

FASTENOPFER POLICY STATEMENT



gender | Gender mainstreaming

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1 Introduction

*'Women are no longer satisfied with half the sky,
they also want half the earth' (Alice Schwarzer)*

Fastenopfer is guided in its work by Christian values such as, for example, that 'every woman and every man have the same dignity, because God created woman and man in his own image' (Genesis 1,27).¹ From this biblical perspective, it seems obvious that gender must never be used as a tool of oppression.

The approach pursued by Fastenopfer is that the aim must be equality and equal rights, not for women and men to become the same. Because sameness will lead to the de facto socio-cultural acceptance of standardised male norms, rather than to equal rights. By contrast, Fastenopfer understands gender equality to mean equal opportunities for young and older women and men. Gender equality recognises and accepts people's diversity with regard to gender, sexual orientation, cultural heritage, faith and age. Only in this way does a policy of gender equality reflect and apply fully the promise inherent in human rights that it is possible to live free from discrimination.

Equality can only be achieved if it becomes a cross-sectoral concern, addressing issues that range from work, via the family, to the economy, from foreign policy to social policy and international development cooperation. Fastenopfer starts from the principle that all areas of life relating to gender – i.e. gender-specific role allocations and relations between women and men – are determined by culture and society. Given the fact that female-male relations form part of all areas of life, Fastenopfer is convinced that it is vital to integrate gender equality into its own practice, into development policy and into its programme work. Because gender must not be treated merely as a side-issue, or used as a politically correct cloak for all pastoral and development projects. Rather, gender is defined as a 'transversal theme', which is taken seriously both here in the North, in our own institution, and which should 'run across' all the programmes and projects, in a positive way, in the countries of the South.

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2 Context and key issues

The term 'gender'² has become a generally accepted concept. Gender³ - in contrast to 'sex' – does not refer to the biological differences between the sexes, but rather to the socially and culturally constructed, learned, different roles and concepts of identity that are assigned to the 'female' and the 'male'. These normative concepts and fixed roles are shaped by the social, economic, religious, legal and political organisation of a society.

A woman's world is also always part of a man's world and vice versa. Consequently, women and men cannot be seen in isolation from each other, but must always be defined in relation to each other. Taking an isolated view, or indeed replacing the term 'gender' with 'woman'

¹ See FO concept 'Building communities – living our faith', 2007: p.6

² The term *gender* was introduced with this meaning in 1955 by the US sex researcher John Money to describe the feelings and behaviour of intersexual human beings whose physical sexual identity was not unambiguous, but who demonstrated a clear gender identity, or a clear gender role presentation. These had originally been described as *sex role* and *sex identity*, but in these people their physical identity or sex was not in fact clear. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender>

³ based on Joan Wallach Scott.

has the inherent danger of cementing separate spheres such as ‘female concerns and family’ or ‘male concerns and politics’.

Gender relations also always reflect power relations. Gender as a category structures the distribution of power, control over and access to resources. A conscious approach to gender provides an opportunity to decode these meanings and to understand the interrelations between the social construct of gender and society. Identifying gender relations also means examining and critically analysing role assignments, rights, responsibilities, resources and values that are associated with women or men.

Gender relations are therefore highly context-specific. Depending on the cultural, social, religious or historic background, they take on a different slant. This is why they have to be decoded within their specific context and – where necessary - changed.

It is therefore vitally important, particularly for development cooperation, which is mainly concerned with the allocation of resources and the redistribution of power, to use gender correctly and sensitively, both as a concept and in practice.⁴

For public relations and campaign work, gender mainstreaming means checking the written and visual communication for gender-specific discriminations. The gender mainstreaming of Fastenopfer programmes and projects must ensure that gender is included as a cross-cutting theme in all the phases and processes of planning, implementation and monitoring/evaluation. Considerations of gender must therefore be integrated into all the stages of programme cycle management (PCM).

3 Basic positions and strategies adopted by Fastenopfer

3.1 Challenges for gender work

Because women and men now live in a globalised world, social injustices have increased massively for both. However, the consequences of globalisation are experienced differently by men and women in the countries of the South: Literacy, urbanisation, greater mobility, marriage at a later age, the more frequent use of contraceptives etc. are leading to a questioning of existing relations between the sexes which can, on the one hand, strengthen the position of girls and women, and on the other hand question that of boys and men. Added to this is the fact that the people in countries in the South are particularly affected by the consequences of war, global warming, hunger and exploitation – which in turn can have a negative effect on the relations between the sexes.

Challenges for gender work at the level of practical project work

One of the biggest tasks at the level of project work is probably to make sure that no stereotyping of ‘the women’ and ‘the men’ and no fixed role assignment is made. The assumption that women and men do not belong to homogenous groups, and that they do not always automatically have the same interests, needs and anxieties, is proving to be a pioneering approach. A tool for the project partners is the collection of gender-disaggregated data – i.e. the collection of information that takes account of the different activities, needs, goals, hopes and fears of women and men. At the level of our own reporting and that of the partners, the challenge is to avoid allocating black and white roles such as ‘women as victims’ and ‘men as perpetrators’, and to make sure of using a **gender-sensitive language**.

⁴ See also the ‘Do No Harm approach’ in the Fastenopfer policy statement ‘Promoting peace, fostering dialogue’, 2007.

Having the same numbers of women and men involved in the projects does not necessarily guarantee equal **access to resources and to decision-making power**. It is therefore important to recognise where women and men are placed in the hierarchy of projects, and whose interests they represent.

Gender-mainstreaming can lead to women being overloaded, and men being disempowered as a result of new tasks, duties and responsibilities being imposed. Both can provoke a worsening of gender relations, instead of improving them. This aspect must always be taken into account in a gender-sensitive 'Do No Harm analysis'.

3.2 Approaches and strategies

Gender empowerment and participation are the premises on which each Fastenopfer project is based. The approaches dealt with here should be seen as possible theoretical gateways to tackling gender work in practice. Two approaches in particular – gender empowerment and gender-sensitive Do No Harm analysis – are prioritised, because they can, on the one hand, be integrated most closely into the practical work of Fastenopfer and because they are, on the other hand, at the heart of the current discussions in the area of gender and development and pastoral cooperation work. However, all the approaches presented here are not exclusive of each other, but can rather supplement each other in a fruitful way, or be chosen depending on each specific context. In particular, they are intended as a practical guide for the programme managers and partner organisations, to stimulate critical reflection about existing, hitherto unquestioned power structures, to identify blind spots in their programmes and projects, institute appropriate corrective measures and avoid the classic gender traps in their practical work. The prioritised approaches are intended to be binding elements in Fastenopfer's future gender policy. In practical terms, this implies that at the level of project and programme work, **gender empowerment** and a **gender-sensitive Do No Harm analysis** will not only form part of the new country programme cycle, but will also always be integrated in the monitoring and evaluation processes. At the level of the institution, a binding implementation of the two approaches means consciously addressing issues of power in the area of gender, i.e. a gender-sensitive personnel and wages policy and a regular reconsideration of existing structures.

Gender empowerment

Fastenopfer understands *gender empowerment*⁵ to mean that women and men empower themselves individually and collectively to assert their rights at a social meso and macro level, to fight against unjust structures, and to participate actively in political, cultural and economic life. In this process, women and men strengthen their own local social, cultural, political and economic resources by means of their existing specific capacities and experiences in a way that enables them to secure their basic needs and to fight against unjust power structures. Gender is always related to power and powerlessness. Empowerment processes – seen as the individual empowerment and enabling of women and men – address four levels of power. Here, it is important to point out that power per se is not perceived as something negative. Both genders have different access to the following four levels of power:

- Power over – in the sense of rule or control
- Power to – in the sense of support, advocacy, lobbying etc.

⁵ The term *Empowerment* was coined chiefly by the Development Action for Women Network (DAWN).

- Power with – in the sense of exploiting synergies, working in networks, using resource persons, passing on information (*gatekeeper*-function)
- Power within – in the sense of strengthening a person's self-confidence, control over her own body etc.

According to Rodenberg and Wichterich⁶, empowerment can be understood as a process that consists of six dimensions:

1. Personal empowerment consists of identity formation through increased self-confidence, self-determination and autonomy.
2. Legal empowerment means constituting both genders as legal personalities with equal rights.
3. Social empowerment means the collective strengthening of women and men in relation to power structures that are discriminatory in a gender-specific way.
4. Political empowerment means the advancement of women and men as equal political subjects.
5. Cultural empowerment means the strengthening of gender identity.
6. Economic empowerment is the strengthening of gender-specific economic survival strategies.

Fastenopfer considers it important to supplement these six aspects of empowerment with a specific level of religious empowerment. It is vital for the success of empowerment projects in development and pastoral projects that all levels of empowerment are addressed and tackled. Only then will the approach be sustainable and effective in the long term. Until now, development cooperation has frequently only focused on economic, legal or political empowerment, while personal, social and cultural empowerment are often still forgotten. Empowerment must always take both genders into account. This may, however, still mean that the marginalised gender needs to be specifically empowered. But at the same time, men must be supported in a way that enables them to learn to deal with new, egalitarian gender roles, and redefine their self-awareness and their identity as fathers, husbands etc.

The systemic gender approach takes account of the fact that *gender empowerment* of one group (most often women) always implies the *gender disempowerment* of another group (usually men). Gender work always involves a shift in power relations. This means that each intervention must always be aware of the whole social structure and of the unintended consequences of an intervention.⁷ That is why Fastenopfer's gender work focuses not only on women's projects but also works with men, integrates different generations and different social strata. Both in the country programmes and in the individual projects, attention should always be paid to considering the whole network of social relations between the sexes. However, a systemic gender approach should not be understood to mean that both sexes always have to be involved in all projects. It can be perfectly sensible to have separate women's or men's projects. However, here too it is vital that the (intended and unintended) impacts of the project on the whole social structure are both anticipated and assessed at the planning stage, observed during the monitoring phase, and finally analysed in the evaluation phase. Because viewing something through a 'gender lens' must never mean focusing exclusively on women and ignoring other socially relevant categories.

⁶ based on Rodenberg and Wichterich 1999: 'Gaining power. A Study of women's projects of the Heinrich-Böll Foundation abroad', Berlin. p. 114-117.

⁷ see also Fastenopfer's Do No Harm approach, 2007.

If unequal power relationships do 'not change automatically', then measures can be taken at programme or project level which put a stop to the prevailing structures that block women's access to, and decision-making power over, project resources. Fastenopfer is therefore in favour of **positive discrimination**⁸ as a possible means of consciously and systematically promoting girls and women. However, positive discrimination must never be an end in itself, but must only be implemented where current systems and traditions exist that clearly 'discriminate positively in favour of men'. In principle, the systematic discrimination in favour of women and gender mainstreaming must never be used against each other, but should rather supplement each other in a combined approach. Because positive discrimination in favour of women does not in itself constitute sustainable gender work, though it can, in specific cases, help to counteract gender-based injustices.

Another means of achieving a long-term change in power relations is the approach developed by Molyneux⁹ (1985) which is characterised by a change **from basic needs to basic rights**. The main focus here is on distinguishing between practical gender needs and strategic gender interests. While projects which centre on practical gender needs are linked to the short-term improvement of women's living conditions, projects which concentrate on strategic gender interests focus on the long-term strategy of ending the 'gender hierarchy' and aim to permanently alter the power relations between women and men. Since both approaches are important for improving the position of women, a combination of the two approaches would seem to be most promising for sustainable programme and project work.

Gender-sensitive Do No Harm approach

A gender-sensitive Do No Harm approach takes account of any unintended consequences for women and men of an intervention through development or pastoral cooperation.¹⁰ Development practice and policy that is gender-oriented must therefore focus more clearly on the different effects and the unintended side-effects: Do women and men have equal access to new acquisitions, to new income-generating opportunities? Is growth being distributed equitably (because growth does not automatically mean equality). At whose expense? Are new dependencies being created. Another risk is that so-called women's empowerment projects create extra burdens for women (housework, field work, work in the informal sector, additional training sessions and voluntary project work). A gender-sensitive Do No Harm approach can be implemented with the existing Do No Harm methodology, with special attention being paid to possible gender injustices.

4 Guidelines for implementation

The approaches outlined above lead to practical recommendations in certain areas for future gender work to be pursued by Fastenopfer. As already mentioned, the aim is for gender mainstreaming to be adopted first at the level of the institution itself, and secondly at the level of the country programmes, by examining them with regard to gender inequalities. As a complementary strategy, gender-specific projects can also be envisaged. Finally, practical proposals are put forward for implementing gender equality in our project and programme

⁸ Positive discrimination, or '*Affirmative Action*' are understood as institutionalised measures aimed at removing discrimination against members of a group through systematic preferential treatment. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Discrimination>)

⁹ Maxine Molyneux is a Pakistani sociologist who is now a professor at the Institute of Latin American Studies at the University of London, and whose main interest is in gender and the women's movement. Her distinction between specific gender needs and gender interests is still used today.

¹⁰ Practical guidance on using 'Gender & Do No Harm' are in the appendix, KOFF, 2008.

work. At the level of the programme managers and of the public relations and campaigning work, attention must be paid to using gender-sensitive language which is in line with gender mainstreaming not only at the formal level, but also in substance.

1. Gender mainstreaming at the level of the institution

Implementing gender concerns in its own institutional culture presents a constant challenge for Fastenopfer. A basic premise of any internal and external equality work is that Fastenopfer devotes sufficient personnel, infrastructural and financial resources to this task.

Although many important steps have already been taken towards gender equality – equal pay, maternity and paternity leave, part-time working, full family benefits for single parents – and attention is being paid to the equal representation of women and men on various bodies, there is a continued need for action – for example, in the form of shorter part-time hours, job-sharing, or with regard to a more equal gender distribution at the management level. Consequently, gender must appear at all levels of the organisation chart.

2. Gender mainstreaming at the level of the country programmes

In order to do justice to the context specificity of gender inequalities, it is essential that the cultural local, national and international background of the country programmes is analysed through a gender lens. However, in the practical implementation of the theoretically defined country programmes and equality concerns, gender concerns frequently evaporate, or somehow get lost on the way to implementation. It is therefore of crucial importance that gender is defined in country programmes with clear responsibilities and practical measures. Here, we have to ask ourselves whether gender inequalities occur in the existing country programme, or are even being reinforced by the programme; what would be the necessary measures in order to remedy these and whether other organisations in the programme region are working with gender, and what the possible synergies are.

Since resources are usually limited, and the needs are correspondingly great, focal points will sometimes have to be selected for an intervention. In a gender mainstreaming process at country programme level, the aim should be to identify whether and where the thematic lines offer spaces for the insertion of gender. If necessary, a gender-specific project can also be considered.

3. Gender-specific projects

In order to place even greater emphasis on the issue of gender equality, gender-specific projects can and should be implemented as a complementary strategy, which integrates the gender perspective in the country programmes depending on context, the partners' capacities and priorities. Gender-specific projects will always be needed if the existing programmes are not sufficient to narrow the gender gap and reduce existing gender inequalities. Gender-specific projects are normally implemented at a macro or meso level. For example, HIV/AIDS awareness-raising programmes require a gender-specific approach. They pursue the following goals:¹¹

1. Heighten both women's and men's awareness of their specific situation (e.g. with regard to their rights and duties).
2. Promote equal participation of both women and men in their family context, as well as in the wider social and cultural environment, in society and in political bodies.
3. Sensitise men to treat women as partners of equal value and with equal rights.

¹¹http://www.deza.ch/admin.ch/ressources/resource_en_24017.pdf

Gender-specific projects cannot replace gender mainstreaming, and should also not be confused with development projects for women. However, they can be a useful means of actually tackling the existing inequalities and reduce them.

4. Practical implementation in programme and project work

For the programme managers and coordinators, gender mainstreaming means, in their practical programme and project work,

1. that priority is given to gender equality, and that a dialogue about this is started with the partner organisations.
2. that concrete measures are introduced, jointly with the partner organisations, in order to ensure gender equality in all phases of the programme cycle, so that women and men are involved equally at all project levels, from the planning to the implementation of the project activities, and that no gender biases are created.
3. that the gender aspect is also taken into account in written reports, such as project applications, annual reports, reports of field trips or internal documents, not only by using gender-fair language, but also by ensuring that the content gives equal space to women and men.
4. that efforts are made to sensitise all partner organisations to gender equality – e.g. in the form of workshops – and to encourage them to implement this in practice.
5. that every effort is made to support partner organisations in their efforts to implement gender equality, and that they are provided with the appropriate tools and resources.
6. that the country programme and the individual projects are regularly monitored for gender equality and adapted (monitoring und evaluation).
7. that Fastenopfer supports women's organisations in Switzerland and in the countries of the South and takes an active role in this network.

5. Gender-fair language

The use of gender-fair language for project and programme work as well as for public relations and campaigning work requires more than purely adding the feminine form. Rather, a creative use of language demands that it does not become clumsy and illegible. Furthermore, a non-sexist use of language is also concerned to express that women and men are recognized as individuals, with their particular achievements and contributions. This means that sexist designations and metaphors, which reduce women and men to their biological gender or their appearance, must be completely removed. With regard to content, care must be taken in the production of text and the selection of images that women and men are not depicted in their 'traditional' roles, and no clichés and stereotypes are reinforced as a result. Both women and men should be represented as equal and active people.¹²

¹² This can be achieved through various different measures: For example, the presence of women and men should be signalled by using both terms, possibly with a back-slash. Using a gender-neutral plural / collective form has the advantage that only one pronoun is necessary. Persons or job designations that do not have a female form should if possible be avoided. It is important that the use of the generic male form, i.e. the sole use of male forms, is systematically avoided and the chosen personal designations are symmetrical for women and men.

5 Glossary and abbreviations

Gender

Social construct

Gender-Mainstreaming

Integration of the gender perspective at all levels and into all processes of an organisation

Gender-disaggregated-data

Gender-specific data / facts

Mainstreaming

Integration at all levels

Sex

Biological sex

Positive discrimination/Affirmative action

Strategic preferential treatment of a disadvantaged group – e.g. women

CEDAW

Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women

PCM

Programme Cycle Management

Appendix

Ten central questions on gender-aware development in FO project work

Project planning

1. Does the project, the programme, the coordinator have an objective as regards the advancement of women and men?
2. How does the project influence the productive, reproductive and socio-cultural role of women and men – as family members, as fathers or mothers, as educators, as agricultural producers, as wage earners and business persons, or who performs unpaid community work?
3. How many women and how many men are concretely involved in project planning?
4. Are the training opportunities accessible to women and men and do they take account of the different roles and duties?
5. Are planning and monitoring arranged in such a way (and indicators defined), that changes in favour of an equitable development can later be measured during an evaluation?

Project application

6. Where are the women and men in the leading bodies, in the management and as employees, as disseminators and beneficiaries?
7. How does the project affect men's and women's access to resources and their control?
8. Does the project entail changes in the women's and men's lifestyle, how does it impact on status, income, does it create new, or does it broaden traditional roles?
9. Are the women and men capable, subsequent upon the project, to continue their development independently?
10. What effect does the globalisation of the economy have on the project and on the (economic) survival of the women and men affected by it?