



Programme Document for Gender Equality for Development 2024-2028

1.0 Introduction

This programme document sets out the overall framework for the knowledge programme Gender Equality for Development (GEfD) for the 2024-2028 period, based on the Norwegian action plan for women's rights and gender equality in foreign and development policy (2023-2030). The purpose of the programme document is to clarify the objectives, focus areas, strategic direction, partners, organisation and implementation of Gender Equality for Development.

Target group:

- Public institutions in selected countries
- Norwegian ministries, agencies and institutions that contribute to Gender Equality for Development through the Knowledge Bank
- The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (UD), foreign service missions and Norad
- Multilateral organisations and civil society organisations

1.1 Background, description of the issue

On a global basis, there are major differences in women's rights and opportunities to participate in society, value creation and working life, among other things. The Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated inequalities between women and men and led to a decline in a number of rights such as health, education and work.

Societies characterised by a lack of gender equality; with restrictive gender norms; an absence of rights for women; and structural barriers to equality are missing out on valuable resources and skills. This prevents sustainable development at political, financial, family and local community levels.ⁱ The [Global Gender Gap Report 2023 | World Economic Forum \(weforum.org\)](https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2023/) points out that the lack of gender equality in the labour market is a growing challenge. At the same time the participation of women in the labour market has decreased somewhat in recent years.

In many countries, including Norway, the public sector is an important employer. Despite slightly increased representation of women in the public sector in recent years, the UNDP notes that it remains a major challenge, especially at the management level.ⁱⁱ

The national authorities have a special responsibility to ensure that gender equality and non-discrimination are embedded in legislation and must adopt policies to promote gender equality and equal opportunities in e.g. education, health and in the labour force. This responsibility entails facilitating dialogue and inclusive processes to promote equality and change public sector to ensure that the adopted legislation is *de facto* implemented. Authorities have a responsibility to ensure improved framework conditions for women's economic participation, including for reducing the gender gap in the labour market.

In all countries, gender equality requires a combination of initiatives that presuppose capacity, legislation, political commitment, as well as investments in human development and support from the general population. Although gender equality challenges have common features across countries, political decisions on how to prioritise between gender equality initiatives in the respective countries, must be informed by available national statistics and data. The OECD notes the importance of cooperating across all public institutions.ⁱⁱⁱ

1.2 Norway's development policy priorities

Women's rights and gender equality are the main priorities in Norwegian foreign policy and in the Norwegian development policy. Gender Equality for Development cooperation requires a targeted effort^{iv}, cross-cutting consideration^v and an integral effort^{vi} in other thematic sectors. Gender Equality for Development must be viewed in the context of other Norwegian-funded gender equality initiatives, including by multilateral organisations, civil society programmes, in humanitarian situations, and both locally and internationally.

Gender Equality for Development was established in 2017 as one of the initiatives to implement the then-Norwegian government's action plan for women's rights and gender equality (2016-2020) and as part of the Knowledge Bank.

International conventions, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, international agreements, guidelines and the sustainable development goals commit countries to promote and protect women's rights and gender equality. The [action plan for women's rights and gender equality in Norwegian foreign and development policy \(2023-2030\)](#) sets out the overall framework and guidelines for work on gender equality in Norwegian development cooperation.

The action plan will help achieve the sustainable development goals and consists of five target areas: 1) Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), 2) gender-based violence and harmful practices, 3) economic rights, 4) political rights and 5) gender equality in initiatives relating to the climate, environment and food security. Gender Equality for Development will primarily support target areas 3 and 5 on equal economic rights and opportunities to participate in the labour market by integrating gender equality in other knowledge programmes such as Energy for development, Agriculture for development, Ocean for development and Fish for development.^{vii}

The GEfD programme contributes to the sustainable development goals by strengthening public institutions' capacity and expertise in mobilising and managing national resources for sustainable development by strengthening gender equality. The direct target group are partner countries' public institutions, but the work to promote women's rights and gender equality involves a large number of international, national and local stakeholders, amongst which women's organisations, civil society, academia and private sector stakeholders constitute important change agents.

Gender Equality for Development will, in line with the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Prop. 1 S (2023-2024),^{viii} continue to be part of the work to integrate gender equality considerations in other knowledge programmes.

1.3 Norway's added value in the sector

Gender equality policy is one of the building blocks that make up the foundations of the Norwegian welfare state. Public investments in gender equality over time and across societal areas and management levels have contributed to increased welfare and economic growth in Norway. Political goals of having everyone in work (arbeidslinjen)^{ix} since the 1950s, combined with a strong women's movement in society, have resulted in more girls and women taking higher education and a very high proportion of Norwegian women entering and remaining in the work force.

Norwegian gender equality and non-discrimination policies have a legal basis in international human rights obligations, the Norwegian constitution and other national legislation. Gender equality policies are produced across sectors and include flexible schemes in working life to ensure that family life can be combined with work life. Family policy, childcare reform, universal income protection schemes for different phases of life (child benefits, parental benefits, sickness benefits, disability benefits and

retirement pension) and public investments in services such as education and healthcare constitute an important infrastructure for the population, as it also contributes to increased gender equality. While these gender equality policies have contributed to economic growth in Norway, they have also helped strengthen the position of women and girls in society as a whole.

In Norway, gender equality is a public responsibility, and the gender perspective must be integrated in the Norwegian public administration at all levels, enshrined in laws and subject to a dedicated supervisory body^x. This has led to the need for a knowledge base, data, statistics and analyses of the challenges and needs among the different groups of girls and boys, women and men.

The demand for Norwegian gender equality experience is often linked to the fact that Norway has largely succeeded in facilitating a high female labour force participation, at approximately 47 %^{xi} in 2023, which has been instrumental to economic growth, societal development and value creation. Cooperation between authorities, civil society, working life parties and research has played a crucial role in achieving the high proportion of women in the work force in Norway.

1.4 Gender equality cooperation with public institutions in other countries

Gender Equality for Development involves technical cooperation and knowledge-sharing with national authorities and public institutions in partner countries in areas in which Norway has relevant and in-demand experience and expertise. The programme is about long-term knowledge cooperation.

2.0 Objectives and focus areas

Gender Equality for Development (GEfD) contributes to sustainable development goals 5 (gender equality), 1 (no poverty), 10 (reduced inequalities) and 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions).

Long-term objective (10-15 years)

The overarching objective for GEfD is for **national authorities to formulate and implement policies that promote women's rights and opportunities to participate in the labour market and in the society.**

Medium-term objectives (5 years):

Relevant national public institutions will have strengthened expertise and capacity to

- **Draw up non-discriminatory legislation and improve framework conditions** in areas such as tax, labour market and family policy.
- **Use of research and statistics** in the design and implementation of policies that promote women's rights and opportunities to participate in the labour market and in the society.
- **Coordinate and ensure accountability across sectoral departments** to design and implement policies that promote women's rights and opportunities to participate in the labour market and in the society.
- **Involve relevant stakeholders within and outside the government system, such as civil society, working life parties^{xiii} and research communities**, in the design and implementation of policies that promote women's rights and opportunities to participate in the labour market and in the society.

2.1 Key focus areas and working methods:

GEfD's key focus areas are employment, work life and family policies, economic framework conditions and tax, statistics, research and strengthened data.

Emphasis is on transparency and accountability when it comes to the implementation of gender equality policies^{xiii} and the use of gender-disaggregated data and analysis.

The programme will contribute to the national authorities' work to strengthen women's rights and gender equality in the following ways:

- **Long-term institutional cooperation in country programmes** for knowledge-sharing and capacity-building in public institutions.
- Sharing of knowledge and experience nationally and regionally through **coordination and networks** involving e.g. **civil society, multilateral and regional organisations and research communities**.
- Knowledge-sharing and capacity-building to integrate the gender perspective in other prioritised knowledge programmes **through specialist advice and targeted efforts**.

In close dialogue with relevant parties, Norad will continuously assess which working methods are best suited and which have the best effect for achieving the goals and bringing about change together.

3.0. Strategic direction and partners

Gender Equality for Development will primarily involve cooperation with public institutions to strengthen women's rights and gender equality at the national level. The integration of gender equality in other knowledge programmes in sectors such as energy, fishing, aquaculture and agriculture is part of this.

Cooperation at the national level to strengthen women's rights and gender equality

The purpose of national level cooperation is to enhance capacities in institutions responsible for designing, reforming and carrying out national gender equality policies. Traditionally, gender equality cooperation has been targeted towards women's organisations and gender equality ministries in partner countries. Even more relevant is cooperation with ministries with the overarching responsibility for national development, budgeting and planning processes, such as the ministries of finance and planning, whose policies lay the frame conditions for gender equality in working life and society. Cooperation with selected multilateral stakeholders and relevant institutions producing knowledge, such as statistics agencies and research communities, can help strengthen national authorities' responsibility for gender equality and to meet sector-specific gender equality needs.

Priority is given to low-income countries, primarily in sub-Saharan Africa, as 'eligible' for GEfD cooperation through country programmes. Middle-income countries facing policy reforms related to closing the gender gap in the workforce, cf. e.g. the green transition, and that can act as examples for other countries in the region/in sub-Saharan Africa and global forums can also be considered.

Gender Equality for Development will contribute to and preferably reinforce other gender equality and governance initiatives and will be coordinated with the Norwegian foreign mission services' bilateral initiatives to ensure that all efforts pull in the same direction at the national level. The direction of the programme will be aligned with other stakeholders that work to promote women's rights, education, decent work, technology, the green transition and innovation to increase women's employment.

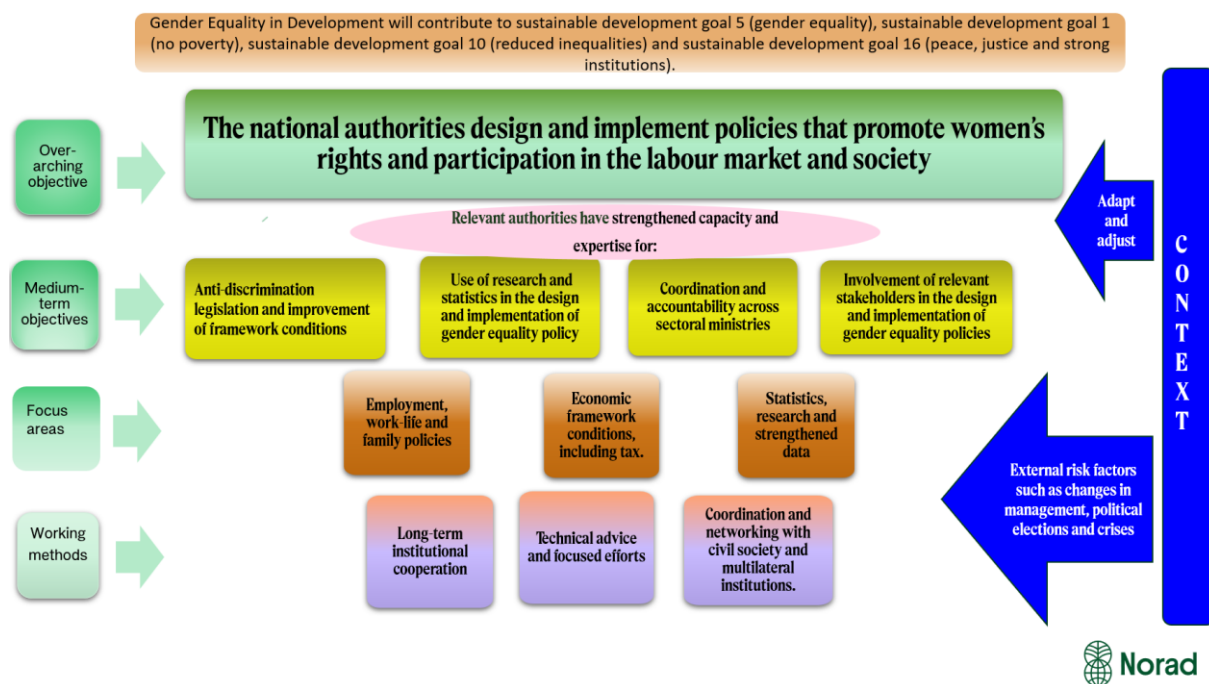
Integration of gender equality in other knowledge programmes

Knowledge programmes are long-term technical cooperation to strengthen expertise and capacity in public institutions in partner countries, with Norwegian public institutions as key partners. The action plan sets out requirements for other knowledge programmes to work to strengthen women's rights and integrate gender equality in their sectors.^{xiv} Strengthening gender equality in other knowledge programmes requires that the knowledge programme in question is responsible for achieving results. Strategic cooperation with other knowledge programmes requires the early involvement of GEfD during the planning phase to ensure that the gender perspective is considered in the problem statement and the design of objectives and activities. Cooperation may entail specific activities to underpin objectives, such as analyses, training, workshops and seminars. A certain level of gender equality expertise is required in the knowledge programmes to make this happen.

3.1 Change theory:

GEfD will draw on Norwegian gender equality experiences and expertise to strengthen women's economic rights and equal opportunities for participation in society and the labour market. This will be achieved through technical cooperation with overarching national authorities in partner countries and by supporting the integration of gender equality in other knowledge programmes. This requires cooperation between authorities, civil society, relevant multilateral organisations, the private sector and research and knowledge communities in various focus areas.

Figure. GEfD's objectives and focus areas



3.2 Partners

Key partners in GEfD include Norwegian government agencies, institutions and ministries. The Norwegian Ministry of Culture and Equality is responsible for coordinating national policy for gender equality and anti-discrimination. The Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir), with its expertise in knowledge management and cross-sectoral approaches to gender equality, is an important partner in the implementation of GEfD. Another important partner is Statistics Norway, with its experience in developing expertise among national statistics authorities for the use of gender-disaggregated data and in providing a knowledge base for gender equality

policies. Other Norwegian government agencies, institutions and ministries will be involved, depending on demand and needs in partner countries. In addition, different knowledge communities may provide additional specialist advice/cooperation if necessary/relevant.

Coordination and cooperation with other relevant knowledge communities such as multilateral organisations, academia and think tanks, higher education institutions, civil society organisations and the private sector will be considered on an ongoing basis, depending on needs and opportunities. Stakeholders may include UN Women and Norwegian aid recipients in relevant focus areas.

4.0. Organisation and implementation

4.1 Governance structure

A Technical coordination forum will be advisory and will conduct strategic discussions on behalf of the programme. The forum consists of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norad, government ministries and agencies that implement/deliver technical advice, as well as the foreign service missions in partner countries.

The coordination forum for Gender Equality for Development consists of the Norwegian Ministry of Culture and Equality, the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs, Statistics Norway, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Norad, but may be expanded if needed to include other relevant government agencies and knowledge programmes. The coordination forum ensures that technical cooperation is in line with overarching guidelines in Norwegian foreign and development policy and in accordance with and based on experiences from Norwegian gender equality policy. Norad acts as the secretariat of the coordination forum and is also responsible for the management of the programme.

4.2 Roles and responsibilities between key stakeholders

The overall distribution of roles and responsibilities:^{xv}

Institution	Roles and responsibilities
Institutions in partner countries	The roles and responsibilities of partner institutions are specified in agreements with the Norwegian partner and relevant authorities.
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Overall governance, primarily through overarching guidelines and agency management of Norad (objectives, country selection, etc.) Dialogue with other ministries.
Norad	Secretariat function for the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the management of the knowledge programmes. Design, partner selection and implementation of programmes. Budget allocation. Quality assurance. Coordination.
Norwegian government agencies and public sector institutions	Implementation of the technical cooperation, ensuring adequate resources, professional quality of deliveries, dialogue with and reporting to Norad.
Norwegian government ministries with sector responsibilities	Dialogue with the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding overarching priorities. Ensuring that participating subordinate agencies have the mandate and opportunity to allocate resources. May delegate the implementation of technical cooperation to subordinate agencies.

Norwegian service missions	Facilitate dialogue with the partner countries' authorities and other relevant partners, coordination with other gender equality initiatives funded by Norway in the same country.
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4.4. Knowledge and learning, performance management, cross-cutting considerations and reporting

The GEfD programme is developed with the flexibility to meet demand within the framework of Norwegian political guidelines. The programme is designed to make use of up-to-date and relevant experience, knowledge and expertise. Active dialogue and exchange of experience with relevant stakeholders will be accommodated for the purpose of an enhanced, shared understanding of challenges and opportunities. The following four cross-cutting issues are mandatory in all Norwegian development cooperation, and must be included in the risk assessment of GEfD:

- Human rights, with a particular focus on participation, accountability and non-discrimination
- Women's rights and gender equality
- Climate change and the environment
- Anti-corruption

Preparation

When preparing country programmes, Norad will, with contributions from the relevant sector government agencies, carry out an assessment of whether the prerequisites are in place for cooperation.

The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has the overall responsibility for Norwegian relations with foreign countries, which includes deciding on whether to enter bilateral cooperation with a partner country. Priorities for country cooperation are drawn up in dialogue with national authorities, in accordance with national plans and in dialogue with relevant stakeholders that will contribute technical expertise. The foreign service missions contribute to dialogue with the country's authorities and ensure that country cooperation is in demand, anchored in the country's national priorities and development plans, and contributes to dialogue and coordination with other Norwegian efforts and relevant donor efforts at the country level. Norad approves programme documents and enters into agreements with the partner government.

Implementation

The Norwegian implementing institutions must prepare country programme documents in dialogue with the partner institutions, carry out the agreed programme activities jointly with the relevant partner institutions, and report annual programme results to Norad.

Norad establishes country groups as needed for GEfD in the individual partner countries. In the country groups, information is shared about contributions from Norwegian and other partners, and discussions are held on coordination, priorities, challenges, resources, and synergies with other Norwegian and multilateral efforts.^{xvi}

Evaluation

Norad is responsible for evaluating goal attainment and compiling knowledge and experiences to improve efforts in the next period.

ⁱ The impact of low female participation in the economy is striking. Estimates from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) show that countries with low levels of female participation in the workforce can increase their gross domestic product (GDP) by up to 35% by closing the gender gap in the workplace.

ⁱⁱ UNDP Gender in Public Administration 2021 [Global Report on Gender Equality in Public Administration | United Nations Development Programme \(undp.org\)](#)

ⁱⁱⁱ Meaningful changes on the ground require a coordinated, competent and powerful whole-of-government commitment, and clear and effective mechanisms in place within and across government institutions to be able to translate public policies, programmes, services and budgets into concrete benefits for men and women. See [Gender-public-life-flyer.pdf \(oecd.org\)](#)

^{iv} When women's rights and gender equality are the main purposes of the initiative. For example, GEfD's institutional cooperation with MoGLSD to strengthen women's rights and gender equality in Uganda.

^v Women's rights and gender equality are a cross-cutting consideration, together with anti-corruption, the environment and human rights. The consideration of cross-cutting considerations is mandatory in aid management and must be communicated to all Norad partners. Organisations that receive support must consider whether there is a risk that the initiative could have unintended negative impacts on cross-cutting considerations, including human rights and gender equality. If such a risk is identified, risk-mitigating initiatives must be implemented and monitored.

^{vi} When the purpose is to integrate gender equality considerations in e.g. Fish in Development for Colombia to ensure that the diverse needs of women and men are mapped and form the basis for how the project is designed to meet different needs.

^{vii} Other focus areas may be considered as needed.

^{viii} In Prop 1 S (2023-2024), a new Chapter 161 *Education, research and public institutions* was added. The gender equality programme is included in a new section in Chapter 161.73 *Governance and public institutions* together with other knowledge programmes such as Digitalisation for development, Oil for development (phased out in 2024), Anti-corruption, Tax for development and Statistics and registry cooperation, and PFM.

^{ix} Arbeidslinjen is the Norwegian term for the political goal of having as many people as possible being able to provide for themselves through gainful employment.

^x [The Gender Equality and Discrimination Ombudsman](#) and [the Discrimination Board](#).

^{xi} [Labor force, female \(% of total labor force\) - Norway | Data \(worldbank.org\)](#)

^{xii} Employers, unions and government, referring to the Norwegian experience with tripartite collaboration..

^{xiii} Gender equality architecture, legislation, regulatory bodies, reporting obligations

^{xiv} [Action plan for women's rights and gender equality in Norway's foreign and development policy \(2023-2030\)](#), p. 32-33.

^{xv} The allocation of roles and responsibilities is based on roles and responsibilities as described for the Knowledge Bank.

^{xvi} This also identifies issues that must be raised with the technical cooperation forum or directly with the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for a decision.