

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF DENMARK  
Danida

# GENDER EQUALITY IN GOOD GOVERNANCE





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# GENDER EQUALITY IN GOOD GOVERNANCE

This booklet discusses gender equality in good governance. The political, public sector and legal dimensions of governance and the links to gender equality are explained. Cases from Benin, Morocco, and Vietnam serve as examples of good practise.

The booklet also suggests ways of including gender perspectives in policy development and gender equality activities in the different dimensions of good governance. Gender equality in conflict affected and fragile states is covered in Booklet 4 on Country Gender Analysis.

## **Responding to the needs of all citizens**

Good governance is about ensuring that policies and public institutions in a country respond to the needs of all citizens. There is a wealth of good governance definitions in use. They broadly cover:

- Political and voice dimensions (i.e. how collective decisions are made and how citizens express their preferences),
- Public sector institution dimensions (integrity and accountabilities of the executive branch of government),
- Legal and anti-corruption dimensions (guarantee of human rights and individual liberties and protection against misuse of power for private gain).

Poor systems of governance result in widespread discrimination related to sex, race, colour, religion and political opinion. Looking across the world, persistent and pervasive gender disparities continue to exist. Women and men do not have an equal level of political representation, freedom of association and expression ('voice'). Employment and career structures in the public sector also favour men above women. Service delivery systems are discriminating, and services are more accessible to men than to women, although neither poor men nor poor women fare well in this respect. Finally, women's human rights and their access to legal services is

a sore point in many countries. Educating girls is particularly important in this regard, as described in Booklet 5.2. In the sections below the three dimensions of governance and the implications for gender equality are introduced briefly.

### **Gender equality - political participation and voice**

Even in well-functioning democracies, the electoral process often creates serious barriers to the participation of women as candidates, and to a minor extent, as voters. In fact women only hold around 11 per cent of parliamentary seats worldwide. A number of developing countries have therefore introduced quota seats for women in parliament (e.g. Egypt) and in local government councils (e.g. Bangladesh). The box below presents a case from Benin illustrating the potential of forging alliances with committed male politicians when it comes to promoting women's political participation.

#### **Benin: Promoting women's political participation in partnership**

Equal opportunities to achieve political influence for women is the goal for a network of committed women in Benin under the umbrella of Réseau d'Intégration des Femmes des ONG et Associations Africaines (RIFONGA). In 2002, RIFONGA received support from the Danish Government's special allocation for poverty alleviation and gender



equality. The funding was used for initiatives to promote election of women in Benin's first ever municipal elections. Interestingly, a number of RIFONGA's initiatives are implemented jointly with male politicians.

Public awareness campaigns including poster, radio spots and the composition of popular songs were launched to educate the public on the right of women to participate in the election as voters as well as candidates. Another important component was training of women candidates in presentational skills, the practicalities of running a campaign and the strategic importance of teaming up in support networks.

### **Results**

The elections resulted in a modest number of elected women with 43 women elected out of 400 candidates running. Women remain politically marginalised in Benin and RIFONGA is still far from its goal of equality. Even so, the campaign in 2002 led to increased political visibility for women politicians. RIFONGA has grown stronger and now operates as a vibrant network conducting training and advocacy. Partnerships with influential male politicians are a balancing act. The risk for women politicians of ending up simply supporting male politicians rather than driving issues themselves has to be weighed up against benefits of increased visibility of joint interventions.

*Source: Renforcement de la Participation des femmes Béninoises à la consolidation de la démocratie. Réseau RIFONGA, Ambassade Royale du Danemark, Cotonou 2002. Interviews during visit to Benin of Gender Review Mission in November 2007.*

Free and independent media is a key institution in the efforts to improve a country's governance framework. Independent and committed media can act as a watchdog in relation to gender equality by exposing discrimination and inequalities. It can also promote change of stereotype perceptions and attitudes. Improving access to information (transparency) and intelligent use of media by civil society groups and others is a powerful way to change public opinion and influence decision makers (voice).

Efforts to effectively reduce gender inequality in political participation and democratic processes rely on the following good governance conditions:

- Decisions of government are vested in elected representatives composed with fair inclusion of all groups of society and both genders,
- Elections are free, fair and frequent,
- Free media enables a free flow of opinion and respect for different views,
- Freedom of association is secured,
- Inclusive citizenship guarantees no discrimination because of ethnicity, race or gender,

Many countries do not guarantee their population the rights above, and gender equality efforts in such countries face serious constraints and even set-backs.

Development partners play an important role in assisting governments and civil society organizations in promoting women's participation in political processes on an equal footing with men. Interventions include mainstreaming measures at policy level but also in special interventions carrying the power of the tangible example (see box above and below).

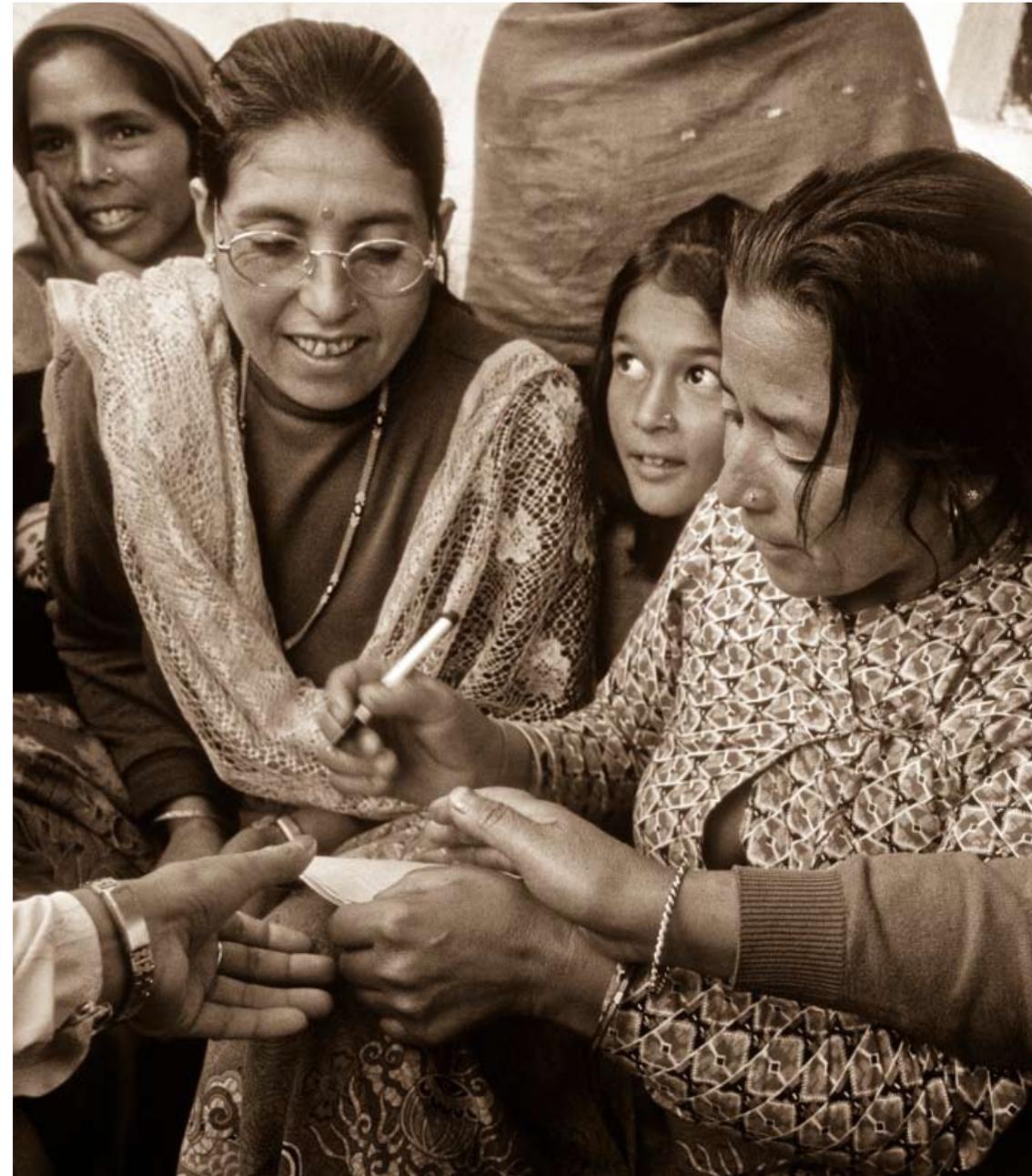
#### **Good practice from Morocco: Affirmative action in politics**

##### **Inequality in Morocco**

Inequality between men and women is pronounced in Morocco. Prior to 2002, there were only two women among the 325 members of the Chamber of Representatives and only one woman in the 270 seat Chamber of Counsellors. Women occupied less than 1 per cent of seats in local communal councils.

##### **Advocacy and affirmative action**

In the late 1990s, Morocco's women's movement advocated for affirmative action with support from UNIFEM; they called on the government



to introduce measures such as quotas, proportional representation, financial incentives, and the establishment of a National Equality Observatory. At the same time, the women's movement approached political parties, trade unions, and professional organisations to adopt quota systems in their governance structures, encourage male members to contribute to domestic chores, integrate women's needs into their policy platforms, establish day-care centres, and reserve a portion of their budgets for women candidates as well as providing training for them. A media campaign promoting women's political participation was also launched.

### Results

Among the results of these efforts was a major increase in the number of women elected to parliament in the 2002 elections (35 women, representing an increase of 33). One of the lessons learnt here is that a multi-pronged affirmative action movement on several governance fronts lead to better results than narrow stand-alone actions.

*Source: UNDP: Electoral assistance in Gender mainstreaming. Resource Kit 2005.*



### Gender equality and public sector management

In many developing countries the public sector has an oversized staffing establishment. Costs strain the national budget and civil servants, constituting the bulk of public sector employees, often work without clear direction and incentives. The result is that those who work hard and perform well are not always the ones to receive promotions and financial incentives.

There are generally fewer women in the public sector than men; they are often in lower positions, they have lower pay than men, and their access to leadership positions are constrained by a number of factors.

Ineffectiveness and inefficiency of public sector institutions contribute to poor service delivery. The gender inequality in staffing and management affect services negatively. Women teachers are important to increase girls' access and accommodate their needs. Likewise, female doctors and health staff mean that more women will seek services related to reproductive health. Experience shows that when women are in management positions there is a better chance of a strategic focus on the particular needs of women and girls.

The general public have limited influence on how public service delivery is budgeted for and organized. Developing skills in gender budget analysis and disseminating the analysis has shown to be an important way for parliamentarians and others to understand budget allocations and lobby for equality concerns. South Africa is a success in this regard.

Development partners, governments and civil society organisations all have important roles to play in 'upgrading' public sector performance. Strengthening equality concerns in budget allocations can be an uphill struggle, as gender is one out of many competing interests. Lobbying and using examples from pilot initiatives are ways to demonstrate that gender concerns in service delivery has positive long term impact in a society.

## Good practice from Brazil: Promoting equality in the budget

### Bleak statistics

In Brazil, poverty has a colour and a sex. It is highest among female-headed households (representing 25 per cent of all Brazilian families). Two-thirds of women of working age are in the lowest wage category. The statistics are even worse for black women. “Social equity” is enshrined in Brazil’s constitution and addressing poverty means considering the need to tackle social, ethnic, and gender inequalities. However, failure to implement policies that could address biases has perpetuated gender and race disparities in health status, educational levels and overall opportunities.

### Addressing inequalities

DFID’s Programme of Support for Integrated Actions in Gender and Race Equity in Brazil (2003) works with government and civil society on many fronts to strengthen accountability and reduce poverty by addressing gender and race inequalities in public policies and resource allocation.

### Results

As a result, a number of women’s organisations and other NGOs, trade unions, and research centres have prioritised gender equality in participatory budget processes, social control, and accountability. The Programme has also set its mark on the central government; staff at the Ministry of Planning have been trained to integrate gender perspectives into their work and are for the first time working on gender mainstreaming in planning and budget design. Dialogue has also been initiated between women’s organisations and legislators regarding the gender equality dimension of federal budgets and how to use gender budgeting.

*Source: Programme for Integrated Actions in Gender and Race Equity in Brazil. DFID 2003*

### Gender equality and legal access

Removing legal barriers to women’s empowerment is a pre-requisite for gender equality. Achieving equitable legal systems involves ensuring that

statutory law adequately provides for women’s independent rights in terms of access to property, custody of children, etc.

States need to have the capacity to develop and implement laws for gender equality and to provide channels through which women can demand legal rights and protection and seek redress. One important area of legal rights is property rights, owning property opens avenues of private sector engagement (collateral for loans) and securing women’s inheritance rights.

## Vietnam: Removing an administrative obstacle

### Gender-neutral policies are not always gender neutral after all

In the 1980s, the Government of Vietnam began granting long-term land use rights to households. The policy was gender neutral but because there was only space enough for one name on the land tenure certificate, by default the name of the male head of the household was often entered. Joint land titling levels out gender inequalities

In October 2001, the Government amended legislation so that all documents registering family assets and land use rights must be entered in the



names of both husband and wife. In 2002, the World Bank worked on a pilot programme with the government to re-issue land tenure certificates with space for two names. A national and local information dissemination campaign raised awareness on the issues and government officials were supported so they could issue guidance on providing joint titling.

### **Results**

The titles now give women equal access to credit to start a small business or scale up to more productive agriculture. The strengthening of women's legal status has provided a gateway out of poverty.

*Source: Land Use Rights and Gender Equality in Vietnam. Promising Approaches to Engendering Development Series 2002.*

Development partners can support both governments and civil society organizations in promoting equal legal rights. Advocacy and pressure from civil society to change prevailing laws is one part, another part is the implementation of programmes focusing public attention on a particular issue.

For some years, Danida has supported the Women and Law in Southern Africa programme involving professionals from the region. Under this programme, customary and modern law has been subjected to gender equality assessments. Lobbying activities have been carried out to influence parliamentarians and legislators working in areas of importance for gender equality and women's rights. Relevant laws have been screened to be fully consistent with international norms. Gender biases encountered within the legal system including attitudes of judges, police officers, have also been dealt with in the programme. Finally, the programme has empowered women to exercise their rights and claim recourse.

### **Improving capacity**

Capacity building is often required for a country's governance system to be rendered more gender responsive. Improving government capacity to support greater equality involves that government itself has the interest, willingness and ability to analyse the differential impact of policies and

programmes on women and men, girls and boys. This requires systems and capacity development in many respects. The integration of sex-disaggregated statistics in data routines is one of the most important and basic elements for gender-sensitive policy options and receives considerable attention in capacity building efforts.

It is not sufficient to strengthen government capacity. Experience shows that civil society groups have a key role both as an important counterpart and as a pressure group, when it comes to changing political representation, improve media attention and capacity, call for more equitable service delivery and obtain equal legal rights.

Real progress depends on a combination of political will and strategic capacity across government and civil society. Consequently, capacity building is best done through the strengthening of government capacity both at national and local levels to work from a basis of sex disaggregated data. This includes building the capacity of staff to use this information in formulation of public policies and strategies. An important additional element is support to civil society, academic institutions and others to focus on a range of key topics and carry out effective advocacy. Development partners can also facilitate national, regional and international advocacy networks and assist organisations to undertake research to support evidence based advocacy.



## SUGGESTED ACTIONS IN GOOD GOVERNANCE

### A. Examples of actions to promote political participation

- Support efforts to establish women's networks of parliamentarians to undertake "gender equality proofing" of legislation and legislative procedures.
- Support training initiatives aimed at women politicians to increase their skills related to political commitment and participation.
- Support civil society movements, especially national women's networks and organisations that promote gender balanced participation.
- Support strengthening of national machineries for gender equality, including national and local government officials and Government/ NGO co-operation.
- Support the inclusion of gender specialists in media regulatory bodies or watchdog panels.
- Support the inclusion of gender equality training in capacity-building initiatives of the media sector and support media training.

### B. Examples of actions in public sector reform

- Support gender equality systems in recruitment and promotion, and support training and employment schemes to empower women staff in the public sector.
- Support research pointing to gender biases in service delivery.
- Assist efforts to engender budget preparation and expenditure analysis.

### C. Examples of actions in legal systems and legal access

- Support the capacity of the judiciary to integrate principles of gender equality into legal judgements.
- Support efforts to include gender equality in law school curriculum.
- Support in-service training of the judiciary.
- Support efforts to promote legal literacy for women and men.

#### D. Examples of actions to improve general capacity of key stakeholders

- Support government data systems to produce sex-disaggregated data and make these generally available and integrated in standard data sets.
- Support capacity building in civil society and academic institutions to produce evidence based research for advocacy purposes.



#### Further reading

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# GLOSSARY OF GENDER TERMS

This section offers a brief glossary of some of the frequently used gender terms in the booklets. Definitions are primarily drawn from the World Health Organisation and the European Commission.

## **Affirmative action**

Measures targeted at a particular group and intended to eliminate and prevent discrimination, or to ameliorate existing disadvantages.

## **Focal points**

Gender focal points are individuals given a particular responsibility for gender equality in an organisation. Given the right circumstances, networks of gender focal points can be a useful method to promote gender equality in a large-scale programme.

## **Gender**

Social (as opposed to biological) differences between women and men. These differences have been acquired; they are changeable over time and have wide variations both within and between cultures.

## **Gender analysis**

The study of differences in conditions, needs, participation rates, access to resources, control of assets, decision-making powers, etc. - between women and men in their assigned gender roles. Booklet 4 gives an introduction to gender analysis at country level, whereas details on gender analysis can be found in Booklet 5 with examples of gender analysis in agriculture, education, health, private sector and good governance initiatives.

## **Gender audit**

The analysis and evaluation of policies, programmes and institutions in terms of how well they apply gender-related criteria.

## **Gender budgeting**

Gender-based assessment of budgets, incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of the

budgetary process and restructuring revenues in order to promote gender equality.

## **Gender equality**

Gender equality means that all human beings are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by strict gender roles. Different behaviour, aspirations, and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favoured equally.

## **Gender equity**

Gender equity means fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities between women and men. It often requires women-specific programmes and policies to end existing inequalities.

## **Gender mainstreaming**

Incorporation of a gender equality perspective in all development policies, strategies, and interventions at all levels and at all stages by the actors normally involved therein. Considering both men's and women's wishes, needs, and experience in design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and efforts.

## **Gender relations**

The relationship and power distribution between women and men in a given socio-cultural context.

## **Masculinity**

The quality or condition of being male in a given social context. Some cross-cultural elements, such as aggression, strength, and assertiveness have traditionally been considered male characteristics. However, the socially and historically constructed male characteristics need to be seen in their specific historical, cultural, and social context.

## **Reproductive rights**

Reproductive rights rest on the recognition of the basic right of

all couples and individuals freely and responsibly to decide on the number, spacing, and timing of their children. The right includes the information and means to decide freely and access to the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health.

## **Sex-disaggregated statistics**

The collection and separation of data and statistical information by sex to enable comparative analysis; sometimes referred to as gender-disaggregated statistics.

## **Special interventions**

Special interventions are efforts aimed at creating fundamental structural changes in institutions, policies, legislation, and allocation of resources to promote gender equality between men and women, based on the specific needs in the individual country, policy area or organisation. Special interventions can be stand-alone projects or programmes identified to complement mainstreamed sector programmes in a country programme.

## **Women's empowerment**

The empowerment of women concerns women gaining power and control over their own lives. It constitutes an important part of the efforts to bring about equal opportunities for men and women and involves awareness raising, building self-confidence, expansion of choices, increased access to and control over resources and actions to transform the structures and institutions which reinforce and perpetuate gender discrimination and inequality.

## **Women's rights**

The rights of women and the girl child are an inalienable, integral, and indivisible part of universal human rights.



# GLOSSARY OF GENDER TERMS

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*Photo:* Danida, Adam Rogers / UN Capital Development Fund, COWI A/S, Stig Stasig

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