



Walking the talk in Yemen

The Gender Focal Points Group in Yemen
- A living example for taking gender action
under Business Continuity Management

Applicant: **GIZ Yemen Gender Focal Points Group**

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The GIZ Yemen Gender Focal Points Group “walks the talk”: For more than 2 years of working under Business Continuity Management conditions, in war-torn Yemen and with a deteriorating humanitarian situation, the topic gender unites national and international colleagues. Together we take action to overcome gender (in)equality in Yemen, and to promote equality in our programmes. We serve as role models for our colleagues, and we send hope to everybody who does not give up working for a better future.

Context



There is still a long way to go to reach equality. Although more girls than ever have entered formal education, the total number is still only 75% compared to 95% for boys (2012/13).

Women in Yemen continue to face political and social discrimination shown in the ongoing practice of child marriage, low school enrolment rate of girls, inaccessibility of reproductive health for 64 % of the Yemeni population, and only 25,2% female labor force participation.

During the political uprising in 2011, change for the better of the Yemeni women’s situation seemed possible when for the first time women took the streets side by side with men, and when women were included into the national dialogue conference for the first time in a significant number. But with the conflict escalation in 2014 and the beginning of the Saudi-led airstrikes on Yemen in March 2015, the hopes are dashed. Armed conflict spread rapidly across much of Yemen with devastating consequences for civilians. UN OCHA estimates that 21.1 million people – 80 per cent of the population – require some form of humanitarian protection or assistance. The conflict forces particularly women into vulnerable situations. At the same time it leads both women and men to adopt coping strategies that can also challenge traditional gender norms.

GIZ Yemen works in addition to the development priority areas of water and education in the areas of sustainable economic development, vocational training, food security, biodiversity, good governance, and health. As a consequence of deteriorating security and political situation starting in 2011, the working modus is

under business continuity management. Despite a short return for seconded staff in 2012 and 2013, the international staff works permanently from outside the country while national colleagues continue in Yemen.

Who are we?

The Gender Focal Points Group has been set up in the summer 2013 to institutionalize and promote gender equality within GIZ programmes and in Yemen. Our 13 members come from almost all GIZ programmes implemented in Yemen, and also from the GIZ Office. We combine the knowledge and experience from the different sectors and approaches. Our strength is our diversity: We are women & men; national & international staff; Yemenis & Germans; project staff & GIZ office staff; advisors, admins & managers. Together we meet regularly, exchange ideas, learn about gender and implement joint activities.

Our vision for the group is: *We promote and support gender equality in Yemen*

- *with regards to the results of our projects (equal benefits)*
- *throughout the cooperation with our partners (equal participation)*
- *at our workplace at GIZ (equal opportunities)*

Why should we be awarded?

We make gender mainstreaming coming true in our project’s approaches.

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We produce context-sensitive products and awareness raising materials.

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We bring together different people with diverse backgrounds and abilities.

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We move the minds of national staff and our partners.

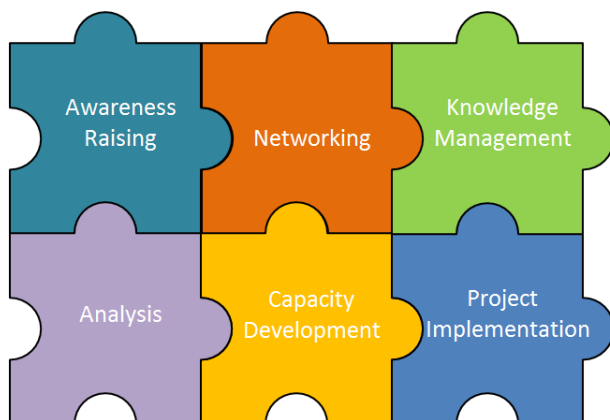
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We proof that gender is not just “nice-to-have” whenever possible, but always essential for our work.

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We are a living example for resilience. We show that continuity and sustainability is possible even under extreme conditions of conflict, war and business continuity management.

What do we do?



Awareness raising – implementation of gender days (women and men days), development of awareness raising materials, campaigning

Capacity development – offering gender trainings with national staff and with AVs as well as sensitization sessions for national colleagues

Analysis and M&E – analyzing gender issues for project designs and supporting the formulation of gender indicators

Networking – connecting with Yemeni actors in the field of gender, setting up a partnership with the Gender and Development Research Center at University of Sana’a

Knowledge management – setting up a gender library at the GIZ Office in Sana’a, publishing a newsletter, organizing DMS file

Project Implementation – gender focal persons advocating in their teams to consider aspects of equity and equality during the project activities

How do we work?

The group continues to exist during the current situation of **Business Continuity Management**. We communicate monthly via Skype, and have met once for a gender training in Amman.

We are a **multi-sectoral and cross-cultural group**. We cultivate an atmosphere of diversity, we encourage everybody to express his/her opinions, and we welcome controversial debates. We learn mutually from each other.

We developed a joint vision and an **annual work plan**. Its budget is shared by the projects. We have defined working fields and have set up task forces (see above). **TORs for gender focal points** frame our tasks within the teams. Most of the gender focal points have regular slots during their team meetings to discuss gender issues.

We actively promote and make our colleagues aware of that gender equality is essential for sustainable development. Therefore, we include gender as **topic in the annual staff meetings** and we present our work during the induction courses for new national staff.

Whenever possible we work in **tandems of national and international colleagues and experts**, which is quality assurance and capacity building measure likewise.

Insights into our work:

The group has successfully implemented several activities. Our success and acceptance by our colleagues, team leaders and partners, is based in a variety of approaches and products which are presented in the following section:



Addressing the topic of women's economic participation through a low-cost film project

Film "Women in Leadership positions"

Working on the topic of women's economic participation, we produced a video about the situation of Yemeni female professionals in leadership positions on the occasion of Women's Day 2015. The film is based on interviews with 7 female leaders at partner institutions of GIZ projects documented with smartphones.

Finalized under extremely difficult conditions of open-armed conflict, it captures a unique moment before the war proving the potentials for women's economic participation and discussing the necessary preconditions. (find here the [LINK](#) to the movie)

Exhibitions “Gender matters” (2014) and “Brave men” (2015)

The group members know: Gender does not only concern women. To increase the understanding of how men are involved into gender issues, we have organized for the second time in a row an exhibition about men. On the occasion of the international men’s day on 19th of November in 2014 and 2015 we collected statements from different staff members, and presented them at four different locations where GIZ Yemen staff works: Sana’a, Bonn, Eschborn, and Berlin. The two exhibitions were about:

- “Why do I support gender equality...?” (2014)
- “What is a ‘brave man’ to me...?” – Playing with Stereotypes (2015)



“A brave man is one who can do female stereotypes without feeling a shame” (Muna Al-Attas, Sana’a 2015)



Colleagues enjoying the exhibition about the men’s day 2014.



“I support gender equality because I believe that both Men and Women contribute equally to our society.” (Abdulwasa Al-Saqaf; Sana’a 2014)



Training Session in Amman

Training for National Staff and for Team leaders

We met once for a face-to-face meeting in Amman in October 2014. Together with a tandem team of national and international trainer we learnt basics concepts, the role of gender at GIZ, and gender in German development cooperation and its influence in different sectors. We transferred the new knowledge in “sensitization sessions” to our colleagues in Yemen.

In September 2015, all programme leaders came together in Eschborn to learn about gender aspects in development cooperation and commission management.

Gender Analysis & Follow Up-tool

We developed a mechanism for carrying out the gender analysis, specifying the different roles and responsibilities of team leaders, gender focal points, and external consultants. Together with a local consultant, the group reviewed and updated an introductory part about gender (in)equality in Yemen which is used in every project’s analysis. It has made the recommendations more applicable and relevant for the project. An excel tool was developed, which helps the different projects to implement and to follow up the key recommendations.



Following a recommendation given in their gender analysis, the biodiversity programme has changed their system for setting up community committees. Today 4 persons are appointed to guarantee equal representation of women.



(Post)-conflict intervention (here: psycho social report in Yemeni schools) require gender sensitive approaches.

Learning about “Gender in conflict situations”

A newsletter project started in August 2015, observing that there is little media coverage about the impact of the war’s dynamics on gender relations. The newsletter collects online available information, particularly from social media and reports of relief organizations. In November 2015, the Gender and Development Research and Scientific Studies Center at Sana’a University, held also a lecture about gender specific impacts of war situation in Yemen, attended by 40 colleagues in Sana’a.



Colleagues in Yemen who want to learn more about gender are invited to use our gender library in Sana’a.

Effects within the projects

The individual gender focal points advocate in their project teams to promote equal chances for women and men during the implementation of activities. In line with the three-fold gender approach of BMZ, we promote gender equality at policy level, empower women and do gender mainstreaming in our projects.

Transformation Support Programme: *enhancing gender equality at policy level through supporting the integration of women rights into the constitution draft*

Water Sector Programme: *Promoting women, the primary water resources managers in households, as key for water-related planning and decision-making*

Quality of Education Improvement Programme: *Empowerment of girls and support of female school staff is at the center of our work for better education*



During the retreat of the Yemeni Constitutional Committee in Germany, the former federal Minister of Justice Dr. Herta Däubler-Gmelin held a lecture on the topic of women campaigning.



Gender-sensitive designed trainings on proposal writing to attract funds for water infrastructure addressed female and male village representatives alike.



Female schools staff from of Al-Chansa School in Sana’a testing training materials for psycho social educational support (November 2015)

Voices about us

“Mutual collaboration between the GDRSC and the GIZ is one of our major concerns towards sustainable development in Yemen since many years. The GIZ improves the capacity of our teaching and administrative staff through its outstanding gender experts. The center on the other hand, provides the GIZ staff with local knowledge to ensure gender mainstreaming in their projects within a particular focus on the Yemeni context. We are proud of this excellent partnership.”

Dr. Bilkis Zabara, Director of the Gender and Development Research and Studies Center, GDRSC, Sana’a University

Our program benefits tremendously from the continuous work of the gender group. Its members built up gender competencies that clearly have an impact on gender awareness of the whole program team. This leads to more gender-sensitive project approaches and better results.
Ute Nuber, Programme manager, Biodiversity Programme Yemen

“Gender is often an add-on to well-established processes and stable environments. The movie ,women in leadership positions’ and the work of the Gender Focal Points Group in Yemen is living proof that Gender-related issues matter in all of GIZ working fields and can be operationalized in fragile contexts, where they are especially needed. Often, we strive for high-end and technically complex approaches in our daily work. The movie has been realized with a minimum of resources and basic technology by only using mobile phones. All that is needed are the voices of Yemeni women talking about their work, society, challenges and support – very simple, but the effect is compelling.”
Julia Gering, Advisor Health System Strengthening Programme Competence Center Health