a result, makes inequality even worse. While this theme remains a concern in all crisis and development contexts<sup>5</sup>, the prevalence of gender-based inequality and violence is likely to become even worse in a humanitarian context, with a differentiated impact on the people affected. In order to provide a coherent response to this issue, the gender dimension should be further strengthened in interventions that are implemented in the context of the triple nexus between peace, development and humanitarian issues, too, gender mainstreaming is a vital element of the humanitarian response and is essential in responding effectively to the needs and interests of the different groups affected.

In recent years, migration has become increasingly feminised; displacement makes migrant women particularly vulnerable and thus at increased risk of physical and/or sexual violence, abuse and exploitation, while the visibility of migrant women remains low and statistical data are almost non-existent.

The effect of this is to significantly impede country development. The particular structural barriers faced by migrant women must be taken into account in order to improve their inclusion in various policy areas. Achieving gender equality is a key priority for reducing and, ultimately, eradicating poverty, and achieving sustainable development. To achieve this, development cooperation must address inequality and ensure that all development policies and programming systematically include the gender dimension among the fundamental issues of sustainable development.

<sup>5</sup> Ubiquitous in peacetime, and exacerbated by crises, including displacement, and during conflict, sexual violence is often used as a deliberate method of warfare.

**EQUALITY****EQUITY****UNIVERSAL ACCESS**

Source: Supreme Education Council, based on an original idea by Craig Froehle, illustrated by Marie Lebossé-Gautron

That said, solely seeking to achieve gender equality, i.e. equal treatment for all, does not take into account the way in which sexual and gender identities influence the needs, aspirations, priorities and sensitivities of individuals. Luxembourg Development Cooperation activities to promote the gender dimension must therefore, as a first step, implement the principle of equity in order to create fair conditions for people in all their diversity, according to their respective needs.

Achieving gender equity is essential so that each person can realise their full potential. It is only through gender equity that gender equality can be achieved.

When women and girls are given equal opportunities to succeed, they can become powerful agents of change for development and peace, can stimulate stronger and more sustainable economic growth and improve their own lives, the lives of their families and communities and of their country. This is an effective way to address the root causes of poverty, and is a vital requirement in ensuring our policies are coherent. In order to meet the SDGs, it is equally important to challenge existing gender norms and establish egalitarian relationships between male, female or non-binary individuals.

The progress report on the SDGs, five years after their adoption, shows that gender inequality, which is deeply entrenched and widespread in all countries, pervades every aspect of sustainable development, without exception. However, according to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: “there can be no sustainable development without gender equality.” By putting gender mainstreaming at the heart of its interventions, Luxembourg Development Cooperation is making a contribution to meeting all the SDGs for gender equality, particularly SDG 5, “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”, and SDG 10, “Reduce inequality within and among countries”.







# POLITICAL CONTEXT

## INTERNATIONAL AND EUROPEAN

Rooted in an unconditional commitment to all internationally recognised human rights standards and principles in the field of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, this strategy follows the approach of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted in 1948, which is recognised as the foundation of international human rights law. It is also in line with the principles upheld by multilateral organisations such as UN Women, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

This gender strategy seeks to contribute to the attainment of the 17 SDGs in the framework of the flagship 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, by recognising the vital role of gender equality in achieving sustainable development.

Gender equality and women’s empowerment are universal goals in their own right, as explicitly stated in SDG 5, “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”, the 1979 United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, both of which have been ratified by Luxembourg.

In addition to the SDGs, there are many instruments, policies and declarations that acknowledge the importance of gender as internationally recognised goals stemming from the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (VAW); the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action and the 2019 Nairobi Summit (ICPD+25) on sexual and reproductive health and rights; the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, known as the Istanbul Convention; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the UNAIDS (Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS) Action Framework: Addressing Women, Girls, Gender Equality and HIV (2009); documents produced by the annual sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)<sup>6</sup> of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and the EU agreements on these issues.



<sup>6</sup> The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is exclusively dedicated to the advancement of women and the attainment of gender equality. It is the main political body responsible for promoting gender equality. The CSW systematically monitors progress in the implementation of 12 critical areas of concern identified by the Beijing Platform for Action (Beijing PFA).

Since 2010, members of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) have consistently increased bilateral assistance for programmes seeking to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment. As a reference point, they have made use of a policy indicator as an essential instrument for allocating donor resources to promote gender equality. In order to effectively analyse the integration of the gender dimension into projects and to give aid agencies of DAC members a shared vision of the minimum characteristics that a project must include, the OECD has established a three-point scoring system of gender markers (DAC markers):

- DAC 0: “Not targeted” – the project does not target gender equality;
- DAC 1: “Significant” – gender equality is an important and deliberate project objective;
- DAC 2: “Principal” – gender equality is the main objective of the project.

At European level, equality between men and women is enshrined in the Treaty on European Union (Article 3, TEU), the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (Article 8, TFEU) and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, to which Luxembourg has acceded. The OECD has published two recommendations on gender equality: the 2013 Recommendation of the Council on Gender Equality in Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship, and the 2015 Recommendation of the Council on Gender Equality in Public Life. A 2017 progress report on these recommendations shows that gender disparities and biases against women and girls remain in all areas, and calls for effective action to remove barriers to achieve equality and equity of opportunity (OECD, 2017).

The new EU Plan for Gender Equality (GAP III 2021-2025), part of the EU’s external action publicised in a joint communication from the European Commission and the Commission’s High Representative and Vice-President, sets out the EU’s political and operational roadmap for a gender-equal world.

Through this plan, EU action will address the structural causes of gender inequality by adopting a transformative approach, and will contribute to empowering women and girls as drivers of change. Particular attention is paid to women and girls who face multiple forms of discrimination.

The Gender Equality Action Plan III focuses on five pillars:

1. Making the gender dimension a cross-cutting priority of EU external action. By 2025, 85% of new EU actions are expected to contribute to this objective, with more actions to include it as a main objective;
2. Developing a shared strategic vision and close cooperation with EU Member States in the framework of Team Europe at multilateral, regional and national levels, and encouraging partnerships with stakeholders, civil society organisations (CSOs) and women’s organisations<sup>7</sup>;
3. Accelerating progress by focusing on key areas of engagement – (a) ending gender-based violence, (b) sexual and reproductive health and rights, (c) economic and social rights and empowerment, (d) equal participation and leadership, (e) women, peace and security, and (f) green transition and digital transformation;
4. Leading by example, by establishing a gender-balanced and gender-responsive leadership, strengthening capacity and expertise and strengthening the network of gender focal points;
5. Focusing on results, accountability and transparency through qualitative, quantitative and inclusive monitoring<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> Women’s organisations and local communities have played a crucial role in preventing and responding to previous crises and must be strongly supported in their frontline actions, including through longer-term guaranteed funding.

<sup>8</sup> Progress in the implementation of GAP III will be measured annually.

Luxembourg Development Cooperation has been actively involved in the consultations of EU Member States in favour of a third edition of GAP. It should be noted that Luxembourg was among the 24 EU Member States supporting the presidency conclusions in favour of GAP III<sup>9</sup>.

With regard to ODA, Luxembourg supports the continued commitment to the 85% funding target for gender equality and encourages the addition of a specific target for dedicated projects on gender equality. In line with this commitment, the present gender strategy promotes the systematic mainstreaming of gender in all intervention areas, encouraging targeted interventions for the empowerment of women and girls and thus contributing to GAP III.

GAP III is in line with the EU Strategy for Gender Equality for the period 2020-2025<sup>10</sup>, and is designed to strengthen its contribution to meeting SDG 5 in all areas of domestic and foreign policy. Luxembourg aligns itself with the key measures set out in the above-mentioned document designed to address persistent violence and stereotypes. The EU strategy also recognises that upcoming policies under the European Green Deal, or the EU Strategy on Climate Adaptation, may impact women differently to men<sup>11</sup>. The gender dimension must therefore be taken into account in order to fully leverage the potential of these policies.



The Council of Europe is striving to achieve gender mainstreaming<sup>12</sup> in policy areas, development and implementation of cooperation programmes and activities in its bodies and institutions. The result is a gender mainstreaming strategy:

Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023<sup>13</sup>. The Gender Equality Commission (GEC) ensures the mainstreaming of gender equality in all Council of Europe policies and bridges the gap between commitments made at international level and the reality on the ground for women in Europe.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/12/16/gender-action-plan-iii-presidency-issues-conclusions-welcoming-an-ambitious-agenda-for-gender-equality-and-women-s-empowerment-in-eu-external-action/>.

<sup>10</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/items/682425/en>.

<sup>11</sup> The key principles of GAP III applicable to the ecological sector and climate change are: (1) adopt a gender-transformative approach, (2) address intersectionality and (3) adopt a human rights based approach.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/gender-mainstreaming-at-the-council-of-europe>.

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/gender-equality-strategy>.



In addition to Luxembourg's commitment at international level, the strategy forms part of concrete measures taken at national level. In Luxembourg law, the principle of equality between women and men has been enshrined in the Constitution since 2006 in paragraph 2 of Article 11, which provides that "women and men are equal in rights and duties. The State shall actively promote the elimination of impediments that may exist with regard to equality between women and men."

This strategy is part of the general 2018 Luxembourg Development Cooperation strategy, "The road to 2030", in which the gender dimension represents a guiding principle, to be considered in all Luxembourg's development cooperation programmes. Gender issues are systematically taken into account in Luxembourg's official development assistance, which amounts to 1% of gross national income. In line with the priorities of the 2018-2023 government programme, this strategy is inspired by the determination to implement a cross-cutting feminist foreign policy in Luxembourg, the main objective of which is to promote gender equality and respect for women's human rights, including women's political, economic and social rights and their sexual and reproductive health and rights, as well as their representation and participation at all levels of responsibility, and the empowerment of women in international and European fora.

This strategy takes into account, among other things, the recommendations for the promotion of women's human rights, particularly in the context of the "Women and Peace and Security" national action plan 2018-2023, which was adopted in July 2018 by the Luxembourg government to implement United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000). The Action Plan enables Luxembourg, as a member state of the UN, the EU and NATO, to strengthen its long-standing commitment to women, peace and security and to give more support to international efforts on these issues.

Nationally, the national action plan for equality between women and men (Equality NAP 2015-2018) specifically aims to achieve gender equality in decision-making and the ratification of the Istanbul Convention in 2018, which has an impact on national legislation to combat violence against women and domestic violence. During the legislative period 2018-2023, the implementation of equality between women and men was monitored by the Interministerial Committee for Equality between Women and Men, which brought together the units responsible for gender in the various ministerial departments.

In a zero-tolerance approach to sexual and gender-based violence, in order to benefit from subsidies from Luxembourg Development Cooperation partners must abide by and fulfil the minimum commitments to combat any form of sexual exploitation and abuse and harassment (SEAH), irrespective of the country of intervention. In this context, Luxembourg Development Cooperation and the *Cercle des ONGD* jointly developed a charter on preventing and combating SEAH that was carried forward by the OECD's DAC<sup>14</sup> and adopted in December 2019. Thus, all NGOs receiving co-financing from the MFA have subscribed to this charter, which constitutes an important step forward in Luxembourg's feminist foreign policy and its development cooperation. The Luxembourg Agency for Development Cooperation ("LuxDev") has also updated its policy on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse and is in the process of raising the awareness of all its staff on this subject.



14 Recommendation on ending sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment in development cooperation and humanitarian assistance, produced by the OECD's DAC.





## VISION AND OBJECTIVES

**This gender strategy is based on a vision where women and men, girls and boys, and all those who do not fit into this binary categorisation, have the same opportunities to make strategic life choices, to enjoy the same economic, social, cultural, civic and political rights, and to be treated equally in their diversity, being accorded their dignity and rights, within society<sup>15</sup>. Equal in rights, opportunities and dignity, all people can participate in building societies that are not only more equitable and inclusive, but also more successful, sustainable, prosperous and peaceful. More than ever, gender equality must be an integral part of global sustainable development.**

To achieve equal rights, empowerment and balanced gender participation in the different spheres of power, all Luxembourg Development Cooperation interventions, including humanitarian aid and cooperation with the private sector, should enhance the opportunities for people to exercise their fundamental rights in all areas of life, as well as ensure their fundamental rights are protected. In operational terms, this translates into the financing of projects specifically aimed at reducing inequality through better access to basic services, women's education, improving access to the labour market, the participation of women in good governance and combating gender-based violence.

To achieve more significant and lasting development outcomes, this strategy pursues the general objective of achieving gender equality by 2030 in terms of policy, programmes and at the institutional level in all work done by Luxembourg Development Cooperation, with a particular focus on the empowerment of women and girls. In other words, Luxembourg Development Cooperation aims to ensure that the gender dimension is integrated into all its interventions by 2030. Luxembourg Development Cooperation is committed to ensuring that the projects it funds seek to improve gender equality and promote women's empowerment.

This strategy also stresses the importance of gender equality in all implementation modalities (political dialogue; advocacy; multi-stakeholder partnerships with international, bi/multilateral organisations, civil society organisations and the private sector; the academic and scientific community, and the use of innovations). The aim is also to strengthen gender equality within organisations, in all European and international fora, as well as in the activities implemented by partners in the various sectors of interest, to ensure that the relevant policies are consistent. Levers must be created to include and perpetuate programmes that meet the needs of all sections of the population, the specific needs of the most vulnerable people, protecting their rights. These will include: institutionalising participatory processes during dialogue with the country; paying attention to gender parity in representation in bodies; and emphasising human rights.

<sup>15</sup> This also applies to minority groups such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and the many other variations of gender (LGBTQI+). In addition, a broader concept of gender and gender equality has been adopted, covering not only the inclusion of women and girls, but also of men and persons with minority gender identity and sexual orientation, in combating gender-based discrimination and violence.

Gender equality implies equal rights for every person, as well as equal visibility, empowerment, ownership and participation in all areas of public and private life. It also implies equality in access to and distribution of resources.

This main objective is divided into the following two specific objectives. The action plan will set out the details of the expected outcomes and the activities to be undertaken within these specific objectives:

- **Specific objective 1:** Increase the number of projects that promote the cross-cutting or targeted inclusion of the gender dimension in Luxembourg Development Cooperation thematic priorities.
- **Specific objective 2:** Strengthen the integration of the gender dimension at the organisational and institutional level of Luxembourg Development Cooperation to ensure that the way it operates internally is consistent with its external activities.



## DUAL APPROACH

In line with the provisions of the EU Gender Action Plan III (GAP III) designed to promote gender equality in all its external actions<sup>16</sup>, the present gender strategy takes a two-pronged approach to systematically and effectively integrating and promoting gender equality. This is reflected in (1) support for the mainstreaming of the gender dimension in all Luxembourg Development Cooperation sectors, policies and programmes, and (2) the use of interventions targeting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

This two-pronged approach is complemented by optimised normative work to ensure that gender issues are at the heart of Luxembourg Development Cooperation's political and strategic dialogue. Finally, the gender strategy must be designed by adopting "gender transformative approaches". These are approaches that challenge the social and power norms underlying the attitudes and behaviours attributed to each individual. It is particularly important to take this into account at the planning stage, when the problems, concerns and needs/interests of rights holders are identified and the means to address them are decided on. Therefore, gender analysis and gender impact assessments are essential tools that facilitate the practical implementation of an integrated approach to gender equality.

This does not mean adding a gender element to all existing or planned activities. Rather, this modality makes it possible to place equality, gender equity and the empowerment of women at the heart of the debate and to meet the differentiated interests and needs of the genders when making strategic decisions and developing institutions' medium-term plans, budgets, structures and processes. This process will ensure that the interests, perceptions and experiences of women and

men in their economic, social and political activities are consciously taken into account.

This will begin during policy development and project planning, using prior contacts and studies, and will continue in decision-making, implementation, as well as in project monitoring and evaluation. This interdisciplinary gender approach is necessary to achieve a change in unequal societal structures. Rather than being an aim in itself, the integrated approach is a way to reach the ultimate goal of achieving gender equality in order to bring about a profound and lasting change in gender relations. The effects are often indirect, but they have a structural impact, which is therefore a long-term one.

Specific interventions are additional actions that aim to combat discrimination by reducing or eliminating the inequalities that still exist between men and women and all those who do not subscribe to that binary categorisation. They may target women and girls exclusively, or women and men at the same time, or they may target men only, and/or people with non-traditional sexual orientations or identities/expressions. Such interventions should be put in place to eliminate inequality and restore gender balance. The active engagement of men, as agents of change, is also encouraged.

The two approaches described above are complementary and should be applied at the same time in order to create a coherent equal opportunities policy within Luxembourg Development Cooperation. These two approaches can, in turn, produce results only if they are based on the prior recognition, by all actors in the global North and the global South, of the legal prohibition of discrimination as a fundamental right, in accordance with CEDAW and the Charter of Human Rights (1948), and the political will to bring this about.

<sup>16</sup> (1) ensuring girls' and women's physical and psychological integrity; (2) promoting the economic and social rights as well as the empowerment of girls and women; (3) strengthening girls' and women's voices and participation; and (4) shifting the institutional culture within the European Commission and the EEAS to improve compliance with the EU's commitment.



## KEY PRINCIPLES

### “LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND” AND PRINCIPLE OF INTERSECTIONALITY

**The following four interrelated principles underpin all the objectives and targets of gender mainstreaming in development cooperation. These principles therefore represent the bold transformative change implemented by Luxembourg Development Cooperation.**

This gender strategy promotes a rights-based approach to development, focusing on issues of justice and social equity, while pursuing the principle of non-stigmatisation and non-discrimination. By placing the unifying principle of “leaving no one behind” at the heart of this strategy, and recognising the importance of applying the principle of intersectionality when implementing it, namely being sensitive to multiple discriminations<sup>17</sup> in order to understand and respond to the intersecting inequalities that a person may face, Luxembourg Development Cooperation seeks to ensure a minimum level of subsistence for all.

It pursues this objective by targeting, in particular, those most likely to suffer from human rights violations and those who have limited access to power and the resources essential for day-to-day survival. This includes putting in place specific policies to cover the needs and interests of these target groups. Support must be given to the collective action of women in all their diver-



sity and of any other minority group and their full and equal participation in all aspects of decision-making connected with making and monitoring policy. Under this strategy, Luxembourg Development Cooperation promotes gender equality, empowerment and the balanced participation of all persons in decision-making processes in the different spheres of power, not only as a development objective in itself but as an indispensable requirement for sustainable global development, based on equity and inclusive and equitable inclusion for all.

<sup>17</sup> The following is a list that reflects the realities of discrimination on the ground: ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, migrant/refugee status, background or other defining characteristics.



## “DO NO HARM” AND PRINCIPLE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

No negative impact, even unintentional, should occur as a result of the interventions and investments by Luxembourg Development Cooperation. To ensure this, it is essential to systematically examine the potential risks associated with the gender dimension of the project/programme (whether existing or upcoming) and to take them into account when designing the intervention, in accordance with the laws and regulations on gender equality in force in the partner countries, or, in their absence, with relevant international good practice. This principle also applies to humanitarian situations, where aid programmes are selected on the basis of real needs, paying particular attention to the local context. The aim is not only to treat the symptoms, but to “do as much as possible” to understand systemic barriers in order to address the root causes of existing inequality and prevent potential conflicts.

A framework that sees accountability through a gendered lens is necessary for those who are accountable towards women, so that they can meet their responsibilities to ensure that women’s rights become a reality and gender equality is achieved worldwide.

In some contexts, the failure to meet gender equality commitments may be due more to the lack of gender accountability than to other factors, such as resource shortages. While full participation in scrutiny or accountability processes should be among the criteria by which public decisions are evaluated, the main element on which the existence of gender-specific accountability should be judged is the elimination of gender-based violence. From a female perspective, there is accountability when all women can get explanations from power holders about actions that affect them and can initiate a process to obtain remedial action when those responsible have not promoted their rights.

Inspired by these values, this strategy pursues a zero-tolerance policy towards all forms of gender-based exploitation, harassment and abuse in the workplace, seeking to instil a culture of prevention, deterrence, gender equality and accountability at all levels of the organisation. The alignment of development plans with human rights norms and standards is key to accountability.



## HOLISTIC AND MULTI-PARTNER APPROACH

Under an integrated approach, covering all sectors, partners and instruments, the thematic priority areas listed above are intended to facilitate categorisation, but should not be considered in isolation. A policy to promote gender equality requires inclusive, multi-dimensional and sustainable work to apply the gender dimension, and naturally leads to collaboration between different sectors, integrating fully the differentiated needs of the genders. In order to increase the impact and scope of its actions to promote gender equality, Luxembourg Development Cooperation encourages the integration of the gender dimension both through partnerships with traditional actors and those who are usually not involved in creating policies, such as direct beneficiaries and local and regional partners, as well as indirect beneficiaries and local populations, especially vulnerable groups.

With this in mind, Luxembourg Development Cooperation will continue to develop and facilitate sustainable cooperation partnerships based on a multi-stakeholder approach, bringing together political and institutional actors, bilateral, international and multilateral organisations, civil society, the academic and scientific community (universities/research centres) and new partners, especially those from the private sector who are socially responsible and accountable, prioritising the promotion of equality in a rights-based perspective. In that connection, Luxembourg Development Cooperation will also pay particular attention to respecting the principles of the rights-based approach and due diligence on the part of these partners.

It will partner more closely with partners with specific differentiated added value and expertise in gender and development, particularly in the field of sexual and reproductive health, combating early and forced marriages, and promoting access to the formal economy and decision-making. In addition, women's rights organisations dealing with gender issues will be further strengthened. As far as possible, strategic partners will be selected on the basis of shared gender equality values.



In the new era of innovation, the possibilities offered by digital technology, the analysis of digital data and the deployment of innovative financing mechanisms for development are important factors for Luxembourg Development Cooperation in addressing the multiple current and future challenges facing the gender dimension (e.g. focus on digital health, etc.).

All these sectoral interventions require ongoing support and commitment to ensure an environment conducive to guaranteeing women's rights. In working towards gender equality it is also necessary to involve men and boys in the process of change. Luxembourg Development Cooperation encourages their involvement in gender equality interventions as active agents in the transformation of gender relations.

## CONTEXTUALISATION AND OWNERSHIP

Such an approach will help ensure the specific needs and contexts of each country or even region are taken into account, thus facilitating the pursuit of the principle of sustainability. Ensuring the participation of local governments at all stages of a project will enable countries to take ownership of sustainable development programmes and translate these commitments into progressive local changes on the ground to promote gender equality. It will be essential to take account of the local context, or even adjust the proposed interventions accordingly so that they are accepted, expanded and viable.

In order to achieve a gender-sensitive environment, Luxembourg Development Cooperation seeks not only to respond to the practical interests of women and men, girls and boys, and any minority group, but also to address persistent structural factors/barriers that restrict people's ability to exercise their fundamental rights. Any intervention by Luxembourg Development Cooperation must therefore take into account the traditions, customs and social norms that perpetuate gender inequality, and must promote a broader understanding of gender-based inequality, taking into account existing power relations.

The goal is to envision an institutional and organisational transformation that eliminates gender discrimination, and this will require a paradigm shift in society in the long term. It will also be necessary to work to strengthen national and local systems for the prevention of and response to gender-based violence.





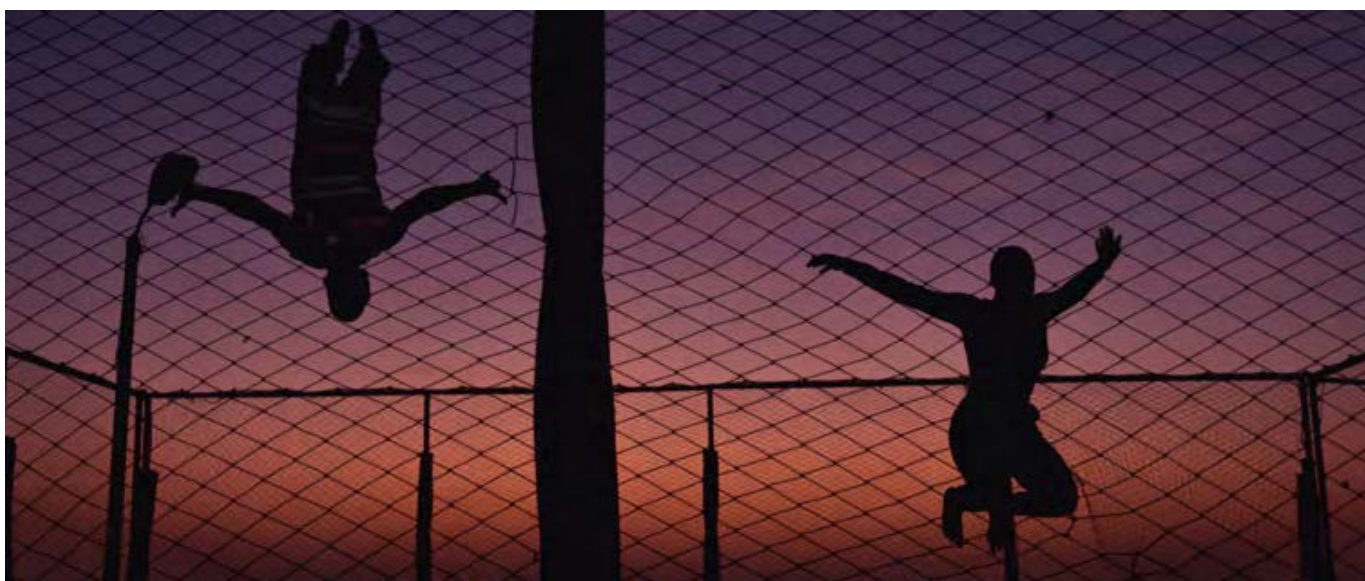


## THEMATIC PRIORITIES

The gender dimension is mainstreamed across all Luxembourg Development Cooperation activities, irrespective of the sector concerned, in accordance with the four interlinked priority areas of intervention in the Luxembourg Development Cooperation general strategy. There are five thematic priority areas:

1. sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR);
2. education, vocational training and labour market integration;
3. economic empowerment (equal access to decent work);
4. balanced participation of women and men in political, public and economic decision-making processes;
5. preventing and combating gender-based violence.

Gender mainstreaming is pursued, in order to promote socio-economic rights; to strengthen the voices and participation of women and girls and to put an end to violence against them. Thus far, the gender dimension has mainly been included in the field of sexual and reproductive health and rights and vocational training and labour market integration, which continue to be priority areas for Luxembourg Development Cooperation.







## PROTECTION OF SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS



Luxembourg Development Cooperation will strive to improve the supply of and access to affordable and high-quality care by strengthening national health systems so they can better address the emergence of transmissible diseases, including HIV/AIDS in particular, or the upsurge in vector-borne infectious diseases, through a better understanding and prevention of risks (epidemiological surveillance) and an improvement in maternal and child health and sexual and reproductive health and rights. As a key area for Luxembourg Development Cooperation, sexual and reproductive health and rights leading to women's empowerment and gender equality are interconnected with universal health coverage (UHC), and are therefore an integral part of SDG 3 "healthy lives and well-being for all". Gender and sexual and reproductive health are intimately linked and must be considered together to generate better medical outcomes and more equitable societies.



## PROMOTION OF TRAINING AND EMPLOYABILITY

Supporting the socio-economic integration of women and girls in all their diversity is a key factor in stimulating economic growth and sustainable development, by reducing inequality in the supply of and access to high-quality education and training. Luxembourg will step up its contribution to the establishment and/or reinforcement of industries or value chains, including green ones, in promising sectors, in line with the potential and needs of the beneficiary countries. Luxembourg Development Cooperation will therefore continue to support the improvement of vocational training systems and the craft sector, particularly in the area of ICT and green jobs, ensuring that they are in line with the needs of local labour markets. Luxembourg Development Cooperation will thus promote the integration into its vocational training actions of technical curricula that will help improve professional opportunities, particularly for women and girls. Luxembourg Development Cooper-

ation will seek to promote the integration of girls into traditionally "male" sectors that are often less accessible to them. In addition, Luxembourg Development Cooperation will continue to strengthen employability and promote equal access to decent employment opportunities and to entrepreneurship, with a particular focus on women and young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). In this context, Luxembourg Development Cooperation continues to increase its support for initiatives aimed at establishing an environment that will help women and young people to access the labour market and jobs. This will be done in particular through increased involvement of the private sector in order to improve employability in the local workforce, especially in the face of changes in growing economies and automation processes.

## PROMOTING ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

To improve its response to persistent discrimination and to promote sustainable and inclusive growth that benefits all, Luxembourg Development Cooperation seeks to go further in coherent gender mainstreaming across all its projects, especially in the areas of equal access to decent work, economic goods, financial services, decision-making and social protection. Pursuing the promotion of socio-economic rights and the empowerment of women and girls means reducing gender inequality in access to and control of development resources and benefits. This also includes progress on labour market conditions and the areas of women's social inclusion, through support for structural reforms governing natural resources, inheritance and property rights for an inclusive economy. Future projects for women's economic empowerment may include activities that increase the labour force participation rate of women and that support entrepreneurship, especially for women and young people, and the local production base (including micro, small and medium-sized enterprises – MSMEs) and

small-scale farmers. Activities may also seek to improve the resilience of those groups, or to eliminate the wage gap between men and women. In order to guarantee the employability of women in these sectors, it is necessary to invest in innovative solutions, through technical support and appropriate financing arrangements. With reference to the European guidelines, women's empowerment will be further strengthened through support for women's networks in green transition sectors such as sustainable forest management, agriculture and energy, support for entrepreneurship and women's employment in the green, blue and circular economies, and promoting a transformative approach in agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture and food systems. This is essential to enable women and girls to claim their human rights and thus improve their opportunities to contribute to developing their societies and making individual life choices.

## INCREASED PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN SOCIO-POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DECISION-MAKING

In this context, investment in promoting the equal participation of women and men as leaders and decision-makers in the sustainable development of their societies contributes, more generally, to better governance. With a view to promoting environmental protection and climate action and to addressing the challenges of peace and security, there should be more participation by women in political, public and economic decision-making processes both in the management and prevention of natural disasters and in the development of long-term strategies for mitigation and adaptation to climate change. This has the dual purpose of placing value on their roles in natural resource management and ensuring the resilience of communities, in part through the sustainability of their livelihoods. Sectors specific to the green transition will be particularly appropriate for this increased participation. The present strategy should

complement the Luxembourg Development Cooperation environment and climate change strategy, which also highlights the interrelated aspects of gender and climate and the importance of strengthening the role of women in managing and protecting the environment and in climate action.



## PREVENTING AND COMBATING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

This strategy emphasises the importance of preventing and combating gender-based violence, which remains a major problem in most Luxembourg Development Cooperation partner countries, particularly those with a low human development index. This priority must be taken into account in the context of specialised projects, as well as in regular cooperation work. Support for advocacy is needed, alongside dialogue, raising awareness of women's rights issues, legal reforms and services for victims of violence, especially where public institutions are inadequate. These interventions are important to protect women and girls and non-binary people and to better respond to persistent discrimination, particularly in view of the increasingly volatile security context in most Luxembourg Development Cooperation partner countries. In addition, the current context of COVID-19 increases the vulnerability of certain segments of society.

On the humanitarian front, it is essential to continue to provide timely and responsive assistance tailored to the special needs of women, girls and non-binary persons in order to promote human dignity. The mental health needs of populations in all contexts, whether development-related or humanitarian, need special attention. The prevalence of mental illness, including post-traumatic stress disorder and depression, increases significantly during crises due to exposure to violence, deprivation, displacement and the destruction of existing support structures.

In order to contribute to the physical and psychological integrity of women and girls and non-binary persons, priority should be given, in future projects in volatile security contexts, to ensuring they participate equally in conflict prevention, reconstruction and the consolidation of sustainable peace and to their role in the context of the current environmental crisis. A project to address



discriminatory social and cultural norms, practices and legislation is an example of addressing the root causes of human rights violations, including all forms of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Luxembourg's humanitarian action department is committed to ensuring that its humanitarian programming takes the gender dimension into account, and to supporting humanitarian actors who respect existing gender equality standards enshrined in international legal instruments.



## IMPLEMENTATION

### POLICY DIALOGUE AND ADVOCACY

**To implement this strategy, a medium-term operational action plan will be developed. This will anchor the principle of gender equality in all programme procedures and practices, and within institutions. The plan will be a flexible tool that provides support to implementing entities, including bilateral, multilateral and civil society partners. The new action plan may be revised regularly to take account of developments at different levels.**

Ensuring continuity in development initiatives requires not only will and strong leadership, but also important policy negotiations. Policy and strategic dialogue on gender and gender analysis recommendations (gender country profiles and sectoral analyses) will help create a common understanding of the national issues, perspectives and approaches for the effective promotion of gender equality, which should be considered when developing country strategies. Through its external representation skills, and in collaboration with other directorates of the MFA, Luxembourg Development Cooperation participates in the work of major European and international institutions and fora and thus actively supports the increased integration of the gender equality dimension and policies relating to equal opportunities into all sustainable development strategies and policies, and associated sectors. The objective is to achieve a change in development cooperation programmes and institutions, which requires raising awareness among

Luxembourg Development Cooperation actors on gender and development issues; putting women's rights issues more systematically on the agenda, together with gender equality; strengthening Luxembourg's role in defending and promoting women's rights and gender equality; and promoting the principle of inclusion. There is consensus that such an approach is effective in producing policies that are better designed and in improving the use of resources. Tackling gender inequality is not only a social imperative but also an economic one. Achieving gender equality requires the integration of a gender perspective into all political and budgetary cycles and balanced representation in decision-making. In turn, this requires the systematic strengthening of the database to measure progress towards gender equality – across all policy dimensions. Luxembourg Development Cooperation therefore plans to promote gender-sensitive budgeting through policy and strategic dialogue, as well as through support for specific government research programmes and projects at national and local levels. It also plans to support the boosting of the capacities of the national institutions, universities and civil society organisations responsible for compiling statistics for the collection of disaggregated data, and to promote synergies between the different actors.



## PROGRAMME AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT

In development actions, gender issues – like those relating to poverty, social exclusion or the environment – are still too often included after the fact or considered as separate categories, whereas they are cross-cutting issues that are crucial to a project's success. Integrating the gender dimension into the project cycle means asking questions at every stage of the project, from the contacts and preliminary studies to the evaluation of the project, in order to determine any positive or negative effects on gender equality, and to measure the real impact at the end of the project.

The gender dimension will need to be considered throughout the project cycle, based on an analysis of the gender dimension, irrespective of the sector or area of intervention of the project proposal, in the programme's planning and design phase. This will enable interventions to be more targeted. Joint analyses on gender equality, or existing analyses if deemed relevant, should be given greater priority. This will enable Luxembourg Development Cooperation partners to propose a methodological approach and a framework of gender-sensitive or transformative results to address them appropriately.

Gender-sensitive programmes will need to address the needs of women and girls and non-binary people with technically sound and evidence-based proposals. This will involve not only integrating the protection of women's interests and needs into different programmes but also targeting women and girls within the programmes. This inclusion process is supported by the steps described in the LuxDev agency operational guide. The guide will include procedures for managing the project cycle in a gender-sensitive way, advice on how to implement gender analysis, and better integration of gender issues in each of its thematic areas.

The fight against gender stereotypes involves opposing deeply established power relations, and so it is essential to create concrete interventions to achieve a change of mindset, or even of power relations or structures, at all levels of institutional and organisational management. Indeed, in order to effectively combat inequality and gender-based violence, public institutions must also be egalitarian structures.



At the same time, significant efforts are needed in the area of legislation, in particular to develop new, responsive laws to combat gender-based inequality and violence.

The monitoring of the implementation of gender-sensitive projects has not yet been systematically scrutinised. The establishment of a results-based management framework in the form of a Luxembourg Development Cooperation action plan is vital in order to ensure the inclusion of gender in project results, as well as in development cooperation policy, i.e. in institutional systems and processes. Putting such markers in place will give the required visibility to the issue of gender and promote programmes and projects that include gender equality. Luxembourg Development Cooperation is committed to continuous performance management, based on regular reviews and evaluations of ongoing projects and programmes.

Partners that are implementing projects funded by Luxembourg Development Cooperation must include the gender dimension in a coherent manner in their interventions, and must ensure that the impact on gender equality and women's empowerment is assessed. Disaggregated indicators make it possible to measure existing gaps and inequalities or disparities, so that appropriate measures may be put forward. In the context of alignment with national policies, national indicators will be given priority. It may be necessary to strengthen the capacities of national statistical authorities in our countries of intervention, to ensure that data collection and analysis are carried out through a gendered lens.

## VISIBILITY, COMMUNICATION AND AWARENESS-RAISING

To ensure coherence at the operational level, all communications by Luxembourg Development Cooperation must be gender sensitive. It is essential to improve the visibility of good practices and to raise public awareness of gender equality issues. These issues must therefore be reflected in the internal and external communications, products and public image of Luxembourg Development Cooperation. The communication plan will refer to gender mainstreaming and specific provisions to eliminate any bias or stereotype that supports gender discrimination. Research, advocacy and public relations materials should use gender-sensitive language and apply a gender quality perspective, and gender equality issues should be regularly raised and promoted.

More comprehensive reports on how gender mainstreaming has been included throughout the various projects financed by Luxembourg Development Cooperation will be needed, placing greater emphasis on measuring transformative change and also indicating the challenges encountered and lessons learned throughout the process. Emphasis will be placed on assessing negative externalities. This will allow the creation of a database for knowledge management. The strategy emphasises the importance of establishing dialogue – preferably based on concrete evidence – to allow for greater coherence and the sharing of lessons learned. Emphasis should be placed on ownership of results at partner country level. In line with the Luxembourg Development Cooperation policy of zero tolerance as regards potential gender-specific discrimination, more work is planned to raise awareness of the policy on inappropriate behaviour through improved communication, awareness-raising and training.



On the one hand, it is important to raise the awareness of Luxembourg Development Cooperation actors in terms of the definition of the concept of gender, so that a wider range of issues and contexts can be covered, and results can be produced that are not only more equitable, in many respects, but also more substantial. On the other hand, the process of mainstreaming gender equality in institutional systems and processes will need to be stepped up by increasing the specific capacities in this area, by strengthening the analysis, data and tools used, documenting and sharing best practice and improving resource allocation and use. This will include identifying and strengthening the gender skills of the staff of partner institutions and implementing agencies, and organising training packages as needed. The idea is to develop initiatives to pass on or attract the new skills required. Work will need to be done to integrate more local expertise into projects, programmes, mission formulations, team evaluations, etc. and thus to properly equip Luxembourg Development Cooperation to implement the strategy.

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