

EAST ASIA & PACIFIC REGION

VIEWS OF EAST ASIAN STAKEHOLDERS ON BANK ASSISTANCE AND GENDER CONSIDERATIONS

1.1 The East Asia workshop was the first of the four gender workshops and was organized in Manila, Philippines in December 1999. The National Commission for the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW), the Bank's partner in organizing this workshop was the host agency. The organization of this workshop was quite unlike that of its successors; one out of the two days focused on general issues of relevance to the countries within the region. The second day dealt with gender issues in the Philippines. Two reasons prompted this structure: one, the Philippines was one of the 12 countries selected for OED's results based evaluation, and two, the country's experience with gender mainstreaming had been acknowledged by the UN partners as having generated some positive outcomes for gender mainstreaming. It was felt that the Bank and other stakeholders could learn from a focused discussion of their experience with gender issues.¹

WHAT WERE THE PRIORITY GENDER ISSUES IN THE REGION?

1.2 Participants felt that progress had been made in the area of gender in East Asia and that women's concerns had been integrated successfully into human development paradigms. Several issues were identified and openly discussed: that considerable efforts had been made to mainstream gender considerations into development interventions, that many of the legal/social/cultural barriers to women's political advancement at the local, national and global levels were being addressed, and that laws to eliminate gender biases were being supported and implemented.

1.3 Despite the progress there was still a need to intensify efforts to address gender issues in the region. A number of common themes emerged from the participants which are summarized here. First, though some positive outcomes had been achieved, overall gender-mainstreaming efforts were not entirely effective. Second, many felt that in the increasing world of globalization, there was an urgent need to ensure that women had equitable access to economic benefits and opportunities. Third, for sustainable and long-term development, participants stressed the need to also ensure that women participated in political and social decision-making at all levels in their respective countries. Their voices needed to be heard, and heard at the upper echelons of economic and political institutions. Fourth, there was an urgent need for improved management of knowledge and data on issues related to gender in the region. Fifth, discriminatory laws and regulations needed to be identified and addressed.

1.4 **Better Gender Mainstreaming.** Although there were some partially successful efforts at gender mainstreaming in the region, participants felt that overall these efforts

¹ Issues related to the Bank assistance in Philippines is presented in **Annex I**.

needed to be reviewed and strengthened. That gender is not only a concern for human development but should cut across all sectors: infrastructure, science and technology, agriculture, environment, finance, labor, heavy and high capital industry etc. More effective tools were felt necessary to ensure that outcomes from these efforts were positive and sustainable. Capacity building of local institutions and agents of change was considered critical and necessary, as was the allocation of adequate resources for gender related activities. In this context, the Philippines experience with regulation of resources for gender mainstreaming was discussed and is reported in the Annex.

1.5 Increased Participation of Women in the Economic Sectors. A critical need was expressed to strengthen efforts to foster an enabling and protective economic environment for women in the context of emerging trends, namely globalization, which has led to free markets and economic liberalization. Although opportunities had increased, there was a perception that women were being marginalized into lower paid jobs. There was an urgent need for improved safety-net policies and support mechanisms for the economic participation of women (training, access to markets/credit, protective tax reforms etc.). A large proportion of women were involved in small and medium enterprises. Yet in both the formal and informal sectors, women had to fight many constraints and barriers that prevented access to economic resources and assets that their male counterparts were able to access.

1.6 Increased Participation of Women in Decision Making. It was pointed out that women were still not visible in the upper levels of participation and decision-making in economic and political institutions in many countries in the region. Gender stereotyping had inhibited the participation of women in decision-making at different levels (local/national/regional/global), especially at the higher echelons of administration. Additionally, many felt that there is need to establish pro-active institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women (structural reforms, integration of women's agenda in central planning agencies of government, etc.). Even in the social sectors, because of stereotypes and gender biases, women are continually marginalized in the areas of education, employment, health, basic service delivery, and agriculture. Gender stereotyping also included, among others, open and hidden sexism in the curricula, textbooks and instructional materials.

1.7 Knowledge Creations and Management. Participants stressed a need to foster cross-country sharing of best practices in gender and development mainstreaming, and to address gender gaps. In many cases it was felt that the Bank had undertaken excellent work through its poverty assessments, public expenditures reviews and other economic and sectoral work. But such work was not disseminated well and women's groups had little or no access to such work. Or gain, the differential impact of poverty and the regional economic crisis on men and women, for example, is not widely understood, resulting in poor planning strategies. Lack of gender-disaggregated data was mentioned as a general problem in all the countries. This lack of data constrained all sectors, but was more evident in the financial sector. Also, there is no reliable data on the extent of women's participation, including basic data such as the number of women in the financial sector/non-banking financial institutions, the positions they hold, their job specifications

or even uniform data on utilization of credit and repayment rates, both by credit source and sex.

1.8 Correct Discriminatory Legal or Regulatory Provisions and Practices.

Participants stated that critical and far-reaching problem areas, such as Violence Against Women (VAW) and governance still needed to be addressed. Many laws and regulations continued to discriminate against women and there is a need to work on VAW using a 'Rights' based approach to the issue. This would include addressing inequalities of men and women in law and other legal instruments. Not all participants felt these were issues of equal concern. It was in Indonesia, Thailand, and Philippines where violence against women was seen as a significant issue that needed to be addressed using innovative ways

HOW HAD THE BANK RESPONDED?

1.9 Despite significant awareness of gender issues in the region, Bank assistance has not been gender aware for the most part and in many cases was even behind efforts by many of the Governments in the region. Moreover, a Bank policy that focused on reducing gender disparity in education or on improving the health indicators for women was not an adequate entry point to address gender issues in East Asian countries. Participants felt that the institutional mechanisms of the Bank did not place women or gender at the core of the Bank's internal planning to ensure that the impact of development initiatives benefits both men and women. Although there was significant interesting research work being undertaken in many parts of the Bank, generating knowledge and data on gender issues, these were not effectively documented and shared with clients and least of all with women's groups in East Asia and the Pacific.

HOW SHOULD THE BANK RESPOND?

1.10 The overall message from the participants was clear: the Bank had to define a clear strategy for the region and specifically for each country. Participants reiterated that there was no single approach to addressing the above priority issues. A one shoe-fits-all approach to gender would be counterproductive. Approaches, by necessity, had to be tailor made. In general, they had the following advice for the Bank's revised gender strategy.

CONSULT WITH & STRENGTHEN NATIONAL/LOCAL INSTITUTIONS

1.11 The Bank and other donors should establish dialogue with local and national stakeholders in determining country specific gender strategies. Collaboration with local institutions at different levels was important in East Asia. Such institutions existed and often had the requisite capacity to participate in the design and implementation of Bank assistance; where they did not, the Bank should focus on strengthening local institutions for undertaking effective gender mainstreaming. Consultants with country specific expertise were essential and participants stressed that this was not an area where international consultants could fly in to find quick solutions to complex problems.

1.12 The participants also stressed that the Bank must carefully select institutions or agencies that it involved in the design and implementation of Bank assistance. It was

pointed out that in response to the UN International Decade for Women and, more recently, the Beijing Platform for Women, most countries in East Asia had established national machineries, but very often they were not involved in the design and implementation of Bank assistance. In fact, in the Philippines, this workshop had for the first time forged a relationship between the Bank and the National Association for Filipino Women, and it was hoped that linkages such as this could be strengthened in the future. Alongside, many countries had strong NGOs, academic institutions and other civil society and private sector groups that helped to address gender issues. These agencies could also be utilized to feed into the preparation of the gender dimensions of Bank assistance.

1.13 Any approach the Bank takes in the future would also have to enhance national and local gender-responsive development and planning technology and systems, increase the involvement of national machineries and other relevant institutions in its policy and program considerations, direct its initiatives more explicitly towards women and set up data collection systems for gender planning.

FACILITATE EQUITABLE PARTICIPATION OF MEN AND WOMEN

1.14 The participants felt that the Bank needed to support and initiate processes and mechanisms to facilitate the equal participation of women in decision-making processes, at all levels in a client country. Bank assistance must not consider women as victims, but help to empower them to participate in determining the nature of assistance and how best it can be delivered. Participants pointed out that it was not adequate, however, to involve women alone; men must also actively participate in such processes.

HIGHLIGHT COMMUNITY BASED APPROACHES

1.15 Participants also stressed the need to find community based approaches to addressing gender issues as these would lead to a 'bottom-up' perspective. Such an approach would create the essential building blocks in these countries for long term and sustainable development.

SUPPORT KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND DISSEMINATION

1.16 Participants saw the need for the Bank to play an active role in generation of knowledge and its effective dissemination. Knowledge generation had also to be timely and appropriate for the region and the various countries. The Bank should also support the generation and use of sex-disaggregated data to enable policy makers and others to ensure gender aware development assistance.

WHAT CAN PARTICIPANTS EXPECT?

1.17 The Bank management assured the participants that the deliberations at the workshop would feed into the gender study of OED and the Bank's gender strategy.²

² Jan Piercy provided the concluding remarks.

They also assured the participants that the past years have witnessed a transformation in the Bank, specifically a change in its mode of operations. Country directors are now assigned in their respective country posts to establish alliances between development stakeholders: program clientele, national/local government, funding agency, NGOs, private sector, etc. More so, this helps the Bank to be more responsive to the needs of its clients, but also facilitates regional cooperation among countries in Asia. However, participants must remember that the Bank can only support and respond. To mainstream women's concerns or gender issues into the agenda of international development institutions such as the WB, there is a need for women's networks in countries to initiate and generate a demand for such assistance within the countries. The development goals established by the Bank can only be achieved with the active participation of the client and other stakeholders, with the Bank was seriously committed to doing its part.

Annex I: Gender Mainstreaming and the Philippines Experience

It was widely recognized that the Philippines was one client country where approaches to gender mainstreaming were much more advanced than that followed by many of the donor agencies. However, there was much more that needed to be done at the implementation stage. The discussions focused mainly around the experience of the Philippines in mandating the apportionment of 5% of the development budget for gender mainstreaming. The Bank's interventions in the area of education, health, and agriculture were also discussed. In placing the gender issues within the context of a specific country, it was possible to draw out specific lessons for the donors and the participants from other countries.

Mandating Gender Mainstreaming. The implementation experience of the 1999 Philippines General Appropriations Act that mandates all agencies to allocate at least 5% of their budget for gender and development provided interesting insights into the process of gender mainstreaming.³ Implementation of this Act had raised a number of issues. The first issue relates to the appropriate indicators to measure the implementation progress. Should the government measure whether the agencies have complied or not with the 5% or should it start looking into the quality of programs or projects that are being submitted by these agencies? The impact of the previous programs and projects financed out of the 5% mandatory allocation is also worth examining. Another issue is the need to differentiate between agencies that implement developmental projects and those that only provide oversight services. While it is easy to show that much of the implementing agencies' budgets go to GAD concerns, it is difficult for oversight agencies to quantify the budget allocated to GAD concerns.

There is also a need to review the entire process of programming the *official development assistance*. At which stage in the whole programming process can we get the best result in trying to get more ODA to address gender and development issues? The World Bank should be able to facilitate gender analysis of proposed projects including program and sector loans and ensure that gender issues are considered at all appropriate stages of the project cycle, including identification, preparation, appraisal, implementation, and evaluation.

The Bank may also focus its initiatives in the review and improvement of mainstreaming tools in gender planning, budgeting and monitoring. There do exist manuals, guidelines, or sets of criteria for evaluating projects used by the *Investment Coordination Committee*. Are these relevant to other agencies? If not, what improvements can be done to make them so?

EDUCATION SECTOR. In spite of the fact that there is no *apparent* gender disparity in the educational system because of almost equal male-female enrollments in the Philippines, it does, in fact, still exist. Many of the issues that came up were a result of gender stereotyping that was rampant both in the education system as well as in the labor

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markets. The focus for poor women was often to become domestic helpers. One of the issues was the privatization of education and therefore the increased cost of textbooks and these women's inability to afford costly education. There was a requirement for qualified and competent teachers who are gender aware and are able to deal with many of these issues. Poor governance and weak management aggravated issues in hiring teachers and low salary and retirement pay were cited as other reasons for inefficiency in the sector. There is a need for reform in policies in the education sector, especially in its governance.

Workshop participants had the following advice for the World Bank in dealing with the education sector in the Philippines:

- Integrate country-specific gender analysis when formulating/implementing Bank assistance
- Support the public sector in assisting the poor
- Examine underlying gender disparities (“second generation” gender issues) and support gender mainstreaming
- Encourage local expertise in analysis
- Gender is cross-sectoral; there is a need for coordination across all sectors
- Assess the impact of privatization on the poor
- Fund gender sensitivity training conducted by DECS
- Assist in the development of gender-responsive curricula and gender-sensitive training manuals
- Undergo/spearhead/assist in the gender-sensitive review of the education sector, specifically in its expenditure

HEALTH SECTOR. The major issues presented in health were: (i) HIV/AIDS; (ii) Domestic Violence/Violence against Women/Family Violence; (iii) Reproductive Health (This issue, coupled with the education issue, makes an interesting discussion point.); and (iv) Women’s low self-esteem especially in health care (women do not give much time for their own health care). A study sponsored by the UNDP indicated significant gender bias in the legal system and the courts. The study pointed out the lack of a gender perspective in many processes/practices of law and medicine. In the Philippines, in particular, there was need for alternative mechanisms that could accommodate more people rather than exacting service approaches. The Health Policy should help strengthen good, traditional systems and skills in medicine and local development.

Participants suggested that Bank assistance could include

- Supporting the development of women’s self-esteem, through the production of Information, Education, and Communication materials on women’s health, particularly reproductive health; supporting crisis centers in the rural areas; target community-based interventions on women’s health; establishment of decentralized paralegal systems for women by women doctors and lawyers.

- The World Bank should promote further use and practice of traditional medicine by influencing public policy (mainstreaming traditional medicine) and by strengthening skills, provision of support in R&D on traditional medicine.

Agricultural Sector. Gender issues are neglected in Bank-supported agriculture projects, which mainly employ macro development approaches and do not provide adequate entry points for gender. For example, programs that pave the way for access to resources/technology and Research & Development often refer not only to male agricultural activities, but also undervalue women's contributions in agricultural production. Or again, a poverty reduction strategy is not necessarily favorable to women, especially the landless and those that belong to tribal communities. For example, access to food is almost always addressed in ways that do not consider data that food shortages often result in rationing in the households, where women either do not eat at all or eat less than their share in order that others in the family might be nourished.

There is need for a conscious effort to acknowledge the linkage between macro policies and decisions and their impact. Often, the non-recognition of women's contributions and participation to globalization results in an irreversible impact on them. The lack of safety nets and support mechanisms for women in the agricultural sector makes them vulnerable to the distresses of globalization. Most agricultural laws do not address women's concerns with regard to control of resources. Despite the parity provision on the distribution of land by way of agrarian reform, the number of women beneficiaries remains low. Sex-disaggregated data systems on the enforcement of laws in agriculture and environment are yet to be established. Women are mostly involved in low-capital micro-enterprises where returns of investment are negligible. The definition of livelihood programs facilitated through Bank assistance must be clarified. Projects in this line must be examined in the context of time-use and management of productive and reproductive roles. There is also a need to increase the participation of women in decision-making positions within the agriculture and environment bureaucracy.

The World Bank could lend its help to strengthening gender issues in numerous ways. In the agricultural sector, for example, it could :

- document and promote sustainable agricultural practices, such as biodiversity, conservation, green health, and the like;
- support gender-responsive research and development, training of researchers and planners in gender analysis;
- assess the gender-differentiated impact of chemical fertilizers/pesticides;
- support the acquirement of post-harvest facilities;
- ensure women's access to land;
- assist in the training of organizations and groups in rural areas regarding sustainable agriculture;
- include equal access to land and resources (such as irrigation, credit facilities, etc.) into its policy; and include improvement of working conditions into its policy.