



MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS & ICELANDIC INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

# GENDER EQUALITY

IN ICELAND'S INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION



*Each individual is entitled to equal rights, opportunities and dignity, as laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the UN General Assembly on 10 December 1948.*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction .....	3
Legislative Framework: Icelandic and International Iceland's Development Co-operation and Gender Equality .....	4
Focus Areas .....	6
Education .....	6
Health.....	6
Natural resources and the environment.....	7
Women, peace and security .....	8
Monitoring and Evaluation.....	9
Analysis of bilateral contributions to development co-operation .....	9
Monitoring international organisations with regard to gender equality .....	10
ICEIDA's monitoring and evaluation.....	10
Monitoring projects of NGOs with regard to gender equality.....	10
Glossary of terms .....	11



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**Photos**

Cover: Gunnar Salvansson  
Arnar Þór Þórisson, Shehzad Noorani  
(UNICEF), Michele Siblioni  
(UNICEF) og Stuart Price (UN)

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## INTRODUCTION

*Each individual is entitled to equal rights, opportunities and dignity, as laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the UN General Assembly on 10 December 1948<sup>1</sup>.*

Discrimination based on gender is nevertheless common, and women, especially in developing countries, are subject to extensive inequality and discrimination. Their position is weaker than men's, both socially and economically, and they are less likely than men to hold positions of power in society. In general, women in poorer countries of the world are in a less favourable position than women in more affluent countries. In fact, women and girls constitute a large majority of the world's poor<sup>2</sup>.

Promoting gender equality is a priority in Icelandic development cooperation and a specific objective of the Parliamentary Resolution on the Strategy for Iceland's International Development Co-operation 2013–2016, hereafter referred to as the Development Strategy. This is based on the conviction that gender equality is a human right, as equality is in fact one of the core principles of the concept of human rights. Evidence shows that in societies where the struggle for gender equality has been most successful, the social and economic rights of the general public are greater.

The vision of gender equality in Icelandic development cooperation is also based on the assumption that gender equality is a prerequisite for progress and development. Gender equality is therefore not only an important development objective in itself, but also supports economic development. In other words, gender equality constitutes prudent economic policy. Research has shown that gender equality and women's empowerment promote increased productivity in society; strengthens its institutions and improves prospects for future generations. Economic growth and higher incomes have been shown to reduce inequality between women and men. This is even more pronounced when the economy and the institutions of society, both formal and informal, are prosperous and strong/stable. This influences decisions taken both on a community basis as well as within households, and strengthens women's position and reduces gender-based discrimination, e.g. with regard to education of girls and boys and the participation of women in politics and the formal labour market. Such changes can also increase opportunities<sup>3</sup> for men to participate in household work and the care of children.

### Participation of men and boys

Gender equality implies that the status of women and men in society is equal and that women and men are entitled to the same opportunities and rights. It is important that men and boys, just as women and girls, are aware of and challenge traditional gender stereotypical assumptions and roles. Furthermore there is a widespread need to raise awareness among the general public of the fact that women's participation in all walks of life boosts prosperity and does not come at the expense of men.



1. 1948. UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

2. UN - Women at a Glance.

3. Human Development Report 2011, World Development Report 2012, FAO 2010–11: Women in Agriculture: Closing the Gender Gap for Development.

## LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK: ICELANDIC AND INTERNATIONAL

*Gender equality is a basic human right, which is universally accepted in Icelandic society. The Icelandic Constitution confirms the equal status of women and men and Icelandic law is based on the principle that all human beings are equal, regardless of their gender. Act No. 10/2008, on the Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men, underlines that in Iceland, systematic efforts shall be made to encourage and maintain gender equality.*

Iceland has ratified the core international human rights conventions, including those that specifically address gender equality and women's rights. These include, for example, the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women<sup>4</sup>, which was adopted in 1979 following the first UN World Conference on the status of women, held in Mexico in 1975. The CEDAW convention is a comprehensive international codification of women's rights. It recognises gender equality as a precondition for the promotion of human rights and increased gender equality and as such should be integrated into development cooperation. Another milestone in international co-operation on gender equality was achieved at the fourth UN Convention on Women, held in Beijing, China, in 1995, which adopted the Beijing Platform for Action, for gender equality and women's empowerment. Still another turning point was reached at the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo<sup>5</sup> in 1994, where the importance of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) was emphasised in an action plan (Cairo Programme of Action).

In the year 2000, the UN General Assembly adopted the Millennium Declaration, on which the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are based and are to be achieved by the year 2015. Since then the MDGs have set the agenda for international development cooperation. Two of the goals, which all

are based on human rights, are directed specifically at gender equality and women's empowerment. The third MDG aims to promote gender equality and empower women, and the fifth MDG aims to improve maternal health. In addition, the first goal, to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, has been reviewed to place additional emphasis on gender equality. In general, gender equality and women's empowerment are regarded as a premise for attaining the Millennium Development Goals.

### UNITED NATIONS MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS



The MDGs are the basic point of reference of Iceland's development cooperation. According to the Strategy for Iceland's international development cooperation, all activities in that field shall promote the advancement of the MDGs.

### Icelandic Foreign Service and Gender Equality

Gender equality is one of the government's key emphases and the actions to increase women's rights and for gender equality is an important aspect of Iceland's international work on human rights. In recent years, increased emphasis has been placed on human rights in Iceland's foreign policy.

Special attention has been given to women's empowerment and their participation in peace negotiations and post-war reconstruction, and actions to adapt and mitigate climate change.

Foreign service employees seek ways of promoting human rights as a matter of principle. In particular, the foreign service promotes gender equality through its work within the UN and its funds and programmes, as well as through the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), NATO, the Council of Europe and the World Bank, and in the field of development co-operation

4. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women – CEDAW.

5. International Conference on Population and Development.

## ICELAND'S DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION AND GENDER EQUALITY

*The Development Strategy underlines the importance of equal opportunities for women and men to have an impact on, participate in, and enjoy the benefits of projects that Iceland supports. The Development Strategy underlines that gender equality and women's empowerment is both a cross-cutting issue and a specific objective.*

Efforts are made to promote gender equality and empower women in Iceland's development co-operation through gender mainstreaming and through specific measures. Mainstreaming gender perspectives is a key focus in all official development assistance. Gender equality is a cross-cutting theme which means that all development projects and cooperation ventures are analysed with regard to gender equality. The impact of actions on women vs. men is analysed and a concerted effort is made to involve both women and men in decision-making and implementation. This applies equally to those involved in preparing or implementing projects, along with the beneficiaries. The mainstreaming of gender equality is a long-term process directed at administration and decision-making in society. Large groups of women in developing countries experience wide-ranging inequality and human rights violations. For this reason, Iceland also supports specific projects, funds and organisations whose primary objective is to promote and increase gender equality and women's empowerment.



## FOCUS AREAS

*Iceland's gender equality policy in the field of development co-operation has four focus areas. The assumption is that the access of women and men to public services, economic opportunities, resources and power is in many instances unequal. The empowerment of women is considered a prerequisite for economic and social development and improved living standards for those living in poverty and whose human rights are limited.*

### The focus areas of Iceland's Gender Equality Policy

EDUCATION

HEALTH

NATURAL  
RESOURCES  
AND THE  
ENVIRONMENT

WOMEN, PEACE  
AND SECURITY

It is particularly important to take gender perspectives and the situation of women into consideration in conflict-affected areas, in peace-building, or where an emergency situation has developed, e.g. following natural catastrophes. The equal rights policy applies to all work by Icelandic authorities in this area, whether in bilateral or multilateral development cooperation, work towards peace or emergency and humanitarian assistance.

### Education

The equal right of girls and boys, women and men to education is a basic human right and addressed as such in the second MDG, which commits countries to work towards achieving gender balance in primary education and gender equality at all levels of education. Education is an effective way to reduce poverty and promote development, while reducing injustice. To that end, emphasis on the education of girls and women is very important. Education provides them access to important knowledge, enables them to improve their standard of living and facilitates their access to society's institutions and formal decision-making.

The education of women and girls has a multiplier effect. Educated girls are more likely to marry later and have fewer children, who in turn are more likely to survive, be healthier and go to school. Similarly, educated girls are better equipped to protect their rights and have an impact on their society. The great majority of children who do not attend

school are girls and two-thirds of all illiterate persons are women. Therefore it is particularly important to emphasise the education of women<sup>6</sup> and girls.

The Government of Iceland aims to promote education for boys and girls alike, and aim to provide the illiterate with opportunities to learn to read and write and acquire practical education. To this end, Iceland contributes to international organisations and projects under their direction. In addition, ICEIDA emphasises support for the education of children and adults in its partner countries, stressing in particular quality and accessibility of education.

### Health

General public health is a prerequisite for development and progress, and every person is entitled to basic healthcare services. Gender-based discrimination in connection with the causes and consequences of diseases is widespread. Women's

### Gender equality is a basic human right

For the most part, women are less independent, have more limited means and less power to take decisions that affect their lives and their society. It is important to give consideration to different cultures but not to allow traditions to serve as an excuse for oppression of women and to exclude them from power.



6. UN - Women at a Glance.

## FOCUS AREAS

inferior social status as compared with men's, their greater poverty and various culturally linked factors such as restrictions of their freedom of movement, all impede their access to health services.

Women's special role in bearing and rearing children requires targeted health services for them. Two of the eight MDGs are directed at this; the fourth aims at reducing child mortality and the fifth at improving maternal health. In most developing countries, women's life expectancy is shorter and their health poorer than men's<sup>7</sup>. The fifth MDG is the one in which progress has been slowest.

The risks threatening the lives of pregnant women in many developing countries can for the most part be attributed to unsatisfactory facilities and a lack of educated healthcare personnel. Young mothers are especially at high-risk and various side-effects of pregnancy are among the main causes of death among adolescent girls in developing countries<sup>8</sup>. Lack of access to contraceptives, unsafe and illegal abortions, HIV/AIDS and gender-based violence are also major health threats for women.

Access to fresh, uncontaminated water is fundamental for life and well-being, and clean water is of paramount importance for protection against disease. A large portion of mankind has neither access to clean drinking water nor suitable sewage and sanitary facilities. The situation is worst in Sub-Saharan Africa. Point C of the seventh MDG deals with this issue. In many developing countries, women are responsible for fetching water and household hygiene. Fetching water is both time-consuming and tiresome. Improvements in this area benefit women and improve their health. The burden on women is reduced, increasing their opportunities to earn an income and, for girls, to attend school.

The Government of Iceland aims to contribute to the improved health of people who live in poverty with special emphasis on women's sexual and reproductive health and rights. To this end Iceland will contribute to international organisations and projects under their direction, which are specifically intended to increase and strengthen sexual and reproductive health and rights. In addition, ICEIDA will place special emphasis on maternal and neo-natal health in local health projects, which the agency supports. ICEIDA will also promote projects that aim to improve access to water and increase water quality and sanitation.

### Natural resources and the environment

Sustainable utilisation of natural resources is one of the basic premises for economic development in developing countries. Two of the MDGs concern natural resources and environmental issues; the first MDG on the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, and the seventh MDG on ensuring environmental sustainability. Furthermore, natural resources are focus areas in Iceland's Development Strategy, with special emphasis on fisheries and energy.

Fisheries are important for the livelihoods of many inhabitants of developing countries. The improved utilisation of fish stocks and better handling of catches, together with an increased supply of fish products from aquaculture, increases society's food security. Division of labour in the fishing sector is often gender-based. It is common for men to do the actual fishing while women generally attend to various onshore jobs in the sector. Support to this area has long been directed specifically towards those areas of the fishing sector that employ men, while women's

work and stakes have often received limited attention. This warrants special attention in the planning of development projects in the field of fisheries to ensure that both women and men benefit from new opportunities and improve their earnings.

Iceland places great emphasis on the gender equality dimension when planning projects in the field of fisheries and when allocating funds to international organisations and projects. Furthermore, ICEIDA aims to mainstream gender perspectives in cooperation programmes and to apply special measures to promote gender equality in the field of fisheries. ICEIDA will also encourage the authorities of its partner countries to address the environmental impact of fishing aquaculture and other fisheries-related issues.

Energy is another focus area for Iceland. More than one-fifth of the world's population lacks access to electricity. The use of biomass for heating and cooking is common and around one million deaths per year can be attributed to the resulting pollution<sup>9</sup>. As women are generally responsible for cooking and spend much of their time in the home with their children, they are at special risk to air pollution<sup>10</sup>. Utilisation of geothermal resources can improve living conditions in developing countries considerably, both with increased access to energy and through less pollution than current energy sources. The utilisation of geothermal energy opens up new opportunities for education and employment, e.g. for food production, and thus contributing to greater food security. Security will also improve considerably with better lighting. Increased access to clean energy is thus a priority for health and economic development in poor countries.

7. UN - MDG monitor.

8. [who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs334/en](http://who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs334/en)

9. UN (2010). Sustainable Energy for All 2030.

## FOCUS AREAS

The consequences of climate change are not the same for women and men. Women's experience, knowledge and special skills differ from their male counterparts. Although women's ecological footprint is generally smaller than men's, the task of grappling with the difficult consequences of climate changes often rests to a large extent on women. Climate change impacts women's economic activity no less than men's, in addition to which their household work and daily struggle for a livelihood becomes ever more difficult. The effects of climate change threaten the food security, health and prosperity of nations.

The Government of Iceland aims to promote income-generating activities directed at both women and men. In addition, emphasis is placed on involving both women and men in decision-making and policy making in environmental, resource and climate change issues, and that gender equality and women's empowerment is integrated into all aspects of development programmes ICEIDA will, also encourage that gender perspectives are taken into consideration in the sustainable utilisation of geothermal energy in its partner countries.

### Women, peace and security

Gender-based and sexual violence is frequently used as a weapon in conflict. Women and girls are often vulnerable in such circumstances, their experiences and views are rarely heard and in many instances their needs are not responded to. Large numbers of women are also forced to flee their homes; between 75 and 80% of refugees are women<sup>11</sup>. Women, however, are not only victims of armed conflicts but also participants. Their role is especially important in the peace-building process,

in post-conflict reconstruction and in providing support to survivors of sexual violence.

The UN Security Council has adopted five Resolutions on women, peace and security, urging the Security Council, the UN Secretary General and the member states to ensure the participation of women in peace-building processes and reconstruction, to prevent and protect women against sexual violence in armed conflict and to promote women's rights, especially in conflict areas. Resolution 1325<sup>12</sup> (2000) was a landmark resolution in the Council's history, as for the first time, the Council addressed the importance of women's participation in peace negotiations and conflict resolution. The Resolution reaffirms that the rights of women and girls are to be respected and that special efforts shall be taken to consider women's needs where conflict prevails. The Resolution emphasises that women play an important role in promoting peace and security internationally. Subsequently, the Security Council has adopted four Resolutions that support the implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325. Iceland was among the countries to issue a national action plan for the implementation of Resolution 1325 (2008); it has subsequently been revised and a new action plan published.

The Government of Iceland aims to protect women's rights in conflict areas and in fragile situations, and to increase their involvement in formal peace-building. Protection against sexual violence and support for survivors of violence is similarly an important aspect of Iceland's work in conflict areas. Iceland therefore places strong emphasis on the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution No. 1325, on Women, Peace and Security in all peace building efforts

### UN Security Council Resolutions on women, peace and security

Resolution 1325 (2000) emphasises importance of women's participation in securing peace and conflict resolution efforts. Resolution 1820 (2008) places special emphasis on preventing sexual violence and ending impunity in armed conflict. Resolution 1888 (2009) reinforces the obligations of peacekeeping forces to protect women and children especially from gender-based violence and Resolution 1889 (2009) reiterates the importance of involving women in peace-building. The most recent Resolution, No. 1960 (2010), underlines that actions need to be increased against gender-based and sexual violence. Perpetrators must be brought to justice, their names made public and that impunity for such crimes can never be tolerated.



10. WHO. Indoor Air Pollution – Fact Sheet. September 2011.

11. Women at a glance – UN.

12. When reference is made to Resolution 1325, this includes subsequent Resolutions 1820, 1888, 1889 and 1960 on women, peace and security.

## MONITORING AND EVALUATION

*For development cooperation to be effective, it is necessary to monitor and evaluate development programmes. The Development Strategy emphasises that all aspects of development cooperation, administration, procedures and methodology must be conducive to optimising results and effectiveness. Strengthening gender equality and women's empowerment is an integral part of effective development cooperation and an important prerequisite for attaining the UN Millennium Development Goals. It is therefore important that the implementation of the gender equality policy is monitored effectively.*

The gender equality policy is valid for four years, from 2013-2016. A mid-term review in 2015 will assess whether changes are needed. Following that, a revised gender equality policy for Iceland's international development co-operation is to be published.

### Analysis of bilateral contributions to development co-operation

An analysis of bilateral contributions for development cooperation (i.e. all ICEIDA programmes as well as earmarked contributions to multilateral organisations and NGOs) using OECD/DAC methodology gives an overview of how Iceland's contributions are targeted at influencing gender equality and the empowerment of women. Using the OECD/DAC's Gender Equality Policy Marker, projects and programmes are analysed and classified according to whether, and to what extent, they target gender equality and the empowerment of women. There are three classifications:

- a. projects which have gender equality and empowerment of women as their **Principal objective**;
- b. projects in which gender equality and empowerment of women is a **Significant objective**;
- c. projects which are **Not targeted to the policy objective** of gender equality and empowerment of women.

Since 2011, all of Iceland's bilateral contributions to development cooperation have been analysed according to the above-mentioned methodology and the analysis used in making decisions on funding. It should be pointed out, however, that the Gender Equality Policy Marker only indicates intentions, i.e. whether projects are intended to encourage gender equality and the empowerment of women, not their implementation and results in the field.

Results on the ground must be analysed by other means. The Development Strategy stipulates that in external evaluations of development projects, a specific assessment should be made of mainstreaming of gender perspectives. By emphasising this in evaluations, an assessment can be made of whether the Icelandic government's policy in the field of gender equality has provided results.

Furthermore, the application of gender-responsive budgeting is to be applied to all ICEIDA's contributions as of 2013. This methodology implies that emphasis is placed on gender perspectives at all stages in planning and budgeting and that revenues and expenditures are reorganised to contribute to the advancement of gender equality. The methodology is still being developed and specific limited projects will be selected to begin with.



## MONITORING AND EVALUATION

### Monitoring international organisations with regard to gender equality

The international organisations to which Iceland contributes are varied and have different mandates. For some of them, gender equality and women's empowerment is a key objective in their work, while others emphasise other aspects and work towards promoting gender equality by mainstreaming gender perspectives into their projects and programmes. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs is responsible for monitoring progress of the projects funded, and to monitor the work of international organisations jointly with other countries. It is particularly important to monitor how these organisations promote gender equality and implement gender equality policies and strategies and that this is done systematically. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs is to follow regular evaluations of international organisations with regard to gender equality, and provide feed-back to ensure that they respond to comments and suggestions made. The Ministry shall also have an overview of individual projects of international organisations that Iceland funds, to ensure that gender perspectives are always made a priority.

### ICEIDA's monitoring and evaluation

Evaluating the implementation of the gender equality policy is part of ICEIDA's general quality policy. This involves regular monitoring of whether implementation accords with plans. Those projects



supported by the agency must have clear and measurable objectives and indicators in the area of gender equality, and they will be monitored and a systematic assessment made of their results. The gathering, analysis and processing of gender-specific data is a premise for such follow-up.

Internal audits are conducted regularly, by the agency's staff and its partners and reported in progress reports. External monitoring is conducted by independent experts. This is comprised, firstly, of reviews which are carried out during the implementation period (e.g. at two- to three-year intervals), and secondly by formal reviews near the conclusion of a project or project phase. Special audit reports on the achievement of gender equality objectives are made as appropriate.

All audit reports and evaluations shall be in accordance with generally accepted principles, standards and instructions and shall be accessible to the public.

### Monitoring projects of NGOs with regard to gender equality

Guidelines of the Ministry for Foreign affairs and ICEIDA for awarding grants to NGOs provide clear instructions for the inclusion of gender perspectives in all projects that are funded by the Ministry/ICEIDA. There is also a requirement that the NGOs promote democracy, human rights and gender equality in their field work. Further details of monitoring of the implementation and managing of funds are provided in the Guidelines<sup>13</sup>.

13. Guidelines for Co-operation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and ICEIDA with NGOs working on international development collaboration, humanitarian work and emergency aid of 2012.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

### Gender blindness

The specialised needs and experience of men and women are often ignored under the banners of gender blindness. Neutral provisions often have worse consequences for one of the genders. For this reason, it is necessary to keep gender and gender equality perspectives in mind in all decision-making.

### Gender

The social differences and relations between men and women that are learned, changeable over time, and have wide variations both within and between societies and cultures. These differences and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through the socialization process. They determine what is considered appropriate for members of each sex. They are context-specific and can be modified.

### Gender equality

The equal status, opportunities and rights of men and women in the community.

### Gender balance

Equal proportions of both genders in specific tasks, e.g. on committees and boards.

### Gender responsive budgeting

The application of gender mainstreaming in the budgetary process. It means incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of the budgetary process and restructuring revenues and expenditures in order to promote gender equality.

### Gender mainstreaming

The view that gender equality issues are issues that concern society as a whole. Gender regarded as a fundamental criterion when new policies are being formulated or when public decisions are being made. The goal is to introduce a gender perspective into all strategic planning within the community, to redefine the traditional roles of the genders and to enable both women and men to integrate family life and professional life.

### Empowerment

Process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes.





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