

Using evidence to strengthen gender equality in fragile contexts

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Highlights

Evidence impact

- The review is cited in the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, BMZ's March 2023 [Feminist Development Policy](#) document.
- Two successive issues of the BMZ Newsletter, Crisis Management in Practice, highlighted review findings, with the March 2023 issue developing findings into recommendations for implementing partners of the BMZ.

Factors that contributed to impact

- The BMZ with the German Agency for International Cooperation, GIZ, engaged with the authors at all stages of the project ensuring there was buy-in and understanding of the scope of the review.
- The authors conveyed the main findings and implications of the review to practitioners and policymakers in the sector and within BMZ through different formats including blogs, presentations and a brief.
- GIZ continued to discuss and translate review findings for use by implementers as part of the ministry's Transitional Development Assistance programs.

Systematic review details

Title: [Strengthening women's empowerment and gender equality in fragile contexts](#)

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Context

Gender inequality is a global problem, and according to the 2022 Global Gender Gap report, the world would need 132 years to achieve gender parity. However, situations of fragility, conflict and violence tend to sharpen the gender gaps in resources, agency and achievements. The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security recognises the inordinate impact of violent conflict and war on women and girls, as well as the potential of gender equality and women's empowerment in sustaining peace. Mapping the evidence on interventions building peaceful societies with support from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), 3ie and the commissioners found a synthesis evidence gap around the effects of a range of gender-specific and gender-transformative interventions in fragile contexts.

To fill this synthesis evidence gap and help identify what approaches can improve women's status in these settings, BMZ commissioned a new systematic review to synthesize the evidence on the effects of 14 different types of gender-sensitive and gender-transformative interventions. The systematic review included 104 unique studies covering 55 identified programmes and 32 linked impact evaluations papers, in addition to 90 linked qualitative and process evaluations. All these studies took place in 29 countries identified as being particularly fragile and having a high level of gender inequality.

Evidence

On average, all the identified interventions had positive effects on women's empowerment outcomes closely related to the purpose of the intervention. No intervention had a significant negative effect on any outcome. Average effects were generally smaller, or negligible, for outcomes less aligned with the primary purpose or mechanism of the intervention. For example, none of the interventions had an effect on intimate partner violence. Some interventions were rarely studied – there is insufficient evidence to synthesise impacts for all-women police stations and community-based services. Many intervention-outcome combinations were not studied at all. The qualitative analysis of the 90 papers covering 55 unique programmes provided a rich complement to the quantitative findings by generating 149 descriptive themes across all studies and 37 analytical themes. The thematic synthesis emphasized that context is a critical aspect of implementation; from asset transfers to safe spaces interventions, programme participants cited gender and social norms as a significant barrier or opening factor for uptake.

Evidence impacts

German federal ministry promotes use of review findings

Citing the review's findings that existing development policy interventions have not adequately addressed prevailing social norms and gender roles, BMZ's [Feminist Development Policy](#) (March 2023) called for evaluating and analyzing the ministry's work to identify effective approaches for responding to the root causes of gender inequalities and discrimination. The policy document cited the review in a section titled Power to rethink: A Feminist Approach to German Development Policy Conclusions and Orientation of German Cooperation. The citation came after two successive issues of the BMZ's Newsletter, Crisis Management in Practice, featured the systematic review. While the [July 2022](#) issue touched upon review findings such as the importance of focusing interventions to family units rather than individuals and subsidizing transport and childcare for participation in vocational training, the March 2023 issue used the findings of the SR to develop recommendations for implementing partners to put into practice.

Suggested citation

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