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FAST TRACK BRIEF

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The IEG report "Gender and Development: An Evaluation of World Bank Support, 2002-08," was discussed by CODE on October 28, 2009

Gender and Development: An Evaluation of World Bank Support, 2002–08

- **The World Bank's current gender policy resulted directly from the 2001 Gender Strategy endorsed by the Board. Subsequently, instructions to staff were reflected in a revised Operational Policy (OP) and Bank Procedure (BP) 4.20. Together, they aim to help client countries reduce poverty and enhance human well-being by addressing gender disparities that are barriers to development. The policy embodies a country-level approach that requires the Bank to prepare Country Gender Assessments (CGAs) for all active borrowers and to integrate CGA findings into Country Assistance Strategies (CASs). Each CAS is then required to specify operational sectors where the Bank is to integrate gender concerns into its funding support for the country in question.**
- **This evaluation which covers the period fiscal 2002-08, finds that the Bank made progress in gender integration compared with an earlier IEG evaluation on gender covering the period fiscal 1990-99. Gender integration into Bank support increased both in quantity and in scope, and more than half of relevant projects integrated gender concerns. With regard to outcomes, detailed reviews were undertaken in 12 focus countries, and the evaluation finds that Bank support likely contributed to increased gender equality in three domains—investment in human capital, access to economic assets and opportunities, and voice in development—substantially in 4 of the 12 countries, modestly in another 6, and weakly in 2. At the project level, 42 percent of relevant projects in the 12 focus countries generated substantial outcomes that contributed to progress in one or more of these domains.**
- **Two sets of issues qualify these generally encouraging signs of progress. First, the evaluation finds that the implementation of the Bank's gender policy, initially strong, weakened in the latter half of the evaluation period. Insufficient steps to implement an accountability framework and to set up a monitoring system—both of which had been envisaged in the 2001 Strategy—were likely contributing factors. Second, two key lacunae in the Bank's current gender policy diminish its relevance. These are the absence of a results framework in the 2001 Strategy and the replacement of what was previously a more generalized gender mainstreaming approach at the operational level with the more selective country-level one. The 2007 Gender Action Plan (GAP) broadened the focus somewhat to include certain key sectors that are typically the focus of Bank support. However, IEG is of the view that the absence of strong linkages between the GAP and the 2001 Strategy blurred the Bank's overall policy.**
- **The evaluation recommends several actions to regain and sustain the momentum of gender integration that was evident in the first half of the evaluation period. These include redoubling efforts to institutionalize the accountability framework and develop the monitoring system envisioned in the 2001 Gender Strategy, establishing a results framework, and restoring a broader requirement for gender integration at the project level.**

The Bank and Gender

In 1977, the Bank was the first multilateral institution to appoint a *Women in Development Advisor*. In 1984, the Bank issued an Operational Manual Statement (OMS) 2.20 that called for Bank staff to consider women's issues as part of the social analysis undertaken during the appraisal of an investment project, and to assess and address through project design any disadvantageous effects on women. A decade later, in 1994, the Bank issued Operational Policy (OP) 4.20 on Gender and Development based on a 1994 strategy paper. Taken together, the OP and the strategy gave gender a central place in the Bank's country-level development model. Through this gender policy, the Bank aimed to address the policy and institutional underpinnings of gender disparities that con-strained development effectiveness within a client country. The policy rightly underscored the importance of country ownership and commitment for Bank support to be effective in helping to re-duce gender disparities. Two points of entry—one through the CAS and the other through project appraisal—provided the means to integrate gender considerations into Bank support for the next several years.

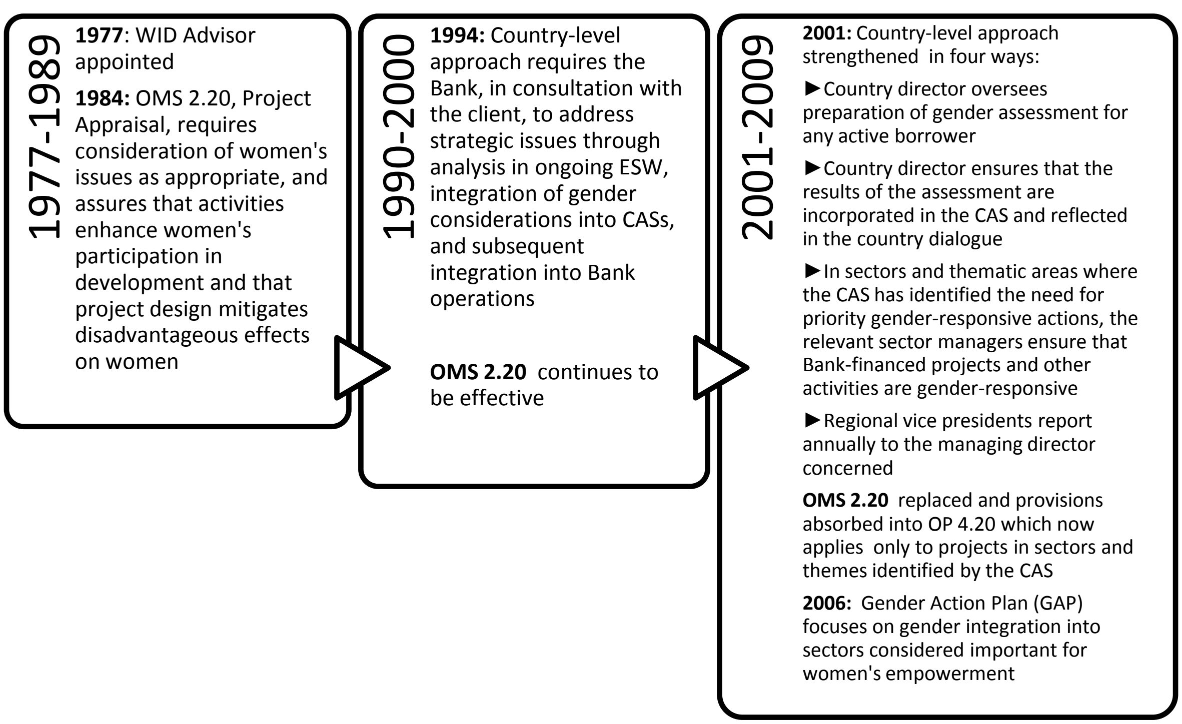
In April 2001, the Bank strengthened the country-level approach through a gender strategy paper discussed at the Board (*Integrating Gender into the World Bank's Work: A Strategy for Action*). The 2001 Strategy reiterated the Bank's aim to help countries reduce poverty, enhance human well-being, and increase development effectiveness by addressing gender disparities that are barriers to development. It introduced the use of a new diagnostic tool—the Country Gender Assessment. The Strategy promised that a CGA for every active borrower would be completed by fiscal 2005. CGAs were expected to inform CASs, which were to include, as relevant, gender-responsive interventions. In sectors and themes that the CAS identified as priorities for gender, sector managers and task teams were to ensure that gender considerations received appropriate treatment in operations.

As regards interpretation of the Bank's gender policy, Management holds it that the 2001 Strategy and the subsequent OP/BP 4.20 replaced the provisions of OMS 2.20, Project Appraisal (1984), by absorbing them into the OP/BP process. Under OP/BP 4.20, the entry point for addressing gender issues during project appraisal thus applied only to projects in sectors and themes identified by CASs to be of priority for gender.

In addition to the above, four specific policies (OP 4.10 on Involuntary Resettlement, OP 4.12 on Indigenous Peoples, BP 4.30 on Forests, and OP 2.30 on Development Cooperation and Conflict) also require consideration of issues related to women, namely as part of vulnerable groups. These policies continue to maintain a project-level entry point.

While the updated OP 8.60 on Development Policy Operations (DPOs), approved in August 2004, does not explicitly require that DPOs address gender dimensions of development, OP 8.60 re-quires that all DPOs examine the poverty and social impacts of the reform programs

Figure 1. Evolution of the Bank's Approach to Gender – 1997-2009



supported by the operation. A Good Practice Note (GPN) encourages the integration of gender into such impact analysis. In 2007, the Bank launched a four-year Gender Action Plan (GAP), *Gender Equality as Smart Economics*, which it implemented beginning in January 2007. The evaluation finds that the GAP returned to the sector-specific and project-level approach of the earlier OMS 2.20, emphasizing integration of gender into operations and activities in predetermined economic sectors of importance for women's economic empowerment.

Scope of the Evaluation

This evaluation seeks to assess the effectiveness of the Bank's gender policy between fiscal years 2002 and 2008. To gauge the extent to which the Bank actually implemented its policy while keeping country coverage manageable, the evaluation selected all client countries that had a population of more than 1 million and implemented at least two Bank-supported investment projects during the period fiscal 2002–08. This yielded a sample of 93 countries in which the evaluation looked at investment projects worth $88 billion (1,183 projects, constituting 90 percent of all in-vestment loans made during the period). Separately, the evaluation reviewed gender integration in 307 DPOs approved during the period. In addition, the evaluation reviewed all 48 available CGAs, 74 Poverty Assessments, and 140 CASs prepared for the 93 countries over the period.

In order to assess the outcomes of Bank support, the evaluation used in-depth country case studies. The evaluation examined Bank support in 12 countries randomly selected from a stratified weighted sample of the 93 countries. In these 12 countries, the evaluation reviewed the results of all lending activities that closed after fiscal 2003. Additionally, at the request of World Bank Board members, the evaluation team undertook a review of Bank support for gender in Afghanistan. With respect to the GAP, the evaluation was limited to assessing its objective and design, as it is too soon to assess results even on a preliminary basis. Finally, the evaluation did not focus on International Finance Corporation (IFC) activities, given IEG-IFC's proposed evaluation of IFC support for gender in the near future.

Appropriateness of the Gender Policy

The objectives of the Bank's gender policy are directly relevant to the Bank's mandate of poverty reduction and economic development. The policy is sufficiently flexible such that the Bank was able to respond to country-specific settings, issues, and priorities: for instance, to mitigate local sensitivities, the Bank was able to adapt and "package" its support for gender in the Republic of Yemen using a social inclusion approach while retaining a direct gender equality approach in the Philippines. However, the absence of an explicit results framework translating Bank support for gender into specific gender-related outcomes diminished the policy's relevance.

The evaluation found another factor that also tended to diminish the relevance of the Bank's gender policy, namely the narrowing of the entry point for gender integration at project appraisal to specific priority sectors indicated in CASs. To illustrate, if only the health and education sectors were identified in CASs as being of strategic importance for gender in a given client country (Pakistan 2006, Bolivia 2004), under OP 4.20, Bank staff responsibilities to address gender considerations would be limited to activities in these sectors. An agricultural or a municipal services project in either country that did not integrate gender considerations, even if it were highly beneficial to do so in these specific cases, would nevertheless be fully consistent with OP 4.20.

In addressing strategic country-level issues, the evaluation found that the relevance of the OP/BP 4.20 was (and remains) high. Where the Bank had addressed institutional and policy reform (for ex-ample Bangladesh, Benin, and Ghana), the evaluation found that client demand was critical for successful implementation. However, an important distinction arises between support for such policy and institutional reform and support that aims directly at increasing the access of the poor to human development, social, and economic services and resources. With the latter form of support, owing to the different gender-related roles and responsibilities, the evaluation found that men and women often did not have equal or fair access to project benefits unless project design expressly took steps to mitigate the impact of local gender practices that inhibited such access in the first place.

Such an obligation (that is, to ensure gender-responsive project design) cannot be made contingent on client demand or only in sectors and themes identified in CASs,—it is a matter of relevance, of efficiency, and of efficacy, and thus a matter of development effectiveness (see box, below). This was the spirit underlying the provisions of OMS 2.20. Furthermore, given the evaluation's finding that CASs did not systematically identify priority sectors for gender integration, and that the links between CASs and operations are difficult to monitor, the distinction between country-level or "strategic" policy and institutional reform and project-level design features becomes critical. The failure to make this distinction and the resulting identical treatment of the two types of Bank interventions under OP/BP 4.20 diminished the relevance of the gender policy.

Addressing Gender Issues is a Matter of Development Effectiveness

Through conditional cash transfers and student bursaries, Bank support contributed to increased enrollment of girls in schools and reduction of gender disparity. Supporting microfinance institutions to provide credit to women in a culturally appropriate manner helped to improve their decision-making powers within households. Focused attention on ensuring that women benefited from temporary work generated by Bank-supported construction created new opportunities for women and reportedly ensured equal wages for equal work. Support for enhancing women's voice at the community levels helped to give women legitimacy in participating in public activities in several countries. Supporting the engagement of women as decision makers in designing activities for a rural road project resulted in the construction of footpaths, which women prefer because they are the easiest and safest way to take their animals to pasture and to collect firewood and water.

In contrast, Bank support has not been equally effective in fostering retention of boys in schools in countries where this is an emerging issue. Similarly, providing training of trainers for extension services predominantly to men, in a context where women overwhelmingly ran family farms and were limited by local norms from attending meetings, diminished project efficacy and reduced development effectiveness. Weak support for gender-aware reform of the agricultural sector could have exacerbated inequities for women who constitute a significant group of the informal labor in many countries. Failure to integrate gender into Bank support for local governments reduced development effectiveness and resulted in missed opportunities to ensure gender-aware development at the local level, where the risks of elite male capture are typically high. Finally, individual women's needs differ depending on their responsibilities and roles. Consultation only with wives of community leaders resulted in provision of insufficient water at inconvenient times to women from poorer households.

Starting with its establishment in 2007, in recognition of shortfalls in gender integration at the operational level in selected sectors, the GAP encouraged gender mainstreaming by providing staff with incentives to integrate gender into predetermined sectors and activities. While these steps augmented relevance (and in that respect made the GAP a positive force for change), the introduction of the GAP without appropriate policy foundations, including the requisite backward links to CGAs and CASs as required in OP 4.20, had the effect of blurring the Bank's overall gender policy.

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Implementation of the Bank's Gender Policy

The quality, scope, and extent of gender integration into Bank support improved significantly in the evaluation period covered in this report com-pared with an earlier IEG evaluation covering the period fiscal 1990-99. While the previous evaluation had found weak integration into sectors other than those related to human development, this evaluation found significant expansion in integrating gender into thematic areas such as microfinance, land management and administration, and justice reform.

Overall, higher levels of gender integration occurred in Regions with lower levels of gender equality and/or greater gender-related constraints to poverty reduction. The South Asia Region posted the highest levels of gender integration, and the Europe and Central Asia Region the lowest. The prevalence of gender mainstreaming in fragile states and in International Development Association (IDA) countries was also higher than in International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) countries—*a priori* a desirable pattern.

The Bank implemented its gender policy well during the first few years of the evaluation period. Many CGAs were undertaken and subsequent CASs were more likely than previously to discuss gender issues, propose a program of action, and include at least one gender-relevant monitoring indicator. Gender integration into relevant projects increased, peaking at 64 percent in fiscal 2003.

This promising start notwithstanding, implementation weakened subsequently. Between fiscal 2006 and 2008, only nine additional CGAs were undertaken or updated, even though the 2001 Gender Strategy had called for completion of CGAs (either as self-standing documents or otherwise) in all active borrowers by fiscal 2005. While CASs increasingly discussed gender issues, particularly in relation to Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the evaluation found a decline in the frequency of meaningful gender integration into CASs. One key weakness was that CASs often did not specify priority sectors or themes for the integration of gender concerns, weakening the link between CASs and operations. The lack of effective monitoring of the country-level approach further weakened the implementation of OP 4.20. With respect to gender integration at the project level, the evaluation found that this declined between 2006 and 2008, after improving early in the evaluation period and peaking in 2003, when measured by four criteria that IEG used, although it rose (recovering to approximately the 2003 level) if measured by one of these four of these criteria, which Bank management uses.

Despite the lack of explicit coverage of gender issues in OP 8.60, the evaluation found increased discussion of gender issues in DPO Program Documents as compared with fiscal 1990-99, the period covered by the previous IEG evaluation. It also found at least one gender-related measure or action in 53 (about 17 percent) of the 307 DPOs approved for the 93 countries during the evaluation period. Most gender-related analysis, actions, and monitoring efforts remained focused on health, education, and safety nets, and gender integration outside these areas remained limited. Nevertheless, this trend represents progress that needs to be recognized, tracked, and built upon.

Finally, the evaluation finds that the introduction of the GAP in 2007, issues of fit with the Bank's gender policy as currently configured notwithstanding, laid the groundwork for revitalizing the gender integration agenda by providing fiscal incentives for addressing gender in Bank-supported operations and analytical work.

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Institutional Arrangements and Incentives

A review of policy coherence and institutional arrangements relating to the Bank's gender policy points to several factors that may underlie the drop-off in implementing OP 4.20 in the latter half of the evaluation period. In particular, the Bank did not put in place important corporate-level institutional arrangements identified by the 2001 Strategy as necessary to underpin the shift to the country-level approach. Targeted funding to pursue gender concerns was fully available only in fiscal 2002, and not again until fiscal 2007 and 2008, after the Bank had put the GAP in place.

The 2001 Strategy promised that "an effective system of monitoring and evaluation" would be in place by fiscal 2002 to monitor the implementation of the country-level approach. This evaluation finds that the Bank did not fully implement such a system. In addition, the Bank had planned annual monitoring reports, but it presented only three such reports to the Board before fiscal 2006. Subsequently, the Bank subsumed monitoring of support for gender under the Sector Strategy Implementation Updates, although the Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Network (PREM) Gender Group has continued to prepare annual progress reports—focusing *inter alia* on implementation of the GAP—for presentation to the Board. In addition, in fiscal 2008 the Bank's President required country directors to report on what they were (and could be) doing to enhance women's economic empowerment.

Results of Bank Support in 12 Focus Countries

IEG reviewed a portfolio of 164 Bank-supported projects and DPOs in 12 focus countries. All of these projects and DPOs closed after fiscal 2003 and before fiscal 2009, and all had an Implementation Completion Report (ICR) available. The evaluation selected Bank programs in these countries for in-depth gender-related review, focusing notably on how Bank support contributed to reducing gender disparities in three domains: in-vestment in human capital, access to economic assets and opportunities, and voice in development planning and implementation. For each domain, the evaluation identified goals and objectives (from the CAS or other relevant documents). Where there was little evidence in ICRs, CAS Completion Reports (CASCRs), or other relevant documents, and where the evaluation team had not conducted a field assessment, the evaluation rated the results as modest. It used a common set of indicators identified in chapter 6 of the report.

A *prima facie* review indicated that 138 of the 164 projects and programs could plausibly have influenced outcomes related to gender equality or women's empowerment in at least one of the three domains. Many of the 138 relevant initiatives were innovative and successful—42 percent of the projects generated substantial relevant results in terms of gender outcomes. Of the 12 countries, substantial results were achieved in four countries in at least two domains and Bank support was judged sufficient to have plausibly contributed to systemic changes in gender outcomes. In another six countries, the Bank's contribution was modest, with results confined to one domain (or even to one sector) and unable to improve the environment for gender equality or women's empowerment significantly. The results were insufficient to address gender power relations, gender-based division of labor, local decision-making processes, or the management of resources. In the other two countries, results were weak and limited to a single domain; hence the Bank's contribution to progress in gender equality was judged to be low.

Findings and Recommendations

The evaluation found that the objectives of the Bank's gender policy were relevant and that the Bank's support for gender over the evaluation period as a whole was stronger compared with the 1990s, the period covered by IEG's previous gender evaluation. There is also some evidence that the Bank shifted its focus toward countries with higher levels of gender disparity. Outcomes were significant—42 percent of relevant projects in 12 countries that were analyzed in depth achieved substantial results. Bank support was more successful in countries where demand for gender work by the client was greater, such as Ghana and Bangladesh.

However, the evaluation found that while the implementation of the country-level approach envisaged in the 2001 Gender Strategy and reflected in OP/BP 4.20 began well, it weakened markedly after fiscal 2005, both at the country and project levels. This decline in gender integration suggests a need to regain the momentum evident in the first half of the evaluation period. The 2007 GAP helped to reinvigorate the agenda, but any such initiative needs to be sustainably institutionalized and set within a policy framework covering the project level, with a clear overall results framework.

To be effective, the evaluation found that gender integration needs to address strategic issues (institutional and policy reform) that would help to facilitate and sustain gender and development outcomes on the ground. By their nature, strategic issues need to be addressed selectively and opportunistically, for such support can be effective only with client commitment and ownership. At the operational level, ensuring a gender responsive project design, when appropriate, is necessary for development effectiveness. Owing to the different roles and responsibilities of men and women, the evaluation found that in roughly 75 percent of Bank operations, women (and, in some untypical cases, men) will participate less and benefit relatively less from project activities if the design does not mitigate such impact. The GAP is attempting to compensate for this and its policy base should be strengthened and formalized, either through revision of OP 4.20 or through restoration of broader gender-related provisions along the lines of OMS 2.20.

In order to strengthen accountability, it is important to formulate a results framework to underpin the gender policy. This would help in targeting a coherent and mutually reinforcing set of outcomes to support the gender and development goals of Bank clients. Additionally, a well-functioning monitoring system to assess implementation of gender-related results at the operational and country level, as envisaged in the 2001 Gender Strategy, is essential. In addition, accountability for policy implementation needs strengthening through provision of resources and training for all Bank managers.

Finally, the Bank needs to use the significant flexibility provided by its gender policy in tailoring its support to different contexts. In countries with higher levels of gender parity (such as Colombia or the Philippines), it may be sufficient to focus on gender issues in a single sector. However, in countries with higher levels of gender inequality, there is a need to mainstream gender issues within and across different sectors in a mutually reinforcing manner if desired outcomes are to be achieved. In these countries, it is also critical to strengthen Bank support for gender-aware institutional reform, particularly at the sub-national and local government levels, and to reinforce the demand for reduced gender disparities through appropriate incentives.

In order to ensure a better understanding of the gender policy and to ensure its effective implementation in a manner that will contribute to reducing gender disparities and empowering women in the Bank's client countries, the evaluation calls attention to several measures:

- Foster greater clarity and better implementation of the Bank's Gender Policy, notably by:
    - Establishing a results framework to facilitate consistent adoption of an outcome approach to gender integration in the Bank's work.
    - Establishing and implementing a realistic action plan for completing or updating country-level diagnostics, giving primacy to countries with higher levels of gender inequality.
    - Extending implementation of the 2007 GAP while formalizing and strengthening its policy basis. An alternative would be to reinstate and strengthen provisions along the lines of OMS 2.20 in order to restore a sector- and/or project-level entry point for gender.

- Establish clear management accountability for the development and implementation of a system to monitor the extent to which Bank work adequately addresses gender-related concerns, including effective reporting mechanisms. The pivotal role of country directors needs to feature centrally in the accountability framework.

- Strengthen the incentives for effective gender-related actions in client countries by continuing to provide incentive funding through the GAP to strengthen the collection, analysis, and dissemination of sex-disaggregated, gender-relevant data and statistics.

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