

# FDFA Strategy on Gender equality and Women's rights



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra

Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA

# Foreword

## ‘More equality: more opportunities’

Gender equality, respect for women’s and girls’ rights, and the elimination of all forms of gender-based discrimination: these are fundamental values of Swiss society, firmly enshrined in our legal and constitutional framework. In fact, Switzerland considers gender equality essential to our social cohesion, economic strength and competitiveness, as well as to our political functioning.

This conviction is one that we as a country strive to promote internationally. We believe that gender equality and the promotion and protection of women’s and girls’ rights should play a role in all aspects of foreign policy as defined by constitutional mandate, notably economic development and the advancement of human rights, democracy and peace. Having already strengthened its engagement over the years, Switzerland now intends to reaffirm its commitment, drawing on its extensive experience and on the priorities set out in its *Foreign Policy Strategy 2016–2019*. Many opportunities and challenges still remain today.

The first *FDFA Strategy on Gender equality and Women’s rights* sets the course for a visible, substantial and decisive commitment to contribute to a society that is more equal, inclusive and prosperous, for the good of all. Switzerland firmly believes that such a society can offer better opportunities for everyone – men as well as women, girls as well as boys. The FDFA has therefore chosen ‘more equality: more opportunities’ as its leitmotiv in its endeavour. Switzerland pursues this agenda by, for example, supporting projects that ensure women’s participation in all political processes. It also has a steadfast commitment to protect women’s rights in conflict situations and other fragile contexts.

Evidently, this FDFA Strategy is guided by the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and its new set of sustainable development goals (SDGs), which serve as a blueprint for Switzerland and the rest of the international community over the next 15 years. Achieving gender equality and

empowering all women and girls is a stand-alone goal (SDG 5) as well as a cross-cutting principle and a precondition for implementing the *2030 Agenda*. Switzerland has advocated on these key issues from the outset and fully incorporated them into the *Dispatch on Switzerland’s International Cooperation 2017–2020*. It is the first time that our dispatch includes a strategic objective on gender equality and women’s and girls’ rights (Objective 7). In doing so, it also underscores the need to mainstream gender equality and women’s rights as transversal elements across all instruments of our international cooperation. Only then can we hope to realise its overall vision: a world without poverty and in peace, towards sustainable development.

For Switzerland, this is a prerequisite for giving everyone equal opportunities to reach their full potential and to contribute to societal transformation, respect for human rights, peacebuilding and economic development. In response to the chal-

lenges of a steadily polarising world and the needs facing half of the world’s population, this Strategy outlines the principles aiming to guide Switzerland’s engagement and defines six strategic objectives to steer our work. My wish is that this new tool will inspire our combined efforts to realise our vision and to embody our country’s commitment to gender equality and women’s rights.

Didier Burkhalter  
Federal Councillor



# Table of contents

## List of abbreviations

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
FDFA	Federal Department of Foreign Affairs
FPA	Federal Personnel Act
GDP	Gross domestic product
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
IPPF	International Planned Parenthood Federation
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
NAP	National Action Plan
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OIF	International Organisation of La Francophonie
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNAIDS	United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
WEPs	Women's Empowerment Principles
WHO	World Health Organisation
WILDAF	Women in Law and Development in Africa

## Foreword **2**

---

### I. Background **6**

---

International normative and political framework	<b>6</b>
Global issues and challenges	<b>6</b>

### II. Guiding principles and strategic objectives **8**

---

<b>Guiding principles</b>	<b>8</b>
An economic necessity	8
An asset for peace and security	8
Effective engagement of men and boys	8
A credible and coherent engagement	9

<b>Strategic objectives</b>	<b>10</b>
Objective 1: Strengthening women's economic empowerment	10
Objective 2: Strengthening women's effective participation	13
Objective 3: Combating all forms of gender-based violence	16
Objective 4: Promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights	19
Objective 5: Incorporating gender equality and women's rights at the heart of bilateral and multilateral work	22
Objective 6: Ensuring equal opportunities for women and men within the FDFA	25

### III. Implementation **27**

---

Partnerships with key stakeholders	<b>27</b>
Coordination and resources	<b>28</b>
Monitoring and evaluation	<b>28</b>

### Appendix: Diagram **30**

---

# I. Background

## International normative and political framework

This Strategy is based primarily on the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)*, ratified by Switzerland in 1997, and the other international and regional conventions on human rights such as those of the Council of Europe,<sup>1</sup> as well as on international humanitarian law and the *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court*. The commitments of the *Beijing Platform for Action* adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 also serve as a basis, along with all relevant resolutions in this area, such as those of the UN Security Council on women, peace and security<sup>2</sup> and resolutions of the UN General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Human Rights Council.

Switzerland's action falls under its existing international obligations and political commitments on gender equality and women's rights. Indeed, Switzerland favours a rights-based approach to its entire foreign policy. It is committed to ensuring an appropriate and consistent international normative framework and to building strong institutions for gender equality and women's rights. It works to uphold the universality of women's rights – frequently undermined – and to defend the international achievements and strengthen the visibility, implementation and impact of norms and

regulations governing women's rights at all levels, be they international, regional, national or local.

## Global issues and challenges

Women and girls make up more than half of the world's population but are disproportionately suffering from the consequences of humanitarian crises, violent extremism, food insecurity and inadequate health services. Discrimination against women and girls and their all too frequently unequal access to resources mean that they are more affected by poverty and more vulnerable to gender-based violence. These inequalities are exacerbated in situations of conflict and fragility. As a result, the main areas of concern of Swiss foreign policy – peace, security, respect for human rights, sustainable development and prosperity – are now more relevant than ever to women as stakeholders and agents of change. Switzerland is eager to promote their role in a rapidly changing world.

While progress has been made in recent years regarding *de jure* equality, much remains to be done to achieve *de facto* equality. Switzerland is determined to act against not only the symptoms but also the causes of inequality and discrimination. Despite the progress made, inequalities between men and women still persist in many sectors, restricting women's ability to assert

their fundamental rights and to use their agency to make decisions and act upon them. Many challenges have yet to be overcome: reforming discriminatory laws; fighting against all forms of gender-based violence; women's effective participation in social, political and economic life, including at decision-making level; increasing women's empowerment and their economic status; access to education and healthcare and women's rights regarding sexual and reproductive health; protection of women and girls in conflict situations and their participation in conflict resolution. Efforts are also needed to transform social norms that perpetuate gender stereotypes and to better distribute responsibilities between women and men.

In a climate of growing conservatism and cultural relativism, which undermine the realisation of gender equality and women's rights worldwide, it has become even more pressing for Switzerland and the international community to demonstrate commitment. Discrimination and violations continue to be frequently justified by using identity values based on political, social, ideological or cultural arguments.<sup>3</sup>

Owing to its reputation, Switzerland is well placed to help achieve concrete results in overcoming the challenges to women's rights and in reconciling the normative standards, political constraints and operational realities, including in polarised or fragile contexts. To strengthen its engagement

and increase its impact, Switzerland draws on its profile and its extensive experience as a committed political actor both at multilateral level and in its development cooperation. Moreover, with its position firmly rooted in legal standards, its solid operational experience, its transparent and inclusive approach, its openness to dialogue and culture of compromise, as well as its know-how in bridge-building, Switzerland has a wealth of assets to bring to the table. These are readily appreciated and at times sought-after by others. Switzerland intends to build upon these in steering its activities regarding women's rights and gender equality.

<sup>1</sup> Switzerland signed the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) in September 2013. The Swiss Parliament approved its ratification on 31 May 2017. After expiry of the three-month referendum period, Switzerland will ratify the Istanbul Convention, which will most likely enter into effect at the start of 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Resolution 1325 and the consecutive resolutions (1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106, 2122 and 2242).

<sup>3</sup> This occurs, for example, in the recognition of sexual and reproductive health and rights, including access to family planning services, comprehensive sexuality education, women's rights to control their own bodies, in the protection against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, in ensuring equal rights to inheritance and land ownership, and in the elimination of harmful practices and certain forms of violence against women and girls.

## II. Guiding principles and strategic objectives

Switzerland's commitment to gender equality and women's rights is governed by the following key principles:

### Guiding principles

#### An economic necessity

For Switzerland, investing in gender equality is crucial for achieving poverty reduction, inclusive economic growth and sustainable development for the benefit of all. Gender equality is a major driver to accelerate development, as firmly enshrined in the *2030 Agenda*. Numerous studies have shown that promoting gender equality is smart economics and the right thing to do for long-term prosperity: both society and the economy benefit from women having equal opportunities as men to participate actively in social, economic and political life. In its foreign policy, Switzerland promotes gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment as essential elements of economic policy.

#### An asset for peace and security

Switzerland was among the first countries to implement *UN Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security*. In 2007, it adopted its first *National Action Plan to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (NAP 1325)* which included the related commitments. This interdepartmental National Action Plan establishes the framework for Switzerland to integrate a gender perspective in its peacebuilding work. The objectives defined in

this Strategy are underpinned by the principles and cross-cutting priorities of *Resolution 1325* and the new National Action Plan for 2017–2020. Switzerland believes in the multiplier effect of gender-sensitive approaches to peace and security and works to highlight the direct relationship between a peaceful, just and inclusive state, gender equality, women's empowerment and the protection of their rights in conflict and fragile contexts. Switzerland sees these aspects as key components of conflict prevention, mediation, management and resolution, as well as in measures to prevent violent extremism and in security sector governance. The evidence shows that the more equality a society has, the more likely it is to enjoy peace and stability.

#### Effective engagement of men and boys

Switzerland focuses particularly on the role of men and boys in promoting gender equality and women's rights. Gender norms are constructed and reinforced by both men and women. It is therefore essential that men and boys, as partners and allies, play an integral role in the activities and solutions for achieving gender equality, which will benefit both men and women in the long term. As stakeholders, men and boys should be mobilised to participate in shifting social norms and transforming roles. Women and men need to work together to tackle the underlying root causes of gender inequalities, such as the unequal power relations between women and men and gender stereotypes that perpetuate discrimination against women and girls. From this perspective, Switzerland sup-

ports projects and initiatives that promote work strategies involving men and boys in gender and equality issues. It devotes considerable attention to including men in its efforts to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence.

#### A credible and coherent engagement

Switzerland strives to ensure policy coherence across all sectors of its foreign policy that relate to gender equality and women's rights. An aligned and uniform approach lends greater credibility to its commitment. Switzerland works to embed gender mainstreaming in all of its foreign policies, areas of action and activities.

It uses its profile and its strong multilateral engagement to create opportunities to include a gender dimension in its bilateral exchanges with other countries, whether political, institutional or programme-related dialogue. Switzerland's engagement also takes the form of a coherent operational approach in all projects conducted under its development cooperation, humanitarian aid and measures promoting peace and human security, specifically within the framework of the *Dispatch on Switzerland's International Cooperation*. For its action to be credible, the FDFA must also pursue gender equality as an employer, i.e. hire, retain and motivate female employees and ensure that they enjoy equal opportunities for advancement. Switzerland strives to maintain coherence of its domestic and foreign policies, given that gender equality and women's rights are integral components of the domestic political agenda, particularly the *Legislative Programme for 2015–2019* and the

*Sustainable Development Strategy 2016–2019*. In doing so, Switzerland takes into account the progress made to date and the challenges that remain at national level.

## Strategic objectives

Switzerland has the necessary resources and instruments to face the current challenges and has established a set of strategic objectives to address them. This strategy has identified priority actions on the basis of the areas in which Switzerland can

make a substantial and credible contribution. With a view to ensuring complementarity between political commitment and operational activities, all of the priority actions contribute to Switzerland's engagement for peace and security, sustainable development and prosperity.

### OBJECTIVE 1: STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Strengthening women's economic status and empowerment and their financial independence is crucial for achieving all the sustainable development goals. Switzerland promotes women's equal access to vocational education and training, the labour market and economic resources. It also works towards a macroeconomic environment that is conducive to realising women's social and economic rights.



According to the World Economic Forum, at the current rate it will take another **118 years** to close the gender pay gap. A McKinsey study has found that global annual GDP for 2025 could be increased by as much as **USD 28 trillion** or **26%** if women attained full economic parity. It is estimated that women worldwide spend **200 million hours** every day just going to fetch water for themselves and their families – time that could otherwise be spent on education, paid work, family or community life.

## Areas of intervention and priority actions up to 2020

### 1.1 Facilitating women's integration into the labour market, including at a senior level, taking unpaid care work into account

- As part of its development cooperation, Switzerland supports projects that promote equal opportunities to access the labour market and decent work; it does so by pursuing gender-sensitive macroeconomic, budgetary and social policies as well as by enabling access to basic education, vocational training and entrepreneurship, with increased support for the transition from education and training to employment.
- In policy dialogues in multilateral and normative processes, Switzerland advocates for women's and men's fundamental rights at work and international labour standards, occupational health and safety standards and the right to equal pay for work of equal value.
- Switzerland supports initiatives to reduce the burden of unpaid care and domestic work on women, a major source of inequality in the economy, and to encourage the sharing of household and family responsibilities.

### 1.2 Enhancing women's economic agency and opportunities

- Switzerland continues to provide financial support for multilateral institutions such as the World Bank. It exerts its influence within these bodies to ensure the integration of gender mainstreaming in their work, specifically to increase development impacts on women's economic empowerment and on their access to economic resources.
- On the normative level, Switzerland stands for equal rights to access and control of inheritance and property, credit and financial services, and for equal access to information and communication technologies.
- In its development programmes, Switzerland supports projects and measures targeting equitable governance of land and water, better access to financial services and an enabling environment for self-employment, entrepreneurship and inclusive market systems, including in the informal sector.

### 1.3 Engaging the private sector to contribute to women's economic empowerment

- Switzerland supports the work of the UN Secretary General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment and encourages all stakeholders, particularly in the private sector, to take actions that promote women's economic empowerment.
- In the context of its engagement on business and human rights, Switzerland seeks to raise awareness within the private sector of the need to promote women's economic empowerment and to implement international standards on social responsibility and respect for human rights, which encompass gender equality and women's rights. To this end it encourages the implementation of the *Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs)*, a joint initiative of the UN Global Compact and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), developed as a voluntary commitment framework.

Switzerland has supported projects dedicated to women's economic empowerment in order to strengthen women's economic agency in rural areas and the key role they play in agriculture and food security, for example in Bangladesh and Georgia, since 2011. It has directly incorporated the gender dimension into its market analysis so as to identify obstacles encountered by women in trying to access the market. These projects have therefore invested in agricultural sectors that tend to be dominated by women, for example through professionalisation of production and improvements in the value chain.

## OBJECTIVE 2: STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION

Women's effective participation in public life and their representation in state institutions are prerequisites for creating a fair, peaceful and inclusive society. Switzerland implements measures to create an enabling environment and opportunities for women to equally participate in defining the priorities in social, economic and political life and in all areas of sustainable development and peacebuilding.



Statistics published by UN Women show that, at present, only one in five parliamentarians in the world is a woman.

Studies carried out to mark the 15 years of Resolution 1325 have shown that, where women are involved in peace processes, there is a 20% increase in the chances of an agreement lasting at least two years and a 35% increase in a peace agreement lasting at least 15 years.

### Areas of intervention and priority actions up to 2020

#### 2.1 Encouraging women's participation in decision-making processes

- Switzerland develops and supports courses of action that increase women's representation, influence and political power in local governance, in the decentralisation and public finance management, as well as in elections and democratic transitions.
- Through policy dialogues in the relevant multilateral organisations and bilateral exchanges, Switzerland encourages women's participation and their role as a driver in decision-making processes as well as their representation in all governance bodies, parliaments, administrations and judicial systems at the local, national and international levels.
- Switzerland plays an active role in ad hoc diplomatic and/or intergovernmental voluntary initiatives outside of the UN or institutional framework which seek to promote women's participation, such as the International Gender Champions Initiative.

## 2.2 Ensuring women's involvement in the prevention of conflicts and of violent extremism

- Switzerland works to enhance the role of women in its peacebuilding and human security instruments – particularly in regard to religion, mediation and dealing with the past – by supporting projects and initiatives aimed at ensuring women's contribution to conflict prevention.
- In implementing its *Strategy on the international combat against the illicit trade in and misuse of small arms and light weapons*, Switzerland integrates a gender perspective in view of capacity building and the strengthening of women's participation in the planning of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control measures.
- In accordance with the strategic priority 'women' in its *Foreign policy action plan on preventing violent extremism*, Switzerland works to increase women's participation and active contribution as actors and stakeholders in all areas covered by measures preventing violent extremism, as well as their involvement in policy dialogue and processes and in local governance.

## 2.3 Strengthening women's participation in peace processes and conflict transformation

- As a priority under the *NAP 1325*, Switzerland is actively engaged to ensure women's participation in peace processes, whether formal or informal, and at all stages of post-conflict negotiation and reconstruction, as well as in all efforts regarding mediation, dealing with the past and the prevention of atrocities.
- To enhance women's capacity building, Switzerland places much importance on gender equality and women's rights in the training courses organised on 'religion and mediation', 'peace mediation' and 'dealing with the past', in terms of participants as well as content.



In Afghanistan, during the period leading up to the presidential elections in 2014, Switzerland supported a project to inform women about their voting rights so that they could fulfil their duty as informed citizens. In Benin, Switzerland has since 2009 supported women interested in holding political office or in playing a role in other decision-making fora such as local committees on health services or water management. The integration of a gender perspective in programmes for the development of municipalities in the Western Balkans is also a priority. In its various projects, Switzerland encourages women to make their voice heard in budget planning and resource allocation and takes account of the needs and interests of both women and men as well as young people of both sexes. In Libya, it has fostered dialogue since 2015 among a diverse cross-section of Libyan women to work out a common peace agenda. In Mali, since 2015 Switzerland has supported Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF), a non-governmental organisation (NGO) that facilitates inclusive exchange between women from different sectors of the community, from different regions and not necessarily of the same religion. The objective is for them to participate actively together in the implementation of the peace agreement and reconciliation process.

## OBJECTIVE 3: COMBATING ALL FORMS OF GENDER- BASED VIOLENCE

Sexual and gender-based violence constitutes a human rights violation and may also amount to a war crime or a crime against humanity. The damage it inflicts on victims and survivors has an impact on society as a whole. Such violence also hampers social and economic development, involves significant costs for public finances, and prevents victims and survivors of violence from participating fully in public and economic life. Switzerland is actively committed to the elimination of all forms of gender-based violence including in armed conflicts and other situations of violence, in fragile contexts and in crisis and natural disasters, whether committed in public or private life.



According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), *one in three women* worldwide experience either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime.

### Areas of intervention and priority actions up to 2020

#### 3.1 Strengthening prevention efforts and ensuring victim protection and support services

- Within relevant multilateral fora, specifically UN and regional bodies, and in its human rights dialogues and political consultations, Switzerland contributes to developing standards, best practices and policies against all forms of violence including domestic violence; child, early and forced marriages; female genital mutilation; and sexual and gender-based violence in fragile and conflict situations.
- Switzerland places particular emphasis on combating sexual and gender-based violence in conflict situations, which is defined as a priority in the *NAP 1325*. It implements prevention projects and programmes with a view to transforming social norms and identifying the risk factors of violence, including by working alongside men. It supports access to comprehensive support services (medical services, systemic psychosocial support, legal aid and economic integration).

- Switzerland contributes to efforts aimed at reducing the illicit trade in and proliferation of small arms and light weapons fuelling conflicts, which are a feeding ground for sexual and gender-based violence.
- One of Switzerland's priority themes in its humanitarian aid is sexual and gender-based violence against anyone (women and girls as well as men and boys) in crisis situations. It calls for the initiation of preventative measures and responses from the outset and throughout all stages of intervention and for these issues to be systematically addressed at both policy and operational levels.
- As part of its commitment to protect civilians and particularly children in armed conflict, Switzerland takes into account the specific needs of women and girls and their particular vulnerability, including as combatants, captive 'wives' or survivors of sexual violence, and supports prevention, demobilisation and victim support programmes for their protection and to facilitate their reintegration into society.

#### 3.2 Fighting against impunity

- In keeping with its commitment under the *NAP 1325*, Switzerland supports the development and implementation of projects and programmes to combat impunity, including within the dealing with the past processes.
- Switzerland calls for national reform and implementation of domestic laws for more effective access to justice for victims, for the establishment of gender-sensitive justice mechanisms, and for access to legal remedies in accordance with national and international law.
- Switzerland takes targeted measures against sexual exploitation and abuse in the context of peacekeeping missions, specifically in influencing the shaping of the associated policies, and supports the implementation of the UN Secretary-General's zero tolerance policy in this respect.



Since 2014, Switzerland has supported Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice, an NGO working for the rehabilitation and reintegration of former child soldiers of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), a rebel group in Uganda, as well as women and girls who have been victims of sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Such support has enabled victims to receive psychosocial support and access to medical care. This project also contributes to bringing the perpetrators of sexual violence to justice at both the national and international levels. To date, evidence of sexual violence that was obtained thanks to this project has been presented in two cases against rebel leaders indicted by the International Criminal Court.

## OBJECTIVE 4: PROMOTING SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS

Promoting maternal and child health as well as sexual and reproductive health and rights are among the objectives of the *Swiss Health Foreign Policy*. Switzerland recognises the right to sexual and reproductive health for all and supports the establishment of healthcare policies governed by the principles of non-discrimination and equality. This is all the more important in an environment in which societal influence of cultural and ideological values undermines the development and implementation of progressive policies at a national, regional and international level. Access to information and to sexual and reproductive health services is essential for achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. Both are also drivers of poverty reduction.



According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), some **225 million women** wishing to access safe and effective family planning methods are unable to do so for reasons ranging from lack of access to information or services to lack of support from their partners or their communities. Most of these women with an unmet need for contraceptives live in **69 of the poorest countries on Earth**.

### Areas of intervention and priority actions up to 2020

#### 4.1 Advancing policy dialogue to effectively realise women's rights

- Based on the *Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)*, Switzerland is firmly committed to promote sexual and reproductive health and rights in multilateral dialogue and negotiations. It is working towards bridge-building on polarised topics, such as comprehensive sexuality education. Switzerland promotes research on sexual and reproductive health and rights in order to better inform policy and technical dialogue.
- Switzerland contributes to multilateral and international efforts to improve the protection of sexual and reproductive health and rights by supporting international institutions and initiatives such as WHO, the United Nations Joint

Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), UNFPA and the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF). It advocates integrating more recommendations on sexual and reproductive health and rights into the Universal Periodic Review mechanism (UPR).

#### **4.2 Improving access to information and quality services**

- Within the context of its development programmes, Switzerland supports access to quality sexual and reproductive health services which meet the needs of women and adolescent girls, in order to prevent early and unwanted pregnancies or sexually transmitted infections including the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV/AIDS). It takes measures to ensure that access to quality sexual and reproductive health services does not lead to financial hardship.
- Switzerland supports prevention efforts and programmes designed to improve access to information and to age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education, relevant to cultural contexts.
- In its humanitarian aid and development policy, Switzerland is committed to facilitate access to adequate health systems and services, particularly sexual and reproductive health services, for women and girls who are victims of violence.

#### **4.3 Promoting the integration of sexual and reproductive health services into basic healthcare**

- As part of its policy and technical dialogues with multilateral partners (such as WHO, UNAIDS, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria) and bilateral partners (such as the health ministries of priority countries), Switzerland calls for the integration of quality sexual and reproductive health services into basic health services, thereby improving the scope and accessibility of basic healthcare. It works to ensure that interventions on sexual and reproductive health contribute to strengthening health systems.



*The IPPF is a strategic partner of Switzerland in promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights and gender equality. IPPF is engaged in policy dialogue at the global, regional and national levels. It operates in more than 170 countries and works across more than 150 member associations which are active in advocacy and provision of quality services, particularly for poor and vulnerable persons. In 2016 Switzerland supported IPPF to set up a representation office in Geneva, enabling it to participate in the discussions and negotiations on health, human rights and humanitarian affairs.*

## OBJECTIVE 5: INCORPORATING GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS AT THE HEART OF BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL WORK

Experience has shown that a more systematic inclusion of gender equality is complementary and parallel to the work done based on priority themes. Through such gender mainstreaming, the specific needs and interests of women and men can be taken into account so that appropriate solutions can be found, resulting in policies and programmes that can benefit women as much as men. Switzerland strives to ensure gender mainstreaming in its various action areas and instruments as well as in the formulation and implementation of policies and programmes, in keeping with the prevailing context and opportunities.

### Areas of intervention and priority actions up to 2020

#### 5.1 Influencing normative developments and intergovernmental political processes

- In intergovernmental processes at the UN, Switzerland aims to play an influential role in promoting gender equality and women's rights in resolutions and declarations or in the organisation of specific events. In all of the resolutions and decisions negotiated in which it participates, Switzerland is engaged to strengthen the language regarding women's rights and ensures that it complies with international standards.
- Switzerland supports the work of human rights mechanisms relevant to gender equality and the protection of women's rights. It also supports the work of the CEDAW Committee through the provision of experts and by supporting any Swiss candidates to the Committee. It works to ensure implementation of its recommendations through policy work and programmatic engagement in development cooperation partner countries.
- Switzerland supports the women, peace and security agenda by drafting and effectively implementing its fourth *NAP 1325*. In keeping with its profile, Switzerland calls for more systematic gender mainstreaming in the Security Council's open debates and positions itself on the women, peace and security agenda. It stands for increased inclusion of women's rights, needs and experience in the design of peace and security policies.

- Switzerland remains actively involved in the monitoring processes of the *2030 Agenda* and the *Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development*, particularly in the design of the follow-up and review mechanisms and concerning financing of gender equality and women's empowerment.
- Switzerland maintains an active network of experts, including with capitals of other states, international organisations and UN agencies. It also has close links with subject-specific contacts in the appropriate bodies, particularly the International Organisation of La Francophonie (OIF) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), including the OECD Development Assistance Committee's Network on Gender Equality (DAC), which it is co-chairing for three years (2017–2020). It seeks to facilitate collaboration with other like-minded states and to forge cross regional alliances, which will enable it to increase the influence, scope and impact of its initiatives and to advance its positions.

#### 5.2 Integrating gender equality into bilateral and multilateral dialogues

- Switzerland seeks to increase gender mainstreaming into its development cooperation global programmes on water, migration, climate change and food security, as well as in the corresponding multilateral discussions.
- As part of the various institutional dialogues with UN agencies which it supports financially, Switzerland encourages the integration of a gender perspective into their strategic orientation. For example, Switzerland actively supports the mandate of UN Women and UNFPA, which have a central role.
- Switzerland seeks to intensify the integration of gender equality and women's rights issues into its bilateral exchanges, whether as part of annual policy consultations or its human rights dialogues and consultations, or during its regular contact with governments and relevant ministers.

#### 5.3 Leveraging the synergies offered by International Geneva

- In the context of its efforts to strengthen the role of human rights in UN policies, Switzerland is committed to increase the linkages between the *CEDAW* and the women, peace and security agenda by way of targeted initiatives in both Geneva and New York and by promoting the CEDAW Committee's general recommendation no. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations.

- Switzerland develops and supports initiatives to increase the role and dynamism of International Geneva, a central platform for the implementation of gender equality. Given the presence in Geneva of the CEDAW Committee and of humanitarian agencies, the concentration of NGOs working in women's rights, and the Gender and Diversity Hub formed by the six think tanks hosted at the *Maison de la paix*, Switzerland seeks to use the many opportunities for linkage to influence the multilateral debate in humanitarian matters and in regard to human rights, peace and security.

Switzerland supported the opening of the UN Women liaison office in Geneva in 2016, to which it contributes financially. It thereby helps to consolidate UN Women's influence on intergovernmental decision-making processes and its strategic cooperation with various other stakeholders of International Geneva, particularly UN specialised agencies, civil society, academia and the private sector, and to raise the importance of a gender-sensitive approach in sectors such as humanitarian aid, peace negotiations, disaster risk reduction, health, migration and employment.

## OBJECTIVE 6: ENSURING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN AND MEN WITHIN THE FDFA

While advocating for gender equality on the international level, the FDFA strives also to be an exemplary employer in this regard. The FDFA implements its *Equal Opportunities Policy 2010–2020* under the responsibility of the General Secretariat. This policy seeks to establish a non-discriminatory organisational culture and to achieve a gender balance among staff at all hierarchical levels and in all areas of activity of the department. It promotes work-life balance, recognises the importance of flexible careers and also takes accompanying persons into consideration.



According to the FDFA monitoring, the gender ratio among staff employed under the Federal Personnel Act (FPA) was 50:50 as at 31 December 2016. Among the staff with a local employment contract, 51% were women and 49% were men. Among FDFA staff, 31% of women and 9% of men work part-time (less than 90% of standard working hours), almost exclusively at head office. Since end-2009, the proportion of women in managerial positions has increased from 34% to 42%, while the proportion of women in top management rose from 12% to 20%. In the diplomatic service, 17% of women hold a top management position.

### Areas of intervention and priority actions up to 2020

#### 6.1 Stepping up efforts to achieve a gender-balanced representation at all hierarchical levels

- The FDFA conducts a monitoring of the statistics based on sex each year with the goal of achieving a gender-balanced representation by 2020. Based on this analysis, the progress achieved in each directorate is evaluated and new objectives are set every two years in association with the directorates themselves.
- The FDFA implements a catalogue of measures to facilitate gender balance in managerial positions.

## 6.2 Ensuring equal opportunities in all human resources processes

- Various modules and seminars on gender equality and equal opportunities are incorporated into the education, training and career development programmes of all employees, with a particular focus on managers and staff with management functions as well as certain target groups, such as human resources personnel, new cohorts of diplomatic staff, the Junior Staff Programme of the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC), apprentices or trainees.
- As part of the project 'Evaluation of the FDFA's professional development framework', particular attention is placed on transparency in all human resources processes (such as hiring, skills development and promotion as well as performance appraisal and remuneration) with a view to ensuring equal opportunities for women and men.

## 6.3 Encouraging a progressive, fair and inclusive organisational culture within the department

- The FDFA monitors the respect of equal pay between men and women using the Logib tool and produces a detailed analysis of the data available.
- Through awareness-raising campaigns, all staff members with a contract under the FPA as well as locally hired staff are informed about the *FDFA Workplace Anti-discrimination Policy* and about measures taken by the department to prevent sexual harassment and the mandate of the group of confidential mediators.

*The FDFA's Equal Opportunities Policy 2010–2020 was evaluated in a mid-term review conducted in 2015. The department was found to have made considerable progress, particularly in the percentage of women in management positions. However, further efforts are needed to achieve parity among management and a proportion of 30% women among top management by 2020.*

# III. Implementation

This Strategy will be implemented through various measures across several priority areas of Swiss foreign policy, such as human rights policy, peace policy, development cooperation, humanitarian aid and sectoral policies. To deliver on its strategic objectives, Switzerland will use existing bilateral and multilateral instruments, which will be selected adequately according to the specific needs and contexts. Switzerland's engagement is supported by existing strategic partnerships, requires increased collaboration with state and non-state actors alike, and calls for greater coordination of the entire FDFA at both policy and operational levels.

## Partnerships with key stakeholders

In promoting gender equality and women's rights, Switzerland places particular focus on intensifying its partnerships with civil society and the private sector. It encourages and facilitates the dialogue between all of these actors and appeals for a sense of mutual responsibility.

### A strong and independent civil society

Switzerland seeks to protect the fundamental role of civil society organisations, which are major contributors to fulfilling the obligations and commitments under gender equality and women's rights. It works to broaden the margin and freedom of action of civil society organisations by fostering a safe and enabling environment; only then can civil society actors freely exercise their critical role in overseeing respect for human rights and the rule of law. As part of its work in the protection of human rights defenders, Switzerland includes

and supports the men and women who defend women's rights and who are regularly exposed to the risk of intimidation, repression or violence, in particular gender-based violence.

Switzerland operates on the basis of close dialogue with civil society organisations that promote gender equality and women's rights. It campaigns for their inclusion in policy-making and decision-making at the international and regional as well as national and local levels. It is involved in the capacity building of women's organisations and local networks, particularly in the countries in which it already works, in order to enable such organisations to drive policy change. Switzerland also supports research centres and institutes for the development of knowledge in the fields of gender, development, peace and security. The specialised, interdisciplinary skills and expertise available at such centres contribute to knowledge creation and management, which also benefit to Switzerland.

### The private sector as a lever

Switzerland is keen to strengthen its cooperation with the private sector and use its leverage, at domestic level and abroad, as a partner and as a responsible stakeholder in advancing gender equality and women's rights. Given the growing influence of the private sector in determining the relationship between gender equality, inclusive growth and sustainable development, Switzerland also seeks to develop appropriate means and measures to associate the private sector with its multilateral and bilateral efforts.

## Coordination and resources

All staff in Bern and in the representations abroad share responsibility for implementing this Strategy. Given the cross-cutting nature of gender equality, delivery of the strategic objectives will require the active participation of and input from all organisational units within the FDFA and its representations abroad, at all hierarchical levels.

### Intensifying coordination mechanisms

The FDFA follows a whole-of-government approach and strengthens the coordination mechanisms and consultation processes. It strives to optimise the synergies and specific complementarities, notably by setting up a technical working group formed by FDFA gender experts and by designating focal points and contacts within the various directorates and divisions. Moreover, the FDFA fosters close intra- and interdepartmental cooperation, particularly with the Federal Office for Gender Equality and the international divisions of other government departments.

The General Secretariat of the FDFA, the technical working group and all gender focal points within the FDFA supply the necessary impetus to facilitate the implementation of the Strategy and to support line management in realising the strategic objectives. The role of the General Secretariat is one of coordinator to foster communication between all the relevant units within and outside of the FDFA and coherence across actions. The FDFA supports the work of internal or interdepartmental networks acting as a framework for subject-specific or strategic discussions in relation to women's rights, such as the FDFA's gender network, the SDC's Gendernet network and the interdepartmental working group on UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

### Building institutional capacities

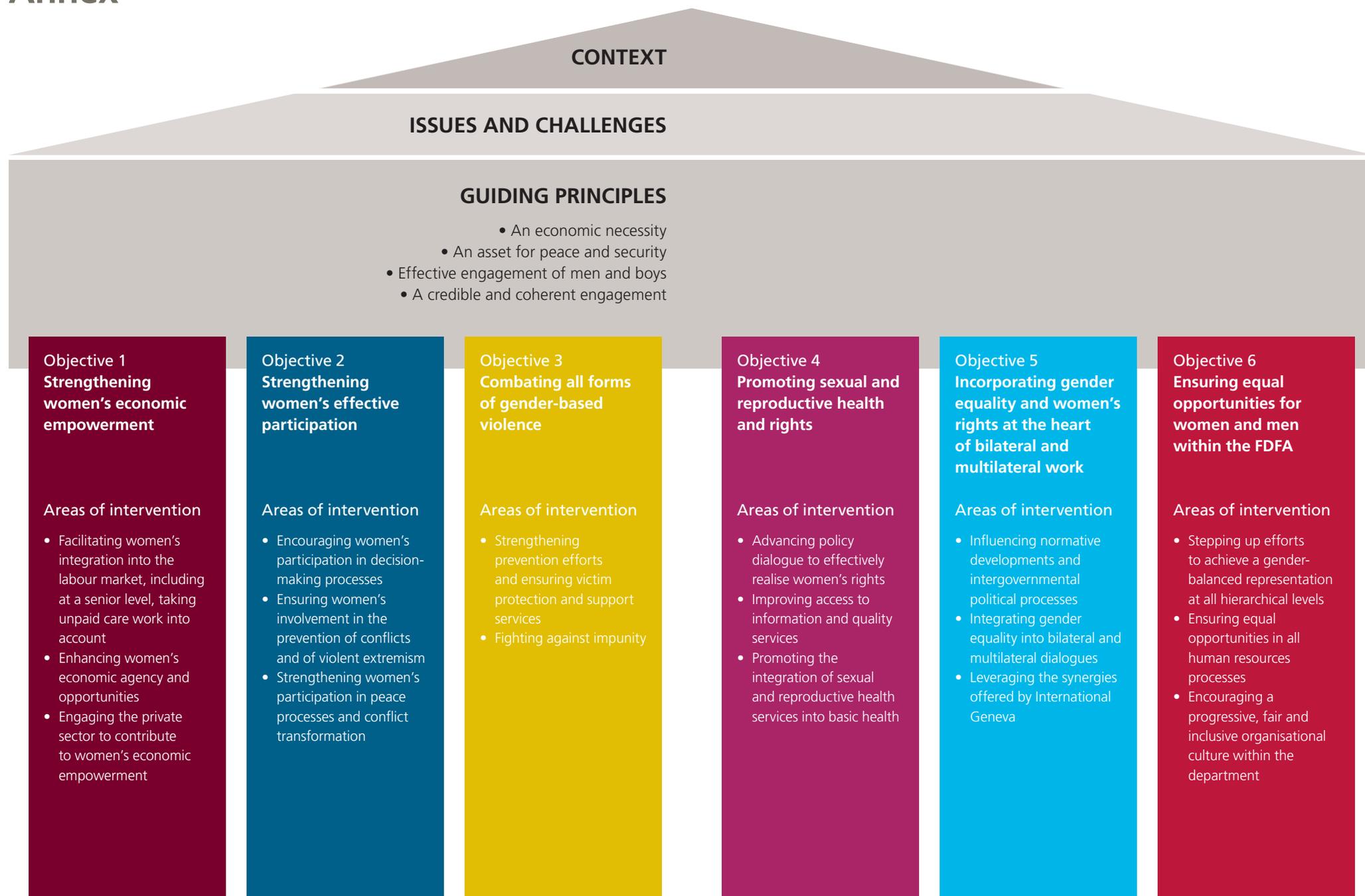
The FDFA works to strengthen institutional capacities, for example by ensuring that its units concerned allocate sufficient financial and human resources to the effective implementation of the strategy, within the constraints of their respective budgets. The FDFA encourages all staff, including management, to assume responsibility for gender issues and women's rights and calls on the heads of mission to integrate a gender perspective in line with the specific circumstances of their host countries. The FDFA also increases the development of training and awareness-raising measures in this respect both in Bern and in representations abroad.

## Monitoring and evaluation

To ensure effective follow-up of the activities carried out under this Strategy, the FDFA will use appropriate monitoring and evaluation tools as necessary, in particular existing mechanisms within the department such as the indicators defined in the *Dispatch on International Cooperation*, the periodic report to be submitted to the Parliament under the *NAP 1325* and the foreign policy report. To measure the results and the funding of its operational engagement, the FDFA will continue to use the OECD DAC's Gender Equality Policy Marker and will implement the new minimum standards set out in 2016.

The monitoring of this strategy will be coordinated by the General Secretariat, together with the technical working group, which will compile an annual activity report on the basis of the annual reports and information provided by the directorates and divisions concerned. This annual report will render an account of the results delivered in each area of intervention.

The Strategy will be evaluated on the basis of the objectives met (areas of intervention and priority actions) in 2018 and after completion of the initial phase of its implementation in 2020. The recommendations drawn from the evaluation will serve as a basis for the review of the Strategy.



## **Imprint**

Editor:

**Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA**

3003 Bern

[www.fdfa.admin.ch](http://www.fdfa.admin.ch)

Design:

FDFA Visual Communication

Orders:

FDFA Information

[www.fdfa.admin.ch/publication](http://www.fdfa.admin.ch/publication)

[publikationen@eda.admin.ch](mailto:publikationen@eda.admin.ch)

Specialist contact:

Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA

General Secretariat, FDFA Equal Opportunities and global gender questions,  
[chancengleichheit@eda.admin.ch](mailto:chancengleichheit@eda.admin.ch)

Human Security Division (HSD), [pd-ams@eda.admin.ch](mailto:pd-ams@eda.admin.ch)

Directorate of International Law DIL, [dv@eda.admin.ch](mailto:dv@eda.admin.ch)

United Nations and International Organisations Division, [pd-aio@eda.admin.ch](mailto:pd-aio@eda.admin.ch)

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC, [deza@eda.admin.ch](mailto:deza@eda.admin.ch)

This publication is also available in German, French, Italian and Spanish. It can be downloaded from [www.fdfa.admin.ch/publication](http://www.fdfa.admin.ch/publication).

Bern, 2017 / © FDFA