

Impact of Gender Mainstreaming in Rural Development
And
Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

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Abstract

Gender mainstreaming is known as a concept of ensuring that policy and decision-making takes account of cultural barriers, challenges, and men's and women's different interests and needs. Recent studies and reports have clearly made a point that gender equality and mainstreaming is highly encouraged and recommended to reduce poverty and meet the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

United Nations MDGs were agreed and signed by all countries in 2000 with the very first goal to "eradicate extreme poverty and hunger," followed by other goals related to education, gender equality, health, environmental sustainability and global partnership. Considering the importance and impact that MDG Goal 3 has in poverty eradication, it is now imperative for all member countries to aggressively pursue gender mainstreaming to be able to fulfill this goal.

Women play a major role in civil society and in economic growth in rural areas of developing countries . Women's work is crucial for survival and provides means for poor household to escape the poverty trap; however in many cases, it is obvious that gender integration does not promote and involve women in policy design and decision making in rural development.

The objective of this paper is to emphasize the importance and implications of gender mainstreaming in rural development . Gender inequality refers to both men and women, however, since the majority of the emphasis is focused on female disadvantage, men's role to promote gender mainstreaming in rural development will also be discussed.

This paper will clearly demonstrate 1) MDGs and the latest progress in achieving them; 2) the importance of meeting the goals; 3) why gender mainstreaming is beneficial in rural development; 4) contributing factors to successful gender mainstreaming; and 5) the importance and impact of gender mainstreaming to meet the goals.

The content of the paper is based on various research and literature reviews and is drawn on the findings and recommendations from recent reports on worldwide trends related to gender equality and mainstreaming. The following sections will demonstrate good practices and the impact and importance of gender mainstreaming to achieve all the goals by 2015.

The paper will conclude with further recommendations that should be considered to develop an in-depth understanding of the dynamics and the added value of gender mainstreaming in rural development, poverty reduction and overall achievement of the MDGs.

Introduction

The World Conference for Women in 1995, followed by the Economic and Social Council of the General Assembly (ESOSOC) conference in 1997, both held in Beijing, China, developed a new meaning for the term “gender mainstreaming.” Gender mainstreaming, by definition involves integrating a gender perspective and analysis into all stages of designing, implementing and evaluating projects, policies and programs.

Throughout the world, women suffer disadvantages with many social factors imposed on them by religion and culture. These disadvantages and differences vary from country to country and region to region, but nevertheless, it has been proven that women and girls in poor countries, in particular in rural areas, experience a monumental gender disparity across societies. Layers of inequality for women in all socioeconomic levels result in a lack of opportunities to access education, health, income and political influence. This phenomena is found in most Developing Countries.

“We have a collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality level. As leaders we have a duty therefore to all the world’s people, especially the most vulnerable and, in particular the children of the world, to whom the future belongs.”

Millennium Development Goals Declaration

For the past decade, gender mainstreaming has opened many opportunities in developing countries to promote the process of mainstreaming in rural areas to contribute to economic and rural development. Gender mainstreaming in many countries of Asia has proven to be a driving force to motivate both men and women to find a peaceful mechanism to work together to face the challenges. While gender equality and mainstreaming focus mainly on female disadvantages, in many areas men also experience discrimination at all levels of society.

The Millennium Declaration endorsed by the world’s governments in September 2000 recognized the importance of gender equality and mainstreaming to be the most effective methodology and tool to meet the needs of the goals and produce a successful end result. Several projects and good practices have proven that gender mainstreaming will have an enormous effect in rural development and poverty reduction, and will be used as a blue print for other similar countries to practice. The following sections will discuss the general concept of gender mainstreaming, it’s importance in rural development and in achieving MDGs.

The United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

In September 2000, at the United Nations Millennium Summit in New York, MDGs were adopted by 189 nations-and signed by 147 heads of state and governments with an initiative to make a firm commitment to achieve eight goals set by the United Nations and respond to the world's main development challenges, all leading to halving world poverty by 2015.

The world leader's reconvened at the March 2002, International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey, Mexico, to establish a mechanism and strategy for a global development partnership in which all countries, despite their current status, agreed to jointly take action to reduce poverty. The meetings continued with UN member states gathering at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa to reaffirm the MDGs and reconfirm their commitment to achieve the goals by 2015.

"We will have time to reach the Millennium Development Goals—worldwide and in most, or even all, individual countries—but only if we break with business as usual.

We cannot win overnight. Success will require sustained action across the entire decade between now and the deadline.

It takes time to train the teachers, nurses and engineers; to build the roads, schools and hospitals; to grow the small and large businesses able to create the jobs and income needed. So we must start now. And we ***must more than double global development assistance*** over the next few years. Nothing less will help to achieve the Goals."

United Nations Secretary-General
Kofi A. Annan

The MDGs have set a road map for countries to develop a framework to take appropriate measurements to eradicate poverty and hunger, provide a child with a secondary education, promote gender equality and empower women, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, combat HIV/AIDs, ensure environmental sustainability and develop global partnership to contribute to economic development.

Goal 1: Eradicate Extreme Hunger and Poverty

Target 1. Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 a day

Target 2. Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger

Goal 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education

Target 3. Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.

Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

Target 4. Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015.

Goal 4: Reduce Child Mortality

Target 5. Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate.

Goal 5: Improve Maternal Health

Target 6. Reduce by three-quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio

Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria

Target 7. Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS

Target 8. Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases

Goal 7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability

Target 9. Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programs and reverse the loss of environmental resources

Target 10. Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation

Target 11. Have achieved by 2020 a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers

Goal 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development

Target 12. Develop, further, an open, rule-based, predictable, nondiscriminatory trading and financial system (includes a commitment to good governance, development, and poverty reduction both nationally and internationally)

Target 13. Address the special needs of the Least Developed Countries (includes tariff- and quota-free access for Least Developed Countries' exports, enhanced program of debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries [HIPCs] and cancellation of official bilateral debt, and more generous official development assistance for countries committed to poverty reduction)

Target 14. Address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and small-island developing states (through the Program of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and 22nd General Assembly provisions)

Target 15. Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term.

Why is it important to meet the goals?

The UN Millennium Project Report, *Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals*, was published in January 2005. Headed by Jeffrey Sachs and supported by UNDP, the Millennium Project is an independent advisory body commissioned by the UN Secretary-General, to propose the best strategies for meeting the MDGs. The report indicated the importance of meeting the goals, and should the world leaders take the initiative and meet the MDGs at the end of 2015, the following will result:

For the billion-plus people still living in extreme poverty, the Millennium Development Goals are a **life-and-death issue**.

Source: (The Millennium Project—Investing in Development- 2006)

- More than 500 million people will be lifted out of extreme poverty
- More than 300 million will no longer suffer from hunger
- There will be dramatic progress in child health
- 30 million children will be saved to reach beyond the age of five
- Over 2 million mothers will live longer
- 350 million people will have access to safe drinking water
- 650 million people will live with basic sanitation
- Over 100 million more women and girls will attend school, and have access to economic and political opportunities

Progress on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (MDG #3)

United Nations MDGs, 2006 reported that numerous countries are making progress toward achieving the goals, with a handful countries in Sub-Saharan Africa still struggling and facing a number of challenges in achieving the goals. Advanced countries have made a firm commitment to increase aid and pardon debts of various countries in some geographic areas, in particular the Sub-Saharan African region.⁽²⁾

While women represent a large portion of the third world's labor force, they still remain disadvantaged in securing decent paid labor. Sociocultural attitudes, lack of a sound legislative framework for gender equality, unfair labor distribution and inequality in the labor markets are all factors that contribute to gender inequality; and all can be resolved with the implementation of successful gender mainstreaming.

The report indicated that women started to slowly increase political participation in some regions. In parts of Asia and Africa, women made significant progress in political participation and securing seats in the parliaments. One in five parliamentarians elected in 2005 are women, bringing the percentage of parliamentary seats held by women in 2006 worldwide to almost 17.⁽²⁾

In 20 countries, more than 30 percent of parliamentarians are women with the most encouraging development of women in Afghanistan and Iraq representing 27 and 25 percent of parliamentary seats respectively.

Asia has shown substantial progress in narrowing gender gaps in education enrollments, and the region has shown an overall mix in gender equality and women's empowerment. In accordance with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) annual report, more than three quarters of countries in Asia are "on-track" in narrowing gender gaps in education enrollment.⁽³⁾

While all the countries in Asia, and particularly the Pacific region, recognize issues of gender equality is matters of cultural norms and constant challenges and barriers, there is a common consensus that countries are unlikely to make meaningful progress in reducing poverty, improving children's access to education and quality health care, reducing the burden of infectious diseases, or improving access to safe water and improved sanitation, unless they take into account the different vulnerabilities of poor women and men, and the sociocultural and other conditions that limit poor women's and girls' access to basic services.⁽³⁾ Gender mainstreaming can and will close the gap, playing a major role in adding value to overcome these challenges.

Why Gender Mainstreaming?

Gender Mainstreaming has evolved since the early 1990s and been growing gradually ever since, mainly in developing/under developed countries. In September 1995, at the World Conference for Women in Beijing, China, the Beijing Platform for Action focused on the term “gender mainstreaming” which was later adopted internationally and recognized as a methodology in achieving equality between women and men.

Leadership and government commitment are major contributing factors to a successful mainstreaming.

Following the Beijing conference, in 1997, the Economic and Social Council of the General Assembly (ECOSOC) adopted gender mainstreaming as the methodology by which the entire United Nations system would work toward the advancement of women and gender equality goals.⁽⁴⁾ The most important and special concept of the process of gender mainstreaming is the fact that it contributes to equal opportunities, obligations and rights of both men and women.

In a less complicated definition, ***gender mainstreaming means that gender equality becomes a full part of common policies.*** It implies a broader and more comprehensive definition of gender equality, giving value to differences and diversity.⁽⁵⁾ At the same time, it stresses the need to (re)organize, improve, develop and evaluate policy processes and thus make it possible to challenge the male bias that characterizes society and the structural character of gender inequality.

“mainstreaming is not about joining the polluted stream, but rather finding fresh new streams.”

It is absolutely imperative to stress the fact that gender mainstreaming is not focused on women; it is about men, women, children, and society in general. It is essential to take measurement to allow men to feel valued and be able to positively participate in the gender mainstreaming process, which will assure taking responsibility to play a role in gender equality.

Importance of Gender Mainstreaming

The most important reasons to emphasize gender mainstreaming are as follows:⁽⁵⁾

More Effective Policy and Legislation

Policy-makers will have to pay attention to the broad effects of policies on citizens' livelihood—and that, as a result, may mean a **more human and less economic** approach to the management of contemporary societies.

More Effective Governance

If gender mainstreaming is used, policymaking will be better informed and show that policies are never gender neutral. **Buy-in of men and productive collaborative efforts between women and men** utilize a diverse human resources. As the stakeholders are getting involved in the process and implementation of gender mainstreaming, a clear shift will take place from **isolation to integrate** both genders, in particular **involve men** in gender equality work.

Visible presence of gender equality in the mainstream of society

Based on a successful track record and good practices, mainstreaming will show that gender equality is an important societal issue with implications for the development of society.

Diversity among women and men

Equality policies usually target women as a whole—but gender mainstreaming should be able to target the diverse situations of different groups of both women and men (migrant women, young women, old men, etc).

Good Practice—Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, the Asian Development Bank was successful in mainstreaming gender in a rural infrastructure development project (TRIDP). The project objectives were to accelerate agricultural and nonfarm economic and social development in 13 districts by improving roads, bridges and culverts, tree-planting, construction of local government complexes and improvements to rural markets and construction of women's sections in them. Mainstreaming gender enabled over **2,000 women to obtain steady employment and wages** for the duration of the project; **increased business skills** and opportunities for women in retail; **enhanced women's mobility and self-confidence**; and improved household living standards, nutrition and education for children.

Upfront institutional dimensions that contributed to success were the ADB's adoption of a **clear gender policy, operational guidelines and support from leadership**. Mandating a country gender assessment helped to identify key issues and strategic possibilities for action while external pressure from donors helped to maintain momentum on mainstreaming, as did their additional financial support. In implementation, **Gender Action Plans provided focus and accountability** while **gender experts provided on-going technical support**. Other contributing factors were project and sector-specific training for project implementers and community members and careful monitoring and fine-tuning of activities during the program.

Source: (Pursuing Gender Equality -Asia/Pacific Report 2006)

Contributing Factors to a Successful Gender Mainstreaming in Rural Development

Gender mainstreaming encompasses all aspects of planning, implementing and monitoring any social, political or economic action. In the implementation phase, changes occur in both “internal” organizational and “external” operational procedures. To successfully mainstream gender in rural areas, internal local government and the community should make a firm commitment to embrace the goals and have a thorough understanding of the values of mainstreaming that contributes to economic and rural development.

“Men are the gatekeepers of current gender orders and are potential resistors of change. If we do not effectively reach men and boys, many of our efforts will be either thwarted or simply ignored” (Kaufman in Ruxton, 2004:20)

On the local level, human resources restructuring takes place to transform the organizational culture from “gender bias” to “gender-balanced” by integrating women, appointing them a key positions in local governance, policy analysis and decision making. This step will empower other women to step forward and contribute to economic and rural development.

On the “external” level, appropriate steps should be taken to mainstream gender into development operations such as design, implementation and evaluation. These steps may include; influencing goals, strategies and resource allocations at the start and providing specialized **gender technical input** such as **gender analysis and technical assistance** for the design, implementation and evaluation phases⁽⁶⁾

Empowering women to take initiatives in rural development is an essential first step to eradicating poverty. From promoting good governance, to encouraging participation in agriculture and farming, to accessing funds through microfinance, gender mainstreaming will play a crucial role in rural development to meet MDGs in developing countries.

The role of women in rural areas in developing countries has tripled with child bearing, caring for the family, caring for the elderly, spending hours gathering wood for fuel and water, processing and producing food, farming and/or being engaged in family businesses that produce very little income, but enough to support the family and survive.

Despite ongoing challenges and barriers, a solid frame work for a successful gender mainstreaming was developed in Africa with the collaboration of five Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and local government, which led to a successful end result. All the

organizations agreed that four key dimensions to promote gender mainstreaming are: **political will, technical capacity, accountability and organizational culture**. The outcome of these efforts was significantly beneficial to the community and the organizations themselves. The economic and community benefits included; **greater agriculture production, improved sanitation, better health, and nutrition and increased primary school enrolment rates, particularly for girls**. The end result indicated a significant social behavior changes toward women in the community. Factors contributing to this effort are illustrated in the following table.

Factors Contributing to Effective Gender Mainstreaming in NGO's in Projects in Africa

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

Source: (James, Sebro, 2005)

In addition to numerous internal and external influences, the following areas showed a tremendous results in mainstreaming gender in rural areas.

Participation in Politics and Governance

United Nations Development Programme defines governance as; the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. It comprises the mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences.

Women's participation in the political arena and governance has been very slow due to the nonexistence of any structured policy, therefore, to promote this task, in 1999 the Management Development and Governance Division of the Bureau for Development Policy in United Nations Development convened a meeting to set goals for women's participation in politics and governance.

Women experience inequality in power relative to men from the household level to the national level, where they are universally underrepresented in legislative bodies, organs of government and local political structures.

Source: Human Development Report (2006)

Politics and participation for women **commences from home** and runs upward to local/state and central government. Women should be able to participate in decision making at home, in a mesolevel of community and local government and then move forward to the national level.

Women's direct involvement in policy and decision making, project planning, design and implementation gives them a **strong sense of value and ownership**, which in return contributes to community development and generates an enthusiasm for community members to be willing join forces to innovate mechanisms for community sustainable development.

Women in politics in rural areas are facing major challenges and obstacles trying to participate in local elections and politics, some of which are due to:

- Cultural barriers and challenges
- Limited education and experience
- Intimidation and threats made by male counterparts
- Commitments and household obligations and responsibilities
- Lack of access to mass media
- Lack of access to campaign finance
- Lack of trust and respect by the community due to eschewing change

Despite the challenges, the Asia Pacific Region MDGs status report indicated that on the local level, Bangladesh, India, Nepal and **Pakistan** are maintaining the highest local participation

rates. However, on the national level, in **Pakistan** and Bangladesh, for example less than 10% of civil servants are women, compared with over 50% in the Philippines and close to 60% in Thailand.

The Islamic Republic of **Pakistan** is one the countries in the Asia region where a woman has held the office of Prime Minister, however it seems that the political arena as a whole is male dominated. The participation rates of **Pakistani** women as voters, candidates in the electoral process, and members of elected forums is minimal. The Election Commission has made continuous efforts to promote and encourage women to vote by launching public awareness campaigns, and even establishing separate electoral booths for both genders, however due to social constraints and other problems and issues, women were not fully engaged in participation and the election process to their maximum potential.

Further studies from these countries have found that gender mainstreaming in the local political arena will have a major impact in rural development, meeting the MDGs. Women will be more empowered to participate in politics once they receive a strong support from the dominant male political party and an extensive support and skill development trainings from local NGOs. A strategic planning to launch a political campaign will build a positive image in the community and earn trust and respect from community members.

The goal of gender mainstreaming into politics and governance on all public administration levels, in particular in rural areas are:⁽⁷⁾

- To ensure balanced participation between men and women in national and/or rural governance, which includes removal of structural and systemic barriers to women's participation;
- To ensure that gender issues are integrated into decision-making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation within local and national governance initiatives.

The most important component to succeeding in the political arena is a commitment by the local government to initiate, develop and implement a **Training and Skill Development Strategy** in the following areas:

- Advocacy for gender awareness in politics
- Business Management
- Capacity building through networking and public relations
- Community Outreach
- Ethics and Etiquettes
- Gender Mainstreaming Skills (include male counterparts in the process)
- Interviews and negotiation
- Information Systems

- Leadership Skills
- Political Campaign Development
- Public Policy and administration awareness
- Public budget analyses
- Strategic Planning Development
- Mass Media awareness
- Youth Development for younger candidates

In addition to the above, the following strategies are highly recommended to ensure a successful gender mainstreaming in local political participation.⁽⁶⁾

Research and Analyze Problems—women face many challenges and obstacles that hinder their full participation in local (rural) and national political arenas. To identify such challenges, it is absolutely crucial to conduct research to analyze the problems and then take appropriate measurements to resolve the issues.

Enact Affirmative Action Policy and Legislation and in compliance with **CEDAW, Article 4**, ensure gender balance and equality and no discrimination against women.

Reform Political Parties and the Electoral System—of the central government to ensure that women **constitute 50 percent** of party membership, leadership, committee officers and candidates.

Provide a Gender-Neutral Environment—provide child-care facilities and parental support to both **women and men to balance their daily roles** as parents and politicians. The experience from numerous developing countries suggests that such measures can be particularly instrumental in **attracting more women** into public administration.⁽⁶⁾

Establish Women's Political Organizations—To achieve the gender balance in political representation mandated by MDGs, it is absolutely essential to form a mechanism and **establish women's political groups, coalitions, and lobbyists** to promote women's participation in politics, advocacy, lobbying and public awareness.

Transfer Technology—to establish and share knowledge and learn **“know-how”** from male counterparts in the political arena within the country or same region; to share lessons learned, in respect to both failure and success stories.

Monitor and Evaluate—Develop a national monitoring and evaluation system to assure a **transparent** electoral system.

Revise Campaign Financing in National Budget—to provide women with financial resources to campaign.

Provide Access to Technology—equal access to technology to access information, to overcome the gender gap and provide women proactively with access to Information Technology.

Promote Agriculture and Farming

Mainstreaming as a strategy to achieve gender equality acknowledges that women and men have different needs, situations and resources with respect to their participation in agriculture and rural development activities ⁽⁹⁾

A Major constraint to achieving gender balance in agricultural development is the lack of women among front-line staff.

Source: (IFAD 2006)

Over 80 percent of the MDG's target group live in rural poor agriculture areas, hence agriculture and farming become a critical component in the successful attainment of meeting the MDGs by 2015 in many parts of the world, mainly in Asia and Africa. Gender mainstreaming in agriculture and farming produces benefits that go beyond project performance. Many factors contribute to successful gender mainstreaming in rural areas, one of the most important components being **Education and Training**.

Women invest a large part of their time, labor and expertise in agriculture and farming with limited resources and education. Providing education and training in agriculture and farming will speed the process and can be instrumental in overcoming barriers. To successfully mainstream gender within a rural setting, a range of tools need to be applied to accommodate the needs of both men and women.

The majority of rural women are farming for livelihood sustenance as men are. Although they are the heads of family of a fifth of rural homes and, in some regions, of a third of such homes, they **only own about 1% of the land**.

In addition to daily chores and family-raising responsibilities, women farmers are turning toward commercial agricultural production and agro-enterprise in order to supplement household income, however they face **numerous constraints and barriers** due to using primitive methods in agriculture. With a lack of education and training in the agricultural sector, techniques and resources are still limited and have not addressed the differing problems and needs between women and men. A shift toward more developed agricultural methods that distinguishes and caters to both genders and provides procedures and standards is beneficial to all stakeholders.

To assure a successful end result, barriers and challenges should be taken into consideration with a tailored and customized training program to meet the requirements of women's work in agriculture and farming. Women's organization should work closely with the local NGOs to promote women's participation, as well as **encourage interaction and participation of men** in conducting training and "**know-how**" transfer technology.

Access Funding through Micro-Finance

In developing countries, women always face barriers when seeking funding through traditional banking institutes. This is mainly due to many factors, some of which are due to **lack of trust, confidence and collateral**. In a rural setting, women tend to exercise other alternatives to access funding from family and friends. Micro-finance has proven to be a constructive tool to provide the rural poor with seed money and access to small amounts of credit at reasonable interest rates to enable them to set up micro/small businesses in rural areas.

Micro-finance can be accomplished in various forms, both for individual and group lending. The latest statistics released by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)⁽⁷⁾ has shown that group-based lending has enabled some women to overcome the requirements for collateral. Overall, vulnerable women demonstrated their willingness to accumulate funds as a group and create a self-help group to open a savings account. This method was extremely successful in many Asian developing countries and led to rural and sustainable development.

As of December 31, 2005, **3,133 micro credit institutions** have reported **reaching 113,261,390 clients, 81,949,036 of whom were among the poorest** when they took their first loan. Assuming five persons per family, the 81.9 million poorest clients reached by the end of 2005 affected some 410 million family members.

Source: (State of the Micro Credit Summit Campaign Report – 2006)

In Bangladesh, for example, women default on loans less often than men, and credit extended to women has a much greater impact on household consumption and quality of life for children. Women's status, both in their homes and communities, is improved when they are responsible for loans and for managing savings. When they generate and control their own income, women gain a level of power that means they can make decisions independently and command more respect.

GOOD PRACTICE—IFAD PAKISTAN

The International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD) was established in Pakistan in 1978. Ever since inception, the organization supported 21 projects in rural areas with a total of \$387.5 million loans and total estimated projects of over \$2 million. These **projects have benefited approximately 1.6 million households in rural Pakistan**. The main objective of the organization is to focus on poverty reduction in rural areas through community development, agriculture, livestock, income generation, women empowerment and generating a mechanism for sustainability.

During the last decade, IFAD has implemented important multisectoral projects in Pakistan **setting a road map to understand the importance and impact of gender mainstreaming in rural areas**. These projects were located in very conservative, rural areas of Neelum, Jhleum and Manshehra. During the design of the project in the early 1990s, the approach shifted from the inclusion of “women’s components,” which were common practice at the time to “gender mainstreaming.”⁽¹³⁾

These pilot projects targeted both **men and women and encouraged gender balance on the community level** to build an effective strategic approach to avoid conflicts and “status-quo” in a conservative setting. To implement such an approach, it has become critical to **replace “reform” with “process”** to achieve a successful end result in gender mainstreaming in rural areas.

IFAD emphasized the **importance of building a partnership with a local NGO** to develop a credible, legitimate structure to oversee the project to serve all aspect of mainstreaming including **men’s involvement in the decision and policymaking process**.

The program has successfully completed the projects by taking the following steps and suggested that these strategies should be taken into consideration for future projects in Pakistan as well as other countries that share similar culture and challenges.

Community Commitment—Project Management through understanding and a solid commitment by community leaders to support the process from inception to completion.

Gender Balance—Women and men participating as field staff will ease mainstreaming and benefit the process for the community to eventually accept interaction between outside men, such as trainers, and local women.

Multilevel process—Strategies will often need to be structured in multilevel stages. One reason for the slower pace is that, in a conservative sociocultural context, it may be necessary to take a multistep approach to achieve objectives. For instance, technical training had to address men first in the particularly conservative communities, and only after it had built confidence and trust among the menfolk could women also be trained.

Even then, technical training had to follow strict gender lines and closely parallel women's existing roles and responsibilities. The same pattern occurred with vocational training for women. Training for nontraditional roles had to be postponed to a later stage. Where women are somewhat more educated and the general context is more progressive, men will be more supportive and women will take advantage of opportunities more rapidly.

Visibility may become an issue that can, again, threaten success. Therefore, common project components, such as the construction of special women's centers, have to be carefully weighed in terms of whether they will really be used by and for the benefit of women, or whether women would be better off meeting in each others' homes.

Men, "buy-in" It is usually necessary to operate through the men and the community leader in order to gain the trust and credibility of the community at large. The project experience showed it to be particularly important first to obtain the trust and cooperation of the men and the religious leaders in the most traditional communities. Only after that could the women be directly targeted.

Women's practical needs should be addressed before one focuses on strategic gender needs. This tactic will open up opportunities for women to do other things and, additionally, establish project credibility with area people.

For instance, the study found that the provision of domestic water supplies and fodder saved women livestock managers an average of about three hours per day. As a result, the **women were more readily able to take up new income-generating activities** such as milk production. Sometimes, the very fact of meeting practical needs will result in secondary changes in gender roles and power in a socially acceptable way, as occurred under these projects.

Source (IFAD Gender Perspective Focus in Rural Development)

GOOD PRACTICE—INDONESIA

The Asian Development Bank has implemented a project aimed at reducing poverty in 11 districts in six Indonesian provinces by **increasing the incomes of about 110,000 poor families** beyond the poverty line and **empowering the rural poor to plan** and manage activities that affect their livelihood. This objective will be achieved through participatory village planning and the formation of community-based savings and loan organizations (CBSLOs), which will provide the rural infrastructure needed to link the urban and rural areas.

Indonesia has about 4.3 million poor households, of which 0.5 million are headed by women. One in every 10 households headed by women is poor.

Rural women in the project area contribute to economic development in major ways through their involvement in agriculture, petty trading, and wage-labor activities. However, they are constrained by low wages and lack of access to capital, skills training, appropriate technology, and market facilities.

The project aims to deal with these constraints. Women will compose half of the membership of CBSLOs for microenterprise development, half of those **who will undergo capacity-building and leadership training**, and half of the project facilitators in the villages. The recruitment of women facilitators will create job opportunities for women from the community.

Women's groups will be formed in the villages to take part in **village planning**. Women will thus be able to identify the constraints on their economic activities and livelihood and have their needs considered in the local government's development plan. Women's participation in village planning recognizes **women's important role in the village economy and community affairs**.

The CBSLOs will provide **women with access to microcredit** from banks in the formal sector for expanding their microenterprises or investing in new ones. Women will thus be able to invest in both farm and nonfarm enterprises to create productive assets. Through the urban–rural linkage component of the project women's enterprises will gain access to marketing facilities.

Women will receive **human development and leadership training** to improve their capacity to voice their needs in village planning and in the operation and management of CBSLOs. The CBSLO management committee will include a woman leader.

Gender and development consultants will be recruited, women's NGOs will be involved in project implementation, **women will be given equal participation in microcredit activities** and in operation of CBSLOs, and a gender-disaggregated monitoring system will be installed.

Source: (Asian Development Bank—www.adb.org)

Gender Mainstreaming to Meet MDGs

In September 2004, 44 government leaders from Asia and the Pacific convened in Bangkok, Thailand to review the region's 10-year progress in implementing the Beijing platform for Action. At the conclusion of the meeting The "Bangkok Communiqué" was issued to emphasize the importance of the meeting and reinforce the commitments made by the world leaders in the Millennium Development Declaration, the Beijing Platform and CEDAW. The communiqué also identified areas of progress, and continuing gaps and challenges facing gender equality and mainstreaming in the region.

Despite substantial progress in narrowing gender gaps in educational enrollment, the region's overall performance in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment has been mixed.⁽³⁾ Country members all agreed that achieving the MDGs will require a collaborative effort and firm commitments by the leaders of the world.

More than **one billion people** in the world **live on less than US\$1 a day** **2.7 billion struggle to survive** on less than US\$2 per day.

More than **800 million** people go  **hungry** every day, including **300 million children**.

Source: (Human Development Report- 2006)

While meeting each goal is extremely crucial, recent reports and evidence has shown that in the Asia region, MDG #3 on gender equality and women's empowerment and goal #5 on maternal health have been widely criticized for their narrow approach to gender issues. The following section will demonstrate the impact of gender mainstreaming in gender-specific goals of MDG Goal #1 (eradicate extreme poverty and hunger), Goal #3 (Gender Equality and women's empowerment) and MDG #3 (Improve Maternal Health).

MDG#1—Eradicate Extreme Hunger and Poverty

United Nations MDG report 2006 has shown very slow progress in poverty reduction in all regions. In 1990, more than 1.2 billion people—28 percent of the developing world's population—lived in extreme poverty. By 2002, the proportion decreased to 19 percent. In Sub-Saharan Africa, although the poverty rate declined marginally, the number of people living in extreme poverty increased by 140 million.

The largest segment of the world's poor are the estimated 800 million poor women, children and men who live in rural areas under the most unbearable living conditions. These are a

group of people who are neglected by the government and the rest of the world who are struggling to capture attention to enhance their living condition.

“Every **3.6 seconds a person dies** of starvation, and most of those who die are **children under age of 5.**”

“The world’s **richest 500** individuals have a **combined income greater than** that of the poorest **416 million**”

Source: (Human Development Report—2006)

A constructive joint effort toward gender mainstreaming by men and women serves a common goal and, along with a firm commitment from the local government and community, will be the key to reducing poverty in rural areas and will contribute to:

- Economic development and growth—Working side by side with male counterparts for a common goal to build a better community
- Income generation and self-sustainability
- Building an effective governance with heavy involvement in local government and public policy decision making.

“Massive poverty and obscene inequality are such terrible scourges of our times—times in which the world boasts breathtaking advances in science, technology, industry and wealth accumulation, that they have to rank alongside slavery and apartheid as social evils.

Source: (Nelson Mandela, 2005)

MDG#3—Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

Gender discrimination and inequality exists in many areas of the social, economic and political sectors. Inequality mainly begins in the household and moves upward to all social levels.

The UN Millennium Project suggested that gender equality encompasses three main dimensions:

capabilities (including basic human abilities in education, health and nutrition);

Seventy percent of the 130 million children who are out of school are **girls.**

Women count for two-thirds of the 960 million adults in the world who can not read.

Of the world’s **one billion poorest people, three-fifths are women and girls.**

Source: (UNDP Partnership Annual Report- 2006)

access to resources and opportunities (including access to economic assets, such as land and infrastructure; resources, such as income and employment; and political opportunities such as representation in political bodies); and **security** (including reduced vulnerability to violence and conflict).

In addition to a general commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment at the UN Millennium Declaration and the World Summit, it is confirmed by all member countries that gender equality and mainstreaming will play a key role to achieve all the MDGs by 2015. Together, these dimensions contribute to women's individual well being to be able to have a better understanding of their rights and make wise choices and decisions in all areas of life.

Despite substantial progress in narrowing gender gaps in educational enrollments, the **region's overall performance** in promoting **gender equality and women's empowerment has been mixed**. More than **three quarters of countries in Asia are "on track"**, while more **than two-thirds are clearly "off-track"**.

Source- (*Pursuing Gender Equality through the MDG in Asia and the Pacific – 2006*)

MDG#5—Improve Maternal Health

Women's health is a major factor and essential capability which is closely linked with family and children's well being. The Asia/Pacific MDG Status report indicated that despite substantial investments in health interventions by governments, western donors, and NGOs, women across **Asia continue to suffer from high rates of death** or disability associated with childbirth, respiratory and water borne diseases, malnutrition and anemia, as well as an increasing rate of HIV infection. Deaths and complications associated with pregnancy and childbirth account for a large portion of women's deaths.

The number of people living with **HIV globally** has now reached an estimated **40.3 million**. In **2005, 3.1 million people died of AIDS-related illnesses**; of these more than **500,000 were children**.

Source: (UNDP Partnership Annual Report – 2006)

In many countries, health service providers are particularly scarce in rural areas, a situation that may arise in part because it is unsafe for female workers to live alone in some isolated areas. Additionally, lack of health facilities and access to a healthcare provider will result in a preventable loss of life.

The scenario may well be different if traditional birth attendants and village volunteers could be included in the process, as these are the domains of women in many countries. Moreover, there are some notable exceptions in Ethiopia and **Pakistan**. Both are among the countries that have actively sought to recruit and train female health workers in rural areas. This group of trained physicians and/or midwives and nurses are called health extension workers in Ethiopia and **lady health workers** in **Pakistan**.⁽¹¹⁾

Gender focus:

As the health services sector is a major employer of women, **special emphasis** should be placed on the **particular challenges** faced by them in the health care working environment. Programmes, education, and **training** initiatives should ensure that both men and women understand their rights within the workplace and outside it.

Source: *The World Health Organization Report, 2006*

GOOD PRACTICE—PAKISTAN LADY HEALTH WORKERS

In 1994, the Pakistan National Programme for Family Planning and Primary Health care has rallied an aggressive program and relied on over 80,000 Lady Health Workers who provide basic health care to nearly 70 percent of the country's population. The selection criteria for the health worker was based on: 1) that they originate from rural areas and the community they are familiar with; 2) they are at least 18 years of age, 3) they have completed middle school; and 4) they were nominated by the community as a reliable candidate. Preference was given to married women.

After the selection, the workers receive 15 months of training (three months full time, 12 months part time) in various healthcare areas and primary study was based on basic health care, sanitation, hygiene, community outreach, public relations to communicate with the community in rural areas, data collection and health management information systems.

Training is geared more toward practicing minor ailments and then determine the condition and if so required, to refer to a large health facility, keep reliable community vital statistics, conduct basic education round tables, **inform the public of HIV/AIDS and other fatal diseases particular to women in the community**, introduce and provide contraception to couples, serve as a liaison between their communities and the formal health system, help coordinate such services as immunization and anemia control, and provide antenatal and postnatal care to mothers.

Recent research shows a clear connection between the presence of Lady Health Workers and a **drastic improvement in community health**. Independent evaluations note that after Lady Health Worker cadres were introduced, substantial increases were documented in **childhood vaccination rates, child growth monitoring**, use of contraception and antenatal services, provision of iron tablets to pregnant women and lowering rates of childhood diarrhea.⁽¹¹⁾

Source: (World Health Report)

Conclusion

Gender equality and mainstreaming are extremely important in attaining MDGs, followed by a firm commitment at the 2005 World Summit, reinforcing that a stronger mechanism should be in place to overcome traditional gender norms and develop a successful strategy for narrowing gender gaps and empowering women.

Women as a whole do understand various problems and civil-society-related issues. Once they enter the political arena, they will be able to take action to ensure equal work

The 2005 World Summit commitment to gender equality provide a sound frame-work for governments, civil society groups and development agencies to pursue more gender-equitable outcomes in the region.

Source: (Pursuing Gender Equality- Asia Report 2006)

distribution, decent work and fair wages, all of which will lead to steady income generation and sustainability and in return alleviate poverty (MDG#1). An elected woman will go above and beyond duty to promote education through mainstreaming both men and women teachers (MDG#2). She will freely discuss maternal health (#MDG 3) and fatal diseases (MDG #6). Women have an endless passion to save the environment. And last, with appropriate negotiation and business management skills, an elected woman can be a vital driving force to form partnership alliances to contribute to economic development.

Gender mainstreaming in local government will have a major effect in rural development. Women, along the side with men, can jointly develop a strategic plan on a community-based level to strengthen rural development planning with aggressive women's participation in local government.

Women's political participation can play a major role in expanding core rural infrastructure, promoting community development to attract private investors to generate income and employment. This effort will not be possible without solid capacity and constituency building with the local government, NGOs, support of women's organization and other civil society and community members.

In conclusion, successful gender mainstreaming in rural development can only be achieved or attempted through a sound policy process, government commitment and a thorough understanding of the goals and benefits by the community members.

Recommendations

Government Commitment and Actions

To reinforce their commitment to women's empowerment in gender equality and mainstreaming and deliver a desirable result to both the Millennium Development Declaration and World Summit, government should take the following initiatives and steps to ensure successful gender mainstreaming in rural areas.

1) Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) or National Development Plans should include and support gender mainstreaming and eliminate gender inequalities in the areas of a) education; b) land ownership; c) equal access to health services; d) equal labor distribution, decent work and fair wages; e) increasing women's entrepreneurship and leadership; f) increasing M/SME Development; g) access to business funding and finance; h) eliminating all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls (CEDAW); i) increasing women's political participation in all government machinery, in particular in rural areas; and j) increasing women's policy decision making at all levels.

2) Integrate gender mainstreaming in all national strategies and programs with relevance to MDGs.



3) At the central government level, government should designate an annual budget to support national women's machineries (e.g., ministry, department or organization) to implement gender mainstreaming throughout government institutions and operations.

4) Set up a gender unit at all government-machinery levels.

5) At a local and national level, develop a solid gender infrastructure to include: gender policies and gender units, increase female staff and managers, and attain additional resources for women's programs.

6) Integrate gender analysis and sex disaggregated targets and data into national strategic planning, in particular in the agriculture sector.

7) Designate a budget for gender equality and mainstreaming projects to fund projects based community outreach campaigns (health, education, human rights).

- 8) Increase or designate specific funding in country budget for political campaigns.
- 9) Establish a solid framework to conduct ongoing gender analysis, gender audit and monitoring and evaluation in public administration.
- 10) National level women's organizations are created in partnership with local NGOs to build a consortium to work with women leaders in rural areas that can work in civil society projects: in particular, women's rights, preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS and other fatal diseases, and combating corruption and human trafficking.

Community Commitment and Actions

- 1) Encourage buy-in of influential male-dominated groups (religious and political);
- 2) Compile a group discussion or community action group to discuss benefits and promote gender mainstreaming;
- 3) Ensure a clear goal and mission with emphasis on the importance of gender mainstreaming and how it will benefit all community members;
- 4) Promote and encourage male participation in local-level policy decision making;
- 5) Encourage women's participation by providing transportation and child care;
- 6) Increase gender awareness in local government and the community through a public awareness campaign;
- 7) Promote women's enterprise development (WED) through leadership-skill development training;
- 8) Increase the ability of rural women to access technical resources and technology in the agriculture sector; and
- (9) Initiate, develop and implement intense training in rural finance, bookkeeping and sustainability development.

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Gender Glossary

Access to Resources is the ability and opportunity for an individual to use a resource: for example, the ability to have land for cultivation or to have a street house for retail shops.

Control of Resources is the process available to an individual to decide who can use a given resource, how to use the given resource and when to stop the use. For example, to sell rights to land use; to open retail shop.

Empowerment is the process of the increased opportunity and ability of women and men to control their lives. Empowerment of women or men includes increasing their power to make decisions, to have their voices heard, to put things on the agenda, to negotiate and to challenge past customs.

Gender Analysis is a process to assess the differential impact of policies, programs, projects and legislation on men and women. Gender analysis recognizes that the realities of men's and women's lives are different, and that equal opportunity does not necessarily mean equal results.

Gender Responsiveness entails consistent and systematic attention to the differences between men and women in society with a view to addressing institutional constraints to gender equality.

Gender Gap is a concrete example of political, economic, social and cultural difference or inequality between men and women or between boys and girls.

Gender Roles are behaviors that are expected from men and women. Gender roles are learned and vary across cultures and over time; they are thus amenable to change.

Gender refers to the socially determined differences between men and women, such as roles, attitudes, behavior, and values.

Gender Characteristics are assigned to men and women during their childhood and are expected to be followed. For example, in some societies, women are considered dependent on men; in other societies, women are decision-makers, or men and women equally make decisions. Gender characteristics vary across cultures and over time; they thus are amenable to change.

Gender Equality means that women and men enjoy the same status within a society. It does not mean that women and men are the same, but rather that their similarities and differences are recognized and equally valued. Gender equality means that women and men experience equal conditions for realizing their full human rights, and have an equal opportunity to contribute to and benefit from political, economic, social and cultural development of their country.

Gender Equity is the process of being fair to both women and men. To ensure fairness, measures must often be available to compensate for historical and social disadvantages that prevent women and men from otherwise operating on a level playing field. Equity can be understood as the means, where equality is the end. Equity leads to equality.

Gender Mainstreaming refers to the process or a strategy to work toward the goal of gender equality that was developed in 1990s. Unlike Women in Development, gender mainstreaming focuses on changing the “gender norms of the mainstream”—the values, behaviors, practices, ideas and conventions that dictate the way the majority of people, organizations, communities and society functions. Gender mainstreaming involves (i) making men’s and women’s concerns and experiences an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all sectors of society; (ii) changing policies and instructions so that they actively promote gender equality; and (iii) rethinking sociocultural values and development goals in the long-term.

Lack of Gender Awareness is the shortage of information and knowledge about gender issues and their impact on experiences and development of men and women, boys and girls.

Gender Prejudice reflects characteristics that are foisted on women and men but fail to recount actual individual ability. For example, housework is women’s work, not men’s. Gender prejudice often limits an individual from doing what he or she is able to do.

Gender Stereotypes are popularly held ideas about men and women. For example, ideas that women are tender, men are strong. Gender stereotypes are learned and vary across cultures and over time; they are thus amenable to change.

Gender-Related Development Index is a comprehensive index measuring average achievement in the three basic dimensions of human development—a long and healthy life, knowledge and a decent standard of living—adjusted to account for inequalities between men and women.

Labor Division by Gender is an assignment of different tasks and responsibilities to women and men.

Gender-based assignments of tasks are learned and pervaded by all members of a given community or society.

Status of women (or men) is the term used to compare socioeconomic conditions of women (or men) with corresponding conditions of men (or women). For example, women have lower status than men in political life, which is illustrated by the in lower number of women at decision-making levels.

Women in Development is an approach that emerged in 1970s, with the goal of integrating women more fully into the development process. It includes strategies such as women-only income generation projects, training and credit for women. In this approach, women are passive beneficiaries of development; women’s concerns are considered separately from the whole development issues.

Gender and Development (GAD) is an approach that was developed in the 1980s to overcome perceived weaknesses of the Women in Development approach. Rather than focusing exclusively on women, this approach is concerned with relations between women and men, particularly inequality in power sharing and decision making. Gender and Development tries to address profound causes of gender inequality through integrating gender in policy-making process in all sectors at all levels, focusing on implementation of necessary steps to ensure that all members of the society equally enjoy the fruits of development.

Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) is a comprehensive index measuring gender inequality in three basic dimension of empowerment economic participation and decision-making, political participation and decision-making and power over economic resources.