

Nordic Development Fund



GENDER EQUALITY POLICY

**Adopted by the Board of Directors
on 24 November 2020
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Related documents

Gender Equality Guidelines

1 Introduction

The Nordic Development Fund (NDF or Fund) recognises the importance of gender equality¹ in delivering on its purpose. The negative impacts of climate change affect people differently depending on their gender. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by climate change. Gender equality and promoting women's empowerment is considered central for ensuring the effectiveness of climate finance activities. The Gender Equality Policy (Policy) spells out NDF's principles and commitments concerning gender equality, with the aim to ensure that gender equality is actively addressed in NDF's work and to enhance the outcomes and eventually the impact of NDF-supported activities.

The purpose of NDF is to advance Nordic leadership in addressing climate change and development challenges through financing, knowledge and partnerships. Together with strategic partners, NDF develops, launches and scales high-impact projects to support developing countries and the most vulnerable people affected by climate change. The Policy is aligned with this purpose, as well as with the Statutes of NDF, according to which NDF was established as an organisation to promote economic and social development². The Policy is informed by Strategy 2025 (Strategy)³ and supports its implementation. Gender equality considerations play a role in all three NDF principles set out in the Strategy: complement, co-create and convene.

Gender equality is at the core of the Nordic countries' development agendas. The Nordic countries have worked consistently for decades for equal rights of all individuals, regardless of their gender. Gender equality is considered as a goal in its own right by the Nordic countries as well as a driver of sustainable development and poverty reduction. NDF is fully committed to advance this common agenda by setting gender equality as a priority for the organisation. Further, the Policy supports the principles set out in relevant international agreements, ratified and adopted by the Nordic countries⁴.

2 Rationale

NDF acknowledges the links and co-benefits between all of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and it works holistically across them in addressing climate and development challenges. Gender equality is both a stand-alone goal (SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls), as well as a cross-cutting accelerator across all the SDGs. It is evident that sustainable development cannot be achieved without gender equality. Gender gaps prevail in several of the SDGs, leading to women often being marginalised from the possibilities for sustainable development. Women and girls are more likely to live in extreme poverty than men and boys⁵, significantly fewer women than men are landholders⁶, women and girls are responsible for water collection in most households without water access on premises⁷, and more girls than boys of primary-school age are out of school⁸.

¹ Please refer to Annex 1 for definitions on NDF's gender-specific terminology.

² NDF Agreement and Statutes (2011), available on NDF's website.

³ NDF Strategy 2025 (2020), available on NDF's website.

⁴ These international agreements include: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (1979), Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), ILO fundamental conventions.

⁵ UN Women (2019): Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals. The Gender Snapshot 2019; <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2019/progress-on-the-sdgs-the-gender-snapshot-2019-single-pages-en.pdf?la=en&vs=5813>

⁶ FAO (2018): The Gender Gap in Land Rights; <http://www.fao.org/3/I8796EN/i8796en.pdf>

⁷ WHO and UNICEF (2017): Progress on Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene 2017; <https://washdata.org/report/jmp-2017-report-final>

⁸ UN Women (2019): Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals. The gender snapshot 2019 (ibid).

Climate change is a multidimensional and cross-sectional issue. Combatting climate change (SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts) is strongly linked with the other SDGs, whereas the impacts of climate change are expected to hamper many dimensions of sustainable development, in particular for vulnerable communities. Gender equality is considered both a prerequisite and an accelerator for tackling climate change. One of the targets of SDG 13 is to promote mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management in least developed countries and small island developing states, including focusing on women, youth, and local and marginalised communities. Furthermore, the preamble of the Paris Agreement⁹ of the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC) highlights that gender equality and the empowerment of women should be respected, promoted and considered when taking action to address climate change. At the 25th Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC in 2019, the parties agreed on a gender action plan with the objective to advance knowledge and understanding of gender-responsive climate action. The UNFCCC invites all relevant public and private entities to “increase the gender-responsiveness of climate finance with a view to strengthening the capacity of women.”¹⁰

Culturally determined gender norms, roles and responsibilities, perceived gender stereotypes, regulatory frameworks, as well as micro- and macroeconomic factors all affect the capacities of individuals of different genders to cope with climate change. These include control over resources and assets, access to benefits, services and knowledge, and possibilities for participation and decision-making. These capacities are differentially distributed in terms of gender - in particular when combined with potential forms of disadvantage, such as class, ethnicity or disability. Women and girls are disproportionately vulnerable to the negative impacts of climate change as they often lack the resources, knowledge and decision-making tools needed for climate adaptation. Climate-related disasters are more likely to be fatal for women, affect negatively their health and increase the risk of gender-based violence. In rural areas, climate events such as drought increase workloads for all genders; however, women’s additional work adds to the already greater amount of labour and caring duties. On the other hand, men may face an increased amount of physically heavy tasks at farms or may have to migrate further away from home for wage labour, with a risk of being exploited.¹¹ Climate-related gender inequalities are further exacerbated in a context affected by conflict, political instability or an economic crisis.

Despite women’s higher levels of climate vulnerability, assigning them the role of victims undermines women as agents of change and their ability to contribute to sustainable development and combatting climate change. People of all genders possess skills and knowledge that can help address climate change more effectively.

All of these aspects have an impact on how climate change-related activities should be designed and implemented to ensure their effectiveness and sustainability. An assessment of how an activity can be beneficial to all genders is needed in order to ensure meaningful participation of people of different genders. Activities in which this issue has not been taken into account can have unintended negative consequences on gender equality. Gender impacts must be assessed in a broader perspective that includes structural causes for disadvantage, as well as intersecting social factors. Due to the existing gender inequalities and the disproportional climate vulnerability of women and girls, women’s empowerment plays a central role in effective climate change and development activities. This can be done through ensuring women’s opportunities for participation and decision-making, as well as providing women economic opportunities in terms of job creation and access, control and ownership of resources and assets.

⁹ UNFCCC (2015): Paris Agreement; <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/cop21/eng/10a01.pdf>

¹⁰ UNFCCC (2019): Enhanced Lima work programme on gender and its gender action plan; https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cp2019_L03E.pdf

¹¹ IPCC (2014): Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Part A: Global and Sectoral Aspects. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change; p. 808-809; https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/WGIIAR5-PartA_FINAL.pdf

3 Objective

The objective of the Gender Equality Policy is to ensure that gender equality implications in the context of climate change and development are systematically addressed and mainstreamed in the Fund's work, as well as measured in the Fund's results. Ultimately, this Policy supports NDF in its efforts towards effective and sustainable development and climate outcomes.

4 Principles

Gender equality is a matter of fundamental human rights and an important goal in itself. NDF acknowledges gender equality as a driver of sustainable development and an accelerator of the response to climate change.

NDF will aim to promote activities designed to achieve co-benefits between climate change, development and gender equality. All NDF-supported activities must be gender-responsive. This guideline means that the needs, priorities, power structures, status and relationships between genders are considered and gender gaps systematically addressed. Furthermore, NDF-supported activities shall strive to be gender-transformative. This means that they aim at transforming existing power dynamics, structures, stereotypes and systems, i.e., the underlying causes of gender inequalities. NDF will ensure that its activities do not aggravate existing gender inequalities or create new ones¹². This responsibility signifies that gender-related risks are identified and relevant safeguards to mitigate these risks are ensured.

NDF acknowledges the existing gender gaps and the marginalisation of women and girls in many aspects relating to climate change and development. Therefore, NDF-supported activities will strive to empower women and girls, in particular through reinforcing women's possibilities for participation and decision-making, as well as providing women economic opportunities. NDF considers that it is particularly important to assess gender gaps in combination with other social factors that might cause disadvantage, such as ethnicity, class or age (intersectionality). Cooperation and interrelations across genders is supported.

NDF's gender equality approach is results-oriented and applied across the portfolio. This approach entails that gender equality is considered in target-setting, as well as in monitoring and evaluation of progress in terms of outcomes. In addition, results, lessons learnt and best practices will be documented and used as part of NDF's knowledge management and advocacy activities, as well as for guiding the development of new NDF-supported activities.

5 Commitments

Gender Equality Guidelines (Guidelines) will support the implementation of the Gender Equality Policy. The Guidelines clarify how NDF will put into practice Policy, including roles and responsibilities within the Fund.

In its operations, NDF works through strategic partnerships. Through its global networks and the strategic partnerships, NDF seeks to advance and promote the gender equality agenda broadly amongst its partners.

NDF's commitments at the institutional and at the operational levels, respectively, are presented as follows.

¹² Aligned with the NDF Environmental & Social Policy and Guidelines, available on NDF's website.

Institutional level commitments:

- NDF staff will have sufficient knowledge and understanding of gender equality issues in order to successfully support gender mainstreaming throughout NDF-supported activities. Staff capacities will be further developed through training.
- NDF will ensure that the resources needed for implementing the Policy are available.
- NDF's results monitoring framework will be gender-responsive.
- Gender equality-related results, lessons learnt and best practices will be disseminated and utilised in NDF's knowledge management and advocacy work.
- NDF will ensure gender-inclusive language in all its communications.
- NDF will engage in a dialogue on gender equality topics with its partners, stakeholders, and in relevant networks and platforms.
- NDF will ensure gender neutral recruitment and job descriptions. A gender-inclusive work environment will be ensured through equal opportunities and benefits for all staff, regardless of gender. As spelled out in the Code of Conduct for Staff, the Fund seeks to promote a balanced diversity among the staff, equal treatment of all staff members and prevention of discrimination. Harassment, sexual exploitation or abuse, and bullying of any kind are unacceptable.

Operational level commitments:

- With the aim to ensure a gender-responsive approach and to strive towards a gender-transformative approach throughout NDF's portfolio, gender mainstreaming is required for all NDF-supported activities.
- As a central part of gender mainstreaming, a gender analysis¹³ will be required at the project preparation phase of all NDF-financed activities. Guided by the conclusions and recommendations of the gender analysis, relevant gender considerations will be incorporated to the project. These considerations will include relevant safeguards for mitigating potential negative impacts on gender equality.
- The gender analysis-based recommendations will be incorporated into the NDF-supported activities' monitoring frameworks through gender-disaggregated indicators and targets as relevant. Throughout the project cycle, the fulfilment of these targets will be monitored and evaluated.
- NDF will only finance activities with an OECD DAC¹⁴ gender equality policy marker 1 or 2.
- Documentation of results, lessons learnt and best practices of NDF-supported activities will incorporate gender equality considerations.
- The due diligence process on potential new partners of NDF will include an assessment of their approach and capacity to mainstream gender.

6 Governance and accountability

The Policy entails the following responsibilities within NDF.

The Board of Directors (Board) shall assess the appropriateness of the Policy and its alignment with the prevailing strategy and other relevant circumstances.

NDF's Managing Director (MD) shall have the overall responsibility to ensure the implementation of the Policy including sufficient resourcing. The Director, Quality Assurance and Reporting has the responsibility for the day-to-day monitoring and implementation activities of the Policy, including capacity of staff.

¹³ The gender analysis must include an assessment of intersectionality with relevant social factors, e.g. ethnicity, age, class.

¹⁴ More information: <https://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/dac-gender-equality-marker.htm>

As part of their work, NDF staff shall ensure that NDF-supported activities adhere to this Policy. The Quality Assurance and Reporting Department will provide more detailed guidance on implementation activities of the Policy.

Both NDF Management and staff are expected to liaise with relevant stakeholders and partners on issues relating to gender equality, as well as to participate in relevant networks on gender equality, in accordance with their roles within the organisation.

7 Policy review

As knowledge and recommended practices around gender issues constantly develop, this Policy will be regularly revised and updated as deemed relevant. NDF Management will periodically assess and recommend when a revision of the Policy and the Guidelines is relevant.

Annex 1: Definitions

These definitions build on information and definitions developed by United Nations, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), Global Environment Facility (GEF) and Oxford English Dictionary.

Gender. The socially constructed attributes and opportunities associated with being considered a specific gender. These are the roles, behaviours, activities, attributes and opportunities seen as appropriate for a specific gender in a society. Gender is therefore part of the broader socio-cultural context. This is opposed to sex, which is based on biology. Gender is considered a spectrum; a range of gender identities exist between and outside of the categories of male and female. Therefore, gender is non-binary.

Gender equality. Individuals of all genders have equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities. Gender equality does not mean that, for example, women and men will become the same, but that a person's rights, responsibilities and opportunities do not depend on their gender. It also implies that the interests, needs and priorities of all genders are taken into consideration, at the same time recognising the diversity of different groups of individuals of a spectrum of genders.

Gender stereotypes. Simplistic generalisations and ideas whereby specific genders, such as women or men, are assigned characteristics and roles determined and limited by their gender. Gender stereotyping can limit the development of the abilities of individuals, their educational and professional experiences as well as their opportunities in life. They generally result from and are the cause of engrained attitudes, values, norms and prejudices in a society.

Gender-responsive approach. The particular needs, priorities, power structures, norms, status and relationships between genders are recognised and adequately addressed in the design, implementation and evaluation of activities, such as projects and programs. The approach seeks to ensure that individuals of all genders are given equal opportunities to participate in and benefit from an activity, and promotes targeted measures to address inequalities. It may also include targeting/benefitting a specific gender to achieve the goals of the financed activity. This can include, for example, the promotion of women and girls' empowerment.

Gender-transformative approach. This approach goes beyond the gender-responsive approach. It aims to tackle the underlying social, political and economic structures that cause gender inequalities. Therefore, the objective is to transform harmful gender norms, roles, relations, power dynamics, structures and systems in order to promote gender equality.

Gender mainstreaming. The systematic consideration of the differences between the conditions, situations and needs of persons of a spectrum of genders in the operations of an organisation or the implementation of a project/program. The ultimate goal of gender mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality.

Gender analysis. A critical socio-economic examination of how differences in gender roles, activities, needs, opportunities and rights/entitlements affect persons of a spectrum of genders in certain situations or contexts. Gender analysis examines the relationships between different genders and their access to and control of resources, as well as the constraints they face relative to other genders.

Women's empowerment. Women and girls gaining power and control over their lives. To be empowered, these persons need to have equal rights and capabilities, equal access to resources and opportunities, as well as the agency to use these rights, capabilities, resources and opportunities to make strategic choices and decisions over their lives.

Intersectionality. The interconnected nature of social, socio-cultural or socio-economic categorisations such as gender, ethnicity, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identification and class as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping, accumulated and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

Gender-inclusive language. Using spoken and written language in a way that does not discriminate against any sex, gender or gender identity, and does not sustain or reinforce gender stereotypes.