



## MENA Gender Action Plan 2023-2026

### Advancing gender equality

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Girls playing, East Jerusalem, UNICEF, 2020



## Objectives & Reference Framework

The Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) promotes Gender Equality as part of Switzerland's broader commitments, including to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and specifically to SDG 5 on gender equality and SDG 10 on reducing inequalities. Switzerland is persuaded that supporting SDG 5 will be a catalyser to achieve other SDGs. SDC believes that if equality is fulfilled at all levels and for everyone, in all their diversities, then communities and countries will do better, because everyone can actively participate politically and economically, therefore contributing to prosperity, growth and stability. The full participation of women and girls in society is a precondition to fulfil the above. Hence, **women and girls' empowerment is an effective approach for poverty reduction, sustainable development and peace**. Despite SDC's efforts and some results in Gender Equality, investments are needed more than ever ([SDC Status Report on Gender Equality 2021](#)).

While the links between Gender Equality and peacebuilding, sustaining peace and Sustainable Development are widely acknowledged, this is **particularly relevant for the Middle and North Africa (MENA) region**. The latter stands out as the worst performing region according to the 2023 *Global Gender Gap Report (GGGR)* by the World Economic Forum (WEF) under multiple indicators and therefore the furthest from parity in the world. At the current rate of progress, full regional parity will be attained in 152 years. The MENA region scores particularly poor under the aspects of 'women's political empowerment' and 'economic participation'. Similar conclusions are present in the UN WOMEN [Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: Gender snapshot 2022](#) under all SDG targets. With 49% of the entire Arab World population being female (World Bank data, 2021), it is **crucial to invest on Gender Equality** in the region if we are to work towards meeting SDG targets and meet overall needs in the MENA in an inclusive manner.

This **Gender Action Plan (GAP)** is intended as a resource for the Swiss Cooperation Offices (SCOs)/ Embassies of the MENA region to strengthen commitment and effectiveness on Gender Equality. It is a continuation of efforts already made under the previous GAP for 2021- 2022 and aims at sustaining and consolidating them. It does not propose additional measures to be adopted, but rather collects **agreed upon and existing institutional requirements** for effectively and consistently bringing about Gender Equality. A series of detailed measures aim at systematising such requirements. It sets a specific focus on three areas which are considered crucial to accelerate Gender Equality: 1) Management & Processes, 2) Strategy & Operations and 3) Knowledge Management & Coordination. For each focus area, a set of objectives and sub-objectives are defined. Similarly to its previous version, the GAP does not require the same approach for all contexts under consideration. Accordingly, in the last column of the matrix, individual milestones can be set by the SCOs depending on the respective contexts. The motto stays "*towards the same goal, on individual paths*". In the same vein, the GAP has been **jointly elaborated by the Gender Focal Points (GFPs)** in the MENA region and consists of a common exercise for a shared Gender Equality regional outcome.

The **GAP is in line with existing policies and standards on Gender Equality at FDFA and SDC**. The initiatives taken under the GAP should therefore contribute to the main SDC's and FDFA's thematic priorities on Gender Equality, namely: women's protection against sexual and gender based violence, as well as women's economic participation and political empowerment.<sup>1</sup> The GAP is also in line with the current Swiss Message of International Cooperation 21-24 and the MENA strategy 21-24, which highlight the importance of promoting gender equality to build a more peaceful, inclusive and prosperous world. Gender equality is mentioned as a compulsory transversal theme in all interventions.

The MENA Section at HQ – newly created in the framework of the F4P process at SDC in 2022 – has **reaffirmed its commitment to gender equality as a strategic priority in the MENA region**. Therefore, specific human resources, programs and investments are dedicated to this priority.

<sup>1</sup> Gender Strategic Lines of SDC 2015-2018, FDFAs Strategy on Gender equality and Women's rights (2017).



## Implementation & Monitoring

The **management in the region is responsible for the oversight of the GAP**, for encouraging the contribution to the objectives/sub-objectives, for pinpointing needs and adjusting programmes accordingly when required. The management ensures that the SCO staff is willing, tasked and equipped to promote gender mainstreaming across the programmes.

Accordingly, objectives under the present GAP are designed in a way to foster **broad ownership** on Gender Equality at field and HQ levels.

The **Gender Focal Points' main responsibility is the building and sharing of knowledge on gender equality** with their colleagues within the SCOs and with their peers in the MENA region. Furthermore, they will support the HoCs during the evaluation of the GAP by collecting relevant data.

This **GAP will be monitored and evaluated in the framework of the annual reporting**. The results of the individual milestones will be handed in as an annex to the annual report.

The GFPs have agreed that objectives and sub-objectives of the present GAP require sustained efforts over a medium to long period of time. To this end, it is proposed to have this 2<sup>nd</sup> GAP last longer than the previous and 1<sup>st</sup> one, which initially covered 2021-2022. Hence, **the current GAP aims at covering 2023 until 2026**.



Objectives	Sub-objectives	Responsibility	Monitoring (Indicator)	Milestones
<b>1. MANAGEMENT &amp; PROCESSES</b>				
<b>1.1 Diagnosis of needs and appointment of a focal point</b>	Diagnosis of needs in gender in the office	HoC	- An analysis of needs in gender is conducted in the office, with clear establishment of needs and priorities.	<i>To be completed by the SCOs individually</i>
	Designation of a gender focal point	HoC	- A gender focal point is identified and appointed in each office with clear tasks and responsibilities	<i>Dito</i>
<b>1.2 All staff contribute to gender equality</b>	Collective objectives in MBOs on gender equality	HoC	Nr of MBOs with gender objectives	<i>Dito</i>
<b>1.3 Integration of gender equality in policy dialogues and advocacy efforts</b>	Promotion of Gender Equality through policy dialogue and institutional communication	HoC, in coord. with other WOGA actors, NPOs, communication officer, HQ	- Nr of policy dialogues including gender aspects (to be adapted depending on context); - Nr of bilateral meetings which include gender aspects - Nr of public communication initiatives mentioning GE	<i>Dito</i>
<b>1.4 Integration of PSEAH in offices (SCOs)</b>	All offices introduce PSEAH	HoC and all staff	- Each office is trained on PSEAH - A Focal Point for PSEAH is identified and designated within each office	<i>Dito</i>
<b>2. STRATEGY &amp; OPERATIONS</b>				



<b>2.1 Cooperation programmes contribute to gender equality</b> with a robust monitoring system	Explicit inclusion of gender perspectives in key PCM reporting milestones (MERV, AR).	HoC	Yes/no	<i>Dito</i>
	Systematic use of gender specific and gender sensitive indicators in all relevant PCM steps	HQ / HoC / NPOs	Systematic use of gender indicators (contextual, ARI/TRI) and other indicators (with disaggregation based on gender) in all PCM steps (coop. programs, portfolios / outcomes, projects), ensuring qualitative and quantitative disaggregated gender indicators (baselines & targets)	<i>Dito</i>
	Quality gender analyses, regular analyses regarding the integration of gender in program portfolios & identification of gender gaps in portfolio, including through backstopping support	HoC / NPOs and partners with possible support of external resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gender analyses systematically conducted to inform portfolio / programme / project planning</li> <li>- Partners are required to systematically conduct gender equality analyses in the framework of the interventions</li> </ul>	<i>Dito</i>
<b>2.2 Programmes and projects</b> contribute to gender equality	Commitments of projects to SDC's gender equality targets	HoC / NPOs / HQ	Projects account for gender principal (8% min.), gender significant (75% min.) and gender not targeted (max. 15%) as per SDC's targets. Overall gender specific should amount to min. 85% (significant and principal combined).	<i>Dito</i>
<b>2.3 Regional programs</b> in the MENA	The flagship regional gender programme (EMHRF) is moving forward and incorporating a protection/GBV component, making it a NEXUS programme	MENA Section / GFPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Additional credit with humanitarian funding is finalized;</li> <li>- Continuous monitoring of the program through regular exchanges (4 x year at least);</li> <li>- GFPs of the region are regularly updated and interact with EMHRF / its partners</li> </ul>	<i>N/A</i>
<b>3. KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT &amp; COORDINATION</b>				
<b>3.1 Enhancing knowledge</b> of methods on how to	Staff improves knowledge on methods on how to improve Gender Equality, based on a diagnosis of needs (objective 1.1)	Gender Focal Points (with	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Nr of trainings based on survey and assessments of needs and capacities</li> </ul>	<i>Dito</i>



improve Gender Equality		support of HQ when required)		
	Partners' gender mainstreaming capacity is supported if needed and gender dialogue is maintained (e.g. dialogue on gender, gender trainings, including PSEAH)	NPOs	- Visibility of gender in PCM documents / field visits is enhanced - Nr of training/position and number of participants (f/m)	<i>Dito</i>
3.2 <b>Knowledge</b> regarding gender equality <b>is shared</b> between the SCOs of the region	Gender Focal Points of the MENA region exchange on a regular basis (sharing of expertise and joint resolution of challenges).	Gender Focal Points	- GFP meetings MENA organized (every 2 months)- Nb of ad-hoc meetings GFP per needs	<i>Dito</i>
	A regional MENA Gender F2F is held with the participation of all MENA GFPs	Gender focal points	Regional F2F is held	<i>Dito</i>
3.3 <b>Coordination</b> with WOGA partners	Coordination with WOGA partners on gender efforts at country level, as well as at HQ	Gender focal points	Regular exchanges of information	<i>To adapt nationally, depending on configuration and set-up in the field</i>