Establishing a Gender Coordination Mechanism al Country Level

A Gender Coordination Mechanism/Group at country level, involving a broad range of donors and stakeholders, helps to keep gender issues on the agenda of the political and policy dialogue, to avoid duplication of efforts, share knowledge on good practice and create synergy among different initiatives and plan cooperation on gender equality.

What is the purpose of this tool?

This tool provides some tips on role and functioning of gender coordination mechanisms/groups at country level.

When should this tool be used?

In many countries donor coordination groups exist at sector level (e.g. health, education, HIV/AIDS, water etc.), and this should include gender equality.

The EU has also embarked upon a policy whereby the EU and its member countries define together which donor works in which sector, leading to more effectiveness and improved results[1]. Therefore efforts should be made to actively engage gender coordination groups and the "EU lead donor" donor on gender equality (see the example from Senegal below) in cooperation programming.

Donor coordination groups may or may not be directly part of broader gender thematic or coordination mechanisms involving the UN, the government and donors. If a gender coordination mechanism/group does not exist yet, the best moment to start is in the phase of programming, when a new cycle of operations is launched. Once these mechanisms are established, they should be maintained and strengthened throughout the entire cycle of operations, in order to monitor how cooperation programmes, including budget support, contribute to the progress towards the achievement of Sustainable Develoment Goals, and particularly SDG 5.

Who can use this tool?

Gender advisors or Focal Points in development agencies or Heads of Cooperation willing to ensure effectiveness and harmonisation of donor support to gender equality in a specific country.

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1   The EU has started joint programming in more than 20 countries and is planning to implement it in about 40 partner countries, thereby covering more than 60 % of country programmable aid managed by EU institutions. http://europa.eu/pol/pdf/flipbook/en/development_cooperation_en.pdf

Who should be involved in Gender Coordination Groups?

Gender Coordination Mechanism/Group and/or Network at country level need to involve strategic institutional actors, through their Gender Focal Persons or gender experts and advisors:

• EU Member States, other bilateral donors, including sectoral coordination groups

• The UN – Agencies normally have established Gender Thematic Groups

• Multilateral donor organisations with gender policy

• National women's machinery or governmental departments with strong gender equality policy

• Gender departments of regional organisations

• Civil society organisations, groups and networks advocating for gender equality and women's rights

• Representatives of research institutions with records on gender studies

• Gender experts in the country or region

• A representative of the National Planning Authority, Department or Office

How to create a Gender Coordination Mechanism/Group

• Assess existing structures, thematic groups, their effectiveness, strengths and weaknesses.

• Map donor gender activities to track the appropriate lead donors per area and sector, and to identify the gender focal persons and gender sensitive staff.

• Coordinate with primary stakeholders, UN Women, National Women Machinery and NGOs.

• Convene a participative workshop for strategic actors (government, CSOs and donors). Ideally, invite people to a workshop that could include the launch of a Country Gender Profile; the adoption of a gender policy, a gender action plan by the national government; or the start of a new cycle of multi-annual cooperation.

• Agree upon a working agenda, annual schedule of meetings, and division of tasks among the participants of the gender coordination mechanism.

What can a Gender Coordination Mechanism/Group do?

• Find common ground for policy dialogue in the international commitments to gender equality and women's rights, as ratified by the national government and donor governments.

• Support the implementation of international and national commitments to gender equality, either directly or by including a gender perspective in all programmes and at all levels.

• Support the preparation of a joint country gender profile, asses and agree on priority areas to be addressed in multi-annual support programmes.

• Discuss gender-related performance targets and indicators for all critical areas of concern, ensuring that all donor programmes have at least one gender indicator.

- Design a strategy to include gender-sensitive indicators and gender equality targets in Performance Assessment Frameworks for Budget Support.

- Invite Gender Focal Persons or gender-sensitive sector experts to share experiences.

- Identify needs for gender capacity building among institutions participating in the gender coordination group, and earmark funds for related capacity development.

- Facilitate lunch meetings or seminars on important gender issues in the country.

- Monitor the dialogue to keep track of the gender impact of budget support, and launch an annual gender analysis of the budget support for wide dissemination.

- Support and attend national events related to the promotion of women's rights in the country, like International Women's day (8 of March), and the International Day to end Violence Against Women (25 November).

- Coordinate activities in order to avoid duplication of efforts, distribute tasks among members, including representation on behalf of the Gender Coordination Group in national events.

- Ensure that other coordination or technical tables active in key sectors of cooperation can count on specific gender expertise. This may require hiring of experts or setting up of technical tables on gender in a specific policy technical domain.

Example: Burkina Faso

The Donor Coordination Group on Gender functions efficiently and regularly, and has demonstrated results. Members support each other to integrate gender into their own agencies as well as those of civil society and government. Examples of results include:

- The Group contributed to the adoption of the gender quota law for parliamentarians, through supporting civil society lobbying;

- The group coaches the Minister of Women's Promotion and Gender;

- A common gender fund was set up which finances activities related to gender skills development as well as support to civil society;

- The group shares experiences and good practices, on how to better support gender equality in Burkina Faso. Member also give mutual support to survive the common frustrations of being gender focal points;

- The group comprises individuals with different technical backgrounds: reports from sectoral ministries can be scrutinised by a member with the relevant sectoral knowledge;

- Avoid double financing of the same projects and provide follow up support if needed. For example, when the Netherlands withdrew, Denmark was able to take on some of their gender-related projects;

- Support to the Ministry of Women, through working with them to develop a gender policy.

Source: Adapted from EC DG Development and Cooperation (DEVCO). 2015. Evaluation of EU Support to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Partner Countries: Final Report. Volume 3: Country Notes.

Example: Guatemala

La "Mesa de Género" (gender table) is a mechanism created by the EU Delegation to Guatemala in order to improve donor coordination on gender issues. It reunites donors, civil society and governmental institutions. The Gender Table mechanism is used for gender mainstreaming in projects. It offers possibilities for gender capacity development through gender trainings, information sharing, exchange of best practices, the development of manuals and tools for gender mainstreaming in the cycle of operations, and for designing policy documents.

Source: EC DG Development and Cooperation (DEVCO) (2010), Newsletter EU Initiatives on Gender Equality in Development. Thematic issues: EU strategy on Gender and Aid Effectiveness.

Example: Coordination between EU Delegations, Member States and other donors

The evaluation of EU support to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Partner Countries undertaken in 2015 concludes that there has been an increase in the number of gender coordination groups at the country level. This has improved donors- capacity to speak with one voice on gender equality objectives (EU Commission, 2015). The self-reported evidence from the EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) annual reports shows that in 2011, EUDs and MSs play an active role, often a lead role, in country-level gender coordination groups in 23 countries, rising to 36 countries in 2012.

Source: EC DG Development and Cooperation (DEVCO) (2015). Evaluation of EU Support to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Partner Countries: Final Report. Volume 1: Main Report.

References

- European Commission (2014). *International cooperation and development.*
- DG DEVCO. (2015). *Evaluation of EU Support to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Partner Countries: Final Report.*
- DG DEVCO. (2010). *Newsletter EU Initiatives on Gender Equality in Development. Thematic issues: EU strategy on Gender and Aid Effectiveness.*

Further Reading

An ample collection of resources, guidelines and briefs on gender in development cooperation can be found in the Knowledge Bank. The Knowledge Bank consists of an annotated bibliography containing over 500 recent titles on a variety of topics related to gender mainstreaming.

- EU Commission, 2012, EU guidelines for EU Delegations and Embassies on gender-equality indicators and sex-disaggregated indicators in budget support (Draft Guidelines).
- UNIFEM, 2005, Resource Guide for Gender Theme Groups.
- DG ECHO, 2013, Thematic Policy Document n° 6, Gender: Different Needs, Adapted Assistance.
- German Development Institute, 2014, Scenarios for increased EU donor coordination: what is the right level of aid coordination?
- UN Women, 2009, How do donors collectively address gender issues in joint coordination mechanisms at country level?
- OECD DAC GENDERNET, 2008, Gender Equality, Women's Empowerment and The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness: Issues Brief 2. Finding the Entry Points.