



Gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) in Africa: Institutional culture shift

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GEWE in foreign aid since Beijing

- Enthusiasm in the late 1990s, quietness in the early 2000s, steadily growing attention and contestation since the late 2000s
- The organisational origin of aid agencies (bank, foundation, diplomacy, etc.) significantly influences how GEWE is taken up
- The challenges of even committed agencies to seriously address GEWE (domestic politics, organisational pressures and priorities at the headquarter level)



Implementation challenges

Challenges at the country level of aid agencies:

- Numerous, changing priorities and overstretched staff
 - Limited capacities
 - Gender focal points are often junior staff working part-time on GEWE
 - Limited room for manoeuvre
- Attention to GEWE becomes a tick-box exercise



Challenges in African countries

- Government commitment: GEWE in national politics
- Stability, fragility and post-conflict recovery
- Religious and customary authorities
- Gender relations are power relations and deeply embedded in cultures that change only slowly (like in Europe)



Recommendations (I)

- Prioritise the priorities and recognise the political limitations
- Perceive the institutional culture shift as a 10-years, SDG-like project
- Be realistic – avoid: ‘We were bad in the past, we will be good in the future.’
- Delegate as much as possible to country offices permitting these to carry out pragmatic aid management (flexible, context dependent, politically sensitive, and liberal in relation to EU policies)



Recommendations (2)

- Distinguish between types of African countries:
 - Strong governments committed to GEWE: Budget support and political dialogue
 - Governments not committed to GEWE: Targeted activities
 - Fragile situations: Targeted activities
 - Post-conflict recovery: Targeted activities and political dialogue



Thank you