



**THE  
JOURNEY OF  
SOLIDARIDAD  
TOWARDS  
GENDER  
INCLUSIVITY**

**Solidaridad**

---

# THE JOURNEY OF SOLIDARIDAD TOWARDS GENDER INCLUSIVITY

**AUTHORS:  
EMMA FEENSTRA  
AND JANNA VISSER**

**CO-AUTHORS:  
NJERI KIMOTHO,  
MONIQUE VAN  
DE VIJVER  
AND SRUSHTI  
MAHAMUNI -  
DE GEE  
(EXTERNAL  
CONSULTANT)**

**PUBLISHED BY SOLIDARIDAD EUROPE / MAY 2019**

Cover photo © Michel Boulogne

## CONTENT

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1 SETTING THE SCENE</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2 GENDER INCLUSIVITY IN SOLIDARIDAD'S HISTORY</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>3 SOLIDARIDAD'S GENDER STRATEGY AND APPROACH</b>	
3.1 Gender inclusivity and togetherness as key concepts	<b>18</b>
3.2 Convince to invest: the Solidaridad Gender Business Case	<b>19</b>
3.3 Creating internal preconditions for success	<b>19</b>
<b>4 PROMISING PRACTICES IN SOLIDARIDAD'S PROGRAMMING</b>	
4.1 Tackling barriers to participation	<b>22</b>
4.2 Enhancing knowledge and skills	<b>22</b>
4.3 Creating safe spaces	<b>22</b>
4.4 Acknowledging women's reproductive roles	<b>22</b>
4.5 Access to financial resources	<b>24</b>
4.6 Supporting equality in decision making and legislation	<b>24</b>
4.7 Raising women's voices and representation	<b>24</b>
4.8 Advocating for equal benefit	<b>26</b>
4.9 Promoting inclusive norms and practices	<b>26</b>
4.10 Changing institutional and cultural norms	<b>26</b>
4.11 Engaging men	<b>26</b>
<b>5 THE WAY FORWARD FOR GENDER INCLUSIVITY</b>	
5.1 Consistently integrate gender inclusivity in every aspect of Solidaridad's strategy	<b>28</b>
5.2 Further develop the gender inclusivity strategy using the Gender Inclusivity Buckets	<b>28</b>
5.3 Improve planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning processes, using the 3-tier gender business case	<b>30</b>
5.4 Develop and implement a gender inclusivity change management action plan	<b>30</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>31</b>

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**This publication outlines the long and often challenging path travelled by Solidaridad in the past 50 years towards gender inclusivity. It highlights the importance of gender inclusivity in society at large and the urgent need to incorporate it as a core part of the organizational strategy should we be truly dedicated to walking the talk towards gender inclusivity.**



First of all, we begin by looking back on the past five decades of Solidaridad's history and the development of the thinking regarding women's rights and gender equality. Looking back gives us the opportunity to reflect from the lessons learnt, so we can move forward armed with this knowledge and experience. Two main lessons deserve a spotlight.

The first lesson is that a strategy for gender inclusivity can only be successful if made part of the core strategy of the organization and all related programmes and projects. For decades, the core strategy of Solidaridad has built on market-based solutions in export-oriented supply chains and sectors that are historically controlled by men, thus overlooking gendered differences that prevent women from participating and benefiting equally from Solidaridad's work.

The second lesson is that gender inclusivity starts with the internal organization, and more specifically, with the individuals that form the organization. Whether born as a man or a woman, we are all a product of our societies, our cultures and our education systems. Without giving it much thought, we tend to reproduce these thought patterns and systems that have led to gender-based exclusion in the first place and have thus prevented systemic changes up until today. Change has to start with us and requires a serious change management strategy and investment in the internal organization. Unfortunately, up until today, this is still not the natural focus of outward-oriented development organizations or donors.

Next, the main innovative elements of the Solidaridad Gender Policy and Strategy Paper are discussed. This strategy currently provides guidance in a continuing effort to integrate gender into our work. The concept of 'gender inclusivity' has been developed with the aim to emphasize the importance of the togetherness of men and women in gender equality. A practical implementation framework has been designed for this purpose named the Gender ABC, which consists of the following three main elements:

- A) ANALYZING AND ADDRESSING BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION**
- B) BALANCING POWER RELATIONS**
- C) CREATING TOGETHERNESS BASED ON SHARED INTEREST AND VALUES**

Furthermore, in line with Solidaridad's opportunity and incentive-based approach, a 3-tier gender business case for gender inclusivity has been developed. The business case can be used to convince stakeholders, externally and internally, that investing in gender is not only the right thing to do, but it is also very smart and effective. After all, the necessary long-term investments will only be maintained if all stakeholders can see some short and medium-term benefits.

The three tiers of the gender business case are based on the following notions:

- 1. Making optimal use of available human capital and opportunities by supporting women to climbing the socio-economic ladder leads to enhanced economic growth**
- 2. Balancing so-called male and female perspectives and approaches enhances the quality of decision making**
- 3. Investing in gender inclusivity provides a valuable long-term return on investment for future generations.**



Solidaridad's gender strategy makes an explicit distinction between gender inclusivity at project level and at internal organizational level. After all, walking the talk is not properly feasible if the staff involved are not provided with an enabling environment to do so within their own organization.

The document further describes Solidaridad's track record in working on gender-inclusive programmes so far and outlines a number of promising practices being implemented, accompanied by concrete project examples. These practices are clustered under three areas: tackling barriers to participation, supporting equality in decision making and legislation, and promoting inclusive norms and practices.

Lastly, we outline a number of recommendations based on the lessons learnt and the Solidaridad gender strategy so far. After all, as a frontrunner in sustainable development, Solidaridad is well placed to contribute to solutions that address the complex and globally interconnected challenges such as climate change, urbanization and migration. However, in order to deliver effective solutions to these challenges, gender inclusivity is a prerequisite, not a choice. Therefore, we propose the following recommendations for Solidaridad:

### **TO CONSISTENTLY INTEGRATE GENDER INCLUSIVITY IN EVERY ASPECT OF SOLIDARIDAD'S STRATEGY**

We have learned from previous strategic plans that treating gender inclusivity as a separate element is likely to lead to projects that do not include it in the problem analysis and the subsequent interventions. Hence, gender inclusivity should be fully integrated in all areas of the new strategic plan from the beginning.

### **TO FURTHER DEVELOP THE IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY USING THE GENDER INCLUSIVITY BUCKETS**

In 2018, the gender task force developed 11 gender inclusivity buckets, which represent a set of priority themes that bring focus to the gender inclusivity work of Solidaridad. Starting now, these buckets should be actively used in all proposal development and project design.

### **TO IMPROVE PLANNING, MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING PROCESSES, USING THE 3-TIER GENDER BUSINESS CASE**

To enable us to properly measure and assess the impact of our gender interventions, it is imperative that investments are made to integrate gender in the planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning processes at Solidaridad. The 3-tier gender business case (as briefly outlined above) provides an excellent framework for analysis.

### **TO DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A GENDER INCLUSIVITY CHANGE MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN**

To close the current gap between policy and practice, gender inclusivity should be treated the way the Solidaridad Gender Policy and Strategy paper describes it: as a change management process. A concrete change management action plan should thus be developed. The following elements are imperative: financial investments in developing gender capacity in the organization, accountability mechanisms to assess staff performance towards gender inclusivity objectives, and personal awareness and commitment of staff to gender inclusivity as a core value for Solidaridad.

# SETTING THE SCENE

1

**Solidaridad is one of the leading innovative development organizations aspiring to transform the way we produce and consume in such a way that it provides profitable livelihoods and business opportunities for everyone, and does not deplete the landscapes where people can thrive, now and for generations to come. However, too many people in today's world are left behind. They are structurally excluded from economic opportunities as a result of deep-rooted social and cultural norms.**

Gender as a social construct is a major source of exclusion and inequality and it affects the way men and women can contribute to and benefit from economic development. For this reason, Solidaridad has incorporated gender inclusivity in the organization's core strategy. In its current multi-annual strategic plan AMBITION 2020, Solidaridad aims to bring about transformative change through interventions at the following levels: producer, infrastructure, landscape, country, and market. It is only when men and women equally participate, contribute and benefit at all levels that true transformation towards inclusive and sustainable development can be achieved.

This publication describes Solidaridad's journey with respect to gender inclusivity over the course of its history up until now. It demonstrates how the gender inclusivity strategy of Solidaridad has emerged from lessons learned over the years, highlighting key successes and challenges, and elaborating on some of the emerging promising practices in Solidaridad's work.

It concludes with a number of recommendations to move gender inclusivity forward in Solidaridad's work in support of sustainable and inclusive economic development.

Gender refers to the social and cultural characteristics, roles and responsibilities associated with being male or female at a particular point in time. It changes over time and varies between and within cultures and geographies. This is different from sex, which refers to the biological characteristics of males and females.

For Solidaridad, gender inclusivity means that men, women, girls and boys can participate in and benefit equally from opportunities, resources and rewards in economic and social development.

# GENDER INCLUSIVITY IN SOLIDARIDAD'S HISTORY

2

SOLIDARIDAD EVENTS

RELEVANT GENDER DEVELOPMENTS IN SOLIDARIDAD

GLOBAL GENDER TRENDS

1969  
FOUNDING  
SOLIDARIDAD

1970  
-  
1980  
PROJECT  
FUNDING FOR  
WOMEN'S  
GROUPS AND  
ACTIVE  
SUPPORT TO  
PROMINENT  
FEMALE  
LEADERS

1975  
-  
1985  
UNITED  
NATIONS  
DECADE  
FOR WOMEN

## A SHORT HISTORY OF WOMEN AND GENDER IN DEVELOPMENT

In the 1970s, the Women in Development (WID) approach came up, arguing that modernization impacted men and women differently, thereby contesting existing “trickle down” theories of development.<sup>1</sup> The approach was embraced by teams in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and Harvard University, which stressed the need to integrate women in development projects, highlighting the importance of women’s access to resources and their participation in development.

There was an emphasis on welfare-oriented projects dealing with small income-generating projects and activities mostly aimed at women’s reproductive role, where nutrition, education and family planning were main features. Although the WID approach has increased the visibility of women in development issues and demanded their inclusion in development, it did not call for changes in the overall social structure or economic system in which women were to be included. As such, WID concentrated narrowly on the inequalities between men and women but ignored the social, cultural, legal and economic factors that give rise to those inequalities in society.

In the 1980s, a new approach emerged which questioned the exclusive focus on women in the WID approach. This Gender and Development (GAD) approach emphasized the need to understand the broader social system of gender relations that allocate specific roles, responsibilities and expectations between men and women.<sup>2</sup> These hierarchical power relations, embedded in institutions, determine the relative positioning of men and women in society, which is often detrimental to women. As a consequence, development agencies started to examine institutional constraints that limited the effect of programmes aiming at women’s empowerment.

<sup>1</sup>Razavi, S. & Miller, C. (1995). ‘From WID to GAD: Conceptual shifts in the Women and Development discourse’. United Nations Research Institute Occasional Paper Series (No. 1). UNRISD, p.2. <sup>2</sup> Idem, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> UN Women. Gender Mainstreaming.



## 1969 - 1986

### THE EARLY DECADES

From the founding of Solidaridad in 1969 continuing into the early 1980s, Solidaridad’s activities have responded to requests from churches, groups and movements in Latin America. The main source of income for Solidaridad were donations raised through thematic campaigns in the catholic and protestant churches. The Liberation Theology that inspired Solidaridad and its partners at that time considered the value of women and their liberation as equally important to that of men. Solidaridad supported the participation of women by funding women’s groups, prominent female leaders (such as the indigenous rights activist Rigoberta Menchú from Guatemala, who won the Nobel Prize in 1992) and women’s movements (like the Argentinian Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires).



In 1995, the United Nations Beijing Declaration Platform for Action laid down a comprehensive and progressive framework for advancing gender equality, for which gender mainstreaming was embraced as the core strategy. Officially defined by the United Nations Economic and Social Council in 1997, gender mainstreaming is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well

as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated.<sup>3</sup> Since then, many development organizations have committed to mainstreaming gender into their projects. Generally, efforts have focused on creating awareness of gender-related inequality and on creating economic opportunities for women.



## 1988

**INTRODUCTION OF THE MAX HAVELAAR FAIR TRADE CERTIFICATION INITIATIVES AIMED AT ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF SMALL-HOLDERS AND THEIR INCLUSION IN THE FORMAL ECONOMY**

## 1995

**BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION FORM GLOBAL BLUEPRINT FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS / GENDER MAINSTREAMING INTRODUCED AS STRATEGY**

## 2006

**THE MIDTERM EVALUATION OF MAINSTREAMING OF FAIR TRADE CONCLUDES GENDER WAS NOT ADDRESSED**

## 1987 - 2006

### FROM ACTIVISM TO ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND MARKET BASED SOLUTIONS

In the 1980s, when it became clear that the revolutions did not bring the promised changes for the poor, the call for sustainable economic development grew louder. Inspired by the 1972 report of the Club of Rome ("The Limits to Growth") and the 1987 UN Brundtland report ("Our Common Future"), Solidaridad shifted its strategy to consumer awareness campaigns on fairer economies and trade relations. This led to the introduction of the Max Havelaar fairtrade certification initiative in the late eighties, which meant a major shift in strategy for Solidaridad. The focus was on economic empowerment of smallholders and their inclusion in the formal economy as a means to lift them out of poverty. This has remained the mission of Solidaridad throughout the decades that followed and up until this day.

### THE BLIND SPOT OF (FAIR) TRADE

Although attention for women and gender in development grew during the 1980s and 1990s, Solidaridad, in fact, had a blind spot for these approaches. The new strategic course from the late 1980s onward, supporting smallholder farmers in export-oriented supply chains, largely overlooked gender differences and the impact of the interventions on women in communities and informal markets. As a result of the position of women in the supply chains targeted by Solidaridad - as home-based or informal workers with limited ownership over means of production - the effect for them was limited. Only those women who already played a role in the formal economy benefited, because they happened to own land or were members of producer organizations or outgrower schemes. The assumption was that the economic benefits for 'the heads of household' targeted in the training and certification programmes would automatically benefit the family members who formed part of those households.



In 2006, the midterm evaluation of the Solidaridad programme ‘**Mainstreaming of Fair Trade**’, which was funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, led to some critical observations regarding the benefits of the initiative for women in particular. The evaluators pointed out that overall, “the involvement of women has been limited and not deliberate” in the Mainstreaming of Fair Trade programme, and questioned the benefits for farmer families of the export-targeted fair trade projects. They also mentioned that ‘most of Solidaridad’s programmes do work with women, but no specific choices are made that are informed by a gender analysis’. In fact, gender equality had not been specifically mentioned as a concern or objective by Solidaridad. Yet, the evaluators noted that ‘without gender equality there can be no Fair Trade and [...] active involvement of women will lead to more sustainable models’.<sup>4</sup>

Exemplary are the effects of the fair trade mango project in Ghana and Burkina Faso. As a result of the project, mangoes were no longer produced for the local market but for the export market instead. This impacted the role of women. Where they would have previously taken an agreed share of the mangoes produced on the family farm to sell in the local market, the bulk of the mangoes were now being exported. Consequently, women now shifted to becoming workers in the newly constructed packing stations. While this provided them with a regular income, it also converted their role from independent (micro) entrepreneurs into dependent employees. Also, the women were not given a say in the so-called Premium Committee that decided on the use of the fair trade premium.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Van Walsem, E. & Guijt, I. (2006). Mid Term Evaluation Mainstreaming of Fair Trade final August 2006, p.12.

<sup>5</sup>Van Walsem, E. & Guijt, I. (2006). Mid Term Evaluation Mainstreaming of Fair Trade final August 2006, pp.38-39.

1969  
-  
2015

WOMEN AND GENDER ARE NOT ACTIVELY ADDRESSED IN SOLIDARIDAD

2011

LAUNCH OF FIRST NETWORK MULTI-ANNUAL STRATEGIC PLAN, GENDER IS NOT INTEGRATED

2009

FIRST GENDER STRATEGY DEVELOPED

**AFTER 46 YEARS, THE TOPIC OF GENDER INCLUSIVITY BECAME A FORMAL PART OF SOLIDARIDAD’S MULTI-ANNUAL STRATEGIC PLAN**

2012

NETWORK GENDER COORDINATOR APPOINTED

2008

SOLIDARIDAD MOVES TO NETWORK STRUCTURE

2015

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS INCLUDES STAND ALONE GOAL FOR GENDER EQUALITY



**2017**

**NETWORK  
GENDER  
POLICY  
AND  
STRATEGY  
APPROVED**

**2018**

**GENDER  
INCLUSIVITY  
APPROACH  
FURTHER  
DEVELOPED,  
INCLUDING TOOL  
DEVELOPMENT,  
TRAINING,  
AND REGIONAL  
IMPLEMENTATION  
PLANS**

**2016**

**LAUNCH  
OF SECOND  
MULTI-ANNUAL  
STRATEGIC PLAN  
AMBITION 2020,  
GENDER INCLU-  
SIVITY BECOMES  
INNOVATION  
THEME, GENDER  
TASK FORCE  
SET UP IN THE  
NETWORK WITH  
GENDER FOCAL  
POINTS IN THE  
REGION**

**2019  
CELEBRATION  
OF 50 YEARS  
SOLIDARIDAD**

**2007 - 2014**

**FIRST ATTEMPTS AND SETBACK**

The findings of the evaluation were taken to heart. In 2007, two female staff from the Solidaridad department for 'Society Building and Human Rights' were tasked to increase the understanding of gender equality in Solidaridad and take the lead in developing a gender strategy. They presented the first Solidaridad gender strategy in 2009. It was inspired by a rights-based approach and gender justice was the envisioned final aim of gender mainstreaming. At project level, economic empowerment of women was to become a key component. Gender analyses were commissioned in several projects to improve their gender focus and their outcome for women. Gender mainstreaming in the organization was to be achieved by staff training, making Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation gender sensitive, hereby developing supportive tools for this purpose, and by supporting linking and learning among colleagues. However, when Solidaridad's major funding application to the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs was not approved in that same year, the organization faced a financial setback. This also affected Solidaridad's gender programming as staff with gender expertise was laid off and there was limited capacity and budget to take the gender strategy forward.

**DEVELOPMENT OF THE NETWORK ORGANIZATION AND DELEGATION TO THE REGIONAL OFFICES**

From 2008 onwards, Solidaridad took the first steps to change the setup of the organization and transform it into the current network structure, with independent offices in the regions. In line with the choice to strengthen regional responsibility and decision making, mainstreaming gender in projects became a responsibility of the new Solidaridad Regional Expertise Centres (RECs). This responsibility was taken up by the RECs in many different ways, at varying scales and with varying quality. Without the institutional capacity, gender was insufficiently addressed during the design of new projects and in the implementation, and the RECs leaned rather strongly on partner organizations. Due to the lack of coordination at network level, no common gender strategy was integrated in Solidaridad's first multi-annual strategic plan (MASP) for the period 2011-2015. In response to that, it was decided in 2012 to assign a gender coordinator for the network in order to understand and steer progress and align the different gender strategies and interventions that had been developed in the regions.





## 2015 - 2019

### AN INTEGRATED STRATEGY OFFERING NEW OPPORTUNITIES

In the course of 2015, Solidaridad developed its second MASP, AMBITION 2020, for the period 2016-2020. In this new strategic plan, the organization broadened its supply chain approach - that was still strongly producer-oriented - to an approach that aimed at sector transformation and the development of sustainable landscapes in which supply chains are embedded. The Theory of Change included the development of a robust (agricultural) infrastructure and an enabling policy environment for sustained sector transformation. The focus is on innovation and mechanisms for 'speed and scale'.

Simultaneously, gender mainstreaming in the policies of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs also started to have a stronger spin-off on the funding requirements of the Ministry's Dialogue and Dissent policy framework, that was to provide backbone funding for the new MASP. The submitted funding application was screened by gender experts at the Dutch Ministry, and Solidaridad was requested to improve its gender strategy. Solidaridad proposed a strategy emphasizing the need for gender mainstreaming in both the internal organization and programming, as well as the necessity to build the organization's internal capacity to make this happen. As a result, when the Advocacy for Change programme was approved in 2016, dedicated funds became available to support gender inclusivity in programming as well as to build capacity within the organization.

In the Practice for Change programme, also funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the emphasis was on increasing women's participation at production level, and on creating jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities for women in the related service sector.

To properly allow the organization to formulate the right strategy and way of working to successfully mainstream gender, 'gender inclusivity' became one of the 'innovation areas' in the new multi-annual strategic plan. After 46 years, the topic of gender inclusivity became a formal part of Solidaridad's multi-annual strategic plan. In 2017, the Executive Board of Directors of Solidaridad approved a new, comprehensive gender strategy. The implementation of the strategy that includes gender-inclusive programming, and building awareness and capacity at all levels in the internal organization, has just started. The fact that this process requires a long-term commitment and continuous investment in order to be successful was once again highlighted by the recent mid-term evaluation of the Advocacy for Change and Practice for Change programmes. This mid-term evaluation states that "overall, gender is not sufficiently integrated into the analysis and strategies to achieve the outcomes formulated in the ToC", which is partly due to the fact that "gender inclusiveness is not sufficiently visible in the ToC and overall approaches of the programmes".

Two key lessons from the timeline of Solidaridad can be drawn with regard to gender inclusivity. The first lesson is that a strategy for gender inclusivity can only be successful if made part of the core strategy of the organization and all related programmes and projects. For decades, the core strategy of Solidaridad has built on market-based solutions in export-oriented supply chains and sectors that are historically controlled by men, thus overlooking gendered differences that prevent women from participating and benefiting equally from Solidaridad's work.

The second lesson is that gender inclusivity starts with the internal organization, and more specifically, with the individuals that form the organization. Whether born as a man or a woman, we are all a product of our societies, our cultures and our education systems. Without giving it much thought, we tend to reproduce these thought patterns and systems that have led to gender-based exclusion in the first place and have thus prevented systemic changes up until today. Change has to start with us and requires a serious change management strategy and investment in the internal organization. Unfortunately, up until today, this is still not the natural focus of outward-oriented development organizations or donors.



# SOLIDARIDAD'S GENDER STRATEGY AND APPROACH

**Solidaridad's current approach towards incorporating gender inclusivity stems from the Solidaridad Gender Policy and Strategy Paper. It reflects lessons learned from the past and is in line with the identity and focus of the organization. Yet, it is also meant to be a 'living document', subject to revisions based on ongoing learning and new insights. Its main elements are described below.**

## **GENDER INCLUSIVITY AND TOGETHERNESS AS KEY CONCEPTS**

In the policy document, Solidaridad introduces the term 'gender inclusivity' in an attempt to move away from what have become loaded notions of gender equity and gender equality. These have often led to discussions and conflicts and have prevented people from taking action. Also, consultations with colleagues across the Network have made evident that terms like gender inequality and women empowerment carry different meaning and evoke different reactions across regions and cultures. This has, at times, closed the door to constructive dialogue.

As a more neutral term, gender inclusivity is meant to create more space for personal and regional interpretations according to context, while presenting a clear connection to Solidaridad's goal of achieving inclusive development.

3

## **GENDER ABC**

### **A: ANALYZING AND ADDRESSING BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION**

Appropriate analysis and understanding of the barriers for equal participation of women and men form the basis of any intervention. To create a level playing field, interventions must address these barriers to enable women to fulfill their potential and maximize their contribution to development processes.

### **B: BALANCING POWER RELATIONS**

The social structures and perceptions that give rise to the hierarchical power relations between men and women must be transformed in order to address inequalities. Therefore, interventions must ensure gender inclusive representation and aim at creating a more equal power balance between men and women. This calls for active engagement of men and boys, as they have a very important role to play in supporting leadership by women and girls.

### **C: CREATING TOGETHERNESS BASED ON SHARED INTEREST AND VALUES**

The key to gender inclusivity is a change process which involves both men and women and stimulates their cooperation, based on well-understood shared interests and shared values. This requires change management strategies aimed at creating togetherness through dialogue, awareness raising and capacity building, as well as targeted investment in support of this process.

The notion of togetherness among men and women is added as a crucial component to gender inclusivity in order to make the process of the redistribution of power between men and women a shared path of mutual interest. To support and facilitate the implementation of these concepts, a practical implementation framework has been designed, termed as the Gender ABC.

### **CONVINCE TO INVEST: THE SOLIDARIDAD GENDER BUSINESS CASE**

Building on the notion that the gender strategy would have to be in line with Solidaridad's identity, using a language that is understood by Solidaridad's stakeholders and staff, the 3-tier business case has been developed. This is in line with Solidaridad's opportunity and incentive-based approach, arguing that all parties benefit when gender imbalances are addressed. The business case can be used to convince stakeholders, externally and internally, that investing in gender is not only the right thing to do, but it is also very smart and effective. After all, the necessary long-term investments will only be maintained if all stakeholders can see some short and medium-term benefits.

### **CREATING INTERNAL PRECONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS**

As seen from Solidaridad's history, when the conditions in the organization are not favourable to achieve gender inclusivity at project level, a gap between policy and practice occurs. This leads to limited and unsustainable results and the consequent loss of investments. Staff should be enabled to build their knowledge related to gender inclusivity, to put this knowledge into practice, and to allow for continuous learning on this topic and improvement of gender strategies in their projects.





For this reason, Solidaridad's gender inclusivity strategy explicitly contains two levels: the project level and the organizational level. The strategy at the organizational level is, in fact, a change management strategy. Successful change management strategies for gender inclusivity have the following components:

- 1. Providing leadership support as a crucial factor of success by:**
  - a. Affirmative action, through working towards a more gender-balanced composition of management and boards, both at the level of supervision and at the executive level
  - b. Making gender inclusivity imperative by making it part of the innovation agenda of Solidaridad
  - c. Actively and proactively contributing to gender strategy development, and making sure it is integrated in the overall Solidaridad strategy
  - d. Actively communicating on Solidaridad's gender inclusivity agenda, approach and strategy both within the organization and in relevant fora
  - e. Putting the conditions for successful implementation of strategies in place by means of:
    - i. Creating adequate staff capacity (expertise, positioning and dedicated time);
    - ii. Ensuring sufficient and adequate resources.
- 2. Developing gender-inclusive HR policies and procedures to give more priority to Gender Inclusivity in recruitment processes, staff development and monitoring of staff performance;**
- 3. Enhancing and anchoring gender capacity throughout the internal organization;**
- 4. Guiding strategy development along the lines of our Gender ABC, leaving space for local approaches and solutions, and creating ownership.**

# GENDER BUSINESS CASE

## 1: QUANTITY OF IMPACT

First, from a business perspective, making optimal use of available human capital and opportunities of both men and women leads to enhanced economic growth. Supporting women with moving from informal, underpaid and undervalued work to skilled, recognized and more rewarding occupations will lead to a significant increase in revenue, at national, company and household level.

## 2: QUALITY OF IMPACT

Second, balancing so-called male and female perspectives and approaches enhances the quality of decision making. Increased gender sensitivity and well-managed gender diversity lead to more balanced and impactful decisions, whether in business, politics or households.

## 3: SUSTAINABILITY OF IMPACT

Third, investing in gender inclusivity provides a valuable long-term return on investment for future generations. Gender-inclusive households make different choices regarding the investment of family income in education, health, job and career opportunities for all family members. Gender-inclusive businesses and governments can support and benefit by facilitating equal career opportunities and legislation, which is good for society and business.





# PROMISING PRACTICES IN SOLIDARIDAD'S PROGRAMMING

4

The following section highlights some of the emerging promising practices in Solidaridad's gender inclusivity track record. These practices are clustered under three areas: Tackling barriers to participation, supporting equality in decision making and legislation, and promoting inclusive norms and practices. They are based on findings from a portfolio analysis carried out by the Gender Taskforce together with an external consultant in 2018. The analysis provides a comprehensive understanding of how and what Solidaridad has been working on in relation to gender inclusivity in its various interventions so far. 646 projects in Solidaridad's project management system were analyzed, combined with a desk review of project evaluation reports and in-depth interviews with gender experts in the Regional Expertise Centres (RECs). It revealed that out of the 646 projects, only 22 could be considered gender inclusive.

## TACKLING BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

Solidaridad has a strong track record in activities that address barriers to full and equal participation by women and men, both within the scope of Solidaridad's programmes and in economic development and society at large. Some of these interventions are highlighted below.

### ENHANCING KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

One key barrier to participation is the level of education. In developing countries, only one out of three girls completes secondary education<sup>7</sup>. This affects not only the girls' ability to participate in the labour market and in their communities, but also their personal development and life skills necessary to make decisions about their own life. Solidaridad undertakes efforts in its projects to ensure that women are included as beneficiaries of training and that their knowledge and skills gap is addressed.

### CREATING SAFE SPACES

Creating an environment where women feel free to speak, exchange ideas and empower each other is as important as the training itself. Therefore, a Resource Centre for Women in Agriculture was established for this specific purpose in Solidaridad's sustainable soy programme in India. The centre provides a women-only space and facilitates knowledge exchange on topics ranging from good farming practices to nutrition and health. It also forms an entry point for other development initiatives by the government or other civil society organizations, providing a means to reach the women easily.

### ACKNOWLEDGING WOMEN'S REPRODUCTIVE ROLES

Women around the world perform a disproportionate amount of unpaid reproductive work in addition to their productive work - on average, three times as much as men<sup>8</sup>. These roles are related to caring for children and the elderly, and to household or domestic work. This has implications for the time women can spend on activities related to their productive work, including attending of trainings and meetings.

## TACKLING BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

The Sustainable Agriculture, Food Security and Linkages (SaFaL) Programme in Bangladesh is one of Solidaridad's largest food security and market development programmes. SaFaL has been undertaking a gender-inclusive approach to shape the lives and livelihoods of women in agriculture as farmers and entrepreneurs, while also ensuring their food security. Women were provided with training on financial literacy, entrepreneurship, market dynamics, adaptive and demand-based crop planning and value addition.

This has significantly increased their livelihood opportunities. Jolly Mondol, one of the beneficiaries of the SaFaL programme, explains what these training courses have meant for her community: 'My mother and grandmother were confined to the household. With increasing awareness and the spread of literacy, women can take part in businesses and jobs'. The SaFaL Programme has also improved the ability of women to access inputs, mechanization, services and credits to create effective linkages with high value markets. According to the project evaluation, women who have engaged in income generating activities have thus enjoyed more decision-making authority in the household and increased their mobility.

<sup>7</sup>Wodon, Q., Montenegro, C., Nguyen, H., Onagoruwa, A., (2018). Missed Opportunities: The High Cost of Not Educating Girls. The Cost of Not Educating Girls Notes Series. World Bank, Washington, DC, p.2.



It is important to take these reproductive responsibilities into account when designing project activities and interventions. Therefore, in several Solidaridad projects, training times were adapted to fit women's time schedules and nurseries were provided during the training to take care of their children. Moreover, some projects included smart solutions that reduce the amount of time women spend on repetitive tasks. For instance, in the Women in Coffee project in Kenya, women were provided biogas units, which saved a tremendous amount of time that would otherwise go into gathering firewood. And instead of buying chemical fertilisers, they could use the slurry left over from producing biogas as an organic fertiliser for their crops.

It is also important to recognize the interrelation between sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and women's equal participation in economic activities. Solidaridad addresses this issue in several projects. During the implementation of the curriculum of the Cocoa Academy of the MASO project in Ghana, it was realized that awareness of SRHR was crucial to maximize the outcomes of the programme.

Solidaridad consequently worked with partners to develop materials on SRHR to teach young cocoa farmers about family planning, HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. The Golden Line programme, which aims to improve working conditions for women in artisanal and small-scale gold mining communities in Ghana and Tanzania, explicitly focuses on health education and women-friendly health services as a precondition for the economic empowerment of women.

#### **ACCESS TO FINANCIAL RESOURCES**

Women also face barriers when it comes to accessing finance. They often cannot meet the bank's requirements or face interest rates that are too high. Solidaridad applies the Village Saving and Loans Associations (VSLA) methodology to address the issue of access to finance. VSLAs provide simple savings and loan facilities to communities that do not have access to formal financial services. In the Cocoa Life project in Ivory Coast, VSLA has provided access to credit for over 7,500 women and hereby enhanced their financial stability. As a result, they are able to increase their income generating activities and venture into new businesses.

## **SUPPORTING EQUALITY IN DECISION MAKING AND LEGISLATION**

In addition to taking down barriers to participation in specific projects or value chains, Solidaridad's track record also includes activities that contribute to broader changes that promote gender equality. This entails interventions that focus on inclusive participation in decision-making processes and legislation.

#### **RAISING WOMEN'S VOICES AND REPRESENTATION**

To be able to influence decision making, one needs a seat at the table. However, women are often excluded from these tables. As a result, women's needs and concerns are not sufficiently represented in discussions that inform decisions and legislation that affect them. Therefore, Solidaridad takes action to involve women in stakeholder meetings and equips them with skills to make their voices heard. It also uses its own position in multi-stakeholder platforms and fora to draw attention to gender issues. An example of this can be found in the Golden Line Programme.

## **SUPPORTING EQUALITY IN DECISION MAKING AND LEGISLATION**

In the Oro Justo (Fair Gold) project in Peru, Solidaridad has actively engaged government actors to create a policy that would recognize the role of female miners, the so-called "Pallaqueras". These Pallaqueras collect low-grade gold ore on the slopes and outskirts of Peruvian mines. Because they are not employed or recognized by mining companies or the government, they are vulnerable to exploitation and work in unsafe labour conditions. In addition to offering legal support to the Pallaqueras and strengthening their leadership and representation skills, Solidaridad has worked together with the Peruvian government to seek legal recognition for these female miners.

As a result, on 21 July 2018, the Pallaqueras were officially acknowledged through a formal statement by the Ministry of Mines and Energy. In this statement, the Ministry declared that several traditional artisanal and small-scale mining practices were enabled to engage in legal trading transactions with processors and gold traders. This gives the Pallaqueras access to labour rights and to formal markets where they can sell their gold to refiners for a better price, thus earning more income.

One of the Pallaqueras, María Reyes, describes: "Before the formalization, we worked the whole day. Now we work two hours a day and we have uniforms. Everything has changed from how things were before." As a result of her engagement in the project, María has travelled to different countries to represent her fellow Pallaqueras and advocate for their development.

<sup>8</sup> Klugman, J. & Melnikova, T. (2016). Unpaid Work and Care: A Policy Brief. UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment.





To raise the profile of women in artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) and stimulate gender inclusive mining policies, the women have received advocacy training and were enabled to actively contribute through various platforms. At the OECD Forum on Responsible Mineral Supply Chains in Paris in 2018, Solidaridad provided an international podium to two female miners from Ghana and Tanzania to talk to governments and companies from the mineral industry about the role of women in ASM. Another way of raising women's voices is through networks. In 2016, Solidaridad launched the Women IN Cocoa & Chocolate (WINCC) network with the goal to address women's limited visibility and influence in the cocoa sector. With WINCC, Solidaridad has created a platform for women to connect, establish global linkages and share knowledge from all levels in the cocoa value chain, and to inspire each other to increase their sphere of influence and take the lead towards a more sustainable sector.

#### ADVOCATING FOR EQUAL BENEFIT

Laws and policies can provide a powerful framework for equal opportunities. Institutional support in the form of inclusive policies is crucial to the success and sustainability of gender inclusivity interventions. Therefore, Solidaridad works together with governmental actors in policy dialogues and multi-stakeholder processes to promote equal sharing of benefit by all citizens.

## PROMOTING INCLUSIVE NORMS AND PRACTICES

Inclusive legislation will not ensure gender inclusivity when underlying cultural norms, beliefs and practices are perpetuating gender inequality in practice. Therefore, Solidaridad takes action to challenge harmful practices and to change norms and attitudes towards gender inclusivity. Therefore, it is important to focus on changing the norms and attitudes of both women and men.

#### CHANGING INSTITUTIONAL AND CULTURAL NORMS

In a variety of projects, Solidaridad aims to raise the awareness about norms that limit women's roles in society through sensitization. To challenge norms and beliefs that restrict women to take up leading roles as business women or entrepreneurs, Solidaridad makes use of gender champions. This happens, for instance, in the MASO project in Ghana, a project aimed at creating employment opportunities for rural youth in the cocoa sector. Gender champions are influential people in the community who act as ambassadors of gender inclusivity and women empowerment.

The role of the gender champions is to gather, educate and mentor people in their community, especially young women. By doing this, they play an important role in mentoring and coaching these women to become entrepreneurs and to take up leadership roles in business and in society.

#### ENGAGING MEN

Gender inclusivity cannot be truly achieved if men are left out of the picture. For decades, development organizations have focused on women empowerment and have thus targeted mostly women. In some instances, this has caused resentment and backlash by men who felt left out or threatened by the changing position of women. Hence, to change something as institutionalized as social gender norms requires everybody to feel responsible and included in the benefits as a result of the changes.

Solidaridad consciously aims to create a sense of togetherness for inclusivity by engaging men as allies. This includes promoting positive images of men, for example, as caregivers in the family and by doing so, changing gender norms and reducing the workload of women. An example of this are the community workshops where Solidaridad brings men and women together to discuss gender issues. The goal is to change the attitudes of both men and women and bring men on board in the journey towards gender inclusivity.



## PROMOTING INCLUSIVE NORMS AND PRACTICES

The Land: Enhancing Governance for Economic Development (LEGEND) project in Sierra Leone is a good example where institutional and cultural norms are being challenged. In Sierra Leone, women are traditionally not involved in decisions that relate to land and many still believe that women cannot own land. Amongst other things, the aim of this project was to improve women's land rights and to increase their involvement in community

decision making. Through an inclusive multi-stakeholder platform created by the project, both women and men were educated about their land rights. In addition, a land title registration initiative encouraged women's land entitlements. Training on gender-sensitive land tenure security further contributed to the awareness of the importance of including women in community decision making. As a result of the project, women in the project areas now participate in land governance and freely share their opinions.

The engagement of men in gender inclusivity was stimulated by a training on the Gender Model Family (GMF), which involved the joint participation of men and women. One of the participants, Sedia Massaquoi explains: "During the GMF training we were told how to make peace in a household. Men were shown how much work the women do, and this changed their opinion of us. We got educated about dividing labour more fairly, and on how to solve our issues more constructively. Now men take on some of the household tasks, and are treating women with more respect."



# THE WAY FORWARD FOR GENDER INCLUSIVITY

5

As a frontrunner in sustainable development, Solidaridad is well placed to contribute to solutions to the complex and globally interconnected challenges such as climate change, urbanization and migration. However, in order to deliver effective solutions to these challenges, gender inclusivity is a prerequisite, not a choice.

Therefore, the following four recommendations will propel Solidaridad to take gender inclusivity to the next level in sustainable economic development.

## 1. CONSISTENTLY INTEGRATE GENDER INCLUSIVITY IN EVERY ASPECT OF SOLIDARIDAD'S STRATEGY

An important lesson learnt from the period of the current multi-annual strategic plan of Solidaridad is that, because a gender perspective was not integrated throughout the Theory of Change but rather treated as a separate element, the consequent projects and interventions did not include it either. As a result, outcomes with regard to gender inclusivity can be expected to be limited.

To remedy this in the development of the new multi-annual strategy for 2021 onwards, gender should be considered from the beginning. Gender analyses should be done related to all topics that will be addressed in

the new strategy. What is more, the Theory of Change should make explicit who the ultimate beneficiaries from Solidaridad's work at impact level are. Additionally, the proposed strategies in all result areas should specify how they aim to contribute to achieving impact for men, women, boys and girls. The principles from the gender ABC - addressing barriers, balancing power relations and creating togetherness - should guide these strategies.

## 2. FURTHER DEVELOP THE GENDER INCLUSIVITY STRATEGY USING THE GENDER INCLUSIVITY BUCKETS

Given the vast scope of the gender inclusivity agenda and due to its cross-cutting nature, it is important to keep focus to avoid getting lost. Both the Gender Policy and Strategy as well as Solidaridad's track record already offer a good starting point for the scope and focus of gender inclusivity interventions in the organization. To help further guide gender inclusivity in project implementation, in 2018 the gender task force developed 11 gender inclusivity buckets, as reflected in the infographic on the right. These buckets represent a set of priority themes, following from the findings in the portfolio analysis, the 2016 report of the UN Secretary General's High-Level Panel on women's economic empowerment, and the Theory of Change of Solidaridad as developed in Ambition 2020.



### 3. IMPROVE PLANNING, MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING PROCESSES, USING THE 3-TIER GENDER BUSINESS CASE

As a result of weak monitoring and inadequate evaluation of projects with regard to gender, it is difficult to find evidence to what extent Solidaridad's interventions have or have not contributed to gender inclusivity and whether they may even have had a negative impact. This is not only limited to Solidaridad; many organizations in the development sector are struggling to measure the effects of gender mainstreaming.<sup>9</sup> This leaves the claim that gender mainstreaming leads to better results still largely unproven. Better gender data will help Solidaridad mark positive progress and also identify gaps.

Therefore, investments in the integration of gender in planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning processes are required. Gender-sensitive indicators should become default in order to measure the impact of our projects, so that progress towards gender inclusive development can be tracked and we can ensure we do no harm. The minimum requirement is that all data collected should be disaggregated by sex and, preferably, age. Baseline assessments need to include both quantitative and qualitative analysis of gender issues, and monitoring reports should analyse progress in a meaningful way. Structural attention should be paid to learning and exchange on gender inclusivity across the regions. These lessons learnt regarding gender inclusivity should also be recorded and stored in the project management system of the organization.

To evaluate the impact of our gender inclusivity strategy specifically, the 3-tier gender business case as developed by Solidaridad provides an excellent framework for analysis. This has already started through the Network learning agenda initiative. The learning agenda for gender focuses on better understanding of the various aspects of gender inclusivity in Solidaridad programming,

and gathering evidence that will prove the business case for gender inclusivity. This should put Solidaridad in a better position to support both our own projects as well as households, businesses and public sector actors in developing smart gender inclusive strategies that have a positive return on investment.

### 4. DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A GENDER INCLUSIVITY CHANGE MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

With Solidaridad's Gender Policy and Strategy, a clear vision of gender inclusivity has been put forward and the track record shows promising potential. Yet, more is needed to achieve sustained and comprehensive implementation. This last recommendation aims at closing the current gap between policy and practice. This requires treating gender inclusivity in the way that the gender policy states: as a change management process.

A concrete change management action plan should be developed that concretizes the aspects mentioned in the gender policy. To avoid trying to do everything at once, the following aspects should be prioritized:

- Financial investments in developing gender capacity in the organization are needed, both the core gender expertise as well as the overall gender inclusivity knowledge and capacity of all staff. Further, human resources capacity is needed in the form of dedicated positions for gender experts that are well-positioned to provide the necessary coaching to build the capacity of all staff to implement gender inclusivity.

<sup>9</sup> Brouwers, R. (2013). 'Revisiting Gender Mainstreaming in International Development: Goodbye to an Illusionary Strategy.' Working Paper 556, International Institute of Social Studies, Erasmus University, Rotterdam.

Through the network Gender Task Force (GTF), consisting of Gender Focal Persons from each region, a basic structure is already in place to start guiding individual change and instituting an organizational change management process. Financial investments are also needed to further develop the necessary tools for capacity building, such as the Gender Knowledge Platform mentioned above.

- Accountability mechanisms should be put in place to assess performance on gender inclusivity within the organization, from junior to management level, against set gender inclusivity objectives. This requires ensuring that gender inclusivity becomes part of job descriptions, performance appraisals and requirements in the recruitment process. Capacity building in the form of gender inclusivity should then be closely connected to staff roles and responsibilities in case people struggle to perform in line with gender inclusivity job requirements.

- Personal awareness and commitment to gender inclusivity as part of Solidaridad's core values and norms should be actively pursued. As people, we are a product of the social and cultural ideologies that we have been taught since our own childhood, including those related to gender. As professionals, we unconsciously bring these ideas into our work and they influence the way we act towards others. This means that many people are not always aware of their own ideas and biases. Therefore, efforts should be made by staff to understand their personal - often unintended - resistance or bias. This will improve the ability of the entire organization to contribute to gender inclusivity. As we have learned in our project interventions, gender champions in the organization could take up the role of mentoring and coaching their peers.

## REFERENCES

Brouwers, R. (2013). 'Revisiting Gender Mainstreaming in International Development: Goodbye to an Illusionary strategy.' Working Paper 556, International Institute of Social Studies, Erasmus University, Rotterdam.

Klugman, J. & Melnikova, T. (2016). **Unpaid Work and Care: A Policy Brief.** UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment.

Kruijssen, F., Brand S., Bergmann, N., Ferrari, G., de Rijck, M. (2018). **Midterm review of Solidaridad's 2016-2020 AfC & Pfc Programmes** evaluation report. MDF Training & Consultancy.

Razavi, S. & Miller, C. (1995). **'From WID to GAD: Conceptual shifts in the Women and Development discourse.'** United Nations Research Institute Occasional Paper Series (No. 1). United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.

UN Women. **Gender Mainstreaming.** Retrieved 27 April 2019 [www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/un-system-coordination/gender-mainstreaming](http://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/un-system-coordination/gender-mainstreaming)

Van Walsem, E. & Guijt, I. (2006). **Mid Term Evaluation Mainstreaming of Fair Trade** final August 2006.

Wodon, Q., Montenegro, C., Nguyen, H., Onagoruwa, A., (2018). **Missed Opportunities: The High Cost of Not Educating Girls. The Cost of Not Educating Girls Notes Series.** World Bank, Washington, DC.



**AFTER 46 YEARS,  
THE TOPIC OF  
GENDER  
INCLUSIVITY  
BECAME A  
FORMAL PART OF  
SOLIDARIDAD'S  
MULTI-ANNUAL  
STRATEGIC PLAN**

**SOLIDARIDADNETWORK.ORG**