e-Discussion Summary: Measuring Gender Equality

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Summary of Responses

Thank you to all of our Gender-Net friends who contributed to the e-discussion on Measuring Gender Equality. Among the varied and stimulating responses, four key themes emerged: Using data to bring about change, the need for data analysis, specific tools and techniques for gender-sensitive measurement, and measuring specific topics.

1. Using data to bring about changes in gender equality and in programming effectiveness

Colleagues from UNDP, UNECE and UNIFEM in Europe and the CIS argue that gender sensitive measures provide the necessary basis to make a sound argument in order to advocate for the allocation of resources to eliminate gender disparities and to provide information to support policy development and research. They are also important for the creation of baselines for measurements of change and provide the tools for monitoring policies and programmes. They can be used to strengthen advocacy by civil society organizations, international organizations and gender equality advocates in general around the need for new or revised policy measures or budgetary allocations to address existing gender inequalities. They can also be used to expose existing biases and questionable assumptions in policy making and traditional analysis.

UNDP Rwanda noted an excellent example of using data to bring about change. Rwandan women parliamentarians joined forces with national and international NGOs, UN agencies and the national gender machinery to use statistics on gender based violence to pass a newly drafted bill on gender based violence. There was an abrupt change of heart by the male parliamentarians on why domestic rape and other kinds of 'private' family issues should be classified criminal offences, and why there is a need for change.

A review of the Asian Development Bank’s Gender Action Plans (GAPs), which include specific targets and indicators on gender equality, found that their use improved the overall quality of development programs and projects and thus help to achieve overall development objectives. The study showed that GAPs are an effective gender mainstreaming tool, because they provide a systematic framework for ensuring that women participate and benefit from project components, and for progress towards changes in gender relations. Both in Bangladesh and Nepal, the data demonstrating the effectiveness of GAPs in delivering poverty reduction results led to the design being replicated by some partner agencies, applying gender equality strategies, indicators and targets to their ongoing work. For example, the Nepal Department of Livestock has replicated small-livestock groups and community mobilisation approaches for targeting women in non-project areas, and rules for managing women’s market sections have been adopted by the Bangladesh Local Government Engineering Department, along with the design of Union Parishad buildings to include a separate women’s room and facilities.

2. The need for data analysis

The need to analyse data in order to make it useful was noted by several respondents.

As colleagues from UNDP, UNECE and UNIFEM in Europe and the CIS suggest, ‘Statistics alone do not provide relevant information if it is not properly analyzed. Gender analysis helps to identify where the gender disparities are more relevant and where more measures are needed to address gender inequality’.
UNDP Armenia, in cooperation with the National Statistical Service, is making efforts to not only generate sex-disaggregated data on gender and politics, but to make the data more user friendly by accompanying it with analysis – that is, transforming sex disaggregated data into gender statistics.

In Rwanda, the recently drafted Preliminary Poverty Update Report compares the findings of the Integrated Household Survey on Living Conditions in 2000/2001 and 2005/2006. This provides important data as background to the upcoming second generate PRSP, but the study needs to be further analysed so that it can influence planning. For example, data showing that the net enrolment in secondary school for both boys and girls is very low and is also equal does not tell us whether boys drop out of school for the same reasons as girls; do factors such as early pregnancy, domestic work, and early marriage impact on this issue? Similarly, ‘even in health, agriculture, working hours etc, there are different figures for men and women but the analysis explaining why more women are in agriculture or why they spend more time in domestic work than men and what this means to the economy is not well explained, yet this analysis is needed by planners to trigger changes leading to economic development and poverty reduction’.

A similar point is made in a joint response from UNDP, UNECE and UNIFEM. Using gender sensitive indicators without deeper grasp of the way data is constructed and without realizing the broader social and economic context may lead to inaccurate conclusions about the situation of women and men. For example, in the case of several countries in Eastern Europe, men’s unemployment rates are higher than women’s. However, there are various reasons why women might be more likely to be classified as “inactive” rather than “unemployed”, which could result in flawed interpretations of statistical data. When asked about their employment status, it is more acceptable for women to define themselves as ‘homemakers,’ even though they might prefer to work outside the home if a reasonable employment opportunity existed. In addition, since being classified as unemployed requires being immediately available for work, many women looking for work are not classified as such because they lack available or affordable child care. They conclude that it is important to use different sources of data, including qualitative ones, and to engage in deeper analysis of the causal relationships and the context behind the data, in order to draw a valid picture of women’s and men’s situation as the basis for adequate policy making.

3. Tools and techniques

A number of specific tools and techniques for measuring gender equality in programming work were discussed, highlighting the fact that there is not necessarily a need for more or newer tools, but to ensure that the tools available are appropriate and are actually used.

As UNDP Rwanda points out, many practitioners call for tools and instruments to assist them in incorporating gender sensitive indicators – however, these tools are already available. The challenge is the ‘weak link between these tools, and expertise knowledge, and the programming officers whose work is not explicitly gender focused’. It was suggested that this could be tackled by a strong supportive group on gender, providing assistance to gender mainstreaming at the UNDP country offices, and functioning as a think tank on gender at CO level, along with UNIFEM, the UN Theme Group, and a high level advisor at the RCOI.

UNDP Albania suggests using the Logical Framework Approach (LFA), such that gender mainstreaming indicators are used while measuring a development intervention from the dimension of project / programme evaluation criteria. Gender mainstreaming indicators such as empowerment, parity, equality, transformation and equity along with project / programme gender sensitive evaluation criteria such as relevance, efficiency, sustainability, effectiveness and impact should be used within the LFA matrix and it should be supported with sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics in order to provide the required verification. When incorporated into the LFA it can be applicable to different levels – micro, meso and macro.

A review of work by the Asian Development Bank found that Gender Action Plans were an effective tool (see discussion above). The GAPs include specific targets, strategies and indicators on gender equality,
including targets for women’s participation and benefits, activities, time-bound actions, budget allocation, and gender capacity building.

UNDP Rwanda has found that ‘the main tool that helps other sectors to integrate gender is support with a checklist and a discussion on various indicators’. This is thought to unpack the myths around gender mainstreaming and enable people to better relate to the issue. UNDP Rwanda are using this approach in the development of the gender strategy for the office. Breaking the strategy into an action plan with clear checklists for the different heads of unit and discussing with them tangible indicators for results helps to make things clearer. They have endeavoured to pinpoint gender sensitive measurements that can guide internal organisational effectiveness in operations (in recruitment, RCAs, and procurement) and in programming (in target setting and results reporting, resource allocation and project design). Using gender sensitive measurements during project and program planning is essential because this directly impacts on development. It is what UNDP does through projects that actually contribute to development outcomes, so every project must be engendered. The biggest issue is that program officers do not know how to do this and need the support of a gender expert.

A baseline and situational analysis used to support gender mainstreaming is the best way for UNDP to measure gender equality throughout its programming, suggest colleagues from UNDP, UNECE and UNIFEM in Europe and the CIS. They argue that ‘any project that has established a sound baseline consisting of gender disaggregated data will be able to detect and measure change in gender equality in terms of a situation for women as compared to men’.

The GDI and GEM are of course important tools for UNDP. Tim Scott shared documents analyzing the GEM and GDI, which include recommendations for country-level work, such as: calculating HDIs for males and females separately, and adapting the component indicators of the GEM to include data on women’s representation in local government institutions and empowerment indicators such as decision making at the household level and contraceptive prevalence rates. UNDP in Mexico is also engaging work around the GDI and GEM, including efforts to use the GDI and GEM at the municipal level, as well as a pilot study combining GDI and GEM indicators with indicators of violence.

4. Measuring specific topics

Several colleagues mentioned the need to develop methods for measuring the gender dimensions of specific topics and practice areas, including the care and informal economy, security, the ‘feminization of poverty’, gender-based violence, gender-sensitive budgets and political participation.

Nina Popovic from INSTRAW emphasized the need to measure gender and security. She suggests that this may be done through sex-disaggregated data on violence, perceptions of insecurities, access to justice and security institutions, and evaluating best practices of gender training of security sector personnel.

A study from the International Poverty Center, a joint project between UNDP and the Brazilian government, which measures the ‘feminization of poverty’ in Latin America, concluded that the debate on feminization of poverty should not overshadow the debate on general gender inequality.

Colleagues from UNDP, UNECE and UNIFEM in Europe and the CIS emphasised that gender sensitive monitoring of budgetary allocations that support policies ultimately helps to ensure that both women and men (including specific groups of women and men) benefit and contribute to achieving results from concrete interventions based on their particular needs and situations. Gender responsive budgeting, which looks at the effect of public revenues and expenditures on women and men, girls and boys, allows for improving equality outcomes, economic governance and financial management, by providing feedback on whether the needs of different groups of the population are met and resources are used equitably and efficiently.

Once again, we appreciate your thought-provoking responses to this discussion over the last four weeks. This material will feed into BRIDGE’s forthcoming Cutting Edge Pack on Gender Equality and
Agradecemos a todos nuestros amigos y amigas de Gender-Net que contribuyeron a la discusión electrónica sobre la Medición de Equidad de Género. De la variedad de respuestas estimulantes recibidas surgieron cuatro temas: la utilización de datos para generar cambios, la necesidad de análisis de datos, las herramientas y técnicas específicas para una medición sensible al género y la medición de temas específicos.

1. Utilización de datos para generar cambios en la equidad de género y en la eficacia de la programación

Colegas del PNUD, UNECE y UNIFEM en Europa y de la CEI sostienen que las medidas sensibles al género proveen la base necesaria para formular un argumento sólido a favor de una asignación de recursos que elimine las disparidades de género y para ofrecer información que apoye el desarrollo de políticas y la investigación. Asimismo, dichas medidas son importantes para crear líneas de base para las mediciones de cambios a la vez que proveen herramientas para el monitoreo de políticas y programas. Pueden ser utilizadas para fortalecer la defensa activa que desarrollan las organizaciones de la sociedad civil, los organismos internacionales y los defensores de la equidad de género en general en torno a la necesidad de medidas de políticas nuevas o revisadas y de asignaciones presupuestarias que hagan frente a las inequidades de género existentes. También pueden ser utilizadas para exponer los prejuicios y supuestos cuestionables existentes en la formulación de políticas y el análisis tradicional.

[descargar el resumen en español]

Résumé des Réponses

Merci à tous nos amis de Gender-Net qui ont contribué au forum électronique sur la Mesure de l’Égalité des Sexes. Parmi les réponses diverses et stimulantes, quatre principaux thèmes sont apparus : l'utilisation de données pour entraîner des changements, le besoin de faire une analyse des données, les outils et techniques spécifiques pour les mesures sensibles au genre et la mesure de thèmes spécifiques.

1. Utilisation de données pour entraîner des changements en matière d’égalité des sexes et d’efficacité des programmes

Les Collègues du PNUD, de l’UNECE et de l’UNIFEM en Europe et du CEI témoignent que les mesures sensibles au genre créent le cadre nécessaire pour la présentation d’un argument solide en faveur de l’allocation de ressources pour éliminer les disparités entre les sexes et fournir des informations pour soutenir le développement de politiques et la recherche. Elles sont aussi importantes pour la création de lignes de base pour mesurer le changement et la mise à disposition d’outils pour le suivi de politiques et de programmes. Elles peuvent être utilisées pour renforcer le plaidoyer de la part des organisations de la société civile, des organisations internationales et des défenseurs de l’égalité des sexes en général au sujet du besoin de mesures politiques nouvelles ou révisées ou d’allocations budgétaires pour aborder les inégalités existant entre les sexes. Elles peuvent aussi être utilisées pour exposer les partis pris existants et les hypothèses discutables dans l’élaboration de politiques et l’analyse traditionnelle.

[télécharger le résumé en français]
Resources


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Responses in full

Marcelo Medeiros, UNDP Poverty Centre.

Dear Colleagues,

At the IPC we have been working in several issues related to the measurement of inequality in general and of gender inequality in particular. While many researchers focus on the indicators (which I see as correct) we focus on data collection and the measures themselves.

You may be interested in two studies we have.

The first one proposes a way to measure the feminization of poverty and tests it empirically for countries in Latin America. Given the high priority UNDP gives to poverty eradication we thought that we had to do some empirical research on this field. Our conclusion is that the debate on feminization of poverty should not overshadow the debate on general gender inequality because there is no evidence of a feminization of
poverty in several countries in Latin America, North America and Europe. The second one is about time deprivation and is still being carried on.

In terms of measurement what we are emphasizing is the necessarily comparative (between gender groups) dimension of gender indicators. Obvious, you may say, but several UN documents base their conclusions about the “gender performance” of policies in non-comparative information. Therefore I believe the almost naïve approach we use is useful not only for the analysis of feminization but to several other comparisons of indicators over time.

In addition we argue that poverty is conventionally measured at the household level, that is, refers to the family, not individuals. Technically it is extremely hard and costly to go below the household level for the measurement of consumption, one of the relevant dimensions of poverty; we believe gender (income) studies should not focus on poverty but in the economic autonomy of women - for the absolute level - and, of course, in income inequality when relative levels are regarded.

We are working in the second study at the moment. We are proposing a definition of time deprivation (called time poverty by some) that can be easily applied to data available in developing countries and analyzing the existence of a trade off between time and income deprivation. We did a few initial tests and we found this trade off to be relevant in both countries we tested. The trade off, as we will analyze in the study, has no gender disaggregation. But, of course, we did some empirical analysis for testing and found a clear gender pattern in the profile of the time deprived. It is very hard to work with the limited time use data we have but given the results of our initial tests we wrote a paper about paid and unpaid work inequalities in Bolivia. I believe the one on time deprivation will be concluded in a couple of months.

Regarding these two studies I do have a few suggestions for the e-discussion and will to summarize them below:

1. Gender analysis of time series data should be done in comparative (gender groups) terms. A comparison women-women (men-men) over time can be done, but is insufficient for gender studies. (It may seem obvious to say such thing but believe me, there is more than one UN document ignoring this)

2. Poverty is a concept dear to UNDP and it is measured at the household level. It is hard to go below this level - the cost if prohibitive for developing countries. Let us look at the economic autonomy of women instead. To the best of my knowledge there is no operational definition of economic autonomy allowing measurement but my suggestion is that we keep doing what has already been done, that is, simple comparisons of men and women in terms of income they receive from labor and transfers.

3. The debate on the feminization of poverty should be put in its proper place; it should not overshadow the concerns about general gender inequality;

4. Unpaid work information in the National Accounts in no doubt useful; however, for gender inequality analysis more emphasis should be given to the distribution of time use among individuals.

5. Time use data is being increasingly collected in general purpose household surveys (in developing countries). If we emphasize this collection in specialized time use surveys we will be able to get much more detailed data but at the cost of losing all the valuable information existing in the general purpose surveys - including occupational segregation, wage discrimination and others which the analysis require large samples to be done.

6. Before proposing the collection of new data, let us look at the available data. Regardless of what I often see among advocates of gender equality, the bottleneck we have is not about data availability but about analytical capacity to systematically process this data.

7. Any proposal of additional data collection should be done in light of its cost, not only its benefits. UNDP’s business is with poor countries that have bureaus of statistics with very limited budgets.

8. Finally, I find it hard to discuss gender inequality measurement if the relevant dimensions of gender inequality are not defined in advance. I believe it would be useful for the discussion to first have a list of the dimensions we want to keep track of - income, assets, domestic violence, education and so on - and
then we can move to the more technical issues of finding indicators, creating measures, collecting data and requesting analysis of this data. Not only the list but some degree of priority in the list would also be useful to guide what we should do first and where we should concentrate our efforts. I am particularly biased towards the importance of economic autonomy and therefore I believe I should keep this bias to myself and give no public opinion about this.

I am attaching the paper on feminization of poverty in LA and the one on paid and unpaid work in Bolivia, in case you are interested. Sorry I am attaching the drafts, they are the only files I have with me.

Best regards,

Marcelo Medeiros

Click here to download a draft of Gender inequalities in work time allocation in Bolivia
Click here to download a draft of Is there a feminisation of poverty in Latin America?

Tim Scott, HDRO- HQ.

Dear Colleagues

Here a link to a discussion of the GDI and GEM, their strengths, limitations, and recommendations for their use at national levels.


Here also a discussion on the Gender Development Index (GDI), the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), and pressing gender data issues in the back section of the 2006 global HDR, pages 279-280:


There is a need for more internationally comparable data that captures additional gender dimensions of the care and informal economy, gender-based violence, and political participation.

Best regards,

Tim.

Susanne Kozak & Christine Umuto, UNDP Rwanda

Dear Colleagues,

We are happy for this opportunity to discuss and share our thoughts on this important issue. UNDP Rwanda has just drafted a strategy for gender mainstreaming for the country office, focusing on the internal change process to achieve a better impact on our external business. This is a process which is common to most gender mainstreaming processes and we are yet to see the results of it. However, through this process we are in the midst of contemplating, developing and working with gender sensitive indicators and by sharing our experiences and ideas, we hope to contribute some to this interesting theme.

Gender mainstreaming has been criticised for being too technocratic and instrumental in its focus on implementation of various tools and instruments, but it can still be recognised as the most effective starting point for gender mainstreaming to date. Without a practical approach, the mainstream does not
seem able to access the idea of gender equality even if some of the ‘myths’ on gender have become mainstream knowledge. In order to move on from this stage, gender sensitive indicators can help us take the next step on the ground towards true gender mainstreaming.

Seeing that we are in the beginning of the process of trying to incorporate gender sensitive indicators into government and development agencies’ work here in Rwanda, our contribution to this discussion is somewhat less technical and detailed than the interesting inputs we have taken part of so far. Instead we aim to share our theoretical reasoning behind our attempts to promote gender sensitive indicators in our work and the experiences from Rwanda.

1. Can gender sensitive measurements be used to promote/achieve gender equality in a country? How and by whom?

Although the majority of Rwandan women have the disadvantage of living under severe poverty and under cultural constraints, and under a prominent threat of gender based violence, they are represented at the parliament and in other decision-making positions by a big proportion of women who have been able to use statistics and gender specific indicators in order to gain some ground for this majority of women. By sharing statistics on gender based violence with the public, and with their male colleagues, the Rwandan women parliamentarians managed to convince the rather sceptical, and ignorant, male half of the parliament that a newly drafted bill on gender based violence should be passed. Literally overnight, there was a change of heart by the male parliamentarians on why domestic rape and other kinds of ‘private’ family issues should be classified criminal offences, and why there is a need for change. By using national statistics and police records on reported sexual violence and abuse, it was possible for the women’s lobby, including national and international NGOs, UN agencies and the national gender machinery, such as the ministry for gender and family promotion and the women parliamentarians, to join forces to make a strong case for a change. Although this case might be exceptional in Rwanda, it still shows how gender sensitive indicators can be made useful, if available and if adopted by a bigger group.

Another example from Rwanda is its constitution, with concrete targets on women’s representation and emphasis on equity in all forms. Setting a minimum target of 30% of women in decision making bodies in the country has contributed the high representation of women in decision making positions and has made the women’s voices stronger. The fact that it is a constitutional requirement binds decision makers when they are making appointments and influences women to be active and to present themselves to be elected.

By ensuring that this type and other kinds of gender sensitive indicators in the work, it might be possible to take a step further in the direction of gender equality which should be needed at this point in time. The achievements since Beijing in 1995, much defined by a wide acceptance of and commitment to gender mainstreaming in development work, have been inadequate in terms of actual impact. With the previous and current lack of specific indicators, the advocacy for making development gender sensitive and gender equal, is to a great extent based on what has been referred to as ‘myths[1]’, and so here in Rwanda. Building your case for gender equality in development on the myths of women being poor, powerless and pregnant, or as agents of change through, but perhaps limited to, micro-credit projects, has perhaps been a possible gain until now. By making the image of women less complex, a wider acceptance of gender mainstreaming might have been possible. However, winning the battle of putting gender into policy and spreading a mythical understanding of women and men in development, have not resulted in action. In order to take this next step, gender sensitive indicators can translate these myths into a reality that is possible for national gender equality advocates to use in their work, as these might be more feasible to translate into action and less possible to disregard in national policy and planning processes.

This has been specifically noticeable in the ongoing EDPRS process, the planning process of Rwanda’s second poverty reduction strategy. Using sector specific data for crosscutting issues, such as gender, has been emphasised during the process of encouraging sectors to incorporate these issues into their sector plans. The crosscutting issues working group on Gender has provided gender indicators through checklists, supporting the sectors as they might be willing to integrate gender in their planning, but lack the capacity to do so. The need for gender sensitive indicators and statistics has emphasised during the EDPRS preparation. The importance of indicators in general can be noted as development partners increasingly
discuss the significance of building the capacity of the national institute of statistics. Sex disaggregated data has notably been high on the agenda, such as during the last ministerial committee (steering committee) on the EDPRS when it was specifically recommended.

2. **What are some of the opportunities and constraints in using gender sensitive measurements to achieve gender equality results?**

The positive results of gender sensitive indicators on a wider scale are perhaps yet to be experienced in Rwanda as it is not yet extensively used. Gender sensitive indicators have however been used in some conventionally women responsive sectors, such as health and education. In Rwanda gender parity in primary and secondary education has been achieved as far as it come to enrolment rates, and this outcome is obviously impacted by the capacity to gather and present data on girls and boys enrolment and drop-out rates.

Similarly maternity health services have increased\(^2\). Baseline data on poor health services and high infant and maternal mortality rates can make the political case to improve and promote these services.

However, these examples from Rwanda as in other countries with similar trends, one important reflection is prominent, and brings attention to a constraint which is noticeable in the work for gender equality and the promotion of gender sensitive indicators in Rwanda. The sectors of health and education have since long been considered as important in development, not specifically for the case of gender equality, but rather for limiting population growth. Hence, the point to note here is the importance of the **political buy-in** for issues on gender, and the acceptance of gender-sensitive indicators as important.

During the EDPRS process, the politically expressed commitment to crosscutting issues has been strong, seeing that the president of the Republic expresses a strong commitment to gender and women’s empowerment, and that an independent evaluation of the previous PRSP expressed a real concern for the absence of the mainstreaming of the crosscutting issues, which include gender.

Although the effective promotion of gender by the crosscutting issues working group on gender, has been making progress in the EDPRS process and in working with the sectors and their planning processes, it is possible to note that the leading ministry for the EDPRS, MINECOFIN has failed to incorporate crosscutting issues within their schedule for the planning process. During logframe trainings and development, and costing exercises, crosscutting issues were welcome to join in. However, without MINECOFIN creating any space or time specifically allocated to the crosscutting issues, the chances for the sectors to understand and to prioritise them in their overloaded and capacity constrained planning sessions, were severely reduced. Hence, the verbal and political commitment to gender, and the other crosscutting issues, that was communicated in the beginning of the process did not have any actual translation into practice. Gender sensitive indicators might be recognised as important for the EDPRS process, but the lack of clear commitment by the different sectors to incorporate them, might hinder the promotion and actual implementation of this important tool for gender equality. Instead the advocates working to get gender equality into the EDPRS process have to work hard and closely with the sectors up to the end, as incentives are not created by the drivers of the process, and as sectors might lack capacity or interest to ensure it is part of their planning.

In summary, it is possible to note that delivering gender sensitive indicators can not be an end in itself, but needs to be supported by continued advocacy and notably a political will to take on the indicators into the mainstream. Hence, gender sensitive indicators, advocacy and political need to complement each other.

3. **Can gender sensitive measurements of change be used to increase organisational effectiveness, as well as development effectiveness? Do they feed into programme planning and are they or could they be used in other concrete ways? If so, what ways?**

Gender mainstreaming as a concept, and practice, stems from the argument that incorporating gender sensitive indicators in all programming will increase not only gender equality but the overall effectiveness and impact of an organisation’s development work. As we have just formulated our strategy on how to put this idea into practice at our country office, we are yet to see the results of this. But it is indeed one of our main arguments for making this organisational change. Gender mainstreaming has been criticised for not
promoting a common understanding of what it actually entails. This has given the consequence that both minor and major organisational adjustments, from only having a gender mainstreaming policy or to significantly changing the behaviour of the organisation, has been branded as gender mainstreaming and making the concept lose credibility. Gender sensitive measurements of change should be part of any gender mainstreaming approach as they hold the potential to promote a more substantial understanding of gender mainstreaming.

Specifically in our process we have endeavoured to pinpoint gender sensitive measurements that can guide internal organisational effectiveness, in a wide range of areas, from operations: in recruitment, RCAs, and procurement - to programme: in target setting and results reporting, resource allocation and project design. Using gender sensitive measurements during project and program planning is essential because this directly impacts development. It is what UNDP does through projects that actually contribute to development outcomes, so every project must be engendered. The biggest issue is that program officers do not know how to do this and need the support of a gender expert to help while training efforts continue for all.

We are yet to see if the office will adopt the suggested changes but we really envisage some impact especially if we relate everything to accountability where every individual is accountable to the change. Our upcoming retreat provides an opportunity for all staff to review, discuss and own the strategy and through this process we hope to establish a strong commitment to the changes that the strategy entails.

4. Can gender sensitive measurements be used in UNDP country programmes or projects that are not explicitly gender focused? How?

As mentioned above, this indeed what we are trying to achieve in our gender mainstreaming strategy. We are in no ways unique in this approach to gender mainstreaming and lessons from several countries have shown the difficulties to gender mainstreaming (Evaluation of Gender Mainstreaming in UNDP, 2005), so we are aware of the challenges ahead. The strategy is being developed in a time of change, when our next UNDAF is being drafted, the overall UNDP Corporate Strategic Plan is being formulated and with the EDPRS process underway. At the same time, the One UN reform will be taking place at UNCT Rwanda. All these changes might drown the call for gender mainstreaming. However, we are hopeful that these changes rather will provide an opportunity to raise the issue of gender equality in programming and we feel that there is a momentum created by these changes. We are also hopeful that the high level commitment to gender in the government, and by our leadership at UNDP can contribute to this momentum. And we also recognise the will among our staff to learn more and to start contributing to this change, a will which might very well have grown from the previous usage of gender 'myths' as a tool for promotion of gender equality.

If we believe that gender sensitive measurements have a place in our gender mainstreaming approach, how are we expecting to ensure that our programmes and projects use them? Many practitioners call for tools and instruments to assist them in their attempts to make planning, designing and implementation more gender sensitive, and to move beyond these myths by incorporating these gender sensitive indicators. However, as noted by UNIFEM’s deputy director Dr. Moez Doraid at a recent meeting here in Kigali, with Winnie Byanyima, Diana Opar and the UN Gender Theme Group, these tools are indeed available already. The UNDP Marketplace is just one of many sources for accessing these kinds of tools and instrument, invaluable in the work of many gender mainstreaming practitioners already. What Dr. Doraid noted was the weak link between these tools, and expertise knowledge, and the programming officers whose work is not explicitly gender focused. If the answer to the question of how to incorporate gender sensitive measurements into programming units is not tools and expertise, then what is it? Waiting to learn from others experiences, one look at these tools might give some indication what is problematic in this picture. Although much elaborated and detailed in how to go about a gender analysis in your day to day programming, the actual problem might lie in the assumptions these tools are making about how programme officers do their jobs. The detailed questions which are proposed to be asked in the process of formulating and implementing programmes and projects, assume that detailed information, time, incentives and resources are available for the programme officers to take these questions into consideration and to follow text book procedures of participation and analysis. If this is not the case, perhaps these tools are not readily accessible for practitioners? Then the gender analysis is proposing a bigger change than just to incorporate gender into their analysis, it might actually be asking programme officers to change the way they are working. Making gender analysis the entry point for bigger changes
could be a good thing, as the issues of capacity constraints to proper programme and project planning need to be addressed. But it might also explain why it is difficult to make use of gender analysis tools and instrument, and prompt important questions of what we need to achieve as part of our mainstreaming agenda. And more importantly we might want to ask ourselves – what kind of mainstream are we trying to mainstream gender into?

As it seems, the issue of gender mainstreaming opens up a Pandora’s Box on a variety of other concerns, including the ones mentioned above, the issue of gender sensitive indicators and others. But even before taking all of these concerns on, we have to ‘fly the plane as we are building it’ as Winnie Byanyima reminded us. In the meantime, the issue of capacity and time constraints could perhaps be tackled by a strong supportive group on gender. As the UN Reform will be taking place, this is the role a new UNDP gender unit at CO level could assume. By supporting the programming and operational units as they attempt to mainstream gender into their practice areas and their daily work, internal gender expertise could provide backing and assistance, to ensure true gender mainstreaming at the UNDP country offices. Together with UNIFEM, the UN Theme Group, and a high level advisor at the RCO, it could perhaps function as a think tank on gender at CO level.

Sources:
Rwanda DHS 2005
Rwanda EICV, December 2006
IDS Bulletin Volume 35, Number 4, October 2004

As we carry on our work on gender mainstreaming within our office, we are looking forward to continue to sharing our experiences, thoughts and questions with other offices and practitioners.

Thank you for this opportunity to contribute to the discussion.

Christine Umutoni, UNDP Rwanda.

Dear all,

I would like to share one of our experiences and to emphasize the point that measuring gender equality is difficult in most cases requires experts but we find it quite necessary. During the elaboration of the second generation PRSP (EDPRS) a gender shadow group was created to help sectors mainstream gender. The main tool that helps other sectors to integrate gender is support with a check list and a discussion on various indicators. This unpacks the whole myth around gender mainstreaming and people begin to feel that they can relate with the issue of mainstreaming. We are doing the same as we developed the gender strategy for the office, breaking the strategy into an action plan with clear check lists for the different heads of unit and discussing with them tangible indicators for results helps to make things clearer.

Measuring gender however can be challenging! Rwanda just concluded the Preliminary Poverty Update Report which presents the preliminary findings of the second Integrated Household Survey on Living Conditions (Enquête Intégrale sur les Conditions de Vie des Ménages (EICV), conducted in 2005/06. It compares key results with the first EICV, conducted in 2000/01 and so provides information on changes in the well-being of the population of Rwanda between the two surveys.

I have tried to pull out the key summaries to share with you. My opinion is that such a survey is very important as the country prepares the second generation of the PRSP but as part of a group that is following up to make sure that cross cutting issues are integrated into the second generation PRSP (EDPRS) we are eager to see how the study will farther be analysed so that it can influence planning.

If I pick an example in education for instance, there is indication that the enrolment rate at primary school is generally good in the country and it shows that boys and girls are equal in number when they join primary school. Net enrolment in secondary school for both boys and girls is very low and also equal. The main reason give in the report for school drop out or low enrolment of students (both boys and girls) in secondary is the cost of education.
But one wonders! Are the reasons for boy’s drop out in school the same as the reasons for girls drop out? What is the impact of issues like early pregnancy, domestic work, early marriage etc on this issue? We find it important to carry this debate further because problems and solutions fitting girls and boys vis a vis school drops out may be different and policy makers need to plan accordingly for the future.

For lack of space I only talked about education but even in health, agriculture, working hours etc there are different figures for men and women but the analysis explaining why women are more in agriculture or why they spend more time in domestic work than men and what this means to the economy is not well explained, yet this analysis is needed by planners to trigger changes leading to economic development and poverty reduction.

### Net enrolment rate at primary school, by gender and stratum (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stratum</th>
<th>EICV1 Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>EICV2 Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City of Kigali</td>
<td>81.5</td>
<td>83.9</td>
<td>82.7</td>
<td>89.8</td>
<td>91.0</td>
<td>90.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other urban</td>
<td>75.5</td>
<td>72.8</td>
<td>74.1</td>
<td>89.0</td>
<td>91.3</td>
<td>90.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>72.9</td>
<td>73.0</td>
<td>72.9</td>
<td>84.0</td>
<td>86.2</td>
<td>85.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>National</strong></td>
<td><strong>73.7</strong></td>
<td><strong>73.7</strong></td>
<td><strong>73.7</strong></td>
<td><strong>84.8</strong></td>
<td><strong>86.9</strong></td>
<td><strong>85.9</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: EICV1 and EICV2 data. Notes: (1) Net enrolment rate shows children aged 7–12 who are reported to be attending primary school, as a proportion of all children aged 7–12. (2) Figures for EICV1 have been recalculated to make them comparable with EICV2. This results in a small difference (1 percentage point) between the figures presented here and those in the EICV1 report. (3) The strata have been reclassified since the EICV1 survey. This table uses the new strata for both sets of data.

### Net enrolment rate at secondary school, by gender and stratum (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stratum</th>
<th>EICV1 Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>EICV2 Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City of Kigali</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>29.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other urban</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>National</strong></td>
<td><strong>6.2</strong></td>
<td><strong>7.5</strong></td>
<td><strong>6.9</strong></td>
<td><strong>10.6</strong></td>
<td><strong>9.5</strong></td>
<td><strong>10.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: EICV1 and EICV2 data. Notes: (1) Net enrolment rate shows children aged 13–18 who are reported to be attending secondary school, as a proportion of all children aged 13–18. (2) Figures for EICV1 have been recalculated to make them comparable with EICV2. This results in a small difference (about 0.5 percentage points) between the overall figures presented here and those in the EICV1 report. (3) The strata have been reclassified since the EICV1 survey. This table uses the new strata for both sets of data. (4) Figures do not include students on vocational ‘post-primary’ courses.
Dear all,

One aspect of the research of the United Nations International Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (UN INSTRAW) focuses on the issues surrounding gender, peace and security.

As we are about to develop practice orientated research and capacity building tools on gender and security sector reform we are highly interested in approaches to evaluating these efforts. Best practices, assessment, gender sensitive security indicators will form part of two upcoming e-discussions (April and June) to which you will be.

In this regard I would like to comment on what has been said by the UNDP country office in Rwanda (referring to question 1):

While the primary focus of the GDI is on the economic aspects of gender equality it has been criticized for leaving out issues such as violence against women and female perceptions of insecurities. Female security forms the crucial part of issues such as economic independence, political participation and human rights for women. Security and its necessity to include a gender sensitive perspective as the basis of development should be analyzed in the light of country specific cultural, social and political patterns.

How can such a highly culturally dependent issue as gender and security be measured by internationally comparable indicators and indexes? Sex disaggregated data regarding violence, perceptions of insecurities, access to justice (including witness protection programs, shelters and economic ability), and security institutions may be one form of measurement. Furthermore, the examination of concrete initiatives such as best practices of gender training of security sector personnel, and their evaluation, form part of how to measure the ability of the state to provide safety for ALL its citizens.

In this context, the differentiation between measuring the success of specific programs promoting gender equality, and the measurement of the general engendering of the security sector (and/or the states promotion of citizen and/or human security) is crucial.

We are considering looking at the following two dimensions of measurement:

1. The success and impact which gender initiatives (such as mainstreaming, female recruitment and gender mainstreaming in security institutions) has for the population affected and
2. Means of developing indicators which can measure the gender sensitivity of the security sector in different countries.

We invite those of you already participating in the process of developing such tools to share your knowledge at the named virtual seminars. We believe that the integration of gender sensitive perspectives into a sector that has remained largely blind to issues of gender, women’s participation, and women's and girls’ insecurities is the basis of human development.

Amalia Paredes, UNDP Mexico.

Estimadas y estimados colegas, amigas y amigos:
La oficina del PNUD-México ha utilizado el Índice de Desarrollo Humano (IDH), el Índice de Desarrollo relativo al Género (IDG) y el Índice de Potenciación de Género (IPG) para elaborar un documento con el título **Indicadores de desarrollo humano y género en México** que fue presentado en junio de 2006, con un análisis a nivel municipal para los 32 estados de la República Mexicana.

Los resultados de este documento tienen como objetivo servir de insumo a los gobiernos locales, ya que es ahí donde mejor puede exhibirse, con la información estadística disponible, las desigualdades de género.

En este sentido, los índices aludidos muestran las entidades federativas, y dentro de éstas los municipios, donde generalmente las mujeres son menos favorecidas en el ejercicio de sus libertades y en la ampliación de sus capacidades, es decir, donde sus opciones de desarrollo están más limitadas.

Se espera que estas mediciones sirvan, a quienes formulan políticas públicas en los niveles estatal y municipal, la sociedad civil y la academia, para evaluar la ampliación de capacidades de las mujeres en relación con los hombres y analizar los múltiples desafíos que las mujeres enfrentan y contar con elementos para orientar su trabajo en el ámbito de sus respectivas responsabilidades.

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**Itzá Castañeda, UNDP Mexico.**

Colegas,

En alcance al mensaje de Amalia, quisiera añadir que en México también hemos iniciado un estudio piloto en el estado de Zacatecas sobre Desarrollo humano, Género y Violencia.

El esfuerzo metodológico por cruzar los índices de Desarrollo Humano Relativo al Género (IDG) y de Potenciación de Género (IPG) con los índices de violencia ha sido un gran reto. En breve tendremos los resultados finales que con gusto compartirremos con ustedes.

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**Nver Sargsyan, UNDP Armenia**

Dear Colleagues:

I am pleased to contribute towards this very important discussion and would very much appreciate to hear your feedback. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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Measuring and evaluating development interventions from the gender perspective is not an easy business however it is not impossible. It is as taught as measuring democracy. The Logical Framework Approach (LFA) which is widely used by international donors makes the measuring and evaluation easier. Gender mainstreaming indicators should be used while measuring / evaluation a development intervention from the dimension of project / programme evaluation criteria. Gender mainstreaming indicators such as empowerment, parity, equality, transformation and equity along with project / programme gender sensitive evaluation criteria such as relevance, efficiency, sustainability, effectiveness and impact should be used within the LFA matrix and it should be supported with sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics in order to provide the required verification. When incorporated into the LFA it can be applicable to different levels – micro, meso and macro.

Overall gender mainstreaming can be measured in terms of **equality** (equal benefits, rewards, access, control and opportunities for both women and men), **equity** (the ratio of participation benefits, rewards, access, control and opportunities according to concerns/needs of women and men, as well as women’s empowerment and/or transformation of gender relations), **parity** (equal participation and representation of women and men), **empowerment** (cognitive, affective, attitudal and behavioral changes to increase level of equality and empowerment of women in relation of men) and **transformation** (changing gender roles, transforming gender order, changing existing distribution of
responsibilities and resources in order to create a balanced gender environment). These dimensions should be measured and evaluated against generic project/programme evaluation criteria framework such as **sustainability** (should explain how the possible achievements will be saved and sustained after the project/programme completion as well as how the ownership by the beneficiaries should be sustained – the latter includes the capacity of the beneficiaries to make the result sustainable), **relevance** (how relevant were the project/programme needs defined against the real needs/concerns of gender related issue), **impact** (this is about the overall social environment and gender related policies), **efficiency** (this shows whether the achievements have been achieved in a reasonable cost and whether the outcome was distributed equally), and **effectiveness** (this reflects whether the achievements have been achieved as planned and perceived by key stakeholders and results in terms of benefits have been distributed / received during the implementation period).

All these can be backed up with statistics and not only sex-disaggregated data but rather gender statistics complimented with other related research studies to provide more information for the full picture.

Currently in Armenia UNDP Gender and Politics project in cooperation with National Statistical Service is producing sex disaggregated data book (http://www.genderpolitics.am/latest_news.php?lang=en&id=185) which significantly eases up the process of measuring and evaluation of gender mainstreaming, however, the project takes steps to make the data more user friendly and accompanying the data with analysis i.e. transforming sex disaggregated data into gender statistics.

**Nadja Dolata** - UNDP regional centre for Europe and the CIS, **Angela Me** - UNECE Social and Demographic Statistics Section & **Asya Varbanova** - UNIFEM Regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe

**Dear Colleagues,**

It has been very interesting to read the contributions to the discussion on gender measurements. Please let us share some more input relating to the questions for week one put together by three agencies that all work with measurements of gender equality **UNDP, UNIFEM and UNECE.**

1. **Can gender sensitive measurements be used to promote/achieve gender equality in a country? How and by whom? Please give examples.**

Gender sensitive measurements in terms of gender disaggregated data and indicators in areas of specific interest to gender are needed to: 1) describe what the current situation is in terms of gender disparities, 2) analyze the trends recognizing if the existing gender inequalities are decreasing or increasing and at what speed, and 3) show how gender differences can affect the economic and social development of societies. Gender sensitive measures provide the necessary basis to make a sound argument in order to advocate for the allocation of resources to eliminate gender disparities and to provide information to support policy development and research. They are also important for the creation of baselines for measurements of change and provide the tools for monitoring policies and programmes.

Gender sensitive measurements are of particular importance when operating in a discourse that is dominated by a language of statistics and economics calling for measurable and quantifiable results. They can be used to strengthen advocacy by civil society organizations, international organizations and gender equality advocates in general around the need for new or revised policy measures or budgetary allocations to address existing gender inequalities. They can also be used to expose existing biases and questionable assumptions in policy making and traditional analysis. Examples of such assumptions are: assuming that gender is not relevant because other social dynamics are more important; that women’s interests are always closely aligned with those of their husbands; and that a particular category of person is always male or female. The development of gender statistics creates the evidence base that enables such assumptions to be tested, and better analyses and policies can then be developed.
If gender aspires to take ground in the main policy arenas, it needs to appropriate the language of such. Backing up gender related analysis with appropriate data will build a much stronger ground for the advancement of gender a policy area on its own and for integration into other policy areas (mainstreaming).

2. What are some of the opportunities and constraints in using gender sensitive measurements to achieve gender equality results?

Gender sensitive measures are equally relevant in social and demographic statistics as well as business statistics, agriculture statistics, transport statistics, ICT statistics and others. Statistics alone, however, does not provide relevant information if it is not properly analyzed. Gender analysis helps to identify where the gender disparities are more relevant and where more measures are need to address gender inequality.

Using gender sensitive indicators, particularly quantitative ones, without deeper grasp of the way data is constructed, without going into sufficient depth and without realizing the broader social and economic context may lead to inaccurate conclusions about the situation of women and men. Those accustomed to traditional forms of analysis that are not fully at grasp with gender analysis may not always find it clear whether or not gender is relevant to the collection and presentation of statistics. While the disaggregation of statistics by sex is a vital first step, the development of a body of gender statistics that is relevant to its users requires additionally an understanding of where gender may be found, where it is relevant, the need and the ways to make it visible and the different understandings of the concept of gender equality.

For example, in the case of several countries in Eastern Europe, men’s unemployment rates are higher than women’s. This, however, does not automatically mean that unemployment is not as severe a problem for women as for men: women’s seeming under-representation among the unemployed might be an artefact of the data gathering process, since when asked about their employment status, it is more acceptable for women to define themselves as ‘homemakers,’ even though they might prefer to work outside the home if a reasonable employment opportunity existed. In addition, since being classified as unemployed requires being immediately available for work, many women looking for work are not classified as such because they lack available or affordable child care. All of this means that women might be more likely to be classified as “inactive” rather than “unemployed”, which could result in flawed interpretations of statistical data. A comprehensive analysis of women’s position on the labour market in this region and further examples related to the use of gender statistics can be found in the UNIFEM study “The Story Behind the Numbers: Women and Employment in Central and Eastern Europe and the Western CIS” (http://www.unifem.sk/index.cfm?Module=Static&page=w&s=IWP) which uses data from the UNECE Gender Statistics Database.

Another example is related to economic activities rates in the UK. In general, men have a higher economic activity rate than women. However, the person’s sex is not the determining parameter for the economic participation of the working age population, but it appears that the age of the youngest child has a great impact in differentiating the participation of women and men in the labour market. Indeed, the economic activity of mothers ranges between 55% for women with children under 5 to 80% for women with the youngest child aged 11-15. While for men the age of children has no impact on their participation rate. Around 93% of men with dependent children are in the labour force regardless of the age of the youngest child.

Another illustrative example is that of Roma girls and women in South East Europe. According to a recent study by UNDP (http://europeandcis.undp.org/?menu=p_publications) there seems to be a lower educational participation among girls compared to boys, and this can be used to explain their relatively higher unemployment. However, a closer look reveals that the return on education is lower for girls compared to boys. This point towards discrimination on labour markets. However this fact presents additional challenges to map and target as compared to enrolment/completion rates in school. Since the latter indicators are easier to understand and measure there is a risk that only participation in education is targeted to fight unemployment among Roma women, and not fighting discrimination, that is more difficult to quantify, measure and to take measures against.
Therefore, it is important to use different sources of data, including qualitative ones and engage in deeper analysis of the causal relationships and the reality which data are meant to describe in order to draw a valid picture of women's and men’s situation that can be the basis for adequate policy making.

3. Can gender-sensitive measurements of change be used to increase organizational effectiveness, as well as development effectiveness? Do they feed into programme planning and are they or could they be used in other concrete ways? If so, in what ways?

Indeed, since gender influences our access to resources and economic as well as political power and largely our societal position in life, interventions lacking a gender analysis/perspective and/or disaggregated data runs the risk of miss-targeting 50% of the population. This means not only that the expected target group is not reached but that the resources risk being misused. As a consequence this might lead to a failure to produce outcomes as a result of project interventions that are based on assumptions rather than sound analysis informed by necessary data.

Using gender-sensitive measurements allows us to measure results and by that way, efficiency of programming efforts. Conclusions based on it feed back into the programme cycle and create incentives to allocate and argue for resources. Showing results increase the incentive for future investments since we (donors and partners alike) are more likely to invest where higher return (in terms of development outcomes) are more likely. Such use would also eliminate the duplication of efforts that might be needed for targeted interventions to correct the bias gender blind policy creates in efficiency and results.

Gender sensitive planning but also monitoring of implementation and of budgetary allocations that support policies ultimately helps to ensure that both women and men (including specific groups of women and men) benefit and contribute to achieving results from concrete interventions based on their particular needs and situations. Improved targeting is important for avoiding “false economics” where attempts to reduce costs in one sector may result in decrease in overall productivity due to increase in time use for individuals, particularly women. In this respect, gender responsive budgeting, which looks at the effect of public revenues and expenditures on women and men, girls and boys, allows for improving equality outcomes, economic governance and financial management, by providing feedback on whether the needs of different groups of the population are met and resources are used equitably and efficiently.

4. Can gender sensitive measurements be used in UNDP country programmes or projects that are not explicitly gender focused? How?

Indeed and so they should. Here is where the focus for UNDP should be on gender mainstreaming, to increase delivery on UNDP’s core mandate by mainstreaming gender across the board. This is best done when setting a baseline and undertaking situational analysis. Any project that has established a sound baseline consisting of gender disaggregated data will be able to detect and measure change in gender equality in terms of a situation for women as compared to men.

In conclusion, it can be said that a body of gender equality measurements creates a foundation to inform baselines and gender sensitive analysis. Adequately used, such a point of departure by and large has the potential to produce more efficient resource use, policy targeting, measurable results, instruments to address gender inequalities and development challenges and inform advocacy!
The review was of 12 loans in various stages of implementation in 4 countries - Pakistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia and Nepal. The objective was to assess the effectiveness of project-specific gender action plans (GAPs) as a gender mainstreaming tool.

Below is a summary of the findings which is extracted from an article published in the Australian journal the Development Bulletin (no. 71 September 2006 http://devnet.anu.edu.au/db71_contents.pdf.) Unfortunately the article is not available for downloading on that site (I can provide the handover copy) but the four country studies are available at the ADB gender equality web-site - http://www.adb.org/Documents/Books/Gender-Equality-Results/default.asp?p=gender - and a synthesis report is also being published.

Best wishes.

On the issue of gender equality strategies and measures contributing to the achievement of overall objectives, this was not something which we expected, but it was certainly one of the most important and interesting findings - gender action plans, which include specific targets, strategies and indicators on gender equality - improve the overall quality of development programs and projects and thus help to achieve overall development objectives. The evidence on that point was clear - and this encouraged some partner government agencies to apply gender equality strategies, indicators and targets to their ongoing work.

The study:

The loans reviewed included five rural development projects (agriculture, rural infrastructure and livestock), four human development/social sector loans (two health loans including one sector program loan, and two education projects) and three governance loans (including one project and two policy reform loans).[i]

What is a gender action plan (GAP)?

A gender action plan is a systematic framework for ensuring that women participate in and benefit from development programs and projects. It is a roadmap to translate gender mainstreaming into concrete actions and to guide implementation of the gender design features of development programs and projects.

Gender action plans helped to achieve practical benefits for women and changes in gender relations

Of the twelve ADB loans assessed, three projects implemented comprehensive GAPs and three projects had GAPs which had partial or delayed implementation. Four projects had no GAPs but did have some gender provisions included in the project design. The remaining two were governance policy loans which had gender equality policy reforms as tranche release conditions.

The gender assessments showed that comprehensive project GAPs are an effective gender mainstreaming tool, because they provide a systematic framework for ensuring that women participate and benefit from all loan components. Gender equality results were demonstrated within sectors, across sectors and across the four countries included in the study.

Projects which refined gender action plans during implementation had the most comprehensive results including practical benefits for women and some signs of progress towards changes in gender relations. Projects with delayed or partial implementation of GAPs demonstrated fewer results but had significant potential to deliver more benefits if GAPs were fully implemented. Projects without comprehensive GAPs achieved some benefits due to specific gender provisions, but demonstrated the least progress towards
changes in gender relations. Two governance policy loans achieved significant gender equality policy reforms at macro level due to tranche release conditions which were met by partner governments.

Loan projects which implemented gender action plans resulted in:

- **Increased participation** by women in project activities, particularly through community based organisations.
- More equitable **access to project and program resources**, including employment opportunities, skills training, technology and government services.
- Improved **practical benefits for women** such as increased income, greater financial security and increased livelihood options.
- **Progress towards gender equality**, including changing decision making patterns in the household, female membership and leadership of community based organisations, and increased mobility for women.

Most projects encouraged the participation of women in loan activities to some extent. However, this did not always translate into sustainable access to resources, benefits, or progress towards gender equality. Gender action plans helped to ensure that women’s participation was effectively translated into practical benefits for women and their families.

**Gender action plans helped to achieve overall project objectives**

Gender action plans assisted with achieving overall project objectives, by reducing the vulnerability of women and their families to poverty. By targeting women, projects which implemented gender action plans also effectively targeted the poor.

**Significant benefits for women and progress towards gender equality was achieved in a variety of challenging social contexts**

All projects were faced with challenging cultural and social obstacles to women participating and benefiting. Comparing results across different sectors in the same country demonstrated that these obstacles could be addressed in non-threatening ways when comprehensive gender action plans were implemented.

For example in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal there are significant constraints on women’s mobility and traditional views which prohibit or undermine women’s involvement in community based organisations, their interaction in public spaces and decision making, and their access to productive resources, education and training. All these factors make it very difficult for women to participate in large loan projects.

Projects with gender action plans identified feasible strategies to address these constraints, including the establishment and nurturing of women’s groups, and mechanisms to ensure that they accessed project resources such as training, technical services and financial support for new livelihood options. The motivation and solidarity provided by women’s groups enabled individual women to challenge and change the attitudes of family members, particularly husbands, who were initially opposed to women taking on new roles and developing new skills. These strategies fostered progress towards greater equality, empowered women to participate in decision making, and provided entry points to deliver practical benefits such as increased income, particularly in rural infrastructure construction projects.

Gender action plans provided a systematic framework and concrete activities for putting gender mainstreaming into practice, based on social and gender analysis. They encouraged project partners and implementers to develop a shared rationale for targeting women and to identify strategic entry points and realistic targets for women’s participation linked to activities in each project component. This ensured that women could access a range of project resources and receive a share of project benefits. These targets and strategies sometimes required interventions which challenged cultural practices.

**GAP approaches have been replicated by some partner agencies**
Good management and strong leadership from the partner agency facilitated the implementation of gender action plans. A capacity to innovate, flexibility, a teamwork approach, effective communication patterns, the capacity to learn and the ability to adapt strategies based on experience were strong features in the partner agencies whose projects achieved the most comprehensive results.

The effectiveness of gender action plans at delivering poverty reduction results has prompted some partner agencies to replicate GAP strategies in other projects and areas of work. Positive results have reinforced commitment by partner agencies to address gender equality issues and to institutionalise gender mainstreaming approaches. Both in Bangladesh and Nepal, the positive results from gender action plans led to GAP design being replicated across the sector.

For example the Nepal Department of Livestock and the Bangladesh Local Government Engineering Department now acknowledge the importance of participatory approaches to community organisation and gender strategies to maximize returns on investments. The Nepal Department of Livestock has replicated small-livestock groups and community mobilisation approaches for targeting women in non-project areas (Hunt, Lateef and Shrestha 2005). Rules for managing women’s market sections have been adopted by the Bangladesh Local Government Engineering Department, along with the design of Union Parishad buildings to include a separate women’s room and facilities. The Local Government Engineering Department has also committed to hiring local sociologists and community organisers to implement social components in other government projects more effectively (Thomas, Lateef and Sultana 2005: 11).

[i] Loans included in this study included: Bangladesh Third Rural Infrastructure Development Project, Bangladesh Northwest Crop Diversification Project, Bangladesh Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project, Pakistan Malakand Rural Development Project, Pakistan Women’s Health Project, Pakistan Decentralization Support Program, Nepal Third Livestock Development Project, Nepal Governance Reform Program, Nepal Teacher Education Project, Cambodia Northwest Rural Development Project, Cambodia Commune Council Development Project, and Cambodia Health Sector Support Project.

Visit the updated Gender Website: [http://www.undp.org/women](http://www.undp.org/women)