



# OED REACH

Number 32

May 10, 2001

## The Gender Dimension of Bank Assistance: An Evaluation of Results

- At the **country** level, Bank assistance has positively influenced the advancement of women only when it was based on a comprehensive diagnosis of the gender context, provided within a country-led agenda with strong country ownership, and addressed institutional weaknesses that frustrated the improved gender impact of development interventions.
- At the **sectoral** level, Bank assistance has achieved satisfactory results for women in health and education. But it has been weak in enhancing their economic participation and in improving borrowers' institutional frameworks for delivering gender-aware development programs, which has reduced the efficacy of overall Bank assistance.
- At the **project** level, outcomes are superior for women when gender considerations are integrated into design and implementation of assistance. In countries with large gender disparities, such integration is necessary for effective poverty reduction.

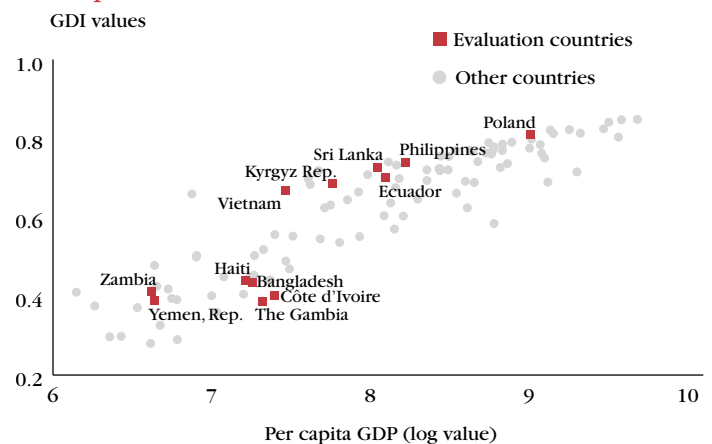
This evaluation examines the results of the Bank's Women in Development/Gender and Development policy between FY1990 and FY2000. It builds on the OED Gender Evaluation 2000—*Integrating Gender Dimensions into Bank Assistance*—and assesses results on the ground for women. It answers the following questions, based on the Bank's Operational Policy of 1994: (i) To what extent did the Bank help to reduce gender disparities in the health and education sectors? (ii) To what extent did the Bank increase the participation of women in economic activities? (iii) To what extent did the Bank influence institutional changes that support the advancement of women?

### Key Findings

The study focuses on 12 countries, all analytical work prepared during the evaluation period, and 180 projects. While the findings and lessons can only be indicative given the small sample, the countries selected provide regional and income diversity as well as varying degrees of gender disparity (see figure).

In the health and education *sectors*, Bank assistance was underpinned by rigorous analytical work, integrated well into lending operations in countries with gender disparities, and led to positive results for women. On the whole, however, the Bank has been weak in simultaneously promoting the economic partic-

Per Capita GDP and GDI for Selected Countries



ipation of women and improved institutional frameworks for gender. This has undermined the overall efficacy of Bank assistance, and has led to disappointing results at the *country* level, except in four countries: Bangladesh, Gambia, Poland, and Vietnam.

Although causality is difficult to assert, the evaluation finds several key factors that increased the development effectiveness of Bank assistance to Bangladesh and Gambia. First, country ownership and government commitment is evident, as reflected by active policies

and action plans for women and by strong and accountable counterparts. Second, the Bank provided assistance consistent with the country's own action plan. Third, there was convincing analytical work that laid a strong technical foundation for Bank operations in both countries. Fourth, the Bank adopted a holistic approach to gender issues in these countries, focusing not only on integrating women's/gender considerations into the education and health sectors, but also including interventions that would increase the participation of women in the economic sectors. Fifth, Bank assistance built the institutional capacity of development agencies to deliver gender-aware programs. In none of the other countries is Bank assistance characterized by all the above factors.

At the project level, the evaluation finds a tendency for outcomes to be superior for women when gender considerations are integrated into the design and implementation of assistance. Such integration is found to be particularly necessary in countries with large gender disparities.

### Recommendations

The previous OED Evaluation 2000 concluded that:

- The Bank's gender policy needs to be clarified.
- The responsibilities and implementation arrangements need to be strengthened.
- There was a need for systematic monitoring of policy implementation and progress on the ground.

The present evaluation reiterates these recommendations and, based on the evidence, further recommends that the Bank:

- **Strengthen borrower institutions and policies** to support the implementation of country gender policies/action plans. In countries where such policies and plans are weak, support for their strengthening (through country dialogue and nonlending services) should be a Bank priority.

### Interactions with Management and Clients

This evaluation went forward in close consultation with the Bank's Gender and Development Board, operational staff, client stakeholders, and other development partners.

- The evaluation paralleled the revision of the Bank's gender strategy. It fed into management's strategy formulation in real time and resulted in a high degree of agreement on the evaluation conclusions.
- Regional Gender Workshops were organized in four regions (Manila (12/1999), Nairobi (5/2000), Quito (10/2000), and Warsaw (1/2001)) to listen to Bank clients and to understand their perspectives on Bank assistance. Their views have been incorporated into the report.
- Field assessments were undertaken for this evaluation in Ecuador, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, and Zambia to bring the views of beneficiaries into the evaluation.

- **Integrate gender considerations into Country Assistance Strategies.** Based on a comprehensive diagnosis, the CAS should explain how Bank assistance will take into account the linkages between poverty and gender and how it will be related to the borrower's policy framework for gender.
- **Integrate gender into the design of Bank-supported projects.** Gender analysis should be integrated into the economic and social analysis carried out in the design of Bank-supported projects so that both men and women are able to access the benefits equitably, especially in countries with high gender disparities.

