



# LESSONS LEARNED FROM PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN DANISH DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

## SUMMARY

## 2016



***Denmark recognises that progress on gender equality remains a critical factor for poverty reduction and delivering on the Sustainable Development Goals. This study provides examples of Danish-supported interventions to promote gender equality, and the cases presented in the study show how human rights as the essential basis for gender equality proves a strong entry-point into the promotion and protection of women and minority rights. The study also points to the importance of supporting innovative and long-term partnerships, as well as donor flexibility to adapt to changing political contexts and donors' role in supporting alliances of stakeholders promoting gender equality.***

***The study was carried out from January to April 2016 and includes eight cases of Danish support to the promotion of gender equality.***

## **Background**

Gender equality is a core priority in Danish development cooperation. For decades Denmark has pursued this priority through its development engagements and as a strong and consistent international advocate for women's rights. The Danish Strategic Framework for Gender Equality, Rights and Diversity in Danish Development Cooperation from 2014 reflects recognition that progress on gender equality and women's rights remains a critical factor in achieving poverty reduction and sustainable development, but also remains a goal in its own right. The framework and Denmark's actions are therefore in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG5 achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls.

In order to learn from experiences and inspire future implementation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs commissioned an evaluation study of Danish support to promoting gender equality carried out by a team of independent evaluators. This study collates lessons learned from eight selected cases of Danish support to promoting gender equality that is intended to serve as an inspiration to further work in this area. The study looks at development results achieved which have been gender transformative within three overall categories of *representation, recognition and redistribution*. It is the ambition that the evaluation study will inspire future engagements by documenting results that contribute to lasting transformation of relations between men, women, girls and boys.

## **Overall lessons learned**

Analysing the eight cases from Kenya, Burkina Faso, Somalia, Uganda, Bolivia and Bangladesh, the study identifies five overall contributing factors to achieving gender equality:

1. Human rights form the essential basis for the promotion of non-discrimination, participation, accountability and transparency. Passing legislation that protected the rights of women as in the cases of violence against women and girls, including marital rape and women accused of witchcraft, brought about by a changing political climate, as well as Universal Periodic Review (UPR) recommendations made a huge difference. The study also draws examples from inclusion of sexual minorities in Kenya in the fight to defend the rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered (LGBT) and shows how principles of non-discrimination and participation have helped in the efforts to extend the rights of these groups. The study also demonstrates how support to the Bolivian police has reinforced duty

bearers' capacity to protect women's rights.

2. Selection of partners that have capacity as well as political vision to go beyond slogans and bring about gender transformational change has been instrumental in obtaining results. Support to women's human rights organisations in Kenya has enabled partners to advocate for a stronger representation of women in parliament. In Burkina Faso, partnering with drivers of change in the former Ministry for Human Rights resulted in legislative changes. Supporting innovative LGBT activist organisations in Kenya and beyond through an innovative partnership has yielded strong results in promoting LGBT rights.
3. Engaging in long-term partnerships have synergy potential if they involve consistent investment and core funding but also trust and frank dialogue on real gender transformative change. The study shows how support to advocating for health, education and property rights in Burkina Faso and Kenya with long-term partners have proven effective and has enabled Denmark to contribute to transformational change at the policy level. Long-term partnerships were also found to be instrumental in government ownership of a multi-sectoral approach to gender-based violence in Bangladesh.
4. Often ambitions are too high with regards to what can realistically be expected from a relatively small intervention at the micro level. Adapting interventions to their political and social context and being realistic about the time frame is essential when working to promote gender equality. A case example advocating for girls' schooling in Burkina Faso shows that ambitions are much higher than what is practically possible with the intervention. Another example is micro level support to small-scale credit schemes in Uganda demonstrating that support to distributing access to and

## The cases included in the study

#	Intervention	Country
1.	<b>Women lawyers promote 2/3 principle in politics</b> Support to civil society and government working group to draft and advocate for a bill on implementation of the principle of the Kenyan Constitution (2010) of only 2/3 of the same gender in elective or appointive positions.	Kenya
2.	<b>Commitment to political quota opening doors in context of fragility</b> Multilateral support through UNDP to increase quantitative participation of women in parliament resulting in a commitment to a goal of minimum 30% of women parliamentarians.	Somalia
3.	<b>Sexual minorities taking success upon themselves</b> Support through <i>International HIV AIDS Alliance</i> to a regional network of CSOs defending sexual minority rights, including the Kenyan LGBTI organisation <i>Ishtar</i> involved in service provision and advocacy through <i>National AIDS Control Council</i>	Kenya
4.	<b>Law to reduce violence against women and girls</b> Support to civil society and government for advocating for the adoption of recent legislation on violence against women and girls including marital rape and women accused of witchcraft	Burkina Faso
5.	<b>All on board for a systemic response to Violence Against Women</b> Support to a government multidisciplinary approach to Violence Against Women involving one-stop crisis centres at hospitals, assistance to victims and prevention efforts with male sport celebrities.	Bangladesh
6.	<b>Police unit enabling duty bearers to respond to violence</b> Support to a special police force tasked with the implementation of a law on Violence Against Women, including comprehensive training of officers and indicators to measure progress in police response and attitude.	Bolivia
7.	<b>Involving men to promote education of girls</b> Support to a cadre of fifty male ambassadors to promote the access of girls to secondary education through door-to-door advocacy for the reallocation of resources at household level.	Burkina Faso
8.	<b>Green growth to increase income and redistribution</b> Provision of credit and capacity building at rural household level to promote gender-balanced negotiations to reallocate resources to enable family savings and payment of school fees and health expenses.	Uganda

control over resources at the micro level has limited impact at the macro level.

- Flexibility to identify strategic entry points is important as a development partner, as even the most solid theory of change cannot foresee contextual changes. Sober planning assumptions cannot be over-relied on, and ears on the ground are required to respond to opportunities arising to use strategic entry points.

### Findings from the case studies

The evaluation concludes that case studies of **representational justice** reflect a degree of success in taking gender equality forward in political representation. Commitments to reserve 33.3% of parliamentary seats for women in the case of Kenya and 30% in Somalia do not represent full equality between men and women but are strategic entry points for the continued work towards a stronger voice of women in political decision-making.

However, both instances of compromise with regards to representation demonstrate the potential of taking advantage of specific contexts, even where these may appear fraught with risk. Important lessons learned concern the choice of implementation mechanisms. In Kenya and Somalia high-level commitment in the Constitution or in the National Leaders Forum has been found not to automatically lead to gender equality in politics, unless implementation mechanisms are devised and followed up upon by advocacy and capacity building.

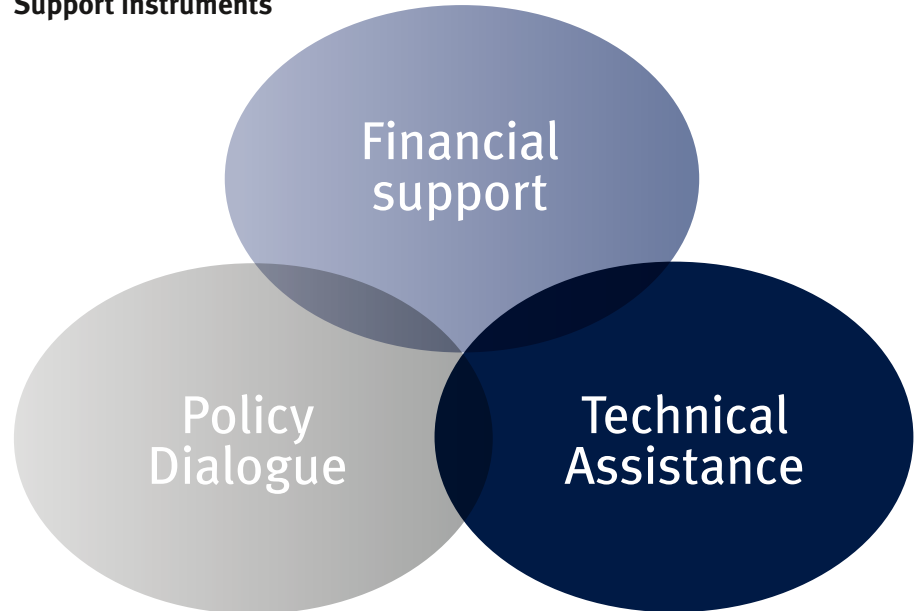
The cases presented in the category of **recognition justice** constitute examples of how gender injustice in the form of violence and discrimination against women is recognised and addressed in ways that carry lessons for gender equality practitioners. Case evidence from Bangladesh and Bolivia illustrate the need for a systemic and long-term response to violence against women.

In the case of Bangladesh more than a decade of comprehensive support to violence prevention has convinced government to take funding responsibility. The work in Bolivia, training a special police force in addressing violence against women, is not as progressed as the Bangladeshi case but already carries interesting lessons on the importance of establishing baseline data to measure progress against set objectives on developments in user perception of services and police attitudes.

Case evidence from Burkina Faso shows how international partners can help a committed government and civil society take advantage of a window of opportunity as exemplified by the political transition following the ousting of President Blaise Compaoré in October 2014. The transition government engaged in a comprehensive legislative reform process, where the issue of violence against women was taken up through a reform package that were previously considered unlikely. The case also shows how achieving the result of passing a law allows partners to start focusing on the task of implementing huge ambitions within the legislation in one of the world's poorest countries.

The case of sexual minorities in Kenya demonstrates how support to human rights activists can help a vulnerable group, in their own words 'take success upon themselves'. Evidence of results in using delivery of health services to position civil society groups as partners of the Ministry of Health shows that allocating resources to committed activists can be an effective

## Support instruments



and efficient way of recognising discrimination in access to services whilst also protecting human rights. Further, there was clear evidence of political success in blocking of an anti-gay law inspired by Uganda in 2015.

Case stories from Burkina Faso and Uganda presented in the category of **redistributive justice** illustrate how relevant attempts at redistributing access to and control over resources have demonstrated some impact at the micro level in the case of Gender for Growth in Uganda, yet with limited evidence of links to macro level changes or any effects beyond anecdotal evidence.

Experience from Burkina Faso shows the strength of innovative approaches such as involving men in community advocacy for girls schooling. At the same time, the approach has clear limitations in a context of acute poverty such as rural Burkina Faso. Therefore male involvement in household level advocacy proved to require financial resources for getting girls to school. This turned what would appear to be an innovative approach into a de facto traditional educational scholarship scheme with

limited effect beyond the relatively modest numbers of immediate girl beneficiaries.

The study finds clear contribution links between Danish funding, technical assistance and policy dialogue and finds evidence of transformational gender changes at micro, meso and macro level. However, the study notes a striking focus on the financial support provided whereas support instruments such as technical assistance and policy dialogue tend to attract less attention from development partners. The study finds that this focus on financial instruments carries the risk that opportunities are missed and synergies remain untapped, as policy dialogue is downplayed – or simply more challenging to document in terms of tangible results than funded activities.

Thus the study shows an untapped potential of strengthened policy dialogue at partner level. Too often, dialogue is deferred to high-level consultations and during ministerial visits rather than the cooperation partnerships where thorny issues could be explored more fully also by bringing partners together to address issues of common interest.