

Gender equality in thematic priorities

Gender equality has long been a focus area within the Swedish international development cooperation. In 2008 the Swedish Government enforced this focus by introducing gender equality and women's role in development as a thematic priority, in addition to democracy and human rights; and environment and climate. So far there has been limited information on how the thematic priorities are addressed. The Swedish Agency for Development Evaluation (SADEV) has therefore conducted an evaluation with the overall purpose to assess how the thematic priority gender equality and women's role in development is integrated in the other two thematic priorities.

Gender equality and women's role in development is to a varying extent integrated in the other thematic priorities – stronger on policy level than on implementation level.

Addressing gender issues is considered crucial for achieving the aim of the Swedish international development cooperation, i.e. to contribute to an environment supportive of poor people's own efforts to improve their quality of life. The evaluation aims at increasing knowledge on how to integrate gender equality and women's role in development as a thematic priority. The focus of the evaluation is integration in the other two thematic priorities at policy level, in the implementation process and development of methods to facilitate integration.

The evaluation includes interviews with staff at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Sida headquarters as well as with staff at Swedish embassies and Sida field offices. Field visits were conducted in two countries, Bangladesh and Serbia, and cases from Guatemala, Kenya and Vietnam were reviewed in desk studies.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Integration of gender equality and women's role in development in the policy framework

The evaluation finds that gender equality is rather well integrated in the policy framework for democracy and human rights, which can be explained by international commitments and traditions of keeping the issues together. The environment and climate framework, on the other hand, has a rather weak integration of gender equality. However, a development can be seen over time, from a rather bleak discussion focusing mainly on technical aspects to a growing awareness of social aspects including gender equality.

The evaluation finds that Sida's background documents to the policies on democracy and human rights and on environment and climate have considered gender equality more thoroughly than the adopted policies. Gender equality is also considered in all of the reviewed country cooperation strategies, yet is weakly integrated in the background sections and the results analyses of the strategies.

Integration of gender equality at implementation level

Interviews revealed that the awareness concerning integration of gender equality at implementation level is high among Sida programme officers and implementing partners. However, the understanding of how to address the issue is limited.

Methods developed to integrate gender equality in the other two thematic priorities

The development of methods to integrate gender equality in interventions related to democracy and human rights; and environment and climate has so far been limited.

Understanding of thematic priorities varies

On an overall level, the evaluation finds that the understanding of the thematic priorities is high among some informants at Sida while others find them confusing. The guiding documents on thematic priorities are not very clear with respect to how the thematic priorities should be understood and integrated.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To increase the understanding and clarity of gender equality and women's role in development as a thematic priority

The government offices (the MFA) are recommended to communicate the relation between the thematic priority gender equality and women's role in development and the rights perspective, taking into account mainstreaming.

Enhance the integration of gender equality and women's role in development as a thematic priority

The government offices (the MFA) are recommended to ensure that gender equality is considered in all parts of the cooperation strategies.

Sida is recommended to develop qualitative indicators for monitoring the implementation of gender equality in the other thematic priorities and enhance the focus on gender equality rather than women's role in development.

The Swedish Embassies/Sida field offices are recommended to improve the work on gender analyses and to work more closely with the policy teams at the Sida headquarters. They are also recommended to develop a strategy for how to promote gender equality through the dialogue.

SOURCES AND FURTHER INFORMATION

This SADEV Evaluation Brief is based on the report *Gender equality in thematic priorities*, SADEV Report 2010:7. This and other SADEV publications are available at www.sadev.se