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Feminist Quality in Context

**GIZ Concept for the implementation of qualitative elements
of the German Feminist Development Policy**

January 2025

Executive Brief

Background and political context

Gender equality is a fundamental human right and essential for a healthy and prosperous society. It is a key objective in many GIZ projects, and our experiences confirm its potential for creating sustainable impact in partner countries. However, while much progress is visible, some achievements remain fragile and are increasingly threatened by conflicts and crises, as well as by anti-gender backlashes. Gender has, at times, become a divisive topic often instrumentalised to restrict basic human rights. Instead of advancing towards equal, fair, and just societies, the current geopolitical framework conditions are leading to standstill and steps backwards.

BMZ set a strong signal in spring 2023 when launching its strategy on Feminist Development Policy followed by the third Gender Action Plan (2023-2027), to set a new political framework for the implementation of a (more) feminist development cooperation. It continues Germany's commitments made in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to explicitly foster gender equality as a critical factor for achieving the sustainable development goals – and goes beyond it by adding a feminist quality to the political framework.

GIZ's new Gender Strategy, entering into force in January 2025, envisions to work for gender equality within GIZ and worldwide; it acknowledges our substantiated work with partners and elevates it to another level, taking up a feminist perspective.

Objectives

Last year, we focused on how to increase the percentage of projects with gender equality (GE) as main or significant objective (gender markers GE2 and GE1) and summarised recommendations in a concept paper. The recommendations explain how to reach the quantitative targets across all sectors, many with a reference to the 3 Rs (rights, resources, representation). We are on track regarding the quantitative targets, observing a steady decrease of GE0 projects to absolute minimum levels, an increase of GE1 projects and more than doubling in numbers of GE2 projects.

This year, we concentrate on how to ensure and improve qualitative aspects of the feminist development policy and developed this technical-methodological concept guided by the following core question:

“How can we successfully implement feminist core elements in our work to improve gender equality and contribute to a feminist development?”

With an analysis of various projects across GIZ's portfolio including all regions and all sectors, we have identified key insights into the successful implementation of feminist core elements – namely, gender-transformative approaches (GTA), intersectionality (IS), and human rights-based approaches (HRBA). This contains practical applications of a post-colonial perspective (PP) and the active involvement of local civil society and knowledge. The examples illustrate that even a single feminist approach can drive substantial impact, highlighting its value in development cooperation.

Context-sensitive Criteria

The experiences from our implementation point towards similar recipes for success and the development of a set of criteria that are widely applicable. Acknowledging the different contexts in our partner countries, we have identified the following criteria for integrating feminist core elements into our frameworks and concepts:

- (1) **Multi-stakeholder approaches** reach a new level by bringing together actors with and without a focus on gender to support gender-transformative, human rights-based, and intersectional policies, in their respective sector.
- (2) **Political dialogues** address feminist core elements, use **context-sensitive language**, which reflects partners' priorities, and identify options for a **flexible** implementation, particularly in fragile or conflict settings.
- (3) **Strategic partnerships** with **civil society, public and the private sector** support political reform efforts based on dialogue and mutual understanding. Partnerships among **like-minded allies** from the local, national, and international level, amplify impact. Partnerships with **feminist civil society** are essential for advancing feminist policies and to stronger apply a post-colonial perspective.

- (4) **Local expertise and knowledge** ensure the practical relevance of feminist principles. Engaging local stakeholders in the different project stages helps to prioritise issues based on local insights and contributes to sustainability. Applying a human rights-based and intersectional framing at local level can be a feasible entry point, context-sensitive language can prevent backlashes and promote acceptance of feminist values.
- (5) **Safe spaces** for dialogue and knowledge exchange need to be created, especially in fragile settings. These spaces allow for an open discussion of gender norms and sensitive issues.

We further recommend adapting our **standards and processes** to apply feminist core elements as follows:

- (1) Always pay attention to a **context-appropriate framing**, which embeds feminist principles in broader social or economic reform processes and responds to the needs of the target groups and (local) communities. Feminist approaches aligned to contexts offer solutions to people's everyday problems, such as unequal distribution of care work and family income.
- (2) Make sure to use **gender data**. Gender data play a critical role, as gender-specific analyses and data-driven evidence inform targeted interventions and provide a solid basis to counter ideological resistance.
- (3) Building **gender competence and resources** within GIZ is equally important. Comprehensive internal training programs and the active engagement from leadership is essential and fosters both the skills and commitment needed to effectively implement a feminist culture. In fragile or conflict settings, regular risk assessments and psychosocial support for staff are essential to manage challenges and maintain resilience.
- (4) **Monitoring and evaluation** are essential for continuous learning and improvement. By openly reflecting on successes and setbacks, GIZ refines its approach to implementing the core feminist elements. Dedicated M&E systems track the long-term impact of these elements, with longer-term projects identified as particularly effective for achieving sustainable (feminist) outcomes.

Learnings/Conclusion

We learn from our projects, that the feminist core elements cannot be seen in isolation and are interdependent. Each element builds on and strengthens

the others: A human rights-based approach can establish the commitment to ensure human rights standards, which a gender-transformative approach then deepens and specifies by addressing root causes, structural discrimination, and gender-related power imbalances. Intersectional forms of discrimination are intertwined with a gender-transformative approaches taking multiple forms of discrimination into account. A post-colonial perspective complements these elements by critically examining historical inequalities and the (different) roles of actors from the Global North and the Global South. Civil society plays a vital role in the implementation of the elements as they are instrumental in addressing root causes of discrimination and bring critical insights due to their local knowledge and networks. These approaches are not hierarchical but complementary and have one unifying purpose: They all help to distribute power and resources more equitably and to support the Sustainable Development Goals.

We have also seen that implementing the feminist core elements in practice requires navigating several trade-offs: Resource allocation often prioritises sectoral goals over gender equality creating a dilemma in balancing objectives; Short project timelines present challenges to the ambition of achieving impacts through gender-transformative approaches; Focusing on marginalised communities, such as LGBTIQ+ persons and groups and collaborating with feminist civil society and human rights actors can result in security risks, thus creating concerns around the “do no harm” principle.

These trade-offs show the importance of applying “feminist quality in context” as our guiding framework to effectively address these challenges. Our analysis underlines that a pragmatic, adaptable approach to feminist development policy is crucial amid rising global anti-gender backlash and socio-political challenges. By focusing on structural inequalities and adapting our strategies to the specific realities of our stakeholders – including commissioning parties, partners, and civil society – we can drive meaningful change, even in difficult circumstances. The evidence of positive results, especially for marginalised groups, underscores the value of this approach. By aligning our efforts with both Germany's Feminist Development Policy and the gender equality agendas/goals of our partners, GIZ enhances its contributions to gender equality to drive sustainable change.

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1 Introduction: Implementing Feminist Core Elements: Enhancing the Quality

In 2024, we at GIZ continue to attach great importance to the implementation of BMZ's Feminist Development Policy (FDP), launched in 2023, and its Gender Action Plan (GAP III, 2023-2027). With a concerted effort within GIZ, we were able to achieve the BMZ "growth path" in the past years and are committed to continue using the Gender Marker system also in future when planning, implementing, and evaluating projects. This year, we expanded our conceptual focus from increasing the quantity of gender equality projects to further enhancing the quality in our implementation. Building on the achievements of 2023, this concept paper addresses how core feminist elements are implemented in our work in concrete terms. The paper does not cover all core feminist elements, as defined in BMZ's GAP, but concentrates on gender-transformative approaches (GTA), intersectional (IS) and human-rights based approaches (HRBA). It also describes the discussion on how to apply a postcolonial perspective and looks closer at cooperations with civil society (CS).

We were asking:

- Which feminist core element are you implementing?
- How do you apply a gender-transformative approach, intersectionality, human rights-based approaches, and/or a post-colonial perspective?
- Why is the approach successful?

Objectives and Scope

This paper identifies criteria for a successful implementation of (selected) feminist core elements and addresses the central question: How can we successfully implement these feminist core elements in our projects? Given the diverse and complex settings in which we operate, it is crucial to understand the specific context and the specific elements that contribute to changes.

Framework and Methodology

To illustrate the successful application of feminist core elements, we have analysed and evaluated projects throughout all sectors and regions that have applied at least one – and in many cases several – feminist core elements.

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Examples were selected based on geographical diversity, fragile and non-fragile contexts, as well as a mix of GE1 and GE2 projects.¹

Based on the experiences and concrete lessons learnt of the examples, the paper introduces criteria that guide our future projects when seeking to successfully implement feminist core elements. Where possible, the paper examines in more details the specific challenges in fragile contexts. In addition, the importance of dealing with and reacting to conservative backlashes and anti-gender movements in many partner countries is also addressed.

2 Implementing Feminist Core Elements

In the frame of the 3 Rs of the FDP – strengthening rights, ensuring equal access to resources, and promoting equal representation – the feminist core elements constitute the central qualitative element achieving the goals outlined in the strategy to foster gender equality and empowerment across diverse contexts.² This chapter illustrates our conceptual understanding of selected feminist core elements³: gender-transformative approaches (GTA), intersectionality (IS), human rights-based approaches (HRBA), and the postcolonial perspective (PP), including in the sense of partner orientation and the inclusion of local knowledge and local civil society (CS).⁴

None of these elements can be implemented on its own; they are all interconnected. For example, Germany and most partner countries in development cooperation have committed themselves to respect, protect and fulfil their respective human rights obligations. These obligations constitute

the basis for our HRBA and are complemented by GTA to specifically address issues of gender-based discrimination and power imbalances, including multiple (intersectional) forms of discrimination. A post-colonial perspective is required to understand the historical development of power imbalances and critically reflect on the role of actors from the Global North in relation to the Global South while strengthening gender equality. These approaches are not hierarchical but complementary and have one unifying purpose: They all help to distribute power and resources more equitably and to achieve the sustainable development goals.

2.1 Our concept(s) of the Feminist Core Elements GTA, HRBA and Intersectionality

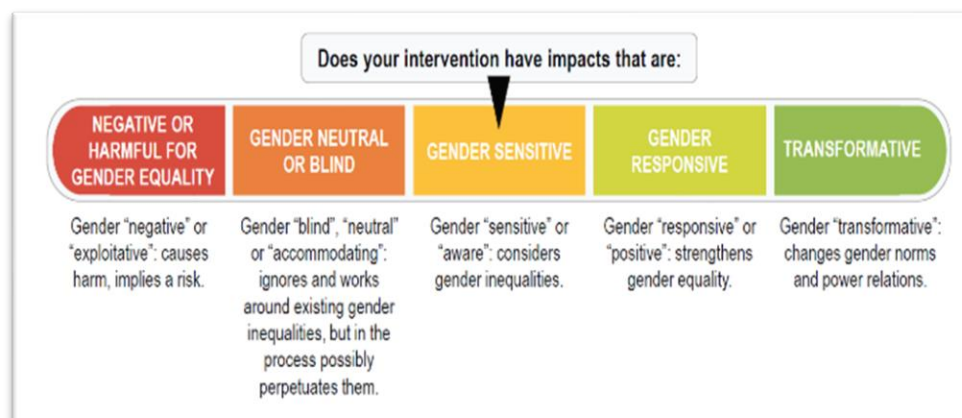
We are guided by the understanding of feminist core elements as explained in BMZ's Strategy on FDP and its third GAP. In the past year(s) GIZ, across all departments, invested into elaborating a solid basis of guidance and orientation, as well as different tools to help colleagues in implementing feminist core elements wherever possible.

Gender-Transformative Approaches (GTA)

To strengthen gender equality, GTA aim at changing social norms, role attributions, as well as unequal power relations and structures in a lasting way. With GTA, we address the root causes, unequal social norms and practices, discriminatory attitudes and structural power imbalances that are based on gender.

How do we apply a GTA in practice?

In the frame of preparing a gender analysis – which is an integral part of standards for project planning at GIZ – GTA are applied by fundamentally questioning and deconstructing gender-specific roles and unequal power



² The 3 R are central to BMZ's FDP as outlined in the Feminist Development Policy (2023).

³ BMZ has defined the core elements in the Feminist Development Policy (2023).

⁴ We analyse these elements in light of our role as implementation agency, presenting good practices examples and experiences that cover the range of approaches in our portfolio in different contexts including fragile and non-fragile contexts. The examples used are provided in the annex.

relations in the specific context. The differentiation between gender-sensitive, -responsive and -transformative approaches along the 'Gender Equality Continuum' (see chart above) is key in planning and implementation of projects to ensure a realistic level of ambition is applied. A GTA requires measures to address various dimensions for sustainable change complementarily, i.e. the individual, interpersonal, cultural and the structural or sectoral level. To assess the level and potential of GTA, the FMB also developed a GTA Self-Assessment Tool.

Intersectionality (IS) – Our concept

An intersectional perspective sheds light on how gender interacts with other aspects of identity, e.g. disabilities, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, age, geography, income, and poverty. Gender norms, in combination with additional discriminating factors that largely vary depending on the context, can create multiple and new layers of discrimination on individuals and group(s). The fact that in almost all societies the most marginalised people are affected by multiple disadvantages creates the structural nature of intersectionality. For example, UN Development Program's (UNDP) data from 16 countries show that women and girls living in rural areas and in poverty and belonging to ethnic minorities are among the most frequently left behind in terms of education, child mortality and development. To us, an intersectional perspective is essential for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its leading principle of Leave No One Behind (LNOB).

How do we apply intersectionality in practice?

At GIZ, we apply an intersectional approach by thoroughly analysing the needs of specific target groups and identifying patterns of vulnerability. We include all levels from meta to micro to understand also structural layers of discrimination. This analysis informs the design of our projects. In practice, this means that we target specific needs and interests of particular groups of persons and advise our partners to work on positively changing the patterns to overcome multiple discrimination.

⁵ BMZ's feminist development policy aspires to pursue a post-colonial and anti-racist approach. It describes this approach as a "(learning) process, which involves critical reflection on issues of power, (that) starts with the recognition that colonial continuities and racist thinking are still present in German development cooperation today" (BMZ 2023).

Human rights-based approach (HRBA) – Our concept

Human rights are the universal basis for a life in dignity and freedom. They are a guiding framework and cross-cutting task of German development policy and therefore guide all GIZ actions. From a human rights perspective, we view the "target groups" of development cooperation as rights holders and state partner institutions as duty bearers. The systematic application of human rights principles, which include participation and empowerment, non-discrimination, equal opportunities as well as transparency and accountability, contributes to good governance in partner countries and increased sustainability of the impact of our projects.

How do we apply a HRBA in practice?

Based on national, regional and international legal obligations in partner countries, we support our state partners (duty bearers) to better know their target groups and their needs when implementing the specific obligations, often depending on the sector and context, and we empower the target groups (rights holders) to exercise their rights within the project's scope. The human rights principles of accountability, equality/non-discrimination and participation are the backbone of the HRBA and can be found in many of GIZ's projects.

2.2 Applying a Post-colonial Perspective in Feminist Development Policies⁵

Post-colonialism refers to diverse academic and political perspectives that take a substantive look at the ongoing consequences of colonialism.⁶ Whereas the post-colonial movement addresses complex questions far beyond the scope of this paper, one important point is shared with feminist approaches: the critical examination of continued economic, political, and

⁶ Colonial continuities and racist thinking patterns persist, reinforcing power imbalances through institutionalized discriminatory structures, as noted in the BMZ's feminist development policy.



socio-cultural inequalities and the questions of how to structurally change and overcome these in the future.

A post-colonial perspective – in this context as part of feminist development policies – requires a critical reflection process in development cooperation. Working with partners (partner orientation), involving (local) feminist civil society and utilising local knowledge are relevant elements in planning and implementing our projects.

The power-critical and postcolonial perspective of feminist development policies demands power-sensitive approaches when developing cooperative strategies. This principle of power-sensitivity throughout all action is systematically reflected in our Capacity Works cooperation model, which we developed a decade ago as the foundation of our work. Capacity Works and its success factors are designed as an open system, adaptable and applicable to different contexts. This model is particularly being utilised to apply the success factor of cooperation to include feminist principles into partnerships. One of the key aspects lies e.g. in the identification and involvement of relevant actors. With our cooperation model we reflect on various interests and attitudes towards a project's objective. Several tools are available and applied as our standard, such as the actors' landscape, activity profile and various instruments of analyses to include feminist principles and core elements.

On this basis we intensified our activities to further shape our cooperative strategies towards power-sensitivity. More recent examples are initiatives on partner orientation as well as the utilisation of local knowledge and engaging with local civil society:

➤ **Partner orientation**

- Engaging with partners through “Triangular Cooperation”: GIZ supports South-South cooperation through triangular cooperation. For example, in the Regional Fund for Triangular Cooperation with partners in Latin America and the Caribbean, German contributions cover about 40% of the total project costs, while other partners contribute 60%. Recognizing

these contributions strengthens the sense of ownership in the joint projects as collective efforts. At the same time, the transfer of knowledge and learning on gender equality between partners in regional or global projects can serve as a source for mutual inspiration. Altogether, this example offers a post-colonial approach by emphasising the partnership and mutual knowledge exchange with partners from the Global South.

- As part of its currently ongoing corporate strategic evaluation on partner alignment (“*USE-Partnerschaften*”), GIZ is going to provide a shared learning and reflection space, where our fundamental principle of “partner orientation” will be critically examined. It focuses on the implementation with our partners based on respect and fairness, assuring that projects are agreed and planned with partners, as well as the utilisation of local knowledge systems.⁷ Possible entry points are a systematic view on instruments with which these principles are being applied, e.g. government negotiations, Minutes of Understanding after appraisal missions, implementation agreements and transparency in funding. Furthermore, most countries have adopted strategies on how to promote gender equality, which constitutes a relevant strategic entry point to align with partners and to support their own reform agendas with implementing a feminist approach in international cooperation.
- The GIZ internal project (*Eigenmaßnahme*) “Shaping Joint Endeavours: International Cooperation in Times of Postcolonial Change” creates space to reflect and discuss postcolonialism and colonial continuities in German international cooperation. It seeks to develop approaches and methods based on participation, self-determination, and transparency particularly with partners and civil society from the Global South. The project aims at overcoming colonial continuities and making development cooperation more equitable and impactful for sustainable global development.

➤ **Including local knowledge and engaging with local CS⁸**

- The Global Project “Feminism in Action for Structural Transformation (FAST)” is designed as a pioneering project to put Germany's feminist

⁷ This is also represented in **GIZ's corporate strategy**, which states in its third strategic objective on systemic partnerships: “We will continue to develop our close relationships with partners on the ground by working with them to find the best solutions and by helping our

partner countries to be even more effective in putting across their positions in international debates.”

⁸ “Local” has a relative meaning depending on the positionality and understanding of the respective actor; here relating to the smaller administrative or community units.

core elements into action, demonstrating that feminist approaches can drive transformative change in global development. FAST applies them in all project stages and at various levels embedding them structurally as well as technically across projects and partnerships with governments and civil society in the four partner countries Armenia, Colombia, Rwanda and Tunisia. A post-colonial perspective is increasingly applied in project conceptualisation and co-creative planning processes, already during the development of FAST. The project prioritises the perspectives and expertise of local stakeholders, working alongside them to tailor approaches that are context-sensitive and sustainable.

- The GIZ internal project "Local Feminist Perspectives as Levers for Transformation in Partner Countries (Lokafem)" engages closely with German and local civil society and academia identifying culturally relevant feminist perspectives and strategies enhancing gender equality. This approach fosters context-sensitive solutions by grounding interventions in locally driven narratives and critically reflects on our own position while respecting diverse "local" interpretations of feminism(s).
- The recently started regional project "Society.Equality.Africa – the Transformation (SEA-T)" aims at strengthening local and regional civil society actors in the feminist transformation in Africa. To achieve this, the project awards funding to established Afro-feminist organisations (intermediaries), which in turn support smaller local CSOs (grassroots). This creates a broad network of organisations that work together on a gender-equitable and inclusive transformation. Applying a post-colonial approach, the project respects the right of initiative of Afro-feminist civil society and supports organisations in setting their own priorities and planning activities for a gender-equitable and inclusive transformation. The project also improves the availability of gender data and evidence, based on the projects and initiatives supported by the funding. Ultimately, civil society actors are empowered to strengthen their advocacy efforts based on solid evidence, thereby the credibility and legitimacy of their concerns are enhanced.

To develop further a post-colonial perspective through a feminist lens in our projects, we recommend:

- To strengthen inclusive, participatory processes that empower marginalized groups and ensure their central role in decision-making, for example, by (i) reflecting on prevalent power dynamics and colonial continuities in our partner countries and within GIZ (project) teams, (ii) addressing colonial legacies in project design and during implementation, and (iii) supporting local capacities based on local knowledge systems and solutions.
- To continue to collect experiences of a post-colonial implementation and to critically reflect on good practices to further embed them in our processes and approaches. Already, trainings on diversity have become mandatory for GIZ's leadership and include reflections and awareness raising on a post-colonial perspective.⁹

2.3 Our Experiences in Implementing Feminist Core Elements

This chapter showcases our synthesised experiences in implementing the feminist core elements in GIZ's current portfolio. The showcasing of experiences is arranged according to the six GAP thematic areas.¹⁰ The conclusions derived from selected projects and programs across regions and sectors are listed in the Annex.

i) Peace and Inclusive Societies

Promoting gender equality in peacebuilding requires holistic approaches that combine three elements: individual empowerment, institutional capacity building, and community dialogue. It is crucial to address entrenched patriarchal norms and stereotypes through culturally sensitive, intersectional strategies. Collaboration with diverse stakeholders, including state actors, civil society, and marginalized groups, ensures inclusivity and amplifies impact.

These approaches have successfully increased women's and marginalized groups' participation in peace processes, reduced gender-based barriers,

⁹ In addition, several staff-initiated processes ("*Mitarbeiter*innen-Initiativen*") are contributing to organisational change processes: GIZ.postcolonial is a striving GIZ staff network with over 1800 members including the Diversity Academy. Further staff initiatives are the Rainbow Network and the Cultural Diversity Initiative.

¹⁰ The key thematic areas of the GAP III are (1) Peace and inclusive societies, (2) Gender-based violence, (3) Health, sexual and reproductive health and rights, (4) Economic and social empowerment, participation and access to decent work, (5) Just transition, and (6) Food and nutrition security, agriculture and rural development.

and promoted social cohesion. Long-term change is facilitated by challenging gender stereotypes and fostering gender-transformative norms change within communities and institutions. Our projects in Iraq, Colombia, and the South Caucasus demonstrate the value of localized, context-sensitive interventions and the importance of integrating gender-responsive approaches in peacebuilding.

ii) Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

We see positive results in tackling GBV that challenge deeply rooted societal norms through multi-stakeholder engagement. When men and boys are involved as allies to address multiple forms of discrimination a broader societal buy-in can be created. Ideally, a whole-of-society approach that engages governments, civil society, and traditional leaders needs to be fostered to produce synergies for sustained change in reducing GBV.

Significant progress has been made in shifting societal attitudes, reducing GBV prevalence, and promoting non-violent conflict resolution. Through projects like the PfP II in Southern Africa we can see widespread shifts in attitudes and reduced GBV. These shifts result from inclusive partnerships that work towards creating more cohesive communities and empowering marginalized groups.

iii) Health, Sexual, and Reproductive Health and Rights

Our experiences show that behavioural change in areas like FGM and sexual and reproductive health is most effective when grounded in dialogue and reflection. Through the intergenerational dialogue that offers safe spaces for discussions mutual understanding of gender norms and harmful practices among community members are created. These provide the ground for shifts in collective attitudes and greater societal transformation. Collaboration with local influencers such as religious and traditional leaders is key to ensure cultural alignment.

In our projects we see measurable reductions in harmful practices, greater awareness of sexual and reproductive rights, and enhanced empowerment of women and girls in the communities.

iv) Economic and Social Empowerment, Participation and Access to Decent Work

Gender equality in economic participation often requires challenging traditional gender roles and addressing structural barriers. Through our

projects we provide tailored capacity-building, access to finance, and support the development of gender-responsive, inclusive policies that enable women to thrive in traditionally male-dominated industries. We see that applying intersectional approaches are vital to address compounded vulnerabilities, in addition to gender, particularly disability, and poor socio-economic status. Examples of our projects supporting women's economic empowerment in Africa, Bangladesh, and Egypt reveal critical pathways to empower women economically and socially. The approaches in these projects have not only improved individual livelihoods but also driven broader societal change by redefining gender norms in workplaces and communities. Furthermore, women's economic participation contributes to reducing poverty and can help increase social cohesion.

v) Just Transition

Projects in the field of Just Transition require inclusive approaches that combine social and environmental aspects. For example, in the environmental and sanitation sectors initiatives can be gender-transformative when they foster women's participation and take local knowledge into account. Particularly, recognising women's key roles in resource management can boost positive effects on environmental protection. Our projects show that taking women's very practical needs into account, such as menstrual hygiene and access to safe sanitation, enables their participation in socio-economic opportunities and fosters dignity for women and girls.

Programs like "Sanitation for Millions" and the biodiversity-focused BFP III in Ethiopia highlight the transformative potential of gender-inclusive approaches in environmental and sanitation sectors. These initiatives have increased women's access to resources, created more equitable care systems, and positioned women as key contributors to sustainable development. Period poverty reduction and enhanced sanitation access have further contributed to educational and economic opportunities.

vi) Food and Nutrition Security, Agriculture and Rural Development

Through our projects we have experienced the power of digital innovations and entrepreneurship for women in agriculture and food systems. We are supporting women to join in entrepreneurial innovation processes, e.g. in women-led start-ups, and are fostering networks of women leaders to create pathways for gender-transformative impact.

Through projects such as the SAIS project across Africa we have been able to increase the incomes and economic resilience of women in agriculture through innovative and improved food systems. Once empowered, female entrepreneurs are continuing to challenge traditional norms, paving the way for greater gender equality in rural economies.

In summary, applying feminist core elements can produce transformative effects across the portfolio. Core lessons include the necessity of intersectional approaches, the value of multi-stakeholder engagement including cooperation with civil society and the importance of challenging harmful norms when possible. These experiences offer scalable insights for global application.

2.4 Dealing with Anti-Feminist Backlash

Resistance to feminism is nothing new. The anti-feminist backlash is directed against the understanding of gender as a social concept, against the rights of women and LGBTIQ+ people, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and against CS active in this area. While the specifics of these movements vary by country and by region, the overarching narratives are often strikingly similar.¹¹ They vilify feminism, call for a rollback of women's rights, and depict gender equality – sometimes termed “gender ideology” or “genderism” – as a threat to inherent human values, family principles, divine designs, and cultural norms.

In affected partner countries and regions with feminist or gender backlashes, the framework conditions for implementing feminist elements in our projects are very challenging, as a recent sector-wide analysis on the implementation of feminist development policy in relevant governance projects in the MENA-region found¹².

The analysis along the 3 Rs shows that improving women's access to resources and representation, can represent a pragmatic approach. Advancing women's rights remains oftentimes challenging due to restrictive legal frameworks (e.g. heritage and family laws) and gaps in legal enforcement.

The conservative socio-political context, e.g. in the MENA region, limits entry points for gender equality initiatives and poses a high risk of backlash from anti-gender movements. While many projects incorporate gender-responsive approaches to enhance public services for all genders, we understand that few directly address harmful social norms with comprehensive gender-transformative strategies. Instead, most projects focus on indirect, gradual shifts in societal attitudes.

In such contexts, the modes of implementation need to be adapted, sometimes additional projects need to be taken or efforts reframed to contextualise feminist elements within the respective cultural frameworks. In these efforts, the *do-no-harm* principle should be strictly observed with respect to our target groups and our (national) employees to prevent potential psychosocial and security risks.

From our assessments and experiences in addressing anti-feminist backlash, conducting regular risk analyses to anticipate and mitigate the risks of backlash are crucial. Feminist approaches, particularly GTA, need to be adapted flexibly according to the political climates and local contexts. It is of paramount importance to develop politically and culturally sensitive

While many projects operate in anti-feminist environments, the project “Support for Human Rights, Gender Equality, and CS” (“S(HE) project”) in Ghana shows an example that employs the feminist core principles of HRBA, GTA and intersectionality exactly to address the country's slow advance for gender equality. It counters anti-gender movements by **strengthening key institutions like the Ghanaian Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice** to build models on gender equality and child rights, allowing them to train decentralized agencies and challenge harmful traditional norms, such as traditional “witch camps” in Northern Ghana. Additionally, the project **empowers grassroots CSOs with capacity building, funding, and intersectional approaches** to dismantle power structures and gender roles, ensuring that marginalized populations receive targeted support and protection services. Also, harvesting **local knowledge in combination with international expertise** has proven to be a key factor in analysing and successfully engaging with the local actors.

¹¹ GIZ (2023), Implementing Germany's Feminist Development Policy in the MENA region. A Starter Kit.

¹² See GIZ (2024), Review of the Implementation of Germany's Feminist Development Policy: Experiences, Lessons and Learnings from Go-MENA Projects.

communication strategies including acceptable language (framing) where scepticism or resistance is expected.

3 Context-sensitive Criteria for Successful Implementation of Feminist Core Elements

In general, GIZ applies a tailor-made approach which considers the specific framework conditions in each context and aims at the greatest possible impact. However, despite this very context-oriented and tailor-made mode of operation, we can – from the examples given above – establish certain criteria and learnings for action that are **scalable and generalisable** for the successful and effective application of feminist core elements.

These criteria are, on the one hand, criteria regarding the application of feminist core elements in the implementation of our projects (3.1) and, on the other hand, criteria which refer to our standards and processes at GIZ more generally (3.2). The presented criteria are also aligned with GIZ's new gender strategy, which sets the course for the organization on how to further promote gender equality and equal opportunities.

Fragility, conflict, and violence have become common conditions in countries where we operate. Approximately two-thirds of GIZ's partner countries are affected by fragility today. One third of GIZ's commissions is even being implemented in acute crises with high levels of violence escalation. This has an immense effect on women, girls and other marginalised groups and challenges the application and implementation of feminist core elements. Wherever applicable and suited, criteria specifically for fragile and conflict settings are highlighted.

3.1 Criteria for qualitative implementation of Feminist Core Elements

i. Feminist core elements are broadly mainstreamed in policy documents.

- To implement feminist core elements, we need to apply a multi-stakeholder approach, involving actors from across all sectors, and **look for a broad political consensus**. For example, involving several ministries from different sectors and importantly, not only the ministries of women's affairs and gender equality is crucial. Specifically, gender-based inequalities of (unpaid) care work can be addressed across a variety of different sectors as these present structural barriers for gender equality.

- **Integrating gender into broader social or economic reform agendas**, for example education, health, or economic development, has shown to be an effective method.
- **Aligning** the implementation of core feminist elements **with critical community interests** and presenting feminist approaches as part of the solution to everyday problems, such as division of care work, increased generation of family income, etc. has proven important for success.
- Gender-transformative, human rights based and intersectional policies are key for reforms in our partner countries, and should be, wherever possible, supported by activities from partners supported by our projects. The objective is **to enable partners across all sectors** to implement and or revise policies, by-laws, and/or laws that tackle discriminatory practices and protect gender equality.
- **Social mapping** enables partners to understand the needs of the target group, to take informed and evidence-based decisions, and to anticipate the expected and potentially unexpected impacts, e.g. via regulatory gender-impact assessment.

ii. Feminist core elements are addressed in the political dialogue.

- Introducing feminist core elements already in the **political dialogue** and governmental negotiations is fundamental for our implementation under the frame of the FDP. It is vital to use context-sensitive language that aligns with the national and local priorities of our partners. **Transparency and alignment** with the partners' priorities and demands, while maintaining open and equal discussions, proved essential for mutual understanding.
- The framework of the **3 Rs** has oftentimes served as an effective instrument in building a strategic and comprehensive framework to promote gender equality. Supporting political partners in concretely highlighting specific gender equality changes helped them to build a strong business case.
- Especially in fragile and conflictive settings:
 - Rather than focusing on the national level, where entry points for feminist approaches could be limited and/or challenging, implementation strategies should be adapted to **local contexts** to ensure effective implementation.

- The need for increased flexibility in project implementation, as partner priorities and the stakeholder landscape might change, should be acknowledged in political dialogue.
- Key **findings** from gender and context analyses (**GA and ICPA**) including risks related to inequalities and discrimination as well as potentials for enhancing gender equality **should inform political dialogue**.

iii. **Partnerships with like-minded allies at all levels and across all sectors are established.**

- Building **trustful partnerships** with key actors, including CS, governments, and the private sector, is key to support political reform agendas on gender equality in our partner countries.
- The overall objective of each project guides the selection of our implementation partners: Some objectives require a close collaboration with state partners, however others with CS and private sector actors, and many with all of them. **GIZ's role as facilitator** between various stakeholders can strengthen relationships and establish cooperation modes between different actors. Promoting dialogue between state and non-state stakeholders on equal terms has proven to be crucial in several projects across the portfolio.
- **Local partners** contribute to effective and strong partnerships. Wherever possible and sensible, their involvement, from planning and implementation to evaluation, should be considered.
- **Like-minded allies** among national and international organisations, such as UN Women and UNFPA as well as international organisations renowned for working on gender equality in development and international cooperation, can amplify the impact through collaborative approaches and joint actions.
- **Regional and global projects** have demonstrated the advantage of flexible partner selection across countries, allowing them to respond sensitively to partner needs and leverage opportunities to achieve gender equality impacts. This flexibility, particularly in global projects that do not require political partners, also facilitates cross-regional exchange of ideas and practices, further supporting gender-transformative change.
- Establishing national committees, such as for the prevention and response to GBV or for women's political **representation**, has proven to be an effective structural approach to challenge gender norms.

iv. **(Feminist) civil society is included in cooperation processes.**

- Working with feminist and civil society organisations supporting marginalised groups (e.g., elders, youth, LGBTIQ+, disabled, etc.), through **shared decision-making and power sharing** is key. This fosters stronger cooperation grounded in feminist principles, enhances ownership, and creates more sustainable results.
- Capacity development of feminist CS organizations is most effective when built on mutually agreed terms. Since feminist CS organisation often face rather instable and challenging framework conditions, we need to invest in **longer-term partnerships**.
- CSOs can build bridges between local communities and government, however they often need longer-term and **core funding** to ensure their autonomy; a need GIZ often cannot respond to due to the nature of the commissions. An assessment of potential alternative funding models is needed.
- Supporting **feminist movement building** and networking of women and women's organisations has proven essential for sustained progress, such as in production, commercialisation of products and value chain development, as well as for political representation.
- **Empowering youth**, especially young women, and youth with disabilities, has shown to be key to create agents of change in communities. The use of creative and participatory methods, particularly with youth, has proven successful in driving broader societal change.
- Bottom-up approaches can challenge traditional power structures, and our as well as our partners' positionality; and are important to apply a **post-colonial perspective**.
- Flexibility & transparency in adapting operational plans, alongside clear communication on budgets, deliverables, and timelines, are crucial for establishing trustful relationships and effective implementation.
- Especially in fragile and conflictive settings it is crucial:
 - To support CSOs and building strong alliances as **a link to the needs of local communities** and disadvantaged groups.
 - To support key actors who are visibly committed to women's rights according to their needs; with longer-term capacity development aimed at the securing the overall structures despite personnel changes, as well as the creation of **safe spaces** for improved networking and peer-to-peer learning.

v. Local expertise is used.

- **Local expertise** and knowledge, particularly from CS, is crucial to the success of many projects, as well as knowledge exchange with strategic cooperation partners.
- Involving **local stakeholders**, especially CS, in planning and implementation helps to integrate feminist principles across national, regional, and local levels.
- **Co-developing methods**, tools and products with local partners ensures their expertise is considered in a context-sensitive way and helps to shape priorities tailored to the needs of the target groups, like social mapping.
- Focusing on the local level helps to ensure that changes reach the target groups and can produce a visible impact. This requires considering both, **practical** (such as immediate resources or services) **and strategic** (aimed at long-term change in gender power relations) **needs** and interests of all genders within the target groups.

vi. Communication and narratives are adapted to the context.

- Using **nuanced language** and context-sensitive framing helps to adapt core feminist principles to local realities and to ensure broader acceptance for both, political dialogue, and implementation.
- Reflecting on **local narratives** has proven essential for aligning the application of core feminist elements with the cultural context (see also point v.).
- Applying **HRBA and/or “intersectionality” as a framing** can be more effective when discussions on “gender equality” are politically or culturally too sensitive, preventing potential pushback.
- Especially in fragile and conflictive settings it is:
 - Crucial to sensitively adapt narratives and communication to navigate in complex political landscapes.
 - Necessary to adapt the thematic focus, e.g., include or prioritise components aimed at economic empowerment, such as employment promotion and vocational training.

vii. Safe spaces are created, and cultural dialogue fostered.

- Fostering mutual understanding between GIZ and partners, even and especially in complex contexts with gender backlashes, and ensuring

stakeholder safety are key, as changing gender norms requires long-term societal solidarity and support.

- Facilitating respectful knowledge exchange on gender-based inequalities and discriminations and their negative societal impacts, often helped to drive awareness and engagement of participants.
- Tailoring dialogues to local cultural and social contexts, and the support to change processes within traditional norms and values, especially by **involving community and religious leaders, elders, and traditional decision-makers**, proved highly effective.
- Especially in fragile and conflictive settings, it is important to:
 - Provide and maintain **safe spaces** for discussion, exchange, and orientation to challenge gender norms, particularly masculinity norms.
 - Focus on the support for vulnerable populations, including women and marginalized groups and on youth, aiming to engage and empower young people in their respective regions.
 - **Integrate** Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (**MHPSS**) to address the psychological well-being of the populations they serve.

3.2 Criteria for Applying Feminist Core Elements in GIZ Standards and Processes

i. A context-appropriate framing is applied in our standards and processes.

- New GE2 projects which require specific and explicit gender focused objectives and indicators may be perceived as imposing “foreign” ideas, especially in countries with strong gender backlashes. **GTA** and other feminist core elements **can be easily integrated into GE1 projects**.
- We learned that using culturally acceptable terms instead of “feminism”, “gender”, “CEDAW”, or “LGBTIQ” is important for wider acceptance. Reframing discussions with terms like “fairness”, “justice”, “family integrity”, “community well-being” helps adapt messages to specific cultural contexts.
- It has proven helpful to clarify that FDP embraces a range of approaches beyond Western ideologies and that an essential part of FDP is to draw on **local feminist perspectives** for a shared narrative (see also point 3.1, vi.).

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- Engaging in a **pragmatic dialogue** with our partners, silent diplomacy, and mutual respect rooted in cultural understanding strengthens relationships (see also point 3.1, i.).
 - Positioning feminism as a lens to interpret power dynamics and promote fairness, justice, and social inclusion resonates in several contexts.
 - Reflecting and **addressing colonial legacies already during planning** processes, in project design and implementation remains key for successful project design and implementation.
 - In all cases, especially in cases with a gender backlash and fragile settings, it is crucial to apply the **do-no-harm principle** and to ensure gender equality policies are culturally sensitive.
- ii. **Gender data is used in the project cycle.**
- Our project-specific gender analyses and IPCA are a good basis to address gender inequalities and power asymmetries in our projects. **GA and IPCA** are used as standard instruments at the project level before, during, and – in case of fragility – even after implementation of the project.
 - We encourage the use of **portfolio-wide gender analyses** to identify strategic entry points and leverage interventions at the portfolio, country, or cluster level, in line with FDP.
 - Gender data and evidence are necessary for informed planning and implementation of our projects. The efficient **use of digital tools is key**.
 - Developing evidence-based narratives for various target groups to build convincing cases for gender equality.
- iii. **Gender competence and resources are provided.**
- **Comprehensive internal trainings** to ensure gender competence throughout the company are available at GIZ, they are also essential for building knowledge, gender competence and methodological skills required to apply feminist core criteria.
 - It is **important to reflect on our own power dynamics** and colonial continuities systematically and critically, starting from within GIZ.
 - **Training at the leadership level**, such as for country or programme directors, has been key to strengthen political will within GIZ and commitment by GIZ's leadership; engaging GIZ leadership to champion gender equality and provide necessary resources to gender focal points is crucial.
- Especially in fragile and conflictive settings it is vital to:
 - Conduct **regular risk assessments** on the framework to implement feminist core elements, and
 - Provide for **staff care**, particularly for national employees given the potential psychosocial and security risks.
- iv. **Monitoring, evaluation, and learning.**
- We have seen that learning within GIZ is encouraged by a power-critical culture of openness, where **mistakes are learning opportunities**, and knowledge sharing is actively encouraged; those formats support GIZ's own ambition as a learning organisation.
 - Together with partners it is important to recognise that answers and solutions cannot always be presented easily but that **facilitating knowledge exchange** by connecting stakeholders and knowledge holders is an important element of our work.
 - **Developing indicators** and an M&E system is crucial for tracking and evaluating the application of feminist principles and their impacts.
 - Incorporating **project-based learning** cycles help share, scale, and refine successful feminist approaches, based on findings and feedback: e.g. qualitative indicators, storytelling, local knowledge.
 - Harvesting insights from projects and partners has enhanced our **organisational learning** on the implementation and impacts of feminist core elements in practice.

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5 Imprint

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6 Annex: List of projects

The project examples listed below provide the main sources for the experiences presented and analysed in the concept paper. A wider number of additional project examples discussed during the development process of this concept paper can be provided.

For GIZ, gender equality has for many years been an important mainstreaming topic. Besides projects with gender equality as a main objective (gender marker GE2), which in numbers have more than doubled to now 94 projects, the vast majority of projects incorporate gender equality as a significant objective (gender marker GE1) and with improved quality. The following project examples showcase good practices across the entire GIZ portfolio covering all regions, from GIZ's Africa, APLAK and EMZ departments as well as from GloBe. The examples are arranged according to the GAP III key thematic areas. Each project example particularly emphasises one or several feminist core elements in their implementation. Even though these illustrated examples operate in their specific contexts, the projects provide general and scalable learnings. This is the case not only because they are successful in their local settings but also because they demonstrate adaptable approaches, methods or mechanisms that can be adjusted to different cultural, social, and political contexts. The learnings from these projects and recent portfolio-wide analyses form the basis for the synthesised experiences in chapter 2.3 and the success criteria in chapter 3.

i. Peace and Inclusive Societies

- ✓ **Building individual and institutional capacities to strengthening women's participation in the WPS agenda in Iraq (HRBA, CS, GTA)**
Within an increasingly challenging political and socio-cultural context, the project "Strengthening the participation of women in the process of peace and reconstruction (SPACE)" aims to enhance women's equal participation through a comprehensive approach: It builds individual and institutional capacities, promotes dialogue, between state and non-state actors, and raises awareness on the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda. Collaborating with religious leaders, activists, CS, and

elected representatives, the project strengthens state services for survivors of GBV and runs public campaigns with women-led CSO to challenge gender stereotypes. It improves women's participation in peace processes and enhances the support for disadvantaged women, especially Yazidi women, through economic and psychosocial assistance. By addressing patriarchal structures and stereotypes in context-sensitive ways, the project aims at creating gender-transformative effects in the long run.

- ✓ **Promoting equal, just and diverse peace in Colombia (GTA, HRBA, CS, IS)**
The project "Strengthening equality and participation to promote peace in Colombia (Paz Diversa)", applies a GTA to support the implementation of the Colombian Peace Agreement of 2016, focusing on women and marginalised groups. The Colombian government is supported in implementing agreed inclusive and gender-responsive measures, e.g., improving the framework conditions for an inclusive peace process, increasing participation of women and people with diverse sexual orientation and gender identities, and in ensuring more resources are provided. By challenging traditional gender roles and strengthening the 3 Rs, the project ensures their active participation in the peace process. It promotes rural reform and the implementation of the WPS-agenda, while using an intersectional lens to address multiple forms of discrimination and human rights violations. Women's rights and human rights principles stand at the core of the project's concept, and an intersectional perspective is being applied, considering multiple forms and causes of discrimination, such as gender, ethnicity, disability, and age.
- ✓ **Promoting comprehensive socio-economic participation addressing both practical and strategic needs of marginalised, displaced groups in South Caucasus (GTA, HRBA, CS, IS)**
The project on "Economic and social participation of vulnerable displaced persons and local populations in the South Caucasus (EPIC)" is aiming at holistic societal integration of displaced and conflict-affected women in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. It promotes the participation and empowerment of women and young persons and involves persons with disabilities (PwD). It applies a GTA as it initiates change processes

through capacity building with state and non-state actors on various administrative levels, while addressing the needs of the displaced persons and empowering them through self-organised projects at community level.

The project also assumes an intersectional lens by addressing different needs of women, girls, men, boys of various age groups from displaced and local communities. It supports state and non-state actors in improving their services for vulnerable population groups, e.g., by drawing up a national integration strategy (Armenia) (IS, HR), improving career guidance for students (Azerbaijan) (IS, GTA) and improving accessibility of public transport to meet the needs of women, families and PwD (Georgia) (IS). Social and economic participation build up on each other and contribute to social cohesion. Therefore, the project promotes community-based initiatives, focussing on women and youth. A variety of micro-projects on the topics of gender equity, inclusion and conflict-sensitivity has been carried out. The purpose was to improve participants' awareness and potential for change in relation to social norms and practices. Among others, these micro-projects facilitated the set-up of a women-led social enterprise (Azerbaijan) (GTA, PP), the re-organisation of public space based on the needs of the inhabitants (Georgia) (IS, PP) and a cross-border cultural exchange among Armenians and Iranians (Armenia) (CS, PP). The project facilitates dialogue between state and non-state stakeholders, vulnerable displaced and the local population.

✓ **Enabling local communities through intersectional and evidence-based social services in the Western Balkans (IS, HRBA, CS)¹³**

The "Social Inclusion of Disadvantaged Groups (SoRI)" project aims at improving social rights for vulnerable groups in the Western Balkans by using social mapping, an LNOB-based methodology, to conduct an intersectional analysis of vulnerabilities of marginalised groups (gender, age, disabilities, ethnicity, etc.). Local stakeholders, i.e. decision-makers from local governance bodies as well representatives from CS identify, develop, and plan strategies to ensure rights and access to social

services for all. By applying a HRBA, the project ensures that stakeholders recognize and uphold the economic, social, and cultural rights of marginalized citizens, leading to more inclusive and effective decision-making with the participation of CS.

ii. **Gender-Based Violence**

✓ **Using multi-stakeholder approaches and addressing the root causes of gender-based violence (GBV) in Southern Africa (GTA, CS, IS, HRBA)**

The regional project "Partnerships for Prevention of Gender-Based Violence in Southern Africa (PfP II)" follows a whole-of-society approach to address GBV on a broad scale. PfP II supports cooperation between government, the private sector and CS to establish multi-stakeholder partnerships. By engaging a wide range of stakeholders, including the media, religious and traditional leaders, and youth, deeply entrenched discriminatory gender norms and attitudes underlying gender-based violence (GBV) are challenged and changed. Thus, the approach aims at contributing to gender-transformative change. Multiple discrimination is addressed, and men and boys are actively engaged. Social and political participation of all genders is promoted, and more cooperative and non-violent forms of conflict resolution are promoted, leading to more inclusive and cohesive development. By addressing different levels of discrimination, especially promoting LGBTIQ+ students, it also applies a strong intersectional lens. Furthermore, a HRBA is applied by empowering the target group and supporting political participation.

¹³ The focus on "social protection systems" of SoRI aligns with the priority of the GAP of "peace and inclusive societies" through activities enhancing local social services, community-based approaches, and implementation through local organizations. It could also

be categorised under the fourth GAP priority of "Economic and social empowerment, participation and access to decent work," given the inclusion of socio-economic activities within the social protection approach.

iii. Health, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

✓ Using the Generation Dialogue to fight female genital mutilation (FGM) at the Horn of Africa (GTA, HRBA, IS, CS)¹⁴

In close cooperation with CS actors, the “Regional Project to prevent the female genital mutilation (RP-FGM) at the Horn of Africa” applies the Generation Dialogue, a methodology for GTA with which deeply rooted gender norms and stereotypes that reproduce inequalities are reflected - in a safe space. Religious actors and traditional community leaders are included as change agents. Role plays, peer-to-peer formats and listening approaches are used to contribute to changing participants’ awareness. The methodology supports a process of reflection on individual attitudes and collective behaviour patterns and enhances the understanding and solidarity between participants from different generations within one community. By bringing about lasting change in attitudes and behaviour on the individual and collective level, the approach can contribute to gender-transformative effects and to a reduction, and ultimately abolition, of FGM among targeted communities. The project also applies a HRBA as it empowers stakeholders to respect and protect girls’ and women’s human rights, particularly in marginalised, often remote communities.

iv. Economic and Social Empowerment, Participation and Access to Decent Work

✓ Challenging traditional gender roles to unlock women’s economic empowerment in green industries on the African continent (GTA, HRBA)

The regional project “Employment promotion for women for the green transformation in Africa (WE4D)” focusses on empowering women by using GTA and HRBA to challenge traditional gender roles and improve women’s access to economic opportunities. It provides tailored support for female entrepreneurs through business development, skills training, and financial access, promoting gender diversity and inclusive business models. The initiative aims to enhance women’s participation in

traditionally male-dominated sectors - from green industries to agriculture - by fostering leadership, promoting inclusive policies, and encouraging women-led innovation (GTA). By addressing gender norms and increasing representation, the projects drive economic growth and social change and contributes to the fulfilment of women’s social and economic right (HRBA).

✓ Empowering young women and youth with disabilities as agents of change in Egypt (GTA, HRBA, IS, CS)

The “Equal Opportunities and Social Development in Egypt (EOSD)” project applies intersectional, inclusive, human-rights-based, and gender-transformative approaches to enhance the social participation of young Egyptians, with a focus on young women and youth with disabilities. It fosters capacity building for both state and non-state actors, following the principle “*Nothing For Us Without Us*”, thereby promoting inclusive policy development and implementation. The project incorporates creative methods like theatre, digital arts, and story-telling techniques and integrates gender equality into trainings for young men. It also collaborates with religious leaders to reshape pre-marital counselling programmes. By supporting local CSOs, the project promotes social inclusion, gender equality, and the reduction of gender-based violence, particularly in rural areas, while challenging social norms and empowering youth as agents of change.

✓ Sector-wide approaches for economic empowerment of internally displaced women in Bangladesh (GTA, HRBA, IS)

The project “Integrate” (Strengthening Capacities for Urban Integration of Internally Displaced Persons and Supporting Host Communities) in Bangladesh, improves the economic empowerment of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and host communities living in informal urban settlements. The project applies a GTA, sector-wide approach that targets women and people with disabilities. By offering entrepreneurship development services in cooperation with state and non-state actors, supporting gender-responsive and inclusive social services, and

¹⁴ Due to its focus on preventing FGM and supporting women’s and girls’ self-determination about their sexual and reproductive rights and health, the RP-FGM can be categorised

under both, the second GAP priority of “GBV”, and the third priority of “Health, sexual and reproductive health and rights”.

partnering with private companies to create gender-responsive, inclusive training and employment opportunities, the approach enables women to take on new roles in the labour market. Additionally, its HRBA ensures that women and other marginalised groups can exercise their human rights to safe and healthy working conditions, driving gender-transformative change and improving livelihoods of the target groups.

✓ **Female leadership in local governments in Cambodia (GTA)**

In the project “Improved Service Delivery for Citizens in Cambodia (ISD)”, women are empowered to play an active part in their local governments and to ensure that high-quality services are delivered to the citizens. Women receive training and capacity building measures to serve in local councils and to develop their leadership skills to work in decision-making positions in the provincial, district and city administrations and in district councils. Women are supported to gain control over resources and provide enhanced public services. They are particularly well suited to relate to the challenges of women and their needs in service delivery. This approach has strong gender-transformative potential driving structural change in both, women’s role, and the quality of local service delivery.

✓ **Supporting gender-equitable care systems in Latin America (GTA, IS)**

The regional project with UN-ECLAC/CEPAL focuses on advancing women’s economic autonomy by developing gender-sensitive, intersectional, human rights-based, and territorial care systems and policies in Member States (“Care-Economy with UN-ECLAC”). Through technical support provided by ECLAC, the project builds government capacity to design and implement gender-equitable care systems. By promoting gender-disaggregated statistics and knowledge exchange, decision-makers gain evidence-based insights to improve care systems at both, national and sub-national levels. The project fosters intra- and interregional dialogues among experts and government representatives from Latin America, the Caribbean, and Europe, sharing promising practices. The goal is to create formal jobs in the care economy, reduce unpaid care work for women, and promote gender-equitable distribution of care work among genders, sectors, and public and private institutions.

v. Just Transition

✓ **Enhancing the right to safe sanitation and hygiene across the globe (HRBA, GTA)**

The global program “Sanitation for Millions” builds female-friendly and inclusive sanitary facilities at schools, healthcare facilities, and faith-based institutions, trains local professionals to operate and maintain them, and promotes safe hygiene practices through targeted campaigns and knowledge transfer. The improved access to safe sanitation and hygiene with a particular focus on marginalised groups has considerable effects on people’s lives. The project uses a HRBA and addresses particularly marginalised groups, including women and girls, to ensure that their sanitation needs are met, such as menstrual hygiene, separate facilities for women and men with a door or other security measures. In addition, girls and women participate in educational or production activities without monthly, period-based interruptions. Increased knowledge and improved economic opportunities can lead to decreased numbers of women and girls that are affected by period poverty. This not only increases equality, but also their self-esteem for the rest of their lives.

✓ **Valuing local knowledge through enhanced participation and visibility of women in protecting biodiversity in Ethiopia (HRBA, GTA, CS, PP)**

In the project “Conservation and Sustainable Use of Natural Resources; Biodiversity (BFP III)” in Ethiopia, agreements on the management and utilization for protected areas and their riparian zones are crucial for safeguarding biodiversity. These agreements must address the specific needs of women and young people. Therefore, mechanisms for local participation and the exercise of consultation rights are designed with a HRBA, primarily focussing on women as they rely on forest resources to provide for their families but are often excluded from decision-making due to traditional gender roles. By supporting the inclusive participation of the local population in protected area management, e.g., through consultations in accordance with the Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) approach, the project directly contributes to strengthening the rights, representation, and resources of women (the 3 Rs). This approach has gender-transformative potential as women’s participation is not only

strengthened but they assume new roles and responsibilities. Close involvement of local actors allows listening and valuing their local knowledge of forest management for the protection of biodiversity.

✓ **Financial and technical support through the “Women’s Energy Fund” in Bolivia’s energy sector (GTA, IS)**

The global program “Energizing Development (EnDev)” established the Women’s Energy Fund (FEM) in Bolivia to support undertakings led by low-income peasant women utilizing renewable energy sources. This initiative promotes gender equality by providing women with tailored training in technical, business, and commercial management, empowering them to make decisions about their productive activities and form collaborative networks. FEM disrupts patriarchal structures in rural areas by providing women access to traditionally male-dominated economic sectors, thereby fostering their economic independence. This gender-transformative approach has been recognized and replicated in other regions of the EnDev program.

vi. Food and Nutrition Security, Agriculture and Rural Development

✓ **Changing Africa’s agricultural sector by empowering female start-up founders (GTA, HRBA)**

The global project “Scaling digital agriculture innovations through start-ups (SAIS)” operating in 21 countries across the African continent, including the EMZ region, aims to increase incomes through digital innovations by African start-ups. Female founders and leaders receive tailored support to enhance personal and entrepreneurial skills, while the “Female Leader Circle” provides a platform for sharing challenges and solutions. A Female Founder Award highlights promising women-led businesses, and a Women’s Academy (under development) offers training for female graduates to become start-up founders. The goal is to make women-led start-ups in AgTech, FoodTech, and ClimateTech investable for growth. The initiative challenges gender norms and fosters a gender-transformative approach.