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Evaluation of gender mainstreaming in AFD projects (2014–2018)

The full evaluation report
can be downloaded from the AFD website:
<https://www.afd.fr/en/ressources-accueil>

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The analyses and conclusions of this document are those of its authors. They do not necessarily reflect the official views of the Agence française de développement or its partner institutions.

Cover page

Clinique juridique d'Abobo, Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire),
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Status of the document

Ce document constitue la synthèse du rapport final de l'évaluation de la prise en compte du genre dans les projets de l'Agence Française de Développement sur la période 2014-2018.

This document is the overview of the final report of the evaluation of gender integration in Agence Française de Développement projects for the period 2014-2018.

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Foreword

“AFD is proud to present the results of the evaluation of gender mainstreaming in projects (2014-2018), an exercise that has been instrumental in the process of increasing AFD's focus on these issues. AFD wanted to learn from the implementation of its first gender strategy, with the aim of continuing to progress. Promoting learning is an ambitious choice that shows AFD's ability to identify and take responsibility for its successes and shortcomings, and to implement the necessary means to achieve the objectives it has set in this area.

The reduction of gender inequalities is already at the heart of AFD's Strategic Orientation Plan for the 2018-2022 period, as one of the five thematic priorities, alongside international stability, climate, education and health. However, social inequalities, especially gender inequalities, have worsened in the face of recent economic, social and health crises and have hit AFD's countries of operations with full force. Aware of this reality, AFD wishes to intensify its efforts to finance projects that can help partner countries overcome the structural difficulties they are experiencing, particularly the difficulties that underlie gender inequalities. The recommendations from the gender strategy evaluation should make it possible to act in this direction.

Therefore, AFD plans to strengthen the institutionalization of this issue internally, as well as the advocacy and driving role it can play with its partners and counterparties, particularly in the framework of future strategic exercises.

Within the framework of its operational activities, its ambition is to better reconcile the founding sectoral and cross-cutting objectives of its intervention – in particular gender and climate – so that they contribute even more to the achievement of all the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda. To this end, a genuine gender expertise branch will be set up.

In June 2021, AFD obtained AFNOR's "Gender Equality in the Workplace" label, materializing this internal commitment and rewarding the work carried out over the past several years to make gender equality a reality within this institution.

AFD, as a feminist agency, is now committed to raising this major issue to the highest level of its strategic ambitions and to supporting the agents who contribute with conviction and assiduity to the mainstreaming of gender in AFD's activities!”

Marie-Hélène Loison,
Deputy General Director

Abstract

THE EVALUATION APPROACH

The Crosscutting Intervention Framework on Gender and the Reduction of Gender Inequalities 2014–2017 or Gender CIF, adopted in March 2014, set out AFD's strategic orientations on the reduction of gender inequalities, defined its operational framework and established quantified operational objectives, notably: by 2017 50% of projects must include gender equality as a main or significant objective (rated DAC 2 ^[1] or DAC 1, respectively) and awareness of 90% of project leaders and managers to gender issues must have been raised.

Five years after its adoption, AFD decided to carry out an evaluation. Based on the Gender CIF, the evaluation covers both the portfolio of projects financed by AFD and the internal organization set up by AFD to address gender issues.

The answers to the five evaluation questions are summarized below.

Q1 – EFFECTS ON GENDER INTEGRATION IN AFD TEAM PRACTICES

Operational teams have significantly improved their awareness, knowledge and skills in relation to gender integration, mainly thanks to the advocacy, training and methodological tools deployed by the transversal unit in charge of this theme at AFD. However, this is essentially the case at headquarters and much less so in the country offices, which benefited less from training and opportunities to contribute to the co-development of methodological tools.

The target of 50% of projects rated DAC 1 and 2 defined in the Gender CIF was achieved by 2017, mainly thanks to the decisive support of the Environmental and Social Sustainable Development Support Division, the project team leaders and the implementation of the sustainable development opinion integrating a gender rating. Nevertheless, practices still vary widely between the operational technical divisions.

The lack of resources allocated at the beginning of the period to coordinate the Gender CIF, design methodological tools, provide training and lead the network of gender focal points, combined with a reorganization of the management of the Gender Strategy within AFD that was poorly understood in 2018, have slowed down the strategy's deployment. Moreover, although gender is indeed one of AFD's major objectives, this issue, which was brought up more recently than climate change, is struggling to be appropriated at all levels of the institution.

While the network of gender focal points at headquarters and in country offices, launched in 2014, has been an effective lever for promoting gender integration at AFD, their ability to act has been limited by high turnover and the absence of a mission statement from their managers

[1] OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) classification criteria. For more information: <https://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/Handbook-OECD-DAC-Gender-Equality-Policy-Marker.pdf>

Q2 & Q3 – EFFECTS ON COUNTERPARTIES' AND CONSULTANTS' PRACTICES

The evaluation also reveals that AFD country offices have encountered great difficulty in the field in engaging dialogue on gender with counterparties during projects' identification and design phases. Counterparties often have very limited knowledge of AFD's Gender Strategy and the associated rating. Gender integration in projects is therefore more often driven by AFD headquarters.

Regarding consultants' practices, while AFD's Gender Strategy has contributed to changing the practices of a minority of consultants, it has had a very limited impact on consultants who are already gender experts or, on the contrary, who are resistant. This is mainly due to the fact that the inclusion of gender in the terms of reference of projects remains weak, even if it has progressed since 2014.

Q4 – ADEQUACY TO THE NEEDS OF THE BENEFICIARIES

While the effective integration of gender in project design is mainly observable in the context information of DAC 2 projects, women's needs are considered through the integration of specific actions in half of the gender-sensitive projects (DAC 1 and 2) in the sample studied.

The strategic objectives and operational modalities of projects whose main objective is gender equality are well aligned with the needs of beneficiaries, particularly women. However, the information collected on projects where gender equality is a significant but not the main objective is too fragile to assess the relevance of the objectives and actions related to gender in these projects.

Q5 – EFFECTS ON THE DYNAMICS OF GENDER RELATIONS AND GENDER EQUALITY IN AFD'S COUNTRIES OF INTERVENTION

Relying on operators with specific expertise and organizing gender awareness sessions are often necessary conditions to promote gender integration in the implementation of projects.

The effects of projects with gender equality as a significant but not primary objective on the dynamics of gender relations are generally difficult to observe. This is mainly due to a lack of explicit gender-specific objectives in the logical frameworks and thus the absence of specific monitoring and investigation of this issue in project evaluations.

EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Five policy recommendations were formulated in response to the key issues identified in the evaluation.

- (i) Consolidate the strategic foundations of AFD's commitment and intervention in favour of the gender priority: redefine the objectives of AFD's new Gender Strategy and ensure that they are disseminated internally and externally, particularly to counterparties; ensure that gender is properly taken into account in sectoral and geographic strategies; and strengthen the link between gender and climate priorities.
- (ii) Strengthen the support of the gender priority by all levels of AFD management: formally involve at the highest level of the institution, in the deployment of the Gender Strategy; encourage the dissemination of knowledge and the increase in managers' skills on gender; and strengthen the place of gender in the dialogue between managers and their teams.
- (iii) Encourage a stronger involvement of country offices in the identification of projects and dialogue with counterparties: strengthen the role of the regional offices in facilitating and supporting gender issues and provide country offices teams with tools for dialogue with counterparties.
- (iv) Renew the gender training and capitalisation strategy for newcomers as well as all gender focal points: by producing additional sectoral toolkits on emerging issues; by encouraging feedback on the most emblematic gender projects; and by strengthening links with the research community.
- (v) Strengthen gender integration at key stages of projects: at the identification phase through the mobilisation of country offices; during the context analysis at the appraisal phase; and during project monitoring and evaluation.

1. Taking gender into account in AFD's projects 2014–2018

1.1 Gender CIF

AFD's Gender Strategy was formalized with the adoption of the **Crosscutting Intervention Framework on Gender and the Reduction of Gender Inequality 2014–2017 (Gender CIF)** by AFD's Board of Directors in March 2014.

This strategic document follows on from the political orientation to remedy France's **shortcomings** in terms of the gender approach in its cooperation practices.

As a result, the gender approach remains today the business of too few specialists, who are relatively isolated in the institutions in which they work, be it the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, AFD [...] [Report on the evaluation of the French Gender and Development policy Strategic orientation document n°1 by the High Council for Equality, 2012].

As far as gender equality is concerned, this concept is not integrated into cooperation strategies (AFD's Partnership Framework Documents and Country Intervention Framework). France finances a few projects targeting women, [...] but the gender approach is a concept that is not sufficiently mastered by most of the agents we met. They do not receive incentives, tools or training adapted to their needs. [OECD Peer Review on Development Cooperation France 2013]

The Gender CIF 2014–2017 set AFD's **strategic orientations** on the reduction of gender inequalities, defined its operational framework and established quantified operational objectives (see Table below).

In the frame of the implementation of this strategy, AFD set up internal governance on gender. The design of the Gender CIF, adopted in March 2014, was entrusted to the **Environmental and Social Sustainable Development Support Division** which, until 2018, was responsible for steering the strategy.

Table 1 – Key elements of the Gender CIF 2014–2017

1 purpose	Contribute to a sustainable, inclusive, and equitable development between women and men
3 operational priorities	Prevent gender inequalities in AFD's operations Promote gender as one of the objectives of its interventions Support the evolution of societies on gender issues
3 key monitoring indicators	100% of AFD's projects will be reported according to the OECD DAC gender equality marker by 2017 At least 50% of operations financed by AFD in foreign countries by 2017 must be rated 1 or 2 on the OECD DAC gender equality marker, except for AFD financing provided in the form of global or sectoral budget support or unrestricted credit lines 90% of AFD's project team leaders and managers must have received gender training or awareness raising by 2017
6 areas of work	Develop and implement gender roadmaps specific to AFD's sectors and geographies of intervention Systematize gender integration throughout the project cycle Evaluate and capitalize on acquired experience Build internal capacity on gender issues Raise awareness of gender issues among AFD's partners Participate in debates and reflection on gender and development

The **Civil Society Organizations Division (CSO)** also played an important role in the implementation of the Gender Strategy, notably by relaying the practices and expertise developed by NGOs on gender equality issues. A **steering committee**, chaired by the management direction, was set up in 2014 to monitor the progress of the objectives defined in the Gender CIF each year and two **gender champions** were appointed to take charge of the subject.

The mission of steering the Gender Strategy was transferred to the **Social Link Unit (SLU)** created in 2018.

In annex, a **selective chronology** of the Gender CIF details the genesis of the strategy and the main institutional elements that led to its development, as well as its key achievements. The resources allocated to its design and management are also described.

1.2 What was done: elements of assessment

Between 2014 and 2018, the implementation of the Gender CIF included several operational achievements, including:

- The establishment of a network of **gender focal points**;
- The systematization of the gender rating of projects, by integrating a **gender rating of projects** in the Sustainable Development Opinion – rated by environmental and social experts of the Environmental and Social Sustainable Development Support Division – and discussing them in project committees;
- **Operational support** for teams and the design of methodological tools (sectoral toolkits, country profiles);
- Raising awareness and training AFD teams on gender issues;
- The development of an **intellectual production**, “Gender and Development”;
- **Communication** on gender as a strategic objective of AFD internally – creation of a dedicated documentation space on the intranet portal, of an internal mailing list and revival of a community on AFD’s social network – and externally – creation of a dedicated page on the website ^[2], forums on the ID4D blog ^[3] – (see Table below).

[3] <https://www.afd.fr/fr/page-thematique-axe/egalite-des-sexes>

[4] <https://ideas4development.org/>

Figure 2 – Elements of assessment of the implementation of the Gender CIF (selection)

Network of gender focal points

The total number of gender focal points varied between 54 and 105, depending on the period
231 people have held the position of gender focal point at AFD for at least one month
45% of gender focal points have held this position for less than 6 months and 6% have held it for more than 2 years

Gender rating of projects

AFD first uses the OECD DAC rating where DAC 0 = not oriented towards the objective of gender equality, DAC 1 = gender equality is a significant objective of the project, but is not the main reason for its implementation and DAC 2 = gender equality is the main objective of the project

The DAC rating is then integrated into the Sustainable Development Opinion, which extends the possibility of assigning a DAC2 rating to infrastructure projects with a strong cross-cutting gender equality objective
100% of projects within the scope of accountability are rated on gender

The share of projects rated DAC 1 or 2 increases from 34% in 2014 to 49% in 2018

Methodological tools

10 sectoral toolkits were co-produced with the corresponding teams: Urban Development; Agriculture, Rural Development and Biodiversity; Water and Sanitation; Transport and Mobility; Energy; Education, Vocational Training and Employment; Private Sector Support, Entrepreneurship and Financial Inclusion; Health; Environmental and Social Due Diligence, downloaded nearly 1,000 times in total internally

57 country/territory profiles were co-produced with the involved teams: 27 in Africa, 6 in Asia, 8 in the Mediterranean and 8 in Latin America, also downloaded almost 1,000 times internally

Awareness and training

Over the period 2014–2017, more than 530 people participated in awareness sessions, including about 50 managers, and nearly 475 received training, including 10 managers

At the beginning of 2018, a gender awareness session was integrated into the training sessions for newcomers to AFD, through a 3-hour session

Approximately 20 sector-specific gender training sessions were held with approximately 10 technical divisions between 2014 and 2018

50% of gender focal points have received training

The monitoring and evaluation system does not provide information regarding the proportion of the Agency's current staff who benefited from awareness-raising and how it is distributed among the departments and divisions

Internal and external communication

Creation of a dedicated space and distribution of documentation on Gaïa, AFD's intranet portal

Animation of an internal mailing list: 328 subscribers in 2017

Creation of a community on La Ruche, AFD's social network: 196 members (as of 18/09/2019)

Externally: dedicated page on the website, forums on the ID4D blog

2. The evaluation approach

2.1 Objectives and evaluation questions

Five years after the adoption of the Gender CIF, AFD wished to conduct an evaluation on gender integration in AFD projects between 2014 and 2018.

Table 3 – Key elements of the evaluation approach

1 scope of the evaluation	Based on the Gender CIF, it covers both the portfolio of projects financed by AFD and the internal organization set up by AFD to address gender issues between 2014 and 2018
2 goals	Nourish AFD's learning process in terms of gender integration and contribute to the improvement of teams' practices Report to AFD supervisory bodies, counterparties, and civil society organizations on the effects of the Gender CIF on the evolution of the portfolio of projects financed; changes in practices within and outside of AFD; the results of projects financed, particularly with regard to gender integration
5 evaluation questions	Q1: To what extent has the adoption of the Gender CIF contributed to strengthening gender integration in the practices of AFD teams? Q2: How has the adoption of the Gender CIF contributed to better integration of gender in the practices of counterparties? Q3: To what extent has the adoption of the Gender CIF contributed to a better integration of gender in the support and work carried out by consultants at different stages of the projects? Q4: To what extent do the gender objectives of the projects and their operational modalities correspond to the needs of the beneficiaries? Q5: To what extent are the projects financed likely to have an impact on the dynamics of gender relations and gender equality in AFD's countries of intervention?

2.2 Governance

A steering committee, chaired by Elisabeth Hofmann (professor and researcher at Bordeaux Montaigne University) and bringing together some forty people at AFD ^[4] –and PROPARGO, but also from other institutions (Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, CARE France), followed the evaluation and met several times to validate the key stages of the work.

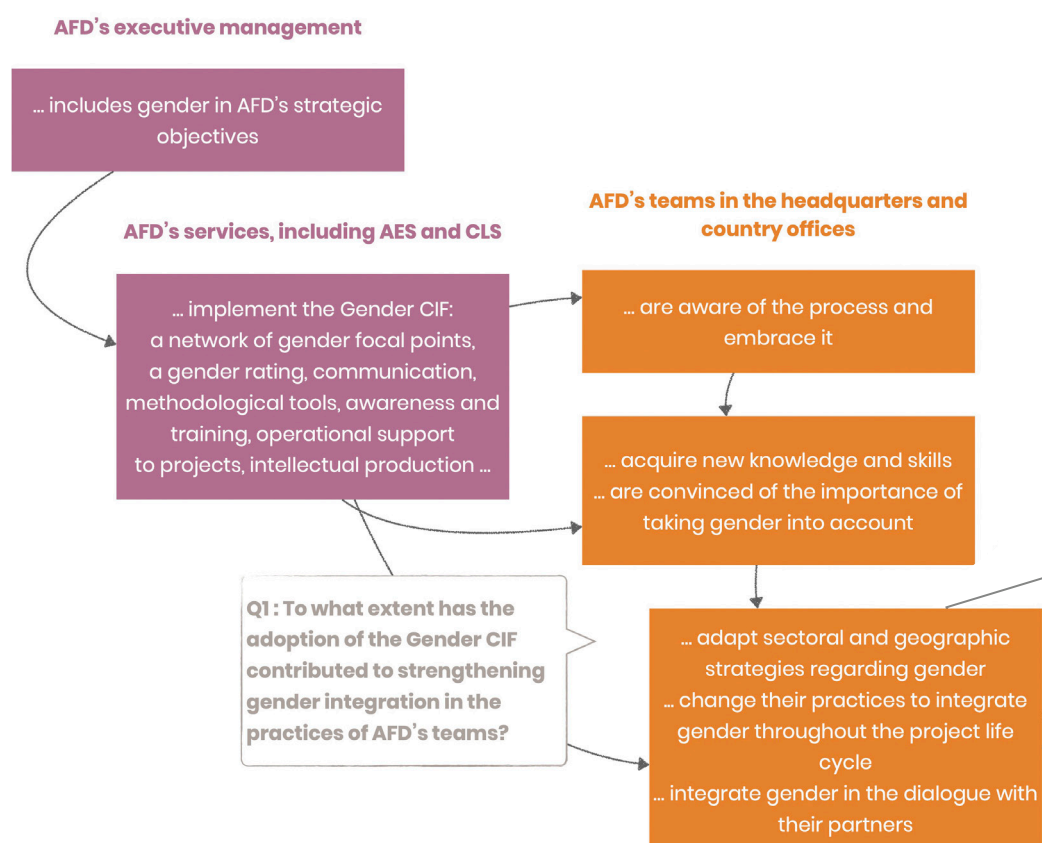
The operational management of the evaluation was carried out by AFD's Evaluation and Learning Department, in close collaboration with Environmental and Social Sustainable Development Support and Social Link Divisions.

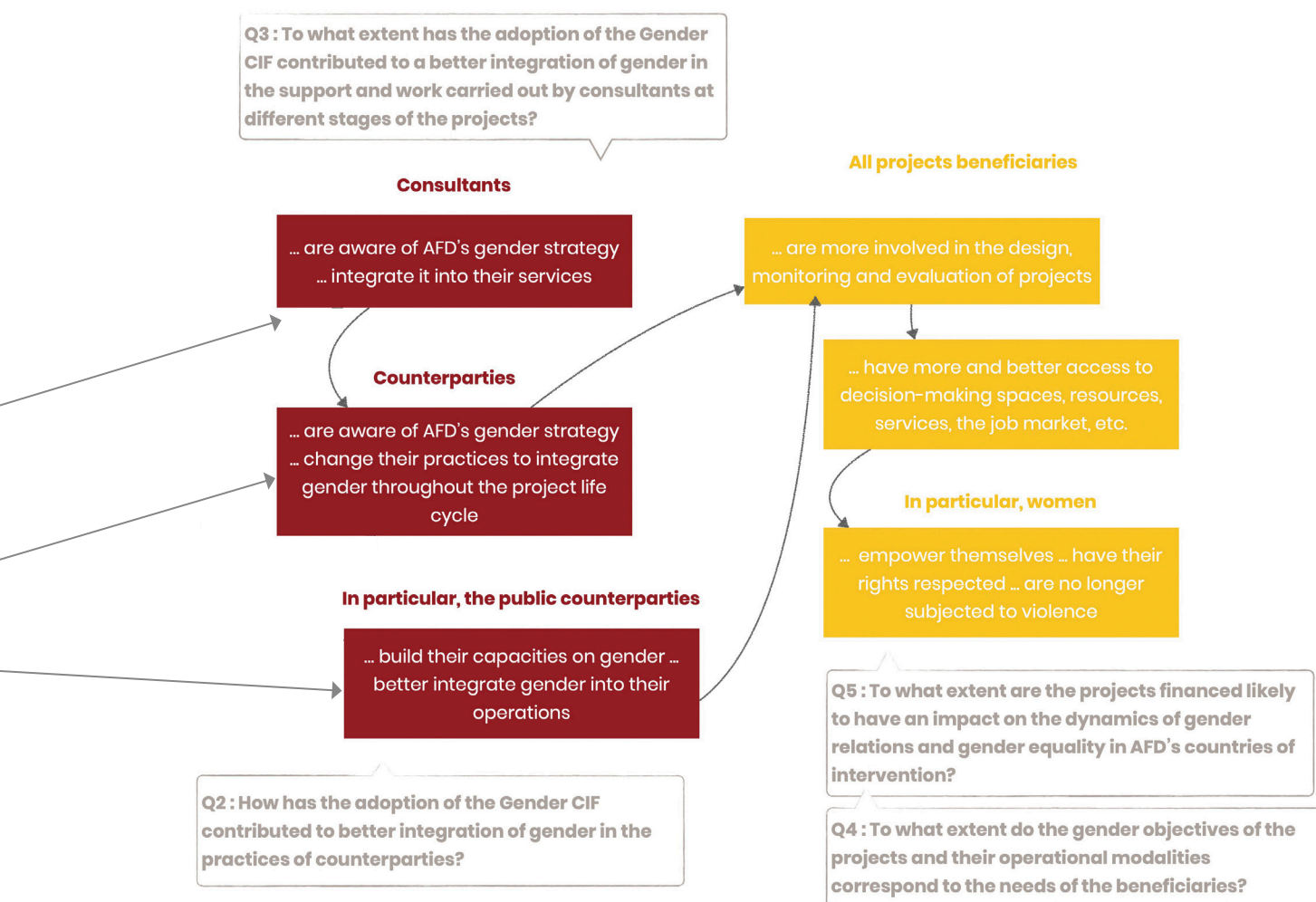
2.3 Intervention logic

The formulation of the evaluation questions was based on a collective effort to clarify the intervention logic of the Gender CIF: what has been done in the context of the implementation of the Gender CIF? Who has been reached directly? And indirectly? With what expected results? The following table summarizes the answers to these different questions.

[4] Sustainable Development Advice (SDA), Environmental and Social Sustainable Development Support Division (ESS), Social Link Unit (SLU), gender focal points from the Operations Division (OD) and the Civil Society Organizations Division (CSO)

Table 4 – Expected impacts of the Gender CIF and positioning of effectiveness-related evaluation questions along the intervention logic





2.4 Methodology

The evaluation process took place between June 2019 and July 2021, as the work was significantly slowed down by the health crisis. It took place in three stages: scoping, data collection, and analysis and judgment. The table below lists the tools used at each of these stages. The sources mobilized to answer questions 4 and 5 on the effects on counterparties and final beneficiaries are limited and the associated results should be viewed with caution.

Table 5 – Steps and tools of the evaluation process

Scoping	Literature review Assessment of achievements
	6 scoping interviews
	1 workshop to reconstitute the intervention logic
Data collection	Comparative analysis of gender integration in sectoral and geographic strategies
	Quantitative analysis of the 1 215 projects engaged over the 2014-2018 period within the Gender CIF accountability perimeter
	Qualitative analysis of a sample of 40 projects: interviews with project managers and counterparties
	10 interviews with gender focal points Online survey of gender focal points (75 responses) 1 focus group of gender focal points
	10 interviews with consultants
	1 focus group with the Operations Direction 1 focus group with the Civil Society Organisation Division 3 focus groups with country offices: Burma, Senegal, Turkey 10 interviews with managers
	3 case studies
Analysis and judgment	1 data party: workshop for collective interpretation of collected data
	Benchmarking with 4 other donors
	1 workshop to co-construct the recommendations

3. Key learnings from the evaluation

3.1 Changes in the practices of afd teams

3.1.1 – A gender culture that is well shared within the headquarters teams, less so in the country offices

The data collected during the evaluation indicate that the operational teams have significantly improved their **knowledge and skills** in gender integration, mainly thanks to the **training and methodological tools deployed by the Environmental and Social Sustainable Development Support Division**. Awareness of the importance of integrating gender issues into their practices has also increased, once again thanks to capacity building activities, as well as the advocacy role played by the Environmental and Social Sustainable Development Support Division then the Social Link Unit. The renewal of teams, the integration of people who were already convinced, and the support of other donors and expert NGOs also contributed to this acculturation.

I think that today, we no longer question whether it is in our mandate to push on gender with counterparties. We've passed a stage. There's really a shared perception that yes, it is our mandate. [A gender focal point]

However, this is essentially the case at headquarters and much less so in the country offices network, which has benefited less from training and opportunities to contribute to the co-development of methodological tools.

3.1.2 – While quantitative objectives have been achieved, there is still room for qualitative improvement

The target of 50% of projects rated DAC 1 and 2 defined in the Gender CIF was achieved in 2017, mainly thanks to the decisive support of the Environmental and Social Sustainable Development Support Division to project team leaders and the implementation of the sustainable development opinion integrating a gender rating.

The introduction of the sustainable development opinion, with its gender dimension, has undoubtedly made it possible to systematize the dialogue on the potential of AFD's contributions in terms of reducing gender inequalities and to identify concrete solutions that can be implemented through the operational support provided by the Environmental and Social Sustainable Development Support Division experts. [Gender CIF Implementation Report 2014-2017]

The qualitative analysis of a sample of projects revealed the following:

Table 6 – Evolution of the number and the share of AFD projects according to their DAC rating between 2014 and 2018

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number and share of DAC1 projects	60 32%	72 36%	96 43%	103 37%	136 41%
Number and share of DAC2 projects	4 2%	6 3%	16 7%	23 8%	26 8%
Number and share of DAC0 or unrated projects	122 66%	122 61%	112 50%	149 55%	166 51%
Total number of AFD projects	186	200	224	275	328

- 60% of DAC1 projects include a specific action in favour of equality: most often, this involves raising operators' awareness of this issue, but it can also involve actions in favour of women's participation (minimum participation rate, adaptation of actions to women's needs, prevention of violence against women, fight against gender stereotypes).

We have gained experience [...] especially in projects that can serve as models for other projects. There are hardly any sectors where we don't know how to [take gender into account].

- As of 2018, a specific **gender action plan** was linked to certain DAC 1 projects, making it possible to allocate a dedicated budget to the actions and to identify external expertise, which is a key success factor in the proper integration of gender at all project levels.
- 50% of the projects in the sample relied on indicators disaggregated by sex at the **monitoring** stage, but these were not used very much

in the project's management of the gender issue. Of the 13 projects in the sample that were subject to an **evaluation**, 7 included questions on gender.

The increase in the number of gender-responsive projects (DAC 1 & DAC 2) at the design stage was strongly driven by **Civil Society Organizations Division's projects** at least through 2017 and obscures the still very different practices across the Operations Direction (see Table below).

Table 7 – Number and share of DAC1 and DAC2 projects by division between 2014 and 2018

	EVE	CSO	HSP	WSD	ARB	UPH	GOV	FID	MOB	EGI	TOT
Number of DAC1 & DAC2 projects between 2014 and 2018	52 70%	227 68%	40 51%	45 45%	60 40%	26 39%	17 28%	31 26%	16 24%	7 7%	542 45%
Number of DAC0 or unrated projects	22 30%	105 32%	38 49%	55 55%	89 60%	40 61%	44 72%	89 74%	50 76%	95 93%	673 55%

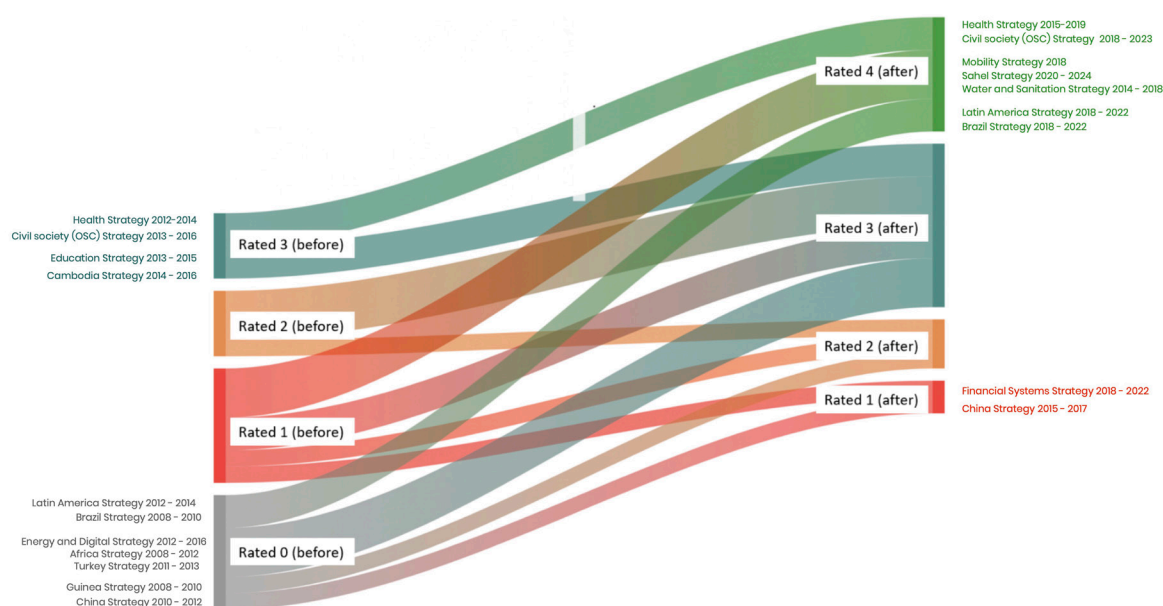
EVE: education, vocational training and employment division, CSO: civil society organizations division, HSP: health and social protection division, WSD: water and sanitation division, ARB: agriculture, development, rural and biodiversity division, UPH: urban development, planning and housing division, GOV: governance division, FID: financial institutions division, MOB: transport and mobility division, EGI: energy division.

There are different practices in terms of integration of gender in **geographic and sectoral strategies**. They have all improved in this area but some of them to a spectacular extent (Latin America Strategy, Brazil Strategy, Mobility Strategy, Sahel Strategy, Water and Sanitation Strategy – see Table below), mainly under the impetus of highly invested gender focal points, who have benefited from the tools developed by the Environmental and Social Sustainable Development Support Division.

When I arrived, the ESS division was very active in helping me establish a regional strategy on gender, especially to identify the issues to focus on. We organized a discussion session with colleagues, crossing the issues of the continent and our specific portfolio. [A gender referent]

However, only slightly more than a third of the strategies include equality between women and men as an objective or goal.

Figure 8 – Evolution of the overall gender rating of sectoral and geographic strategies



Rating system: For each strategy, we looked for evidence of gender integration: (1) at the level of the context, (2) of the objectives, (3) of the operational modalities and (4) of the monitoring system. A score of 0 indicates that no gender integration has been achieved at any of the four levels. A score of 1 indicates gender integration at only one of the 4 levels; 2 at 2 levels; 3 at 3 levels. A score of 4 indicates that gender is integrated into the context, objectives, operational modalities and monitoring system.

Among the strategies rated 4, the Latin America and Brazil 2018-2022 strategies stand out. Rated 0 in their previous version because they made no mention of gender issues, these strategies are now examples of gender mainstreaming.

At the level of the formulation of the purpose and objectives of the strategy, gender mainstreaming is in itself one of the objectives of these two strategies. And at the operational level, gender is considered from the methodological and content point of view and activities are implemented at all levels of intervention. Both documents emphasise the importance of collaboration with partners and of a rapprochement with other multilateral donors working on gender. Nevertheless, the gender dimension of the monitoring system should be improved by integrating gender-sensitive indicators. This would allow for the measurement of the gender results and impacts of the funding allocated, once the projects are completed.

Finally, **country offices** still play a relatively limited role in identifying gender-sensitive projects.

The step we need to take now is for country offices to start identifying gender projects.
[A representative of a support division]

3.1.3 – Quantitative objectives were achieved, despite insufficient resources and support

The lack of resources allocated to the Environmental and Social Sustainable Development Support Division to coordinate the Gender CIF and design methodological tools, trainings and animate the network of gender focal points, combined with a poorly understood reorganization of the steering of the strategy in 2018, were major obstacles to the deployment of the strategy.

Indeed, between 2014 and 2017, the resources allocated to the coordination of the Gender CIF fluctuated between 0.7 and 1.5 full-time equivalents (FTE), despite the professional exhaustion of two Gender CIF pilots and coordinators.

[They] both found themselves having to drag the whole house into the process. [...] Our mistake was to see the objectives, what had to be done to achieve them, without thinking about what the team was capable of doing.

It was necessary to wait until 2018 to have 2 FTE and 2019 to reach 4 FTE with the transfer to the Social Link Unit.

Moreover, although gender is indeed one of AFD's major objectives, this issue, which has been addressed more recently than climate change, has had difficulty being appropriated at all levels of the institution.

Maybe our mistake was that we achieved DAC 1 and DAC 2 objectives: nobody had to worry about anything because everything was running. But it was at the cost of disproportionate effort.

While the network of gender focal points at headquarters and in country offices launched in 2014 has been an effective lever for promoting gender appropriation at AFD, their ability to act has been limited by a high turnover and the absence of a mission letter from their managers. Finally, one third of the gender focal points have been truly active and devote at least half a day a week to their mission.

3.2 Effects on counterparties' practices

Along with managers, **country offices** are the main **missing link** in the Gender Strategy. Their teams have thus encountered great difficulty in engaging in upstream dialogue on gender with counterparties and in generating projects. As a result, the counterparties have **very limited knowledge** of AFD's Gender Strategy and the associated rating.

Between 2014 and 2018, only two prospecting missions were organized by the Environmental and Social Sustainable Development Support Division (to Turkey in 2014 and then to Tunisia in 2017). A specific financial instrument, the Gender FAPS^[5], was launched in 2019 to facilitate the design of gender projects. A Gender Prospect kit was also disseminated in March 2020 to country offices, particularly to encourage the identification of DAC 2 projects.

Gender integration in projects is thus most often driven by headquarters and rarely discussed with counterparties.

It's easier to talk about it with the counterparties because they've already integrated these requirements from the funders. But you can't call it a dialogue; they tell us 'If that's what you must put in to get the grant, go ahead!' It's not a real dialogue on this subject. [OD Project Manager]

In a minority of projects, mostly led by NGOs, counterparties, who are often already gender-sensitive, play a crucial role in gender integration (see box below).

[5] Facilitation of project initiation, preparation and follow-up.

Table 9 – Example of a fruitful dialogue on gender between AFD and the counterpart

The starting point for the Women's Employment component is a shared interest of TSKB and AFD to work together to strengthen Turkish women's participation in the labor market. [...] AFD, based on a study conducted by the country office in 2015, had a strong interest in supporting childcare services to facilitate women's access to and retention in the workplace. However, when the country office and AFD headquarters began to research the project theme in more depth, they realized that other aspects make it difficult for women to access and remain in the labor market, such as women's underrepresentation in decision-making spaces, wage differentials, and sexual and gender-based violence. Thus, with TSKB's agreement, they decided to focus the component on gender equality in the workplace.

[From the "TSKB – Women's Employment" project monograph, CTR 1064]

The success factors identified are:

- Use of grants;
- A historical collaboration with the counterpart;
- A facilitating legal or institutional framework that can act as a motivating factor for the counterpart, and also limit the self-censorship observed among some project team leaders.
- The evaluation of a previous generation of the project, in particular for the Civil Society Organisations Division [6] projects.
- The use of an external operator who will accompany the counterpart in the implementation of gender-specific activities.

Counterparties' practices in project monitoring are beginning to evolve, particularly with the provision of indicators disaggregated by sex, but this is essentially to respond to AFD's injunctions and less to improve project management.

[6] Evaluations conducted for OD projects are generally less appropriate by counterparties, except when they are co-funded.

3.3 Effects on consultants' practices

While AFD's Gender Strategy has contributed to changing the practices of a minority of consultants, it has had a very limited impact on consultants who are already gender experts or, on the contrary, who are resistant. This is mainly because gender integration remains weak in the projects' terms of reference, even if it has progressed since 2014.

AFD's ambitions in terms of gender are thus known to different extent by this population:

- The Gender CIF is well known to consultants with a strong gender expertise and to consultants with a strong relationship with AFD (regular contractors);
- The Gender CIF is not known, or is only slightly known, by consultants who do not have gender expertise and consultants who are not very close to AFD (occasional contractors).

Out of a panel of 26 Operations Direction projects analyzed ^[7], there were terms of reference for a feasibility study for 6 projects, 2 of which included a gender requirement; and there were terms of reference for an evaluation for 13 Operations Division and CSO projects, 7 of which included a gender requirement. However, this injunction, when it exists, encourages the development of the skills of non-expert consultants despite certain limitations.

The fact that the Terms of Reference specify gender forces bidders to look for gender expertise. In this context, one of the team members knew me and indicated that he knew a local gender expert: myself. [A consultant]

We have a problem of competence among our experts. [...] In the proposals, we find things that are completely basic. [...] In the same Terms of Reference, you will have technical, financial, climate and other issues, and you will have a single firm that will respond with a multi-expertise, but in fact they are not experts. [...] If it's not a DAC 2 project, it will be one criterion among others, but it will not be decisive. [A project manager]

Better identification and knowledge of local gender experts as well as a more standardized process for verifying the proper integration of gender throughout the project life cycle could improve this situation.

[7] It should be noted that CSO projects are not subject to a feasibility study. Also, the number of OD projects that had terms of reference for a feasibility study was probably slightly higher, but 6 terms of reference could be collected.

3.4 Adequacy to the needs of the beneficiaries

While the effective integration of gender in project design is mainly observable in the context information of DAC 2 projects, women's needs are considered through the integration of specific actions in half of the gender-sensitive projects (DAC 1 and 2) in the sample studied (see the example below).

Table 10 – Example of a gender-specific action implemented at the time of project design

The implementation of 4 socio-anthropological surveys aimed at a comparative analysis of the socio-cultural and community determinants of unwanted pregnancies and abortions, particularly in the 15–24 age group, was a key step in the analysis of the public's needs. These studies, developed at the cross-sectional level, are a reference tool for the teams, particularly in Burkina Faso and Peru, to establish their understanding and knowledge of the public's needs and have made it possible to develop a specific approach for the prevention and management of unwanted pregnancies among adolescents and young people aged 15 to 24, based in particular on the practice of counseling by health professionals.

[Extract from the analysis of the program agreement on unwanted pregnancies of Doctors of the World – CSO, DAC 2, Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of Congo, Palestine, Peru]

The strategic objectives and operational modalities of DAC 2 projects are well aligned with the needs of beneficiaries, particularly women. The information collected on DAC 1 projects, on the other hand, is too fragile to take a position on the relevance of the objectives and gender-related actions of these projects – see box below.

Table 11 – Gender mainstreaming throughout the project cycle

The evaluation team conducted an in-depth analysis of 36 projects rated DAC 1 and DAC 2:

- 19 did not present gender-related contextual data at the design phase. Of these 19 projects, 4 have already undergone a final or mid-term evaluation: 1 project partially met the expectations of the beneficiaries, while 3 evaluations took no position.
- 17 had gender-related contextual data at the design phase. Of these 17 projects, 8 have already undergone a final or mid-term evaluation: 7 projects met the expectations of the beneficiaries while 1 evaluation took no position.

3.5 impacts on the dynamics of gender relations and gender equality in AFD's countries of intervention

The reliance on operators with specific **expertise** as well as the organization of gender **awareness** sessions are often necessary conditions to promote gender mainstreaming in the implementation of projects.

Table 12 – Example of a case of awareness-raising of operators on the issue of gender

As part of the design and production of a television series, the scriptwriters were trained and supported to integrate this dimension into their scripts. The actors/actresses of the series were educated.

“We also integrated the raising of awareness of the actors/actresses on gender issues, sexual and reproductive health, family planning issues, forced marriage. There was a real qualitative work with certain actors/actresses who later became ambassadors. There was a notable qualitative contribution. We had young actors/actresses who were better trained on these issues.” [An operator]

Within the framework of the community actions, the field operators received three to four days of training to prepare them for the animation based on the “C’est la vie” kit. The content of these trainings covered the objectives and functioning of the project, the concept of gender, the rights-based approach to sexual and reproductive health, communication techniques, the facilitation posture, and the content of the kit. However, the facilitators who were trained mainly remember that they were trained in facilitation techniques specific to the “C’est la vie” tools.

[Extrait de la monographie du projet « C’est la vie » – SAN, CAD 2, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Niger et Sénégal]

The effects of **DAC 1** projects on the dynamics of gender relations are generally **not very much observable**. This is mainly due to the lack of explicit gender-specific objectives in the logical frameworks and thus the absence of specific monitoring and investigation of this issue in project evaluations.

The two **DAC 2** projects that are the subject of a case study (“C’est la vie” and “TSKB – Women’s employment”) have had positive effects on the **knowledge, attitudes, and practices** of beneficiaries (see Table below).

Table 13 – Example of changes in knowledge, attitudes and practices of project beneficiaries

Concerning the “TSKB – Women’s employment” project, the interviews conducted, and the evaluation carried out after one year of implementation have made it possible to identify a contribution of the project to the reinforcement of awareness and knowledge of gender equality and employment of women at the level of the companies involved. The project is also likely to change the policies and practices of the companies to advance gender equality and strengthen the situation of women employees within them: improvement of recruitment processes for women, and development of employment opportunities for women in particular.

[Extrait de la monographie du projet « TSKB- Emploi des femmes », CTR 1064]

4. Evaluation recommendations

Five strategic recommendations were formulated in response to the main issues identified through the evaluation. They are presented in order of importance and are broken down into courses of action. They may be new actions, existing actions that should be strengthened, or existing actions that could be re-launched.

As the evaluation covers the 2014-2018 period, several actions have already been initiated by AFD, in particular the Social Link Unit, which has a dedicated gender unit with 6 full-time equivalents. An effort has been made to revive the training offer and workshops dedicated to prospecting have been organized in several geographic areas. A training and capacity building plan on gender adapted to the different needs of the operational teams is underway as well as the production of a training kit for the trainers of the gender section of the Social Link Unit. In addition, the network of gender focal points has been re-launched.

4.1 Recommendation n°1: consolidate the strategic foundations of AFD’s commitment and intervention in favor of the gender priority

- **Redefine the objectives of AFD’s new Gender Strategy** and ensure their dissemination internally (at headquarters and in the network of country offices) and externally, particularly to counterparties.

- (i) The quantitative objectives defined during the previous period were a powerful lever for deploying AFD’s Gender Strategy. These must be redefined, in agreement with the supervisory bodies, in line with the ambition of the “feminist agency” whose specific intervention in favour of equality (DAC 2 in particular) should not replace or compensate for the intervention in favour of the transversal integration of gender (gender mainstreaming – DAC 1 in particular), each corresponding, in our opinion, to specific and complementary objectives (and proficiencies). In particular, it may be necessary to

apply quantitative objectives to each technical division and geographic department, or even to each manager, to return to a strict definition of DAC 2 and to ensure a sufficient level of ambition for DAC 1 qualification so as to continue to push practices upwards, possibly by accepting and assuming, at least temporarily, that the objectives set will not be reached within the planned timeframe.

- (ii) The clarification of objectives should notably allow AFD to position more clearly its “feminist” strategy and its orientations: equality between women and men and/or gender equality, inclusion of LGBTI people, intersectional approach, rights-based approach, transformative approach, approach in favour of women’s empowerment and/or approach in favour of reducing the gender gap, etc.

Table 14 – Extract from the benchmarking with SIDA (Sweden)

SIDA’s gender strategy is based on:

- Gender mainstreaming, starting from the functioning of the institution itself and extending to the projects supported
- A rights-based approach, where the main objective is the full enjoyment of their rights by women and girls
- The principle of intersectionality, affirming that gender discrimination is also affected by age, origin, class, social status, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity, and religious beliefs, and that these must be taken into account
- A GAD Gender and Development approach, where the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality is emphasized
- A transformative approach, as opposed to “counting” or “gender-sensitive” approaches: SIDA aims to contribute to changing social norms, cultural values, power structures and the roots of gender inequalities.

[Extrait de la monographie du projet « C’est la vie » – SAN, CAD 2, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Niger et Sénégal]

- (iii) The elements of language thus formalized could serve as a basis for AFD’s internal and external training and communication materials, which need to be renewed, in the spirit of the publication “Equality between women and men, a priority for AFD” (April 2021) by marking the additional step, difficult to distinguish today, that is taken with the claim to be a “feminist agency”.
- (iv) Associate AFD’s Gender Strategy with the objectives and efforts related to more egalitarian and inclusive human resources management, as a necessary condition of legitimacy and credibility, for example by transparently publishing the key figures of the inventory carried out within the framework of the AFNOR certification, the target objectives defined following it and by reporting on their annual progress.

- Ensure that gender is properly integrated into sectoral and geographic strategies.

No AFD sectoral and geographic strategy should be gender-blind or content with the minimum and should include, in order to be validated: contextual and diagnostic elements, at least one strategic or operational objective associated with at least one monitoring indicator relating to gender equality, defined with the support of the Social Link Unit.

- Strengthen the articulation between gender and climate priorities.
- (i) It could be envisaged to strengthen collaboration between the teams in charge of the appraisal of gender projects at the Environmental and Social Sustainable Development Support Division or the Social Link Unit and climate projects and to experiment joint review times.
 - (ii) A toolkit or specific manual for project team leaders and country offices teams could be produced to explain the links between gender and climate and to identify the main questions to ask to combine the two issues during project design to break the sense of competition. This publication could draw on the experience of the Asian Development Bank ^[8].

[8] Training manual to support country-driven gender and climate change.

4.2 Recommendation n°2: strengthen the support of the gender priority by all levels of AFD management

Beyond the quantitative objectives assigned to the Gender CIF, the Gender Strategy seems to have been less supported by AFD management than the climate strategy, for example, which has been in place for several years. Managers have not participated much in training sessions, which may have contributed to the loss of momentum in the design of the Gender CIF.

We propose the following courses of action:

- Formally involve the general management in the deployment of the Gender Strategy.
- (i) One possibility would be to revive the annual gender steering committees and to involve one or more representatives of the general direction in the strategic discussions on the progress of the Gender Strategy.
 - (ii) These annual steering committees could usefully be opened to gender and feminist partners and experts, who would be invited to act as compasses and guarantors of the real implementation of AFD's feminist ambitions, which seem difficult to fully assume internally.
- Promote the dissemination of knowledge and the development of managers' skills on gender.
- (i) In particular, we propose to strengthen the place given to gender in the training of managers. Participation in gender training could be integrated into the individual objectives of managers at headquarters, in regional offices and within the network of country offices in order to increase the proportion of managers or directors trained on the issue.
 - (ii) A time of capitalization dedicated to gender could be systematized during the network weeks. This could include the intervention of recognized experts (academics, international consultants, etc.) to discuss the rationale and the orientations of the Strategy to ensure their proper understanding and full appropriation by the teams, as is the

case for a subject as “technical” as climate change, for example.

- (iii) Particular attention could be given to the mobilization of managers in the framework of the FAPS [9] Gender steering committees to show concrete examples of gender integration in projects.
- Strengthen the place of gender in the dialogue between managers and their teams.
- (i) In particular, we suggest improving the procedures for dialogue between managers and gender focal points, both at headquarters and in country offices, based on an assignment sheet detailing the activities carried out by the gender focal points and the time to be devoted to them.
- (ii) A half-yearly review could be organized between the managers and the gender focal points in order to discuss the specific needs of the service as well as the follow-up of the CAD 1 and 2 projects.

[9] Facilitation of project initiation, preparation and follow-up.

4.3 Recommendation n°3: encourage the involvement of country offices in project identification and dialogue with counterparties

One of the major lessons of the evaluation is that the country offices have taken little ownership of the Gender Strategy and the main tools that have been developed. This would explain the fact that country offices teams have often encountered difficulties in engaging in dialogue with counterparties on gender and identifying projects.

We suggest several courses of action here:

- Strengthen the regional offices’ role of animation and guidance on gender issues.
- (i) Based on the overall quantitative objectives for each geographic department, define, with the support of the Social Link Unit, gender action plans at the level of each regional office, associated with specific resources and a monitoring and evaluation system, for which the regional department is responsible.
- (ii) Although a gender focal point has been appointed in each regional office, tasks that they carry out are different from one office to another. In order to harmonize these tasks and to ensure that the time to be devoted to them is secure, we suggest that a job description be drawn up jointly by the Social Link Unit and the network of gender focal points and shared with all the regional offices and the geographic divisions at headquarters.

- (iii) One of the central missions assigned to the gender focal points in the regional offices would be to lead and support the gender focal points in the country offices. This support would include updating country profiles and formalizing a gender action plan for all country offices. Another mission could be the design and share of gender prospecting tools, in collaboration with the Social Link Unit. A final mission could be the animation of regional networks of good practices on gender, based on the model of the Gender Innovation Labs (GIL) developed by the World Bank (see Table below).

Table 15 – Extract from the World Bank benchmarking

The World Bank has evolved its strategy from an initial gender mainstreaming approach to a gender gap approach that relies on:

– An institutionalized learning process – via Gender Innovation Labs (GILs) – that allows for capturing results and having a convincing dialogue with counterparties based on evidence: the GILs have a budget of \$74.6 million, in particular to carry out impact evaluations via the Umbrella Facility for Gender Equality. WB staff no longer play the role of “gender police” by imposing targets but are thus able to provide evidence of what works based on the work of the GILs.

– A model for upstream gender tagging support to target gender differences in the 4 pillars of the strategy, starting at the project design stage.

[Extract from the World Bank benchmarking report sheet].

- (iv) This strengthening of gender focal points requires an increase in the resources allocated to them: for example, 0.2 FTE at the level of headquarters and country offices and 0.5 FTE at the level of regional offices, for which the managers would be accountable.

• **Equip country offices’ teams to engage in dialogue with counterparties.** One of the main obstacles mentioned by country offices’ teams is the difficulty they encounter in initiating and maintaining a dialogue on gender with their counterparties. Several levers could be used with the appropriate resources:

- (i) Strengthen financial incentives and bonuses for gender integration.
- (ii) Provide country offices with a summary document presenting the main objectives of AFD’s new Gender Strategy and position it in relation to other donors’ strategies.
- (iii) Make training mandatory for gender focal points in country offices and propose a practical module focused on gender integration in prospecting activities (how to be convincing and develop a gender argument).
- (iv) Increase the number of prospecting missions conducted by the Social Link Unit in the countries and involve the country offices’ gender focal points.
- (v) Systematize a time for discussion on gender with counterparties during traditional monitoring and/or prospecting missions, conducted in collaboration with project managers.
- (vi) Support the development of exchanges between counterparties and institutional and civil society organizations dedicated to gender, specifically women’s organizations, to open dialogue and ground it in local dynamics in favour of equality so that it is reinforced.

4.4 Recommendation n°4: renew the training and capitalization strategy on gender

The launch of the Gender CIF in 2014 was accompanied by a significant training effort on gender and the emergence of a community of practice among the most motivated project team leaders, but which gradually ran out of steam, mainly due to the lack of resources allocated to the team in charge of steering the Gender Strategy. The challenge is therefore to re-launch the training dynamic with new recruits, but also to keep the community of practice around gender alive by relying more on capitalization tools.

Table 16 – Extract from the benchmarking with SIDA (Sweden)

Prior to 2018, SIDA as an agency considered itself to have gender integration in its “DNA”. It was assumed that the agency’s agenda was known to everyone within it, including newcomers. The 2018 strategy is based on the observation that this consideration did not allow for the appropriation of this objective.

The “capacity building” dynamic has therefore been greatly increased, in particular through

- Specific training for gender focal points;
- Basic training deployed on a large scale, on a continuous basis, including for newcomers;
- The proposal of gender themes during the bi-monthly capacity building sessions (gender social norms next month, for example);
- Integrating gender training into the two annual “learning weeks”;
- The Helpdesk solution to find answers to questions quickly.

SIDA recognizes that gender integration is complex, even within an organization that defines itself as feminist, and involves an ambitious process of continuous, unending training.

[Excerpt from the SIDA benchmarking report sheet]

We propose the following courses of action:

- Strengthen gender training for newcomers. While since 2018, a gender awareness session has been incorporated into the training for new hires, we suggest lengthening its format (one day instead of 3 hours).
- Systematize training for all gender focal points. Between 2014 and 2018, nearly 50% of gender focal points did not receive specific gender training, which is a significant limitation. We therefore suggest making it mandatory for all gender focal points at headquarters, regional offices, and country offices to receive at least two days of training.
- Encourage sector-specific training and launch the production of additional sector-specific toolkits on emerging themes (governance, media, etc.) with project managers and translate these tools into English to facilitate their appropriation by non-French speaking country offices’ employees.
- Encourage feedback on the most emblematic gender projects based on evaluations and targeted literature reviews. The objective should be to build the advocacy and design capacity of DAC 1 and DAC 2 quality projects for country offices’ teams.
- Strengthen links with the research community. One or more partnerships could be formed with universities or research centers specializing in gender and development issues, and several targeted studies could be launched each year. These new collaborations could be modelled on the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation’s partnership with Stanford University.

Table 17 – Extract from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation benchmarking

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has partnered with various experts to implement its gender strategy:

– Its conceptual model based on empowerment was developed with the gender team of the Royal Tropical Institute of the Netherlands (RTI) based on the state of ongoing gender research.

– Equality Institute accompanied the formalization of its monitoring and evaluation system by proposing a set of gender-sensitive indicators relevant to the empowerment-based conceptual model

– Stanford University is a key partner of the Foundation:

- It oversees capacity building activities on gender for Foundation staff: online trainings, podcast series, etc.

- It provides on-demand technical support to all Foundation teams: by requesting a “ticket” for technical support on gender, staff receive rapid technical expertise from Stanford University teams.

[Excerpt from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation benchmarking report sheet].

4.5 Recommendation n°5: strengthen gender integration at certain key stages of projects

The evaluation examined integration at different stages of the projects’ life cycle. Three critical stages were identified:

- Project identification. We refer here to the proposals made for recommendation n°3 to strengthen the dialogue between country offices and counterparties on gender.
- Contextual analysis during the appraisal stage. During the period studied for the evaluation, few specific studies were undertaken on the issue of gender and the presentation of contextual data relating to gender is often succinct, particularly for DAC 1 projects. This is a major obstacle to ensuring the relevance of projects, but also a hindrance to engaging in a constructive dialogue with counterparties.
 - (i) We therefore propose to make it mandatory to carry out a gender analysis, based at least on secondary data, as well as to identify relevant local partners on gender for the identified project before the project is granted by the credit committee.
 - (ii) A specific budget is dedicated to these mandatory preliminary gender analyses. It could, for example, finance a framework contract with specialized service providers that can be easily mobilized by project managers.
 - (iii) Training and capitalization opportunities make it possible to ensure the proper implementation and usefulness of these gender analyses: objectives, methodologies, obstacles, levers, results, use in project design, etc.

- Project monitoring and evaluation:

- (i) The analysis of DAC 1 projects carried out during the evaluation highlighted the fact that the specific gender objectives of the projects are often not very explicit in the logical frameworks, which mechanically limits the ability to monitor the expected achievements and to evaluate their effects. A dialogue could be initiated between the Social Link Unit, the Environmental and Social Sustainable Development Support Division, Capacity Development Unit and the Evaluation and Learning Division to improve the integration of gender in the logical frameworks of DAC 1 projects.
- (ii) Nearly 50% of the DAC 1 and 2 projects analysed include monitoring indicators disaggregated by sex (essentially concerning the participation of women and men in the actions implemented), but these are infrequently used in the management of the project, both by the project managers and the counterparties. One possibility would be to strengthen the dialogue between the two parties when designing these indicators. This could be done within the framework of experimental training-actions led by Capacity Development Unit and/or Evaluation and Learning Division in conjunction with the Social Link Unit. Another approach would be to use project evaluations to reconstruct “generic” intervention logics by major intervention sector that could be added to the sectoral toolboxes. This approach has, for example, been deployed by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which has chosen to structure the monitoring-evaluation system for gender projects around the three key stages of empowerment (knowledge acquisition, attitude change and practice change)^[10]

[10] Note that these three steps correspond to the main expected impacts of the two DAC 2 projects examined in the case studies.

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