



**Gender Evaluation for the Swiss Cooperation
Programme Horn of Africa
October 2025**

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Executive Summary

The gender evaluation of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation's (SDC) Regional Cooperation Programme in the Horn of Africa (RCPHoA) provides critical insights into how the programme integrates gender equality and drives transformative change. Conducted between May and August 2025, the evaluation examined both ongoing and upcoming projects planned for 2026, including those in the preparatory phase, managed by SDC teams in Nairobi and Addis Ababa, and implemented across Somalia and the adjacent arid and semiarid areas (ASAL) in northeastern Kenya, and southeastern Ethiopia.

The evaluation examined the degree to which projects have transitioned from being gender-sensitive to gender-transformative, assessing progress since the 2019 Horn of Africa (HoA) Gender Assessment. Using a mixed approach that combined desk reviews, interviews, and an online capacity assessment survey with SDC staff and partners, the evaluation identified key achievements, challenges, and opportunities for deeper gender integration. Its objectives were to: (1) assess progress in gender integration and transformative approaches; (2) identify enablers and barriers to gender mainstreaming; (3) evaluate the capacity of SDC staff and partners; and (4) propose actionable recommendations to strengthen gender-transformative programming in the upcoming Swiss Cooperation Programme for Somalia and adjacent ASAL (2026–2029).

Key findings: Most projects are gender sensitive with a number showing potential for being gender transformative. There are limited systems and guidance on integrated gender transformative programming. Monitoring, evaluation and learning systems do not capture changes in gender relations both positive and negative (e.g. backlash), Participatory and qualitative monitoring is limited. Gender action plans are not clearly linked to the Results Framework (RF), and gender outcomes are not always fully tracked, current Result Framework focuses on quantitative metrics (e.g. # of women trained), with little on agency, norm change, or workload distribution. Strong feminist leadership at senior levels promotes gender mainstreaming. Growing recognition of intersectionality (e.g. gender, age, disability, displacement). Adaptive management allows some flexibility to respond to emerging gender issues. SDC staff indicate a stronger conceptual understanding of gender equality principles while partners' grasp appears more practical and experience based. Few lateral exchanges or peer learning around gender integration exist. Gender analysis is mandatory and has improved program cohesion and relevance. However, it is inconsistently applied and sometimes conducted mid-project instead of at design stage. This timing gap leads to missed gender insights, limited integration and responsiveness to contextual change.

Recommendations

What Action Area	Who Responsible Actor	When Timeline	How to Measure Indicators
1. Define and communicate SDC's level of ambition on gender transformation, link objectives to results, and embed accountability in roles and performance reviews.	SDC Management global and local level	To be determined by SDC	-Clear articulation of gender-transformative ambition in strategic documents. - Gender objectives reflected in job descriptions and staff performance reviews. -% of documented gender results frameworks updated on gender transformation outcomes.
2. Strengthen understanding of gender transformation through tailored capacity-building, mentorship, and safe spaces for dialogue to promote equality, reflection, and shared ownership of gender outcomes across all levels.	Gender Focal Points to source for trainers and mentors even from partners; SDC Project Officers. Global and Local level	Ongoing activity	- # of staff and partners trained on gender-transformative approaches. -% reporting improved understanding/confidence in addressing gender reluctance. -Evidence of safe space sessions or peer-to-peer learning exchanges conducted. -Qualitative evidence of cultural change for example, stories of practice.
3. Institutionalize Cross-Sector/ across domain Learning and Accountability Establish mechanisms for inter-sectoral learning and tracking of transformative gender outcomes across portfolios.	Project officers, Partners Gender Network both global and local levels (with external partners).	Ongoing activity	-# of cross-sector learning sessions annually. -Documentation of shared practices and lessons integrated into planning cycles. -Presence of gender learning indicators in portfolio reviews.
4. Include Result framework indicators to track gender normative changes: Need to capture shifts in power relations, decision-making, and social norms, beyond participation numbers.	Gender Focal Points; SDC Project officer, SDC Management (Local level)	Medium-term (1–2 years)	-% of projects using participatory tools (Outcome Harvesting, most significant stories, etc.). - Number of qualitative case studies capturing gender norm shifts. - Results Framework updated to include transformative indicators.
5. Integrate gender-transformative and intersectional approaches across all current domains or future outcomes. This includes: -Strengthening women's agency, decision-making power, and control over resources.	Management, Gender Focal points, PO	Throughout project cycle integrate during ToC revision and operationalize during implementation, monitoring, and reviews	Structural Indicators: -Number of domains adopting gender-transformative outcomes in the revised Theory of Change. - Percentage of supported government bodies at any level that adopt and implement gender responsive budgeting

-Embedding gender-responsive budgeting and institutional frameworks. -Tracking changes in gender norms, workload distribution, and representation. -Creating feedback loops to ensure accountability and learning.			(GRB) Outcome Indicators: - Percentage of female representation in targeted political bodies - Percentage of targeted women who describe more positive attitudes and practices in their environment towards their equal opportunities and rights. - % of institutions adopting survivor-centered and gender-responsive service delivery models. Norm Change Indicators: -Percentage of targeted women and girls who perceive that their unpaid domestic and care work is reduced and or more equally distributed among male and female household members - Intersectional monitoring data used in annual reviews to inform adaptive actions. Accountability Indicators: -Existence and use of participatory feedback mechanisms that include women and marginalized groups. - Number of supported preventions or repeals of gender discriminatory laws, policies, and/or number of supported revised or new laws, policies, which promote gender equality and/or address gender-based violence
6. Integrate an intersectional approach across the project cycle including an intersectional analysis¹ as part of gender analysis. During project design, reflect findings in the logframe, engage affected communities, design inclusive activities, build capacity, and ensure adequate resources and monitoring.	SDC Project Officers & Gender focal points at SDC and partner levels,	Throughout the project cycle from design and planning to implementation, monitoring, and review	- Intersectional analysis completed and used in project design - Logframe includes intersectional objectives and indicators - Evidence of meaningful participation of marginalized groups - Activities and communication materials tailored to diverse needs

¹ intersectionality analysis is beyond examining diversity, equity, and inclusion. Instead, it examines how different aspects of identity such as gender, age, ethnicity, disability, class, and location interact to shape people's experiences, opportunities, and vulnerabilities. Rather than viewing these factors in isolation, it explores how their overlap influences access to resources, decision-making, and power. This approach helps uncover the specific barriers faced by diverse groups and informs more inclusive, equitable, and context-sensitive program and policy design.

			- Disaggregated data (by gender, age, ethnicity, etc.) collected and analyzed - Staff trained on intersectionality. - Dedicated budget for intersectional actions - Periodic reviews show adaptive changes responding to intersectional findings
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Acronyms

ARI	Aggregated Reference Indicators
AVF	Africa. Voices Foundation,
C4P	Culture for Peace
FRAP	Framework for Risk Governance and Adaptive Programming
GIC	Gender Integration Continuum
GPM	Gender Policy Marker
HIPS	Heritage Institute for Policy Studies
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development.
IVR	Interactive Voice Response
KII	Key Informant Interviews
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSD	Market System Development
NIS	Nordic International Support Foundation
NRM	Natural Resource Management
PWD	Persons with Disability
R2P	Road to Peace
RCPhoA	Regional Cooperation Programme in the Horn of Africa
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
SMS	Short Message Services
TOC	Theory of Change
ToT	Trainer of Trainers
TRI	Thematic Reference Indicators
WELBI	Women's Empowerment in Livestock Business Index
WEE	Women Economic Empowerment
WELI	Women's Empowerment in Livestock Index
WLO	Women Led Organisations
WROs	Women's Rights Organisations

Glossary

Key Concepts applied in the Gender Evaluation	
Sex	Refers to biologically defined and genetically acquired differences between males and females, according to their physiology and reproductive capabilities or potentialities. ²
Gender	A social construct built through cultural, political and social practices that defines the roles of women, girls, men and boys, as well as the social definitions of what it means to be masculine and feminine. ³
Gender Equality	Refers to the equal enjoyment by women and men of socially valued goods, opportunities, resources, and rewards. The aim is not that women and men become the same, but that their opportunities and life chances become and remain equal. ⁴
Gender Integration	Refers to strategies applied in programme assessment, design, implementation, and evaluation to take gender norms into account and to compensate for gender-based inequalities. ⁵
Power	The capacity or ability to influence others or the course of events. Feminist frameworks distinguish between: Power-over- domination, Power-to- capacity to act, power-with- collective action: power-within-self-confidence and internal strength. ⁶
Intersectionality	An analytical framework that recognizes people's experiences are shaped by overlapping identities (e.g., gender, race, class, disability), producing unique forms of discrimination or privilege. ⁷
Gender Norms	The social expectations and behavioural guidelines that society imposes on individuals based on their gender. These norms define what is considered “appropriate” behaviour, traits, and roles for men and women. ⁸
Household Dynamics	The patterns of interaction, decision-making, negotiation, and power relations among members of a household, shaping how responsibilities, authority, and resources are distributed. ⁹
Agency	An individual's ability to define goals and act upon them, even in the face of constraints. ¹⁰
Decision-Making	The process by which individuals or groups make choices that affect their lives, households, or communities. Focuses on who participates, whose preferences count, and whose choices prevail. ¹¹

² Jhpiego. (n.d.). *Gender Concepts and Definitions*. Gender Analysis Toolkit for Health Systems.

<https://gender.jhpiego.org/analysistoolkit/gender-concepts-and-definitions/>

³ Inter-Agency Standing Committee. (2017). IASC gender handbook for humanitarian action. UN Women.

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2017/2/the-gender-handbook-for-humanitarian-action>

⁴ OECD. (1998). *Dac Guidelines For Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment In Development Co-Operation*. https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/1998/12/dac-guidelines-for-gender-equality-and-women-s-empowerment-in-development-co-operation_2a1b7df4/791d5d28-en.pdf Retrieved 31 October, 2025,

⁵ Jhpiego. (n.d.). *Gender Concepts and Definitions*. Gender Analysis Toolkit for Health Systems.

<https://gender.jhpiego.org/analysistoolkit/gender-concepts-and-definitions/>

⁶ Kabeer, N. (1999). *Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment*. UNRISD Discussion Paper No. 108. Link to PDF <https://weehub.ku.ac.ke/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Naila-Kabeer-Empowerment.pdf>

⁷ Crenshaw, K. (1989). *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics*. University of Chicago Legal Forum, 1989(1), Article 8. Crenshaw, K. (1989).

<https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1052&context=ucf>

⁸ Gender Study. (2024, February 7). What are gender norms, and how do they shape society? <https://gender.study/psychology-of-gender/gender-norms-shape-society/>

⁹ Agarwal, B. (1997). 'Bargaining' and Gender Relations: Within and Beyond the Household. *Feminist Economics*, 3(1), 1-51.

https://www.binaagarwal.com/downloads/apapers/bagaining_and_gender_relations.pdf

¹⁰ Kabeer, N. (1999). *Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment*. UNRISD Discussion Paper No. 108. Link to PDF <https://weehub.ku.ac.ke/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Naila-Kabeer-Empowerment.pdf>

¹¹ Ibid

Access to and control over resources	Access is defined as the opportunity to make use of a resource. Control is the power to decide how a resource is used, and who has access to it. Women often have access but no control. ¹²
Gender Responsive	Gender responsiveness implies consistent and systematic attention to gender-based differences and inequalities between women and men, with a view to addressing systemic and structural constraints to gender equality, as well as underlying causes of gender inequality and discrimination. ¹³
Gender Unaware	Programming that ignores or is completely unaware of the economic/social/political roles, rights, entitlements, responsibilities, obligations, and power relations associated with being female and male; as well as the dynamics between and amongst people of all genders
Gender Neutral	Programming that works with gender norms. This may mean reinforcing and utilizing pre-existing gender inequitable structures, systems, and divisions in society relating to gender. Does not consider how gender roles and relations can impede the achievement of programming outcomes, or how programming can negatively affect gender roles and relations.
Gender Sensitive	Programming that adapts to gender norms. Works around existing gender differences and inequalities to ensure equitable allocation of services/support aligned with the pre-existing gender differences, structures, systems, and power divisions in society. Aware of the effect of leveraging inequitable gender norms on the outcomes of programming.
Gender Responsive	Programming that challenges inequitable gender norms. Responds to the different needs and constraints of individuals based on their gender and sexuality. Open space for discussing, challenging, and engaging with inequitable gender structures, systems, divisions and power relations.
Gender Transformative	Policies and programmes that change inequitable gender norms and relations to promote equality. Not only does it have the ambition to transform gender, but it also has the resources, willingness, and capacity to institutionalise transformative programming.
Ableism	The belief that people with physical, intellectual, or psychiatric disabilities are inferior to people without disabilities. Ableism encompasses discrimination against people with all kinds of disabilities. ¹⁴
Patriarchy	Patriarchy is a social structure or system of community, society and government in which men's and boys' power is upheld as superior to and often exclusive of the power of women and girls. ¹⁵

Introduction

This report presents the findings and recommendations of the mixed internal-external evaluation of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)'s regional cooperation programme in the Horn of Africa (RCPHoA). The evaluation examined the extent of gender integration across the programme's activities, with a particular focus on enhancing gender transformation. The report provides an overview of the approach, scope, and methodology used for the gender evaluation. It then delves into the key findings and recommendations which were generated from a comprehensive analysis of desk review data and primary data collected through interviews with SDC staff and partners and an online capacity assessment survey. The gender evaluation specifically focused on select projects within the HoA portfolio.

¹² March, C., Smyth, I., & Mukhopadhyay, M. (1999). *A Guide to Gender-Analysis Frameworks*. Oxfam / NDI.

<https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/Guide%20to%20Gender%20Analysis%20Frameworks.pdf>

¹³ UN Women. (2022). Handbook on gender mainstreaming for gender equality results. United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. Retrieved September 29, 2025, from <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/Handbook-on-gender-mainstreaming-for-gender-equality-results-en.pdf>

¹⁴ UNGEI. (2025). Ableism. In *Gender-Transformative Education Glossary: Intersectionality*. United Nations Girls' Education Initiative. <https://www.ungei.org/gender-transformative-education-glossary/intersectionality/ableism>

¹⁵ UNGEI. (2025). *Patriarchy*. In *Gender-Transformative Education Glossary*. <https://www.ungei.org/gender-transformative-education-glossary/gender/patriarchy>

The gender evaluation's primary goal has been to determine the level of gender integration in projects since the 2019 HoA Gender Assessment, specifically examining the shift from a gender-sensitive to a gender-transformative approach. The evaluation also sought to assess the capacity of SDC staff and partners to implement gender-integrated projects and to provide recommendations for future gender-transformative programming. As outlined in the Terms of Reference (ToRs), the key objectives were:

Objective 1	Assessing progress in gender integration and identifying whether projects have transitioned from gender-sensitive to gender-transformative approaches since the RCPHoA 2019 HoA Gender Assessment.
Objective 2	Identify challenges and opportunities for gender mainstreaming within ongoing and future projects.
Objective3	Assess the capacity-strengthening needs of staff and implementing partners to effectively integrate gender.
Objective4	Recommend strategic and actionable steps to strengthen gender integration in the upcoming Swiss Cooperation Programme Somalia and adjacent ASAL 2026 – 2029.

The expected deliverables for the gender evaluation as detailed in the Terms of Reference (ToR): Inception Report; Draft the final report at the end of the review and interview work phase; A validation and outlook debriefing session, co-organized by SDC and the consultant and a final evaluation report with an analytical review and recommendations.

Context

SDC has been implementing a regional cooperation programme in the Horn of Africa (HoA) since 2013. The programme adopts a regional and portfolio approach, focusing on Somalia and adjacent arid and semi-arid (ASAL) areas in Southeastern Ethiopia, and Northeastern Kenya. The current cooperation strategy, which covers the 2022–2025 period, addresses key regional challenges within its four domains: Food Systems, Migration and Protection, Health, and Governance. Gender is a transversal theme integrated across all of these domains. SDC's focus on gender is set against a backdrop of increasing recognition that equitable access to opportunities and resources for both women and men is essential for inclusive development. In the HoA, complex factors such as cultural norms, political instability, climate impacts, conflict, and limited access to services exacerbate gender inequalities. As such, addressing these deeply rooted inequalities and the norms that drive them is critical.

Gender integration in SDC is guided by the SDG Agenda 2030, specifically SDG 5, which focuses on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls. SDC's approach to gender equality is grounded in the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which Switzerland and all partner countries have ratified. SDC's commitment ensures women and men have equal access to resources, assets, and services, participate in political and social decision-making, access justice and legal protection, move securely in both private and public spheres, and experience an improved quality of life.

To operationalise its gender integration approaches, SDC employs a gender analytical framework that focuses on gender roles and division of labor, access to and control over services and resources, participation, voice and leadership, as well as women's and men's needs and interests. Key tools and guidelines that guide SDC's gender work include 'Working on Gender Equality: Good Practices from Eastern and Southern Africa Region', 'the How to Note Integrating SDC's Gender Policy into Cooperation Strategy Management', 'How to Mainstream Gender in Project Cycle Management', 'How to make relevant Gender Equality Results visible in the Annual Reports', support staff and partners in integrating gender throughout the project cycle. Furthermore, the SDC Gender Policy Marker is a crucial monitoring tool, defining minimum criteria (Principal, Significant, Not targeted) to track resource allocation and the depth of gender integration, while also addressing issues such as the Prevention of and Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Sexual Harassment (PSEAH) in partner organisations.

In preparation for the upcoming 2026–2029 cooperation programme cycle, SDC is updating its regional gender assessment. This update will draw on the findings of this evaluation, which builds upon the previous 2019 HoA Gender Assessment and the 2021 regional GBV assessment. SDC plans to continue with its regional approach in

the new programme cycle. In this regard, SDC has identified a need to review the capacity of projects, including SDC staff and partners, to implement a gender lens as they operate in the complex HoA environment.

Gender Evaluation Approach and Methodology

The section below describes the evaluation scope, framework, thematic questions, and methodology.

Scope of the Gender Evaluation

According to the ToR, the scope of the gender evaluation encompasses the present and future projects scheduled for 2026 that are currently in the preparatory phase. The evaluation examined projects managed by both the Nairobi and Addis Ababa SDC Teams within the current RCPHoA. This included projects implemented in Somalia, northeastern Kenya, and southeastern Ethiopia. The evaluation focuses specifically on how gender is integrated into projects and its contribution to transformative change and was conducted between May and August 2025. The projects reviewed under each specific domain are as follows:

Project
Health
1. Private Sector Partnerships in Health (PSPH) 2. Sexual and gender-based violence prevention and response project in the Horn of Africa (SGBV-HoA). 3. One Health Units for Humans, Environment, Animals and Livelihoods (HEAL) 4. Community Health Provision in Somalia (CHASP)
Food Systems
1. Horn of Africa Regional Livestock Program 2. RAPID +
Governance
1. Culture for Peace (C4P) 2. Africa Voices Foundation (AVF) 3. Kulmis (KST) 4. International NGO Safety Organisation (INSO) 5. Nordic International Support Foundation (NIS), 6. Road to Peace (R2P) 7. Heritage Institute for Policy Studies (HIPS) 8. Elman Peace
Migration
1. Empower 2. Saameynta (UNJPS) 3. Strengthening Resilience of Disaster-Affected Communities through Durable Solutions in Oromia and Somali Regions of Ethiopia (DS ETH)

Evaluation Approach

The gender evaluation approach has been grounded in the principles of feminist research, emphasize collaboration, transparency, non-discrimination, and context-specificity. These principles have been consistently applied across all evaluation activities. See Annex 1. The approach has been user-centred and has been geared toward generating actionable insights that align with the SDC's foundational principles of 'Do good' and actively promote gender equality. Grounded in an awareness of the complexity of human identity, the evaluation has sought to understand how intersecting inequities are created and what mechanisms have been effective in disrupting and transforming these systems. In reviewing the projects, the gender evaluation team checked the SDC Gender Policy Marker assigned to specific projects as Principal, Significant or Not Targeted and assessed how it has been applied, with what gender outcomes and how it can move forward realistically along the scale.

The gender evaluation's approach assessed the evolution of each project along the gender-sensitive to gender-transformative continuum. For new projects (less than one year old), the evaluation highlighted the potential for gender transformation and proposed actionable steps to achieve this goal. To achieve this, the evaluation

operationalized gender transformation through a synthesis of [interrelated gender analytical frameworks](#). These frameworks included the Harvard Analytical framework, the Moser framework, the Capabilities and Vulnerability approach, the Longwe Framework, the Social Relations approach, the Gender Integration Continuum tool, and an intersectionality lens.

The approach to the gender evaluation focused on the distinct needs of diverse men, women, and youth of both gender by addressing their differential access to resources and decision-making. Beyond a woman-only focus, the analysis considered how gender intersects with other axes of differentiation, such as ethnicity, age, clan-based status, displacement, and disability, to influence access to resources and power. Within the context of the HoA program, this included a diverse range of vulnerable groups, such as internally displaced persons, returnees, and women-headed households. The evaluation also incorporated a socio-ecological lens, which was used to move beyond individual changes to address the root causes of inequalities and the structures that perpetuate them.

The evaluation also focused on how gender-transformative projects addressed inequalities and moved toward gender equality at various levels, individual, household, market, community, and state, by influencing gender roles, access to resources, power dynamics, and gender-based violence. The evaluation assessed how this gender dynamics manifested and evolved within different projects, viewing gender transformation as the most advanced stage in the continuum of gender integration, which goes beyond traditional gender mainstreaming, which was judged as inadequate for engaging with power inequalities. The focus was therefore on assessing gender integration in ways that were judged as transformative across all project phases, including design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and capacity strengthening for staff and local stakeholders. As per the ToR, and recognizing the reliance of effective gender transformation on strong institutional capacity, the evaluation also included a staff capacity assessment specifically aimed to answer the following key questions:

- What specific gender integration and gender-transformative competencies exist among SDC staff and partners?
- How effectively are gender integration and gender-transformative approaches, tools, and analyses being applied in programming?

Gender Evaluation Framework

The gender evaluation utilized the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria, which were adapted to specifically assess gender dynamics within the projects. An additional framework was used to evaluate the extent to which projects were shifting from a gender-sensitive to a gender-transformative approach. Insights from the Gender Integration Continuum (GIC) informed the design of this evaluation matrix.

OECD DAC- Evaluation Criteria.

This section outlines the key thematic questions that were addressed by the evaluation. The questions were developed based on the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria and specifically designed to meet Objectives 1 and 2 of the gender evaluation. These objectives were to take stock of gender integration progress within the RCPHoA since the 2019 HoA Gender Assessment and to identify challenges and opportunities for gender mainstreaming in ongoing and future projects. The analysis to answer these questions drew on findings from both key informant interviews and a desk review. The OECD DAC evaluation criteria used to develop the questions and evaluate the projects.¹⁶ This was differentiated from the OECD DAC Criteria Gender Marker which is the tool adapted at SDC.¹⁷

- *This* component analyzed how well the SDC's projects and approaches addressed the root causes of gender inequality, as identified through robust gender and context analysis. It examined their responsiveness to the gender-transformative needs of various projects and assessed their capacity to adapt to evolving circumstances within complex intervention environments.

¹⁶ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2023). *Applying a Human Rights and Gender Equality Lens to the OECD Evaluation Criteria*. OECD Publishing. https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/applying-a-human-rights-and-gender-equality-lens-to-the-oecd-evaluation-criteria_9aaf2f98-en.html

¹⁷ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2016). Handbook on the OECD-DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker. OECD-DAC Network on Gender Equality (GENDERNET). Retrieved from <https://canwach.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Handbook-OECD-DAC-Gender-Equality-Policy-Marker.pdf>

- *Coherence*-this component determined how well the SDC's gender-transformative priorities, projects, and approaches aligned within the broader landscape of relevant internal and external policies. Internally, it examined their alignment with the SDC's overarching goals. Externally, it assessed how SDC projects and interventions aligned with, complemented, or contradicted the gender-transformative efforts of other actors and national policies.
- *Effectiveness*- This component analyzed the extent to which the SDC's efforts, through its projects, achieved or were expected to achieve gender-transformative results. This included assessing any outcomes for diverse men, women, boys, and girls.
- *Efficiency*-this component assessed how effectively the SDC's efforts converted financial, human, and time resources into desired gender-transformative outputs and outcomes. This included examining the timeliness and cost-effectiveness of activities, exploring whether alternative approaches could have achieved similar results more efficiently, and identifying factors that either hindered or enhanced the efficient use of resources.
- *Impact* - This component analysed the extent to which SDC interventions generated or were expected to create significant, higher-level positive effects after the projects were completed. Since most projects were ongoing, the analysis focused on the potential for transformation. The guiding questions included how projects contributed to deeper, systemic changes in gender inequality at structural and societal levels, such as shifts in policies, laws, institutions, and broader cultural norms.
- *Sustainability* - this component assessed the extent to which the positive outcomes of gender transformation within the intervention were likely to persist. The guiding questions focused on how gains in gender equality were likely to endure beyond a project's lifespan.

Matrix for Assessing the potential of shifting from Gender Sensitive to Gender-Transformative.

Insights from the Gender Integration Continuum (GIC) informed the development of the matrix. The GIC, ranges from ignoring or reinforcing inequalities to actively pursuing transformative change for full gender equality. The GIC helped us assess a project's current level of gender integration and guided strategies to advance it toward a gender-transformative approach, ultimately aiming for both gender equality and improved development outcomes.

- Gender-Sensitive Review: If the project identifies and addresses the distinct needs and priorities of women, men, and diverse gender groups within its activities.
- Gender-Transformative Review: if the project actively challenges and has changed unequal power relations, norms, or structures that perpetuate gender inequality. **See Annex 2. Matrix for Assessing the Shift from Gender Sensitive to Gender-Transformative.**

Staff capacity assessment: to assess Fit for gender approach in RCPHoA

The evaluation assessed the capacity-building needs of staff and implementing partners to effectively integrate gender. This included institutional practices, knowledge, challenges, opportunities and competencies. To guide the assessment of these capacities, a brief self-assessment questionnaire was developed. The questionnaire, distributed via Google Forms, was completed by project officers and representatives of partner organisations. The questionnaire examined the following key thematic areas.

- **Gender Mainstreaming Capacities:** What are the specific strengths and limitations in the gender-related skills and capacity of SDC staff and implementing partners? How effectively are SDC staff and implementing partners applying gender analysis tools and methodologies, and what is their capacity to integrate gender considerations into project design, implementation, and monitoring? What is the level of understanding of gender equality, and what are the key experiences with gender integration among SDC staff and implementing partners at various levels?
- **Gender Transformative Approach in Programmes:** Do SDC staff and implementing partners challenge gender norms and the root causes of inequality in the projects they support, and what barriers hinder their ability to implement a gender-transformative approach? What factors influence and support the ability of SDC staff and implementing partners to implement a gender-transformative approach?

Evaluation Design

To gain a thorough, detailed, and practical understanding of gender dynamics within the SDC's work and how gender is incorporated into its projects, the gender evaluation employed a mixed-methods approach. This approach prioritized the use of both secondary and primary data sources.

a) Desk review: A desk or document review was conducted on SDC and partner projects, guided by the evaluation's objectives. The review generated specific questions for the interviews that directly addressed the OECD criteria for evaluating gender transformation and assessing capacity. The desk review also served as the basis for identifying reflective questions to determine the extent and nature of SDC's progress toward gender-transformative approaches. Documents that were consulted for the review included Project Narrative Documents, Entry and Credit proposals, Gender Analyses, reports, and Gender Action Plans. The desk review also examined the **theory of change** and the **core gender indicators** based on the Aggregated Reference Indicators (ARI) and Thematic Reference Indicators (TRI). It also assessed how these indicators align with and reflect the programme's intended gender outcomes and transformative pathways. **See the analysis on Annex 3.**

b) Key Informant Interviews: Primary data collection was guided by key informant interview guides, primarily targeting key SDC personnel, Programme Officer and partners. SDC identified a list of 15 key staff to be consulted in the key informant interviews. **Annex 4, table on list of Key Informants and partners.** While the sample is not statistically representative, it is analytically robust, ensuring that the evaluation captures variation across country contexts (Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia), implementation levels, and Organisational types.

The evaluation team frequently met to discuss and compare the ongoing and preliminary outcomes of the interviews, cross-checking findings and identifying emerging issues to ensure consistency. These reflections aided in identifying any additional perspectives to be explored in subsequent interviews with other participants or areas that require clarification with those already interviewed.

c) Capacity Assessment Survey: The gender capacities were assessed through a self-administered questionnaire available online via Google Forms. There were 30 participants in the assessment, 19 partners and 11 SDC staff. **Annex 5: Complete Capacity assessment report.**

Data Analysis: Qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis, guided by the evaluation framework through an intersectional lens. Efforts have been made to ensure that data is attributed to the various projects represented in the scope of the analysis.

Ethical Considerations: The evaluation team adhered to ethical guidelines throughout, ensuring the confidentiality and anonymity of participants. The team presents the findings in a manner that is sensitive to the diverse experiences of our project partners. All participants signed a consent form.

Team and Work Plan: The evaluation team consisted of gender specialists Aurelia Munene and Lonah Wanjama. Two gender-focal experts from SDC support the team.

Key findings

The evaluation findings are discussed below and are presented according to the gender evaluation objectives:

SDC RCPHoA progress in gender integration and shift to gender transformation.

The findings below addressed Objective 1 of the evaluation which as per the ToR was to assess progress in gender integration and identifying whether projects have transitioned from gender-sensitive to gender-transformative approaches since the RCPHoA 2019 HoA Gender Assessment. To address this objective, we present first the findings of the gender evaluation when we assessed SDC RCPHoA (also termed as the programme) generally, then proceed to provide our synthesised findings of the four domains, and then of the Theory of change and ARI's and TRI's and how each project has moved along the GIC (See Annex 3 of Theory of change).

SDC RCPHoA 2022-2025 has the long-term objective of contributing to the realization of a stable and resilient HoA region that supports the wellbeing, inclusion and empowerment of the most vulnerable communities, including women. The programme works in Somalia (including Somaliland) and the arid and semi-arid lands of North-Eastern Kenya and South-Eastern Ethiopia. Its focus is on those left furthest behind including the (agro) pastoral communities, Displacement Affected Communities (DAC) as well as women. In responding to the protracted conflict in these contexts, the programme uses a triple nexus approach (humanitarian-development-peace approach) working in the thematic areas of Good Governance, Food Security, Health and Migration & Protection. In terms of relevance and cohesion, these domains are integrated and respond to the critical challenges in the HoA such as fragility, food insecurity, health disparities, and forced displacement issues. Transversal themes like gender equality, good governance, and conflict-sensitive programme management are part of the programming.

Gender integration in SDC RCPHoA

The programme addresses gender transformation issues by aiming for the wellbeing, inclusion, and empowerment of vulnerable communities, including women. The SDC strategy in the Horn of Africa responds to a key weakness identified from the previous cooperation period (2018-2021) that merely mainstreaming gender is insufficient, necessitating Switzerland to reinforce advocacy, partnerships and specific interventions that respond to the precarious situation of women in the HoA regarding gender equality. The programmes focus on gender integration are also aligned with other Swiss goals. For example, gender and inclusion are part of the Swiss global and international cooperation strategy, and a key priority of the Swiss foreign ministry, which has a gender equality desk and inclusion is seen as key. Within SDC, Gender Equality is a priority theme and a transversal theme throughout all topics of our Cooperation strategy. It is for example mandatory to conduct a gender analysis for all projects and programmes, to ensure the principle of no harm, and to provide the opportunity for better programming. It is also mandatory to classify all projects towards the OECD DAC Gender Marker levels including: not targeted, significant or gender principle. The gender evaluation findings, however noted a need for better guidance from SDC on its gender transformation approaches and priorities. From a continental level, issues of gender transformation were also reinforced by the head of the Africa division, noting that the cooperation needs to go beyond ticking the gender box. Discussions with partners positively commented on SDC's goodwill and the push for gender-transformative programming as a good practice in programming.

Gender transformation aspirations are reflected in the 2022-2025 Results Framework that includes some direct and specific gender-related outcomes and indicators, demonstrating a shift towards more transformative thinking. Gender issues are embedded in cross-sectoral outcomes, with cross sectoral Cluster Outcome 5.1 focuses on improving inclusion and social cohesion among (agro-)pastoral, displacement-affected communities, and women. It includes indicators such as the number of people from left-behind groups benefiting from initiatives that reduce exclusion, discrimination, and inequality, with a specific focus on women as a vulnerable group. Another indicator measures the number of Swiss-supported political bodies with at least 30 per cent representation of women (and minorities), emphasizing women's political participation as a key element of gender transformation.

Cluster Outcome 5.2 focuses on enhancing the sustainable provision, access, and use of quality services for (agro-)pastoral and displacement-affected communities, with particular attention to women.

Other portfolios also have specific gender related indicators. For example, the Food Security portfolio includes a focus on catalysing Women Economic Empowerment (WEE) through support for women micro-enterprises, access to finance and provision of business support services. This shows an intentional approach to responding to economic gender disparities. Likewise, the Health Portfolio has Indicator IS3.2.4: # of health sector plans developed at national and regional level that include an integrated approach (related to GBV, One Health, and MCH), which address GBV and maternal and child health. These are critical needs in the intervention contexts. The Migration & Protection Portfolio explicitly pays attention to the effects of displacement on women. There is an indicator on # of persons reached by programmes supported by Switzerland that contribute to the reduction of violence (including forced displacement) and foster the protection of vulnerable persons, supported by gender-disaggregated targets.

RCPHoA also has a policy on gender parity in participation, aiming to ensure that in all activities a 50-50 for women and men's participation in activities is attained. This target is being met in almost all the project activities, except in some contexts when working with government partners, universities, and research institutes. Some of these institutions still reflect the skewed participation in the public space for women with more men occupying most positions in these institutions. RCPHoA also works on issues of governance and political participation for women. There are also economic and livelihood programmes for the displacement affected communities, that are aimed at ensuring that no one is left behind. For example, livelihood programmes focus on bridging gender disparities by supporting women micro-enterprises, providing access to finance, and offering business support services in livestock, agricultural, and water value chains. Addressing intersectional discrimination is one of the core aims of the programme and to embed the gains and ensure sustainable impacts, the programme is engaging at the policy level, reinforcing advocacy and partnerships, thereby embedding gains by ensuring that barriers to gender transformation are addressing and generating impact.

Gender analysis and RCPHoA: The relevance and cohesion of SDC projects have improved due to the adoption of gender analysis, a mandatory requirement of all projects of the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation. This has been the case since the introduction of a Gender Equality Policy in 2003 and is also a result of a recommendation from a 2019 evaluation. However, the application of such analysis is inconsistent. A key issue is timing of some of the project's gender analysis which for some occurs mid-project rather than during the design phase, causing some projects to miss critical gender related findings. This oversight impacts project relevance and cohesion. Another challenge is the missed opportunity to continuously track gender changes throughout the project lifecycle, which prevents projects from remaining responsive to evolving contexts. RCPHoA is getting better at conducting gender analyses but still struggles to embed the findings and track impact on gender integration efforts within projects and programmes consistently. From the gender evaluation, this is attributed to limited gender capacity for some partners and planning challenges/delays during project development. For instance, in several instances, partner gender focal persons or safeguarding officers were not engaged during project initiation or joined only after implementation had begun. This limited the depth and quality of the gender analysis, reducing opportunities to identify and integrate gender considerations effectively in project design. The gap does not necessarily imply a complete absence of gender analysis but rather reflects constraints in technical capacity and institutional commitment to mainstream gender from the outset. This points to a broader systemic challenge in which partners acknowledge the importance of gender analysis yet often lack the expertise, resources, and organizational support to translate that recognition into concrete design and implementation measures.

Gender Action Plans (GAP): SDC HoA 2022–2025 programme indicates that each domain will develop an annual GAP, which will have specific, measurable goals and concrete deliverables. The GAPs will be informed by findings from the HoA gender evaluation, ensuring they respond to actual gender-related gaps and recommendations. The GAP helps to operationalize gender commitments across the governance, food security, health, and migration/protection portfolios. The gender evaluation findings indicate that connection between the GAPs and the Results Framework (Appendix 2, pp. 29–39), is implicit with no clear elaboration on how the two process interconnect. For example, Programme results framework does not show how the GAP deliverables will be tracked, measured, or reported. That makes it difficult to see how commitments in the result framework translate into measurable outcomes within the programme's results. The gender evaluation recommends that Gender Action Plan (GAP) objectives be clearly linked to one or more overall cooperation programme outcomes or outputs in the Results Framework. Gender indicators from the GAP at programme level should be integrated into the Results Framework, either as core indicators or as disaggregated sub-indicators. This alignment would facilitate the translation of GAP objectives into project-level logframes, ensuring that gender commitments are

reflected and measured consistently across all projects and domains. The GAP should not be a standalone document, its implementation progress should be monitored through the programme's regular results reporting, ensuring gender performance is visible and comparable across domains.

The evaluations findings also indicate that the Results Framework primarily tracks quantitative metrics such as the number of women reached or trained, with limited attention to empowerment, agency, or gender norm change. This constrains the programme's ability to demonstrate transformative gender outcomes. The evaluation proposes to include three cross cutting objectives for all domains in the GAP that can help track gender transformation. These include proposals such as, *enhance women's and girls' agency and voice* which is measured by the proportion reporting increased confidence to express opinions, negotiate decisions, or challenge discriminatory norms. *Increase women's and girls' decision-making power* which is measured by their participation in joint household, community, and institutional decision-making processes. *Reduce gendered workloads and promote equitable access to and control over resources* which is measured through time-use data and improvements in women's control over productive and financial assets.

Monitoring and documentation of outcomes: The 2022-2025 cooperation strategy has several purposes, including mitigation of risks; providing the necessary basis for learning, for evidence-based programme steering and adaptations; and for accounting for the results achieved. The current monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) practices for projects, are insufficient because they fail to comprehensively measure changes in gender relations, including both positive progress and negative backlash. Additionally, the projects often lack explicit qualitative indicators to assess how change happens and whether it is being reversed. In some cases, such assessments are typically relegated to third-party reviews that do not always adequately reflect in project reports. SDC also has various guidance on how to integrate qualitative data into quantitative monitoring data for better results. For example, the 2024 Gender and Qualitative Interpretation of Data guidance makes this provision. However, the results frameworks for the projects rarely embed critical qualitative and process change indicators. Consequently, changes are not adequately documented leading to sometimes a false perception that no change is occurring and preventing valuable lessons from being learned. There is also a notable lack of participatory monitoring that would allow local communities to define and track their own experiences of gender transformation within specific contexts.

Project reporting. There were differing views among the participants regarding programmes' reporting. Some participants felt that the reporting format was too brief, making it difficult to capture gender transformative results across three countries and multiple domains within the regional programme. The reporting format was considered insufficient for a complex, multi-country programme and poses challenges for qualitative reporting. In contrast, other research participants emphasised the need for SDC to reconsider how it uses data and the demands placed on partners' time. They cautioned against SDC positioning itself as an operational partner seeking detailed, field-level information. Instead, they suggested that data from the field should enable SDC to ask the right questions and, more importantly, guide partners towards better implementation. To address these concerns, SDC could streamline its data requests to focus on information that directly supports partners' implementation efforts, rather than seeking granular operational details.

Gender transformative programming and capacity SDC also relies on external expertise with contextual specific information, who occasionally support in gender analysis and evaluations and training. In line with the SDC Gender Equality Policy and as a follow-up to the 2019 Assessment, each project must be guided by a gender analysis that guides the actions. This was the case for all projects, apart from one that carried out its gender analysis much later in the project. This is a big leap and shift in gender integration. Each domain has GAP, that guides the Gender focal persons. The SDC partner assessment in the beginning of the project looks at the internal governance structures, and as also reported to be checking for partners' understanding of gender, whilst also checking for presence of PSEAH policies and procedures. The capacity assessment conducted in this evaluation provides further findings.

Management for gender transformative programming: The programme is headed by a regional head of cooperation, based in Nairobi, who also has responsibility for gender integration into the programme. Gender integration within the SDC HOA work is seen as a mandate, an obligation, and so the focal role ensures that gender is substantively included. Externally and within the country context, the Head of the Cooperation also engages with government counterparts and implementing partners to ensure that gender inclusion is taken seriously. She is also part of the middle management of the foreign ministry. Having a senior position in the ministry provides a platform for pushing for integration of gender, not just in the programme, but also for the

organisation or what was seen as engaging the glass ceiling. A senior manager within a country office as a 'gender champion' also ensures a high-level backing for gender issues within the organisation. Downwards, the presence of such a feminist oriented leadership within the programme was cited as one of the key strengths, and the gender focal programme officers feel adequately supported and are being signposted to further learning around gender transformation programming. In the larger mission, it was also reported that in the last five years, the Head of Missions in Nairobi consecutively were acting as Gender Champions.

SDC thematic gender focal leads: the SDC gender focal persons support the diverse projects on issues of gender integration. The focal point is a voluntary two-year position with rotational and distributed responsibility taken by staff who have leadership in a specific thematic area. In addition to their core work, there is a 20 per cent time allocation for supporting the different thematic domains in gender integration. Rather than being gender technical focal persons, their role is more on ensuring that within the context of other programming issues in the complex RCPHOA programme, gender issues stay on the agenda. They operate in a similar way to the other crosscutting and transversal theme focal persons like climate change and good governance. Having such a role on a rotational basis was seen as one of the good practices in gender integration because it provided an opportunity for every National Program Officer (NPO) to take leadership in gender integration. The fact that the role is taken by NPO's who have project management and policy dialogue knowledge was also seen as a strength and gives some legitimacy to the role. This practice was also lauded for creating both a pool of gender-knowledgeable staff and a pipeline of staff within the programme who are conversant with gender-transformative programming. This is a gateway to normalizing the integration of gender in the programme in the long run.

Partner Gender focal leads at the project level: Some of the projects also have gender focal leads who are also working on integrating issues of gender in the projects, while for some of the projects, the responsibility for gender integration was the responsibility of all the staff. The analysis however reveals a need for revisiting the responsibilities of these gender focal staff and ensuring that their roles are properly institutionalized through adequate funding, they are recruited at the beginning of project design and adequate allocation of time. The role of the gender focal leads should go beyond checking for integration of gender into building allies among other staff by working with project colleagues on how to steer gender issues based on evidence and context-specific issues.

Context-responsive training and capacity strengthening: The gender evaluation also identified a need for gender-specific training for focal persons, including clear guidelines on what to look for on issues of gender integration in a complex HOA context. While there are manuals that can be used by SDC staff and partner focal persons, some of these tool kits are not adequately consulted by the staff. Research participants noted that these toolkits need to be adapted to project contexts to reflect local concerns, dynamics and approaches and capacities of the organisations in question. Guidelines on how to operationalise them were also expressed as a need. For example, guidelines on how to step by step conduct intersectionality analysis, develop and link GAPs and log frames among others. Some of the new gender focal persons were also not signposted to the materials. This is especially important for the new staff who need to be inducted.

Rethinking Intersectionality: Most of the partners are increasingly disaggregating gender data and going beyond women as the quintessential vulnerable gendered category. One of the key issues identified in the analysis is the need to reposition and rethink what is seen as intersectionality. In some cases, data is disaggregated in terms of women and men, youth and in a few cases, other axis of differentiation like those with disabilities. Our discussions revealed an understanding that the category woman and man exist along diverse axes of identity and are defined by social status, minority clan status or age. However, this awareness is not sufficiently translated to practice in the field. While reporting or programming around gendered vulnerability, intersectionality was erroneously equated with being over granular hence a threat to people's identity and privacy and due to challenges of further disaggregating data. Intersectionality, therefore, needs to be repositioned as an approach that offers a transformative way of understanding how context-specific inequalities are experienced, particularly for people or groups facing multiple disadvantages. It therefore goes beyond counting after the fact (after the intervention) and involves being intentional in seeking out, showing and programming around nuanced perspectives and entangled inequalities. A focus on intersectionality is key to leaving no one behind, as advocated in the SDC HOA programme. Intersectionality also involves an understanding of how the intersection of gender, conflict and fragility in the project contexts affects the dignity

and rights of differently located men, women, boys and girls and how these differences may overlap thereby compounding the experience of being left behind.

Budget and adaptability. We were also interested in understanding the extent to which the projects were adaptive to emerging gender issues in intervention contexts. Responsiveness to DAC contexts and needs in funding decisions is crucial in fragile environments where needs come up on short notice, and delays may worsen the situation of the most marginalized groups. The cooperation strategy makes provisions for the need to adjust the programme according to the realities on the ground. The programme is guided by an adaptive management approach, which responds to context-specific needs, including security changes, and these have budget lines. Partners have budget flexibility and partners need to inform SDC prior to shifting fund. However, shifting between specific categories (from project funds towards overhead is not allowed. with authority from SDC. Such budget flexibility can aid in responding to gender transformative programming. However other partners noted that there was no adequate budget for programming around gender issues since there were no budget lines and changes were only possible during a new phase of the project.

Domain specific analysis on gender integration and shifts to gender transformation

Migration/Protection Domain: *Empower, Durable Solutions Somalia* (, (*Saameynta*) *Durable Solutions Ethiopia* (*DS ETH*).

All the three projects are focussing on durable solutions, and all projects can be described as having some measure of gender transformative programming. These projects acknowledge that gender transformative planning and programme implementation must go beyond provision of services and address root causes of gender inequalities. There is evidence of a shift from being gender sensitive to gender transformative. While *Empower* and *DS ETH*, have commendable gender-sensitive elements and a promising understanding of transformation, this shift to gender transformative is more visible in the UNJPS programme which has a more emerging direct, intentional, and transformative intervention. We explain this finding below.

All the three projects identify women's marginalisation as the root cause of inequalities and have made intentional efforts to address these root causes by for example involving women in planning and in identifying the projects therefore improving their voice and agency. All the interventions are using livelihoods activities in ways that are also targeting the most marginalised. UNJPS has a clear focus on land tenure for women and is working on laws that enable right to land for those affected by displacement. The project is therefore linking land tenure security to women's agency and empowerment and recognizes that providing title deeds to women can strengthen their voice and bargaining power within the household and community. Addressing underlying social norms around land ownership can also ensure long-term, sustainable change. UNJPS is also receptive to learning in an adaptive way. The three projects also seem to be more concerned with reaching equal number of women and men, or the institutional thresholds set in the projects.

In terms of adaptive learning and budgets, all the three projects have some flexibility in allocating funds to emergent gender issues in their context. *Empower* has a lumpsum budget for emerging issues while the two other projects noted some flexibility in allocating funds. While design of the different projects and their log frames lack a nuanced understanding of how gender intersects with other factors, the three projects show some adaptive learning and are increasingly conscious of different beneficiary categories beyond just women and men. UNJPS is increasingly adapting its projects and responding to the results of previous gender analysis.

In terms of internal cohesion, the two joint UN projects (*DS ETH* and *Saameynta*) reveal a need for internal cohesion since there is a variation in the way gender transformation is understood by each partner in the joint project. There is also a need for stronger accountability to each other and streamlined conversations with SDC in terms of accountability. In terms of external cohesion, while all the three projects identify a need to work with women's rights Organisations in their contexts, for the two UN joint projects, there was limited engagement with other local actors beyond the UN system and the government for the three projects.

None of the three projects directly engage with the prevailing gender norms, even though their objectives suggest they should be addressing these issues more explicitly. However, projects classified as significant can still contribute to gender transformation by systematically tracking gender-related changes that occur during

implementation. This evidence can then be used to identify and address the underlying gender norms that continue to reinforce inequality. For the two UN projects, we recommend using their proof of concepts strategies to identify which components of their engagement can be a pilot for showcasing how gender integrated projects work and in ways that engage underlying norms and lead to long term transformative outcomes.

During discussions, the projects reflected on the various ways in which their projects are leading to sustainable impacts. They all have an evolving understanding of what constitutes gender sustainable programming. For example, Empower understands that gender transformative programming is more than access to finance but also includes engaging with barriers to participation. The project implementers understand that enabling women to participate in the public business sphere can transform gender relations by challenging the image of a male-dominated entrepreneurial landscape. For all the three projects, there is an attempt to address structural barriers of women's participation and control over and access to resources. For example, Empower provides coaching and mentoring. However, such training does not incorporate gender-related issues or informal norms. UNJPS is focusing on land tenure and housing solutions that are cognisant of women's practical and transformative needs. DS ETH is focussing on livelihoods, integration and sustainable housing solution. The projects are therefore identifying economic disempowerment, limited land tenure, fragility, inadequate housing as a significant root cause of gender inequality, particularly in the context of displacement.

The evaluation revealed that for all the three projects there is lack of proper documentation linking the project's activities to changes in gender relations and overall impacts indicating a gap in its practical application of transformative knowledge. All the three projects' processes of documentation do not adequately link financial inclusion or livelihood activities to change in dominant gender norms. This is also because while there are these emerging gender transformational changes as revealed during discussions, these are not adequately captured in the results framework do not adequately cater for these changes. We recommend that the results framework should include clearly spelt out indicators for change on gender integration.

In relation to intersectional programming, gender reporting across all three projects has become increasingly disaggregated, reflecting a growing commitment to capturing the diverse experiences of women and men across different contexts. There is also emerging evidence of intersectional targeting, with deliberate efforts to reach the most marginalized groups, such as single female-headed households, widows, older women, and survivors of violence. This shift signals an important step toward more inclusive programming, though continued attention is needed to ensure these efforts translate into measurable, sustained improvements in equity and empowerment outcomes.

Despite these advances, intersectional reporting remains largely descriptive, focused on counting and categorizing beneficiaries after interventions, rather than reflecting a deeper understanding of what intersectional marginalization truly entails. Across the three projects, a critical gap lies in the limited analysis of how displacement and fragility intersect with other identity markers such as gender, clan affiliation, and duration of displacement. This highlights the need for enhanced capacity on what constitutes genuine intersectional programming within fragile and displacement-affected contexts.

To advance this, community engagement and norm change efforts should frame gender transformation in ways that resonate with local priorities, such as community integration, stabilization, decent shelter, business development, livelihoods, food security, and peacebuilding. Positioning gender transformation as integral to these broader development and recovery goals would provide a more effective entry point for fostering meaningful and sustainable change in such complex environments.

The capacity of staff to implement gender-transformative results is a significant weakness across all projects. None of the three projects have a substantive gender focal point. Even though the safeguarding officers were said to be taking on this role, it was not clear if the gender focal responsibilities were intentionally allocated for the project. Empower has a new safeguarding officer who is taking on gender focal duties for the project in a voluntary capacity. This lack of capacity manifests in weaknesses in integration of gender into the programmes including in ways that are gender transformative. There is a need for a dedicated and well-supported focal person to prevent a loss of focus on gender issues during implementation.

The three projects also have gender imbalance of staff, with most of the staff being men, presenting challenges to capacity for gender transformations in programming and accountability to communities. There is a need to intentionally hire and retain women staff by recruiting in ways that communicate trust in these roles, ensuring better workplace practices that ensure participation for both men and women and hire staff with clearly defined responsibilities for gender integration.

DS ETH project is gender significant, the project is aimed at ensuring that gender sensitivity is mainstreamed by aiding both male and female-headed households, ensuring full and equal participation of the most vulnerable members of the community and prioritising women in the provision of livelihood assistance and emerging good practice in integrating gender in the settlement component of the project. The project remains gender sensitive while moving towards gender transformation. This is shown through commendable efforts at gender integration into the project but in ways that are uneven, emerging evidence intersectional programming, emerging evidence on enhancing voice of women and in economic empowerment, and integrating gendered perspectives in housing and settlement solutions, and in livelihood interventions and efforts to integrate gender issues into surveys and in baseline surveys to identify barriers facing women in participation.

Gaps in engaging with dominant gender norms in the project sites, a lack of documentation on projects gendered outcomes mainly because the log frame lacks gender transformative indicators, in adequate gender expertise remain core challenges for gender transformation.

Empower: it remains gender significant, while gender is not the core mandate of EMPOWER's work, it has a strong women client focus. In addition to providing financial inclusion services to address women's marginalisation and lack of access to and control over resources, it is also providing business coaching services in ways that acknowledge the triple roles of women and is providing gender disaggregated data. On gender integration it is still gender sensitive with a potential towards gender transformative. Gender is still treated as women and there is a lack of sustained intersectional approach to programming. The business coaching training does not include a focus on gender norms and the role of financial inclusion on gender relations at various levels. The project is not coordinating with women rights Organisations and other CSO's in project contexts. Project's monitoring and evaluation is largely output focussed and does not focus on transformative changes like enhancement of women's voice or increase in agency in financial decision making.

There is a need to move beyond descriptive intersectionality by examining the processes of marginalization that shape project contexts and outcomes. This includes documenting lessons learned from intersectional targeting and assessing their results. The logframes of the three projects should integrate gender indicators that capture shifts in norms, attitudes, and behaviors, rather than limiting monitoring to participation metrics. Ultimately, instead of only asking whether the project delivered on planned activities, the core question should be whether it made a difference, specifically, whether it contributed to gender-transformative change. Promoting stronger accountability by making gender integration a decisive performance criterion can motivate partners. For SDC, this means investing resources in impact measurement and fostering joint, reflective, and creative discussions between project implementers and SDC teams to continuously learn from results.

In addition, SDC and its partners should engage regularly on the partners' preparedness to operate within a gender-transformative framework and to apply findings from gender analyses. Achieving gender balance and diversity in staffing should also be pursued intentionally through creative recruitment and retention strategies, supported by Organisation-wide employment practices that prioritize inclusion. Each project under the Migration and Protection Programme should further engage with dominant gender norms that hinder gender equality and transformative programming. Coordinating with other actors to promote synergistic interventions will be key to addressing entrenched gender relations and sustaining equitable change across contexts.

Governance Domain: *FRAP: Africa Voices Foundation (AVF), Kulmis (KST), International NGO Safety Organisation (INSO) & COMPEL: Nordic International Support Foundation (NIS), Road to Peace (R2P), Heritage Institute for Policy Studies (HIPS)*

The governance portfolio includes a mix of projects that work on peacebuilding, service delivery, civic participation, public policy, and local accountability. Across the board, there is a strong intention to promote inclusion, especially of women, youth, and minority clans. This inclusion is often operationalised through participation quotas, community-based governance structures, and efforts to engage communities in decision-making.

Several projects also link governance with economic opportunity. NIS, for instance, supports women in small businesses and gives access to microfinance. C4P integrates cultural leadership with livelihood opportunities. These approaches recognise that access to income and markets can improve participation in public life. However, many of these efforts do not go far enough in addressing how resources are controlled within households and communities. In key informant interviews, it emerged that women may gain access to income but do not necessarily control how it is used. This reflects deeper social structures, especially patriarchal norms, that remain largely untouched by most projects.

Projects like R2P and HIPS are beginning to engage in policy and normative work. R2P has supported women to participate in electoral processes and peace structures. HIPS is building a pipeline of women analysts and has created forums where female scholars and religious leaders can challenge restrictive norms. These examples show potential for normative influence but are still early in their reach and depth.

Across the governance portfolio, monitoring frameworks tend to focus on outputs, such as participation rates, but often miss more complex outcomes related to decision-making, voice, and power. Several projects are collecting sex- and age-disaggregated data but are not tracking shifts in power relations. As a result, it is difficult to assess whether the inclusion of women and youth is leading to real influence.

To close this proof gap and go beyond simple participation markers the portfolio should adopt as part of its review processes, at minimum, three portfolio-wide power-and-influence checks: who sets or co-sets the agenda; (which decisions changed and where minutes credit women's or minority input; and what rules, bylaws, terms of reference, or public statements were adopted as a result. In addition, projects should draw on further practices indicators in the project annexes, such as barrier-removal indicators, short and stable attitude checks, outcome harvesting influence cases, and norms/policy influence logs. Partners could also submit a one-page quarterly evidence pack, and SDC should convene a quarterly joint gender review to assess progress and agree on adaptations. These practices are elaborated in the governance project annexes.

There is also a limited conceptual clarity across the portfolio on what gender transformation means. Most project teams equate gender mainstreaming with transformation. This has resulted in uneven application of gender approaches across projects, with some remaining gender sensitive but not transformative. Other projects show potential but have not yet embedded strategies to shift norms or change institutional structures. To correct this, projects can operationalise transformative approaches through three practice shifts: define transformation with simple tests applied at design and review for instance a move from counting attendance to documenting how participation shifted to influence, from intentions to for example written rules/ToR/bylaws, and from outputs to decisions/norms changed); upgrade monitoring to include the portfolio-wide power checks and the quarterly evidence pack so influence is evidenced regularly; and institutionalise gains through formal artifacts which include such gains as women co-signatories for budgetary allocations, agenda-setting rules, or public commitments) so changes persist beyond individuals.

There are entry points to build on. The economic empowerment approaches in C4P and NIS could be deepened to address control over income and decision-making. HIPS and R2P show promise in shaping norms and public policy. Overall, the governance portfolio is positioned between gender-sensitive and early gender-transformative. It has expanded participation and created access, but it has not yet consistently shifted power structures or challenged the deeper norms that shape inequality.

With reference to intersectionality, there is growing awareness of the intersecting forms of exclusion that shape people's experiences of governance and public life. Many of the projects recognise that gender does not operate in isolation, and that identity markers such as age, clan affiliation, displacement status, and socio-economic position affect access to voice, resources, and protection. For example, R2P and HIPS have made deliberate

efforts to include young women and minority clan members in political and research spaces. However, while the results frameworks often name these groups, fewer projects systematically analyse how these identities interact or compound marginalisation. Intersectionality tends to be acknowledged in design but weakly applied in implementation. As a result, certain groups, such as women with disability, displaced youth, or older men and women facing economic precarity, may be invisible in programming. The portfolio should adopt Minimum Intersectionality standards. By this we mean a simple, enforceable minimum standard for analysing intersecting inequalities, even where project resources are limited. The minimum requires that every project select at least two priority outputs each year and apply one additional layer of disaggregation (disability, displacement/IDP, or minority clan). The analysis should then track the path from participation to influence across at least two intersections for example, comparing older women (60+) living with a disability to other women in the same programme. The aim is to move beyond symbolic presence to documented influence: who attends, who speaks, who sets the agenda, whose preferences are reflected in decisions, and who formally co-signs or authorises outcomes. By institutionalising this minimum practice, the portfolio ensures that marginalised groups, especially older women, are consistently visible and their actual influence is captured. The same is detailed explicitly in the annexes.

There is an opportunity for the portfolio to move from inclusion to deeper understanding of how layered identities shape risk, agency, and influence. Doing so would allow interventions to be more responsive to the realities of the communities they aim to serve. Going forward, there is a need to define what gender transformation means in practical terms. There is also a need to measure power shifts and not just participation. The portfolio has created openings. The next step is to ensure those openings lead to influence.

Health Domain: *Private Sector Partnerships in Health (PSPH), Sexual and gender-based violence prevention and response project in the Horn of Africa (SG BV-HoA), One Health Units for Humans, Environment, Animals and Livelihoods (HEAL), Community Health Provision in Somalia (CHASP).*

Across all four projects, a core strength is the explicit recognition of gender inequalities as a central issue, moving beyond a simple 'do no harm' approach. The GBV and CHASP projects stand out for their strong, intentional gender-transformative designs. They directly challenge patriarchal norms and advocate for legal and policy reform, such as the Somali Land Sexual Offences Bill and the FGM Bill. This proactive stance is crucial for sustainable change in the long run. The SGBV and PSPH projects employ a systems-level approach. PSPH leverages the private sector to promote gender-sensitive practices by tying them to business viability. The SGBV project engages a wide range of actors, including men, boys, traditional leaders, and WLOs to create a multi-layered ecosystem for change. The SGBV and CHASP projects prioritize localization by building the capacity of local actors. The SGBV project provides direct grants to WLOs, positioning them as central agents of change. CHASP empowers female health staff and community health committees, increasing women's professional roles and decision-making power.

All projects show a commitment to data disaggregation (by sex, age), which is a fundamental step. The HEAL project's use of a One Health community of practice for cross-learning is also a notable capacity-building strength.

Common challenges across projects limit the full realization of gender-transformative goals. A pervasive challenge is the deeply entrenched patriarchal norms and passive resistance to gender mainstreaming. The HEAL project, for instance, notes a subtle but widespread reluctance to involve women in meaningful decision-making. All projects contend with male dominance in leadership roles. The long-term sustainability of gender gains is a concern due to this prevailing challenge. The CHASP project highlights the threat posed by a lack of political will to implement progressive legislation, even after successful advocacy. The SGBV project also notes that deep social change requires sustained resources and continuous political accompaniment. While designs may be transformative, implementation can fall short. The SGBV project points out that WLOs are often overstretched and under-resourced, limiting their effectiveness despite their central role. The HEAL project highlights an underrepresentation of women at the ToT level, which limits the long-term sustainability of training outcomes.

Opportunities for these projects include: The PSPH project has an opportunity to move beyond its current approach by offering specific training on management skills to address the lack of women in top-level positions. This would directly tackle the key structural ^(GBV) barriers to women participation in leadership. The HEAL project can use its community of practice to specifically address passive resistance and institutional barriers. By

leveraging existing platforms, it can more efficiently build capacity and share strategies for overcoming these challenges. The SGBV project has a clear opportunity to refine its Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system, by developing indicators that track changes in power relations, social norms, and women's agency, it can better demonstrate and document its transformative impact. The CHASP project's success in increasing the number of female health staff and advocating for new legislation presents a dual opportunity. It can leverage the professional empowerment of women to further advocate for the implementation of the new laws, creating a powerful synergy between on-the-ground change and systemic reform. The SGBV programme stands out as the only one that has been designed from the outset to be gender transformative. It applies a socio-ecological model, works with men and boys, builds the capacity of women-led organisations, and aims to shift harmful gender norms. It also strengthens institutional response and prevention mechanisms. It provides an example of how a project can address gender inequality in a structural and sustained way.

Food Security Domain: *Horn of Africa Regional Livestock Program, RAPID +*

The gender evaluation shows both the RLP and RAPID projects are moving from gender sensitive focus towards a more gender-transformative approach. This shift is intentional, driven by the recognition that simply including women is insufficient because the underlying systems and power dynamics must be changed. The projects are using various tools and strategies to integrate gender. The RLP team, for instance, has moved beyond simple Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) training to adopting more specific frameworks like Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) and the Women's Empowerment in Livestock Index (WELI). This indicates a deliberate effort to measure and address gender-specific challenges. The RAPID project's shift from a gender-accommodating design as highlighted in the last gender analysis conducted in 2021 to a more gender-transformative, one, shows a similar evolution.

Both projects are looking beyond individual women's empowerment to address the societal norms, policies, and institutions that create gender inequality. The RLP's emphasis on tackling policies that are gender-blind -meaning they do not consider gender components in their formulation, like budgeting for livestock value chains and the RAPID project's work on policies and legislations like the Wajir Water Bill which have integrated gender components. This is about changing the rules of the game, not just helping women play better within the existing, unequal rules.

Both projects are strong in their gender-transformative efforts. For example, they have commitment to deeper analysis, where the projects have gone beyond basic gender-disaggregated data. The use of the WELI and the Women's Empowerment in Livestock Business Index (WELBI) shows a commitment to understanding the nuances of women's empowerment across multiple domains such as agency, time, and GBV. This provides a rich, quantitative basis for tracking progress. A major strength is the intentional work on policy and systemic change. RLP is anchoring its work with government institutions (IGAD) to influence long-term policy and laws, which will ensure that the changes outlast the project itself. RAPID+ is leveraging its technical work to influence policy changes at the county level. This shows an understanding that true transformation requires a supportive legal and policy environment.

The projects are demonstrating flexibility and adaptability. When the initial budget for the RAPID project was found to be inadequate for a gender audit, the team proactively re-aligned the budget to fund it. This is an example of adaptive programming that prioritizes gender outcomes. Acknowledging the need to move beyond a 'blanket' approach to women and instead focus on different types of women like entrepreneurial, rural vs. urban is a significant strength. While the implementation is in its early stages, this recognition is a crucial step toward ensuring that the projects do not leave out the most marginalized women.

As for the challenges, the RLP project is particularly affected by the reliance on a single regional gender specialist. This means that gender-specific actions and intentions can be lost or not implemented effectively at the local level. This directly affects the RLP, as it has specific value chains in different corridors that require dedicated, on-the-ground gender expertise. Both projects recognize that unpaid care work is a massive burden, especially RLP particularly in Somalia where women are still doing business while raising many children. This is a complex challenge that needs creative, well-resourced solutions. While the need to engage men and boys is acknowledged by both projects, practical application seems to be in the nascent stages. This is a significant gap because without male champions, long-term gender transformation is difficult for either project to achieve.

As for the opportunities, both projects could formalize a strategy to engage men and boys in gender equality, using workshops, dialogues, and partnerships with male leaders to challenge traditional masculinity and

encourage men to become champions. Both projects lack strong partnerships with Women Rights Organisations (WROs) and other local advocacy groups. By leveraging these partnerships, the projects can gain technical expertise, local knowledge, and advocacy power to drive policy changes and ensure the long-term sustainability of gender gains. Given the lack of gender staff on the ground, the RLP has a significant opportunity to build capacity by hiring gender officers, providing continuous training for existing staff, and creating a support team for the regional gender specialist. The RLP project demonstrates strong technical capacity by using the WEE framework and WELI to measure and track empowerment beyond just income, considering dimensions like agency, time, and GBV. RAPID's decision to conduct a gender audit shows a critical capacity for self-reflection and course correction. The project's willingness to re-align its budget twice to fund the audit highlights its pragmatic ability to prioritize and resource gender-related activities. Both projects have technically strong dedicated gender focal points who are driving ownership and gender institutional strengthening through staff capacity support. Both projects can benefit from developing a concrete, intentional gender action plan. For the RLP, this plan should be a 'living document' that's integrated into its results measurement framework. For RAPID, the project can use the momentum of its new gender action plan to make it a core part of its work, linking it directly to the project's framework with clear deliverables for all partners.

RAPID+ project is effective at translating technical findings into actionable policy recommendations and engaging with political structures. The RLP team shows a capacity for realistic planning by recognizing they can't work on all indicators and are focusing on what's feasible and impactful. Both projects demonstrate a strong capacity for adaptive management. The RLP is actively seeking new models to address challenges like unpaid care work, while RAPID+ is proactive in assessing its work and willing to overhaul indicators based on new learning. RAPID+'s program learning week is a key capacity for cross-learning and knowledge sharing.

Project Review: GPM Score and GIC Placement

The proposed next steps will be the responsibility of Project officers, working closely with the specific project partners and supported by the SDC Gender Focal points.

Project	GPM Score (with justification)	GIC Placement (with justification)	Next Steps
Africa's Voices Foundation (AVF)	Significant – Gender is integrated under the broader rubric of inclusion informed by a gender analysis, disaggregation of data by gender.	Gender Sensitive AVF ensures women and marginalized groups can participate (through radio, SMS, safe spaces), but does not yet systematically measure norm shifts or embed transformative practices.	1. Add barrier-removal indicators (by next reporting cycle). 2. Introduce norm-change surveys (within 12 months). 3. Strengthen safeguarding protocols (within 3 months). 4. Hold joint reflection sessions with SDC (twice per year).
Project	GPM Score (with justification)	GIC Level (with justification)	Next steps
Culture for Peace (C4P)	Significant – Gender is explicitly integrated in design through training for women, financial literacy, women's advisory roles, and inclusion in cultural markets. However, the project does not yet have strategies that redistribute decision-making power or transform restrictive norms. Transformative intent is possible but not yet embedded systematically.	Gender Sensitive – The programme reduces barriers for women and youth (training, mentorship, inclusion in cultural forums) but lacks consistent norm-change indicators or strategies to shift patriarchal control over resources. Current activities are gender sensitive with early moves towards transformation.	1. Integrate empowerment & norm-change indicators into MEL (by 2025 logframe revision). 2. Embed gender clauses in all new MoUs with cultural enterprises (2025–2026). 3. Develop clear shared definition of gender transformation and embed in staff training & SDC guidance (by 2025 annual review).
Project	GPM Score (with justification)	GIC Level (with justification)	Next Steps

INSO (International NGO Safety Organisation)	Significant While gender/age aren't the core mandate, INSO has begun integrating gender into practice (female and male trainers in courses, gender-disaggregated participation in trainings, GBV case awareness). This elevates gender beyond not targeted, though integration is uneven and not yet embedded across products (advisories, threat analysis, SOPs).	Gender Sensitive — INSO has taken inclusion steps (mixed-gender training delivery, some sex-disaggregation), but training content and threat analysis still largely treat security as gender-neutral. There's no systematic gendered risk assessment in advisories, limited GBV awareness for male staff, and incomplete safeguarding/referral protocols, for example, adaptations exist, but power/norms and institutional rules have not shifted.	1.Embed gender-specific modules into all safety trainings and require gendered threat paragraphs in every situational advisory (by next training/advisory cycle, 2025). 2.Roll out GBV-awareness sessions for male staff and add gender-specific KPIs to the log frame for example percentage advisories with gendered sections (by contract update, 2025). 3.Approve and operationalize safeguarding SOPs with confidential referral pathways and test them in two field locations (by mid-2026).
Project	GPM Score (with justification)	GIC Level (with justification)	Next Steps
Heritage Institute for Policy Studies (HIPS)	Significant (GPM 1) Gender is addressed through dialogue content and inclusion strategies (women scholars; women-focused talking points), but is not the principal objective across the portfolio of policy products; outcome evidence on gender influence is nascent.	Gender sensitive (with early moves toward transformative) HIPS meaningfully includes women in dialogues and content and surfaces gendered issues but lacks a formalized norm-change strand and systematic evidence of influence on norms/policy. Formalizing the scholars track and champion pipeline would move it gender transformative	1. Launch the Outcome Evidence Pack and embed pre/post perception checks in two dialogue cycles (by Q3-2026). 2. Formalize and publish the female religious-scholar strand with tracked references in sermons/media/policy (by Q4-2026). 3. Appoint the Gender Focal Point and reach compliance with the "Gender Risks & Opportunities" box across outputs (by Q2-2026).
Project	GPM Score (with justification)	GIC Level (with justification)	Next Steps
Kulmis Support Team (KST)	Significant Gender is integrated in staffing and field practice (female enumerators; facilitation that accommodates women's care schedules; private debriefs; minority-clan inclusion). However, gender is not yet a core, automated feature of tools, dashboarding, and management cycles.	Gender Sensitive KST adapts processes so women and marginalised groups can safely participate and be heard, but institutional shifts are not yet embedded.	1. Bake gender fields into all TPM/spot-check templates dashboard (Q2-2026). 2. Launch feedback loop into quarterly reviews with 2 tracked actions per quarter (pilot Q2-2026). 3. Run quarterly CoP and publish an annual brief on "what changed because of gender insights" (start Q2-2026).
Project	GPM Score (with justification)	GIC Level (with justification)	Next Steps
NIS (Nordic International Support Foundation)	Significant Gender is integrated via inclusive planning, gender-sensitive designs, and targeted support for women (markets, microfinance, TVET). Conducted a gender analysis	Gender Sensitive The approach reduces barriers and includes women meaningfully, with some gender-specific initiatives; but it does not yet shift norms/rules or consistently	1. Formalise women's roles in asset governance through written by-laws in 6 sites (by Q4-2025). 2. Add time-bound gender outcome indicators and at least one intersectional layer to priority outputs (by Q2-2026).

		measure changes in power/authority.	3. Publish first outcome-learning brief linking women's participation authority (using OH/MSC) (by Q3-2026).
Project	GPM Score (with justification)	GIC Level (with justification)	Next Steps
R2P (Road to Sustainable Peacebuilding & Good Governance)	Significant Gender is a cross-cutting objective in participation/elections/peace platforms but not yet embedded as a core strand in the ToC; strategic framing and gender MEL are incomplete.	Gender transformative (early) Evidence of institutional/policy shifts (e.g., electoral law reform; women's council seats; women as peace champions) goes beyond accommodation but enabling environment and sustained strategy are not yet in place.	1. Add qualitative outcome indicators & OH/MSC and publish 1st learning brief (by Q2-2026). 2. Formalise leadership pipeline with tracked cohorts (launch Q1-2026; review Q1-2027). 3. Apply one extra intersectional layer to 2 outputs and document adaptations (from Q2-2026).
Project	GPM Score (with justification)	GIC Level (with justification)	Next Steps
Private Sector Partnerships in Health (PSPH)	Significant: Gender inequality directly affects development outcomes and must be addressed to ensure equitable access to resources, services, and opportunities. The programme therefore integrates gender considerations to remove barriers, promote women's economic empowerment, and ensure both men and women benefit from interventions.	Gender Sensitive: Recognizes and actively addresses the barriers that limit women's access to opportunities and services. It integrates gender analysis into market diagnosis and intervention design, ensures participation of both women and men health providers, and considers their different health financing needs. It also promotes women's economic empowerment by linking them with private sector networks to enhance access to skills and financial services. Gender-disaggregated data will be used in planning and reporting to track progress and ensure equitable benefits. .	1. Have a qualitative outcome on patient perception if the care meeting their different gender needs. Update- HLT TRI 3 - Patients satisfaction by Q1 2026 2. % of women in leadership or decision-making roles within supported health and market institutions by Q1 2026 3. Include a gender responsive health service delivery module by Q2 2026.
Project	GPM Score (with justification)	GIC Level (with justification)	Next Steps
Community Health Provision in Somalia	Significant: commits to providing comprehensive RMNCAH services which are targeted mostly towards women. Training for health facility personnel emphasizes gender equality principles, equipping staff with the skills necessary to offer care that respects the unique needs and experiences women, including survivors of SGBV. The program's efforts to expand and strengthen SRHR services are keenly	Gender Transformative (Early): Focus on delivery of high-quality gender responsive and nutrition services. Strengthening GBV and child protection with a system-based approach, session on Addressing norms like FGM, CEFM, GBV-IPV prevention and response.	1. Track Qualitative changes in gender relations, norms, unpaid care work by Q1 2026 2. % of male participants reporting increased involvement in childcare. Q1 2026 - Campaign outcomes showing norm shifts in men's roles. Q1 2026 3. # of female staff completing leadership training. Q1 2026 4. %increase in women in supervisory or management roles.

	focused on the needs of women and girls. Inclusivity, the establishment of gender-responsive and disability-inclusive Community Health Committees is planned, with a minimum of 40% representation of women. Lastly, the programme is committed to working with policymakers and authorities to advocate for the adoption of gender-inclusive health policies. The use of mother to mother and father to father group also provides spaces where gender sensitive issues can be discussed such as contraceptives, importance of birth spacing etc.		5. Mentorship satisfaction feedback. Q3 2026
Project	GPM Score (with justification)	GIC Level (with justification)	Next Steps
One Health Units for Humans, Environment, Animals and Livelihoods (HEAL)	Significant – gender analysis has been conducted. One Health Units and innovation platforms take into consideration analysis related to access to services, gender capacity assessment across stakeholders involved in health. animal and environmental service delivery and will be responsive to the needs of men and women conduct. Data and indicators are disaggregated by sex - log frame indicators where sex disaggregation is applicable indicated with 'M/F) Project is expected to have a positive impact on advancing gender equality which will be assessed through the impact assessment. In this assessment a strong focus on gender will not only allow us to capture expected impacts but also identify eventual non- intended consequences. Monitoring tools of identification of gender-specific needs and How much these needs are met will be embedded in the monitoring and evaluation system of the project	Gender Sensitive: The project shows promising effectiveness in achieving its stated goals, though some areas need strengthening. There are several positive outcomes: improved access to health services for women through mobile health delivery, increased women's participation in community groups and income-generating activities, and a rise in female representation on platforms. The project has also successfully built women's capacity in community health activities and provided them with skills in new areas.	1. Gender-transformative indicators adopted. Q1 2026 2. Reports include qualitative findings (stories, case studies). Q1 2026 3. M&E feedback informs programme adaptation, Q1 2026
Project	GPM Score (with justification)	GIC Level (with justification)	Next Steps
Plan International – SGBV Prevention & Response	Principal The core purpose is GBV prevention and response; gender is the main objective across services, safeguarding, and norms work.	Gender Transformative. Survivor-centred services, WLO leadership, and community norm work are in	1. Make change measurable (Q2–Q3 2026): Launch a simple Transformation Tracker (decision influence, GRB

		place, to enhance the transformative aspects by systematic evidence of decision influence and formal rules/budgets	budget tags, two-item norm surveys) and attach a one-page evidence pack to each site. 2. Institutionalize and fund (by Q4 2026): Sign MoUs and adopt local by-laws for women's roles in committees; secure district budget lines for CMR, safe spaces, and survivor navigation. 3. Manage risk and learn (start next cycle; review quarterly): Roll out a backlash & safeguarding log; review incidents and adaptations in quarterly meetings with WLOs and authorities.
Project	GPM Score (with justification)	GIC Level (with justification)	Next Steps
Kenya Arid Lands Partnerships for Integrated Development Plus (RAPID +)	Significant: RAPID+ intends to enhance gender mainstreaming and integration by strengthening gender departments within will push and promote equitable promote and monitor equitable gender division of labour in water and rangeland management at household, community. And county level advocate for enhanced access to, and control over water and rangeland resources and assets by women and other marginalized groups and capacitate local institutions to be aware and prevent Gender Based Violence in the spheres in water and rangelands. Core gender indicators have been developed under each of the outcome end will be monitored throughout the project	Gender Significant towards transformation. Working on gender norms within decision making places, conducting gender audits, gender measurements in M&E processes.	1. # of staff trained on intersectional analysis. By Q3 2026 2. Inclusion of intersectional variables in data tools. By Q3 2026 3. Reports disaggregated by sex, age, disability, and displacement. Continuous. 4. Adaptive actions based on intersectional insights. By Q3 2026
Project	GPM Score (with justification)	GIC Level (with justification)	Next Steps
Horn of Africa Regional Livestock Program RLP	Significant - Link pastoral women to productive assets, service providers, and new markets to help minimize gender gaps in income. Facilitate access of financial services for women through tailored financial products and taking closer services to women. - Expand gender-responsive approaches to natural resource management. - Expand opportunities for women in the camel and camel milk businesses. Provide capacity support for women and youth owned livestock MSMEs through business development service providers.	Gender Sensitive towards Gender Transformation. Working from a WEE perspective and monitoring gender indicators using WELI and WELBI	1. Gender-transformative criteria in project proposals and reports. Q1 2026 2. Evidence of power analysis and norm-change components in design documents. By Q2 2026 3. Progress discussed in review meetings. 4. Staff trained on intersectionality analysis by Q3 2026

	- Comprehensive gender assessment to be conducted by partners during the first six months of RLP		
Project	GPM Score (with justification)	GIC Level (with justification)	Next Steps
DS ETH	Significant -While gender is not the core mandate of DS ETH work, The project is aimed at ensuring that gender sensitivity is mainstreamed by providing assistance to both male and female-headed households, ensuring full and equal participation of the most vulnerable members of the community and prioritizing women in the provision of livelihood, assistance and emerging good practice in integrating gender in the settlement component of the project	Gender Sensitive Commendable efforts at gender integration into the project but in ways that are uneven. While there is evidence of intersectional programming, beyond gender and age diverse intersectional categories including IDP's, returnees, those from minority clan contexts were targeted are not explicitly targeted, Emerging evidence in the way this project is enhancing voice of women and in economic empowerment, and integrating gendered perspectives in housing and settlement solutions, and in livelihood interventions. # Efforts to integrate gender issues into surveys and in baseline surveys to identify barriers facing women in participation. However, there are gaps in engaging with dominant gender norms in the project sites. This is coupled with a lack of documentation on projects gendered outcomes mainly because the log frame lacks gender transformative indicators, lack of adequate gender expertise and lack of explicit focus on intersectional programming.	1. Pilot a focused engagement with dominant gender norms within the livelihood component. By Q3 2026 2. Leverage work of other actors to engage dominant gender norms to attain durable solution. By Q3 2026. 3. Document and amplify the gender transformative aspects of settlement solutions component of the project. By Q3 2026 Strengthen projects intersectional programming and reporting of results. By Q3 2026
Project	GPM Score (with justification)	GIC Level (with justification)	Next Steps
Empower	Significant -While gender is not the core mandate of EMPOWER's work, it has a strong women client focus. In addition to providing financial inclusion services to address women's marginalization and lack of access to and control over resources, it is also providing business coaching services in ways that acknowledge the triple roles of women	Gender Sensitive - Gender is still treated as women and there is a lack of sustained intersectional approach to programming. The business coaching training does not include a focus on gender norms and the role of financial inclusion on gender	1. Evidence of platforms where the impact and business cases are being communicated. Q1 2026 2. Evidence of reflections on how the project is leading to gender transformation and the potential to achieve this at scale. Q1 2026

	and is providing gender disaggregated data.	relations at various levels. The project is not coordinating with women rights Organizations and other CSO's in project contexts. Project's monitoring and evaluation is largely output focused and does not focus on transformative changes like enhancement of women's voice or increase in agency in financial decision making	ext Steps
Project	GPM Score (with justification)	GIC Level (with justification)	Next Actions
Saameynta	Gender Significant - The project is aimed at ensuring that gender sensitivity is mainstreamed by providing assistance to both male and female-headed households, ensuring full and equal participation of the most vulnerable members of the community and prioritising women in the provision of livelihood assistance. It is including the perspectives of women in housing solutions	Gender Sensitive towards Transformation # UNJPS has a clear focus on land tenure for women and is working on laws that enable right to land for those affected by displacement and is enhancing women's agency in Land ownership. Its gender adaptive learning is commendable. It has used data to improve both efficiency and effectiveness of the intervention ensuring it remains relevant to the needs of the vulnerable groups including women and is allocating budgets for gender related work. However, while it is disaggregating data, the processes of change are not included in documentation and other vulnerable intersectional categories are not factored in. The project is not engaging with underlying norms due to its limited gender expertise.	1. Number of new recruits who are women 2. Workplace policies that are supportive of both men and women staff and that acknowledge women's triple roles by Q 2 2026 3. Evidence of recruiting through women friendly and feminist networks Q2 2026 4. Job specifications and roles - clearly integrating preference for both female and male staff. Q1 2026

Challenges and opportunities for gender mainstreaming within ongoing and future projects.

Discussed below are challenges identified in the gender evaluation and opportunities to be more gender transformative.

Limited systems and inadequate integrated focus on gender transformative programming: In the evaluation, the focus was on the information flows and synergistic focus on gender issues within the programme. Upwards, the SDC gender focal persons report on their work and integrate their reflections into the SDC annual planning and reporting. For example, perspectives on the status of each domain and the challenges in gender integration are shared in a collaborative discussion format known as a world café. Feedback was gathered on how to improve gender integration, including practical suggestions for strengthening strategies and identifying key obstacles. However, there is no systematic process of consultation about gender integration between the SDC gender focal persons and those at the project level or project leads at partner level. While there were a few cases of active dialogue reported, communication between SDC and partners regarding gender is often through commenting through emails and providing information. These discussions were mainly SDC-stimulated, with no evidence of lateral discussions around the incorporation of gender in the programming and in ways that are transformative. This was seen as a challenge, given that some partner staff reported having knowledge of context specificity and issues of gender. Indeed, it was noted that some partners can share with SDC insights on gender integration since some of their institutional profile is exemplary.

Limited cross-thematic cooperation in Gender integration: There is inadequate cross-thematic cooperation or geographical learning on issues of gender integration. For example, in the migration portfolio, the three projects on durable solutions noted that collaborative learning on gender issues was difficult because of their different operational contexts, geographically and from a political economy perspective. There is therefore a need to provide leadership and improve linkages in learning within projects where possible in specific geographical areas and across thematic areas. There is an opportunity to include an overarching gender transformative objective which can be incorporated in all domain action plans to act as a basis for collective reflection and monitoring. Further, the programme is planning to create a regional pool of gender focal points and partners, to learn together, engage in sense-making around gender issues and catalyzing progress on gender transformations and collective learning. This was also identified as a need by some of the research participants. Such a network should be a community of practice and not a space for receiving top-down information. It should also be a space for open dialogue and, for levelling power between SDC and partners, and an avenue for identifying needs. It was also seen as a space for drawing on the gender expertise of different staff and their skills in integrating gender and reflecting on what gender transformative outputs and results mean. Keeping the practice aspect of the network open will help in the receptivity of gender-focused guidelines and communication and in adapting and trialling new ways of approaching gender at SDC.

Limited accountability for gender transformative programming through data. The cooperation strategy clearly delineates how monitoring will be carried out and how it feeds into the programme development. However, the analysis revealed a lack of clear understanding of how monitoring data is used, amongst some partners. This was especially the case for third-party monitoring. SDC is clear on how this data is helpful for internal reasons, including ensuring compliance, steering the project, making necessary adjustments, and for collective reflections with the partners on the results. The analysis however, revealed that this awareness is not, mainstreamed within the entire organisation and there is a need to engage partners on this so that monitoring is not perceived as an extractive process. Upwards SDC enters monitoring data in its systems and uses this to report globally to its own government and to other international civil society organisations.

Gender imbalance of Staff: Even though there was observed a shift in gender balance of staffing in SDC and in partner Organisations, gender imbalance in staff in some of the projects was still an issue with some of the partner Organisations dominated by men, making it hard for the programme to walk the talk of gender integration. For projects working in engineering and construction, being STEM-oriented was given as the reason why fewer women are employed with women reportedly failing to respond to advertised positions. This was also the case for financial inclusion partners, with for example those in the banking sector being mainly men, making it hard for men staff to interact with women beneficiaries. Another example was given in cases where some partners hosted forums on thematic issues, but only with men sitting in those panels. Having a diverse staff allows for a more inclusive programming approach and leads to higher impact and results. There is

therefore a need for hiring intentionally to ensure gender balance on the programme and project team level and ensuring that partner assessment on preparedness involves encouragement to work with gender balanced staff. Beyond the project level, there was also gender imbalance at the senior leadership within SDC programme. For example, at the embassy level in Nairobi, there is currently only one woman in the management team, the Head of Regional Cooperation. Several of the previous heads of the cooperation in Nairobi at the time of the evaluation have also men. Such a scenario makes it hard for SDC to demonstrate gender transformative programming. For gender issues to gain traction, there is a need for leadership at senior and middle management.

Gaps in Working with Men. Just like in the last gender evaluation, the analysis shows that in most cases SDC projects missed opportunities for working with men as agents of change, as champions for gender transformation but also in responding to their needs. These gaps affect the responsiveness, effectiveness of the programmes, and their impact. In SDC, men were primarily engaged in gender principle projects like the regional SGBV program. Men are also involved as victims and as beneficiaries, but also in norm change with a focus on dominant masculinities. There is however, limited engagement with men across all projects. This is attributed to a lack of an intersectional lens in understanding the root causes of profound challenges in the HoA context and how this affects men, and also the role of men in sustainable programming. Like for women and girls, men's and boys' vulnerabilities can be exacerbated or addressed by complex factors that interact with gender, such as age, socio-economic status, spatial location, etc. Men's marginalisation, for example, could be a root cause of conflict, and belonging to a faction-warring group for some excluded men it may be a way of inclusion in economic opportunities or a mode of survival in public space inclusion into political governance. These forms of men's marginalisation could therefore lead to synergistic negative effects for women, who according to SDC programming are most marginalised. Working with men therefore would lead to improved overall outcomes for gender transformation.

Capacity-strengthening needs of SDC staff and implementing partners to effectively integrate gender.

Below is a snapshot of the capacity assessment results. The full report can be found in annex 6.

The capacity assessment survey shows considerable progress towards gender transformation. SDC staff and partners are moving beyond simply acknowledging gender issues to actively embedding gender equality in their projects. However, this shift remains uneven and needs practical support, including hands-on guidance, tools, and signposting on how to apply gender concepts in day-to-day work. While several participants demonstrate strong analytical understanding of gender transformation and have achieved visible results such as advancing women's economic empowerment, gaps remain in translating knowledge into action. Staff often know what to do on gender integration but struggle with the how, particularly in complex areas like measuring social change or meaningfully engaging men and boys.

To address these gaps, a multi-faceted approach is needed. This includes prioritizing capacity building through hands-on training and practical tools that help staff move from theory to practice. These include step-by-step guides for integrating gender into project design, peer-learning sessions to share practical cases, and coaching on measuring changes in gender relations and norms or engaging men and boys. Institutional strengthening is also essential, for example by formalizing gender-related processes, and ensuring gender is a standard criterion in partner selection and performance reviews and ensuring that induction sessions provide clear guidance on gender integration. Adequate resourcing is critical, including dedicated budgets for gender activities, access to gender specialists for technical backstopping, and dedicated innovation funds to test gender-transformative actions as pilots (if possible). Together, these actions will aid in embedding gender equality more consistently and sustainably across all SDC projects and partnerships.

The assessment engaged a total of 30 participants, comprising **11 SDC staff (36.7%)** and **19 partner representatives (63.3%)**. This distribution ensured that different perspectives were strongly represented, providing valuable insights into how gender integration is being implemented both within SDC and across its partner Organisations. As much as possible, the analysis differentiates responses between SDC staff and partners while maintaining confidentiality and anonymity.

An example of the results of the capacity assessment are below. A full capacity assessment report is Annex 6

The first part of the survey focused on participant's general understanding of gender and application. See the results below.

Question	Response Category	SDC Staff (n=11)	% SDC	Partner Staff (n=19)	% Partner
Q6. Overall understanding of gender equality principles	Strong	6	54.5%	6	31.6%
	Good	4	36.4%	9	47.4%
	Expert	1	9.1%	1	5.3%
	Basic	0	0%	1	5.3%
	Total	11	100%	19	100%
Q7. Familiarity with gender transformative approaches	I actively apply them	2	18.2%	4	21.1%
	Very familiar	5	45.5%	4	21.1%
	Moderately familiar	4	36.4%	11	57.9%
	Total	11	100%	19	100%
Q8. Confidence in supporting partners integrate gender	Highly confident	2	18.2%	2	10.5%
	Very confident	6	54.5%	7	36.8%
	Moderately confident	2	18.2%	7	36.8%
	Slightly confident	1	9.1%	2	10.5%
	Total	11	100%	19	100%
Q9. Effectiveness of gender action plan application	Consistently and effectively	1	9.1%	5	26.3%
	Very effectively	2	18.2%	3	15.8%
	Moderately effectively	7	63.6%	10	52.6%
	Rarely effectively	1	9.1%	1	5.3%
	Total	11	100%	19	100%

Gender Evaluation Recommendations

Clarify Leadership Ambition and Accountability

The SDC leadership has shown commitment to advancing gender integration, yet it is crucial for them to define the precise level of ambition they seek: *“To what extent do we aim to go, and how do our gender integration objectives connect to tangible results we want to achieve?”* Being explicit about these goals, especially when aiming for transformative programmes, will enable staff and partners to make informed strategic choices and prioritize gender-transformative approaches. Communicating the value of such approaches should go hand-in-hand with dedicating resources and embedding institutional-level gender objectives into job descriptions and performance evaluations. This ensures each team is held accountable.

Address Cultural and Conceptual Gaps in Understanding Gender and Gender Transformation through Strengthened Systematic Capacity Building

Addressing cultural and conceptual gaps in understanding gender and gender transformation requires strengthening systematic capacity building on gender-transformative approaches. SDC staff need to be equipped with the skills to navigate reluctance and resistance effectively, supported by strong Organisational backing for those leading change. It is important to identify the type of reluctance or resistance whether it takes the form of denial (e.g., “women’s exclusion is irrelevant to this conflict”), inaction (e.g., “other priorities must come first”), reluctance to collaborate with women’s Organisations, or appropriation (e.g., requesting proof that gender norms drive conflict). These patterns are sometimes visible, although it is not always clear whether such responses reflect reluctance, limited knowledge, or simply the absence of feedback mechanisms.

To address these challenges, SDC should enable targeted strategies that create safe spaces for constructive dialogue, recognizing that staff and partners are on personal journeys toward understanding gender dynamics. Transformative change often requires shifts in personal values, perceptions of power, and awareness of privilege. Leadership plays a central role by fostering opportunities for reflection and learning such as peer-to-peer experiential training and documenting success stories to showcase effective gender integration. Incorporating gender training into induction processes can further strengthen inclusion and sustain change.

Many stakeholders still lack a shared understanding of what gender transformation truly entails and why it is necessary. Empowering staff with knowledge, practical tools, operational guidance, and leadership support is essential for effective implementation. Embedding values that align with desired changes within the Organisational culture and reinforcing them through consistent leadership actions—can help normalize transformative practices. There is also a cultural dimension to this process: Organisational values should genuinely reflect the changes they aim to promote. This includes moving beyond viewing gender as a “women-only” issue to conceptualizing it in terms of gender relations and the (re)construction of femininities and masculinities, particularly within contexts of conflict and displacement.

To deepen and sustain progress, leadership should institutionalize regular, in-depth capacity-building processes on gender transformation for both staff and implementing partners. The analysis and KII insights revealed that, although many actors are familiar with the concept of gender equality, there remains uncertainty about what “transformative” means in practice and how to operationalize it across different contexts. This gap risks reducing gender efforts to compliance-driven or additive activities rather than embedding them into the strategic core of programming. Capacity building should therefore go beyond one-off workshops to include ongoing mentoring, peer learning, and experiential modules linked to live project work. Such investment would ensure that teams share a common understanding of transformative outcomes, have practical tools to achieve them, and can adapt these approaches effectively in the face of contextual complexity.

Balance Donor Pressure with Organisational Ownership

Donor expectations can be a powerful driver of gender integration, helping to create momentum and accountability. However, they often prioritize quick, tangible results rather than long-term institutional transformation. Achieving genuine change requires balancing donor demands with authentic Organisational ownership and commitment. Over-reliance on donor pressure, especially when responsibility rests primarily

with gender advisors, can result in superficial or short-lived outcomes. Leaders must therefore play an active role in transforming donor requirements into opportunities for deeper and more sustainable change. This is particularly important because such pressure often contributes to fatigue among gender advisors, who are frequently relied upon as the sole drivers of Organisational and colleague awareness on gender within partner Organisations or specific projects. While this approach has yielded success in some cases, there is a clear need for stronger institutional backing to ensure that gender integration is not dependent on a single individual.

Institutionalize Cross-Sector Learning and Accountability Mechanisms

SDC and its partners should establish formal mechanisms for cross-sector learning on gender transformative practice, spaces where teams from different thematic areas can share practical experiences, challenges, and innovations. This would help prevent gender work from being siloed within specific programmes and instead foster Organisation-wide uptake of transformative approaches. As noted in the study, examples of transformative success remain fragmented and are not systematically used to inspire learning or influence across sectors and programmes. Integrating these exchanges into quarterly or annual planning cycles, and linking them to existing accountability structures (e.g., performance reviews, portfolio reviews), will ensure that lessons learned are not just documented but acted upon. Importantly, feedback loops should include both internal staff and external partners to build a shared, evolving understanding of what works in shifting power relations and social norms.

Adopt Participatory MEL Frameworks//Leverage MEL to Track Normative Change, Beyond Participation Rates.

Employing Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) frameworks that incorporate participatory methodologies, such as outcome harvesting, enables the collection of nuanced data on shifts in power relations and inclusion. These approaches help capture politically sensitive results, like changes in gender norms or decision-making power, which are often overlooked in conventional metrics. This will ensure that reporting progress goes beyond numbers reached, rather than changes in attitudes or relationships. Leadership should mandate MEL systems to capture shifts in gender norms and power relations across all programmes (some programmes track these), employing qualitative tools such as outcome harvesting, most significant change, or longitudinal case tracking. Embedding these in Organisational practice would strengthen the evidence base for transformative programming and help justify resource allocation to longer-term change processes.

Integrating an Intersectional Approach in Project Design and Implementation

The process begins with conducting an intersectional analysis of the project context to identify how overlapping inequalities (e.g., gender, age, ethnicity, and social status) shape people's experiences. The project's logical framework should reflect these insights and remain guided by intersectional reflexivity continually questioning how power and privilege influence outcomes. The following guiding questions help apply intersectionality across all levels of the logframe:

Impact (Long-term Objective)

- Do project goals address intersecting inequalities?
- Were objectives developed in consultation with affected communities?
- Will marginalized groups benefit from the intended long-term changes?
- Does the project promote inclusive policies, laws, and programmes?
- Could there be any unintended effects on vulnerable groups?

Outcomes (Medium-term Results)

- Are outcomes explicitly linked to groups identified in the intersectional analysis?
- Will the project improve equitable access to resources, services, technologies, and opportunities?

Outputs (Short-term Deliverables)

- Do outputs respond to the distinct needs and priorities of diverse groups?
- Will they help reduce inequalities and challenge discriminatory norms and practices?

Activities (Actions to Achieve Outputs)

- Are all individuals and communities equitably involved in planning and monitoring activities?
- Do activities consider diverse roles, responsibilities, and identities to ensure equal participation and benefits? Are communication and M&E strategies inclusive and culturally relevant?
- Does the project build awareness and capacity on intersectionality and equity?
- Are adequate financial and technical resources dedicated to intersectional actions?

Annex 1: Principles guiding the Gender Evaluation.

Principle	Description
Principle 1: Collaboration and Participation	Our approach emphasises mutual respect, co-creation, consultation, relationship-building, and meaningful inclusion of SDC staff and the stakeholders in the evaluation to promote co-ownership and action.
Principle 2: Non-Discrimination	Our evaluation process will ensure equitable treatment and participation of stakeholders and SDC staff. A commitment to non-discrimination is central to this evaluation, driving our analysis of how project design and implementation address the needs of all individuals, regardless of their gender or other social identities
Principle 3: Intersectionality	Intersectionality will be applied to analyse how overlapping and complex social factors within the Horn of Africa context influence the implementation and impact of RCPHoA on different groups. This approach will reveal how these intersecting factors shape project outcomes and inform recommendations for strengthening gender transformative approaches within project design and implementation.
Principles 4: Do no harm and Do good.	Our approach in the evaluation aims to generate actionable recommendations that lead to concrete improvements in gender equality outcomes in the next strategy. Our approach will ensure we do not exacerbate existing inequalities or create new ones by assessing and mitigating any potential risks, ensuring data collection and interactions with the SDC will be done ethically. For example, including clear communication, informed consent, confidentiality, and data security.
Principle 5: Context Specificity	We recognise that specific cultural, social, and political contexts shape gender dynamics. The evaluation will be sensitive to the unique context of the Horn of Africa during the design of the tools, data analysis, interpretation and recommendations.
Principle 6: Transparency, Rigour and Openness	Our approach will ensure transparency, with clear communication about the methodology, data collection, and analysis. The evaluation will use robust methodologies and data analysis techniques to ensure the credibility and reliability of the findings. This will ensure that the results are trusted and can inform decision-making.
Principle 7: user-centred evaluation	We will adopt a knowledge mobilization approach in designing and conduct the evaluation with the intended users in mind (SDC), ensuring that the findings are relevant, accessible, and used to improve programmes and has a real-world impact.

Annex 2: Matrix for Assessing the Shift from Gender Sensitive to Gender-Transformative.

Project Domain & Name	Assessment Area that applies to the type of project	Is the project mainly Gender-Sensitive	Is the project shifting towards gender transformation
	Gender roles Including shifts in unpaid care work	Recognizes the unequal gender roles or burden of unpaid care work on women and adapts programmes to accommodate it.	Actively challenges and seeks to redistribute or recognise, or reward unpaid care work, aiming for fundamental shifts in gender roles within households and communities.
	Access to and control over resources	Acknowledges existing gender disparities in access to and control over resources, adapting interventions to ensure women can participate, and mitigates existing inequalities by, for instance, providing women with access to resources while leaving control largely unchanged.	Actively challenges the power dynamics that limit women's control over resources, aiming to restructure systems for equitable ownership and decision-making. It aims to dismantle the patriarchal structures that systematically deny women genuine control over resources, seeking fundamental shifts in power dynamics.
	Capability and vulnerability	Shielding women's existing vulnerabilities or enhancing their capabilities within established gender norms without questioning the root causes of those vulnerabilities.	Deconstruct structures that create and perpetuate gendered vulnerabilities while simultaneously striving to empower women and challenge the systemic barriers that limit their full capabilities.
	Gender relations	Acknowledge existing gender relations to avoid harm or ensure participation, but it primarily operates within and therefore risks reinforcing them.	Interrogates and actively seeks to reconfigure unequal power dynamics within gender relations, aiming for fundamental shifts towards equity and justice
	Gender norms	It recognizes existing gender norms to tailor interventions effectively, yet it often accommodates or works around these norms without directly challenging their restrictive nature.	Actively seeks to dismantle harmful gender norms, aiming to establish more equitable and flexible social expectations for all genders.
	Gender needs	Identifies and addresses the immediate, practical gender needs of women and men. Still, it often fails to challenge the underlying societal structures that create these differential needs in the first place.	Actively works to address strategic gender needs, such as legal equality, equal political participation, and freedom from gender-based violence, aiming to dismantle the systemic inequalities that perpetuate gendered needs.
	Decision-making power	Include women in consultative processes or project implementation, yet it often stops short of genuinely redistributing decision-making power at higher levels.	Actively challenges and dismantles the patriarchal structures that exclude women from leadership, aiming for their equitable and full control over all levels of decision-making.
	Gender-based violence	Provide essential services to survivors of GBV or raise general	Critically challenges and aims to dismantle the patriarchal norms and power

		awareness, yet it often treats GBV as an isolated issue rather than a symptom of systemic gender inequality.	imbalances that are the root causes of GBV, fostering new, equitable social norms and accountability mechanisms to prevent violence.
	Policy	Acknowledges that policies can affect men and women differently and seeks to mitigate adverse impacts or ensure equitable access within existing structures.	Legal frameworks, institutional practices, and resource allocation mechanisms that promote gender equality are in place and operationalised to address the root causes of inequalities.
	Men & Community Engagement	Empowerment efforts focus on and address the needs of men and boys, as well as those of the broader community.	Engages men & communities to change attitudes and norms on gender inequality
	Budget and resource allocation and use	Budget track and allocate resources to address the distinct needs and priorities of women, men, and diverse gender groups within project activities.	An intentional budget allocated for gender transformation and on gender as a transversal domain. Budget strategically funds initiatives or components that explicitly aim to challenge and change unequal gender power relations, norms, or structures
	Leadership & Partnerships	Includes gender-focused programming	Led and implemented by staff and partners with expertise in gender integration and gender transformative programming
	Monitoring & Evaluation	Collects sex-disaggregated data in each domain	Measures how results in each domain and, where possible, across domains synergistically and multiplicatively contribute to addressing intersectional marginalization, measures systemic change in gender relations, norms, and agency, among others.

Annex 3: Theory of Change and Result Analysis Framework Analysis

Food Security Domain Theory of Change and Result Analysis Framework Analysis

The Food Security ToC has two complementary pathways. First, **OS2.1** focuses on pastoral and agro-pastoral communities improving natural resource management, productivity, quality of produce, and access to markets. This involves climate-smart practices, skills and technology support, and inclusive market systems using a corridor approach to address barriers in regional livestock value chains. Second, **OS2.2** focuses on strengthening local institutions to create enabling conditions for sustainable NRM, improved productivity, and inclusive markets. This pathway supports public, private, and community institutions, raises awareness about resource degradation, ensures women's participation in decisions, collects gender-segregated data for policy, and reduces resource-based conflicts. Together, these pathways link household and enterprise productivity to the rules, capacities, and coordination that make markets and NRM work.

Strengths and Gaps: The ToC already emphasizes **women's inclusion**, sex-disaggregated data, and conflict-sensitive Natural Resource Management (NRM). Indicators (AFS_TRI_2, DRR_TRI_3, GEN_TRI_10) track policy, political decision making and system effectiveness and gender-transformative reforms. However, gender transformation can be strengthened. The ToC does not yet show how women's voices lead to formal authority, budget changes, or safer and more inclusive market governance. It also does not track how productivity gains translate into agency, reduced unpaid work, safety, and norm change. Current portfolio experience (RLP, RAPID+) shows readiness to move beyond gender training toward women's economic empowerment frameworks (WELI/WELBI) and gender-responsive policy, momentum that can be codified across the portfolio.

Proposed Sub-Outcome: OS2.2g Gender-Transformative Rangeland and Market Governance

OS2.2 (existing): Local institutions effectively create conditions for improved and sustainable NRM, productivity, and market systems. *OS2.2g (new sub-outcome):* Local institutions institutionalise women's and marginalised groups' decision-making authority in rangeland and market bodies and apply gender-responsive rules and budgets. This ensures that their voice leads to equitable resource access, safer and more inclusive markets, and measurable norm change.

Mechanisms for achieving this: include establishing gender-responsive rangeland and market by-laws that ensure fair representation through defined seats, quorum requirements, voting rights, and co-signing procedures. Market allocation rules and safety improvements should be implemented to promote equitable and secure access for all users. County or local government budgets for water and rangeland management should be gender-tagged to enhance accountability and inclusivity in resource allocation. Routine disaggregation of data by sex, age, disability, and minority status is essential for effective monitoring of natural resource management and market systems. Formal citizen - authority hearings should be held regularly to ensure women's perspectives are meaningfully included in decision-making. Safeguarding mechanisms must be established to prevent and respond to gender-based violence and sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (GBV/SEAH) near markets and water points. Finally, time-use relief strategies, such as providing closer water points and improving queue management, should be implemented alongside male engagement initiatives to promote shared responsibilities and equitable participation.

Intermediate Outcomes: Documented influence of women in rangeland/market committees. Equitable budget allocation through gender-responsive tagging and 'you-said/we-did' audits. Safer and more accessible markets. Measured shifts in attitudes and reduced unpaid work related to water and NRM.

Evidence: Retain AFS_TRI_2, DRR_TRI_3, GEN_TRI_10. Add two portfolio-specific indicators changes in the Women's Empowerment in Livestock Index (WELI/WELBI) and the proportion of markets where women hold voting rights. Ensure that all core indicators are disaggregated by sex, age, disability, and minority clan to capture inclusion and equity outcomes.

Optional Sub-Outcome: OS2.1g, Women's Productive Agency and Time

OS2.1g (new sub-outcome): Pastoral and agro-pastoral women adopt climate-smart practices and access inputs, services, and market information with reduced unpaid-care constraints and safer mobility, turning productivity gains into agency and income control.

Approaches: Female-friendly extension and input access. Reduced water collection and waiting times. Access to market information. Male engagement in domestic labor sharing and linkage to corridor market committees for practical fixes.

Evidence: Sex-disaggregated uptake, Time-use changes, WELI/WELBI sub-indices and Women's share of sales and earnings.

Conclusion: **OS2.2g** makes the ToC's promise of **inclusive institutions** concrete, measurable, and linked to equitable NRM and market outcomes. **OS2.1g** ensures productivity gains translate into agency, time-use relief, and safety. Together, they keep the ToC intact while scaling practices already underway in RLP and RAPID+, using existing results framework indicators.

Migration & Protection Domain Theory of Change and Results Analysis Framework

OS4.1 Protection and Durable Solutions: This pathway seeks to ensure that displacement-affected communities (DACs) and migrants in vulnerable situations are better protected and can advance toward durable solutions. It focuses on protection services, legal and policy frameworks, and advocacy including the uptake of the Kampala Convention and adherence to the Centrality of Protection.

The underlying logic is: **IF** DACs who have experienced violence, exploitation, or abuse have their basic needs met and receive adequate protection, **THEN** they are more likely to recover from trauma and regain normalcy, **BECAUSE** addressing basic needs upholds dignity and supports coping and resilience in displacement.

OS4.2 Self-Reliance, Inclusion, and Reintegration: This pathway promotes self-reliance, inclusion, and sustainable (re)integration by improving access to essential services and supporting area-based, county-led solutions that strengthen social cohesion and livelihood prospects for DACs, refugees, returnees, and host communities.

Strengths: The ToC effectively anchors protection and durable solutions in services and legal/policy environments (e.g. Kampala Convention adoption and operationalisation; Centrality of Protection compliance), and area-based integration that connects protection to social cohesion and economic participation. These approaches align well with the domain's lines of intervention, including child protection, SGBV prevention and response, registration/documentation, legal aid, advocacy for humanitarian access and International Humanitarian Law (IHL), and support for subnational/national displacement policy frameworks.

Current Gaps: While current indicators and narratives emphasize service, reach and legal uptake, they are only **partially gender sensitive**. They do not capture how women, girls, and other marginalised groups gain decision-making power, control over assets, or protection from backlash along the durable-solutions pathway. In the COMPEL (UNJPS/Saameynta, DS-ETH, and Empower projects), the current approach to gender integration mainly focuses on collecting sex-disaggregated data or meeting participation quotas. While this helps track inclusion at a basic level, there is limited evidence showing how gender norms, roles, decision-making power, or safety evolve over time. This means that deeper gender dynamics such as shifts in control over resources or changes in household and community power relations often remain undocumented.

Furthermore, responsibilities for gender integration are not clearly defined. In several cases, safeguarding staff informally take on gender focal point roles. As a result, accountability for gender outcomes becomes limited, and opportunities to learn from what works or does not work is limited. Together, these gaps limit the ability of projects to achieve truly gender-transformative results. To address these gaps and strengthen the link between protection and gender equality, a new sub-outcome OS4.1g: Gender-Transformative Protection and Durable Solutions is proposed.

Proposed Amendment of OS4.1g to make it Gender-Transformative Protection and Durable

Solutions Existing OS4.1: Displacement-affected communities and migrants in vulnerable situations are better protected and advance toward durable solutions, gaining self-reliance, inclusion, and sustainable integration.

New Sub-Outcome (OS4.1g): Protection and durable-solutions systems promote women's and other marginalised groups' participation in decision-making, ensure safe and survivor-centred services, and allocate resources in a gender-responsive manner. This approach helps translate voice and safety into fair access to services, livelihoods, and tenure while also encouraging measurable progress in reducing harmful gender norms. The new sub-outcome strengthens OS4.1 by turning the domain's intent into practical action. It retains the current ARI/TRI framework and legal/policy indicators but adds portfolio-specific measures to capture changes in gender norms, power relations, and equitable outcomes over time.

To operationalise this sub-outcome, several mechanisms are proposed. First, survivor-centred case management and referral standards should be integrated into partner MoUs and municipal SOPs to ensure protection systems are safe and inclusive. Second, gender-responsive planning and budgeting should be built into durable-solutions compacts to guarantee fair allocation of resources. Third, local by-laws or policy notes should formalise women's representation, quorum, and voting rights in area-based committees such as those managing tenure, markets, or services. In addition, safe feedback and social audit mechanisms should allow women and women's rights organisations (WROs) to contribute meaningfully to municipal and programme steering structures. Finally, intersectional standards should guide targeting and reporting combining gender, age, and disability with a locally relevant factor such as displacement status or minority clan affiliation.

Expected Intermediate Outcomes: Through these mechanisms, several intermediate results are expected. First, there should be documented evidence of women's and WROs' influence in decision-making processes, including budget allocations and land decisions. Second, safety and access to help-seeking services should improve, with fewer barriers and faster referrals. Third, women's control over livelihood assets such as grants, tenancy, or land titles should increase. Lastly, in areas where media or dialogue activities are implemented, changes in community attitudes and practices should be observable, showing progress toward gender-equitable norms.

Evidence and Measurement: To monitor progress, the framework will continue to track existing indicators on legal and protection achievements, such as Kampala Convention enactment and operationalisation and Centrality of Protection follow-up. In addition, it will introduce: Two cross-project custom outputs, and One new outcome under OS4.1. All indicators will be disaggregated by sex, age, disability, and minority-clan/displacement status. To complement quantitative data, each result will include a brief narrative summary that highlights qualitative shifts and learning. Together, these refinements will make the Migration and Protection results framework more gender-transformative, more accountable, and better aligned with the goal of achieving inclusive and durable solutions for all.

OS4.1g ensures that women's and marginalised groups' voices and safety lead to real decision-making power and fair access to resources across protection and (re)integration processes. It also supports **OS4.2**, since safe movement, recognized decision-making roles, and control over assets are essential for lasting self-reliance and stronger social cohesion. This amendment keeps the original ToC intact while making 'protection and durable solutions' practical, measurable, and clearly linked to overall portfolio outcomes.

Health Domain Theory of Change and Results Analysis Framework

The Health Theory of Change (ToC) has two complementary pathways. First, OS3.1 improves access to basic, quality, and affordable health services for people and their livestock, including maternal and child health (MCH), One Health, and SGBV services. This is supported through technical assistance to public and private providers to ensure availability, accessibility, quality, and affordability. Second, the enabling pathway strengthens health personnel and systems, improving reliability (e.g. geographic access, costs, hours, supply chains) and quality

(medical outcomes, cultural acceptance). If these conditions are in place, then service availability and quality improve, leading to higher service use and better health outcomes. At the regional and national level, the goal is equitable access to quality services, especially for women, children, adolescents, displaced people, and other vulnerable groups.

Current Gaps: While gender and inclusion are addressed through targeting and gender equality language, the ToC does not yet include gender-transformative approaches. There is no clear link between women's and marginalised groups' participation and decision-making authority in facility or district committees; adaptations in services (privacy, hours, staffing); budgets that sustain these changes. Monitoring currently focuses on service coverage and user satisfaction but does not regularly track changes in decision-making authority, governance rules, or resource allocation, nor does it link to SEAH/GBV risk reduction.

Proposed Sub-Outcome: OS3.2g. Gender-Responsive, Survivor-Centred Primary Health Care ensures that women and marginalised groups have decision-making power and that health planning and budgeting are gender-responsive. This translates client voice into safer access, adapted services, and measurable quality improvements.

Key Mechanisms: Gender-responsive planning and budgeting at facility/district level. Written by-laws or terms of reference women's roles in committees. Survivor-centred SGBV/SEAH protocols and confidential reporting. Community-to-facility hearings with intersectional outreach (gender, age, disability, displacement).

Intermediate Outcomes: Services adapted based on women's input (hours, staffing, privacy, language). Budgets allocated for priority needs (safe spaces, female staff). Faster referrals and improved service completion. Reduced SGBV/SEAH incidents and increased perceived safety.

Evidence: Existing ARI/TRI indicators are preserved. New portfolio indicators are added, disaggregated by gender, age, disability, and displacement, and complemented by qualitative "change stories" from clients. OS3.2g makes the Health ToC practical and measurable. It strengthens the public-private interface, ensures gender-responsive rules and budgets, and connects inclusion and survivor-centred care to improved access, quality, and utilisation. In short, it keeps the original ToC intact while making "inclusive health" concrete, testable, and directly linked to portfolio-level outcomes.

Governance Domain Theory of Change and Results Framework

The Governance Theory of Change (ToC) has two complementary pathways. First, OS1.1 aims for a more inclusive and stable political settlement by broadening the elite contract and formalising the sharing of power and resources. This depends on progress in managing electoral crises, building trust between the centre and periphery, reviewing the constitution, and implementing a revenue-sharing framework. Second, OS1.2 focuses on bottom-up state-building to create responsive and inclusive local institutions. These institutions should have the capacity to deliver decentralised, equitable, and sustainable services. Success depends on civic engagement, forming district councils, and devolution, while recognising the risk that citizen-led platforms may not always connect effectively with elite-driven processes.

Strengths of the Current ToC: The ToC clearly links top-level political settlements to local service delivery, showing how national reforms affect citizens. It identifies concrete enabling conditions such as the Local Governance Act, council formation, and devolution. It aligns with Somalia's federalisation agenda and supports local government strengthening. However, while gender and inclusion are implied through the term "inclusive," the ToC does not yet include gender-transformative mechanisms or intermediate outcomes. There is no clear chain showing how women's and marginalised groups' participation lead to changes in norms, decision-making influence, institutional rules, or budgets that sustain those gains. Currently, most governance projects are gender-sensitive rather than transformative, as gender is included without being central to the core goal. To align with SDC's ambition for gender-transformative practice, an explicit sub-pathway is proposed to make "inclusive governance" operational and measurable.

Proposed Sub-Outcome: OS1.2g Gender-Transformative Local Governance

OS1.2 (existing outcome): Bottom-up state-building processes lead to responsive and inclusive local institutions with improved capacity to deliver decentralised, equitable, and sustainable services, contributing to durable peace. **New Outcome:** OS1.2g (new sub-outcome): Local institutions institutionalise women's and marginalised groups' decision-making authority and apply gender-responsive planning and budgeting. This ensures that citizen voices lead to fair resource allocation, accountable service delivery, and measurable changes in norms. This sub-pathway strengthens OS1.2 by putting the ToC's inclusivity language into practice through mechanisms, intermediate outcomes, and evidence:

Mechanisms for achieving this: Gender-responsive planning and budgeting in districts. Written by-laws and terms of reference that formalise women's roles in committees (seats, quorum, voting, co-signing by-laws). Formal citizen-to-elite feedback loops that bring women's inputs to district executives and relevant national bodies. Safeguarding and grievance pathways. Minimum intersectionality standards (gender/age plus one local factor such as disability, displacement, or minority clan) for targeting and reporting.

Intermediate Outcomes: Documented decision-making influence from women's and marginalised groups' inputs. Equitable resource allocation through gender-responsive budget tags addressing binding constraints for women and girls. Reduced participation barriers and shifts in community attitudes where dialogue and media are used.

Evidence: Existing ARI/TRI-aligned indicators are retained. Two portfolio-specific indicators are added under OS1.2. Core indicators are disaggregated by sex, age, disability, and minority clan.

OS1.2g improves OS1.2 by turning citizen voice into real decision-making power and fair resource allocation. It also supports OS1.1 because women's meaningful participation strengthens the legitimacy and durability of political settlements, increasing the likelihood that constitutional and fiscal arrangements are implemented. In short, this amendment keeps the Governance ToC intact while making inclusive institutions concrete, measurable, and directly linked to portfolio-level outcomes.

Annex 4: List of Study Participants

SDC

Title	Domain	Projects for Review
NPO Food Systems & Market Systems Focal Point	Food Systems	RLP
NPO Food Systems & Climate Change Focal Point	Food Systems	SomRep
NPO Health	Health	CHASP, PSPH
NPO Migration / Protection	Migration / Protection	INKOMOKO
NPO Governance & Migration / Protection	Governance & Migration / Protection	NIS Foundation, HIPS, Saamyenta
NPO Governance & FRAP	Governance	R2P, AVF. KST, INSO
Political Officer for Somalia	Governance	Elman Peace
NPO Culture, PSEAH & Gender Focal Point & Communications Officer	Governance	C4P
NPO Health & PSEAH Focal Point	Health	HEAL, JOHI, Regional GBV Programme
NPO Migration and Protection	Migration and Protection	Strengthening Resilience of Disaster-Affected Communities through Durable Solutions in Oromia and Somali Regions of Ethiopia
Gender Focal Point	Global Programme Migration	-
Finance Controller	Finance	-
Deputy Head of International Cooperation, Horn of Africa	Management	-
Head of Cooperation	Management	-
Desk Officer, Horn of Africa	HQ Support to HoA Team	-

Partners

	Name	Partner
1.	Hodho Amina Farah	Mercy Corps
2.	Emma Odundo	DT Global
3.	Lilian Dullo	INKOMOKO
4.	Nick Daniels	INKOMOKO
5.	Ahlam Mohammed	NIS Foundation
6.	BOERS Johannes Franciscus Karel	IOM
7.	Ron Ashkin	DT Global
8.	Amina M. Abdulkadir	Puntland Development and Research Center,
9.	Deka Abdullahi	HIPS

10.	Sandra Kabiru	vsf-suisse
11.	Sileshi Zenebe	Plan International
12.	Louise Tine	FAO
13.	Sumaya Ali	FRAP
14.	Mumina Hassan	Dansom Consultancy
15.	June Suno	Millennium Water Alliance Kenya
16.	Abel Estifanos	UN- Habitat

Annex 5: Complete Capacity Assessment Report

The capacity assessment survey shows considerable progress towards gender transformation. SDC staff and partners are moving beyond simply acknowledging gender issues to actively embedding gender equality in their projects. However, this shift remains uneven and needs practical support, including hands-on guidance, tools, and signposting on how to apply gender concepts in day-to-day work. While several participants demonstrate strong analytical understanding of gender transformation and have achieved visible results such as advancing women's economic empowerment, gaps remain in translating knowledge into action. Staff often know what to do on gender integration but struggle with the how, particularly in complex areas like measuring social change or meaningfully engaging men and boys.

To address these gaps, a multi-faceted approach is needed. This includes prioritizing capacity building through hands-on training and practical tools that help staff move from theory to practice. These include step-by-step guides for integrating gender into project design, peer-learning sessions to share practical cases, and coaching on measuring changes in gender relations and norms or engaging men and boys. Institutional strengthening is also essential, for example by formalizing gender-related processes, and ensuring gender is a standard criterion in partner selection and performance reviews and ensuring that induction sessions provide clear guidance on gender integration. Adequate resourcing is critical, including dedicated budgets for gender activities, access to gender specialists for technical backstopping, and dedicated innovation funds to test gender-transformative actions as pilots (if possible). Together, these actions will aid in embedding gender equality more consistently and sustainably across all SDC projects and partnerships.

The assessment engaged a total of 30 participants, comprising **11 SDC staff (36.7%)** and **19 partner representatives (63.3%)**. This distribution ensured that different perspectives were strongly represented, providing valuable insights into how gender integration is being implemented both within SDC and across its partner Organisations. As much as possible, the analysis differentiates responses between SDC staff and partners while maintaining confidentiality and anonymity.

The first part of the survey focused on participant's general understanding of gender and application. See the results below.

Question	Response Category	SDC Staff (n=11)	% SDC	Partner Staff (n=19)	% Partner
Q6. Overall understanding of gender equality principles	Strong	6	54.5%	6	31.6%
	Good	4	36.4%	9	47.4%
	Expert	1	9.1%	1	5.35%
	Basic	0	0%	1	5.3%
	Total	11	100%	19	100%
Q7. Familiarity with gender transformative approaches	I actively apply them	2	18.2%	4	21.1%
	Very familiar	5	45.5%	4	21.1%
	Moderately familiar	4	36.4%	11	57.9%
	Total	11	100%	19	100%

Q8. Confidence in supporting partners integrate gender	Highly confident	2	18.2%	2	10.5%
	Very confident	6	54.5%	7	36.8%
	Moderately confident	2	18.2%	7	36.8%
	Slightly confident	1	9.1%	2	10.5%
	Total	11	100%	19	100%
Q9. Effectiveness of gender action plan application	Consistently and effectively	1	9.1%	5	26.3%
	Very effectively	2	18.2%	3	15.8%
	Moderately effectively	7	63.6%	10	52.6%
	Rarely effectively	1	9.1%	1	5.3%
	Total	11	100%	19	100%

The analysis of SDC staff and partners responses reveals notable patterns in gender knowledge, confidence, and practice. SDC staff indicate a stronger conceptual understanding of gender equality principles, which means they have a better grasp of ideas, principles, and frameworks behind gender equality with more than half rating their understanding as ‘strong,’ while most partners described theirs as ‘good.’ This likely reflects SDC’s greater exposure to institutional training and frameworks, whereas partners’ grasp appears more practical and experience based. Familiarity with gender transformative approaches remains moderate across both groups, with 45.5% of SDC and 21.1% of partners identifying as very familiar, while most partners (57.9%) reported being only moderately familiar. This suggests that while awareness of transformative gender approaches exists, both groups still need deeper practical exposure to applying them in programming. In terms of confidence in supporting gender integration, SDC staff rated themselves higher as 54.5% were very confident compared to 36.8% of partners, thereby indicating stronger assurance but possibly limited reflection on the quality or consistency of this support. Meanwhile, partners’ moderate confidence points to openness to learn and a dependence on SDC guidance. When assessing how effectively gender action plans (GAPs) are applied, both groups largely rated performance as ‘moderately effective,’ though partners reported slightly higher consistency (26.3% versus 9.1% for SDC). This may indicate that partners, being closer to field implementation, see stronger outcomes, while SDC’s oversight role limits their visibility of on-the-ground progress.

To strengthen gender outcomes, SDC could leverage its conceptual strength to mentor partners, while partners can share practical lessons from their experience with implementation. The Organisation should also promote co-learning platforms and enhance monitoring frameworks that track transformation and inclusion. In doing so, both SDC and partners can move from awareness and moderate effectiveness toward more consistent, transformative gender equality outcomes.

The capacity assessment then focused on gender integration into the project cycle.

Question	Response Category	SDC Staff (n=11)	% SDC	Partner Staff (n=19)	% Partner
Q10. Confidence in integrating gender analysis (Design phase)	Highly confident	0	0%	3	15.8%
	Very confident	6	54.5%	8	42.1%

	Moderately confident	5	45.5 %	8	42.1%
	Total	11	100 %	19	100%
Q11. Consistency in integrating gender (Implementation)	Always	2	18.2 %	4	21.1%
	Often	7	63.6 %	11	57.9%
	Sometimes	2	18.2 %	2	10.5%
	Rarely	0	0%	1	5.3%
	Total	11	100 %	19	100%
Q12. Effectiveness of gender integration (M&E)	Consistently and effectively	2	18.2 %	5	26.3%
	Very effectively	3	27.3 %	8	42.1%
	Moderately effectively	5	45.5 %	5	26.3%
	Rarely effectively	1	9.1%	1	5.3%
	Total	11	100 %	19	100%

Both SDC and partner staff show generally moderate to high confidence in integrating gender considerations throughout the project cycle, though consistency and effectiveness vary by phase. At the design phase, most SDC staff (54.5%) felt very confident, while some partners (15.8%) rated themselves highly confident, suggesting partners draw strength from hands-on project experience while SDC's confidence is grounded in institutional knowledge. In implementation, most participants in both groups reported integrating gender often, though few reported always, showing that gender integration is still not fully embedded in daily decision-making. In monitoring and evaluation, partners rated their effectiveness slightly higher than SDC staff, likely because they are more directly involved in field-level monitoring, evaluation and reporting while SDC staff viewed their role as only moderately effective. Overall, both groups have a solid foundation in gender integration but need to strengthen consistency, depth, and practical follow-through, especially in monitoring and evaluation. The findings point to the value of co-learning, mentorship, and shared tools between SDC and partners to bridge the gap between confidence and consistent gender-transformative practice across all project stages.

Top 1-2 strengths in relation to gender integration skills and capacities.

The capacity assessment reveals that the study participants have key strengths in gender integration, which can be grouped into three categories: analytical skills, for some practical level application, and institutional commitment. This demonstrates a collective shift from simply acknowledging gender to actively embedding it throughout the entire project cycle. There are strong analytical skills through gender and political economy analysis, which aids in understanding power dynamics and context. For practical application, those who participated noted that they are skilled at mainstreaming gender across project stages, providing partner support, and using inclusive methodologies. A strong institutional commitment is evident in their gender-

sensitive policies, collaborative approaches, and robust monitoring systems that track long-term outcomes and impacts.

- *"I can identify where gender can be included in project planning and activities... and help in connecting gender related actions to the project's main goals... so that gender is not treated as a separate topic, but as part of the overall work."*
- *"One of my key strengths is the ability to conduct thorough gender analysis. I can identify gender-specific risks, roles, power dynamics, and access to resources, which helps ensure that our... programmes are grounded in the real needs and experiences of women, girls, and other marginalized groups."*
- *"Our ability to collect, analyse, and act on citizen-generated data disaggregated by gender and age is a core strength. This enables us to surface the lived realities of women, men, and youth in real time and across diverse geographies."*

Top 1-2 limitation in relation to gender integration skills and capacities

The analysis on limitations in gender integration reveals both shared and distinct gaps between SDC staff and partner Organisations. Overall, both groups are transitioning from basic gender mainstreaming toward more transformative and evidence-based practice, yet they face conceptual, institutional, and contextual barriers that limit consistency. Among SDC staff, the most cited gaps relate to technical and conceptual knowledge, including deeper understanding of gender theories, intersectionality, and developing transformative indicators. Several also mentioned the need for practical mentorship and stronger institutional support to translate analytical insights into measurable gender outcomes. In contrast, partner staff highlighted more institutional and operational constraints, such as limited budgets, lack of technical tools, inconsistent gender analysis across sectors, and inadequate systems to measure or report on gender outcomes. They also noted contextual challenges, like fragile environments, security risks, and restricted access to remote or marginalized groups that hinder full gender integration.

Both SDC and partners, however, recognize the need for more structured mentorship, peer learning, and resource support to bridge the gap between understanding and practice.

- *"One key limitation... is the inconsistent application of gender analysis across all implementation areas... This highlights a need to strengthen institutional capacity and practical tools for conducting comprehensive, localized gender analysis that goes beyond participation numbers to address power dynamics and structural barriers."*
- *"I need more practical guidance on how to monitor and measure changes in gender norms and power relations over time, which is often overlooked in routine project monitoring."*
- *"I understand the concepts but I don't fully have the knowledge of Gender Theories and Frameworks."*
- *"I would like to strengthen my capacity in applying participatory gender analysis tools particularly in low literacy or pastoral settings."*

1-2 positive outcome seen in projects due to integrating gender into work

The responses from the study participants indicated gender integration has yielded a variety of positive and tangible outcomes. These results fall into three main categories. Economic and livelihood empowerment is evident through specific examples like a women's marketing group earning significant additional income and women accessing formal financing to grow their businesses, including in non-traditional fields. Increased participation and representation has been achieved, with women being elected to political and civic roles, taking on leadership positions in community groups, and gaining greater safety and access to public spaces. There are also shifts in attitudes and social norms, with a noticeable reduction in the 'taboo' nature of gender topics, increased community support for girls' education, and changes in attitudes toward GBV with more men actively speaking out against it.

- *"Through gender-transformative community dialogues that engage both women and men, we start to observe a measurable change in attitudes towards GBV. More men are actively speaking out against violence, and communities are adopting more supportive behaviors, which contributes to a safer environment for women and girls."*

- *“Compared to the past, we can now see some meaningful change after many years of efforts... people are more open to discussing and engaging with narratives related to gender 'no taboo'.”*

Challenge faced when trying to integrate gender when working with a partner.

Integrating gender into programmes and partnerships is challenging due to a complex combination of cultural resistance, a lack of capacity, and institutional barriers. Deep-rooted cultural norms, particularly in patriarchal societies, can create strong community and political opposition, sometimes leading to fear of backlash and a reluctance to support women-only initiatives or their participation in traditionally male-dominated fields. This is worsened by a lack of understanding, where gender is often seen as a secondary, ‘by-the-way’ requirement, leading to limited investment and a tendency to assign gender-related tasks to junior or female staff by default. At the institutional level, the absence of clear internal gender policies, a lack of designated experts, and limited representation of women in leadership positions make it difficult to champion and hold staff accountable for gender integration. These overlapping challenges, along with data and reporting issues, hinder the shift from basic gender awareness to truly transformative work

- *“One challenge faced when trying to integrate gender while working with a partner was resistance to women-only interventions... What made it particularly challenging was the lack of shared understanding around gender equity versus equality, and the absence of internal gender policies or focal points within the partner Organisations to champion the approach.”*
- *“Some partners don't have a gender expert within their organisation to continuously help with the integration. I think women staff are designated as gender experts by default.”*
- *“The lack of budget to train the partners and also conduct follow up activities to ensure gender is being mainstreamed in programming.”*
- *“Lack of seriousness or gravitas when tackling gender activities (E.g sending new/ junior staff for important gender trainings/meetings, sending/assigning only female staff to undertake gender activities.”*

Support, training, or resources that would help strengthen capacity in gender mainstreaming and gender transformative approach.

The analysis shows a strong demand for practical, context-specific training and resources to help participants move from simple gender mainstreaming to a genuinely gender-transformative approach. While individuals have a good grasp of the concepts, many lack the hands-on tools, examples, and guidance needed for real-world application. The most critical priority is to provide practical training on GTAs, focusing on how to operationalize gender integration within projects. This could include interactive workshops on advanced gender analysis that unpack power dynamics, intersectionality, and structural barriers, as well as practical sessions on developing gender-sensitive indicators and budgeting.

To make the learning more actionable, participants would benefit from a step-by-step guidance and ready-to-use tools, such as gender analysis checklists, templates for gender-responsive project design, sample gender action plans, and case studies drawn from similar fragile or culturally complex contexts. Training on engaging men and boys and addressing men’s needs should also be prioritized, using role plays, field examples, and community dialogues to shift attitudes and promote shared ownership of gender equality goals are all needed.

In addition, it is important to ensure accessibility and usability of such guides by translating key materials into local languages such as Somali and Oromiffa, and by simplifying technical jargon so that all staff can apply the approaches confidently in the field. Participants also emphasized the need for peer learning and mentorship, which could take the form of regular learning circles, cross-partner exchange forums, or joint field visits where teams learn directly from each other’s experiences. Establishing a gender advisor mentorship program that pairs experienced specialists with country teams would further strengthen applied learning and accountability.

To make these efforts sustainable, the analysis highlights the need for dedicated financial and institutional support. This includes setting aside resources in project budgets for gender training, learning materials, and staff time for mentoring and reflection. Long-term funding for partner Organisations will be essential for sustained, transformative gender integration that creates measurable and lasting change.

- *“Gender is essentially a mind-set shift and requires extensive behaviour change so these trainings would be key. These trainings where all partners come together would also be important for peer-learning and knowledge exchange from other partners or programmes that are integrating gender into their activities effectively.”*
- *“To strengthen my capacity in gender mainstreaming and move more confidently toward a gender transformative approach, I’d benefit from practical, hands-on training on advanced gender analysis tools and frameworks — especially ones that show how to design actions that don’t just address immediate needs but also tackle root causes of inequality.”*

Inclusion of gender in performance appraisals

The analysis shows the following, for the integration of gender in appraisals, a number of SDC staff indicated that gender equality is increasingly being reflected in performance appraisal systems. They referenced the *Management by Objectives MBO* framework, specific gender indicators, and the expectation to apply a gender lens in programming. For example, one staff member noted, *“For our performance appraisal MBO we now have specific indicators that we are meant to report against regarding how we are supporting gender equality and inclusion.”* **On the other hand** most partners reported that gender equality is *not yet systematically included* in performance reviews. Their appraisals tend to focus on project delivery, coordination, or thematic outcomes, with gender integration mentioned informally, if at all.

Some SDC Staff mentioned that gender equality is part of their job expectations especially for gender focal points or program managers though formal accountability varies. There’s recognition that *“gender equality and social inclusion are reflected in cross-cutting themes but not clearly included as specific indicators.”* Partners often described gender integration as part of Organisational values rather than a formal accountability measure. One noted that *“unless someone is directly working in a gender-focused role, their contributions toward gender equality may not be formally evaluated or incentivized.”* A few SDC staff suggested that demonstrating concrete achievements on gender could improve overall performance ratings, possibly linked to salary increases. This suggests a shift towards institutional incentivization based on gender integration. Partners did not report similar performance incentives. Most indicated that gender is seen as a programmatic or compliance issue, not a performance measure influencing appraisal outcomes. For some SDC staff, the inclusion of gender in MBO, annual reports, and embassy-level awareness activities suggests a more mature system with emerging formalization, though consistency remains a challenge. Partner responses show that partner Organisations are at varied stages of integrating gender into the performance system some are planning to include it *“we will need to integrate this in the future”*), while others state it is outside their current mandate.

Partners largely report *limited or informal inclusion* of gender in appraisals, with most saying it’s not yet a measurable or incentivized component. This contrast suggests that while SDC is progressively embedding gender equality into staff accountability mechanisms, partners may require capacity building and guidance to formalize gender-responsive indicators in their own performance systems.

Process of induction or orientation to SDC gender integration approaches and expectations and how this affects their work.

Based on the analysis, SDC’s approach to inducting partners on its gender integration methods is inconsistent and often unstructured, resulting in uneven understanding and application across projects. While some partners reported receiving comprehensive briefings during kick-off meetings or virtual sessions, others noted that they had no formal induction at all, relying instead on personal initiative like reading strategy documents, interpreting program feedback, or learning informally from SDC’s gender focal points. This ad hoc approach has limited the consistency and depth of gender integration, as understanding of SDC’s priorities depends largely on individual networks and initiative rather than an established system. Many participants clearly expressed the need for a formalized and standardized onboarding process to ensure that all partners start with a common understanding of SDC’s gender expectations and tools. As one partner noted, *“a dedicated session, with practical examples and expectations would have been beneficial.”* Structured briefings on gender during inception have only recently been introduced about a year ago leaving earlier cohorts of partners without this foundational guidance. This

gap underscores the importance of developing a consistent, practical induction process that includes hands-on training, orientation materials, and examples tailored to different contexts and project types.

To strengthen practice, SDC could integrate gender orientation as a mandatory component of project inception, supported by clear templates, reference materials, and interactive learning tools. Regular refresher sessions and peer exchange forums could help reinforce understanding and allow partners to share experiences from implementation. By moving from informal information sharing to a systematic and experiential induction process, SDC can ensure that all partners regardless of when they joined have the capacity and confidence to apply gender-transformative approaches consistently and effectively across their work.

How SDC can improve how it supports partners integrate gender in the projects

Study participants identified three key areas where SDC can improve how it supports partners to integrate gender in their projects: capacity building and technical support, resource allocation and policy, and collaboration and learning. They recommended that SDC offer periodic and refresher gender training tailored to partner needs, ranging from short 'gender bootcamps' to in-depth workshops on gender-transformative approaches. To make learning more applicable, SDC could develop sector-specific tools such as a Gender in Pastoral Livelihoods Toolkit, alongside practical checklists and templates that can be adapted across projects.

Resource Allocation and Policy where partners highlighted the need for dedicated resources, both financial and human, to ensure that gender integration moves supports further implementation. They recommended that SDC, require mandatory gender budgeting in project proposals; track and analyze gender-disaggregated funding data; and update its gender guidelines and induction materials to reflect evolving priorities and contexts. Partners also suggested that SDC strengthen accountability mechanisms so that commitments to gender equality translate into measurable actions.

Collaboration and Learning, participants recommended fostering a culture of shared learning, SDC can establish Communities of Practice or peer-learning platforms where partners exchange experiences, tools, and lessons from implementation. Some participants also recommended that gender should be a standing agenda item in regular review or coordination meetings, beginning at the project design stage, to encourage open dialogue and joint problem-solving. Partners noted that SDC should adopt a more bottom-up and flexible approach, which is less burdensome and more responsive to field realities, so that gender integration becomes both practical and contextually relevant.

Regularity of opportunities for staff/partners to reflect, discuss, and share learning on how gender equality is being promoted across programmes.

The responses reveal that while most teams and Organisations have some spaces to discuss and reflect on gender, these are not held regularly or systematically. In several cases, gender issues are raised during annual planning, quarterly reviews, or ad hoc meetings rather than through consistent, dedicated forums. A few participants noted more structured mechanisms such as biweekly gender learning fora, pause-and-reflect sessions, or periodic reviews linked to gender action plans, but these appear to be exceptions rather than the norm. For many, gender discussions are integrated into broader learning events or general meetings, often as an afterthought rather than a central focus. Overall, the pattern points to irregularity and uneven practice across teams, with a need to institutionalize more predictable, structured, and in-depth reflection spaces for gender learning.

Specific Training on Intersectionality

The analysis indicates that most study participants have not received structured or specific training on intersectionality and gender-transformative approaches. While some staff have participated in trainings offered by Organisations such as Plan International, UNDP, or through academic programmes covering topics like gender analysis, GBV, and gender mainstreaming, such opportunities are not widespread. This reflects a significant gap in formal learning on these more complex dimensions of gender work particularly in contexts where gender intersects with displacement, fragility, and conflict. Those with deeper or more specialized training are typically Gender Focal Points or newer staff linked to specific projects, underscoring that capacity-building efforts remain

uneven across teams. To address this, the identified gap should be translated into the 2026 learning plan through the inclusion of core modules such as Intersectionality in Fragile Settings and Qualitative Gender-Transformative Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL). These modules should intentionally target a broader audience beyond Gender Focal Points to ensure that intersectional and transformative gender principles are mainstreamed across all staff and partner teams.

- *“Not specific training on intersectionality. however, I participated in a number of training in online courses such as gender in emergencies, violence against women and children.”*
- *“No, I have not received formal training specifically on intersectionality or gender transformative approaches in complex settings. such training would be useful, particularly in contexts like the Somali Region of Ethiopia where gender issues intersect with displacement, conflict environmental stress.”*



MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO THE 2025 GENDER EVALUATION FOR THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME SOMALIA

Management Response

The Management Response (MR) states the position of the Swiss Cooperation Office (SCO) Nairobi on the recommendations of the 2025 Regional Gender Evaluation for the Cooperation Programme Somalia (CPS) and adjacent arid and semi-arid areas in northeastern Kenya and southeastern Ethiopia 2026-2029 (CPS 2026 - 2029). It provides a clear reflection on progress made since the 2019 Gender Assessment and offers practical recommendations to strengthen gender integration in the new CPS 2026 - 2029.

Introduction

Gender is a transversal theme across all interventions in the CPS, which operates across Somalia and its adjacent regions of northeastern Kenya and southeastern Ethiopia, a deeply fragile context affected by conflict and climate stress leading to displacement. These dynamics disproportionately impact women and girls, affecting their access to services, participation in decision-making and socioeconomic opportunities.

The Terms of Reference for the 2025 Gender Evaluation called for an updated assessment of gender integration across the CPS, building on the 2019 Gender Assessment and the 2021 Regional Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Assessment. The evaluation was mandated to take stock of progress, identify remaining gaps, review internal and partner capacities, and propose realistic and actionable measures for strengthening gender integration in the upcoming CPS 2026 – 2029 cycle. This included reviewing project documents, analysing existing gender indicators and results frameworks, assessing placement along the SDC Gender Policy Marker and examining theories of change from a gender perspective. Consultations with SDC staff (field and HQ) and implementing partners were also undertaken to understand how gender is being operationalised within the portfolio in complex Somali and Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL) contexts.

The timing of the evaluation is strategic, as the forthcoming CPS cycle focuses on women and youth, seeks to consolidate progress made and move towards gender transformative practices.

Assessment of the Report and Evaluation Process

The evaluation process was well managed, participatory and evidence-based. It included extensive document reviews, interviews with SDC teams in Nairobi, Addis Ababa and HQ, as well as consultations with implementing partners. The consultants, Aurelia Munene and Lonah Wanjama, demonstrated strong contextual understanding and produced a clear, coherent and digestible report. The annexes, including project reflections, capacity assessments and analysis of theories of change, provide additional depth.

The findings and recommendations are relevant, actionable, and aligned with the CPS strategic direction. The dissemination workshop, which included SDC staff and its partners, provided a useful platform for validation, dialogue and future action. The SCO finds the evaluation credible and appreciates the quality of work delivered.

In line with the Terms of Reference, the evaluation did not include direct engagement with beneficiaries. The analysis is based on secondary documentation and stakeholder consultations.

Main Findings

The consultants identified six overarching recommendations, which collectively address:

1. Clarifying SDC's ambition on gender transformation and strengthening internal accountability within the CPS 26 -29.
2. Building staff and partner capacities through structured learning, mentorship, and dialogue.
3. Enhancing cross-outcome learning and institutional coherence.

4. Improving measurement of gender norm shifts, power relations, and agency.
5. Deepening gender-transformative and intersectional approaches across outcomes.
6. Integrating intersectional analysis into the full project cycle.

Project-specific actions will be taken forward by the Programme Officers in-charge, together with their implementing partners, in line with each project's planning and review cycle, with support from the Gender Focal Point (FP).

Table 1: Overview of Recommendations, Management Response and Measures

Recommendation 1		
Define and communicate SDC's level of ambition on gender transformation, link objectives to results, and embed accountability in roles and performance reviews.		
Management response		
Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree
The evaluation clearly highlighted the need for a more explicit and shared understanding of the SDC CPS ambition to move towards being more gender transformative. Providing this clarity will help ensure that teams and partners have a common vision, clear expectations and a coherent pathway for moving from gender-sensitive towards more gender-transformative practice in the Horn of Africa. Strengthening strategic clarity, linking objectives to measurable results and embedding gender responsibilities in job descriptions and performance tools, will help translate ambition into concrete action and reinforce accountability across the programme.		
Measures	Responsibility	Timing
Articulate SDC CPS's ambition for gender transformation in strategic documents	IC Management, Gender FP	Q1 2026
Include gender accountability elements in job descriptions and staff performance reviews (Management by Objectives - MBOs).	IC Management	Q1 2026
Ensure updated results frameworks reflect gender transformation outcomes where relevant.	Programme Officers (POs)	Continued

Recommendation 2		
Strengthen understanding of gender transformation through tailored capacity-building, mentorship, and safe spaces for dialogue to promote equality, reflection and shared ownership of gender outcomes across all levels.		
Management response		
Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree
The evaluation identified varying levels of confidence and capacity among staff and partners regarding gender transformation. Strengthening learning through tailored capacity-building, mentorship, and safe spaces for reflection, including having a community of practice for gender focal points (SDC and partners), is both feasible and necessary for embedding a gender-transformative culture within the CPS. These measures also support shared ownership and consistent application of gender principles across outcomes.		
Measures	Responsibility	Timing
Develop and implement a gender learning agenda including gender-transformative approaches.	IC Management, Gender FP	2026 onwards
Facilitate periodic safe spaces for gender integration reflections or dialogue sessions.	POs, Gender FP	Quarterly in outcome meetings
Promote mentorship or peer learning with strong partners.	Gender FP	2026

Recommendation 3		
Institutionalize cross-outcome Learning and Accountability. Establish mechanisms for inter-sectoral learning and tracking of transformative gender outcomes across portfolios.		
Management response		
Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree
While cross-sector learning and accountability are important and will be strengthened, the evaluation also acknowledged workload and capacity constraints across teams. For this reason, SDC supports a pragmatic and light approach that encourages periodic exchanges and shared learning e.g having a gender discussion during quarterly outcome meetings, without establishing heavy or formal institutional mechanisms that may not be sustainable. A balanced approach will ensure learning takes place while remaining realistic in the current operating context.		
Measures	Responsibility	Timing
Hold cross-outcome gender learning or exchange sessions.	POs	2026 onwards
Document and share cross-outcome practices, tools, and lessons.	POs, Gender FP	2026 onwards
Integrate gender learning insights in portfolio reviews when feasible.	POs	Annually

Recommendation 4		
Include result framework indicators to track gender normative changes: Need to capture shifts in power relations, decision-making and social norms, beyond participation numbers.		
Management response		
Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree
The evaluation confirmed that the current results frameworks rely heavily on participation metrics and do not sufficiently capture changes in gender norms, agency or power relations. Integrating qualitative and normative indicators aligns with SDC's ambition to move towards more gender-transformative programming and is feasible through project redesign and strengthened monitoring practices.		
Measures	Responsibility	Timing
Integrate qualitative / norm-change indicators in updated project designs.	POs	2026 onwards
Promote collection of qualitative evidence of gender norm shifts.	POs	Ongoing
Where feasible ensure updated results frameworks reflect gender transformative indicators	POs	2026

Recommendation 5		
Integrate gender-transformative and intersectional approaches across all current CPS outcomes or future outcomes. This includes: - Strengthening women's agency, decision-making power and control over resources. - Embedding gender-responsive budgeting and institutional frameworks. - Tracking changes in gender norms, workload distribution and representation. - Creating feedback loops to ensure accountability and learning.		
Management response		
Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree
The evaluation showed that while gender-sensitive practices are present across the portfolio, projects often fall short of addressing the underlying norms, power relations and structural barriers that limit women's agency and decision-making. Integrating gender-transformative and intersectional approaches across outcomes is therefore key to strengthening the depth and consistency		

of gender results. However, SDC partially agrees with this recommendation, as fully embedding gender-transformative approaches across all outcomes is not always feasible within the current operating context. Funding levels across several programmes have decreased, which limits the extent to which deeper analysis and additional layers of gender-transformative work can realistically be undertaken, particularly when engaging government partners whose priorities, capacities and willingness to adopt such approaches vary. While the ambition remains relevant, SDC will take a phased and context-appropriate approach to strengthening transformative elements where feasible, without over-committing beyond available resources or partner capacity.

Measures	Responsibility	Timing
Gender and transformative outcomes in elaboration of new CPS RS and in new/revised project ToCs.	IC Management (POs)	Completed
Integrate gender and transformative outcomes in elaboration of new/revised project ToCs/Outcomes.	POs	Ongoing
Strengthen tracking of agency, decision-making, representation, safety, and time use.	POs	Ongoing
Promote gender-responsive budgeting where appropriate.	POs	2026 - 2029
Ensure feedback and accountability loops for gender equality exist in projects.	POs	Ongoing

Recommendation 6

Integrate an intersectional approach across the project cycle including an intersectional analysis as part of gender analysis. During project design, reflect findings in the logframe, engage affected communities, design inclusive activities, build capacity and ensure adequate resources and monitoring.

Management response

Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree
The evaluation highlighted that intersectionality remains a significant gap across several projects, particularly in relation to displacement status, disability, age and minority clan identity, factors that strongly shape how women and men experience exclusion and access opportunities in Somalia and the adjacent ASAL regions. SDC recognises the value of integrating intersectional analysis throughout the project cycle to improve the quality and equity of interventions. However, SDC partially agrees with this recommendation, as the feasibility of applying deep intersectional analysis varies considerably across projects and contexts. In some projects, the level of analysis proposed may not be realistic due to limited resources, sensitive political dynamics, or operational constraints, especially when addressing clan-related issues, which require careful navigation and may not always be appropriate or possible within project mandates. While SDC will strengthen intersectional considerations where feasible, efforts will be tailored to the context and implemented pragmatically to ensure they remain achievable and do not exceed partner capacities or available funding.		
Measures	Responsibility	Timing
Ensure intersectional analysis is included in project design and revisions.	POs	2026 onwards
Integrate intersectional objectives and indicators in project logframes.	POs	2026 onwards
Ensure meaningful participation of marginalised groups in design / monitoring.	POs, Partners	Ongoing
Strengthen disaggregated data systems (gender, age, disability, ethnicity, displacement).	POs	2026 - 2029
Build partner and staff capacity on intersectionality.	Partners, Gender FP, POs	Ongoing
Use intersectional monitoring in adaptive management.	POs	Annually

Nairobi, 18.12.2025

(Martina Durrer)

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