



Gender Mainstreaming: Making It Happen

Rekha Mehra *
Geeta Rao Gupta **

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* Consultant, Gender and Economic Development
** President, International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)

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1. Introduction

Gender mainstreaming is at critical cross-roads right now. Many early supporters are disillusioned with the way it has worked so far and are beginning to feel that it has failed. This paper argues that it may be too soon to pass judgment because from the perspective of a development agency, the most critical element of mainstreaming – mainstreaming in operations – has not yet been seriously attempted. Implementation has focused solely on internal organizational dimensions, such as staffing, policies, developing indicators, and training of all staff, which are often interpreted as preconditions or precursors to interventions at the operational level.¹ This paper asserts that although mainstreaming gender in operations requires some of those organizational elements, it does not have to wait for all those changes to be implemented. It can begin in an entrepreneurial and strategic way and show success in small measures so as to gain credibility.

This is especially important now because the United Nations (UN) Millennium Development Goals (MDG), especially MDG3 on gender equality and the empowerment of women, offer an invaluable opportunity to reinvigorate efforts to achieve positive development outcomes. Besides, the vast body of experience and knowledge gained over the past three decades on what works and what doesn't in development interventions across different sectors is available to be applied to make greater and more rapid progress on mainstreaming gender into operations. As results emerge and development effectiveness improves from mainstreaming gender, we believe that the success and growing experience will generate additional interest, learning and enthusiasm, and the process will gather momentum. Changes at the operations level will also improve the lives of women and men, the purpose for which gender mainstreaming was adopted. Concrete results in terms of increased development effectiveness constitute a way forward in the current impasse with gender mainstreaming and will make important and growing contributions towards achieving the wider institutional goals of empowerment and equality for low-income and disenfranchised people that are not currently being met.

2. Background

Gender mainstreaming was adopted as a major strategy for promoting gender equality at the Fourth World Conference of Women in 1995. It called for mainstreaming in all Critical Areas of Concern at the conference which included poverty, human rights, economy, violence against women and armed conflict. In addition, the Beijing Platform of Action established that gender analysis should be undertaken on the respective situation and contributions of both women and men before undertaking development policies and programs.

The inclusion of a goal on gender equality and the empowerment of women in the MDGs re-established the commitment voiced in Beijing. In addition, in outlining the way

¹ The term “operations” is used here to describe all activities related to development projects and/or interventions designed to have a beneficial impact on low-income people.

forward toward achieving that goal, the report of the Task Force on Education and Gender Equality of the UN Millennium Project reinforced the importance of investing in gender mainstreaming as a tool and reiterated the need to expedite mainstreaming responses and actions and put in place the systems to hold institutions accountable.

In the decade since gender mainstreaming was endorsed and adopted by countries and institutions, however, it has yet to be fully implemented anywhere. It is not surprising then that the world has also already fallen behind on a key target set for MDG3—eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005. Over the years, the attempt to mainstream gender in a wide range of development agencies has, however, elicited important lessons, insights, and some evidence. These lessons can now be used to model future success and to achieve the target set for 2015 for MDG3, gender equality, the empowerment of women and to improve development effectiveness overall.

This critique examines what it will take to effectively implement gender mainstreaming. It is restricted to implementation issues within development agencies, although in discussing those issues it draws on the experience of countries that have sought to mainstream gender into their policies and programs in order to better address the development challenges facing them.

3. Definition

The commonly accepted and most widely used definition of gender mainstreaming is the one adopted by the United Nations' Economic and Social Council: "Mainstreaming a gender perspective 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 programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality." (UN ECOSOC, 1997)

Gender mainstreaming was adopted mainly to address the perceived failure of previous strategies such as women-specific projects to bring about significant changes in women's status. There was widespread consensus that the failure of women-specific projects in the 1970s and 80s was due to their marginalization. Gender mainstreaming was designed to overcome this marginalization and to bring gender equality issues into the core of development activities.

4. Interpretations, Applications and Results of Gender Mainstreaming

As currently understood, gender mainstreaming encompasses all aspects of planning, implementing and monitoring any social, political or economic action. A

common understanding is that implementation involves changes in both “internal” organizational and “external” operational procedures. The former refers to changes needed within organizations to embrace the goals and values of gender mainstreaming and to alter systems and procedures to meet these goals. Changes may include staffing and personnel policies such as hiring more women or appointing a particular percentage to leadership positions or more structural elements such as changing the “culture” of the organization through gender equality mandates to make the work place more egalitarian. The “external” dimension generally pertains to the steps needed to mainstream gender into development operations such as design, implementation and evaluation. These steps may include influencing goals, strategies and resource allocations at the start and providing specialized gender technical input such as gender analysis and technical assistance for the design, implementation and evaluation phases.

In a somewhat different framework, Rao and Kelleher (2002) suggest three dimensions in which changes are needed—in gender infrastructure, within organizations and in institutions. Gender infrastructure involves putting in place gender policies, gender units, increased female staff and managers and additional resources for women’s programs. Organizational changes, similar to the “internal” formulation, pertain to “deep structure” such as improving the work-family balance and equalizing power relations within organizations. Institutional changes refer to broader societal shifts needed to change embedded power relationships and gender roles and relationships throughout the social structure in families, communities, markets and the state. In their view, gender mainstreaming involves the development and implementation of processes, capacities and techniques, as well as shifts in structural and normative dimensions such as beliefs, norms and power. While it is true that achieving gender equality in society requires all these changes, this formulation is missing a discrete focus on development operations, the more immediate concern of development organizations.

In response to the call for gender mainstreaming many development organizations, private donors and NGOs took steps to implement mainstreaming policies. They set up gender units, hired gender specialists and adopted gender training. Some organizations also made budget allocations. On the operational side, they required gender analysis at various stages of development assistance and some started working with other organizations such as civil society or country governments and other donors (Hannan 2004, NWFA 2002, UNESCAP 2003).

At the country level, governments established national women’s machineries (ministry, department or office), charging them with responsibility for gender mainstreaming throughout government institutions and operations. In practice, women’s machineries played multiple roles as policy coordinating units, knowledge and support providers and advocates and catalysts (CIDA 2000). Like development organizations, they also appointed gender specialists and focal points and launched training programs for all staff. A few countries also established accountability mechanisms to assess progress.

The early and necessary steps to put structures and systems in place to begin to implement mainstreaming policies soon became the focus of gender mainstreaming. In the decade following Beijing, a great deal of energy and resources went into getting the organizational culture right. Organizations launched extensive transformation processes to restructure internal systems and procedures and to change attitudes and values, especially male bias, primarily through gender training. Some international development agencies such as Oxfam GB and NOVIB also involved their developing country partners in these efforts. Other developing country organizations such as BRAC themselves embraced these ideas and started their own programs (Dawson 2005; Rao and Kelleher 2002; NWFA 2002; Van Dueren 2001). Most organizations met significant resistance and faced a steep learning curve about what it takes to change people's attitudes and values (Dawson 2005; Sandler 2002; Van Dueren 2001). As the realization grew that they were involved in a lengthy process, some organizations extended their time schedules and intensified their efforts. Others abandoned them.

During the decade of focus on internal organizational change, a new understanding began to emerge that gender mainstreaming required organizations to first demonstrate their own commitment to gender equality goals and values and that this had to be done through significant internal organizational change. This understanding solidified into a stronger implicit assumption that internal organizational changes were a pre-condition for mainstreaming gender in operations. As Oxfam staff put it, "could we realistically expect to achieve at the programme-level what we could not achieve in our own workplace?" (Quoted in Moser and Moser 2005 from Oxfam 2003). Moser and Moser report that organizational culture was mentioned as a constraint to successful gender mainstreaming by international NGOs and their developing country partners, and by the UNDP and DFID. The end result of these understandings was an absence of focus on gender in operations and the loss of a decade of opportunity to acquire experience and learning and to show impact on development on the ground.

Recent reviews and evaluations show a huge gap between policy commitments made at Beijing and actual implementation (Hannan 2004 and Moser and Moser 2005). In fact, evaluators assert that policy commitments to gender mainstreaming "evaporated" or became "invisible" in planning and implementation (MacDonald 2003). Other assessments describe implementation as "patchy" and "embryonic." The gap is most pronounced in mainstreaming gender into operations. A review of UN agencies found that many had not even taken the first step of using gender analysis to inform policies and programs (Hannan 2004). Moser and Moser (2005) studied 14 international development agencies representing a mix of bilateral and multilateral donors, UN agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and also found that gender was not reflected in country and strategy documents. Since these documents form the basis for developing sector programs and interventions, this shortcoming at the start of the process is reflected throughout planning design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation processes. Perhaps reflecting the imbalance between internal organizational focus and programming, a DAC review found that evaluations also focused exclusively on organizational mainstreaming processes and not on results (quoted in Watkins 2004), even though the

goal of gender mainstreaming is precisely to have an impact and to show results—to demonstrate development effectiveness.

A second widespread understanding that limits gender mainstreaming is that all staff should be responsible for its success. A potentially contrary outcome of this understanding is that when mainstreaming is everyone's task, it can become nobody's responsibility. This was the experience of the Dutch government in attempting to mainstream gender throughout the policymaking process. An immediate consequence of the policy's adoption was closure of all gender equality offices at the local level – nobody assumed specific responsibility, procedures did not change and, as a result, gender equality policies totally disappeared from local government (Verloo 2001). There is a real danger that gender equality goals can be swept away by the mainstream, instead of changing it. Worse still, it can provide an easy “out” for not addressing gender in an effective and coherent manner (NWFA 2002).

Evidence from experience shows that most staff does not assume, let alone fulfill, gender mainstreaming responsibilities. In most cases, the task falls upon key individuals who are willing or appointed to take on the responsibility. Many factors are involved for this lack of commitment to assume gender mainstreaming responsibilities. Staff may be reluctant to take on additional work or they may feel they lack the knowledge and skills for it. Also, and importantly, they may lack motivation because they may not see a connection between incorporating gender considerations and their own work goals and plans (Khan 2003, NWFA 2002, UNDP 2006, UNESCAP 2003).

Along with the requirement for all staff to be responsible for gender mainstreaming comes the expectation that they should be gender aware and responsive, conversant with gender issues and knowledgeable about them. Often, they do not have this knowledge and may express the sentiment that this is a personal obstacle in addressing gender issues. Oxfam GB's country-based staff, for example, stated that their work on gender was not up to level “because they lacked training and would welcome an opportunity to obtain it.”(Zuckerman 2002a). Acknowledging the difficulty, organizations attempted to address it in various ways, the most important being via training and by the appointment of gender focal points. Neither has worked well so far.

The role of gender focal points is to act as resource persons, complementing and supplementing the work of gender specialists, thereby extending more widely the outreach of a gender unit within an organization. In many cases, however, gender focal points have not been successful. They often get marginalized. They tend not to be gender experts themselves, they are often young and inexperienced and lack clout and influence. They take on, or are assigned focal point duties in addition to their routine responsibilities, and can experience difficulty managing their competing time demands and responsibilities. Rao Gupta (2004) found this to be the case in the World Health Organization (WHO) but it is an issue that cuts across development organizations (NMFA 2002).

The experience with training has generally been less than satisfactory. Staff “pushed” to perform quickly demand training, as reflected in the quote from Oxfam GB cited above. Organizations responded by investing heavily in time and resources in all types of training such as gender sensitization, gender concepts and analysis and, much less so, specialized sector or project based training. By and large, the response to a decade of training has been dissatisfaction reflected in negative attitudes towards gender issues and continuing lack of understanding about basic concepts. Training participants claim they are unable to see the relevance of the training and that they do not acquire the skills they need to apply it to their own work. Curiously, the dissatisfaction ends up being identified as a “need” for more and better training at all levels (Moser and Moser 2005). It does not translate, as it should and as we argue below, as a need for a completely different type of technical and hands-on sector-specific and project-specific training that builds capacity to integrate gender into specific types of operational work.

A decade after Beijing, thus, gender mainstreaming is in crisis. There is a sense among some proponents that it has fallen off the agenda of international organizations and countries and, in some cases, it has been displaced by attention to the MDGs (Watkins 2004). They are, therefore, discouraged. They feel that little has been accomplished and less has changed (MacDonald 2003, NMFA 2002, UNDP 2006, World Bank 2005, Watkins 2004,). However, these conclusions may be hasty and the disillusionment premature. As this report shows, gender mainstreaming has not been pursued fully or systematically enough to support definitive conclusions about its success or failure. In most cases, the process is incomplete or not properly implemented and, in some cases, it has been abandoned midstream. Most importantly, especially in the context of multilateral and bi-lateral development organizations, the process of gender mainstreaming has stopped short of operations—of the very dimension that impacts development on the ground and can show results in terms of development effectiveness.

However, a few organizations that have been successful in mainstreaming gender into their operations offer important initial lessons for speeding up the process of gender mainstreaming where it really counts—in improving development effectiveness and the lives of people, both women and men. The next section takes a look at case study evidence on successes in gender mainstreaming in operations to determine what works and to discover commonalities that might point the way forward.

5. What Works

In determining what works in mainstreaming gender into operations, there is very limited information to draw upon because, as we have noted, this has not been so far the focus of gender mainstreaming activities. Nevertheless, the little information we have enables us to begin to draw out common factors and begin to test a new approach. The three cases presented below, and at greater length in the Annexes, are a violence prevention initiative for Latin America and the Caribbean at the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), five NGO implemented community-based poverty eradication

programs in Africa and an infrastructure development project at the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

In 1996, the IDB launched a major initiative to address violence, in response to demand from countries in Latin America and the Caribbean to address a serious and growing problem in the region. Between 1998-2004, the IDB approved loans worth \$123 million for violence prevention in Chile, Colombia, Honduras, Jamaica, and Uruguay and leveraged substantial counterpart funds for this purpose in all five countries. It mainstreamed the reduction of domestic violence against women into this broader initiative to enhance citizen security. Gender-based activities took different forms in each country and included, in Colombia, data collection on domestic violence and police training to handle cases of domestic violence; in Jamaica, training for judges and probation officers on intra-family violence; and in Honduras and Uruguay, components to prevent domestic violence and treat its victims. Buvinic (2004) identifies six key elements that contributed to success and can form the basis for replication: relevance, leadership, financing, expertise, research and innovation (see Annex 1). They are shown in Box 1.

BOX 1

**Factors Contributing to Effective Gender Mainstreaming
in a Violence Prevention Initiative at the Inter-American Development Bank**

- **Relevance:** A high priority issue for citizens because Latin America and the Caribbean is the second most violent region in the world and there was growing awareness of the victimization of women.
- **Leadership:** The IDB President launched the initiative and, importantly, assigned resources to it.
- **Grant financing:** The IDB and the Nordic Trust Fund awarded modest but critical grant funding to the initiative.
- **Availability of expertise:** The IDB tapped into local expertise in the region on domestic violence and this facilitated research and project interventions.
- **Research:** Research showed both the intrinsic and instrumental value of mainstreaming attention to domestic violence and made a sound economic case for investments to reduce it.
- **Openness to innovation:** The opportunity for mainstreaming arose in the launch of a new set of operations, citizen security lending. Gender could be mainstreamed from the start and increased the likelihood that it would be incorporated in future designs.

Source: Buvinic 2004 in UN Millennium Project 2005

The second example is of five NGO affiliates of InterAction, CARE/Niger, Catholic Relief Services (CRS)/Kenya, Heifer/Zambia, Lutheran World Relief (LWR)/Kenya, and World Vision/Ghana, each of whom systematically took measures to integrate gender into their programs (see Annex 2). In the relatively short time frame of a

year or two they were able to demonstrate both development effectiveness and reductions in poverty in the poor rural communities in which they worked (James-Sebro 2005). Three of the five organizations, CRS, World Vision and CARE were engaged in multi-sectoral work in activities such as health, HIV/AIDS, livelihood security, agriculture, micro-finance and education. LWR's focus was on improving small-holder farming, while the Heifer projects were in livestock development and farming.

All five organizations embraced aspects of InterAction's gender mainstreaming framework that is rooted in four key dimensions to promote change—political will, technical capacity, accountability and organizational culture. The framework encompasses both organizational and operational elements. The NGOs embraced both dimensions but focused on making a difference in their operations. World Vision/Ghana, for example, devoted two percent of its budget for gender mainstreaming throughout its operations. Heifer/Zambia challenged prevailing taboos by giving animals to women and training them in their upkeep and care. By changing its selection criteria, LWR in Kenya increased women's participation in agriculture training programs. Organizational change actions included increasing the number of women staff, setting up gender task forces, and reviewing personnel policies and practices in light of their impacts on women.

The outcome of these concerted efforts was significant benefits both for the African communities and the organizations themselves. The economic and social benefits to communities included greater agricultural production, better sanitation, improved health and nutrition indicators and improved primary school enrolment rates, particularly for girls. There were also significant changes in cultural attitudes toward the division of labor in the household and field. Factors contributing to these successes are shown in Box 2. Some of them mirror those contributing to success in the case of the IDB's violence prevention initiative.

BOX 2

**Factors Contributing to Effective Gender Mainstreaming in
NGO Organizations and Projects in Africa**

- **Poverty eradication linked to program quality.** This linkage was important for acceptance by project staff and the community
- **Clearly articulated gender policy** and actions plans; all organizations had gender equality in their social justice missions
- **Support from top leadership** in the organization who understood and acted upon the link between gender equality and poverty alleviation and encouraged greater participation by women internally and in project communities
- **Gender embraced in its fullest application to both sexes** not just to women or men as targets or obstacles but rather as partners; proactively hired women for senior level positions, hired young women and supported non-traditional roles for women
- **Political will** in organizational headquarters was passed on to the field by senior leadership and backed by policies and directives
- **Applied multifaceted strategies** for gender mainstreaming that came out of organizational self assessments
- **Technical capacity built** among organizational and project staff and, in some cases, beneficiaries through training and development of gender analysis tools
- **Gender technical expertise enhanced:** All organizations hired a gender specialist or gender coordinator

Source: James-Sebro 2005

In Bangladesh, the Asian Development Bank was successful in mainstreaming gender in a rural infrastructure development project (TRIDP). The project objectives were to accelerate agricultural and non-farm economic and social development in 13 districts by improving roads, bridges and culverts, tree-planting, construction of local government complexes and improvements to rural markets and construction of women's sections in them. Mainstreaming gender enabled over 2,000 women to obtain steady employment and wages for the duration of the project; increased business skills and opportunities for women in retail; enhanced women's mobility and self-confidence; and improved household living standards, nutrition and education for children (Thomas, Lateef and Sultana 2005 and Pulley, Lateef and Begum 2004). Upfront institutional dimensions that contributed to success were the ADB's adoption of a clear gender policy, operational guidelines and support from leadership. Mandating a country gender assessment helped to identify key issues and strategic possibilities for action while external pressure from donors helped to maintain momentum on mainstreaming, as did their additional financial support. In implementation, Gender Action Plans provided focus and accountability while gender experts provided on-going technical support. Other contributing factors were project and sector-specific training for project implementers and community-members and careful monitoring and fine-tuning of activities during

implementation. Key lessons learned about how a GAP contributes to project success are summarized in Box 3. Additional details can be found in Annex 3.

BOX 3

**How a Gender Action Plan Can Deliver Gender Equality Results:
Lessons from the Asian Development Bank's Loan Operations**

- **Design** that is linked to the main project components, is based on detailed gender analysis of each component and offers a strong rationale to support gender mainstreaming
- **Realistic targets** that can be achieved through step-by-step progress closely linked to project objectives
- **Step-by-step actions** spelled out to accomplish each gender-related target and flexible implementation and a learn-as-you go approach to address unanticipated constraints;
- **Structured training** opportunities for project team members and other stakeholders to promote ownership and commitment to the GAP
- **Sufficient skills and resources** developed in the project team to ensure GAP targets can be met;
- **A participatory approach** to designing the GAP to ensure all team members understand why resources are allocated to specific measures to ensure women benefit
- **Leadership and good management** from senior management in the country's executing agency country to overcome challenges and resistance during implementation
- **Consistent monitoring of indicators** suitable to assess progress across all gender activities
- **Gender expertise** of an local gender specialist to ensure country-specific sustained input and consultations with women beneficiaries and civil society networks

Source: Thomas, Lateef and Sultana 2005

These three operational case experiences have a number of features in common. They are highlighted below with a view to determining a pattern for success that can be replicated more widely by other organizations.

The adoption of a gender policy was deemed important in the case of the ADB and one of the five NGOs. The value lay in spelling out organizational commitment and as a reference point for action. However, lack of a policy in three of the five NGOs did not impede mainstreaming. Based on this evidence, it is not clear whether a gender policy is necessary to move forward. In fact, most multi-lateral and bilateral development organizations now have gender policies and some also have operational guidelines. However, the evidence does show that having a policy does not guarantee success. A mandate without backing lacks "teeth" By itself, it is not enough to ensure action or implementation. The policy mandate must be accompanied with leadership, financial support and technical expertise.

Leadership was critical for success in each case. At the organizational level, leadership from the top proved necessary to get the ball rolling. At the IDB, the President himself took the initiative to launch the violence prevention program. In the NGOs, top leaders provided the impetus for mainstreaming. Once launched, leadership was needed to keep the ball in motion. Although it was important for leaders to express will and commitment, it was even more important for them to demonstrate it by allocating resources. The IDB President backed up his commitment to violence prevention and the gendered elements of it by allocating resources. The case of the ADB showed that leadership was also important at the operational level—the project director’s support, openness to learning and personal attention proved invaluable to successfully mainstream gender.

In all cases, mainstreaming worked best when its relevance was clear. The relevance and civic support for the violence prevention initiative in Latin America and the Caribbean derived from the fact that the region is the second most violent in the world, with rates increasing since the mid-1980s and high rates of violence against women. Awareness of the need to mitigate violence, especially against women was growing and violence reduction was an important priority for people. Related to relevance is the crucial issue of making the links with gender through research and analysis, whether in violence prevention or poverty reduction or any other issue. Research at the IDB made the case that violence was mostly a learned behavior and that one of the earliest opportunities for learning violence was in the home. Therefore, domestic violence deserved attention in its own right and as a key to preventing the intergenerational transmission of violence. Additional studies of the costs of violence made the case for the value of investing in prevention. At the ADB, gender analysis revealed how women and men used infrastructure in different ways and where the potential opportunities lay for engaging low-income women and changing their life options. Assessing and documenting project implementation and results made an important contribution to filling the prevailing gaps in knowledge about “how to” mainstream gender into operations.

Also related to relevance are the extent to which mainstreaming contributes to program quality and development effectiveness. In Africa, James-Sebro (2005) found that mainstreaming was most successful when it was “directly linked to program quality and, specifically, to the eradication of poverty.” The linkages between gender and poverty were especially compelling to the intervention communities and local staff, and facilitated adoption of gender-based goals and activities.

The technical skills of gender experts were employed in all cases and proved invaluable. Each of the NGOs in Africa hired a gender expert to function as an internal resource. The local gender expert in the ADB’s Bangladesh resident mission played a critical role in the initial process of mainstreaming. Later, with additional support from IFAD, the project hired a dedicated gender specialist (Thomas, Lateef and Sultana 2005). In fact, the ADB regards the hiring of local gender experts at resident missions as being the main drivers for gender mainstreaming in country projects (S. Lateef personal

communication). In another context, Zuckerman (2002a, 2002b) suggests that the relative success in integrating gender concerns into Rwanda's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, as compared with other countries that did not, was mainly due to the use of a gender expert.

Another critical role for gender experts during implementation is to provide "technical assistance" to implementing staff. In Bangladesh, the gender expert played a vital role in monitoring project implementation and in recommending mid-course corrections. Expertise was also used to determine the kind of information and skills project staff needed to implement gender-specific activities. In this case, the ADB offered extensive and specialized training tailored to meeting mainstreaming goals in the project context. The training generated its own momentum and, in the end, proved most effective when it triggered peer-to-peer exchange (T. Pulley personal communications). In other cases, specialized training may be needed on related issues as, for example, in addressing religious concerns about potential changes in gender roles and relations. CARE/Niger, for example, found that it had to involve local religious leaders in order to address gender concerns in its programs (James-Sebro 2005). Training appears to be most valuable when it is context specific and tailored to operational goals.

Finally, the need for accountability is widely mentioned in the literature (Hannan 2004, NMFA 2002 and World Bank 2005). Accountability features as one of the four key steps needed for mainstreaming in InterAction's framework and James-Sebro's (2005) assessment identifies lack of accountability mechanisms as a shortcoming of the NGO programs. In the ADB context, accountability was systematically integrated into project implementation via the Gender Action Plan that included a monitoring and evaluation framework. The latter was effectively used to keep on track and to determine results and impact. At the organizational level, at the ADB, mainstreaming was greatly helped by a subtle but powerful accountability mechanism—Board member attention and queries about gender on loan projects and Country Strategies and Programs.

Logically, accountability would appear to be necessary. Its value in facilitating project level implementation and demonstrating results is very clear. It is, however, impeded by a lack of attention to broader (non-gender) project outcomes and impacts in many organizations. Evaluation of gender results, more specifically, is constrained by the on-going shortage of gender-disaggregated data and, perhaps, also by the lack of agreed upon gender equality indicators. The role of accountability at the highest organizational level is also clear; it is one of the elements that gives a policy mandate "teeth." More broadly, this analysis suggests that accountability for gender mainstreaming may not need to be as diffuse as generally believed. Rather, the need may be concentrated at the very top and at the level of implementation. This makes the task of designing accountability mechanisms more manageable. It also suggests that such mechanisms should be strategic and carefully targeted. Finally, it argues for doing a better job at building accountability into project operations because this can enhance overall effectiveness.

Because this discussion focuses on operations, it abstracts somewhat from one broader critical dimension that must underlie development activities, namely, country

cooperation. Razavi and Miller (1995) found that the work of mainstreaming was much harder when a country had not bought into the process. However, in countries such as South Africa, Cambodia and Rwanda that have demonstrated commitment to gender equality by writing it into the constitutions and by making legal and other reforms, mainstreaming is accepted (UN Millennium Project 2005). In these countries, it may be relatively easy to collaborate and build on local support. Interestingly, the countries adopted gender equality and mainstreaming goals in the context of civil strife, genocide (Rwanda) and rapid changes. These conditions may have created an atmosphere of openness favorable to the new perspectives and creativity required for mainstreaming gender. But these examples should not be taken to mean that equality and mainstreaming cannot be pursued under more ordinary circumstances. It is quite possible through information, education and advocacy to build awareness and demand. Civil society groups can often serve as helpful partners in this process and so can women's groups, especially those that are already involved in raising gender and development awareness. They may also contribute to raising demand for better development and for holding institutions accountable for progress. In the 1990s, the ADB worked fairly successfully with governments and civil society organizations in a number of Asian countries to further awareness on the role of gender in development (ADB 1999). These activities, in some cases, paved the way for later mainstreaming.

Besides building country support and ownership for mainstreaming and development, nurturing women's and civil society groups and movements and soliciting their participation are intrinsically valuable exercises as they enable women and men to build capacity and confidence in democratic processes. In the case of women, specifically, they provide opportunities for making them visible and begin to change cultural perceptions about women's roles and place in society.

6. An Alternate Approach

Refocusing gender mainstreaming on operations, based on the experiences cited above, requires adopting a quite different approach from the one employed so far. It means questioning some of the common understandings described in Section 4. It requires new perspectives and the generation of new information and knowledge. Perhaps a more difficult task, it also requires new and different ways of looking at and employing current methodologies for the purpose of improving operations. We attempt below to describe what an alternate approach supportive of mainstreaming in development operations would look like.

The alternate approach is grounded in the fundamental ideas that:

- Gender mainstreaming in operations is possible and very necessary, and under certain circumstances, it can occur fairly rapidly.
- It is important to get results on the ground because such success is motivating, and helps to lower organizational resistance.

- Success based on demonstrable results contributes to learning and serves as a model for replication.
- All the organizational pieces do not have to be in place for gender mainstreaming at the operational level to succeed. It is possible to get results by adopting a pragmatic approach that responds to strategic operational opportunities.
- Once an opportunity for gender mainstreaming in operations has been identified, it is important to have a systematic and sustained approach, to allocate sufficient financial resources, employ gender expertise and show results.
- An instrumental approach that focuses on operations can yield intrinsic benefits for women.

The alternate approach based on the above principles is driven by the need to improve development effectiveness. It is entrepreneurial, results-oriented and has impact. It delivers concrete benefits to women and low-income communities. It offers the opportunity to model success that can be replicated and can build momentum.

Our explanation of the alternate approach begins by clarifying the embeddedness of means and goals in understanding the term “gender mainstreaming.” It requires more carefully separating them out. This means viewing gender mainstreaming as **a process**. It also means not expecting the process to instantly deliver the bigger institutional changes in norms and values—those needed to change people’s “hearts and minds.” Rather, it is important to focus on what can be accomplished in practical terms, especially in meeting the immediate and urgent needs of low-income people and improving their lives. The gradual accretion of such changes over time is much more likely to result in the bigger goals of cultural and social change, and empowerment and equality. By contrast, failing to attempt the practical changes by neglecting operational opportunities is not likely to do so.

Therefore, contrary to the dictum that a gender perspective needs to be incorporated into all policies and programs, the alternate approach requires being very **strategic** at all stages of the development process. Initially, it requires being strategic in selecting the development issue on which to work. It requires identifying and acting on strategic opportunities that are likely to yield tangible results to people “on the ground.” It implies working on high priority development issues, such as poverty reduction or violence prevention. A significant advantage of this approach is that the issue already has **relevance**. It does not have to be proved. It requires less effort “to convince” non-believers of its importance. Another advantage of a strategic approach of this type is that it helps order priorities for gender-based input and intervention all along the development process or operation in order to achieve the broader development goals.

However, it may still require and, often does, demonstrating the gender linkage. This can be done through **research and analysis**. To the extent that research can demonstrate the costs of not investing in gender or the value added of doing so, the case is strengthened. These are tasks for gender specialists.

Once the issue has been selected, **gender expertise** is needed to lay out a course of action. Once again, it is not necessary to do “everything” or to act on all levels. Nor is it necessary for everyone involved in the project to have gender-based knowledge and skills, just as it is not necessary for sector-specific technical experts to be knowledgeable about each others’ expertise. However, it is helpful for gender experts also to have specialized sector or issue based knowledge. Such sector-specific expertise can help the gender expert gain credibility with sector specialists and determine a strategic and practical course of action or set of actions that are likely to yield the desired results. Succeeding also requires selecting the appropriate levels on which to act, not necessarily acting “on all levels.” Thus, it may be necessary and possible to obtain the support and increase the understanding of the project director or task manager to mainstream gender but not as necessary at other levels. The important point is that who is to be influenced and what tasks have to be accomplished for successful mainstreaming will have to be empirical and context-specific. This greatly, and helpfully, narrows down the tasks.

Once a course of action has been determined in line with the broader operational goals, gender expertise is needed to provide **hands-on “technical assistance”** on the “how to” of mainstreaming to project staff. Gender experts are also needed to design monitoring and evaluation systems and to document outcomes. Monitoring is important for ensuring mainstreaming and project implementation is on track and for “trouble-shooting” and, if it is not, offering solutions for mid-course corrections. Following project completion, gender expertise is needed for documenting results, effectiveness and strategy. This type of documentation is vital for filling the current gap in knowledge gender mainstreaming in operations. It is also important for building a body of knowledge in this area.

Contrary to popular belief that additional resources are not needed for gender mainstreaming, the allocation of appropriate **financial resources** is actually critical for success. Like any other project component, financing is needed to ensure that the necessary technical “back-stopping” described above occurs. More importantly, financing is needed to ensure that resources are available to fund activities and components deemed vital for the success of mainstreaming. For example, to ensure that women have the opportunity to obtain training on an agricultural extension project may require holding additional sessions. The need may arise because of a cultural taboo against women participating in coeducational sessions or to accommodate the time constraints posed by women’s household duties. In any case, financial resources would be needed to add sessions. Financial resources are also needed to ensure that the required gender expertise is available. As gender mainstreaming becomes more successful in an organization and shows results, the demand for gender specialists can be expected to grow, not diminish.

Accountability is vital to this approach. It is the means for determining whether or not mainstreaming has happened. It is only by examining outcomes and results and assessing them relative to expectations (and/or baseline conditions) that it will be possible to determine the extent to which gender and development goals have been met. This would require setting up a monitoring and evaluation system, preferably right at the start of a project. It would also require adopting indicators, and both process and outcome

indicators would be necessary. Process indicators can help determine whether or not project implementation, including gender goals and activities are on track and for diagnosing problems and fixing them. They are also important for assessing, if relevant, the extent of community and women's participation on the project. Outcome indicators are needed for assessing results—whether or not project goals were met and the extent to which the economic and social conditions and the well-being of target populations improved. Most important, if intended goals and improvements did not occur, or were partially achieved, accountability would require determining the causes, learning from them and fixing them.

Understanding gender outcomes, and hence, the success of gender mainstreaming on a project, would require the adoption of gender-specific indicators. For instance, in a rural poverty reduction program it would be important to know not only whether economic opportunities and incomes increased overall but also if opportunities for women improved and their incomes were higher, and that they had control over their earnings. Admittedly, in an improving economic environment, women's incomes could improve without particular attention to gender. This would be a fortunate and happy outcome. Equally, women's economic situation could also worsen even with improvements in the overall economy and this would signal a need for gender analysis to understand the reasons why and to remedy the process.

It is important to note, however, that accountability for gender mainstreaming may be difficult to implement precisely because overall project accountability mechanisms tend to be weak in many organizations. On the other hand, the need to determine accountability for mainstreaming offers one among many reasons for strengthening them. Development effectiveness overall would benefit from doing so.

Finally, in order to undertake something new like gender mainstreaming in organizations that have established ways of doing things and to garner the resources needed, requires **leadership**. Not only does the leadership have to have will and commitment, it has to be open to innovation and, importantly, willing to allocate resources and to expect results. While the support of top leadership is invaluable, leadership may be needed from other levels as well and would have to be determined contextually for each project.

The approach described here diverges from current frameworks in that it focuses mainstreaming around the particular development issue being addressed operationally. In a sense, gender mainstreaming is “driven” by the issue and the practical problems involved in solving it rather than by the need to implement a generalized process. It thus offers a way to make it meaningful to those involved in implementation while simultaneously helping to structure gender-based responses tailored to the development issue at hand. It requires picking only those actions that are likely to help bring about results—not doing everything. It also requires selecting the appropriate levels on which to act. It may, therefore, help in addressing the details needed for successful mainstreaming—the selection of implementing variables to act upon, and a way to determine the right mix, level and type of actions required to accomplish a selected

development operation, meet its goals effectively and make a difference in the lives of both women and men.

7. Moving Forward

Even with a new approach, moving forward on gender mainstreaming to achieve MDG 3 goals and targets will require a sense of urgency, renewed commitment and, most importantly, financial resources. It will require focusing on poverty reduction and economic development—issues that must be at the heart of development work in a world in which one billion people still live on less than a dollar a day (Chen and Ravallion 2004). It will require creativity and innovation in identifying problems, devising solutions and testing interventions. It will need technical gender expertise in multiple sectors, especially economic development and poverty reduction, research and analysis, project implementation and monitoring and evaluation. Regional and/or country specific technical expertise will also be needed. The strength of this technical work will depend on the availability of gender-disaggregated data, a continuing gap, although one that is beginning to be met.

Many countries have taken actions to move forward on the MDGs in a focused way as, for example, by concentrating their poverty reduction strategies on the MDGs. Meanwhile, donors have begun to coordinate their efforts especially on poverty reduction and on HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment. In the latter, for example, they have adopted the “three ones” approach of having in a country a common national strategy, a single coordinating body and one monitoring and evaluation framework. A gap still remains, however, in addressing the gender dimensions of HIV/AIDS, as it does in poverty reduction. But the fact that donors have agreed to coordinate on these important issue sets an important precedent—one that should be tapped to move forward as well on gender mainstreaming.

With renewed commitments fueling demand in countries and greater cooperation among donors, it is a good time to help countries successfully meet their obligations on the MDGs, especially MDG3. It is also an opportune moment to launch the new approach to gender mainstreaming and to enhance the focus on operations. It is a time to seek out innovations, test new ways of gender mainstreaming and have a greater impact. Doing so will require greater and strategic financial investments in innovative mainstreaming and development efforts, and in technical expertise to make them work. They pay-off will be in reducing poverty and improving the lives of low-income women and men.

8. Conclusion

This critique has argued that although gender mainstreaming is a complex and lengthy process, it can be done. Gender mainstreaming offers a vision of the future -- a vision that was articulated eloquently in the report of the UN Millennium Project, Task

Force on Education and Gender Equality, as “a world in which women and men work together as equal partners to build better lives for themselves and their families, ...where women and men share equally in the enjoyment of basic capabilities, economic assets, voice, and freedom from fear and violence ... where women and men share the care of children, the elderly, and the sick; the responsibility of paid employment, and the joys of leisure.” (UN Millennium Project 2005).

Development organizations are already attempting to implement gender mainstreaming with varying degrees of success and failure. Most importantly, such attempts have elicited useful lessons that must be used to move ahead to ensure that the next decade of gender mainstreaming is more successful. The MDGs, by setting time-bound targets, force us to expedite the process of learning and implementation to accomplish Goal 3: gender equality and the empowerment of women. All that remains is the doing.

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Annex 1

Mainstreaming attention to domestic violence in lending operations: Six Elements of Inter-American Development Bank Success

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) has mainstreamed the objective of reducing domestic violence against women in its lending operations for citizen security. Since 1998 the IDB has approved more than \$123 million in lending for the control and prevention of violence in five countries (Chile, Colombia, Honduras, Jamaica, and Uruguay). These loans have raised substantial domestic counterpart funds in all five countries to fight violence.

Some loans integrate gender concerns in most project components, for instance, making sure that indicators for gender and domestic violence are collected in national information systems on crime and violence and that the police are trained to handle domestic violence cases (Colombia); that the court system trains judges and probation officers on intra-family violence (Jamaica); or that the multi-sector models from crime prevention that are piloted on specific topics include abuse against women and children (Chile). The projects in Honduras and Uruguay include a specific component to prevent domestic violence and treat its victims. In most loans some funding goes to women's NGOs with expertise in research, advocacy, and treatment of domestic violence against women.

How did this happen, and how can it be replicated? Six elements have contributed to the IDB's success.

- **Relevance.** Latin America and the Caribbean is the second most violent region in the world (after Sub-Saharan Africa). Along with high rates of homicide, there are high rates of victimization of women and rising violence since the mid-1980s. As a result, reducing violence is a priority for citizens in the region, and there is growing awareness of violence against women, especially in the NGO sector.
- **Leadership.** Listening and responding to these citizen concerns, IDB President Enrique V. Iglesias, in a bold move for a development bank, launched work on violence reduction in 1996 and assigned resources to it. The IDB organized high-visibility seminars to catalyze interest in the region and undertook badly needed research. The region's response and interest were immediate.
- **Grant financing.** Modest but critical grant financing was made available to undertake the work (IDB and Nordic Trust Fund monies to the IDB).
- **Availability of expertise.** The IDB was able to tap into local expertise in the region on domestic violence, facilitating research and project interventions.
- **Research.** Research showed the intrinsic as well as the instrumental value of mainstreaming attention to domestic violence in lending for violence reduction operations. It made the case that violence is mostly a learned behavior and that one of the earliest opportunities for learning violence is in the home. Thus, domestic violence is

deserving of attention in its own right and as a key to preventing the transmission of violence. The research also provided a sound economic rationale for investing in domestic violence reduction operations (Morrison and Orlando in Morrison and Biehl 1999).

- Openness to innovation. A new generation of IDB operations, citizen security lending, was launched in parallel with the mainstreaming efforts to emphasize violence prevention in all Bank loans. These new designs provided a unique opportunity for mainstreaming a gender perspective from the start, increasing the likelihood that this perspective would be incorporated in future designs. This last element is perhaps the most difficult to replicate because the very nature of the mainstreaming task calls for integrating new thinking into established practice.

Source: Buvinic 2004 in UN Millennium Project 2005

Annex 2

Gender Mainstreaming in NGO Development Programs in Africa

Five NGO affiliates of InterAction that systematically adopted gender mainstreaming succeeded in the relatively short time frame of a year or two to demonstrate both development effectiveness and poverty alleviation. The organizations involved were CARE/Niger, Catholic Relief Services/Kenya, Heifer/Zambia, Lutheran World relief/Kenya, and World Vision/Ghana. All five organizations were working in poor rural communities in Africa. Three of the five organizations, CRS, World Vision and CARE were engaged in multi-sectoral work in activities such as health, HIV/AIDS, livelihood security, agriculture and micro-finance and education. LWR's focus was on improving small-holder farming while the Heifer projects were in livestock development and farming (James-Sebro 2005).

All five organizations embraced aspects of InterAction's gender mainstreaming framework that is rooted in four key dimensions of promoting change—political will, technical capacity, accountability and organizational culture. The framework encompasses both organizational and operational elements. The organizations embraced both aspects but focused on making a difference in their operations. World Vision/Ghana, for example, devoted two percent of its budget for gender mainstreaming throughout its operations. Heifer/Zambia challenged prevailing taboos by giving animals to women and training them in their upkeep and care. By changing its selection criteria, LWR in Kenya increased women's participation in agriculture training programs. Organizational change actions included increasing the number of women staff, setting up gender task forces, and reviewing personnel policies and practices in light of their impacts on women.

The outcome of these concerted efforts was significant benefits both for the African communities and the organizations themselves. The economic and social benefits to communities included greater agricultural production, better sanitation, improved health and nutrition indicators and improved primary school enrolment rates, particularly for girls. There were also significant changes in cultural attitudes toward the division of labor in the household and field. Finally, it led to greater equality between women and men, both in the communities and within the implementing organizations.

According to an assessment by James-Sebro (2005), key factors contributing to effective gender mainstreaming were:

- Gender mainstreaming was particularly successful when it was directly and clearly linked to the enhancement of program quality and to poverty eradication. Linking gender equality to poverty alleviation proved to be as important as well for acceptance in communities.
- In the most effective programs, top leadership in the organization understood and acted upon the link between gender equality and poverty alleviation encouraging greater participation by women internally and externally.

- Successful organizations embraced gender in its fullest application to both sexes not just only to women or only on men as targets or obstacles. They saw men as partners.
- Political will in the headquarters of these organizations was passed on to the field by senior leadership and backed by policies and directives. All organizations used multifaceted mainstreaming strategies that came out of organizational self- assessment and all had gender equality and mainstreaming in their social justice missions.
- These organizations also proactively hired women to senior level positions, recruited young women and supported women in non-traditional roles.
- The organizations got involved in technical capacity building through training and the development of gender analysis tools. More inclusive and gender sensitive approaches to project design, planning, implementation, and evaluation were adopted.

Factors that limited effective gender mainstreaming were:

- **Weak accountability:** Mechanisms to ensure that the staff implemented the mainstreaming strategies were weak. Budget allocations were also deemed to be inadequate.
- **Lack of ongoing training and communication** limited the degree to which gender mainstreaming totally entered organizational cultures

The assessment also found that, when successfully implemented, gender mainstreaming had significant impact on both communities and organizations. Some of the positive outcomes identified were:

- All 16 communities in which the organizations worked saw positive outcomes including economic and social benefits to households and communities such as greater agricultural production, better sanitation, improved health and nutrition indicators, and improved primary school enrolment rates particularly for girls.
- Mainstreaming led to increased gender equality between men and women in both the organizations and the communities.
- There were significant changes in cultural attitudes toward division of labor in the household and the field.

In light of these findings, the assessment identified four factors as essential for effective gender mainstreaming in the work of development NGOs:

- **Political will:** It should start at the very top of the organization. The leadership should make a public commitment to gender mainstreaming, realign their organizational mission statement accordingly and communicate this effectively to staff. Political will should be reflected in actions to change the organization's policies, procedures, and systems. Actions should include, but are not limited to, hiring a gender coordinator with extensive experience, forming a gender task force, developing a gender action plan and providing budget support to gender activities.
- **Technical capacity:** Organizations should conduct a gender audits to assess the current level of gender awareness and, based on that work, they should enhance gender expertise

of staff, produce and use gender analysis and training material. They also need to make changes in technical and project approaches.

- Organizational culture: It is important to influence/change the values and views on gender that prevail within organizations. These changes can be achieved through approaches such as ensuring gender balance on technical and administrative teams, involving men as partners not as obstacles to gender mainstreaming, and by providing public recognition of staff and community members who are positive gender role models.
- Accountability: Accountability measures should be put in place. They may include requiring gender indicators for monitoring and evaluating project processes and outcomes, ensuring that gender is integrated throughout annual plans and reports, and requiring that all field requests for funding demonstrate gender integration.

Annex 3

Case Study: Asian Development Bank

A. Gender Mainstreaming Policies and Practice

Following the adoption of a Policy on Gender and Development in 1998 the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has taken important steps to bring gender into its operations. The Policy followed an earlier action, taken in 1992, in which the ADB elevated gender concerns by adopting “improving the status of women” as one of its five strategic development goals. In 1998, following Beijing, a Gender and Development (GAD) Policy replaced “role of women in development” with mainstreaming as the key strategy to promote gender equity. The GAD Policy advocates reducing gender disparities and women’s empowerment on grounds of efficiency and equity and social justice. The policy is supplemented with Section 21 of the ADB’s Operations Manual (OM) which gives guidance for implementation. For instance, the Policy and OM require that a country gender strategy be developed and integrated in every new country strategy and program. The country strategy should be based on a country briefing paper on gender. It also requires a gender analysis to be included in the initial social assessment for every proposed loan (ADB 1999). The Human Resources Department was entrusted with responsibility for addressing organizational issues pertaining to gender mainstreaming.

The ADB’s position is that gender is a cross-cutting issue influencing all social, economic and political processes and, therefore, that it should be addressed across the board. A gender and development framework facilitates incorporation of gender considerations into all programs, projects, sector and macroeconomic work. Mainstreaming recognizes that improving women’s status requires analysis of male-female relations and the cooperation and concurrence of men. Therefore, during project preparation, “the traditional and potential roles of women and men are carefully assessed” and design features are developed “to meet their differing needs and ensure the project benefits are equitably shared.” In practical terms, to meet gender goals in its operations and like many other organizations, the ADB employs approaches that include both stand-alone women’s projects and special components targeting women in general projects. Stand-alone projects are designed to meet particular needs such as those in countries where gender segregation is very strong or because they can have an important demonstration effect and can provide lessons for future mainstreaming.

By 1999, gender mainstreaming was being routinely applied to all operations (ADB 1999). The ADB addressed gender concerns in projects across a wide variety of sectors, demonstrating the ways in which gender analysis was important to project results and how gender concerns could be integrated into various types of activities.

Range of gender-responsive projects

In Bangladesh, the Khulna-Jessore Drainage Rehabilitation Project was designed to address drainage congestion that limited production on 30,900 ha of agricultural land resulting in lower food production, incomes and employment for the local population, 75 percent of which

already lived below the poverty line. To ensure gender equitable participation and benefits, the project contracted landless women's societies for some of the construction work, recruited women into user groups designed to oversee operations and management and gave NGOs the responsibility for training women to participate effectively in them. Women were also trained in agriculture and fish production. Simultaneously, in order to ensure that the Department of Agricultural Extension, the project implementing agency, had the capacity and skills to address gender, the ADB provided training on gender issues in agriculture.

An Employment Promotion Project in Cambodia (1998) was specifically designed to address unemployment and underemployment among women, the disabled and other vulnerable groups. The problems were caused by return of large numbers of refugees from border camps, demobilization, retrenchment of civil service workers and the transition from a centrally planned to a market economy. They were more severe in rural areas and among older daughters and widows, often heads of households. The key issue was a mismatch between the unemployed who lacked skills, and prospective employers, who could not find staff to fill vacancies. The project offered training opportunities and employment related services such as career counseling, skills and entrepreneur training, credit and job placement. It also strengthened the institutional capacity of the ministries of Women's Affairs and Social Affairs and Labor and Veteran's affairs and of NGOs.

On a microfinance project in Indonesia via NGOs working through self-help groups and assisting with micro-enterprise development, at least 50 percent of clients were required to be women, especially from poor and female headed households. On a Financial Institutions Project (1997) in the Kyrgyz Republic channeling micro-finance to rural communities through credit unions, all 80 credit unions established had women members. Women were also involved in management and administration, an important consideration since credit unions are owned and controlled by members.

The ADB wove measures to mitigate violence against women into the Urban Primary Health Care Project (1997) in Bangladesh—one of the few countries in the world where life expectancy for men is higher than for women. Causes of death for women include maternity-related factors (25 percent) and nearly 29 percent due to homicides or violent accidents, some believed to include hidden homicides. Seventy-five percent of project beneficiaries are women and aid to victims of violence is an important component of the project. Health centers offered medical treatments to women violence victims, referrals for legal counseling and places of refuge. Staff was trained to carry out rape investigations. The project also included community education campaign to prevent violence and raise consciousness. To facilitate women's access to services, facilities opened at convenient hours, including evenings, weekends and holidays and were designed to offer privacy for women patients.

Recognizing the importance of building women's constituencies and enhancing their visibility, participation and skills in civil society decision-making, the ADB supports catalytic activities at local and national levels and attempts to link them to the wider global women's movement. Prior to the Beijing World Conference on Women, the ADB supported regional preparatory meetings and, in the post-Beijing period, implementation of gender mainstreaming. For instance, in 1998, it gave support for a Global Network of Women in Politics Workshop in

Manila organized by the Center for Women in Politics in Manila to enhance women's participation in politics.

Key components of the internal process to implement the GAD Policy

Internal institutional mechanisms to implement the GAD Policy included development of a bank-wide Gender Action Plan and detailed commitments by each operational department for mainstreaming gender concerns. The number of gender specialists on staff was increased from 2 to 4. A gender strategy paper was required for every new Country Strategy and program and gender issues had to be included in the initial social assessment for every proposed loan project. An External Forum on GAD was formed to gather and make available good practice information from across the Asia/Pacific region. It included gender experts from government, academia and civil society. A small-grant fund was set up to catalyze pilot initiatives of governments and NGOs and for partnerships with other development agencies.

To help staff implement the requirements, the gender specialists developed criteria both on how to develop special women's components and how to effectively mainstream gender concerns. They made available orientation and training on gender and development, to staff and to government officials and project directors of ADB-financed projects. They also developed a set of sectoral and sub-sectoral gender checklists to help with project design. These aids are readily accessible on the Bank's website, as are good practice case studies of successful mainstreaming experiences with loan projects. The site also links to country briefing papers on gender and profiles of projects with gender features. Finally, the gender specialists advocated personally for gender mainstreaming at every opportunity—at formal meetings, seminars, and personal contacts.

According to Shireen Lateef, the gender specialists essentially pursued a strategy of “demonstrating by doing” to make the ADB's work more gender responsive (NMFA 2002). When the gender specialist found that trainings and sensitization seminars were not very effective, they started working closely with staff by providing direct operational assistance to as many loan project preparation teams as possible. These activities yielded a set of good practices that were made available for wider replication. The Gender Action Plan (GAP) became the basis for guiding implementation of gender-based activities on loan projects. Details of the design and use of a GAP are provided in Section B for an infrastructure project in Bangladesh.

Staff recognized that engaging developing member countries was just as important as integrating gender concerns in internal processes for the obvious reason that projects are implemented by them. Member country engagement and capacity building, therefore, is a critical piece of the ADB's gender mainstreaming strategy.

Engaging developing member countries in gender mainstreaming

As member countries differ greatly due to culture, religion, laws, attitudes towards women, the situation of women and a host of other factors, the ADB's activities can range from basic awareness promotion on gender issues in development to carefully honed technical training for sector specialists. For instance, in Malaysia, the ADB sponsored a series of seminars to

promote awareness of women's roles in development among 80 key personnel from 10 major rural development departments, policymakers and field workers. Participants developed action plans to incorporate gender into sector development strategies and programs. Recognizing that limited gender capacity, particularly among government agencies, is an important constraint in gender mainstreaming the ADB pays particular attention to engaging officials and NGOs, involving them in planning and design and building capacity to address gender issues in project implementation (ADB 1999).

Support can begin at the level of national planning processes. For instance, in Indonesia, the ADB provided technical assistance for institutional strengthening of the State Ministry for the Role of Women in Indonesia to develop a medium-term strategic plan for women as part of the overall REPELITA VI national planning process. The plan spells out the strategic directions, functions and roles of the State Ministry for the Role of Women, action plans to implement the strategy, improvements in the gender database and development of a management information system. Often gender analysis and planning and subsequent monitoring and advocacy are constrained for lack of data. Recognizing this, the ADB made grants available to the Philippines and Fiji to develop gender-disaggregated databases. The support enabled Fiji to develop a statistical gender profile.

The ADB's support for gender mainstreaming in countries may also involve technical assistance to civil society organizations as "Building the capacity of organizations to provide an effective advocacy role in support of gender equality is fundamental to mainstreaming women into the development process" (ADB, 1999). This support also involved capacity building for planning and project implementation. In the 1990s, a regional technical assistance activity, Strengthening Women's NGOs, helped 180 NGOs improve their capacity to plan and implement projects for women and trained 500 women in organizational and project management techniques including developing action plans for their own organizations. Trainees included NGO leaders, trainers and micro-entrepreneurs in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines and Viet Nam.

Stakeholder participation is another critical point at which gender can be mainstreamed. This was done in Pakistan where a stakeholder workshop preceded preparation of the country operational strategy. A wide cross-section of interest groups, including government officials, implementing agencies, NGOs, the private sector and community groups were invited to explore major issues related to social sector strategy. A woman-headed consulting firm was assigned the task of organizing the workshop and it was charged with ensuring gender balance among participants. The consultation identified four areas of importance to them, including gender, employment and income, human resource development and community empowerment. Participants urged consideration of the role of Islam in women's lives when designing projects. The consultation was expected to result in increased gender sensitivity in all ADB-funded projects in the country and greater resource allocation to projects specifically for women under the Social Action Plan. Similar participatory workshops have been held in Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic.

Interim assessment of GAD Policy implementation

An interim report on the functioning of the GAD Policy showed that gender mainstreaming was taking hold as all Country Strategies and Programs adopted from 1998-2002 included a gender strategy, a number of loan projects had adopted comprehensive gender plans and strategies and some loan documents included specific covenants to support gender mainstreaming. The poverty reduction work, however, did not show consistent attention to gender.

One of the more successful strategies employed was to appoint local gender specialists in six resident missions. This activity started in 1999 as a three-year pilot but is still on-going and gender specialists are now associated with four more resident missions, bringing the total to ten. They were hired for their local and gender technical expertise and charged with spearheading the process of engaging local institutions and giving technical assistance and training to the implementing agencies in member countries (NMFA 2002).

Support from external donors such as the Nordic countries, the Netherlands and Canada was very important in promoting gender mainstreaming at the ADB. This is reflected in comments of Board members on loan projects, strategies, Country Strategies and Programs and in countries' negotiations with ADB for replenishment of the soft-loan window (NMFA 2002).

B. Gender Mainstreaming in Operations: The Third Rural Infrastructure Development Project (TRIDP)

The Third Rural Infrastructure Development Project (TRIDP) included gender provisions in its design, developed a GAP and systematically integrated gender in project implementation. It also monitored gender results. A review found that the project successfully met both women's practical needs for employment and income and their strategic needs by making them more confident and vocal and enabling them to participate in decision-making in project-related forums and in their communities and households. These results are particularly significant because they occurred in an infrastructure project that is typically considered "gender neutral" or as having little or no potential to go beyond indirect benefits for women. By contrast, the Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project (SESIP), although it undertook a direct intervention to enhance girls' education by including in the project a stipend for female students, missed important opportunities to address strategic gender equality issues. The project team assumed that neither a GAP nor a gender specialist was needed to work with them since the project contained a gender component (Thomas, Lateef and Sultana, 2005). Details of the successes, shortcomings and lessons learned from the TRIDP infrastructure project follow.

The objective of the TRIDP project was to accelerate agricultural, non-farm economic, and social development in 13 northern and northwestern districts of Bangladesh by improving and maintaining roads bridges and culverts, tree planting, construction of Union Council (UC) (local government) complexes, improvement of rural market centers and construction of women's sections in them. It also involved a training component for UC officials, contractors

and the Local Government Engineering Department (LEGD), the executing agency for the project.

During the original project design phase a social analysis identified targets that, if adopted, could result in benefits to poor women: (1) direct employment of 3,000 women for tree planting and care, and for a portion of the road maintenance; (2) construction of women's sections in 279 improved rural markets; and (3) construction of separate women's rooms in the Union Councils (local government buildings). A project covenant required all LEGED staff and local government bodies to cooperate with and support NGOs in encouraging women's participation in the project.

This was followed, early in the implementation phase, by the preparation of a detailed GAP to provide a systematic framework to guide implementation and achieve gender goals (Pulley, Lateef and Sultana 2004). The GAP offered step-by-step guidance in the gender-based activities and linked them to corresponding quantitative and qualitative targets against which implementers could track progress. For instance, because women were traditionally not permitted in markets, the GAP recommended training for LEGED staff to understand both ways to involve women and the reasons for doing so. For each element of the gender components, the GAP recommended stakeholder consultations, targeted training for women and all levels of project implementers, and the need to encourage women to participate actively in project-promoted committees and associations. These guidelines were closely followed throughout the implementation process.

As recommended, women were organized into labor contracting societies for the tree planting and maintenance component. In these groups, they received training in project activities, negotiating skills and motivation to bargain with private contractors for equal pay. Because private contractors typically discriminate by paying women laborers less than men and assign them the least-skilled tasks, the LEGED was required to motivate contractors in pre-bidding orientation sessions to train women so they could qualify for higher paying jobs. The department was also required to promote equal pay for equal work, and contractors were required to provide basic but separate facilities and services for female laborers like water and sanitation.

To ensure that women would indeed use the infrastructure being constructed, women members of the Union Councils (UC) were consulted about the road and bridge building plans and their ideas were incorporated into the design. They suggested building exclusive waiting rooms in the refurbished docks. The O&M committees were also to include female UC members.

A compulsory savings scheme was set up for female laborers in order to ensure that they retained control over their earnings. They thus had an opportunity to learn how to keep and manage their own accounts and savings. At the end of their 2-year contracts, they were given additional training in income-generating activities so they could put their savings to productive use. As a result, each laborer anticipated an approximate savings of Tk 7,000 at the end of the construction period. The women stated they would not otherwise have been able to accumulate such a large amount of savings and also noted this was their first use of a formal bank.

The objectives of constructing women's market sections were to create income-generating activities and employment opportunities for low-income women traders—a highly innovative component as women were traditionally barred from public spaces such as markets. Steps required to meet this objective included gender awareness training for LGED staff, discussions with all stakeholders, especially male shop-owners, regarding women's presence in the market, ongoing support to the women as they started up their businesses, business management training for female stall holders; and women's participation in traders' associations. Support from the community for this new role for women was built through information campaigns, joint planning sessions involving male community leaders, and motivating activities with female vendors, all steps included in the GAP. Some male shop owners did initially object to women being given the best shops but this hurdle was overcome through combination of convincing the men that poor women had to be offered a chance to participate in the project, and demonstrating that the idea had been accepted in other communities and had worked well.

Overall, this component was a qualified success. Less than half of the women's businesses were profitable for several reasons including lack of access to start-up capital and limited business skills and experience. But the assessment found that women's mobility and their status in the community had improved. More women were coming to the market to buy from women traders and women were participating more in community decision-making.

To encourage women to participate in local government affairs, facilitate their use of the UC complexes, and encourage the community to put a higher priority on women's development concerns, separate rooms and facilities for women were designed into the construction of the UP complexes. Female UC members were consulted about this step.

Overall, the project motivated 604 contractors on gender issues including the advancement of wage parity for women, trained 2,200 women in livelihood skills training and helped 816 women start trading operations and access credit and business skills training. By facilitating women's participation in labor contracting societies and trading, the project increased their access to steady employment over the project period, raised incomes of laborers and traders and fostered savings. Increases in income were reflected in improved nutrition for the household while participation in a visible and remunerative job enhanced women's confidence and sense of independence.

By ensuring women's participation on market committees and women's rooms in all union complexes in Bangladesh (not just on the project), the project fostered women's involvement in community decision-making—a very important step for previously destitute women. Project officials mentioned that women undertook their duties more responsibly and, therefore, that they would involve them more in future development activities. Women's mobility also increased as they participated in market activities and entered more visible public spaces—providing an impetus for other women to do the same.

Factors Contributing to Effectiveness of the Gender Action Plan

The assessment cited a mix of project-specific and institutional factors associated with the ADB as contributing to the effectiveness of the GAP. It also found that the social-political environment in Bangladesh was important for success.

Project-specific factors

Institutional support from the ADB was vital in developing a GAP and ensuring support for necessary changes in design and resources. The GAP also provided a mechanism through which the ADB and the executing agency could track results.

Linking GAP targets to the overall goal of the project was very useful in gaining support for the GAP. The GAP emphasized the importance of women's equal participation to the project's poverty reduction goals, the project team internalized this message and conveyed it repeatedly and effectively to all stakeholders. Linking the GAP elements to the overall goals avoided marginalization of the gender components.

Realistic targets: The GAP set mostly realistic targets and they were largely achieved. The women's market stalls were the exception and this was mostly because the time needed to build community support for such a challenging innovation was underestimated.

Participatory approach: The design teams undertook participatory rapid assessments (PRAs) and consulted at length with the communities to ensure that innovations and design feature would succeed within the cultural context. There were examples of women's market stalls that were not successful because the consultation in the early design stage was too rapid and incomplete.

Flexible approach to implementation of GAP: LGED, the executing agency, took a flexible approach to implementing the GAP adding or changing activities to strengthen implementation. Regular monitoring and an easy flow of communication between the ADB resident mission gender specialist, the project gender specialist, and the project director permitted mid-course corrections to overcome constraints and meet implementation goals. Support from the project director was especially important as he encouraged innovation and creativity while maintaining pressure to accomplish the social goals that were more time-consuming. A learn-as-you-go approach also helped.

Gender awareness and capacity building: The GAP built in opportunities and resources for support and skills-building in all project components. The project director's leadership and personal participation in gender capacity-building sessions were particularly useful. Training was provided to project and LGED staff as well as to partners and UP decision makers.

Adequate GAD skills and resources: Although specialized gender technical support was not built into the original design of the project, when the need was demonstrated via the GAP, the project hired a full-time gender consultant with funds obtained from IFAD. NGOs were brought in to

supplement staff capacity when it proved to be insufficient for labor and time-intensive community mobilization tasks particularly those associated with the women's marketing stalls.

Sustainability of results: As the GAP and the project systematically addressed both women's practical needs (e.g., access to employment opportunities or income-generating activities) and strategic needs (e.g., building support among community leaders and inducing institutional changes within and outside the home), project impacts are more likely to be sustained over the long term.

Monitoring: Consistent monitoring required by the GAP helped identify and overcome constraints thereby enhancing the likelihood of success. Project level monitoring was reinforced with regular visits from ADB regular review missions. Once constraints were identified, often by the gender specialist, the project undertook corrective action in a timely way.

Institutional factors

Leadership: Leadership within the project team was crucial to success. The project director encouraged innovation and testing of new ideas to solve problems as they arose. His leadership was vital. Many LGED staff at the district and local levels also provided leadership. For instance, there was a close and trusting relationship between some of the women shop holders and the LGED staff. This helped perpetuate similar relationships between UP members and other men in the community and with women beneficiaries. The GAP helped the project director to predict where leadership would be required and facilitated systematic oversight of activities.

Technical gender support: Commitment from LGED to incorporate a formal GAP, support from the ADB resident mission gender specialist and open communication between the project staff and the gender specialist provided momentum to design and implement the GAP. The gender specialist was regarded as a full team member who contributed to the overall success of the project, not just to the gender components. The ADB project team leaders played an important role in developing this supporting role for the specialist. Her reputation facilitated the acceptance of similar approaches to gender equality in other ADB projects with LGED. It also helped to internalize lessons across different sectors of LGED work.

External factors

Project implementation was facilitated by important social changes occurring in Bangladesh, especially the growing recognition that women's participation is vital for poverty reduction. Another critical factor was the introduction of quotas for elected female representatives in the UPs. The TRIDP could capitalize on women's growing involvement in community decision making to engage women as equal participants in the project. Further, project activities supported and reinforced women's growing roles in community decision making. It also took steps to reinforce the status of elected female officials by offering extra training in management and resource mobilization in their role as UP members. The project demonstrated how positive changes for women already taking place can be strengthened through careful and consistent support from development projects.