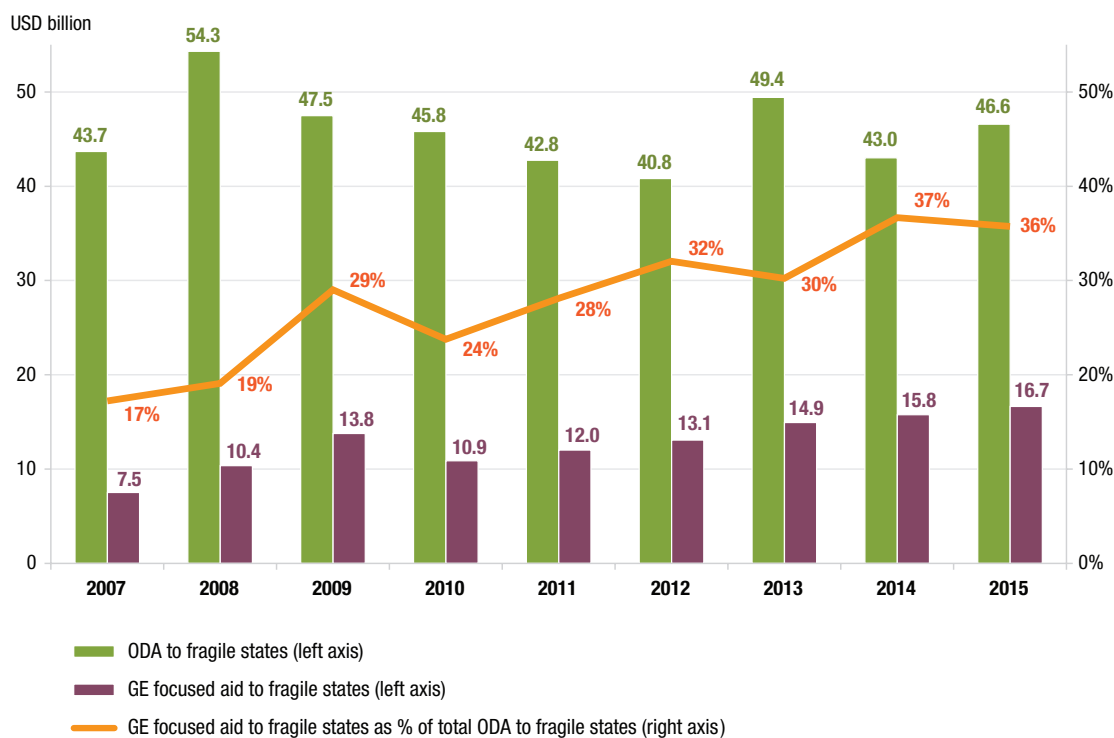# Gender equality and women's empowerment in fragile and conflict-affected situations:
A review of donor support

Strengthening gender equality and women's empowerment in fragile situations is critical for achieving sustainable peace and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Gender inequality, conflict and fragility are key challenges to sustainable development and they are inextricably linked: women's active participation in conflict resolution contributes to peace and resilience, while unequal gender relations can drive conflict and violence. Conflict and fragility also place enormous burdens on women and girls, while peacebuilding and statebuilding can provide unique opportunities to advance recognition of their rights.

The OECD Development Policy Paper on *Gender equality and women's empowerment in fragile and conflict-affected situations: A review of donor support* (October 2017) assesses how donors can improve the quality of their gender equality and women's empowerment programming in fragile situations drawing on case study reviews of donor programmes in Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Ethiopia and Nepal[1].

Trends in DAC Members' ODA to gender equality in fragile states (2007-15) in USD billion, 2015 constant prices

USD billion

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
ODA to fragile states	43.7	54.3	47.5	45.8	42.8	40.8	49.4	43.0	46.6
GE focused aid to fragile states	7.5	10.4	13.8	10.9	12.0	13.1	14.9	15.8	16.7
GE focused aid as % of total ODA	17%	19%	29%	24%	28%	32%	30%	37%	36%

- ■ ODA to fragile states (left axis)
- ■ GE focused aid to fragile states (left axis)
- — GE focused aid to fragile states as % of total ODA to fragile states (right axis)

Source: OECD DAC CRS database

1. The Policy Paper was published jointly by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Network on Gender Equality (GENDERNET) and the International Network on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF).
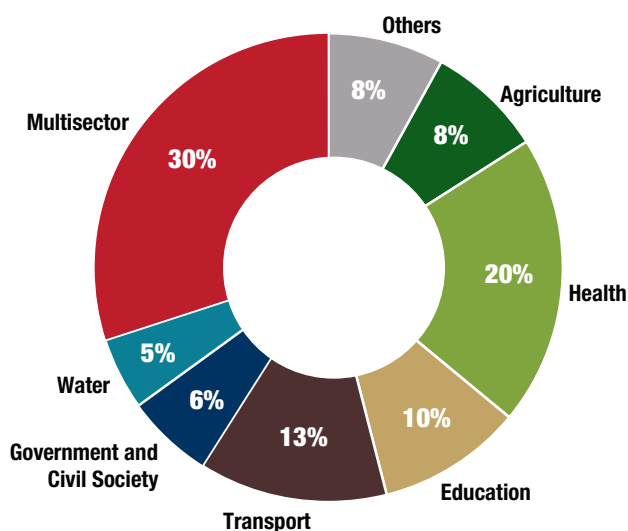*www.oecd.org/dac/conflict-fragility-resilience*
http://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development

Despite the differences between the four countries studied, there are similarities in the factors driving gender inequalities, conflict and fragility. Among these are the prevalence of discriminatory gender norms and practices; widespread sexual and gender-based violence; weak institutions and women's lack of access to justice and basic services; women's exclusion from political and economic decision making; and a narrowing space for opposition or civil society organisations.
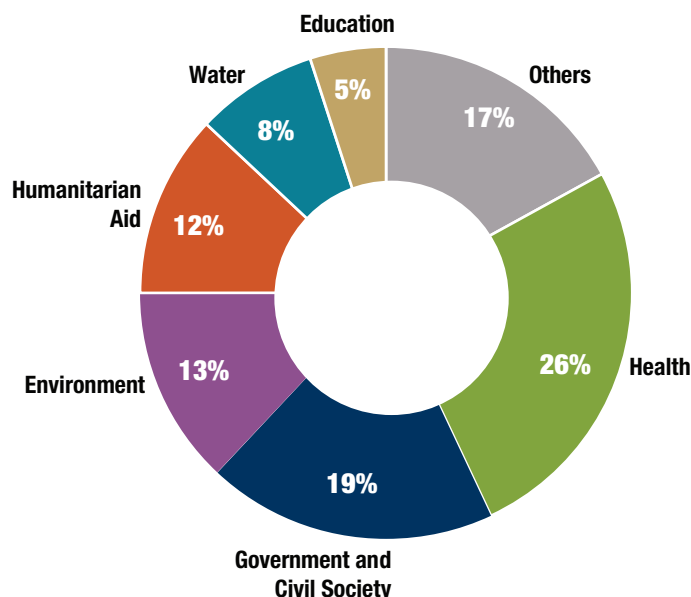
ODA TARGETING GENDER EQUALITY IN
BANGLADESH

In 2014-15 44% of ODA to Bangladesh was reportedly gender-focused; that is, it was reported to target gender equality as a principal or secondary objective (at USD 922 million on average per year). Most gender-focused aid to Bangladesh went to the multisector support, followed by the health and transport sectors.

Multisector 30%
Others 8%
Agriculture 8%
Health 20%
Education 10%
Transport 13%
Government and Civil Society 6%
Water 5%

ODA TARGETING GENDER EQUALITY IN
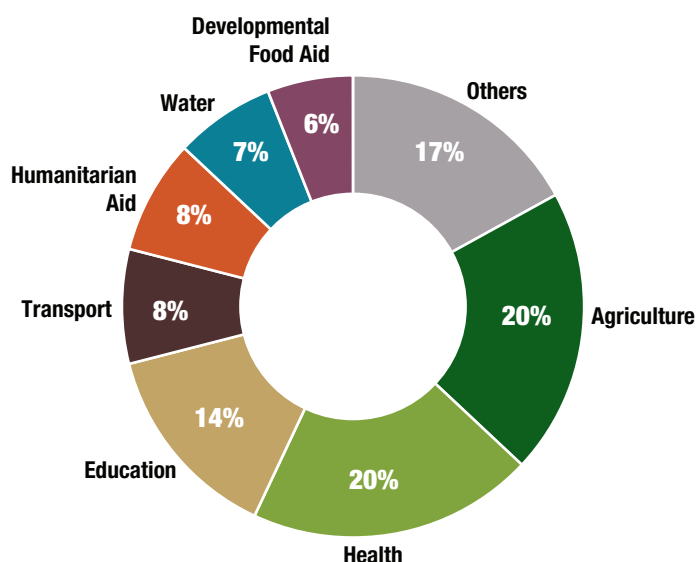# THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

In 2014-15 53% of ODA to the Democratic Republic of the Congo was reportedly to be gender-focused (USD 585 million on average per year). The largest share went to the health sector, followed by government and civil society, and "other" sectors.

Education 5%
Water 8%
Humanitarian Aid 12%
Environment 13%
Government and Civil Society 19%
Health 26%
Others 17%
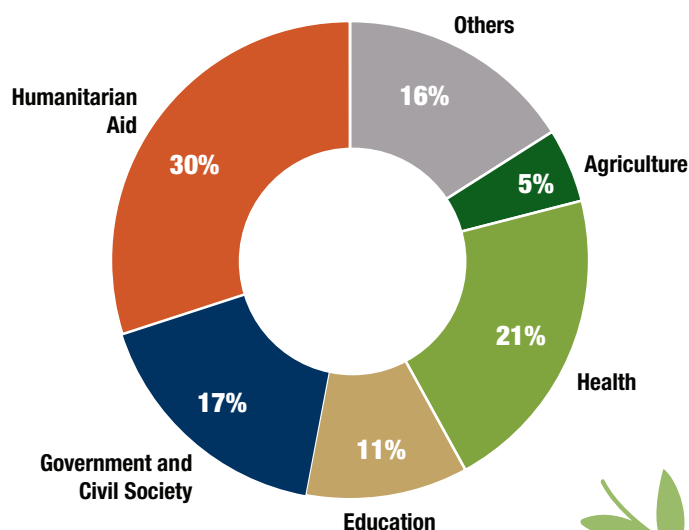
Source: OECD DAC CRS database

ODA TARGETING GENDER EQUALITY IN
ETHIOPIA

In 2014-15 49% of ODA to Ethiopia was reportedly gender-focused (USD 938 million on average per year). The largest share went to the health and agriculture sectors, followed by "other" sectors, and education.

Developmental Food Aid 6%
Water 7%
Humanitarian Aid 8%
Transport 8%
Education 14%
Health 20%
Agriculture 20%
Others 17%

ODA TARGETING GENDER EQUALITY IN
NEPAL

In 2014-15 56% of ODA to Nepal was reported to be gender-focused (USD 442 million on average per year). The largest share went to the humanitarian aid sector, followed by health, and government and civil society.

Source: OECD DAC CRS database

Humanitarian Aid 30%
Others 16%
Agriculture 5%
Health 21%
Education 11%
Government and Civil Society 17%

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Policy Paper stresses the need for a shift in perspective towards a more holistic approach for development partners, based on an understanding of gender equality, conflict and fragility that is deeper, wider, and more politically informed, with a strong focus on women as agents of change:

- Deeper – in focusing on the root causes of gender inequality and fragility, including social norms;

- Wider – in grasping the full range of connections between gender, conflict and fragility, including how gender inequality shapes conflict and fragility;

- More politically informed – in understanding the power relations driving gender inequality, conflict and fragility and the role of women as actors rather than only passive victims or beneficiaries.

OECD

Concrete steps to improve donor support to gender equality and sustainable peace in fragile situations include:

- **Think politically,** acknowledging the range of connections between gender equality and fragility, including the effects that wider fragility issues (e.g. rising identity politics, clientelism, corruption) have on gender equality and on the long-term impacts of programming. Donors can do more to understand how political economy factors and power relations shape conflict, fragility and gender relations to ensure that their programming is well grounded in political realities and sustainable over time.

- **Address underlying social norms and gender relations in fragile situations** by engaging more strategically with men, and by supporting women's role as active agents in peacebuilding and statebuilding. It is necessary to work with the diversity of stakeholders – including men, community norm setters, and potential "resistors" (e.g. religious authorities, local officials, central or local level political party leaders) – whose participation is required to affect change in gender power relations. Donors could also explore how negative norms for male behaviour can shape conflict and violence. Supporting women's active role in these settings can for example entail a strengthened focus on programming for women's economic empowerment.

- **Plan a learning phase previous to designing a programme** to enable research, relationship-building and consultation with the full range of local stakeholders. This can help ensure that the programme's objectives, work streams and methodology are adjusted to the particularities of the context. Programmes should ideally be adjusted to changing country contexts and adapted based on learning of what works through systematic testing of approaches, use of new information, or ongoing reflection about casual assumptions.

- **Increase incentives and accountability, and make further progress in Monitoring and Evaluation and data collection.** Donors can aim to recognise and respond to the potential tensions or risks associated with gender-blind activities; and increase attention to qualitative indicators in order to create opportunities for learning and adaptation. Mandatory reporting requirements can facilitate the collection and use of sex disaggregated data and indicators.

- **Strengthen co-ordination within and between agencies, and make use of existing country level capacity by pooling resources.** For example, link up gender co-ordination groups with governance and conflict networks. Partnerships with local women's organisations increase the quality of programmes and helps support locally led change.

Taking forward the research

In 2018, the OECD DAC Network on Gender Equality (GENDERNET) and the International Network on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF) are aiming to help translate the recommendations set out in the Policy Paper into practice.

The Policy Paper was published jointly by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Network on Gender Equality (GENDERNET) and the International Network on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF).

www.oecd.org/dac/conflict-fragility-resilience
www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development