



## MODULE I

# Gender and Food Security

### INTRODUCTION

Food Security, at the individual, household, national, regional, and global levels [is achieved] when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for a healthy and active life.

FAO (2001)

**T**oday the world has enough food to feed everyone, yet an estimated 854 million people worldwide are still undernourished (FAO 2006) (fig. 1.1).<sup>1</sup> Poverty—not food availability—is the major driver of food insecurity. Improvements in agricultural productivity are necessary to increase rural household incomes and access to available food but are insufficient to ensure food security. Evidence indicates that poverty reduction and food security do not necessarily move in tandem. The main problem is lack of economic (social and physical) access to food at national and household levels and inadequate nutrition (or hidden hunger). Food security not only requires an adequate supply of food but also entails *availability, access, and utilization* by all—men and women of all ages, ethnicities, religions, and socioeconomic levels.

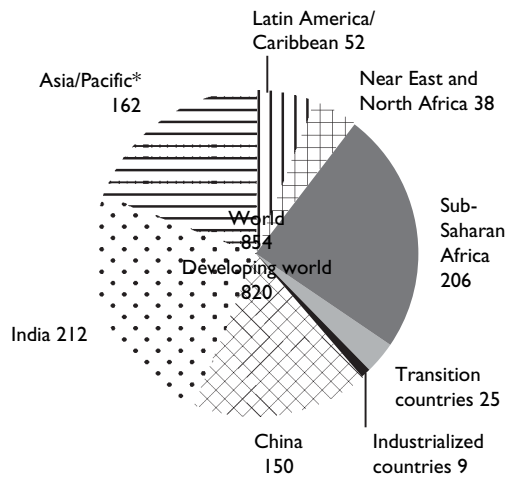
Gender-based inequalities all along the food production chain “from farm to plate” impede the attainment of food and nutritional security. Maximizing the impact of agricultural development on food security entails enhancing women’s roles as agricultural producers as well as the primary caretakers of their families. Food security is a primary goal of

sustainable agricultural development and a cornerstone for economic and social development, and so this Module serves as a road map that indicates how addressing gender in agriculture development in the other Modules can be optimized to maximize the impact on food security. Unlike the other Modules, it does not contain thematic notes but instead guides the reader to Modules that provide more in-depth discussions. It also demonstrates the vital and often unacknowledged role that women play in agriculture, as well as how their critical role in ensuring sustainable agricultural development translates into household-level improvements in food and nutritional security.

### FROM AGRICULTURE TO FOOD SECURITY

Agriculture and food security are inextricably linked (see fig. 1.2). The agricultural sector in each country is dependent on the available natural resources, as well as on national and international policy and the institutional environment that governs those resources. These factors influence women and men in their choice of crops and levels of potential productivity. Agriculture, whether domestic or international, is the only source of food both for direct consumption and as raw material for refined foods. Agricultural production determines food availability. The stability of access to food through production or purchase is governed by domestic policies, including social protection policies and agricultural investment choices that reduce risks (such as droughts) in the agriculture production cycle. Yet the production of food

Figure 1.1 Undernourished People Worldwide



\*Excluding China and India

Sources: FAO 2006; [www.ifad.org/hfs/thematic/rural/rural\\_2.htm](http://www.ifad.org/hfs/thematic/rural/rural_2.htm).

is not the only goal of agricultural systems that also produce feed for livestock and fuel (see Module 10 for a more in-depth discussion). Therefore, demand for and policies related to feed and fuel also influence food availability and access.

Staple grains are the main source of dietary energy in the human diet and are more likely to be available through national and international markets, even in developing countries, given their storage and transport characteristics. Fruits, vegetables, livestock, and aquaculture products are the key to micronutrient, that is, vitamins and minerals, sufficiency. However, most of these products are more perishable than grains, so that in the poorest countries where lack of infrastructure, such as cold storage and refrigerated transport, predicated short food chains, local agriculture determines the diversity of diets. Food security can become a reality only when the agricultural sector is vibrant.

Other elements are necessary to achieve food and nutritional security as shown in figure 1.2. These are largely assigned to women, who play a key role in ensuring food security and are the focus of this Module.

## WOMEN'S ROLE IN FOOD AND NUTRITIONAL SECURITY

Agricultural interventions are most likely to affect nutrition outcomes when they involve diverse and complementary processes and strategies that redirect the focus beyond agriculture for food production and toward broader consideration of livelihoods, women's empowerment, and optimal intrahousehold

**National food security** requires both the production and the ability to import food from global markets to meet a nation's consumption needs.

**Household food security** is year-round access to an adequate supply of nutritious and safe food to meet the nutritional needs of all household members (men and women, boys and girls).

**Nutritional security** requires that household members have access not only to food, but also to health care, a hygienic environment, and knowledge of personal hygiene. Food security is necessary but not sufficient for ensuring nutrition security. (International Fund for Agricultural Development [IFAD])

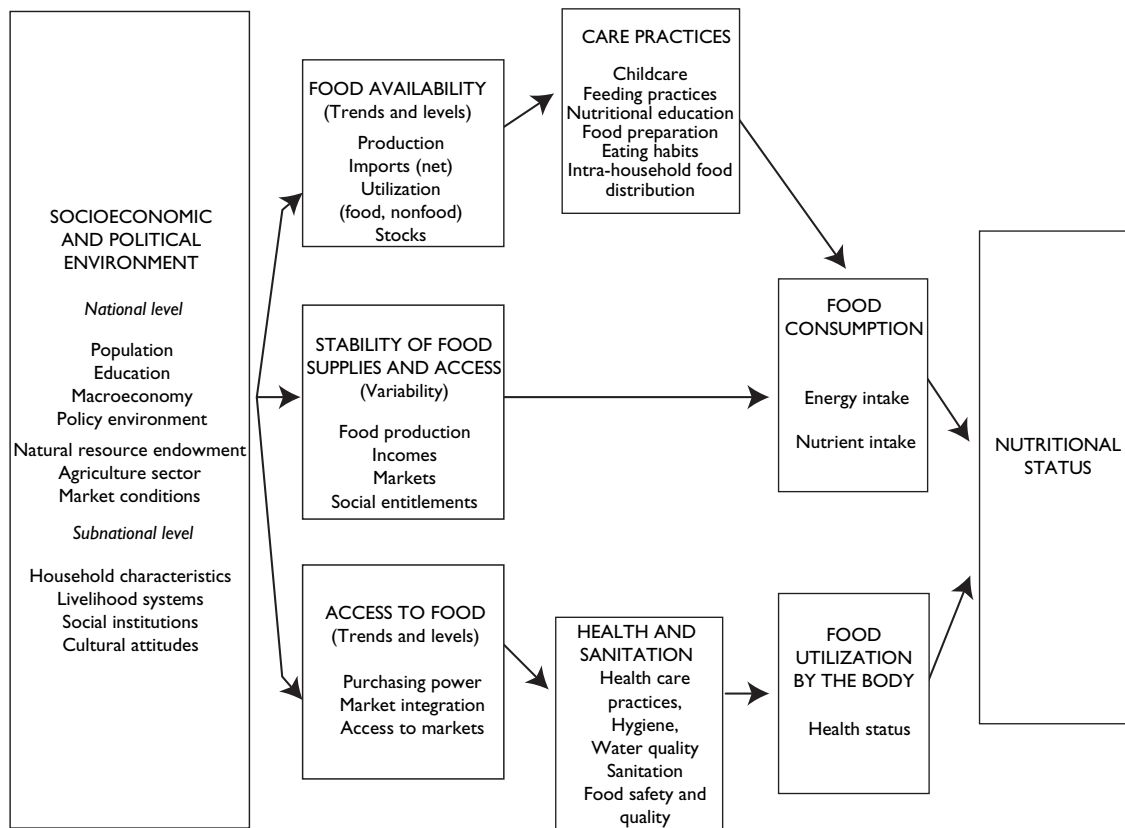
uses of resources. Successful projects are those that invest broadly in improving human capital, sustain and increase the livelihood assets of the poor, and focus on gender equality.

World Bank (2007b)

Women are crucial in the translation of the products of a vibrant agriculture sector into food and nutritional security for their households. They are often the farmers who cultivate food crops and produce commercial crops alongside the men in their households as a source of income. When women have an income, substantial evidence indicates that the income is more likely to be spent on food and children's needs. Women are generally responsible for food selection and preparation and for the care and feeding of children. *Women are the key to food security* for their households (Quisumbing and others 1995).

In rural areas the availability and use of time by women is also a key factor in the availability of water for good hygiene, firewood collection, and frequent feeding of small children. In sub-Saharan Africa transportation of supplies for domestic use—fetching fuelwood and water—is largely done by women and girls on foot. In Ghana, Tanzania, and Zambia women expend most of their energy on load-carrying activities involving transport of fuelwood, water, and grain for grinding. Fields dedicated to food crops are often farther from home than those related to cash crops. Because women must also perform domestic tasks, they must spend a considerable amount of time traveling between their home and the fields. This burden, together with other domestic and

Figure 1.2 Elements in Achieving Food and Nutrition Security



Source: IFAD, FAO, and WFP 2000.

reproductive activities, severely constrains the amount of time available to women (see Modules 9 and 7, particularly Technical Note 4 in the latter). As women’s time constraints increase because of engagement in wage labor and other factors, they will need to build “strategic alliances with men” to meet all the needs of the household. In the WIN project (Empowerment of Women in Irrigation and Water Resources Management for Improved Food Security, Nutrition and Health) in Nepal, one woman trained as a para-veterinarian convinced her husband to care for their children and perform other domestic tasks while she made her rounds.<sup>2</sup>

Changes in the availability of natural resources, due to the depletion of natural resources and/or impacts of climate change, can compromise food security by further constraining the time available to women. As discussed in Module 10, water degradation and pollution can force women to travel farther to collect water, reduce the amount they collect, and compromise hygiene practices in the household. Recognizing women’s needs for environmental resources, not only

for crop production but also for fuel and water, and building these into good environmental management can release more time for women to use on income generation, child care, and leisure.

Agriculture has an additional impact on food security through its impact on health. For example, poorly managed irrigation infrastructures may become a breeding ground for mosquitoes, and excessive use of groundwater for irrigation may compromise water sources needed by women to ensure good hygiene practices and clean food preparation, without which children suffer more frequently from diarrhea and compromised growth.

Poverty is a major driver of food insecurity, but the two are not always linked. Poorer households headed by women have demonstrated that they often succeed in providing more nutritional food for their children than those headed by men (Kennedy and Peters 1992). This demonstrates the importance of gender-based knowledge and roles with regard to food security. Men who lack knowledge about

food preparation may not be able to translate food availability into nutritional security for their households.

The following sections examine in detail the three key components of food security and show how women's contribution to agriculture and its translation into nutritional security can be promoted.

## FOOD SECURITY

Food security is essentially built on three pillars: food availability, food access, and food utilization. An individual must have access to sufficient food of the right dietary mix (quality) *at all times* to be food secure. Those who never have sufficient quality food are chronically food insecure. Those whose access to an adequate diet is conditioned by seasonality are food insecure and are generally called *seasonally* food insecure. Individuals who normally have enough to eat but become food insecure in the face of disasters triggered by economic, climatic, and civil shocks (war and conflict) are *transitorily* food insecure. The “at all times” element of the food security definition makes risk and associated vulnerability an important element of the food security concept.

The definition of food security is often applied at varying levels of aggregation, despite its articulation at the individual level. The importance of a pillar depends on the level of aggregation being addressed. At a global level, the important pillar is food availability. Does global agricultural activity produce sufficient food to feed all the world's inhabitants? The answer today is yes, but it may not be true in the future given the impact of a growing world population, emerging plant and animal pests and diseases, declining soil productivity and environmental quality, increasing use of land for fuel rather than food, and lack of attention to agricultural research and development, among other factors.

When food security is analyzed at the national level, an understanding not only of national production is important, but also of the country's access to food from the global market, its foreign exchange earnings, and its citizens' consumer choices. Food security analyzed at the household level is conditioned by a household's own food production and household members' ability to purchase food of the right quality and diversity in the market place. However, it is only at the individual level that the analysis can be truly accurate because only through understanding who consumes what can we appreciate the impact of sociocultural and gender inequalities on people's ability to meet their nutritional needs.

The third pillar, food utilization, essentially translates the food available to a household into nutritional security for its

members. One aspect of utilization is analyzed in terms of distribution according to need. Nutritional standards exist for the actual nutritional needs of men, women, boys, and girls of different ages and life phases (that is, pregnant women), but these “needs” are often socially constructed based on culture. For example, in South Asia evidence shows that women eat after everyone else has eaten at a meal and are less likely than men in the same household to consume preferred foods such as meats and fish.

*Hidden hunger* commonly results from poor food utilization: that is, a person's diet lacks the appropriate balance of macro- (calories) and micronutrients (vitamins and minerals). Individuals may look well nourished and consume sufficient calories but be deficient in key micronutrients such as vitamin A, iron, and iodine. People may live in unhealthy environments with inadequate hygiene and sanitation, which results in frequent illnesses and compromised nutritional outcomes despite sufficient food being available. Infants and very young children may have mothers who are so time constrained, particularly at peak times in the agricultural calendar, that they are unable to feed a child as often as necessary to provide good nutrition. Malnutrition is economically costly: it can cost individuals 10 percent of their lifetime earnings and nations 2 to 3 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) in the worst-affected countries (Alderman 2005).

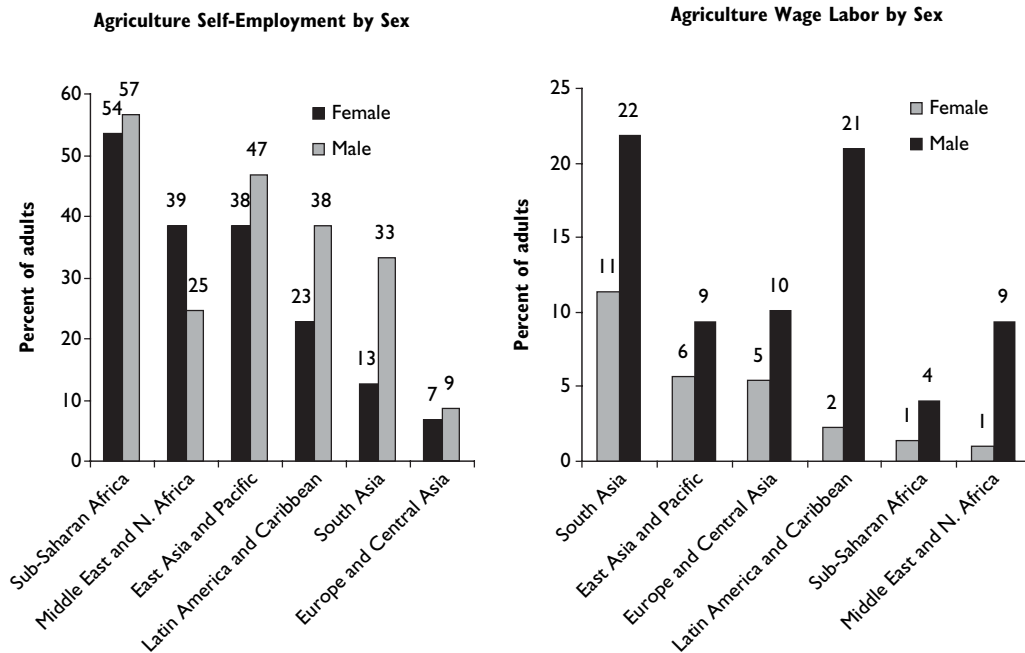
Achieving food security is even more challenging in the context of HIV and AIDS. HIV affects people's physical ability to produce and use food, reallocating household labor, increasing the work burden on women, and preventing widows and children from inheriting land and productive resources (Izumi 2006). A study of rural households in Mozambique has shown that an adult death due to illness, which is likely to be AIDS related, reduces the amount of staple foods produced by these households by 20–30 percent, contributing to household food insecurity (Donovan and Massingue 2007).

Policy responses differ according to the underlying determinants of the food insecurity. These responses range from legal reforms to economic incentives to infrastructure investment to the provision of insurance instruments. The following sections will address the specific gender issues in each pillar of food security, drawing out the links to the other Modules of the *Sourcebook*.

### Food availability

Women are key players in the farming sector as shown in figure 1.3. Their role in agriculture self-employment is

Figure 1.3 Rural Employment by Sector of Activity



Source: World Bank 2007c.

notable in sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East and North Africa. Women’s role in food production within agriculture is even greater. In many societies women supply most of the labor needed to produce food crops and often control the use or sale of food produce grown on plots they manage.

However, the asymmetries in ownership of, access to, and control of livelihood assets (such as land, water, energy, credit, knowledge, and labor) negatively affect women’s food production. Women are less likely to own land and usually enjoy only use rights, mediated through a man relative. Studies cited in Deere and Doss (2006) indicate that women held land in only 10 percent of Ghanaian households while men held land in 16–23 percent in Ghana; women are 5 percent of registered landholders in Kenya, 22.4 percent in the Mexican *ejidos* (communal farming lands), and 15.5 percent in Nicaragua. On average, men’s land holdings were almost three times the women’s land holdings. This compromised land access leads women to make suboptimal decisions with regard to crop choices and to obtain lower yields than would otherwise be possible if household resources were allocated efficiently.

Insecurity of tenure for women results in lower investment and potential environmental degradation; it compromises future production potential and increases food insecurity. In Ghana the primary investment in land, given the lack of availability of fertilizer, is fallowing. However,

longer fallows are likely to lead to loss of land when tenure is insecure, but shorter fallows reduce yields as soil fertility is compromised. Goldstein and Udry (2005) demonstrate that those with less political capital in a village have less tenure security and as a result leave their land fallow for shorter periods. Within households, profits per hectare of a maize-cassava intercrop from similar plots vary according to individuals and length of fallow. Women have less tenure security and sacrifice profits per hectare with shorter fallows. The lower production reduces not only women’s potential income, but also the availability of food for household consumption.

Legal reforms need to take into account multiple-use rights to land, particularly women’s rights, as well as the different means by which women gain access to land, including divorce and inheritance systems (see Module 4, particularly Thematic Notes 2 and 4). The Lowlands Agricultural Development Projects in The Gambia (see Module 6, particularly Innovative Activity Profile 2) provide a good example of how understanding the way that women obtain land rights affects the design of a successful project. The project resulted in previously landless women obtaining secure rights to land through a land reclamation program.

Agricultural production depends on natural resources: land, soil, water, and plant genetic resources. Women often have unique perspectives on as well as understanding of

local biodiversity and can be key partners for plant breeders as they work to develop adapted and improved varieties. In Rwanda women farmers have shown they can be more effective at selecting improved varieties for local cultivation than the men plant breeders (Sperling and Berkowitz 1994). The LinKS project,<sup>3</sup> discussed in Module 10 (in particular Innovative Activity Profile 1), demonstrates how to work with a broad spectrum of stakeholders to promote food security by understanding local women and men farmers' unique understanding of agrobiodiversity.

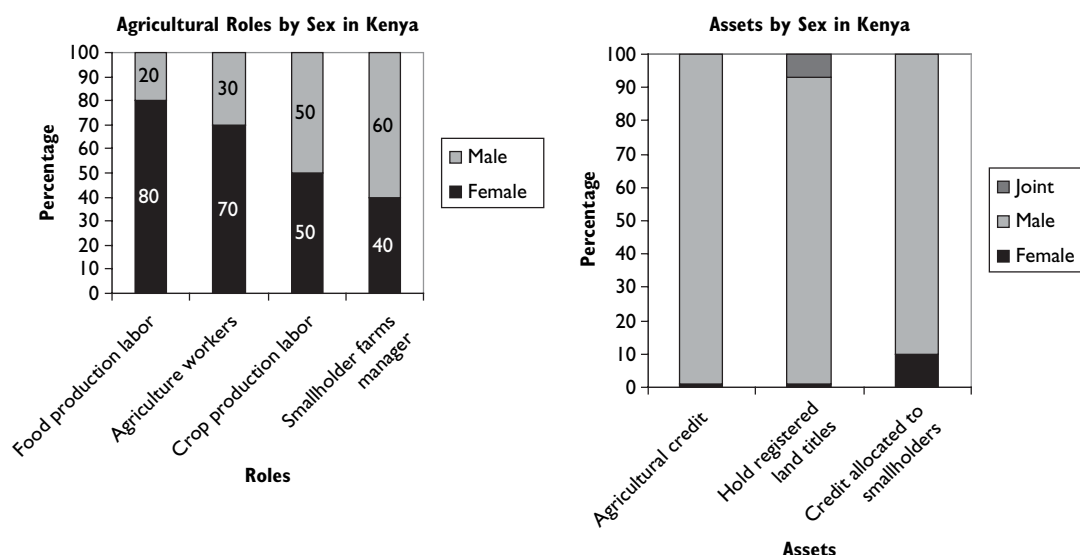
Agricultural technology transfer capacity development is one of the prime policy levers to increase agricultural productivity. But often women are not targeted because it is assumed that their husbands or fathers will share the knowledge with them, and often they are supplied with technologies that do not meet their needs. For example, early dissemination of hybrid maize in Zambia failed to recognize that women use the crop for home consumption, which requires milling. The hybrid that was introduced required hammer mills, but only traditional mills were available locally. Poorer storage characteristics of the hybrid also compromised women's ability to conserve their agricultural produce, so women returned to growing traditional maize varieties (see Module 12). Involving young women and men in training opportunities from the start has proved to be a successful strategy in ensuring food security and sustainable livelihoods for households, as can be seen in the example provided by the approach used in

the Junior Farmer Field Life School (see Module 7, in particular Innovative Activity Profile 3).

However, adoption of new technology depends on many things, including the availability of required assets to implement the technology, how local women and men view the perceived benefits, the way information is shared, and local gender roles and other sociocultural constraints. Even when women have access to land for food production and access to improved technologies, they face more constraints than men in accessing complementary resources for success. They have less access to credit (see Module 3) and less access to inputs such as fertilizer, and they are less likely to benefit from agricultural extension services (see Module 7), and therefore they have less access to improved technologies (see fig. 1.4). Women tend to process their crops more on the farm than men do theirs, but little is invested in technology research into on-farm crop processing.

These constraints are not only costly to food security but also to economic growth. If women farmers in Kenya had the same access to farm inputs, education, and experience as their men counterparts, their yields for maize, beans, and cowpeas could increase as much as 22 percent (Quisumbing 1996). This would have resulted in a one-time doubling of Kenya's GDP growth rate in 2004 from 4.3 percent to 8.3 percent (World Bank 2007a). More important, household productivity in agriculture and food supplies could often be increased at no extra cost by reallocating existing resources inside the household toward women.

Figure 1.4 Roles and Access to Assets by Women and Men in the Agriculture Sector



Source: World Bank 2007a.

Soil fertility is an important component of agricultural productivity. As shown in Module 12, particularly Thematic Note 2, legumes can be used to improve soil fertility to enhance crop productivity as well as human nutrition. Recognition and adaptation of this approach in Malawi demonstrated that women had a preference for a legume intercrop production system for their plots. This approach helped improve soil fertility and increased the productivity of their main crop as well as improved household food security by providing an additional source of nutritious food.

### **Food access**

Access to food can be constrained physically—washed-out roads in a rainy season may cut off access to the nearby market town—or, more usually, economically. Ironically, food insecurity has a largely rural face. Despite the fact that the majority of food is grown in rural areas, most of the rural poor are net food buyers, not sellers, in many countries. Hence, economic access to markets, or lack thereof, is a fundamental determinant of food insecurity. The role of agriculture in income generation for the poor, particularly women, is more important for food security than its role in food production (Sanchez and others 2005).

The Andhra Pradesh Rice Credit Line Project (Module 3, Innovative Activity Profile 1) and Niger’s Food Bank Project (Module 11, Innovative Activity Profile 2) are examples of initiatives in which improved income generation and food-linked credit systems for women enhanced household food security and the overall well-being of the family.

During conflict and crises, food aid and agricultural assistance are both necessary components of effective interventions. The intertwining forces of food aid and agricultural support affect women’s and men’s food security, nutrition, health, and livelihoods. During times of crisis, women and girls are often forced to reduce their intake in favor of other household members, particularly men and boys, which results in increased incidence of malnutrition among women. However, men are at greater risk during famines, and in many recorded famines, mortality rates are higher among men than women. Insecure conditions can also limit women’s mobility and access to humanitarian aid or markets (see Module 11).

When crises disrupt agricultural production and distribution, displace populations, and render land unusable, food aid is of critical importance, especially in the short term. The key to sustainability, however, is to ensure that the aid provided does not create dependency or harm the communities and stakeholders it hopes to assist. To plan

emergency interventions properly requires substantial knowledge of the ways in which the agricultural sector works, as well as knowing what the sociocultural reality is locally and how that dictates who does what, who has what, and who controls what. Because women (and children to some extent) are typically responsible for food production, preparation, storage, and marketing, it is crucial to include them in emergency-related food security planning and decision making as potential change agents and decision makers, rather than as the “victims” they are often portrayed to be. A key aspect of program design is to understand the differing roles, responsibilities, capacities, and constraints of women and men in the region in question. This includes understanding the traditional division of labor in the agricultural sphere, as well as any changes that may have resulted from a crisis. Lessons learned reveal that food security interventions and livelihoods-saving strategies within an emergency setting are more efficient, cost effective, and timely when gender-based differences and gender-differentiated impacts on the affected population have been properly understood and addressed (FAO 2005; see Module 11).

The Household Food Security and Nutrition Project in Ethiopia illustrates that it is vital that beneficiaries have a strong sense of ownership of the project and that the ability of men and women to assess their own situation and their ability to improve their livelihoods are important steps in the empowerment process.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, identifying gender-differentiated opportunities and constraints for improving nutrition and food security during the design phase of a project often leads to better food security interventions.

Addressing poverty issues in and of themselves, while vital, does not necessarily mean that we are addressing food insecurity. India has been remarkably successful in using agricultural development to foster economic growth and poverty reduction. It has moved from food deficits to food surpluses on the national level. India has a higher gross national income (GNI) per capita at \$730 than most of sub-Saharan Africa. However, its child stunting rates are high at 46 percent. Niger’s GNI per capita is just \$240, but its stunting rate is 40 percent. The Gambia demonstrates what can be achieved despite poverty, with a stunting rate of just 19 percent against a GNI per capita income of \$290.<sup>5</sup> Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, and Nepal occupy four of the top five positions in the global ranking of underweight children. Bangladesh and India rank among the highest incidences of low-birth-weight babies, an indicator of maternal malnutrition. Many would argue that the inferior status of women in South Asia is a key factor in the failure

to translate agriculture-led poverty reduction into nutritional improvements.

Welfare improvements at the household level are not just a function of increasing incomes for households; they are related to who accrues the income within the household. In Côte d'Ivoire, significantly more is spent on food and education and less on alcohol and cigarettes when a higher share of household cash income accrues to women. To achieve the same improvements in children's nutrition and health with a \$10 increase in women's income would require a \$110 increase in men's income (Hoddinott and Haddad 1995).

Although men often control labor input and the sale of "cash crops," women often manage production of subsistence crops, albeit some of the same crops that are sold in local markets. Therefore, improving women's productivity in agriculture not only increases food availability for the household but also raises women's incomes and enhances food security due to women's spending patterns. As discussed in Module 8, public works programs are often used as elements of social protection programs to benefit poor, landless households. Cash wages provide flexibility, but women often prefer that these programs pay food wages. In a World Food Programme project to improve watershed management in Rajasthan, India, women were glad that the program paid food wages as opposed to cash wages because if the program paid cash, then their husbands would participate, and they would not see any additional resources dedicated to household food security.<sup>6</sup>

However, women often face constraints to market engagement. Cash crops are often collected at the farm gate, whereas food crops need to be transported by the grower to local markets. In Africa this is commonly done by women headloading. Studies have found that women transport 26 metric ton kilometers per year compared to less than 7 for men. This leads some people to argue that women account for two-thirds of rural transport in sub-Saharan Africa (Blackden and Bhanu 1999). Hammer mills, which are needed to grind many maize hybrids, are often less common and are centralized at a greater distance from individual households. Given that women bear the transport burden, they may be less likely to adopt hybrid varieties and continue to favor their traditional but lower-yielding varieties.

Investment in transport and infrastructure is necessary to support women's market engagement (see Module 9). This is an important step toward integrating women into value chains (see Module 5). Changes in policy and regulatory frameworks are also needed to create an equal playing

field for women and men in market participation. Greater access to information, organizations, and resources is important for poor women, who disproportionately lack access compared to their men counterparts. Finally, capacity building is needed for poor women in particular, as cultural and other gender-specific constraints have hindered them from greater engagement in markets (see Module 5).

### Food utilization

Having access to food of sufficient quality does not automatically translate into good nutritional status for individuals. Women's role in food utilization for food security is perhaps the most critical and outweighs the importance of their role in food production and how they spend the income they earn.

Sixty percent of the calories and proteins consumed by humans today come from just three plant species: maize, rice, and wheat. Seventy-five percent of our food supply comes from just 12 plants and five animal species (Lambrou and Laub 2004), but yet dietary diversity is extremely important. Diets dominated by cereals lack an adequate array of micronutrients such as iron, vitamin A, B vitamins (niacin, thiamine), vitamin C, zinc, iodine, and folate. Deficiencies in micronutrients are costly in economic terms and in terms of people's well-being. Deficiencies in vitamin A, iron, and zinc all rank within the top 10 leading causes of death through disease in developing countries (WHO 2002). In Sierra Leone iron deficiency among women agricultural workers will cost the economy \$100 million in the next five years (Darnton-Hill and others 2005).

Women are typically responsible for food preparation and thus are crucial to the dietary diversity of their households. Women are generally responsible for selecting food purchased to complement staple foods and to balance the household's diet. Even in the Sahel where men control the granaries, women are responsible for supplying the "relishes" that go with the grains, and it is these that provide the bulk of the micronutrients.

The prime sources for micronutrients are fruits, vegetables, and animal source foods, including fish. Animal source foods are particularly good; they are high density in terms of micronutrients, and those micronutrients are also more bioavailable to the human body (see Modules 13 and 14). Agriculture is thus a key to dietary diversity, particularly in areas that have less access to markets given the perishable nature of fruits, vegetables, and animal source foods.

An extensive review of the nutritional impacts of agricultural interventions, disaggregated into staple crops, fruits and



vegetables, and animal source foods, found that the role of women was critical. Studies of the commercialization of staple food production determined that those people who increased the share of women's income were more likely to increase expenditures on food, although not necessarily improve nutritional outcomes. Interventions focused on fruits and vegetables were more likely to produce biochemical indicators of improved nutritional status when they included educational behavior change designed to empower women. Many of the reviewed livestock and aquaculture interventions resulted in gains in production, income, and food availability, and significantly greater nutritional improvements when the interventions were combined with capacity development training that promoted women's empowerment, education, and behavior change (see Modules 13 and 14). A good example of this type of intervention is that of the introduction of orange-fleshed sweet potatoes in Mozambique. These contain higher levels of provitamin A carotenoids and when introduced with nutrition education can lead to reductions in vitamin A deficiency.<sup>7</sup> Fisheries also offer powerful opportunities for women, as demonstrated in Module 13, particularly Thematic Note 2, which shows how CARE Bangladesh introduced a sustainable, high-income fisheries component that improved family nutrition. As discussed in Module 12, Thematic Note 2, vegetables can be cultivated on the homestead because they require very little land and do not displace other crops. Women do not need to leave the homestead, and so they do not need to violate local cultural restrictions, which would have lowered their participation rates in projects.

## **MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

Disaggregated monitoring of food security is critical. Many of the following Modules contain specific information and indicators regarding production and access to food under different production systems. Table 1.1 provides examples of indicators that might be used in monitoring the access of women and their families to food of adequate quality and quantity.

Depending on the country or region, it may be relevant also to consider ethnicity and caste alongside gender (both as comparative indicators and when collecting data), because women of lower castes or ethnic minorities are usually in the most disadvantaged situation.

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Women play a triple role in agricultural households: productive, reproductive, and social. The productive role,

performed by both men and women, focuses on economic activities; the reproductive role, almost exclusively done by women, includes child bearing and rearing; household maintenance, including cooking, fetching water, and fuelwood; and the social role or community building, often dominated by women, which includes arranging funerals, weddings, and social events.

If sustainable agricultural development is to be translated into food and nutrition security, then the active engagement of women is absolutely necessary. Their involvement will require that development agents go beyond traditional approaches to sustainable agricultural development. Food and nutritional security will mean that women are included in crop breeding and selection strategies so that crops are not selected on their behalf that they cannot market or process, such as hybrid maize when they do not have a hammer mill, and it will necessitate incorporating women in marketing chains (see Module 5).

Food security is not just a goal of sustainable agricultural development; it is a right enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and amplified by Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Women also have the right to be equal partners in the agriculture sector, and to that end the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women protects women's equal access to land, credit, and income. In South Africa (Integrated Food Security Strategy) and Uganda (Food and Nutrition Policy), governments call for a rights-based approach to food security that includes gender equity. Public policies, written from a human rights perspective, recognize the interrelatedness of all basic rights and assist in the identification of those whose rights are not fully realized. In this way they facilitate corrective action and appropriate strategies to enable equal protection for all. Equal representation and active engagement of both women and men in the policy-making processes are required so that their varying needs and priorities are appropriately targeted. More often than not, however, access to the legal system may be more problematic for women than men, but technical and financial support is also needed if institutions that advance and implement women's rights are to fulfill their mandate (see Module 2).

This Module has outlined the basic concepts regarding food security and how it may be achieved by addressing gender inequalities in agricultural development. For a more in-depth understanding of how food security can be achieved through a specific agricultural sector, refer to the relevant Modules or the further reading listed below.

**Table 1.1 Monitoring and Evaluation Indicators for Gender and Food Security**

Indicator	Sources of verification/tools
Relative contributions of fruits, vegetables, animal products, fish, and grains to diet, disaggregated by gender and age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Household survey</li> <li>• Nutritional survey</li> </ul>
Change in food consumption by women, men, boys, and girls per quarter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Household survey</li> <li>• Nutritional survey</li> </ul>
Change in amount of milk, eggs, fish, and animal protein consumed by household family members (disaggregated by women, men, boys, and girls)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child health records</li> <li>• Household surveys</li> <li>• Rapid nutrition surveys</li> </ul>
Change in nutritional status of children under age five, before and after program activities (disaggregated by boys and girls)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child health records</li> <li>• Household surveys</li> <li>• Rapid nutrition surveys</li> </ul>
Change in birth weight of babies, before and after program activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child health records</li> <li>• Household surveys</li> </ul>
Time spent or distance walked by household members to collect potable water or firewood, disaggregated by gender and age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Household surveys</li> <li>• Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA)</li> </ul>
Percentage of time spent daily in household on paid and nonpaid activities, disaggregated by gender and age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender analysis</li> <li>• Time-use studies</li> </ul>
Uptake of new or intermediate technologies, such as low fuel stoves, solar cookers, rope pumps, small grain mills, and new types of food, disaggregated by age and education level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observation</li> <li>• Sample surveys</li> <li>• Stakeholder interviews</li> </ul>
Number of persons accessing credit for food production annually, disaggregated by gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bank records</li> <li>• Savings and loan group records</li> </ul>
Changes in soil, crop, and pasture condition in farmland, before and after program activities (such as nutrient levels and percentage ground cover)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Department of Agriculture surveys</li> <li>• Farm records</li> <li>• Participatory monitoring by villagers/herders</li> </ul>
In postdisaster situations, number of women with cooking utensils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sample surveys</li> </ul>
Changes to livelihood sources (on-farm and nonfarm) among resettled or postdisaster men, women (especially women-headed households), and other disadvantaged groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Case studies</li> <li>• Community monitoring committees</li> <li>• PRA</li> <li>• Sample surveys</li> </ul>
Changes in access to food markets, before and after infrastructure development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Household surveys, before and after</li> <li>• Project management information system</li> </ul>
Changes over x-year period of project activities in household nutrition, health, education, vulnerability to violence, and happiness, disaggregated by gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Household surveys, before and after</li> <li>• Project management information system</li> <li>• School records</li> </ul>

Source: Authors, with inputs from Pamela White, author of Module 16.

## NOTES

This Module was written by Lynn Brown (World Bank), Chitra Deshpande (Consultant), Catherine L. M. Hill (Consultant), Yianna Lambrou (FAO), and Marina Laudazi and Catherine Ragasa (Consultants), with inputs from Anne Nicolaysen (FAO), and reviewed by Deborah Rubin (Cultural Practice); Karel Callens, Bill Clay, Patricia Colbert, Brian Thompson and Marcela Villarreal (FAO); Maria Hartl, Sean Kennedy, and Annina Lubbock (IFAD); and Harold Alderman and Mio Takada (World Bank).

1. Based on FAO's 2001–03 estimates; see FAO (2006).

2. The project is funded by the United Nations Foundation and implemented by FAO. See e-GAL *Sourcebook* for more details on the WIN project at [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org).

3. See [www.fao.org/sd/LINKS/GEBIO.HTM](http://www.fao.org/sd/LINKS/GEBIO.HTM).

4. Available in the e-GAL *Sourcebook*, Module 11, Innovative Activity Profile 3, at [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org).

5. Nutrition statistics from *State of the World's Children 2007* (UNICEF 2006), GNI per capita statistics from *World Development Indicators 2007* (World Bank 2007d).

6. Personal communication with Lynn Brown, April 1, 2008.

7. Available in the e-GAL *Sourcebook*, Module 12, Innovative Activity Profile 1, at [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org).

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#### **Further information on developing and using food security indicators at different levels**

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#### **Further case studies**

- Available via the Innovative Activity Profiles prepared for the *Gender in Agricultural Livelihoods (GAL) eSourcebook* available at [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org): Module 12 (Gender in Crop Agriculture), Innovative Activity Profile 1 (Promoting Orange-Fleshed Sweet Potatoes).



## MODULE 2

# Gender and Agricultural Livelihoods: Strengthening Governance

## Overview

**G**overnance has taken center stage in the international development debate. As Kofi Annan, then-Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN), told world leaders in 1998: “Good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development.” Good governance has been defined in different ways by development organizations. The definition offered by the United Nations Development Programme highlights participation, accountability, transparency, consensus, sustainability, and the rule of law as elements of good governance and emphasizes the inclusion of the poorest and most vulnerable people in making decisions about allocating development resources.<sup>1</sup> A widely used set of aggregate data from a broad range of sources compiled by the World Bank Institute measures the following six dimensions of good governance: (1) voice and accountability, (2) political stability and absence of violence, (3) the rule of law, (4) regulatory quality, (5) government effectiveness, and (6) control of corruption (Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi 2007).

Reforms that aim at promoting good governance have become an important policy area increasingly supported by international financial institutions and donor agencies. In 2007, 14 percent of the World Bank’s total lending was spent on public sector governance (World Bank 2007a). Programs, projects, and investments that support governance reforms are relevant for agricultural livelihoods in two respects: First, agriculture can benefit from overall reforms that aim at improving governance, such as decentralization,

promotion of community-driven development, public sector management reforms, legal reforms, and anticorruption measures (column a in table 2.1). Second, agricultural livelihoods can be promoted by governance reforms specific to the agricultural sector, such as strategies to improve agricultural policy making and reforms of agricultural service provision (column b). As shown in table 2.1, one can further distinguish approaches to improve governance that require institutional and legal changes (row a), and approaches that can be pursued within an existing institutional and legal framework (row b).

Although all four types of reforms create significant opportunities for improving agricultural livelihoods by making agricultural policies and programs more effective, one cannot take it for granted that any of these governance reforms will also promote gender equity in the agricultural sector. If implemented in a “gender-blind” way, such reforms can even increase gender inequalities. Therefore, specific efforts are needed to make governance reforms gender sensitive and to address the specific challenges of gender inequality in the agricultural sector, which have been outlined in the *Sourcebook* Overview. One can consider governance reforms that are relevant for agriculture to be “gender sensitive” if they are (1) *sensitive to gender differentials*, for instance, by making sure that women in the agricultural sector do not lose out in the reform process; (2) *gender specific*, that is, by addressing specific needs that differ between men and women engaged in agriculture; (3) *empowering to women*, for instance, by making provisions for affirmative action

**Table 2.1 Investment Options to Improve Governance**

Activities supported by investment projects and programs	General governance reforms (a)	Agriculture-specific governance reforms (b)
(a) Governance reforms requiring institutional and legal change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political, fiscal, and administrative decentralization</li> <li>• Public administration and civil service reforms</li> <li>• Access to justice reforms</li> <li>• Changes in procurement rules and procedures</li> <li>• Right to information laws</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decentralization of agricultural services and functions (transfer of functions, staff, and resources to lower levels of government)</li> <li>• Institutional reforms of Ministries of Agriculture (including creation of autonomous agencies and transfer of management to local groups)</li> </ul>
(b) Approaches to improving governance within existing legal and institutional structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participatory policy planning and budgeting</li> <li>• Citizen report cards</li> <li>• Governance and integrity surveys</li> <li>• Improved audits, including introduction of social audits</li> <li>• Leadership training</li> <li>• Civic education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting participation in agricultural policy processes</li> <li>• Improving management systems in Ministries of Agriculture</li> <li>• Community-driven agricultural development projects</li> <li>• Support for rural self-help groups' producer organizations</li> </ul>

Source: Authors.

and creating more opportunities for rural women’s participation in political processes; or (4) *transformative*, for instance, by attempting to change prevalent attitudes and social norms that lead to discrimination against rural women. The objective of this Module is to identify and discuss opportunities for making governance reforms gender sensitive, focusing on those reforms that are particularly relevant for agricultural livelihoods.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The following sections discuss several strategies and approaches to reform governance.

### Strategies to reform governance

To understand how the gender dimension can best be addressed in governance reforms that are relevant to agriculture, it is useful to define good governance for the agricultural sector and to identify the major mechanisms or strategies by which such reforms attempt to lead to better governance. Applying the definitions and concepts of good governance quoted above, one can derive the following dimensions of good governance in the agricultural sector (fig. 2.1): quality of agricultural policies and regulations (regulatory quality); efficiency and equity in the provision of agricultural services and infrastructure (government effectiveness); reduction of corruption, that is, the abuse of public office for private gain, in the agricultural sector (control of corruption); and access to justice and enforcement of

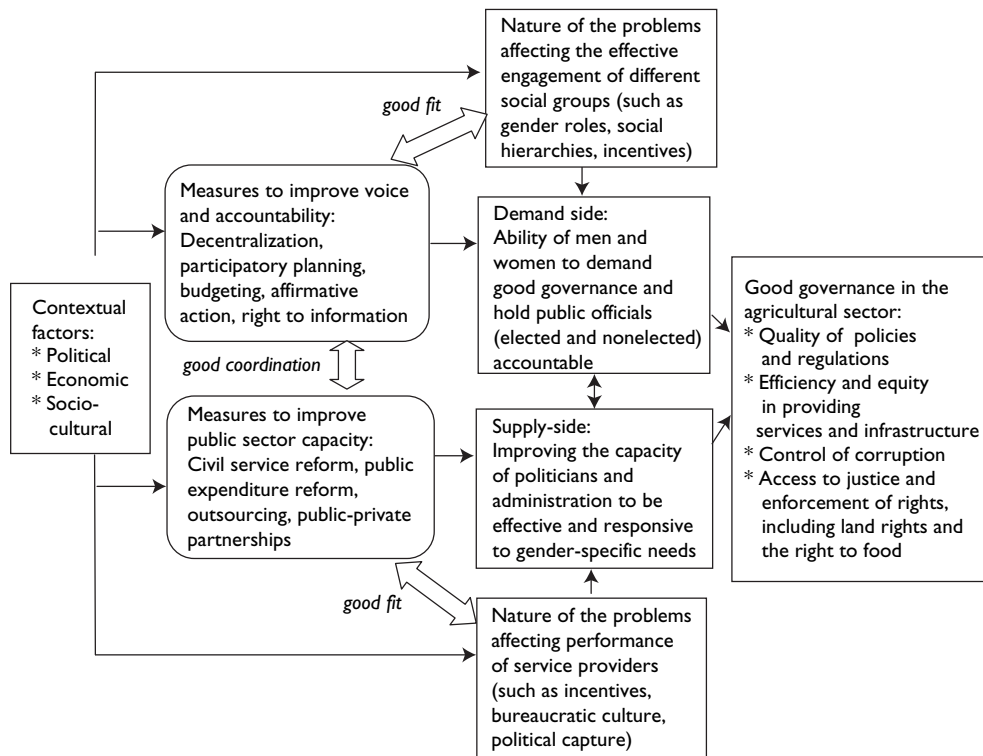
rights that are related to food and agriculture, including rights to land and the right to food (rule of law). All these dimensions of good governance are essential for the improvement of agricultural livelihoods, because they make agricultural policies and programs more effective and lead to a more efficient use of the funds invested in agriculture.

In figure 2.1 one can distinguish two types of approaches that can lead to improved governance outcomes. They can be referred to as “demand-side” and “supply-side” strategies, even though one must acknowledge that public service provision does not follow the principles of a functioning market. The term “demand-side” strategies has become widely used to cover strategies that aim at strengthening people’s and communities’ ability to demand better public services and hold public officials accountable, including politicians and the public administration. These strategies capture the “voice and accountability” dimension of good governance. The term “supply-side” strategies is used to cover all approaches that strengthen the capacity of the public administration and other public service providers to supply services more effectively and efficiently and to be more responsive to citizens’ priorities and needs. These strategies refer to the “government effectiveness” dimension of good governance.

### Making demand-side strategies gender sensitive

An important example of a demand-side strategy is decentralization, which holds promise for better service provision by “bringing government closer to the people.” One can distinguish between political, administrative, and fiscal

Figure 2.1 Demand- and Supply-Side Strategies to Improve Governance



Source: Authors.

decentralization, depending on whether political authority, administrative functions and staff, or financial resources are transferred to lower levels of government. If accompanied by fiscal and administrative decentralization, political decentralization has considerable potential for making public service provision more accountable to rural citizens and more responsive to their needs. Other examples of demand-side approaches include participatory planning and budgeting and strengthening citizen's rights to information. Demand-side approaches that are specific to the agricultural sector include decentralizing agricultural ministries and departments, making service providers accountable to locally elected governments, using participatory methods in agricultural policy formulation and in agricultural advisory services, and using social audits for agricultural infrastructure projects. Demand-side approaches are often promoted by civil society organizations, and they are particularly effective if they are driven by civil society organizations' grassroots movements rather than external interventions (Ackerman 2004).

To make demand-side reforms gender sensitive, taking into account that gender roles and existing forms of discrimination against women may prevent them from exercising demand and holding public officials accountable are both

important. The design of governance reforms can help to address such problems; but no simple solutions are to be found. A prominent example is the reservation of seats for women in local government bodies, an affirmative action measure that was introduced together with decentralization in India, Pakistan, Uganda, and other countries. A considerable challenge to making this strategy work is the fact that many men politicians deeply resent the reservation of seats for women. As a consequence, it is a common strategy that they have their wives run on their behalf, who are then considered to be proxies for their husbands. Another challenge is low levels of literacy among women, which limit their effectiveness as politicians, as studies in India and Uganda have shown (Jayal 2006; Johnson, Kabuchu, and Vusiya 2003). Women who stand for elections may also suffer from physical intimidation and violence (Jayal 2006). One also has to take into account that women do not necessarily advocate for gender equity once they assume political functions. Studies from India suggest that women representatives often align their policy emphasis along caste rather than gender lines (Vyasulu and Vyasulu 2000). Research from southern Africa indicates that women politicians dismissed the idea to give up party solidarity in support of gender concerns

(Geisler 1995). Despite these limitations, evidence suggests that reservations may lead to women’s empowerment and better representation, eventually. Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004) found that local council presidents in three Indian states invest more in types of infrastructure directly relevant to the needs of their own gender (see further discussion, lessons learned from past experience, and entry points for improved interventions in Thematic Note 3).

In participatory planning approaches—a type of intervention that can be introduced within existing legal and institutional structures—special provisions may be required to ensure women’s participation in the planning process, such as holding planning meetings with women’s groups prior to general planning meetings. Gender-disaggregated information is a key input in demand-side strategies, because citizens need to know how the state has allocated public resources and to whose benefit. Right-to-information legislation, such as India’s Right-to-Information Act, helps to improve access to information. Citizen report cards, which are based on surveys among citizens regarding their satisfaction with the quality of public service provision, have become an important approach to increase transparency (Samuel 2002). Women may have comparative advantages in some types of demand-side strategies. For example, women’s groups are effectively monitoring food prices in ration shops in India to reduce corruption (Goetz and Jenkins 2002). Demand-side approaches may lead to repression of citizens who try to disclose irregularities in the public administration. Women may be particularly vulnerable to such repression. Therefore, ensuring women’s access to justice is often important to make demand-side approaches work.

### **Making supply-side strategies gender sensitive**

Examples of supply-side reforms include civil service reforms, public expenditure management reforms, the reform of procurement and audit procedures, training programs for public officials, and improved coordination between different government agencies and departments. Because the agricultural administration is part of the general public administration, such general reforms typically have implications for agriculture. Also, however, supply-side reforms exist that are specific for agriculture. For example, the introduction of new technologies, such as information and communication technologies (ICTs) for agricultural advisory services or land administration, can help to improve agricultural sector governance. Another supply-side approach consists in involving nongovernmental organizations and private sector enterprises in agricultural service

provision, for example, through outsourcing of agricultural advisory services, public-private partnerships in agricultural research, devolution of authority for natural resources to user groups, and privatization (for example, of formal seed supply systems).

Gender-sensitive supply-side reforms build the capacity and willingness of state actors and other public service providers to perform their tasks in such a way that women are served equally, and that gender equality is one of the goals of public management. Awareness creation and training for men and women staff members remain an important approach to reach this goal. Another avenue to make supply-side reform more gender sensitive consists in strengthening the role of women staff members within agricultural agencies. Not only is this a measure to reduce discrimination in the workplace for the women employed there, but it also may increase the capacity of the respective agencies to serve women clients better, as the theory of representative bureaucracy suggests. For example, women extension agents may have a better understanding of the needs of women farmers. Another important approach is the development of “machineries” for the promotion of gender equity, such as special units in agricultural ministries that have the task of mainstreaming gender concerns. To make supply-side reforms gender sensitive, one also has to take into account that reforms may affect men and women differently. For example, special provisions may be necessary to make sure that women, whose literacy level is often lower than that of men, can participate in agricultural e-governance initiatives, such as Internet-based agricultural extension.

### **Going from “best practice” to “good fit”**

The experience with governance reforms shows that “blue print” or “one-size-fits-all” approaches have limited chances for success. In fact, the reform approaches have to be tailored to the context-specific conditions (Levy and Kpundeh 2004), indicated by the “good fit” arrows in figure 2.1. As highlighted above, the design of demand-side approaches needs to take into account the challenges that different groups, including women, face in exercising voice and demanding accountability. Likewise, supply-side reforms need to address the specific problems that prevent public agencies and other service providers from performing their tasks effectively. Moreover, demand- and supply-side approaches need to be coordinated. Little value can be found in increasing people’s ability to demand better services if the service providers lack the incentives or the capacity to respond, indicated by the “good coordination” arrow in figure 2.1.



One also needs to take into account that reforming governance is essentially a political process. Experience shows that it is often necessary to focus on those types of governance reforms first for which political commitment can be created (Grindle 1997; Levy and Kpundeh 2004). Governance reforms that require a change in legal and institutional frame conditions (table 2.1) typically depend on higher levels of political commitment than strategies that can be used within the existing legal and institutional framework.

## POLICY PROCESSES

As indicated above, developing sound policies and regulations is an important aspect of good governance. In recent years, the international development community and civil society have placed increasing emphasis on making processes of policy formulation more participatory and consultative. Because of democratization, the role of parliaments in policy making has been strengthened in many countries too. Likewise, democratic decentralization has improved the possibilities of locally elected council members to engage in policy formulation. In terms of the framework above, these trends are “demand-side” approaches, which strengthen the ability of citizens to formulate demands by involving them in policy making, directly, through interest groups, and through elected representatives. These developments have created important opportunities for making policies more gender sensitive. The contemporary challenge is to seize these opportunities, as women face particular obstacles of making their political voice heard. With regard to agricultural livelihoods, the following five types of policy processes are of particular interest.

1. *Formulation of general development strategies and plans.* National development strategies and plans form an important basis for economic policies. In many countries, they take the form of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), which are developed with a strong emphasis on stakeholder participation. Other countries, such as India, have five-year development plans formulated by national planning commissions. The way in which agriculture and gender are addressed in these strategies and plans has far-reaching implications for the formulation of agricultural policies and programs.
2. *Formulation of agricultural sector policies and plans.* Most countries have specific agricultural sector policies, which are often developed with support from international organizations. These policies are an important entry point for mainstreaming gender concerns.
3. *Formulation of plans at the local level.* Decentralization and community-driven development approaches have introduced or strengthened planning processes at the local level, such as community-action plans and district-level plans. Integrating agriculture as well as gender concerns into such local plans is important to ensure that local development efforts improve agricultural livelihoods in a gender-sensitive way. Moreover, local plans are important because they are increasingly used to feed into regional and national agricultural and general development strategies.
4. *Development of budget processes.* The national and local budget processes are of crucial importance, as they determine to which extent policies are actually translated into practice. Gender budgeting, which is now promoted actively in many countries, provides important entry points for gender mainstreaming (box 2.1). One also needs to pay attention to the range of policy documents related to the budget process, such as Medium-Term Budget Frameworks, Annual Budget Framework Papers, and Sector Investment Plans. Mainstreaming gender concerns in these documents is essential for achieving adequate budget allocations.
5. *Development of political processes leading to institutional reforms.* Another type of process that deserve attention are political processes that lead to the reform of agricultural sector institutions, such as agricultural extension reforms or land administration reforms. The content of such policy reforms is covered in different Modules of this *Sourcebook*. The *political process* of bringing about such reforms is an important entry point for gender concerns. This is also true for the political processes by which general governance reforms (such as decentralization reforms) are pursued, because those have important implications for gender and agriculture too.

As further detailed in Thematic Note 1, different entry points make these policy processes gender sensitive by strengthening the capacity of women and their organizations to (1) participate effectively in policy-making processes; (2) conduct relevant analyses, such as gender-specific agricultural expenditure reviews and gender analysis of agricultural budgets; (3) use research-based knowledge in the policy process (for instance, by providing training in policy communication); and (4) analyze the political economy of specific policy processes through a gender lens and engage in policy change management, for example, by building coalitions and influencing public opinion.

## Box 2.1 Gender Budgeting

Public expenditure analysis can be a powerful tool for gender equity when gender-disaggregated analyses of public budgeting and expenditure expose gender bias in macroeconomic policy. Public expenditure management portfolios conventionally focus on fiscal discipline and good operational management. However, how public money is allocated and spent is the most concrete representation of policy priorities in a country, and gender-sensitive analyses can be used to hold policy makers accountable for spending real money to achieve their political promises. One prominent strategy in this realm is gender-responsive budgeting. Gender-responsive budget initiatives are usually multistep policy analysis projects that compare the adequacy of policy and budgetary allocations for addressing the specific nature of

*Source:* Authors.

gender inequity in a country. They can be sectoral, focusing on a particular gender-equity issue, or may involve a more comprehensive disaggregation of government accounts. Such initiatives also increase the transparency of government and discourage the use of public office for private gain, especially in ways that siphon off resources that should be of special benefit to women. Civil society groups play an important role in gender budgeting. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) has been supporting gender-responsive budgeting and operates a Web site with resources in several languages ([www.gender-budgets.org](http://www.gender-budgets.org)). Although gender budgeting has gained increasing importance, a need still exists to use opportunities created by this tool more effectively in agricultural budgets.

### **PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM**

Although good policies are important, they are not enough. To improve agricultural livelihoods in a gender-sensitive way, public institutions must have the will and the capacity to implement policies and programs that are targeted at gender equity in the agricultural sector. In other words, “supply-side” factors must accompany demand-side processes to strengthen governance. Understanding the public administration is especially important to achieve gender-sensitive governance because research has shown that the bureaucracy plays a significant role in creating gender relations in the broader society. The agricultural administration can maintain existing gender relations in the agricultural sector by providing unequal access to social and economic resources, and it can help to transform them through recognizing men’s and women’s different needs and positions in this sector. Moreover, public administration staff in frontline service agencies such as agricultural extension are often the first, and perhaps the only, contact that women and men in rural areas have with the state. The implementation of public policy through the agricultural administration thus determines how policy directives developed at a central level are actually experienced on the ground. Agricultural bureaucracies are also gendered in their own internal cultures—in the relationships of and opportunities for the men and women who work within them. Improving public sector management in agriculture is thus essential for the alleviation of poverty for rural women.

### **National and local machineries for promoting gender equity**

Since the First World Conference on Women in the mid-1970s, the international women’s movement and the donor community have pressed countries to establish state institutions specifically tasked with the promotion of the status of women. These “national machineries” take many forms, including self-standing ministries, gender focal points, gender units or “gender desks” within existing ministries such as Finance or Agriculture, or a central advisory body within the Executive Office. Early machineries tended to be isolated structures that actually implemented welfare-oriented projects, but it is now generally recognized that the machinery should act as a catalyst for gender mainstreaming in all areas of policy and administration, rather than as an implementer. As of 2004, 165 countries had established some type of national machinery for promoting gender equity.

Because agriculture is the primary source of women’s livelihoods in most developing countries, the way in which the agricultural bureaucracy institutionalizes gender policy and planning functions is particularly important for poverty alleviation. Both the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) support the establishment of gender units that specifically serve the rural sector as part of a country’s broader machinery for the promotion of gender equity. Women’s desks or gender focal points in Ministries of Agriculture and/or in decentralized district agricultural

offices can provide guidance to sector practitioners on how to mainstream gender in agricultural planning, budgeting, and implementation. For example, the Unit for the Strengthening of and Support to Gender Policies at the El Salvador Ministry for Agriculture and Livestock helped the extension program tailor training to women farmers, thus enhancing productivity. The Gender Strategy in the reconfigured Ministry of Agriculture in Côte d'Ivoire led fully a quarter of the ministry's programs to have an explicit gender focus (see Innovative Activity Profile 2). Broad-based practitioner evidence suggests that separate, small women-specific agricultural and rural development programs are usually not successful in reaching large numbers of rural women. Instead, it is more effective to design mainstream agricultural programs so that they reach both men and women. Having dedicated gender staff sit inside sectoral ministries increases the gender relevance of their work (see further discussion specific to the agricultural sector, lessons learned from past experience, and entry points for improved interventions in the Thematic Note 2).

### **Public sector reform**

In addition to creating dedicated institutional bodies to advocate for women's issues, gender sensitivity can be integrated into the daily operations of the public sector. Periods of reform often provide strategic opportunities to do this.

**REFORM MODELS.** Public administration reforms have been on the development agenda ever since developing countries achieved their independence, but with the increasing commitment to good governance, public sector management has gained particular prominence. The models that have guided public sector reforms have changed over time (UN & AF 2005). The New Public Management (NPM) approach, which replaced the traditional public administration model, focused on the introduction of private sector management approaches in public agencies, emphasizing entitlements, efficiency and results, outcomes, and professionalism. Treating citizens as "customers" is an important guiding principle in NPM. Creating semiautonomous agencies to remove the public administration from direct political influence has also been a major approach in NPM. These principles remain relevant for public sector reform, and they create scope for gender mainstreaming by recognizing the entitlements of women "customers," disaggregating results and outcomes by gender, and introducing gender mainstreaming as an element of professionalism in public service. In current reform approaches, a stronger focus lies

on combining public sector reforms with demand-side approaches by emphasizing stakeholder participation and transparency. The "responsive governance" model of public sector reform describes this trend. To make this reform approach gender responsive, it is crucial to involve stakeholders that represent women in participatory processes.

Although public sector reforms have potentially far-reaching impacts on agricultural administration, it is important to determine which activities are best addressed through sectoral instruments, and which through a more cross-cutting approach. Administrative reforms within Ministries of Agriculture and other relevant government agencies can be important tools for creating incentives for service responsiveness to women-specific needs, as well as those of men. Projects focusing on building administrative capacity can experiment with innovative incentive systems that reward the extra effort needed to work for women's advancement. Performance reviews and indicators, bureaucratic communication flows, trainings, management techniques, and informal professional cultures all can be strengthened to value the work necessary to tailor services specifically to the needs of women clients and to help women clients overcome barriers to accessing these. In Chile, for example, the public sector Management Improvement Program links performance evaluations to achievement of specific gender targets and has led a high proportion of government agencies and services to incorporate gender.

Civil service reform is another area with potentially significant gender impacts. Practitioner evidence suggests that public sector downsizing often impacts women disproportionately, especially in places where women are overrepresented in the secretarial and administrative ranks of the bureaucracy that are thinned. Gender-sensitive reform projects begin with an ex ante analysis of the gender impacts of public sector downsizing, such as that conducted by the World Bank in Vietnam, to understand how the reforms impact the roles of women and men who work inside the administration. Important positive benchmarks for civil service reforms include whether they diminish job discrimination, increase equity and opportunities, and give consideration to issues relevant to women in the workplace such as sexual harassment and family leave policies. In addition to improving the job quality of women bureaucrats, these gender-equity practices in the public administration can improve the quality of service provided by the public sector. The theory of representative bureaucracy suggests that organizations perform their missions more effectively if their workforces reflect the characteristics of their constituent populations. Keeping women in the public administration

means they may be better able to tailor agricultural services and policies to the needs of rural women. A study of two rural credit and development programs in Bangladesh showed that women field workers and managers identified with some of the problems of their poor women clients and acted as advocates for them within the managers' organizations (Goetz 2001).

**PUBLIC SECTOR REFORMS BY INVOLVING THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND CIVIL SOCIETY.** Another set of supply-side reforms aims at improving public sector governance by involving private sector agencies, user organizations, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in the provision of public services. The combination of approaches discussed here that is most suitable depends on country-specific conditions, as highlighted earlier ("best fit"):

- **Outsourcing.** Contracting, or outsourcing, is suitable for functions that require public finance but not necessarily public provision. For example, in Uganda's new National Agricultural Advisory Services system, the provision of agricultural advisory services is contracted out to private sector enterprises, individual consultants, and NGOs that compete for the contracts. The approach is combined with a demand-side strategy, because committees of farmers' representatives at the subcounty level make decisions on awarding the contracts. A quota for women farmers in these committees aims to ensure gender responsiveness.
- **Public-private partnerships and privatization:** Going beyond outsourcing, public-private partnerships create joint responsibilities for financing and provision of services and infrastructure, including irrigation infrastructure. For services that are not confronted with market failure, privatization can be a useful reform approach. Veterinary services, for example, have been increasingly privatized in many developing countries. However, if market failures exist because of, for example, natural monopolies, as with water and electricity supplies, privatization needs to be combined with regulation to ensure that the rural poor, including rural women, retain access to such services. Regulation can be combined with demand-side approaches, for example, by making regulatory decisions subject to public consultations, as they are for electricity regulation in India. Special provisions can help to ensure that women's interests are equally represented in such approaches.

A range of reform strategies represent mixed demand- and supply-side approaches because they involve citizens directly in public functions such as service provision and regulation.

- **Representation of the private sector and civil society in management boards of public sector agencies:** One important public sector reform approach is the creation of semi-autonomous agencies, which are governed by boards that include representatives of the private sector and civil society, for example, Guatemala's forest administration and Uganda's national agricultural research system (Birner and Wittmer 2006).
- **Public-private people partnerships:** These partnerships involve civil society organizations, such as farmer organizations, along with public sector agencies and private business enterprises. An example is the "Sustainable Uptake of Cassava as an Industrial Commodity" project in Ghana. Cassava is widely grown by women and traditionally viewed as a subsistence food crop. The project established systems that link farmers, especially women, to new markets for cassava products, such as flour, baking products, and plywood adhesives (World Bank 2007b).
- **Devolution of management authority to user groups:** This strategy is widely applied in natural resource management. Community forestry in India and Nepal is a prominent example. The strategy is also important in irrigation. The Office du Niger irrigation scheme in Mali is a particularly successful African example of this approach (Aw and Diemer 2005).
- **Development of service cooperatives:** Formed and owned by producers, including smallholder farmers, service cooperatives can be important for providing services helping the poor. In India, for example, dairy cooperatives provide livestock services to more than 12 million households.

Such mixed approaches create opportunities for involving women: for example, by involving organizations that represent rural women. Yet it cannot be taken for granted that such opportunities will be used. Special provisions, such as reserving seats in governing bodies for women representatives, and enabling measures, such as training coaching and mentoring, may be necessary to make such approaches gender sensitive. Moreover, strengthening the capacity of organizations that represent rural women is often an important prerequisite to make such approaches work (see further discussion on civil society and women organizations in Thematic Note 4).

### **Reforms to reduce corruption**

The emphasis on good governance has stimulated a wide range of reforms aimed at combating corruption. Corruption affects the agricultural sector in many ways. National integrity surveys show that land administration is often one

of the most corrupt government agencies.<sup>2</sup> Large agricultural infrastructure projects, such as those for irrigation, are particularly prone to corruption, as is water allocation in public irrigation systems (Rinaudo 2002). Companies may bribe regulators, as in biotechnology regulation in Indonesia (BBC News 2005), and pesticide regulation in India. Pesticides may cause particular health hazards for women, who often do the planting and weeding work. Reducing public sector involvement into input supply and marketing of agricultural products may reduce the scope for corruption, which is often associated with such interventions (see, for example, Jeffrey 2002). However, outsourcing and privatization also create new scope for corruption, and the agricultural sector is equally affected by such problems. For example, concerns have been expressed that outsourcing agricultural advisory services in Uganda has created scope for corruption in the contracting process.

Both demand- and supply-side approaches can overcome corruption in agriculture (World Bank 2007b). Public expenditure management reforms and procurement reforms are typical supply-side approaches, which are often part of

general public sector reform. A successful demand-side example is the monitoring of food prices in ration shops by women's groups in India, as mentioned above. A study of strategies to reduce corruption in village road projects applied a randomized experimental design to compare social audits, a demand-side approach, and government audits, a supply-side approach (Olken 2007). The study suggests that grassroots monitoring may reduce theft more when community members have substantial private stakes in the outcome. New technologies, especially ICTs (e-government), can reduce the scope for corruption, as with computerizing land records in Karnataka. As box 2.2 shows, a vivid debate exists on the extent to which involving women in politics and public sector management will reduce the scope for corruption.

### **DECENTRALIZATION, LOCAL GOVERNANCE, AND COMMUNITY-DRIVEN DEVELOPMENT**

Decentralization—the transfer of political, administrative, and fiscal authority to lower levels of government—is one

#### **Box 2.2 Gender and Corruption**

Two papers by the World Bank launched women into the global debate on anticorruption and good governance. In two cross-country studies, Swamy and others (2001) and Dollar, Fisman, and Gatti (2001) found that a greater proportion of women in parliament was associated with lower levels of corruption. Swamy and others (2001) also used data from the World Values Survey as well as a survey of business owners in Georgia to show gender differentials in attitudes about and involvement in bribery. Do these studies show that women are intrinsically more honest, and thus are a “tool” to combat corruption?

Several political scientists who study gender dynamics in developing countries argue no. They suggest *opportunities* for corruption are what is gendered, not people's reactions to it. In particular, in socially conservative societies, it is difficult for women to become either clients or patrons in the men-dominated patronage networks through which corrupt exchanges occur. Where corrupt acts are condoned by social networks, or even required by social convention, women have been shown to be no less willing than men to engage in

such behavior, especially if required to create a sustainable livelihood.

These scholars argue that the central question in the gender and corruption debate is not whether women or men are less corrupt as a group, but how to combat gender-specific accountability failures. These include gendered capture, such as when money destined for women's development is more easily stolen by state actors because women tend to be less aware of their rights and less willing than men to demand that public authorities account for missing funds, and gender bias in purportedly impartial law and policy, which exacerbates existing forms of discrimination. Women may also be more susceptible to “sexual currencies” of corruption, such as having sexual services demanded in lieu of money bribes. Because corruption takes the largest toll on the poor, and women make up a disproportionate share of the poor in many places, the effects of corruption are thus disproportionately borne by women. The key question to ask is whether anticorruption measures equally address the types of corruption faced by women and men.

Sources: Alhassan-Alolo 2007; Goetz 2007; Goetz and Jenkins 2005.

of the major governance reforms that many developing countries have been undertaking. Eighty percent of all developing countries have experimented with some form of decentralization (Work 2002). Community-driven development (CDD) is a related approach. Broadly defined, CDD gives community groups control over planning decisions and investment resources. By mobilizing community groups, CDD aims at making the rural poor active partners rather than targets of poverty alleviation measures. In early phases of decentralization, local governments often do not reach down to the community level. However, decentralization and CDD can go hand in hand by making local governments, rather than higher-level state agencies, responsible for the implementation of CDD approaches.

### **Decentralization**

As indicated earlier, decentralization holds great promise for making public service provision more responsive to the needs of rural citizens, including rural women, by “bringing government closer to the people.” With regard to agriculture, acknowledging that this sector is best served by a mix of centralized and decentralized functions is important. For example, public functions of strategic relevance—such as ensuring food safety and controlling epidemic diseases—need to remain national responsibilities, even though their implementation may require considerable administrative capacity at intermediate and local levels. For applied agricultural research, agroecological zones may be the appropriate level of decentralization. Agricultural extension, however, is often best organized at lower tiers of local government to be responsive to diverse local conditions and extension needs (World Bank 2007b). Decentralization is inherently a political process that shifts power and authority, and so agricultural ministries at the central level, like other ministries, often resist the transfer of their fiscal resources and their staff to local governments. This resistance limits the possibilities of the elected local leaders, including women leaders, to become active players in promoting agriculture. Hence, building political support is important to avoid fiscal and administrative decentralization falling behind political decentralization.

Decentralization also involves the challenge of “local elite capture,” which implies that local elites use public resources to their advantage. However, whether elite capture is indeed more important at the local than at higher levels depends on country-specific conditions (Bardhan and Mookherjee 2000). The gender dimension of the elite capture problem is complex, since women are part of local and national elites,

and they do not necessarily prioritize gender concerns when they assume political office. The system of reserving seats in local councils in India aims at addressing both elite capture and gender-inequality problems, as seats are reserved for women and for disadvantaged castes. Efforts to reserve seats for women in state assemblies and the national parliament have been unsuccessful so far. The challenges involved in the reservation of seats for local council members have been discussed earlier.

### **Community-driven development**

Once a visionary idea, CDD has become a reality on a large scale. More than 9 percent of World Bank lending uses this approach to development (World Bank 2007b). Other international development organizations also use this mechanism to a large extent. Experience shows that CDD can speed up the implementation of projects, increase cost effectiveness, make fiscal transfers more efficient, improve the quality of infrastructure, and increase income from agriculture. Considerable experience has been accumulated in scaling up, but drawing definitive conclusions requires more rigorous impact evaluation (World Bank 2005).

As further detailed in Thematic Note 3, experience has shown that communities that manage resources under CDD programs typically concentrate first on meeting basic needs for health, education, and infrastructure. Once they turn to income-generating activities, however, agricultural projects—including those that link smallholders to high-value markets—become an important choice. Community-driven projects in northeast Brazil that promote agricultural income generation show that success depends not only on community capacity but also on market demand, technical assistance, and capacity building (van Zyl and others 2000). Income-generating projects in the agricultural sector often provide private goods, such as livestock, seeds, and access to irrigated plots, rather than public goods, such as schools. Such projects need special provisions to avoid elite capture and to make sure that women benefit equally. Without such provisions, agricultural CDD projects that provide private goods may disadvantage women by one-sidedly increasing the asset base of men.

Although CDD approaches attempt to avoid market and state failure, they may be confronted with the problem of community failure. Therefore, developing accountability is an important condition for enabling communities to implement agricultural projects. Unlike local governments, communities do not usually have formal structures of authority and accountability, and they can be riddled with abuses of

power, social exclusion, social conservatism, and conflict. Where customary traditions deny rights and privileges to women, relying on customary community institutions for project implementation can deepen gender inequality (Beall 2005). Therefore, CDD projects need to invest considerable resources in changing community practices by encouraging more transparent information flows, broad and gender-sensitive community participation in local decision making, and participatory monitoring of local institutions. Special provisions, such as quorum rules for women's participation in community meetings, may help to achieve gender equity. One needs to acknowledge that accountability evolves over time, and that solutions need to be specific to country context. Yet, when associated with predictable resource flows, CDD approaches can change community dynamics beyond the project time frame (World Bank 2007b).

## GLOBAL GOVERNANCE OF AGRICULTURE

In today's global world, much of the architecture of agricultural governance is created at a supranational scale. As the

*World Development Report 2008: Agriculture for Development* (World Bank 2007b) makes clear, action at the global level is essential for successful realization of national agendas to use agriculture for development. Even though agriculture is primarily a private sector activity, it relies heavily on the provision of public goods, as well as on the regulation of the international commons for sustainable development. Agricultural development is also influenced by the globalization of the economy, and reducing barriers and transaction costs in trade requires international coordination. Agriculture is increasingly susceptible to transboundary issues, such as pandemic animal and plant diseases and invasive species that require regional solutions. Progress in agriculture is also essential to meet other great global challenges of our day, including environmental change, disease, poverty, and security. For all of these reasons, international cooperation through the types of organizations listed in table 2.2 is necessary to support strategies for strong agricultural livelihoods at the national and local levels.

Because activities, agreements, and institutions that operate at an international scale influence outcomes at the

**Table 2.2** Types of Global Organizations Relevant for Agriculture

Sector and specialization	Intergovernmental organizations	Nongovernmental organizations and networks, private sector enterprises, and organizations with mixed membership
Specialized organizations in the agricultural sector	Food and Agriculture Organization Global Donor Platform on Rural Development International Fund for Agricultural Development World Food Program World Organization for Animal Health	Global networks of farmers' organizations (for example, International Federation of Agricultural Producers and Via Campesina) Multinational agribusiness enterprises (for example, Dow Chemicals and Monsanto) Supermarket chains Consultative Group on International Agricultural Development
Cross-sectoral organizations that include agriculture	Codex Alimentarius	<i>Harvest Plus</i>
Development organizations and funding agencies with agricultural programs	United Nations Development Programme World Bank Group	Private foundations and funding agencies (for example, Gates and Rockefeller foundations) Nongovernmental development organizations (for example, CARE and Oxfam)
Specialized environmental organizations	Global Environmental Facility Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change United Nations Environment Programme	Environmental NGOs (for example, Greenpeace and World Wide Fund for Nature) International Union for the Conservation of Nature
Specialized organizations in other sectors	United Nations Development Fund for Women World Health Organization World Trade Organization	Multinational pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies International Organization for Standardization
General global governance bodies	G-8 Summit United Nations Secretariat, Assembly and Security Council	

Source: World Bank 2007b.

national and local scales within developing countries, it follows that institutions of global governance must be gender sensitive for their country-level impacts to be gender sensitive as well. For example, trade liberalization has differential effects on women and men when women are disproportionately employed in industries affected by the removal of tariffs, such as agriculture or textile manufacturing. Analysis of these country-level effects must be available during international trade negotiations. Likewise, recent agreements relating to agricultural inputs, such as the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (commonly known as the International Seed Treaty), have important gender aspects, because men and women are often stewards of different crops and species, and the farmers' rights of women need to be equally protected. Hence, it is important to include gender-sensitive language and concepts in such agreements.

Making sure that women are at the negotiating table when international agreements relevant to agriculture and global governance are written and that gender interests are represented in international policy and regulatory vehicles is essential for truly mainstreaming gender in agricultural governance. Similar to the programs and investments discussed above in mainstreaming gender in national agricultural policy processes, donors and governments can build the capacity of both men and women to

bring relevant gender concepts to the world of international agriculture diplomacy. In particular, trade capacity-building programs should involve significant training in gender analysis, because trade negotiations are particularly data intensive. Activities such as exchange programs or study tours for elected officials or diplomats can also expand their awareness of positive gender practices in other countries. Support programs and investments should focus on both government representatives and civil society actors.

### **MEASURING CHANGE: GENDER-SENSITIVE MONITORING AND EVALUATION INDICATORS**

It is important to be able to measure the impact that governance initiatives have on men and women beneficiaries, their families, and communities. Table 2.3 gives some ideas for indicators and sources of verification, although clear modifications are required for each program. Further detail is also available in Module 16.

Depending on the country or region, it may be relevant also to consider ethnicity and caste alongside gender (both as comparative indicators and when collecting data), because women of lower castes or ethnic minorities are usually in the most disadvantaged situation.



**Table 2.3 Monitoring and Evaluation Indicators for Gender and Governance**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Sources of verification and tools</b>
Number of women and men actively participating in local-level planning and policy-setting processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizen's scorecards</li> <li>• Community meeting minutes</li> <li>• Participatory monitoring records</li> </ul>
Number of women and men employed at each level in the public service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff records</li> </ul>
Percentage of women and men in new recruitment in public service at each level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff records</li> </ul>
Percentage of elected women officials (at national, state, and local levels)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government electoral records</li> </ul>
Number of women and men (bureaucrats or elected officials) participating in training per quarter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training records</li> </ul>
Change in knowledge and attitudes of women and men in public service regarding issues such as sexual harassment, child care access, and family leave policies, measured annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus groups</li> <li>• Surveys</li> <li>• Stakeholder interviews</li> </ul>
Number of government officials participating in gender training annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government records</li> <li>• Training records</li> </ul>
Percentage of women and men extension workers and project staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government agricultural extension and business support services records</li> <li>• Project records</li> </ul>
Perceptions of incidence of corruption, disaggregated by gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholder interviews</li> <li>• Surveys</li> </ul>
Percentage of women and men actively involved in committees writing PRSPs, national policies, and so on	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government minutes</li> <li>• Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) records</li> </ul>
Use or otherwise of gender-disaggregated monitoring in PRSPs, national budgets, project logical frameworks, government socioeconomic development plans, and so on	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documents: PRSPs, budgets, and others</li> <li>• Gender analysis of budgets</li> <li>• Public expenditure reviews</li> </ul>
Satisfaction of entrepreneurs with their access to government services (such as land titles and business registration), training, information, and infrastructure, disaggregated by gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average time taken by government offices to issue certificates</li> <li>• Focus groups</li> <li>• Stakeholder interviews</li> </ul>
Changes in community knowledge regarding government policies, laws, or services, disaggregated by gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus groups</li> <li>• Sample survey</li> <li>• Stakeholder interviews</li> </ul>
Percentage of time spent daily in household on paid and nonpaid activities, disaggregated by gender and age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender analysis</li> <li>• Time use studies</li> </ul>
Numbers of women and men community trained in group management and leadership skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training records</li> </ul>
Active participation of women and men in community-based rural organizations, including holding leadership roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bank account signatories</li> <li>• Organization minutes</li> <li>• Stakeholder interviews</li> </ul>
Changes over x-year period of project activities in household nutrition, health, education, vulnerability to violence, and happiness, disaggregated by gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Household surveys, before and after</li> <li>• Project management information system</li> <li>• School records</li> </ul>

Source: Authors, with inputs from Pamela White, author of Module 16.

## Gender in Policy-Making Processes

**D**emocratization and the rise of participatory policy making have increased the possibilities for smallholders and the rural poor to raise their political voice. Diverse institutional arrangements involving citizens directly in service provision and regulation have started to be adopted, including (1) representation of the private sector and civil society on management boards of public sector agencies, (2) public-private partnerships, (3) devolving management authority to user groups, and (4) service cooperatives (see Module Overview). Reforms in the public sector and in many agricultural institutions have escalated in recent years; they also create special opportunities for greater representation and inclusion, especially involving women, who historically have been underrepresented in processes and neglected in policy outcomes. However, it cannot be taken for granted that such opportunities will be used. Increasing voice and accountability in rural areas remains a challenge even in democratic systems, and rural women face particular obstacles in making their voices heard (World Bank 2007). This suggests a vital need for a critical look across countries at the processes of policy formulation, participation of women and men, and the different obstacles that they face to seize the opportunities presented by recent governance reforms.

### GENDER IN DIFFERENT TYPES OF POLICY PROCESSES

Following the discussion in the Module Overview on the different types of policy processes, we discuss here the level of inclusion of gender issues in various policy documents and the equality of participation between women and men in the different policy processes.

*Process of developing national development strategies and plans.* National development strategies and plans form an important basis for economic policies. In many countries they take the form of PRSPs,<sup>1</sup> which are developed with a

strong emphasis on stakeholder participation. However, recent studies have stressed that representation by women and the incorporation of gender issues in the PRSP processes remain a challenge (World Bank 2005; Zuckerman 2002). A World Bank survey covering the PRSP process in 32 countries shows that agricultural stakeholders, especially women, are often well represented in the preparatory phases when issues are diagnosed and studied, but their involvement in actually setting priorities is much weaker (World Bank 2004). In the rural sector, the attention to gender issues and follow-through in the recommendations or priorities in the document are even more challenging. In 2004 the World Bank conducted a review of rural development aspects of 12 PRSPs (in 2000–04). Only six PRSPs brought up gender issues in the poverty diagnosis, and only three included a detailed discussion. Only one PRSP (Rwanda) used gender as one of the criteria for prioritizing actions in the policy matrix. Gender-related targets are generally absent in the PRSPs, and only two PRSPs (Kyrgyz Republic and Mali) had a set of gender indicators. Only three had follow-up in the instruments for policy changes, in the form of Poverty Reduction Support Credits, and only two had follow-up in the lending program of the Bank and other donors (World Bank 2004).

*Process of developing agricultural sector policies and plans.* Most countries have specific rural or agricultural sector policies, which are often developed with support from the World Bank or international organizations. In a recent analysis of seven rural development strategies supported by the World Bank (2005–06),<sup>2</sup> only three reports included substantial discussion of gender-related issues including specific recommendations (Cambodia, Mozambique, and Vietnam). Two of the reports presented country-specific findings on the differences between men and women in the rural sector, with less focus on recommendations (Argentina and Lao People's Democratic Republic). These strategy documents most commonly discuss gender issues related to

education, nonfarm employment, and woman-headed households. Often focus is given to women's access to health care, property rights, credit, women's limited access to relevant extension services, and limited participation in local planning processes.

In the seven documents, no discussion is given to the consultation processes undertaken before the strategy writing. However, the Cambodia document recommended increased women's participation at the village level, and the Vietnam document noted how local planning processes need to become more transparent and inclusive to ensure that all groups—including ethnic minorities and women—have a voice in the decisions that affect their lives.

*Budget processes.* Gender-responsive budgeting aims at mainstreaming gender into public finance. Gender-responsive budgets are not separate budgets for women,<sup>3</sup> but instead, general budgets that are planned, approved, executed, monitored, and audited in a gender-sensitive way. In the aftermath of the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995), gender-responsive budgeting work has been carried out in more than 60 countries. Schneider (2007) summarized some successes:

- Awareness has increased that budgetary decisions may have an impact on gender relations and gender equity.
- The capacity to analyze budgets from a gender perspective has increased.
- In some countries, budget allocations have been reprioritized in favor of women and girls.
- In some countries, budget guidelines and formats have been changed.
- Debates on gender issues have taken place in parliament, and gender issues have been mentioned in the budget speeches of ministers of finance.
- Budget processes have become more transparent.
- The participation of the civil society in the budgetary process has increased.

However, Schneider noted that gender budget work in many countries was partial in scope. In some cases, the impact was limited because the initiatives referred to a stylized approach that was not suitable for the respective national budget system. Yet gender budgeting work in many countries remained a one-off activity (for example, sensitization workshops, training, and analyses) and was not institutionalized. Moreover, gender-responsive budgeting activities were not linked with recent reforms in many countries' public finance systems (for example, a more results-oriented budgeting and establishment of mid-term

economic frameworks to link planning and budgeting more closely).

One challenge is that government ministries responsible for women's affairs and advocacy groups tend to have limited expertise in macroeconomic issues and are therefore at a disadvantage when it comes to negotiating gender-equitable policies (World Bank 2005). They also often lack authority and/or budget allocations for follow-up action.

*Political processes leading to institutional reforms.* As is the case for public system reforms, gender-responsive actions rarely accompany recent or ongoing general governance reforms (for example, decentralization reforms) and more specific agricultural reforms (for example, national agricultural extension, land administration). Although the political process of bringing about such reforms is an important entry point for gender concerns, gender-responsive actions are seldom incorporated in such processes.

## WOMEN AS POLICY MAKERS

In agriculture, women account for more than 50 percent of the labor force, and they are responsible for three-quarters of food production in sub-Saharan Africa, but the design of many development policies continues to assume wrongly that farmers and rural workers are men (World Bank 2007). The rigidities of some gender-blind policies, institutions, programs, and projects are perpetuated by the underrepresentation of women as policy makers or their limited participation in policy and institutional change processes.

At the national level, the number of women in parliaments remains low: 17 percent in parliament, 14 percent as ministers, and 7 percent as heads of government in 2006 (IPU 2006). Signs of progress have been seen in terms of women's participation in parliaments over the years; however, the proportion of women remains low. In addition, despite the increasing role of civic society organizations in shaping the research and policy agenda, it remains a challenge for these organizations to be representative and inclusive of women.

At the local level, women have enjoyed more success at gaining access to decision-making positions in local government than at the national level (UNIFEM 2007).<sup>4</sup> These positions tend to be more accessible to them and have less competition than for parliamentary seats. In all likelihood women's decision-making roles in city and community government may be more easily accepted because they are seen as an extension of women's involvement in their community. Yet, in many countries, women's participation in local politics is often undermined by gender inequality within

families, by an inequitable division of labor within households, and by deeply entrenched cultural attitudes about gender roles and the suitability of women for decision-making positions (UNIFEM 2007).

### **MISSED OPPORTUNITY FROM LIMITED ANALYTICAL WORK**

Good analytical work can lead to more and better treatment of agricultural issues in policy debates, which in turn can result in more and better projects and programs. In the agriculture sector, significant analytical strengthening has occurred in several organizations. For instance, FAO, IFAD, and the World Bank have made some progress in their gender-mainstreaming strategies and have recently embarked on more action-oriented processes of gender integration (Curry and Tempelman 2006; FAO 2007; GENRD 2006, 2007; IFAD 2003; World Bank 2008). Analytical capacity is being strengthened, and data collection and analyses have been improved to include gender-specific variables and indicators in these three agencies. The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)'s Gender and Development Program has also contributed in analytical capacity strengthening for gender in agriculture (see also IFPRI 2007a, 2007b; Quisumbing and McClafferty 2006a, 2006b). Capacity building of staff in these organizations has also been implemented (see also Thematic Note 2). However, several gaps still remain. For instance, in a recent review of 130 economic and sector work (ESW) programs by GENRD (2008), at least 50 percent of the reviewed ESW do not include any gender-related issues; of the remainder, several reports include a minimal to moderate level of diagnosis of and recommendations for gender issues, and only one to four ESW programs include detailed coverage. Of the 39 technical assistance (TA) documents, between 63 and 76 percent of the reviewed TA reports do not include any gender-related issues; and of the remainder, only one provides detailed coverage of gender issues (GENRD 2008). In the IFAD, while the checklist on "prerequisites of gender-sensitive design" is being used widely, application remains uneven across regions. Opportunities for consultation and capacity building with local NGOs or women's groups were often missed.

### **GOOD PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED**

Some good approaches and examples emerge that can be scaled up to effect greater gender equity across a broader spectrum of countries. The different lessons learned from

past experience and good entry points for investments are summarized below. The roles of national governments are crucial in reducing the barriers for greater gender inclusion in the policy processes and outcomes, but an important role also is available for the international development community. Effective partnerships and capturing the comparative advantages of both national governments and the international community, along with other stakeholders, are critical for scaling up activities and venturing other innovative approaches.

#### **Unified policy framework**

Having a unified, national framework guiding general gender policies and mainstreaming gender into agricultural policies and institutions is important. Some countries have already moved in this direction. For instance, Chile's Equal Opportunities Plans are the framework documents guiding the country's gender-mainstreaming processes, leading to a recent success story of effective gender mainstreaming in the public sector, including agriculture.

#### **Representation of women in political institutions**

Getting more women in the policy making and research institutions is an important step toward getting gender issues into the focus of national strategies and policies. Political reservations for women are often proposed as a way to rapidly enhance women's ability to participate in policy making. Quotas for women in assemblies or on parties' candidate lists are in force in the legislation of over 30 countries (World Bank 2001). Reservation policies clearly have a strong impact on women's representation; however, this does not necessarily imply that reservation for women has an impact on policy decisions. Despite the importance of this issue for the design of institutions, little is known about the causal effect of women's representation on actual policy decisions (Chattopadhyay and Duflou 2004).<sup>5</sup>

In Uganda, women are particularly visible in national politics due to affirmative action, which has also contributed to women's participation in regional political decision making. Women hold four of the Ugandan representative positions in the East African Legislature Assembly (EALA) and are two of the five Ugandan members of the African Parliament. The enabling laws derived from the 1995 constitution have seen the need for affirmative action, mainly as a result of women's groups' activism: (1) the Land Act of 1998 provides for the protection of the land rights of the poor, the majority of whom are women, and the (2) the Local

Government Act of 1997 explicitly states that women shall form one-third of all local councils at all levels. As a result the proportion of women in local councils rose from 6 percent in the early 1990s to 44 percent in 2003.<sup>6</sup>

At the same time, one needs to recognize that the setup of political institutions (for example, whether or not parliaments or political parties have quotas) is hardly an entry point for donor-funded projects per se, because these are sovereign decisions that the citizens of a country and their representatives need to make. However, donor interventions can aim at strengthening the capacity of women in political institutions (for example, women members of Parliamentary Committees on Agriculture). Capacity building and training are important for enhancing women's role in decision making, at all policy-making levels, and for providing women with skills to ensure that they are fully conversant with their roles and accountabilities. Capacity strengthening of women policy makers and administrators has proven to be a pillar of the Gender Strategy of Côte d'Ivoire's National Agricultural Services project. A series of data collection processes and staff training to analyze these data have dramatically built competencies for gender and other staff in analyzing agricultural themes sensitive to specific gender issues at both the national and regional levels. The presence of the head of the national office for gender issues in all strategic discussions was also key to more effective gender mainstreaming in the agriculture sector (see Innovative Activity Profile 2).

Support can also be provided for activities that support women candidates to run for elections at different levels. In countries where education levels of women are low, governments can have a pipeline of well-qualified women candidates for senior positions in public and private organizations, which would require increased emphasis on women's education, including scholarships and cash transfers for the education of girls for vocational and university training in agricultural science and policy (see also Module 7).

### **Participation of women in political processes**

The participation of women in political processes is an important entry point. The rise of participatory policy making and stakeholder consultation provides important opportunities. Projects can aim at strengthening the capacity of women to participate. Because participatory processes are often managed by donor agencies, they can place emphasis on an adequate participation of women in such processes, and a systematic evaluation of such processes with regard to the participation of women would be an instrument that donors could use more effectively.

Increasing women's political participation may not be easy. Despite Chile's many successes in its gender mainstreaming, political participation of women is the area in which less progress has been made. The work, led by the national "women's machinery" called the Servicio Nacional de la Mujer (National Women's Service), has found few allies within the public sector, and progress on women's participation in formal politics has been sparse. Thus, it is not surprising that studies have recommended continued promotion of women's active participation in forums of citizen's control, strengthening women's organizations, and piloting quota mechanisms for formal politics.

In most cases around the developing world, institutional support is needed to ensure that gender issues are effectively represented in the policy processes. For instance, one reason why only a few PRSPs have a gender dimension is that they were prepared based on the assumption that participatory processes would automatically feed into PRSPs. In fact, participatory processes have often not fed into PRSPs (Zuckerman 2002). In Ghana previously disaggregated data were aggregated, obscuring gender differences and inequalities, thereby undermining the potential to challenge gender-blind policies (Derbyshire 2002). Other countries have had weaker participatory exercises, and some countries restrict PRSP participation to a very short list of government-recognized NGOs (Zuckerman 2002). Even if women's groups are integrated into participatory exercises, women generally remain marginalized from government, civil society, and grassroots decision making, and women's organizations feel removed from macroeconomic debates central to PRSPs (Derbyshire 2002). However, various emerging good-practice examples can be highlighted (box 2.3).

Participatory processes do not guarantee gender integration in PRSPs because of a possible disconnect between participants of the consultation processes and writing teams. In most cases PRSP writers have scarcely integrated participatory inputs into PRSPs; this reflects their lack of commitment to reflecting citizens' inputs and mainstreaming gender into the PRSP. PRSP writers have consisted mainly of government finance and economic ministry staff, often men who may lack sensitivity to gender issues (Zuckerman 2002). In a few countries, external consultants have played key PRSP writing roles, but gender integration was not always guaranteed. The Rwanda PRSP is a good example where gender integration was achieved from the consultation and institutional support in writing the PRSP (box 2.4).

Assessments of the PRSPs and other national development strategies conducted by donor agencies also provide a good venue to incorporate gender perspective. For instance,

### Box 2.3 Institutional Support for Gender Integration in PRSPs

*Bangladesh:* The Ministry of Women's Affairs with the support of several donors facilitated the establishment of a "Gender Platform," with representatives from both government and civil society, which consulted and negotiated with the interministerial PRSP task force to incorporate gender analysis and concerns in the PRSP.

*Pakistan:* The World Bank conducts a gender dialogue with the government either directly or through the Interagency Gender and Development Group (INGAD) and supports INGAD's participation in the subgroups working on the interim PRSP. This gender dialogue is a regular ongoing Bank activity with special focus on political participation, poverty reduction, and strengthening of institutional mechanisms.

*Sri Lanka:* The World Bank supported the government's Strategy on Gender as part of the PRSP process. The strategy includes (1) increased emphasis on the protection of women's rights in conformity with the

UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), (2) introduction of an employment policy to promote equal training and employment opportunities for women, (3) continued support for entrepreneurship programs for women, (4) greater support for victims of gender-based violence, (5) specific rehabilitation programs targeting women affected by conflict, and (6) introduction of gender sensitization programs for the public and private sectors.

*Vietnam:* The National Committee for the Advancement of Women (NCAFW), together with some donors, established a Task Force for mainstreaming gender into the Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy in Vietnam. A group of donors funded and facilitated research on gender-based violence and on equality of economic opportunity under Vietnam law, particularly with respect to land titling.

Sources: World Bank 2004a, 2004b.

### Box 2.4 Rwanda: Steps toward Effective Gender Integration in a PRSP

- The Ministry of Gender and the Promotion of Women (MIGEPROFE) hired an external gender expert to facilitate the process. The expert analyzed in detail the potential areas where gender could be integrated in the IPRSP and suggested specific steps on how these steps could be done in the Rwandan context.
- The consultant worked with the PRSP writing group at the Ministry of Economics and Finance (MINECOFIN) to ensure its members were committed to mainstreaming gender into the PRSP.
- PRSP stakeholders including MIGEPROFE and PRSP writing team members tried to persuade the participatory exercise facilitators, also headed by an external consultant, of the importance of ensuring women's as well as men's views.
- MIGEPROFE and MINECOFIN cosponsored a workshop to promote engendering the PRSP for some 50

representatives from a broad range of sectors. Two dynamic civil society activists cofacilitated the workshop. The MIGEPROFE and MINECOFIN ministers opened and closed the workshop, giving it a high profile. Presentations focused on the importance of integrating gender into the PRSP to achieve poverty reduction and tools to engender the PRSP. Participants practiced using these PRSP engendering tools through a teamwork exercise to engender IPRSP sectors, and teams formulated recommendations on how to engender the interim PRSP text using tools provided.

- An interagency PRSP Engendering Committee was established to promote PRSP gender mainstreaming. Committee members consisted of the PRSP writing team director, the MIGEPROFE Gender and Development Department director, and a representative of Pro-Femmes, the women's civil society groups' umbrella organization.

Source: Zuckerman 2002.

in the World Bank over half of the 17 joint staff assessments (JSAs) of PRSPs reviewed in 2003 provided concrete advice for improving attention to gender inequalities in the sectors considered in the PRSP. Almost all JSAs acknowledged the treatment of gender inequalities in the PRSP's poverty diagnosis or the consultative process or made a general statement about insufficient attention to gender in the PRSP. Aside from describing the deficit of attention to gender issues in PRSP processes and documents, these JSAs often provide useful recommendations on further steps in diagnosis and sex-disaggregated data collection and monitoring.

### **Gender-responsive budgeting**

Gender analysis of public budgets is an emerging tool for determining the different impact of expenditures on women and men to help ensure the equitable use of existing resources. Although more resources are usually needed, in some cases the problem is not allocating more resources, but efficient spending on different activities or better coordination between sectors. Intersectoral coordination and impact monitoring should be strengthened. For instance, the objective of increasing girls' completion rates in primary schools will be achieved only if investments are made in transport or water provision. Gender analyses contribute to making public spending more effective. The development community can support the capacity to perform regular gender analysis in public budgets, and it can strengthen the capacity of the national "women machinery" to identify main gender issues and coordinate the gender mainstreaming in planning and budgeting needs to be built up (see also Thematic Note 2 and Innovative Activity Profile 2).

Governments and donors should ensure that all tools used to assess public financial management systems—such as public expenditure reviews (PERs), Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys, Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability, and Country Financial Accountability Assessments—incorporate a gender perspective. Good examples include PERs initiated by the World Bank for Bangladesh, Cambodia, and Morocco. The Bangladesh PER recommends using area-based poverty indicators to allocate public funds to social sectors, such as to the Female Secondary Stipends program. This not only helps correct gender disparities, but also strengthens the overall impact of public spending. Cambodia's PER includes gender-disaggregated benefit-incidence analysis; identifies the barriers to public service access faced by women and girls, especially in education and agriculture; and proposes ways of addressing these issues. Based on the gender analysis of the budget conducted as

part of the Morocco PER, Morocco's Ministry of Finance and Privatization endorsed the integration of the gender dimension in Morocco's budgetary reform process. Although no impact assessment has been made to date, hopes are high that this will advance the institutionalization of gender considerations in public policy.

### **Strengthening analytical capacity**

Research-based knowledge can play an important role in the policy processes. Country gender assessments and gender mainstreaming in economic and sector work, technical assistance, macroeconomic models, and other regular activities need to be intensified.

The World Bank's country gender assessments (CGAs) seek to diagnose the gender-related barriers to poverty reduction and economic growth in client countries and use this diagnosis to identify priority interventions. In 2005 CGAs had been completed for 41 of 91 client countries, and many of them have been instrumental in intensifying gender inclusion into lending and nonlending activities of the World Bank. CGA preparation processes for most countries have involved extensive consultations with stakeholders including the World Bank, other donors, and civil society groups. This good practice has enhanced the analysis and fostered greater country ownership of the CGA.

Gender issues are also increasingly being incorporated into the World Bank's other instruments for country-level analytical work, such as a Country Economic Memorandum (CEM). For example, the Kenya CEM analyzed the linkage between gender inequality and economic growth and advocated reform of succession laws as applied to women as a key element in promoting stronger pro-poor reform. In a recent case using the Downsizing Options Simulation Exercise tool, analysis in Vietnam found that displaced women employees benefit more from lump-sum compensation than from standard severance packages.<sup>7</sup> Based on this finding, the Vietnamese government modified its assistance package during its state-owned enterprise-downsizing program to include substantial lump-sum components. The World Bank has an ongoing project to mainstream gender perspective in *Doing Business*, a book widely used by researchers, the private sector, and policy makers on the status of the business climate and regulations in 175 countries.<sup>8</sup> Also, the gender-disaggregated MAMS (Maquette for MDG Simulations) presents a few attempts to mainstream gender into macroeconomic modeling and planning (Morrison 2007).

Lessons from IFAD-supported projects show that, for women's economic advancement to be significant and

sustained, income-generating activities need to be linked to market opportunities. However, also essential is accompanying support for production and marketing with complementary measures that include awareness and confidence building, information and communication, the sensitization of men and local leaders, general capacity building (in areas such as literacy, leadership, and management skills), organizational support, reduction of women's workloads to enable women to participate more fully, and, occasionally, social welfare measures. Increased emphasis in IFAD's country programs on these critical action areas could be at risk in view of the fact that borrowing governments are becoming less inclined to incorporate capacity building and social investments in loan agreements.

Completion of CGAs and other ESWs is an important element of strategy implementation, but of equal importance is the dissemination and use of research-based findings by donor agencies and strengthening partnerships in producing and disseminating the findings. Moreover, there could be more intensified and concerted efforts in bridging the remaining disconnect between the analytical work and actual policy dialogues initiated and projects implemented by donor agencies.

Interventions can also aim at strengthening the capacity of stakeholders in the countries to conduct relevant analyses (for example, gender-specific expenditure reviews, gender budget analysis, and macroeconomic policy). Strengthening their capacity to use such knowledge in the policy process (for example, training in policy communication) is also important.

### **Gender in policy instruments**

Donors have assisted countries in terms of providing financial and technical support in undertaking policy reforms. For instance, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) have lending instruments called Poverty Reduction Support Credits (PRSCs), a new name for Structural Adjustment Loans—and the IMF's Poverty Reduction and Growth Facilities. In Vietnam the latest PRSC promotes gender equity in the labor force and the protection of women's rights, which has helped facilitate a national employment policy to promote equal training and employment opportunities for women as well as support for entrepreneurship programs for women. Several examples related to agriculture and rural development policies also include Mali, Rwanda, and Vietnam (box 2.5). These donor policy-lending instruments are crucial entry points for addressing gender-related constraints and obstacles for agriculture and

rural development. Donors must ensure the inclusion of gender perspective in these instruments. Debate continues on the relative effectiveness of conditionality. On the one hand, the Millennium Challenge Corporation's conditionality to Lesotho has paved the way for changing the country's minority status of women.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, some experts believe that policy dialogues between a wide range of participants, both governmental and nongovernmental, are likely to prove more productive than donor conditionality (Elson and McGee 1995) and that they emphasize that policy reform processes with the highest chances of success are those which are locally designed and implemented.

Although most countries have national gender policies that guide the implementation of the gender-equity agenda (and a few more countries are in the process of finalizing their national gender policies), the greater challenge is the alignment of the gender policies and approaches to the macroeconomic and trade policies and budget processes in the countries. The existing "cultural" divide separating gender staff from technical staff and economists needs to be narrowed by increasing mutual understanding of the concepts, priorities, strategies, and instruments deployed by both groups. Critical to the development of a better collective understanding of gender and macroeconomic issues is interdonor dialogue; and these policy dialogues should be centered on key processes, for example, PER, poverty assessment, sectoral policy reforms, and market development strategies. As a focus for policy dialogues, a concept of a "gendered economy" (Elson and McGee 1995) is important, in which gender relations are seen as an important social and economic variable at macro-, meso-, and microlevels, rather than viewing the economy as something external and not having an impact on women. A broader understanding is needed, one that recognizes that the issues are both social and economic and that matters of efficiency as well as equity are important. It would be crucial to intensify research and impact assessments that bring into the picture the impact of gender relations on the achievement of policy reforms and rural development, to complement the existing focus on the impact of policy reforms on women.

At the project design stage, donors can focus mainly on the design of the policy reforms. This involves not only checking social policy, but also examining particular elements of the economic policy reform program supported by the reform package to see how far they contribute to influencing gender relations. Improvement in the quality and availability of gender-disaggregated data, training that integrates gender analysis and economic analysis at the national and sectoral levels, and access of women's groups



## Box 2.5 The World Bank's Poverty Reduction Support Credit

*The Mali Economic Management Credit* supports the government's efforts to improve women's access to land and financial services. It has facilitated the preparation of an action plan that was included in the overall financial sector action plan approved in 1998, which resulted in budget support for women's income-generation activities. The operation has also facilitated and increased women's access to land in the Office du Niger region and raised public awareness of women's legal rights and the benefits of women's participation in the development process. In addition, the operation has resulted in the creation of a Ministry of Women's Affairs.

*The Rwanda Economic Recovery Credit* supports legislation to eliminate discrimination against women. The credit is designed to promote legal and institutional changes in the agricultural sector and labor market that will foster economic growth and reduce rural poverty. In this context, amendments will be made to the labor code to consolidate minimum wages in the

rural labor market to one national minimum wage and remove provisions that discriminate against women.

*The Vietnam Poverty Reduction Support Credit* has been particularly strong in analyzing the likely gender impacts of state-owned enterprise reform and integrating this analysis into the design of safety net provisions for displaced workers. The gender analysis for the credit focused on women and men as separate stakeholders on whom the reform might have different impacts. It found that men are more likely to be laid off, but that women who are laid off are likely to experience a sharper drop in earnings. It also found that men benefit more from compensation packages defined as a multiple of earnings, whereas women benefit more from lump-sum packages. Informed by this analysis, the Vietnam Poverty Reduction Support Credit proposes a unified compensation package (not a separate one for women) that has an important lump-sum component.

Source: "Integrating Gender into the World Bank's Work: A Strategy for Action," <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTGENDER/Resources/strategypaper.pdf>.

to policy-making processes are crucial toward this gendered economy perspective. Some donor agencies, such as the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), have started on this. To support the implementation of its gender-equity policy, the gender-equity manual and training that integrates gender and economic analyses have been adopted as one of SIDA's gender strategies (SIDA 2005). Peer review is a tool also used by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD/DAC), in which a panel of peers assesses a multilateral agency's evaluation systems and processes. The OECD/DAC has also developed a gender-equity marker that allows donors to record whether activities have the explicit goal of achieving gender equity. The gender-equity index, which represents another effort to measure progress or regression in gender equity internationally as a result of new aid modalities,<sup>10</sup> uses a set of indicators for which data are available in most countries. Gender audits have also been used increasingly as a self-assessment tool for measuring gender equity among institutions, including development agencies and NGOs (see Module 16).

## GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

*Representation of women in political institutions.* The representation of women in governments and parliaments is an important avenue to making agricultural policies more gender responsive. Donor interventions can aim at strengthening the capacity of women in political institutions, such as women members of parliamentary Committees on Agriculture. Support can also be provided for activities that support women candidates with a rural background to run for elections at different levels. Reservation policies can be adopted and promoted; however, reservation should be coupled with capacity building in decision making and negotiations for women. Training for women needs to provide them with the required skills, particularly in countries where education levels for women are low, and to ensure that they are fully conversant with their roles and accountabilities. Emphasis on women's education, including incentives and scholarships for women in science and policy, is important to ensure a pipeline of well-qualified women candidates for senior positions in public and private organizations.

*Participation of women in political processes.* Explicit and concerted efforts are needed to ensure the participation of women and inclusion of gender constraints in the strategies. A truly gender-integrated strategy is critical so as to include genuine participation of women in the consultation process and gender-sensitive writing teams. Moreover, in most cases, institutional support for women's groups is needed to strengthen their voice in the national and agricultural policy and strategy development process. Projects can aim at strengthening the capacity of women and their organizations to participate effectively in such processes.

*Development cooperation strategies,* such as country cooperation strategies, corresponding country plans, and strategies for working in partnership with multilateral organizations, are important entry points for a better integrated gender perspective. In these strategies donors should be guided by priorities and initiatives expressed in the partner country's PRSPs, or similar national and sectoral plans, and by the international conventions and agendas to which the partner country has subscribed. If national priorities and plans do not include gender-equity issues, donors could raise this in the bilateral dialogue and promote further steps to be taken. Donors could also promote and support the capacity of civil society to influence the national plans and priorities in order to close an existing gender gap.

*Gender-responsive budgeting.* Initiatives toward gender-responsive budgeting should be continued and intensified.

Capacity building for stakeholders to conduct relevant analyses (for example, gender-specific agricultural expenditure reviews, gender analysis of agricultural budgets, and macroeconomic policy analysis) is crucial. National women's machinery needs to be strengthened, along with their capacity for negotiation, to have an effective voice in the budget processes.

*Strengthening analytical support.* Many gaps need to be explored to understand the obstacles and constraints faced by women and men. Analytical work on gender issues should be heightened, and more should be done to strengthen the capacity of organizations to do gender analysis and gender impact assessments and improve mechanisms to collect gender-disaggregated data to inform policy effectively. Strengthening their capacity to use research-based knowledge in the policy process, for example, by providing training in policy communication, is also important.

*Analyzing the political economy of policy making and strengthening the capacity for policy change management.* Making policies more gender responsive is inherently a question of political economy. Powerful interests are likely to prevent changes, such as the introduction of land titles for women. Interventions can aim at strengthening the capacity of women policy makers and advocacy NGOs to analyze the political economy of specific policy processes and to engage in policy change management, for example, by building coalitions and influencing public opinion.

## Institutionalizing Gender in the Agriculture Sector

Getting the right policies is critical, but equally important are effective institutions and approaches to implement the policies. *Gender mainstreaming* is often a term that encompasses these institutions and approaches.<sup>1</sup> The international women's movement and the donor community have urged countries to establish national institutions (called national machineries) specifically tasked for gender mainstreaming.<sup>2</sup> The Mexico Declaration and Plan of Action in the 1970s, the first international instrument to introduce the concept of national machinery, called for the establishment of national machineries for the advancement of women to advocate for attention to women's advancement, provide policy direction, undertake research, and build alliances. As of 2004, at least 165 countries have established national machineries.<sup>3</sup> A number of world conferences have assessed the status and provided recommendations on strengthening national machineries, and discussions on the role of national machineries have been held at the regional and subregional levels.

Over the last decade, the role of national machineries has evolved in many countries. Transformations in global and national systems of production and governance (including market liberalization and governance reforms, the HIV and AIDS pandemic, urbanization, new forms of conflict, increased migration, and new communication and other technologies) have intensified in the last decade, with important implications for gender relations and for the role, relevance, and impact of national mechanisms for promoting gender equity (see also *Sourcebook Overview*). These changes pose big challenges, but they also present an important opportunity to national mechanisms for gender equity to influence reforms to ensure that they promote women's human rights, market access, and political participation. For example, the shared commitment to meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) presents an opportunity to mainstream gender-equity perspectives into key development goals, and the Monterrey Consensus offers a chance to

incorporate gender equity centrally in economic governance reforms.<sup>4</sup> Governance reforms introducing new accountability jurisdictions at the regional and local levels provide national mechanisms for gender equity with an opportunity to influence policy making at multiple levels.

The emerging new mechanisms (apart from the national machineries) serve as new opportunities to promote the status of women, but they also highlight the need for more coordinated efforts for more effective gender mainstreaming. Some countries have a combination of women's ministry, parliamentary caucus, gender focal points in line ministries, an ombudsperson, and a gender-equity commission, which is a multistakeholder body with high-level participation, monitoring, and reporting to top political leadership. In India associations of elected women in local government are mobilizing themselves across party lines, voicing their demands, and finding a place in the political structure, at a more influential level as they carry political power, votes, and local constituencies (Jain 2005).

This Thematic Note reviews the experiences of national machineries and is divided into two subtopics: one at a national level and the other at the level of the Ministry of Agriculture. Although the focus of the *Sourcebook* is on agriculture, the broader macroeconomic planning and simultaneously the coordination of competition among the different structures of the government also affect the agricultural sector. The second part reviews the experiences of selected countries (Côte d'Ivoire, Arab Republic of Egypt, Morocco, and Sudan)<sup>5</sup> in terms of their design and implementation of national and agriculture sector-specific institutions to support gender approaches. The aim of this exercise is to draw lessons learned from these experiences to inform key principles and entry points for improved investments toward gender-responsive interventions. That governments learn from international success stories in setting up gender units in Ministries of Agriculture and other sectoral ministries to encourage change in what can be a particularly conservative sector is essential.

## NATIONAL MACHINERIES FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

The structure and effectiveness of national machineries vary across countries.<sup>6</sup> National machineries take three general structures: (1) units located at the highest level of government, that is, the president's office (for example, in South Africa and Zambia); (2) fully fledged ministries responsible for gender or women's affairs, with additional responsibilities to coordinate other policy issues (Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Tanzania, Uganda, Zimbabwe); and (3) departments or units within a bigger structure (Botswana, Swaziland).

Most of these structures have evolved from small structures to their current size, and their mandate has been changing, an indication of greater focus being given to gender mainstreaming. In general, the mandate, role, and responsibilities of the gender structures are clearly defined to include facilitation, coordination, and monitoring. National machineries in many countries are facilitating exchange and sharing of experiences as well as information and best practices among stakeholders; developing gender competency of stakeholders to influence engendering of policies, programs, and projects; and lobbying for increased measures to address the gender-equity agenda. However, in many countries, the mandates of national machineries are quite broad compared to the resources allocated to fulfill the roles, responsibilities, and functions they are assigned.

Several studies show that national machineries have played catalytic roles in facilitating gender mainstreaming as elaborated in the Beijing Platform for Action, particularly by sensitizing different sectoral ministries and agencies to address gender concerns in their policies and programs. Many countries have enacted gender-equity laws and legal reforms and adopted national gender-equity policies, action plans, and national strategies. Gender-sensitive budgeting has also been introduced in many countries (see Thematic Note 1).

The UNDAW (United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women) conference concluded that some national machineries have had major successes while others have been constrained by lack of clear mandates, political support, and resources and have experienced problems in balancing demands for project implementation, including those from their constituents at a grassroots level, with the need to actively influence policy and program development at the national level from a gender perspective. Many national machineries are constrained by the lack of expertise and conflicting demands on their scarce time and resources, particularly in cases in which women/gender-equity units are

part of larger ministries with the responsibility for many issues, and gender-equity issues still remain marginalized in the competition for attention and resources. The gender machineries in many countries also lack coordination, that is, they are not efficiently connected to each other and the other departments. This is in part because of limited human and other resources allocated to these structures and in part to limited clarity on the role and mandate of the national machinery in terms of coordination and monitoring as opposed to implementation of programs, which most national machineries are involved in. The above scenario points to the need for innovative arrangements and structures for sustained financing, which can be achieved in part by better coordination of gender structures within countries to reduce duplication of activities and create synergies to better outcomes.

With about three decades of worldwide experience, lessons have been learned and good practices can be highlighted (box 2.6).

Experiences by various countries also show that the structure and institutional arrangements matter in the effectiveness of the national machineries in gender mainstreaming. For instance, national machineries of South Africa demonstrate a good practice example in terms of interrelationships between the different components of the national machinery (Warioba 2005). The relevant departments and even some of the private sector firms are taking the processes of mainstreaming gender seriously. They have structured relationships between the Office of the Status of Women and the other structures, and they have a clear calendar of events on when they convene planning and monitoring meetings, how they operate, and when consultative meetings are held at the different levels. The role of the Office of the Status of Women in coordination and monitoring is clearly visible. The annual gender audits by this office regularly monitor progress made by its stakeholders in addressing the assigned responsibilities and tasks. Most government departments have developed gender policies to enable gender mainstreaming to happen within their respective departments. The gender focal points are appointed at a very senior level: the director, deputy director, or assistant director levels. Some departments have established structures that are provided with more than one staff member to coordinate gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment programs. Because of better coordination, the national machineries of South Africa are able to influence policy decision-making processes at all levels, at cabinet, national parliament, and provincial levels. Gender mainstreaming and women empowerment programs in the various sectors of the economy are a living example. South

## Box 2.6 Key Elements of an Effective Gender Unit

- A clear vision and intellectual leadership that harnesses the knowledge of many relevant partners in the society
- The development of a strategic plan of action to support policy development and implementation
- The utilization of research and data collection, in formulation and review of policies, programs, and plans
- The establishment of alliances with strategic actors within government (head of governments, line ministries, and local governments), parliaments, professional organizations, academic institutions, civil society, community-based organizations, and the media to create synergies to enhance outcomes
- For effective coordination and collaboration, development and implementation of different types of national gender-equity machineries, including joint meeting, plans, and annual reports
- The implementation of a package of actions—such as legislation, gender-mainstreaming action at policy and program levels, and pilot projects
- Capacity development through training of government officials and other relevant actors to support gender-sensitive policy formulation and implementation
- Allocation of adequate personnel and budgetary resources to government bodies and other partners to implement the various activities
- Innovative special incentives (such as awards to gender-sensitive judges or earmarked seed funds to sectoral ministries) to encourage further actions
- Establishment of targets, development of appropriate monitoring tools, and regular tracking of progress
- Regular meeting with partners inside and outside government to assess progress, identify gaps, and devise collaborative strategies to address obstacles
- Mobilization of political will through public awareness programs and broad dissemination of information.

Source: UNDAW conference (see note 1 in Thematic Note 2).

Africa was also able to present comprehensive and detailed national progress reports on the implementation of the various gender-equity instruments to which their country is partly compared to other countries, in which in most cases the national reports omit much information that could have been added.

Another example is Tanzania: although a structured relationship is lacking between the national machinery and NGOs that are promoting the gender-equity and women's empowerment processes, the Ministries of Finance and Planning Commission and NGOs have been able to establish a working relationship in promoting gender-sensitive planning and budgeting processes that were initiated through a Gender-Responsive Budgeting Initiative. These processes resulted in the establishment of a gender macro-policy working group that is coordinated by the national machinery and convenes regular meetings to facilitate mainstreaming gender in macroeconomic policy frameworks, such as PRSPs and Medium Term Expenditure Review Frameworks. In Uganda women are particularly visible in national politics because of affirmative action. Affirmative action has also contributed to women's participation

in regional political decision making. Women hold four of the nine positions of Ugandan representatives in the EALA and are two of the five Uganda members of the African parliament. The enabling laws derived from the 1995 constitution have seen the need for affirmative action, mainly as a result of activism by women groups: (1) the Land Act of 1998 provides for the protection of the land rights of the poor, the majority of whom are women, and (2) the Local Government Act of 1997 explicitly states that women shall form one-third of all local councils at all levels. As a result, the proportion of women in local councils rose from 6 percent in the early 1990s to 44 percent in 2003.<sup>7</sup>

### GENDER UNITS AND FOCAL POINTS IN THE AGRICULTURE SECTOR

The Ministries of Agriculture are the main agencies responsible for mainstreaming gender into agricultural policies, projects, and programs. The first step in the gender mainstreaming in the selected countries was an information campaign and sensitization of the “gender” and women empowerment concepts usually initiated with

technical and funding support from international organizations (including FAO, IFAD, and the World Bank). Plans of action for the integration of the gender dimension in rural and agricultural development policies and programs were also designed, starting with situation assessment (for men and women) in the agricultural sector and identifying gender roles in agriculture, constraints, potentialities (natural resources, human resources), priorities, needs, and solutions. A second step was training for trainers and national officers about gender approaches and gender analysis, and technical support often came from international agencies. Pilot testing was performed for effective adaptation of gender approaches and methodological tools to the sociocultural context of the countries.

A third step was the introduction of gender focal points and creation of gender units within the Ministries of Agriculture (MOAs) to address gender issues in the sector. The name given to these gender units differs from one country to another (for example, Office for the Promotion of Rural Women's Socioeconomic Promotion, Women and Agricultural Development Directorate, Women Promotion Units, Policy Coordinating Unit for Women in Agriculture, and National Gender Service). These gender units and focal points are either independent units under MOAs or a part of the extension services or policy and economic planning units. Donors often partner with gender units to implement key programs and projects. For instance, the IFAD supported the Lao People's Democratic Republic's Women's Union to mainstream gender issues in all project activities. In many countries in Asia (China, Lao PDR, Mongolia), the IFAD is collaborating with women's organizations under the Communist Party; these are often the de facto operational force for the national machinery and plans to be replicated in Cambodia and Vietnam. In Azerbaijan an IFAD-financed project targeting rural women in the mountainous areas is being implemented in cooperation with the MOA and the Ministry for Women's Affairs. This collaboration is taking place at the central level as well as local government and community levels and is enhancing the national machinery's capacity to address gender inequalities through practical measures.

## GOOD PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED

The effectiveness of these gender units varies across countries. For example, the unit for the Strengthening of and Support to Gender Policies in the El Salvador Ministry for Agriculture and Livestock helped the extension program tailor training to women farmers, thus enhancing produc-

tivity. The Gender Services unit in the reconfigured MOA in Côte d'Ivoire led to fully one-quarter of the ministry's programs having an explicit gender focus (see also Innovative Activity Profile 2). In most North African countries (including Egypt, Morocco, and Sudan), the gender-mainstreaming concept was introduced around 1995 through projects and programs funded in cooperation between governments and international or bilateral agencies. Mainstreaming gender became a prerequisite for the design of development projects and programs, but the implementation has started slowly, and little progress was made during the first five years. The initial challenges were due to several factors: (1) the concept was new, and the national researchers have not produced the relevant data to make the concept more comprehensive; (2) the "new" concept has been perceived as a theoretical one without operational use; and (3) the decision makers have not been targeted as beneficiaries of information and sensitization sessions: those officials in charge of women's affairs or women's NGOs participated in the sessions. However, the situation has evolved, and progress has been made in the adoption of gender approaches in development policy and program design. Gender-sensitive governance is becoming the rule in these countries.

But for some countries, similar to the national machineries discussed above, the focal strategy has had limited effectiveness because the often junior women staff who are appointed are given few extra resources or time for new responsibilities, as well as little training, support, and clarity about their role. Gender desks themselves have often suffered from lack of political will and insecure institutional tenure. Crucial lessons and experiences in gender units and focal points in the agriculture sector include the following:

*Strategic location of gender units and focal points.* The location of the gender unit is important to ensure that gender equity is taken into account when designing, implementing, and evaluating agricultural development policies and programs. For instance, this approach has been more successful in Sudan compared to Morocco and other countries, where the gender unit was located within the extension directorate (box 2.7). Gender units established and focal points identified within permanent structures for planning had greater access to gender databases in agriculture because their activities are included in the work plan and budget. Others had difficulties performing their tasks because the units had neither power nor a hierarchical coordinating role, the units depended on external funds (government or donor), and they had no relation with universities and research centers. In some cases the autonomous gender unit stopped the

### Box 2.7 Sudan: Structure of Gender Units in the Agriculture Sector

The Ministry of Agriculture established a layer structure of gender and rural women machineries:

- At a central level, the Women and Agricultural Development Directorate is a part of the General Directorate of Planning and Agricultural Economics. It is a coordinating structure that helps decision makers integrate gender dimension in the design of the MOA's policies and programs.
- At a decentralized level, Women Promotion Units were created for the integration of gender dimension in the governorate programmes.

- Women Development Units were created in the rural development projects.

An important strategy that was adopted was a series of training sessions on gender approach and tools that were organized through international and bilateral cooperation programs and projects. The tasks performed are similar to the ones mentioned here. An important lesson from Sudan's experience is that the location of the gender unit within the policy and economic planning made the coordination and gender-disaggregated data collection and analysis easier.

Source: Personal communication with Fatiha Bou-Salah (FAO), January 18, 2008.

activities on completion of the project, when the unit was not included in the official chart of the MOA.

*Networks established that connect different levels of governance.* Networks connecting the central and local governments, private sector, and the community were proven to ease the integration of gender dimension at the earliest step of the program and project design and during the projects' implementation and evaluation. The gender units can also serve as vehicles to connect local agents with national entities that could facilitate change in spheres in which rural development projects cannot intervene directly, for example, domestic violence against women and girls. Another area is improvement of health, which, in the case of rural women, is usually neglected because of lack of accessibility and cultural barriers. In this case the national machinery can also facilitate contacts with governmental institutions to make services available.

In Egypt the approach for gender mainstreaming in the agricultural sector through the pilot governorates is said to be innovative since it involves a multisectoral approach and a wide range of stakeholders to participate in key activities and share information related to constraints, needs, priorities, and proposed solutions. The activities involve women and men farmers and agricultural workers, extension agents, rural development specialists, authorities of extension structures, the private sector, and women's NGOs. To date, the gender-mainstreaming concept in Egypt's agriculture sector is said to be integrated in the agricultural research programs (box 2.8). In El Salvador,

Unidad de Fortalecimiento y Apoyo en Aspectos de Género works closely with the gender units in the different projects at the local level not only to provide support but also to learn about the different challenges, constraints, and opportunities that arise in the project implementation process.

*Political commitment.* Securing high-level political commitment is important, and the national commitment to and generalization of gender policy making, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation through gender units are all crucial. This should be followed by a clear objective and quantifiable indicator to measure progress over time effectively. The need is present for defining and applying impact indicators to measure how gender-equity measures impact the lives of women and men in communities. The national machinery could be crucial in the dissemination of such tools and could be very effective when convincing Ministries of Finance (which in the case of the IFAD are very important) to allocate resources to finance gender-related budgets and activities. Vargas-Lundius (2007) illustrates the importance of introducing affirmative actions to reduce the gender gap at the community level, as well as the importance of measuring the impact such measures could have in terms of reducing poverty, generating income and employment, and increasing women's self-esteem, empowerment, and economic autonomy.

Moreover, gender approaches need to be institutionalized in the governmental planning process and curriculum for planners and statisticians. In Morocco curricula Modules

### Box 2.8 Egypt: Integrated Approach to Gender Mainstreaming

The women-equity machinery in the Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation is called the Policy Coordinating Unit for Women in Agriculture (PCUWA). This autonomous structure is located at a central level. The unit team is composed of researchers and officers from the Agricultural Research and Extension Institutes. Gender-related projects also contribute to the funding of the unit expenses. PCUWA works with the technical services at central and decentralized levels, mainly with extension agents. It cooperates with the rural women's associations, particularly in newly reclaimed lands. The unit works in an integrated approach—involving governorate authorities, stakeholders, and the local population: rural men and women.

*Source:* Personal communication with Fatiha Bou-Salah (FAO), January 18, 2008.

The main activities performed by the unit team are related to (1) preparation of agriculture and gender studies, (2) integration of women in the agricultural policies and programs, and (3) promotion of income-generating activities in agriculture on old and newly reclaimed lands. Awareness and training sessions on gender approaches and related topics were organized with the support of governmental and bilateral or international agencies through development projects. Among the integrated activities, the experience gained during the last five years in the framework of integration of women into the agricultural policy and practice project is of particular interest.

on gender approach were integrated into the agricultural education institutes including the university. This leads to approach sustainability and improvement.

*Holistic approach.* Broad-based practitioner evidence suggests that separate, small women-specific agricultural and rural development programs are usually not successful in reaching large numbers of rural women. Instead, design of mainstream agricultural programs so that they reach both men and women is more effective (Innovative Activity Profile 2). Mainstreaming gender in the policies, programs, and projects requires much more than just a unit or organization, but should be tackled at the different technical divisions as well as in administrative, human resources, and financial services divisions.

*Human and technical expertise.* Providing high-quality technical support on gender analysis by the main coordinating body of the national gender machinery is important. Sound analysis of what the MOA and gender units are currently doing and then the analysis and dissemination of gendered impacts are very important processes. Crucial to these processes are the training and support of national and decentralized staff to (1) build gender monitoring and evaluation of their current activities, (2) quantify existing gender gaps, (3) agree on the necessity of change, and (4) build the new strategy and instruments. Effective facilitation of a sustainable national commitment is often based on solid, credible knowledge of gender issues.

Moreover, appointing gender focal points in MOAs with the most extensive knowledge of technical and research issues and the authority to encourage change is crucial. Women should be encouraged to participate at all levels of the hierarchy, particularly at managerial and technical levels; however, identifying posts or tasks that can be performed only by women does not help the cause. Having dedicated gender staff sit within sectoral ministries increases the gender relevance of their work. These staff need to have exceptional competencies in mobilizing other partners, have great field knowledge of the agricultural women producers, and display a high university-level education to exhibit recognized technical credibility in front of men directors. They would also need to have a specific budget to facilitate missions, networks, and training.

A need exists to provide support to ensure that MOAs' human resources policies become genderized and introduce the necessary measures and incentives to increase the participation of qualified women at managerial and technical levels. For example, the terms of reference for all staff, particularly those for new recruits, ought to highlight their engagement to promote gender equity actively in all their activities and programs. Ministries should also be encouraged to introduce quotas to improve gender balance among technical and managerial staff.

Last, looking at and devising incentives are important strategies. Linking gender targets to economic incentives for



public sector employees is needed. Presenting gender as a principle of excellence in public sector management, rather than as an additional burden, can be adopted as an effective strategy.

## **GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS**

Several entry points for more effective support through donor programs and projects, in partnership with governments and civil society organizations, are the following:

- Capacity building and support to national women machinery, gender units, and focal points in critical areas such as poverty reduction strategies, MDGs, national economic planning, statistical systems, budgeting processes, and agriculture sector approaches
- Providing women machinery, gender units, and focal points with adequate human and financial resources to enable them to respond more effectively to the challenges of changed global and national environments and to enhance their important monitoring and reporting roles
- Strengthening the capacity of women machinery, gender units, and focal points to undertake gender analysis and to develop the methodologies and tools needed to play a catalytic role in gender mainstreaming across all sectors of government in collaboration with line ministries
- Mandatory training on gender mainstreaming for all governmental bodies, including at the local level, to ensure understanding of their roles and responsibilities
- Developing effective accountability mechanisms, particularly through the introduction of gender perspectives and gender-equity indicators in budgetary processes at all levels of government
- Facilitating the establishment of alliances between women machineries and strategic actors within parliaments, professional organizations, academic institutions, civil society, community-based organizations, and the media to create synergies
- Assisting in the effective coordination and collaboration among the different types of women machineries and gender units, which may include joint meetings, plans, and annual reports.

## Decentralization and Community-Driven Development

As reported in the *World Development Report 2008*, governance issues are crucial to achieving an agriculture-for-development agenda to fulfill the MDGs and reduce world poverty. Although democratic processes and the rise of participatory policy making have increased the opportunities for small landholders and the rural poor to make gains from agriculture over the last 25 years, the complexity and diversity of agriculture require special efforts to ensure gender equity and accountability and inclusion to disadvantaged groups, including women, in relation to their access to technology, natural resources, finance, markets, and nonfarm opportunities.

In the last two decades, many large international development agencies have turned increasingly to decentralization and the use of demand-driven (community-based and community-driven) development approaches to address poverty by involving rural women and other beneficiaries in choices regarding project activities and resource allocation, making use of a special development fund to ensure delivery of goods and services to rural communities. Social funds and community development funds (CDFs) are mechanisms used by the World Bank and IFAD to channel grant resources to CDD projects; they are currently viewed by many in the donor community as *the* delivery model best suited for large-scale implementation of community-based, demand-driven development and decentralization based on their attractiveness to beneficiaries as grants instead of loans and their flexibility and potential for poverty targeting. Other agencies, including CARE, the U.K. Department for International Development's Sustainable Livelihoods Program, and the United Nations Development Programme-supported Decentralization Program, utilize CDD approaches that do not fully meet the strict definition of the term because they rely less on a fund mechanism (Gillespie 2006). CDD is believed not only to lead to better allocation of resources to help communities by building social capital and fostering empowerment, but

also to reduce corruption and misuse, and to increase transparency and accountability by working directly with communities (Mansuri and Rao 2004).

The term "CDD" is widely adopted and assumes a different meaning and connotations depending on which development agency has tried to apply it in practice, but in all cases, CDD is an approach to reduce rural poverty through more equitable, sustainable, and efficient use of resources by (1) establishing an enabling institutional environment for the emergence of robust community organizations, (2) developing community-level infrastructure, (3) supporting the local economy at the community level, and (4) diversifying sources of external support for community-based organizations (see also box 2.9). The approach supports participatory decision making, self-reliance, empowerment, local capacity building, and community control of resources by channeling resources to activities proposed by community groups. Various forms of social fund financing and technical assistance are available from outside the community; these are usually implemented through decentralized local governments. Projects can have low or high CDD content depending on the extent of devolution and institutional development at the community level.

An important distinction between the two is that CDD has a tendency to reach down to the village level, whereas decentralization interventions tend to be clustered at a somewhat higher administrative level, municipality, or district. Complementarities may exist between the two that can improve the welfare of rural women.

One of the recognized benefits of these approaches is their potential to reach goals of capacity building, empowerment, and sustainability of community-based organizations and self-help groups, including those of the most marginalized groups, such as poor women, for the development of public goods and services. To varying degrees, donor agencies use targeting as an approach to build the capacities of those who have less power, to influence

### Box 2.9 Definitions: Decentralization and Community-Based and Community-Driven Development

Decentralization is the transfer of administrative, political, and fiscal authority to lower levels of government to make policy making and implementation more responsive to the needs of rural people. It is a political process that shifts power and authority and has been tried in some form in over 80 percent of all developing countries. Fiscal decentralization has as its goal the improvement of revenue generation while building accountability of local governments to local taxpayers. Devolution refers to the delegation of responsibilities and power from a central to a subordinate level.

Community-based development (CBD) is an umbrella term that refers to projects that actively include beneficiaries in their design and management;

*Source:* Author.

community-driven development provides a mechanism to design and implement projects that facilitates access to social and physical capital assets for the poor by creating conditions for the following:

- Transforming development agents from top-down planners into client-oriented service providers
- Empowering communities to take initiatives for their own socioeconomic development
- Enabling community-level organizations to play a role in the design and implementation of policies and programs affecting their livelihoods, including the management of funds
- Enhancing the impact of public expenditure on the local economy at the community level.

decisions, and to participate in development (see examples from projects in Indonesia and the Philippines in box 2.10).

Donor agency policy documents often state that grants allocated to CDD programs will go to the very poor and women, who are perceived as key agents of change (and victims of social and economic inequalities) in agricultural production and food security programs. As a result, CDD projects hold out hope as an approach to fortify women's agency and decision making for benefit sharing in the agricultural sector. CDD projects build the capacity of community and women's groups (including producer associations, microenterprise groups, credit and savings groups, natural resource management and common property groups, and groups formed for agricultural extension and adaptive research purposes), promote an enabling environment through policy and institutional reform (decentralization, sector policies, and so on), strengthen local governance relationships (including forging linkages between community-based organizations and local governments), enable community-level organizations to play a broader role in the design and implementation of policies and programs affecting their livelihoods, and enhance the impact of public expenditure on the local economy at the community level.

Yet CDD involves trade-offs between building the capacities of marginalized groups, such as poor women, and responding to community demands for social and physical infrastructure, which leaves the process subject to decision-

making systems already in place. Thus, without due attention to gender issues and without changes in existing power structures, women's interests can be harmed both socially—by undermining their decision-making roles and sidelining their priorities—and materially (GENRD 2008).

#### KEY GENDER ISSUES

Agriculture requires a mix of centralized and decentralized services. Some tasks are best organized at the central level, such as food security, whereas the intermediate level is most suited for research, and the local level is best for extension. In cases where agricultural goods and services are provided through private services, capture by elites and exclusion of women are much higher than in development programs that provide public goods, such as drinking water supplies and schools.

Decentralization has generally been considered a positive step toward making governments more accountable to the poor by bringing decision making down to a local level. Research has shown that where resources are available, decentralization has resulted in the greater participation of poor and marginalized groups such as women in decision making and in monitoring the activities of local governments (Baden 2000). However, projects that work through existing decentralized public administration to devolve investment authority to decentralized entities at the district

## Box 2.10 Indonesia and the Philippines: Gender Targeting

The *Indonesia Kecamatan Development Program (KDP)* began in 1998 and is partially funded by the World Bank. Its aims are to alleviate poverty, strengthen local government and community institutions, and improve local governance through the delivery of block grants to *kecamatan*s (subdistricts) for productive infrastructure and social and economic investments identified through a participatory planning process. From 1998 to July 2006, KDP covered 34,233 of the poorest villages in 30 provinces (260 districts and 1,983 subdistricts), approximately 48 percent of all of Indonesia's 71,011 villages.

The KDP gender strategy has been developed since its first phase to identify key activities that can promote gender equity, including (1) creation of an affirmative action recruitment program for field staff, (2) hiring and training of equal numbers of men and women village facilitators, (3) opening up subproject menus to a broader range of options that reflect women's choices, (4) improving opportunities for women's participation in developing proposals and decision making, (5) ensuring that a share of block grants goes only through preexisting women's groups, (6) furthering women's active roles in project implementation, including speaking competitions for shy women, and (7) creating internships for women engineers.

*The Kapitbisig Laban Sa Kahirapan-Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services Project (KALAE-*

*CIDSS)* is the flagship poverty reduction project of the government of the Philippines. The objectives are to (1) empower communities to manage their assets, lives, and livelihoods; (2) strengthen their social networks and link them up with policy and administrative structures of the state; and (3) promote representation and accountability at different levels of the decision-making pyramid. The Midterm Review notes that awareness of KALAE-CIDSS is quite high (75–92 percent) and so is the level of participation in the preparatory and planning stages (61–90 percent).

KALAE-CIDSS gave priority to subprojects if they target women's participation in all phases of decision making. In a few regions participation in the preparatory phase was slightly higher among women than men members. Most of those who did not participate claimed that they did not have spare time, were afraid to attend evening meetings, were not properly informed, were discouraged, or were not interested. Other lessons include the following: (1) lack of confidence prevents women from contributing during meetings; (2) women's capacity to exert their voice and interact productively is gradually increasing; (3) contrary to what was expected, both men and women are partners in terms of work inside their home and in the field; and (4) encouraging women's participation in indigenous peoples' communities has proven to be a long process.

Sources: Balisacan, Edillon, and Ducanes 2000; Balisacan and Edillon 2003; Joint Donor and Government Mission 2007; World Bank 2002, 2003, 2007b.

level are less likely than community-driven processes at the subdistrict level to favor poor women. Factors that account for this are women's greater accessibility to community-level decision making, less stringent eligibility criteria, and greater relevance to issues and services that directly impact women's private lives. Although in many areas local politics are more suited to women than are national politics (because of restrictions on mobility and lack of experience), patriarchal structures and norms that are often strong at the local level and may well be combined with nonaccountable customary or informal bodies and community relationships mean that in many cases it is even harder for women to exert meaningful influence (Baden 2000).<sup>1</sup> At the local level, inequalities due to class and caste make it equally difficult

for poor women to participate, as at any other level. Similarly, the shape, structure, and politics of the decentralization program in countries affect both men and women policy makers' ability to wield the power of the state in women's interests (Horowitz 2007). A common constraint is that in many countries decentralized structures of government are created but given very few resources, capacity-building investment, or power actually to enact an agenda defined by local citizens.

Institution building that could provide sustainable solutions is problematic; innovations and organizational changes that facilitate gender equity and women's empowerment are not easily accepted by civil servants and local politicians. Without strong external intervention, implementation of

CDD has been known to revert to conventional ways of implementing top-down projects, sidelining participation and empowerment. In part for this reason, some donors adopt a targeting approach: a range of measures that ensure that the most marginalized social groups are able to claim their rights to receive an equitable share of the benefits of development interventions, expand their influence over public policy and institutions, and enhance their bargaining power in the marketplace through special enabling, empowering, and self-targeting measures.

An inherent contradiction exists between traditional poverty targeting, which is usually top-down and uses quotas or earmarked funds for special groups, and CDD approaches that grant resources to community groups best able to influence decision-making and granting processes. Women's participation in decentralized processes and community organizations is hampered by gender inequities that are particularly acute at the local level. Due to their lack of free time, literacy, and language barriers, low levels of confidence, and gender norms within households and cultures, women often are excluded from CDD processes that require them to develop proposals and compete for funds (IADB 1998).

Finally, CDD projects are reluctant to impose gender-equity concerns on existing institutions and rarely set targets for percentages of women among project beneficiaries, or for women's representation in decision-making bodies or in user groups for project-supported facilities. No gender earmarking exists for development funds, gender sensitization, or affirmative action on gender balance in staffing. Staff are not assigned responsibility for gender or poverty targeting. Going against this trend, World Bank projects in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam incorporate affirmative action and targeted capacity building to enable gender equity (box 2.10).

### **EXPERIENCES, IMPACTS, AND BENEFITS FROM GENDER-RESPONSIVE ACTIONS**

Some lessons have been learned from earlier development projects, but it is unclear whether women have been able to benefit as fully as men in the CDD processes, or whether they have been harmed by the process. A review of IFAD CDD projects in 2003 revealed that it is difficult to evaluate impacts on women in projects that do not explicitly target women because of insufficient information. Basic infrastructure development projects, which have reported more success than those of capacity building, have a strong potential to benefit the whole community; these are commonly

used to develop roads, markets, irrigation and water systems, community-based natural resource management, and income-generating activities. The impact of community projects themselves on women has been shown to be positive or negative, depending on the type of activities financed (boxes 2.10–2.13).

Yet there is abundant evidence that untargeted CDD can bypass women and the poor. Evidence suggests that infrastructure investments need to be accompanied by investments in user group empowerment to increase the likelihood that the poorest women and men will benefit from the facilities. Women's marginalized status within the community renders their voices less significant than those of men; they have less access to decision making and to the resources for development, and limited time and mobility to attend meetings that determine women's needs and priorities. In some cases CBD/CDD approaches have resulted in more women's participation, but this inclusion has not always translated into active participation and equal access to benefits for women. Without additional measures to empower women to articulate their own needs for technical assistance or form and strengthen groups, these approaches differ little from more traditional top-down approaches to community development. However, as noted by Horowitz (2007), limited evidence exists of this kind of transformation in practice.

To date, the evidence of the impacts of CDD approaches is limited; most CDD projects have not yet been subjected to rigorous evaluation (World Bank 2005), and few studies have attempted rigorous and credible evaluation of their social impacts (Mansuri and Rao 2004). Existing literature also does not provide a sufficient understanding of how decisions are made by communities in CDD projects (Labonne and Chase 2007), much less an understanding of the roles and impacts on women.

Recent studies have led to a pause in the optimism for women to benefit significantly from CDD approaches and decentralization. The World Bank and IFAD have found that the link between CBD/CDD projects and social capital and community empowerment is weak, and that there is "mixed and limited evidence on the impacts of CBD/CDD projects in relation to empowerment and poverty reduction." A review of IFAD's experiences (IFAD 2004a, 2006) reported that current information on gender aspects and impacts in the CDFs is superficial; assessments of CDD and CDFs have not measured gender impacts or participation of women in the capacity-building activities. Reports show that less than half of CDFs go to the targeted poor because elites favor groups who are more educated, better connected

to information channels, more politically influential—and better off. Positive impacts on poor women’s livelihoods cannot be taken for granted. Investments in supporting empowerment initiatives through CBD/CDD projects alone are often insufficient and can even be counterproductive if the better-off sections of the community gain more than the less well-off. The views and priorities of poor women are likely to remain excluded from collective decision-making processes.

## GOOD PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED

To date, the documentation and evaluation of decentralization and CDD on building accountability to rural women and transforming gender relations are extremely limited. Knowledge generated by both the IFAD and World Bank gives some preliminary findings on gender impacts of these policy and implementation instruments.

### Capacity building

*Building internal leadership and accountability.* Poor women’s participation in publicly visible activities, such as those of CDD projects, is severely constrained as well by their own lack of confidence. Experience has shown that building women’s leadership, capacity, and self-esteem can result in more active participation and benefit sharing. Although women’s membership in groups may have been achieved, members may not be the type of people envisaged, or all women may not participate and benefit equally. In the case of IFAD’s project in Chattisgarh, India, participation in self-help groups was found to build women’s confidence to enable them to challenge those abusing power. Yet a big constraint is the lead time required to build women’s self-esteem, which ideally should exist before a CDD project is initiated.

*Training and skill development.* Women with low levels of literacy find it impossible to participate in decision-making processes that are heavily dependent on written work and agendas, minutes, and reports and are thus significantly disadvantaged under CDD. Their capacity to participate meaningfully in the drafting of microproject requests and participatory procurement mechanisms is thus seriously constrained.

Women members of self-help groups and elected officials in local government also require more specific training in procedures, group management, and leadership. Women’s self-help groups as well as NGO-created and -funded women’s *sanghas* in several Indian states have served as important training grounds for women to develop and define their leadership skills (Horowitz 2007).

IFAD projects in Peru and Nepal have provided women leaders and knowledge holders from within the beneficiary groups with contracts to work as providers of extension services and skills in technical aspects of agricultural production and agroforestry as well as in group formation, bookkeeping and accounting, and leadership, thus contributing to the women’s abilities to build local institutional capacities to address their own needs.

### Participation

*Inclusion of the poorest.* A major lesson learned from CDD projects is the need to avoid assumptions about social homogeneity of communities and to understand the livelihood strategies of women as compared to men, and as compared to women of other socioeconomic status. Assumptions by project managers about who constitutes the poorest are often found to be very different from the perceptions of local community members. Even in successful targeting projects, a “middle class effect” occurs, wherein the better-off section of the poor benefits as a result of being more able to negotiate and communicate their desires. Poor women also face a high opportunity cost by participating, especially if it displaces income-earning opportunities (Horowitz 2007).

Recognizing the complexity of targeting within CDD projects, the IFAD has found that a combination of enabling and affirmative action measures directed at the poor, reinforced by disincentives for the wealthier, to “mainstream a pro-poor perspective” minimizes the risk of elite capture. In Peru participatory social mapping and wealth ranking were valuable exercises that proved essential to the design of a targeting strategy and project activities that included the poorest (Peña-Montenegro 2004), although it remains unclear to what extent their participation was included in the later stages of the project cycle. The Indonesia Kecamatan Development Program and Vietnam Community-Based Rural Infrastructure Project selectively target the poorest communities (boxes 2.10 and 2.11).

*Strategies for supporting women’s participation in different types of groups and ensuring accountability to them.* Within CDD projects, project-approved groups are the gatekeepers of the resources and decisions and are therefore more powerful than in traditional projects. Existing groups are found to have more community credibility, cohesion, and established decision-making procedures than newly formed groups; by selecting target groups, donors can influence the targeting of benefits to women. There is no strong recommendation that can be made about trying to achieve high levels of homogeneity in these groups, as some groups

### Box 2.11 Vietnam: Community-Based Rural Infrastructure Project

The objective of the Community Based Rural Infrastructure Project (CBRIP) is to reduce rural poverty in the poorest rural communes in 13 provinces in central Vietnam by (1) increasing the capacity for decentralized and participatory planning and management of development activities; (2) providing essential small-scale, community-based infrastructures; and (3) generating direct income for the poor through providing construction employment. The project initially targets 540 poor communes with a population of about 1.4 million. The communes selected for the project are defined as “poor,” based on nationally established criteria. The poor are mostly women and ethnic people. Women’s participation has been a key objective and successful component of CBRIP, but its full potential remains to be realized as women make up 50–60 percent of village meeting participants, 20–30 percent of participants in training courses, 40 percent of mem-

bers of CPCC, 42–51 percent of participants in sub-projects, and 20–30 percent of operation and maintenance groups.

*Lessons learned.* The benefits to women were particularly recognized in activities including (1) recognizing women’s customary rights in determining compensation for land and assets, (2) opportunities for practicing training skills in workshops on gender mainstreaming, (3) revised and improved communication content of leaflets and posters focusing on gender equality, and (4) separate meetings for men and women to select subprojects. Women interviewees were very satisfied with their participation from selection, implementation, and monitoring the subprojects. Although women have benefited from new employment opportunities, they usually receive low pay for “simple” work. The Vietnam Women’s Union has not been fully made aware of CBRIP and its gender initiatives.

Sources: World Bank 2001a, 2006a, 2006b, 2007c.

prefer (as in the case of a project with people who own no land in Nicaragua) to have some better-connected members in their groups to perform advocacy or functions requiring more education.

In the case of very poor and overworked women, total inclusiveness is extremely difficult to achieve. Contributions of cash, labor, and local materials that must be provided by communities as proof of commitment and a condition to obtain community-driven funds are often unaffordable by women who have few material resources and little time for labor contributions. In some cases, “artificial groups” form to access CDF funds, undermining legitimate groups that exist for credit purposes and collective investments.

In India all adult women in villages were organized into self-help groups by the IFAD to compensate for their exclusion from project groups. Criteria for group membership may exclude the poorest; projects need to understand the reasons for exclusion and encourage nonparticipants to group themselves on the basis of common interests and affinities.

Quotas and earmarked funds have been used to ensure women’s representation in decision-making bodies or recipient groups. These measures alone have not been fully effective in ensuring benefits, however; when transparency was stressed, as in a project in Peru, the directing of funds to

women of easily identified groups had the desired impact. But despite the fact that quotas for women’s inclusion in recipient groups in projects in India and Nicaragua were met, they were often filled by women who lacked the assets to use profitably the technical assistance services provided (such as women without livestock for livestock-related activities). Furthermore, the East Asia Region CDD Flagship Report concludes that women’s frequent attendance in meetings does not always mean that they will be able to influence the decision making (box 2.12).

Gender relations within the community groups and community-based organizations that represent their communities are key to equitable participation and impact. In some cases, decentralized decision making works more smoothly than in others; success depends on the capacity of the community organizations for democratic decision making. Associations such as the Cape Verde community associations may have a majority of women members, but they tend to be less informed and active and are led by better-educated men leaders. The number of women in leadership positions in rural producer organizations, for example, is extremely limited; women in these groups—and many others—are not always able to hold their representatives—both men and women—accountable to their needs. As a result,

## Box 2.12 Enabling East Asian Communities to Drive Local Development

The East Asia Region CDD Flagship Report refers in particular to experiences from Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam. Its main findings related to gender issues include the following:

*Increased women's involvement.* If women, minorities, and the poor remain uninvolved, elites are far more likely to retain control within the community. Evidence on the success of CDD operations in promoting participation among these groups comes from Cambodia, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Analysis shows increased women's involvement compared to other villages where there are no CDD operations. Women in Indonesia also expressed satisfaction that their voice was being heard.

*Involvement leading to decision-making power.* Although quantitative evidence points toward frequent attendance at meetings by women in Cambodia and Indonesia, women may not influence the actual decision-making process, which is often because women lack capacity or because of their language barriers. Despite these results, evidence from Indonesia shows active participation by women in particular in

women-only meetings. Data show that women in CDD operations attend decision-making activities more frequently compared to limited evidence in non-CDD projects.

*Indicators of women's participation.* Project outcome indicators should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attributable, Realistic, and Targeted). By targeted is meant that the indicator identifies the particular group the project should impact. An example of a strongly targeted indicator is "40 percent participation rate of women and poorest community members in planning and decision-making meetings." An example of a weakly targeted indicator is "improved social capital and organizational development." Outcome indicators could include "percentage change in the number of women in local decision-making bodies in the targeted communities." The facilitators should be able to obtain the necessary information during their first and their last visits to the village. For day-to-day management purposes, data should be collected, such as percentage of poor and women (or any other marginalized group) involved in planning, execution, and maintenance.

Source: World Bank 2007e.

women's roles are still overlooked by those who fail to internalize the fact that agriculture is dominated by women through their labor, knowledge, and other inputs at the field level.

### Institutional linkages

CDD design efforts usually do a good job of articulating the demand side, that is, the processes whereby demands will be elicited in a participatory manner from local populations. However, they often fall seriously short in analyzing the supply side. To have positive impacts on women, the menu of goods and services available within CDD projects must include those that are of relevance and interest to women. Poor landless women could not gain much benefit from a project's land improvement activities in India, for example; nor could Nicaraguan women without animals benefit from livestock activities (IFAD 2004b). In Vietnam one project aimed to avoid transferring agricultural technology innovations to women farmers if it increases their already heavy workload (box 2.13). In-depth preliminary

poverty and livelihood analyses are necessary before determining the menu of the types of goods and services to be funded and supported to match the interests and livelihoods of women.

Even when menus of eligible microprojects are appropriate, a rigorous analysis of the capacity to deliver such goods and services and follow-up on implementation is frequently lacking. This then leads to unacceptably large numbers of low-quality microprojects. Effective participation may occur, and even a degree of empowerment. This empowerment must, however, be a means to an end of improved living conditions and higher incomes. To this end, a project in Vietnam now aims to improve communication with organizations such as the Vietnam Women's Union to facilitate monitoring, dissemination, and training opportunities (box 2.12).

The IFAD has found that the process of mobilizing community demands is often rushed, uninformed, and influenced by either government or NGO actors who often are not representing women's interests. To counteract this tendency, the IFAD uses self-targeting by communities to



### Box 2.13 Vietnam: Northern Mountains Poverty Reduction Project

The Northern Mountains Poverty Reduction Project's development objective is to help poor villagers in the northern mountains gain access to improved and sustainable infrastructure and social services. In addition, the aim is to increase the institutional capacity of upland communes and districts. The gender roles are highly unbalanced in farm labor, transportation chores, and household subsistence chores, particularly for the Hmong and the Dzao ethnic groups. Women are carrying out many of the farm operations but are burdened with very heavy workloads, limited decision-making power within their households (particularly on reproductive decisions), and low access to education and knowledge. As such, one of the World Bank's recommended priorities for poverty reduction is to provide women with equal access to productive assets, income opportunities, and basic services. The draft project completion report indicates that women make up nearly half of trained teachers, over 40 percent of trained health workers, 22 percent of community facilitators, and 24 percent of trained province and district staff.

Sources: World Bank 2001b, 2007d, 2008.

determine activities and investments appropriate to a specific group. Adequate identification of target groups and their characteristics in terms of assets and livelihood strategies, conducted through gender-sensitive poverty analysis, is a precondition for the design and implementation of an effective targeting strategy. In the case of a CDD project in Peru, this analysis turned up much more variation in women's livelihood strategies than was initially recognized. Similarly, it was discovered in a project in the Philippines that—contrary to expectations—men and women share the workload in terms of work inside the home as well as in the field (box 2.10).

*Networking and communication.* Most CDD projects use both mass media and field personnel such as extension agents, NGOs, and promoters to provide information. A careful communication strategy is needed to ensure that women are provided with full information on what is available from the fund, to whom, and how to obtain access in a language and at a level that suits their abilities

(boxes 2.12 and 2.13). Poor women's lack of capacity, information, and knowledge hampers their ability to participate equally with men in CDD processes. Women often lack information about the process of applying for funds, as well as the time to attend meetings and the confidence to speak up if they do. Class, caste, and other nongender aspects of identity also affect women's ability to participate and the issues that motivate them. In Cape Verde, India, and Peru, planners observed that information can ensure that women (1) know what goods and services they can choose, (2) are able to make informed choices, (3) know where to go to obtain the necessary forms, (4) are able to prepare and present acceptable proposals or seek help to produce these, (5) understand their responsibilities, and (6) know what to do with the goods and services once provided, to gain full benefit (IFAD 2004b). Yet a lesson learned is to separate the role of promoter from service provider, as marginalized groups are often vulnerable to a slick "sales pitch." An unclear division of responsibilities between these two has created conflicts of interest at times between profit and non-profit-oriented suppliers who engage with poor women.

In Cape Verde the community facilitators who assist the promoters are selected by the groups themselves. This was a result of a lesson learned from Peru, where promoters hired from outside the community with strong patriarchal attitudes affected women's participation negatively.

Sustainability depends on the existence of enabling environments in which policy and institutional reforms are oriented toward increasing control of decisions and resources by community groups or elected governments. Political and institutional environments often prove unsupportive to the process of CDD, in part because they lack cadres of competent facilitators. Sustained community action often rests on the abilities of external mediators to unlock and activate local social capital (Mansuri and Rao 2004).

Measures required by project management to ensure the participation and benefits to women are new to many governments, NGOs, and private sector partners and as such are often slow to be adopted. Resistance is also found where this approach is perceived as a threat to established ways of doing things and the interests of dominating groups. IFAD found that men often saw no reason to include women in decision making and to target benefits to them. Broad enabling and empowerment targeting measures are found to be easier to apply and more effective than narrow measures based on eligibility criteria; the concept of inclusion is generally more acceptable than targeting, which suggests top-down and exclusionary measures.

## Financing modalities

To date, the effectiveness of demand-driven mechanisms and funds has been strongly enhanced or undermined by the specific procedures for the application for funds and review and selection of proposals. The complexity and technical difficulty of preparing proposals, time allocated for submission, distance to be traveled for submission, criteria and processes for selection of groups—all affect women's abilities to participate and benefit from CDD projects. Women with less education and free time and whose mobility is constrained require special assistance by not-for-profit groups such as NGOs or promoters to prepare proposals. Investments to build the capabilities of poor women to become leaders and to choose good representatives and hold them accountable must be supported by governments and donors as needed. The process requires full transparency and publicity in procedures, including selection, signing of agreements, and contracts.

Contributions of cash, labor, and local materials that must be provided by communities as proof of commitment and a condition to obtain community-driven funds are often unaffordable by women who have little time for labor contributions and few material resources to provide. In some cases artificial groups form to access CDF funds, undermining legitimate groups that exist for credit purposes and collective investments. Many borrower governments have not been convinced that allowing community control over investment decisions and resources is the best means of engaging communities; they have concerns about local capacities but also feel threatened by devolution of authority (World Bank 2005).

To date, CDD projects have been rarely designed with sufficient investments to provide the types of follow-up support and complementary investments that poor women require to overcome their multiple constraints and to achieve the expected level of benefits (Perrett 2004)—a point that clearly requires mitigation to realize the potential of CDD and decentralization for gender-equity goals.

Empowering measures are arguably the most important ones to increase poor women's bargaining power and their participation in public decisions, as evidenced by the case of women members of self-help groups in a project in Chattisgarh, India (IFAD 2004b). It is clear that a demand-led process and the availability of funding are not sufficient to ensure outreach to poor rural women. Specific empowerment measures are needed to enable the poorest and most marginalized groups to transform their needs into effective demands. Women in communities participating in the management of natural resources in the Southern Highlands

Project in Peru demonstrated higher levels of self-esteem and more active participation in community decision making through various instruments, including gender mainstreaming and affirmative action, gender sensitization and training for both men and women, and the creation of a special fund for support of economic activities undertaken by women (IFAD 2004b). The Self-Help Learning Initiative of the Gemidiriya project in Sri Lanka illustrates how women's participation in decision making and in managing village-level financial institutions can be achieved (see Innovative Activity Profile 3).

On the supply side, the capacity of service providers to respond to the needs of poor women needs to be strengthened with services and extension methods appropriate for women, requiring a complete reversal from the established way of providing assistance as per the decisions and methods of technical staff. Projects in India and Peru demonstrate that inculcating gender sensitivity and commitment within the implementing organizations and service providers while simultaneously building women's leadership and capacity was critical to achieve women's substantial participation and accountability to them. There it was learned that existing institutional and policy environments are often critical constraints and that pro-active measures to instill a strong commitment by project management can catalyze positive results (IFAD 2004b).

## GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

Cases of well-designed CBD/CDD projects have taken place, but most have not taken sufficient account of the limitations in the enabling environment to achieve gender-equitable impacts from these approaches. Specific improvements in the design of these projects, based on qualitative analyses of gender aspects of livelihood strategies, community organizations, and project partner institutions (as well as those of the donor agencies themselves), could go far in promoting the success of CBD/CDD approaches to address the needs of poor rural women. Guidelines and principles used in gender mainstreaming are useful references for this purpose.

*Inclusion of the poorest women.* To ensure that the poorest women are able to participate in and benefit from CDD project activities, project management procedures and policies must mandate the use of tools of gender-sensitive poverty and livelihood analysis to first identify them, understand their livelihood-related constraints and opportunities, and incorporate their views before determining the menu of the types of goods and services to be funded

and supported to match the interests and needs of women. All CDD projects—even those that work through existing decentralized public administration—must incorporate an explicit strategy to ensure that the resources reach and benefit women and men of poor rural households. This implies an adoption of enabling, empowering, menu-based, procedural, and other targeting measures and continuous monitoring of effectiveness.

*Enabling policy environments.* The presence or absence of an enabling environment for CDD as an innovation makes a significant impact on its success. The design of projects should anticipate resistance to CDD and include measures targeted at the implementing agencies themselves, such as capacity building for gender mainstreaming, to build support for the CDD process at all levels. Bringing about changes in attitudes and ways of interacting with poor women builds sustainable organizational and individual accountability of public and private service providers to rural women.

As a result of the importance that local governance issues assume in the elaboration of a CDD project policy, new tools must be adopted to complement existing methodologies of project formulation, appraisal, implementation monitoring, and performance evaluation. Gender-sensitive institutional analysis is a tool that would greatly improve the understanding of the system within and around communities and would help to identify enabling and disabling agencies and actors, to properly map implementation arenas, and to streamline project organization and management arrangements.

At the community level, institutional analysis will help to (1) understand the community institutions, the rules of the game accepted by everyone, and how these can be used to devise self-targeting instruments in favor of women; (2) acquire insights on how socioeconomic and political factors affect change and community preferences and demands; and (3) monitor the reactions to project conditions of “inclusiveness” and monitor the impact of formal inclusiveness on the effective role of women in the management of the public affairs of the community.

At the level “around” the communities, institutional analysis will help to (1) understand the institutional systems and how they really work; (2) identify enabling and disabling agencies and actors that can or should work to improve the livelihood of members of the rural communities, their roles, motivations, organizational culture, and behavior; (3) establish a dialogue with both women and men; (4) negotiate enabling instruments, including solutions to the key issues of inappropriate processes and disabling

procedures, transparency, and accountability mechanisms; and (5) facilitate the role of enabling actors in the application of agreed-to enabling instruments.

Institutional analysis brings stakeholders together to examine how best they can make use of the resources and authority they will get from CDD and can inform questions of linkages and feedback loops between enablers, service providers, and client groups (Binswanger and Aiyar 2003).

The experience of CDD project implementation in West and Central Africa suggests that partnerships that join together CBOs, local government administrators, civil society organizations working for local development, and the private sector provide more effective mechanisms to unleash the development potential of the rural communities than do mechanisms that operate exclusively through the government administration (Patanali 2007).

*Accountability, monitoring, and evaluation.* One shortcoming of many CDD projects is that if one of the primary goals is to build grassroots capacity, appropriate monitoring tools are rarely employed to assess the evolution of this capacity, but good practical tools exist for doing this. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are especially critical to ensure that decentralization and CDD approaches have the intended impacts for women and gender equity. Innovation always requires more careful M&E; in this case a careful watch is needed to monitor who does or does not obtain access to funds and decision-making processes, and why. Such monitoring starts with the first process (often information dissemination about the project) and should continue to the distribution and use of benefits within a group.

## CHALLENGES

Further information is needed to answer questions such as the following. What are the consequences of decentralization and CDD for poor rural women, for gender relations in households and institutions, and for agricultural productivity and food insecurity? Are poor rural women able to demand accountability, and do they play a significant role in decision making for project activity selection? Do women and their households benefit substantially from CDD projects? Under what circumstances are poor rural women harmed by CDD? Does a CDD approach hold greater promise to improve the condition of women than thematic project interventions related to issues of particular relevance to women such as microfinance, small-scale marketing assistance, and food crop development?

Is the goal of CDD pro-poor women institutional development or poverty reduction through women’s increased

access to infrastructure? What is the likelihood that devolution of decision making on public resources to communities will lead to greater equity? What is the likelihood that government will devolve decision making on public resources and use their authority to support women's decision making in this?

In addition, a need exists for a broad search for innovations that have aided women to benefit from decentralization and CDD projects to address the current gap in the knowledge of whether or not, as well as how, these processes have significantly impacted gender relations and women's poverty levels.

## Gender, Self-Help Groups, and Farmer Organizations in the Agricultural Sector

### SOCIAL CAPITAL, EMPOWERMENT, AND DECISION-MAKING AGENCY

**G**ood governance involves effective collective organization, and without question this has proven to have value for improving the livelihood opportunities and empowerment of poor women who depend on agricultural or rural livelihoods in developing countries. Participation in group organization has clear benefits for poor women in terms of increased assets, income, and gains in control over decision-making processes that affect their lives. Poor rural women form and belong to many types of groups related to agriculture, including self-help groups, producer associations, and businesses as well as voluntary associations. Here the focus is on groups that involve agriculture-driven, joint activities initiated around an economic purpose, where this includes the production of goods or services or collective management of natural resources important for agriculture. This focus identifies several types of groups summarized in box 2.14: agricultural cooperatives, self-help groups (including microcredit and rotating savings and credit groups), user groups for natural resource management, agricultural extension and field schools, and farmer research groups. The last are a specific, agriculture-related case of groups that form in the rural sector to provide several kinds of public services, such as sanitation or schooling. Groups may be formal, in the sense of having agreed-on rules and procedures that give the group a status that enables the group to own or manage its assets legally, as in the case of formal cooperatives, or they may be informal, as is the case with self-help groups, but the legal status of groups is not a primary determinant of important gender issues. Rural women may be involved in other kinds of interest groups and political organizations with noneconomic objectives, such as advocacy, or that pursue different concerns, such as health, education, religion, or political representation, that are important to rural women but not agriculture driven. In most cases, as discussed in more detail below, organized groups in the agricultural

sector are rarely formed exclusively by or for women. Important gender issues are therefore related to the inclusion of women and their membership status, and policies that enable women to participate in decision making or take leadership roles in groups.

This Thematic Note addresses key gender issues that cut across different types of group organization in the agricultural sector, following the topical outline that guides all the Thematic Notes in this *Sourcebook*, to synthesize current knowledge about the advantages and disadvantages of group organization for women. Discussion is organized under the following topics: aspects of experience in group formation related to the impacts and benefits of groups for women, key implementation problems and constraints due to gender relations, good practices and lessons learned, and principles and guidelines for designing and implementing group organization in the agricultural sector that is inclusive of women.

### GROUP FUNCTIONS, ADVANTAGES, AND DISADVANTAGES

Groups in the agricultural sector have several functions affected by gender relations that, in turn, influence how much women benefit from participation in group organization. A central function of groups is to overcome market failures, cases in which collective action helps members to overcome high transaction costs, or risks that increase the vulnerability of the poor. For example, cooperatives and self-help groups facilitating savings and credit for agroenterprise development are important for overcoming market failure, which makes it difficult for women producers to diversify and engage in commercial farming. Another function of groups is to produce public goods and externalities associated with nonexcludability, as is the case with common property management of natural resources, including water, forests, and fisheries, that may be of critical importance to women's agricultural livelihoods. Groups may also function to advance

## Box 2.14 Types and Functions of Women's Groups in the Agricultural Sector

*Producer associations and cooperatives* are businesses owned and often managed by farmers to transform, package, distribute, and market their produce. Agricultural cooperatives encompass several functions or may specialize in marketing, input supply, or savings and credit.

*Self-help groups (SHGs)* are voluntary associations of not more than 10 to 20 members who are usually poor people with the aim of solving their common problems through mutual help. Typically an SHG promotes internal savings and lending among its members; this capital eventually may be deposited with a bank.

*Rotating savings and credit associations (ROSCAs)* are groups of about 6–12 individuals who make regular contributions to a common fund, which is then given as a lump sum to one member in each saving cycle. In this way a member lends money to other members through contributions, and members alternate between being lenders and borrowers.

*Women's subgroups in village development associations (VDs)* are vehicles for mobilizing local resources, especially labor, for projects such as the construction of bridges and community halls, renovation of school

buildings and health centers, digging and maintenance of earthen roads, irrigation, soil conservation works, and the provision of piped water.

*Women's groups in watershed management associations* may be traditional groups for collective management of common property resources or may be externally catalyzed by projects for the management of natural resources. They are mainly oriented toward carrying out soil and water conservation measures, reforestation and forest conservation, training, and conflict resolution and may have specific functions like water users committees, forest protection committees, fodder development committees, or seed distribution committees that represent sectoral interests in watershed development.

*Agricultural extension field schools or farmer research groups* are formed to promote learning about production technologies or to contribute to the development of innovations. Women's groups formed for these purposes can help to ensure that innovation is more relevant to women producers, although they may also be marginalized into "traditional" semisubsistence production.

Source: Authors.

claims of their members to rights and resources or enforce existing rights important for agriculture: these include land-rights groups, labor unions, cooperatives, and associations that perform this function.

Gender relations affect the extent to which women enjoy important advantages obtained by membership in groups, such as economic gains from collective marketing, agroprocessing, or input supply. Group membership helps to build different kinds of internal and external social capital, solidarity, and bargaining power, as well as experience with democratic decision making and leadership. In all kinds of groups, gender relations affect the extent to which women are included as group members, participate in decision making, and exercise leadership, but it is important to keep in mind that women's socioeconomic resources and ethnic, religious, or caste identity may compound any effect of gender on its own. One of the most important effects of group membership for poor women is the development of self-esteem, solidarity, and shared identity. The potential to forge empowering social and political identities for poor women makes groups a powerful channel for women to

demand and effect social change, especially when large numbers of groups federate and act together. Women's empowerment through participation in groups is especially important for attacking root causes of rural women's poverty: lack of entitlement to key economic resources, drudgery and weak bargaining power within the household, domestic violence, and sexual oppression.

Against the advantages of participation in groups for women must be considered the low probability of successful participation in groups by very poor women, especially in highly stratified and unequal societies. Very poor women seldom join or form strong, sustainable groups without external catalysts to initiate and support group formation with long-term training and facilitation. Nonetheless, it is also clear that once rural women have had the experience of belonging to a successful group, even the poorest groups can produce women leaders who are fully capable of inspiring and teaching other women to form groups. Recent studies show that building self-esteem and self-worth among poor women and their organizational skills is perceived by them as the most important result of participation in groups and

may be as or more important than the economic benefits of group action.

### EXPERIENCE, IMPACTS, AND BENEFITS FROM GENDER-RESPONSIVE ACTIONS

Rural women's groups and producer associations have exploded recently in developing countries. In Mali, for example, it is not uncommon for a woman farmer to belong to four, five, or even six associations. Participation in groups for mutual assistance such as communal labor or rotating credit and savings associations is a feature of traditional village life in many rural areas, but recently a dramatic expansion of women's self-help groups (SHGs) has been driven by the microfinance revolution. In 2006 microcredit SHGs numbered 2.23 million with approximately 33 million members. These groups have proved remarkably effective as a mechanism for extending microfinance services to the very poor. Women's SHGs formed for microcredit, especially in India, have expanded vigorously into other development domains, including education, water management, housing, sanitation, and disaster prevention, effecting significant changes in women's status. In general, self-help groups with microcredit as their primary purpose have not proved effective for financing agricultural production because of the difficulty they have in providing the relatively large infusions of capital required for farming at key points in the production calendar, but they have proved important for group agroenterprise development by women producers (box 2.15).

The experience of PRADAN, a large rural livelihoods development NGO reaching over 80,000 poor women in seven of the poorest states in India, illustrates the empowerment impact of women's SHGs. PRADAN (Professional Assistance for Development Action) targets women in the poorest and most socially marginalized groups with the goal of enhancing the capacity of women to exercise voice and influence within the wider community, and so it builds secondary-level federations, networks, or clusters of these groups to improve their bargaining power. Federations are developed to function as self-sustaining organizations with a variety of livelihood-focused interventions, which include microcredit for agroenterprise development, although this is not the primary objective of group formation. An impact assessment of PRADAN's SHGs shows that group members have higher levels of awareness and knowledge than nonmembers about issues that affect women's ability to control certain aspects of their lives, such as family planning and government policies. Group members had greater mobility outside the home and a higher proportion kept a portion of household income for their own use.<sup>1</sup>

#### Box 2.15 India: Example of the Broad Impact of SHGs on Poor Women's Livelihoods and Empowerment

In India the IFAD's North Eastern Region Community Resource Management Project for Upland Areas has mobilized women's organization into SHGs to achieve a wide array of benefits. Women members make weekly savings used for income-earning, health, and education needs of the village. The group acquired a rice and maize dehusking mill to save labor and effort on the part of villagers who had to travel long distances for this. Additionally, the group has revived the local market in Nonglang, which previously opened once a week. Now it opens daily, making the procurement of food and other items much easier for all in the village. SHG members value meeting every week to discuss common problems. Eradication of illiteracy has become one of the group's goals. With the encouragement of the project, the group has organized a school for young children, who previously either did not attend classes or did so only in the morning. Now each family sends at least one child to this school. Women volunteers teach here. Members know that the school needs more supplies and better resources for the students and are looking at using the group's savings to arrange for these. The most important impact of SHGs has been this mobilization of poor women to assume responsibility for their own development.

Source: Authors.

The empowerment impact of group organization may be more important for women, especially poor women, than the direct economic benefits of group membership. Although the intensive support required for financially sustainable microcredit SHGs may not be profitable for lenders in the long run, numerous studies find that participation in SHGs, notably in India, has assisted the development of women's self-confidence in working collectively to influence change in their communities. An example is the Women's Empowerment Program in Nepal, which focused on literacy and savings for 6,500 women's groups in which many participants started businesses and increased their decision-making authority in the home. In addition, SHGs have provided a platform for the development of women's leadership both at the community level and in local politics, where group

members are taking an active role in electoral politics. In India SHGs have created a role for women in local politics, and a growing number of SHG members now fill elected local government positions.

Women's SHGs have formed effectively for a variety of purposes that enable them to have an impact on public service provision, although they often also include group savings as an activity. SHGs often evolve from existing women's organizations that, like the Women's Councils in Maharashtra, India, can provide an important source of leadership for group formation. SHGs involved in service provision have successfully expanded women's access to health, literacy, and agricultural extension services. Such groups provide an important forum for women to access and share information from which they are otherwise excluded, a function that deserves explicit attention in group formation. For example, the Agha Khan Rural Support Program has formed women's organizations that have had the dual purpose of income generation and providing a civic forum for social development. A different approach is that used by the International Development Bank MAG-PAES project in El Salvador, which sets up municipality-level gender committees (*comités de genero*) to explicitly address issues of gender equity. The committees funnel training and microfinance to women's groups, which have launched several of the program's more successful agroenterprise initiatives.

Watershed development strategies to address land degradation and improve agricultural productivity rely heavily on decentralization of decision making to farmer groups. The focus of watershed management on land, to which mainly men have title, means that women's groups have been marginalized, even though it is well known that women often play a key role in managing common pool resources such as communal forest and grazing. Non-land-based income generation has been higher on the agenda than land management or land rights for most women's SHGs in watershed development programs. Women's microcredit SHGs have been mobilized to meet quotas for women's participation in many watershed development schemes but seldom have direct links to natural resource management unless an explicit effort is made to link women into participatory watershed governance, such as watershed committees. When women are brought into watershed planning, very different outcomes have been observed. For example, the AKRSP (Aga Khan Rural Support Programme) in Gujarat used gender sensitization exercises that led men to conclude that women were contributing about 50 percent of the labor for watershed improvement and should receive part of the wages that were being paid to men as the land owners. The women

deposited their wages into the common fund of their women's association and used it for collective activities addressing women's priorities (Seeley, Batra, and Sarin 2000).

Several decades of experience with the formation of producer associations and agricultural cooperatives for women, supported by governments, NGOs, and national women's organizations, have had mixed results. Notable examples of success are the work of the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) and Working Women's Forum in India or Femmes et Développement (FEDEV: Women's Development Project) in Mali. SEWA, a registered trade union with a membership of 800,000 women, two-thirds of whom are small farmers or landless agricultural laborers, has a strategy of empowering women by improving women's assets and employment opportunities and has created the All-India Women Farmers Association. Some benefits are clear in terms of enhancing the skills, opportunities, and prestige of women who are active leaders in these organizations. In many cases participation in producer associations or cooperatives has enabled women to break down cultural restrictions on their mobility and to expand their social and economic networks. So long as organizations forming SHGs provide long-term, high-quality, nonfinancial support (typically one or two years) for capacity building, groups have low dropout and turnover rates, reflecting their utility to poor women. But the vast majority of women farmers' associations have not been able to sustain income generation for members without outside support.

## **POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES**

Similar implementation problems in forming and sustaining women's groups are found whether at the small scale of self-help groups or at larger scales of producer associations and cooperatives because of the persistent handicaps women experience from unequal gender relations. Frequently in producer cooperatives or farmer associations, women members have been oriented to compete with traditional "women's" products in weak markets that often cannot absorb expanded production of these products, or they have not been provided with the skills and technology required to compete successfully. Collective organization for production has not automatically improved women's status or control over key assets, such as land or capital, or over the income generated. Insecure access to land and land tenure remains a pressing issue for women producers, as does the need for public policy to support small-scale farming. Poor women still face the problem of adequately establishing user rights allotted to them by law. Thus, even when organized in groups



and associations, women producers face political as well as economic disadvantages that force them to compete on relatively unfavorable terms.

An important obstacle to implementation, although the evidence is contradictory, tends to be the problem that cooperative organization has not led to redistribution of work between women and men in the household, increasing already heavy demands on women's time and energy. This especially affects poorer women, who find it difficult to absorb the costs of participation in collective decision making, and are less likely to join groups. In the case of PRADAN, for example, membership in self-help groups did not alter the gendered pattern of decision making about household resource allocation, which remained very similar in member and nonmember households.

Another obstacle to implementing successful group organization is the difficulty of providing incentives to group participation that promote the inclusion of resource-poor women. The advantages of cooperative organization frequently accrue primarily to better-off women who are more likely to have the formal education needed for leadership roles. However, research shows that more educated rural men and women alike tend to participate less in community-level groups, in part because they are more likely to be engaged in nonfarm, income-generating activities (these are becoming a major source of income to smallholders in developing countries). The cost of participation in groups, associations, or cooperatives can be a disincentive to those with more profitable ways of investing their time outside of groups. Even so, more educated women are more likely to fill positions of authority in SHGs and producer associations alike. This can lead to conflicts of interest between them and poorer members over the distribution of benefits.

Even when group participation is broadly inclusive of women with different levels of resources, cooperative organization is frequently overly ambitious relative to women's skill base, and corruption resulting from weak leadership or high turnover in management is common. Problems of distrust and conflict between members and management are frequently cited as reasons for the failure of women's cooperatives. The so-called middle-class effect of participation can lead to the disempowerment of the majority of poor women in a producers association when, for example, patronage resources are arrogated to a select group of women from the wealthier families in a community. Mistrust, class conflict, and limited participation may delegitimize a cooperative or association for most of the women who are nominally members.

Group formation can be seriously hampered by underlying structural disadvantages and inequities that underpin the poverty of women. The assumption that participation in groups assists women in escaping from poverty and inequity has been severely criticized for its neglect of the "dark side" of social capital, referring to the possibility that association can lead to the exclusion of women and to reproduction of existing structures of inequality. Multiple factors militate against group participation for the poorest women: for example, ill-health and their physical inability to participate, their inability to afford reciprocal relationships and maintain more than "threadbare" social networks, their lack of assets needed to make regular contributions to group fees and activities, and discriminatory norms that restrict their mobility and relegate them to lower status within groups. Although groups have clear benefits for some women, entrenched class, caste, and ethnic differences exist among women that groups cannot in and of themselves overcome.

Building coalitions and federations of SHGs and producer organizations is crucial for sustaining their socioeconomic viability. A key gender issue is the extent to which women can access and undertake leadership roles at different levels of federated producer organizations or SHGs. Participatory decision making and the management of organizations require special skills that poor women seldom have and for which they need special training. Scaling up from small groups to federations requires long-term capacity building and mentoring to develop women producers' organizational as well as technical skills at all levels. The training of professional social mobilizers and financial support for them are frequently insufficient for them to provide the type of capacity building required to build sustainable federations of women's organizations. Inadequate investment in either members' or facilitators' capacity has led to the postproject collapse of numerous federations.

## **GOOD PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED**

This section draws together some of the more effective practices derived from learning to overcome several of the main problems of implementation highlighted above (box 2.16). One of the most important lessons concerns the importance of formulating and putting into practice specific policies to alleviate gender inequalities that are widely understood to be basic constraints to the success of women's self-help groups and producer organizations in agriculture. Few programs explicitly include such policy measures, but these are needed to address the lack of child care and onerous domestic

### Box 2.16 Summary of Good Practices for Implementing Women's Participation in Group Organization for Agricultural Development

- Use group formation strategies that are easily replicable (such as the SHG approach) and lead to scaling up and federation of groups.
- Provide long-term, high-quality capacity development and mentoring over at least one to two years from inception of groups and federations.
- Include an explicit effort to include women with different resource endowments in governance and decision making.
- Include specific policies to alleviate gendered work and power relations unfavorable to women.
- Develop group management and leadership skills as well as technical skills, for women as well as for men.
- In the early stages of group organization, consider creating relatively homogeneous subgroups of women facing similar constraints to create a safe place where the most disadvantaged can develop new skills and empowerment.
- Assess the need for intensive social awareness and gender sensitization training for women and men to build mutual confidence, esteem, and capacity to negotiate.
- Include specific policies, such as selective targeting, to enable women to control some key inputs and resources critical to project success.
- Ensure groups have mechanisms that include women as well as men in performance evaluation of groups and their leaders, and some enforceable sanctions such as the ability to withhold membership fees.
- Promote inclusive information sharing that enhances women's understanding of their rights and opportunities.

Source: Author.

conditions that place heavy demands on women's time spent in unpaid domestic work and limit the time they have for group activities. Evidence suggests that participation in groups, especially if these generate tangible, short-term income under women's control, can improve women's bargaining capacity within the household to negotiate changes in their domestic workload and responsibilities. An important lesson is that to benefit poor women, strategies for their collective organization in agriculture need to include explicit measures to alleviate unfavorable work and power relations in the home as well as in the wider social context. It is essential for interventions based on women's participation in agriculture-driven group organization to build their confidence and self-esteem so they can both increase participation in groups *and* negotiate for important changes elsewhere in their lives.

An important lesson is that the heterogeneity of women's social class and ethnic differences needs to be factored into the formation of and support for women's groups, associations, and cooperatives. A relatively homogeneous class or ethnic composition of small groups may be needed to create a safe space for the most disadvantaged women to develop their skills. Avoiding the "middle-class effect" of participation is extremely difficult at larger scales. Gender targeting and quotas are not enough, because forming women's groups, associations, or cooperatives will not guarantee that poor women reap benefits from membership. A good practice is

to provide intensive social awareness training for women's group members. In SHGs engaged in microcredit, this type of intervention has had an important influence on the capacity of women to negotiate change in intrahousehold decision making and to transform their groups into actors of local institutional change.

Development interventions aimed at benefiting women need to include policies designed to enhance women's control over all types of development inputs and to target women for this purpose. The expansion of women's self-help groups in India into multiple areas of intervention, including health, education, domestic violence mitigation, and local politics, is strong evidence of an expressed demand among women for this type of multifaceted approach. The strategy of targeting women-only beneficiaries, validated by numerous rural women's empowerment programs, has had positive results in terms of helping poor women to overcome their lack of self-confidence and in making socioeconomic and political change, including expanding women's income generation opportunities. In this respect there is some evidence that women's organizations have outperformed men's organizations (for examples, see Liamzon 2006).

Project design needs to include a careful targeting strategy to enhance women's control over public investments. An example is the Sunamganj community-based resource

management project in Bangladesh, in which 50 percent of community organizations were planned from the start to have trained women managers, and 50 percent of the land made available to the poor was allocated to women-headed households.<sup>2</sup> Representation for active women leaders in decision-making bodies such as watershed committees, village associations, and cooperatives that give them voice in planning processes consistently leads to different outcomes from those obtained when women are excluded.

Building capacity to represent and negotiate women's interests is a priority issue for women producers, while recognizing that there is no uniform "women's interest." Men-dominated producer organizations in developing countries that seek to create a policy voice for farmers give a degree of representation to women but seldom have an operational gender-based program. For example, *Reseau des Organisations Paysannes et des Producteurs Agricoles de l'Afrique de l'ouest* (ROPPA: Network of Farmers' and Agricultural Producers' Organizations of West Africa) country delegations must include at least one woman representative, and the top executive committee of 10 members must include two women, but ROPPA did not at the time of writing have specific gender initiatives. In contrast, the International Federation of Agricultural Producers has a separate committee on Women in Agriculture, established in 1992 to promote the status of women farmers, empower their participation in farmer organizations at all levels, and advocate women farmer's interests. The formation of women-managed organizations for women producers is an alternative strategy that has gained ground in some countries, notably in West Africa, where there are several regional federations of organizations representing women producers.<sup>3</sup>

Meeting quotas for women's representation or forming women-managed producer organizations and federations does not guarantee that the interests of the least-advantaged women will be addressed unless mechanisms for accountability exist, as the Ndulo case illustrated. It is vital, therefore, for these organizations to have the mechanisms that enable their members to evaluate leadership and monitor how different types of women benefit from the organization. Accountability requires building capacity for women to take responsibility for monitoring and evaluating activities, whether at the scale of individual SHGs, producer associations, or larger-scale federations. Participation in monitoring and evaluating performance is not sufficient, unless accompanied by performance incentives and enforceable sanctions, such as the ability of members to withhold fees.

An important lesson is that building capacity for social action within each SHG and then clustering or federating groups at larger scales can increase the capacity of women's groups to advocate for policy change, as well as to take responsibility for local development. For example, in Mysore, India, SHGs with 20,000 members have been organized so that each group includes a small task force that undertakes to represent village interests and claims with local government. In an area of tribal conflict in Tripura, India, SHGs in which women make up 80 percent of membership are active in social justice issues, campaigning against alcoholism and wrongful arrest.

Farmer organizations that operate beyond the level of SHGs that act as an interface between local communities and national and global policy-making bodies sometimes have the capacities and mandates to engage in advocacy activities at national, regional, and global levels. For example, building the capacity of farmer organizations is IFAD's goal. Through its Farmer Forum, IFAD aims to increase farmer participation in policy dialogue with their governments and within intergovernmental bodies and forums, via a bottom-up process of consultation and dialogue with small farmers and rural producers organizations that IFAD and governments convene every two years. Yet in most bodies such as this, whether international or national, as in farmer organizations in general, there is a notable absence of women's voices and leadership. To address this, IFAD organizes separate working sessions and side events with women leaders, from organizations such as the national women's organization SEWA. At the February 2008 meeting of the Farmer Forum, its members recommended that IFAD support farmer organizations to engage their women members in the management and decision-making processes of their organizations, with a minimum quota of 30 percent women farmers in all IFAD programs, events, and initiatives.

Other spaces for advocacy by women farmers exist through the UN's mechanism of major groups of civil society for sustainable development, wherein women have their own major group that facilitates their participation in the UN Commission for Sustainable Development and the various conventions related to agriculture and environment.

## **GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS**

Experience shows that a combination of empowering and capacity development measures works best for realizing the development potential of women's groups, associations, or

cooperatives. This involves combining several measures so that they are flexible: for example, quotas to ensure women are in key leadership positions and participate as members, targeting specific resources and opportunities at the poorest women, sharing information to make sure women know about rights and opportunities, and building beneficiary capacity. Long-term support is needed for processes that foster women's involvement in and leadership of democratic decision making. Finally, women members need to have the means and the authority to undertake monitoring of an organization's performance, using well-defined, locally appropriate indicators of change in women's welfare in domestic as well as other domains.

A key principle for forming and supporting sustainable women's SHGs and producer associations is to invest from the beginning in skill formation, especially among the least advantaged. Building the skill base for women's empowerment and leadership development, especially for the poorest women, requires work in small groups in which self-confidence and self-esteem can develop more easily. However, up-scaling and clustering into associations and federations is crucial for gaining the bargaining power and influence needed for women producers to effect change. Planning the long-run up-scaling strategy and its expected results from an early stage in group formation is one key to success. Self-replication has occurred on a large scale among women's self-help savings and microcredit groups in South Asia, for example, which highlights the importance for poor women in particular of using group formation strategies that are easily replicable (see box 2.16).

## Advocacy

Farmer organizations that operate beyond the level of SHGs acting as an interface between local communities and national and global policy-making bodies have the capacities and mandates to engage in advocacy activities at national, regional, and global levels. Building the capacity of farmer organizations is a focus of the IFAD: for example, to increase their participation in policy dialogue with their governments and within intergovernmental bodies and forums, particularly through its Farmers' Forum, which is a bottom-up process of consultation and dialogue between small farmers and rural producers' organizations, the IFAD, and government that convenes every two years. Yet within these meetings, and within farmer organizations in general, a notable absence of women's voices and leadership is present. To address this, the IFAD organizes separate working sessions and side events with women leaders, including those of SEWA. At the February 2008 meeting of the forum, its members recommended that the IFAD support farmer organizations to engage their women members in the management and decision-making processes of their organizations, with a minimum quota of 30 percent women farmers in all IFAD programs, events, and initiatives.

Other spaces for advocacy by women farmers exist through the UN's mechanism of Major Groups of civil society for sustainable development, wherein women have their own Major Group that facilitates their participation in the UN Commission for Sustainable Development and the various conventions related to agriculture and environment.

## Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan: Gender and Governance Issues in Local Government

**D**ecentralization is an important governance reform that holds promise for making public service provision more responsive to the rural population by bringing government closer to the people. Yet it is a challenge to involve women in local governments and to ensure that the services they require to improve their agricultural livelihoods are met. In Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan, legislative reforms of local government bodies have led to quotas for women. Approximately 12,000 women representatives participate in local governments in Bangladesh and more than 36,000 in Pakistan. In Nepal more than 39,000 women were elected in 1997. Although these quotas created space for the participation of rural women in local governments, elected women have faced a range of challenges, especially because many come from poor households and did not enjoy the benefit of schooling. Low levels of literacy, time constraints, lack of confidence, and limited access to relevant social networks restrict the effectiveness of women as local politicians. In view of traditional patriarchal power structures, men members of local councils often restrict women's participation, for example, by not

informing elected women about council meetings and by not including them in important committees. Moreover, officials of line departments often do not give sufficient recognition to the women members of local councils. Among various projects created to address these problems, the "Gender and Governance Issues in Local Government" project (Regional Technical Assistance Project—RETA 6008)—jointly funded by the Asian Development Bank, Japan Special Fund, and Canadian International Development Agency) has developed an innovative approach to address the multiple problems faced by women representatives in local governments.

### PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND DESCRIPTION

The objective of this project was to promote gender and good governance by assisting women representatives of local governments to carry out their roles more confidently and to serve their constituents, who are mainly poor women, more effectively. The project included the following components:

- Creating an interface among women representatives, poor communities, and government officials that established the credibility and effectiveness of elected women and involved officers from line agencies in transparent and accountable interaction with community members
- Providing social mobilization of key stakeholders, particularly the poor, elected women representatives and women leaders, and officers of line agencies
- Developing the capacity of elected women and men representatives of local government bodies, and of women and men community leaders.

Past experience with poverty reduction and local development projects suggests that when only one stakeholder in a complex social environment is provided with training,

**What's innovative?** The project combines capacity development, formalizing interactions and creating local forums for stakeholders. The forums provided women representatives with visibility and status and helped them to establish links with government line agencies, NGOs, and private sector representatives. The forums also provided support networks and opportunities to discuss experiences, problems, and issues and to plan actions to increase the accountability of both government officers and women members to their poor and other constituents.

assets, or resources, the results are often not effective. For example, line officers are often trained to deliver services more effectively, but reaching their target populations is hampered because locally elected officials responsible for providing accurate recipient lists are not involved. Moreover, the groups targeted for assistance often are unaware of resources designated for them, miss out on benefits to which they are entitled, and cannot act as pressure groups to hold government officials and locally elected members accountable.

The project addressed these problems by combining capacity development with the creation of an interface for stakeholders and with social mobilization. Creating an interface implied formalizing interactions among key stakeholders involved in delivering services in rural communities. The project brought together stakeholders in local forums on a monthly basis that provided women representatives with visibility and status and helped them to establish links with government line agencies, NGOs, and private sector representatives in all three countries. The forums also provided support networks and opportunities to discuss experiences, problems, and issues and to plan actions to increase the accountability of both government officers and women members to their poor and other constituents.

The forums made local people aware of various programs like development schemes or the *zakat* (charity funds) and community development projects in Pakistan and the poverty and social protection programs provided by *union parishads* (local government bodies). Local people also learned about the agriculture and rural development programs offered by the line agencies and about the microcredit programs provided by NGOs. In Nepal the forums demanded and received funds for development projects from village development committees (VDCs) and other agencies.

Capacity-building training was provided by local NGOs in each country to enhance the knowledge and skills of local women representatives and women community leaders so that they could be more effective in their roles in local government and forums. The goal was to provide women with basic knowledge about local government (their roles, budgets, meetings, record keeping, agendas, development projects, monitoring committees; council project funds); about how to run meetings, mediate disputes, and negotiate for development programs and local resource mobilization; and about gender issues.

It was recognized, however, that without the support of their men counterparts, women representatives would still not be able to realize their potential. Therefore, each country created capacity-building programs for women and

men, and in all cases training in gender sensitivity was also provided to men representatives, and in some cases to other men stakeholders, as well.

## BENEFITS AND IMPACTS

The combined effects of project activities did much to improve the confidence and ability of the elected women in Bangladesh and Pakistan and former representatives of the VDCs and community leaders in Nepal to represent the interests of all their constituents. Creating visible networks between women representatives and the officials of line agencies, including agricultural departments, proved to be a key element in improving the effectiveness of women representatives. Moreover, gender sensitivity training of men representatives of local bodies in the project area increased their awareness of the role and potential of elected women, which in turn led to better collaboration.

The women representatives made significant contributions to the well-being of the poor in their constituencies. Through the cooperation with government officers and NGOs in Bangladesh, women's forums made it possible for women representatives to provide poor women and young people with access to extension programs in the fields of agriculture, livestock, and fishery. The forums also increased the access of poor women and children to social protection programs and to other income-generating activities. Women local government members were also involved in mediating disputes and in mediating cases of woman and child repression, divorces, and theft.

In Nepal the forums were able to mobilize funds from VDC budgets for projects in the fields of agriculture, forest, and environmental management. Active links were made with government line agencies, NGOs, and community-based organizations engaged in savings and credit cooperatives, health, education, and hygiene. Women's forums promoted citizenship certificates and the registration of births, deaths, and marriages. The women's forums also mediated gender and social disputes related to domestic violence against women, polygamy, and witchcraft and were active in campaigns against alcoholism, drugs, and child trafficking.

In Pakistan forums in two districts of North West Frontier Province have established links with government departments, NGOs, and savings and credit programs and have implemented a range of development schemes. Women were also provided with income-generating opportunities, and some obtained jobs through government, private, or NGO sources. As in the other two countries, women were also involved in mediating disputes, including cases of

land disputes, fights between neighbors, child custody, provision of education for young girls, and waiving school fees for poor students.

## **LESSONS LEARNED AND ISSUES FOR WIDER APPLICABILITY**

*Quotas create space for the political participation of women in local governments, but additional measures are needed to increase the effectiveness of women representatives.* The experience in South Asia shows that low levels of women literacy, patriarchal power structures, and blocking access of women from poor households to social networks limit their effectiveness as local politicians. Project interventions are more likely to be successful if they address these multiple obstacles in an integrated way.

*Training women representatives is important, but not sufficient to increase their effectiveness.* Elected women clearly benefit from improved knowledge about local government procedures, such as meetings, record keeping, negotiating for development programs, local resource mobilization, budget management, monitoring, and dispute resolution. However, the training of women representatives needs to be combined with strategies to address other challenges they face beyond knowledge and skill gaps.

*Increasing the awareness of men stakeholders in local government about gender issues is crucial.* The project showed that efforts to promote gender equity in local governments should not be limited to interventions that target women representatives. It is equally important to increase the awareness of men stakeholders about the role that women can play in local government and about the obstacles that

they face. Hence, gender sensitivity training needs to be targeted to both men and women representatives, community leaders, and other stakeholders, such as line department officials.

*Creating visible interfaces between women representatives and service providers from line agencies and NGOs is a promising approach to improve service delivery in rural areas.* The project showed that regularly held forums can create an important interface between elected women and service providers and address a number of key constraints that women representatives face, especially if they come from poor backgrounds: lack of recognition, lack of access to social networks, and lack of contacts with stakeholders outside their villages, such as NGOs and the public administration.

*Social mobilization is needed to increase the awareness of women about projects and programs that support agricultural livelihoods.* Because the forums promoted by the project involved not only elected representatives, but also the constituents, they provided an important avenue for social mobilization. They increased the awareness of the rural poor, including rural women, about the availability of development programs that support agricultural livelihoods, thus facilitating their access to such programs. Moreover, the forums provided an avenue to create transparency and improve accountability.

*NGOs can play an important role in strengthening the confidence and ability of locally elected women to operate in predominantly men-oriented environments.* In all three countries the project showed that NGOs can be important partners in improving the effectiveness of women representatives in local governments and their commitment to gender equity.

## Côte d'Ivoire: Gender in Agricultural Services Reforms

### PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND DESCRIPTION

**A**t the beginning of 1991, the government of Côte d'Ivoire requested World Bank support to reform the institutions of the agricultural sector. The first five-year phase of the national project was focused on rationalizing and strengthening all the agricultural extension services and adaptive research. Plans were to have an Adaptable Lending Program for 11 years. One of the three main project components of the *Projet National d'Appui aux Services Agricoles* (PNASA: National Agricultural Services Project) was designed to help, create, and support the initial operation of the new National Agricultural Services Agency. The strategy aimed at closing the three big public administrations for agricultural services and to merge the selected best staff into one national institution. This new institution would be semiprivate and have a decentralized structure: the *Agence Nationale d'Appui au Développement Rural* (ANADER: National Agency for Rural Development). Being a semiprivate institution meant having no civil servant staff and one board, including an equal number of representatives from (1) the public administration, (2) the private sector, and (3) the producers organizations. The

**What's innovative?** The creation of the Gender National Services was instrumental to the gender-mainstreaming activity of Côte d'Ivoire. The Service led to fully one-quarter of the ministry's programs having an explicit gender focus. Selecting a highly qualified and strongly committed head of this Service was crucial to the effectiveness of this mainstreaming effort. Staff training, sound impact assessment and research, and effective monitoring and evaluation were the cornerstones of this effort.

producers organizations (POs) were becoming a key institutional element to achieving the project's goals. ANADER was built as an autonomous institution: the board led ANADER and appointed the general and central directors. The general directorate had full power to manage the budget, human resources, and strategy only under the control of the board. The PO's representatives on the board were freely elected by the POs for each main agricultural production chain area (for example, food crops, livestock, coffee, cocoa, cotton, and pigs). In each specific agricultural production organization, ANADER support was improving the participation of women to guarantee that PO representatives were efficiently defending women producers' interests. ANADER was implementing (1) agricultural advice (extension), (2) adaptive research, (3) PO development support, and (4) training and information.

### GENDER APPROACH

A pilot Women in Development (WID) stand-alone project was closed because of a number of difficulties in implementing activities isolating the support of women from the global development strategy. The knowledge of the women's role in the agricultural national production was just emerging with the quick transition from a self-agriculture consumption of food crops to a need to feed an increasing urban population. To avoid similar problems during WID, the national staff supported by Bank staff decided to implement a national gender-mainstreaming approach. Three main steps were undertaken.

1. *Speaking about gender issues:* At the beginning of PNASA I, the gender-mainstreaming strategy was announced to all staff: support to women producers' development was becoming a mandatory goal for ANADER staff. The different workshops for managers and field staff demonstrated that they were permanently arguing that women



producers were already fully integrated into their strategies. However, when monitoring and evaluation started to be more precise, asking for proof of field results, it became evident that the majority of the staff were working only with men producers. The gender approach adopted earlier was used only to make politically correct speeches for headquarters or international visits without specific instruments and obviously without field results.

2. *The creation of the national service for gender policy implementation:* The ANADER general directorate supported by Bank staff decided to create a National Gender Service. A woman staff member was selected with a university diploma, wide experience, and strong qualifications. She was very committed. However, she was quickly disappointed. The majority of the staff, including those at managerial levels, thought that gender issues and the related work were the responsibility of the National Gender Service and not their own. They continued to maintain that the gender issue was not a problem: they claimed that they knew what they had to do in the field. The chief of the National Gender Service sponsored a number of quantitative studies and organized two large regional workshops to demonstrate to all staff the gap between what they were reporting about gender issues and the reality in the field. The necessity for change became evident to everyone.
3. *The generalization of gender policy making, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation led by the Gender National Service and the general directorate:* Under the leadership of the general directorate, the National Gender Service began a general national training program, which aimed to provide all staff with tools for analyzing gender issues and tools to design and implement gender-sensitive projects. Support from the general directorate was high, and an annual budget was provided. Gender issues became a part of the daily agenda of all ANADER staff.

## INNOVATIVE FEATURES

Several innovations of this project are worth mentioning: national strategy change, policy implementation, and capacity strengthening.

### Policy making

*Mainstreaming gender in the national and subnational strategy and policy.* The past policies and strategies were aimed at supporting small associations and groups of women

farmers. With the creation of ANADER, the inclusion of women producers' empowerment into the national agricultural services strategy was made possible as the explicit objective in the plan. This objective states that 25 percent of technical packages and advisory services respond to the needs of women. Evaluation of existing practice indicated that the actual percentage of women being reached by these services was far lower than 25 percent of the total number of producers. Supervision missions demonstrated that field advisors were mainly using top-down advice and were not responding to the women producers' needs and requests. These findings legitimized the urgent need to look more closely at gender equality.

### Policy implementation/public administration

The results of the baseline study were very clear: women staff in the agricultural services delivery were only 1 percent. ANADER launched an experiment in recruiting five young women staff just after the end of their economic study to become PO advisers in the field. Women staff demonstrated that they could perform the job without problems. However, the availability of suitable trained women staff was limited, and thus the ANADER strategy has been limited in increasing the number of women staff. Gender policy was limited by the low number of girls entering into agricultural education and training at the secondary and university levels.

### Capacity strengthening

Studies and pilot experiments provided reliable data for advocacy and policy change. These data were facilitating the task of the chief of the National Gender Service and other staff in building instruments for policy implementation in the field. New instruments and new training built solid competencies for staff in analyzing agricultural issues sensitive to specific gender issues. The positive changes are very evident at the regional and national levels. Credible data and sound studies facilitated strategic discussions, which transformed staff's approaches and knowledge about the gender issues in the agricultural sector.

## BENEFITS AND IMPACTS

The objective to have 25 percent of packages advice respond to the needs of women was almost achieved in 2001, with 21 percent according to an independent field study at the time (World Bank 2003). Sixty-one focal points

were implemented in the different regions. In 2003, 720 groups of producers have been supported, including at least 26 percent of women producers. The majority of the groups were focused on food crop production and trading. They were receiving support from the new ANADER PO advisers. At least 100 women group leaders have emerged and are playing an increasing role in the POs and consequently positively influencing the place of the women producers in the ANADER board orientations. The proportion of women receiving agricultural advice has increased from 8 percent at the start of the project to 30 percent in 2003. At the request of women, new technologies were introduced and adopted to reduce women's time burden: for example, pedal pumps, oil presses, and solar dryers. The Service Gender and Development was fully implemented with a budget, credibility, and support from all members of the general directorate. Women staff in ANADER increased from 1 to 14 percent. Beneficiaries' evaluation demonstrated high women's satisfaction with the project. The project concluded with a better integration of women's needs into the agricultural services policy and investment.

## **LESSONS LEARNED AND ISSUES FOR WIDER APPLICABILITY**

*Functional national lead unit for gender mainstreaming.* Gender approach needs a high national commitment. Although having a gender component at the start of the project or program is important, more crucial are the implementation, evaluation, and impact assessment. Training and support of the national staff are necessary (1) to build gender monitoring and evaluation of their current activities, (2) to quantify the gender-related gaps in access to resources and opportunities, (3) to build a consensus for the necessity to change, and (4) to build a new national strategy for gender equality and effective instruments and tools to implement it.

*Strategic choice of the chief of the gender implementation strategy.* A highly competent woman or gender-sensitive man at the director level is needed. He or she needs to have great field knowledge of the agricultural women producers and needs to have achieved a high university level and/or a recognized technical credibility in front of the men direc-

tors. He or she needs to have exceptional competencies in mobilizing other partners. The gender unit needs to have a specific budget to facilitate contact missions, training, and other activities.

*Support sharing of studies and evaluation results.* The most important constraint in implementing gender strategies is changing staff perception at all levels. Staff often believe that they know the problems of women and that they are responding to these needs. Sound and credible research and impact assessments are needed to help staff realize the intensity of gender issues in the country. Workshops and conferences at local, regional, and national levels using the results of those studies can facilitate the change of perception by staff and policy makers and should be included as a regular activity in the project cost.

*Incentives and rewards for staff.* Implementation of a win-win strategy in human resources management is important. The staff need to change, but they are the ones who decide whether to change or not. If they expect some benefits from change, the gender strategy will be implemented easily. Gender issues need to be part of the daily agenda of all staff and need to be evaluated as an essential part of their job, not as a supplemental activity. Human resources management needs to be gender sensitive.

*Intensified agricultural education and training for girls.* The low rate of girls' enrollment in the agricultural schools at the secondary level or in the universities is conditioning the opportunity of agricultural services to appoint women staff into the public or private agricultural sector institutions. According to the importance of the sector, affirmative actions need to be implemented in numerous countries to avoid this constraint.

*Strengthened the producer organizations.* Agricultural field advisers are all working with groups of farmers. The efficiency of the adviser generally depends on the organization, cohesion, and sustainability of the group. For agricultural development, technical advice is important but not sufficient. Technical advice needs to be implemented with an enabling environment and equal playing field for farmers: access to land, input, credit, and power to negotiate. Particularly for women farmers, membership in a strong and well-established group is crucial to gain access to necessary productive resources.

## Sri Lanka: Gemidiriya Community Development and Livelihood Improvement Project

### PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND DESCRIPTION

**T**he Gemidiriya project aims to enable the rural poor to improve their livelihood and quality of life. In Sinhalese *gemidiriya* means “village strength.” As part of a longer-term 12-year program, this 4-year project is implemented in about 1,000 village communities (510 Grama Niladhari Divisions) in five districts (Badulla, Galle, Hambantota, Matara, and Moneragala) of Uva and Southern provinces in Sri Lanka. This covers approximately 150,000 households and is expected to directly benefit approximately 700,000 people (about 20 percent of the population of the two provinces).

Uva Province continues to be one of the most economically backward regions in the country because of problems of accessibility, connectivity, poor infrastructure, and poor quality of economic services. Production of primary commodities, mainly seasonal crops and livestock, is the main source of economic sustenance. Access to health and education and other basic services is less than satisfactory. Although the Southern Province shows a remarkable disparity between its districts (Galle, Hambantota, and Matara), it has a significantly high average poverty incidence along with high adult illiteracy and lack of access to electricity, safe water, and safe sanitation. The social assessment indicates that women in different villages contribute

between 35 and 60 percent of household income, whereas, on average, they contribute 36 percent of agricultural labor and 79 percent of domestic labor. In general, women are not willing to take loans because of the risk. Women’s participation in community-based organizations is high, but their voice is typically not fully heard and their participation in decision making is relatively low. Data also indicate that although women heads of household have lower education than man household heads, their income and consumption capacity are at least as good.

The project demonstrates an innovative approach in employment generation and rural poverty through five components: (1) strengthening village organizations (VOs) and funding priority subprojects; (2) building the capacity of local and national agencies and support organizations to respond to community demands; (3) creating an innovative seed fund to pilot innovative ideas that need experimentation, learning, and incubation; (4) facilitating overall coordination, implementation, and management of the project; and (5) creating a pilot Village Self-Help Learning Initiative (VSHLI).

### GENDER APPROACH

In recognizing that women’s empowerment and their participation in development opportunities will benefit not only women but also the entire community of the current and future generations, the project aims to mainstream gender in all project-related activities. Gender equity is a cross-cutting aspect of the project, and measures to establish and sustain gender equity have been set in the entire project design and implementation arrangements. In addition, the project sets gender empowerment and participation as a trigger for the next phase. The trigger states that women should participate in decision making by holding 30 percent of management positions either as members of the VO Board of Directors or as members of VO subcommittees in the first two years of Phase 1.

**What’s innovative?** Gender equity is a cross-cutting aspect of the Gemidiriya project. Measures to establish and sustain gender equity have been integrated in the design and implementation arrangements, such as in the leadership of community finance organizations. In addition, the project sets gender empowerment and participation targets as a trigger for the next phase.

The overall gender goals of the project are threefold: (1) social balancing (power balancing) through awareness and sensitization, (2) economic empowerment of women through their livelihood improvements, and (3) promotion of village-level initiatives toward social issues.

The project's Gender Strategy and Action Plan consists of three components, addressing three objectives:

- Gender mainstreaming and awareness building
- Ensuring women's equitable participation and benefit sharing
- Provisioning of special assistance to the most vulnerable women.

Because a risk exists that women may not be permitted to participate in key decisions and in operation and maintenance management, project rules of inclusion dictate their participation. For example, a specific results indicator has been created for the village development component that at least 50 percent of the decision-making positions should be women and youth at the village level (that is, chairperson or treasurer of various subcommittees). In addition, at least 50 percent of the project benefits should go to women. This would be monitored closely and accompanied by gender-specific training and capacity building.

## BENEFITS AND IMPACTS

The midterm report indicates that as part of the VSHLI pilot program villages, 60 percent of the decision-making positions on the board of directors were women at the end of 2006—exceeding the goal of 30 percent set during the project appraisal. Further, women have broad representation and participate in many decision-making positions in the various VO bodies, as shown in tables 2.4 and 2.5.

In the community-managed microcredit program, most of the necessary ingredients have been included to achieve the success of a credit project of this nature for the poor, including establishing village savings and credit committees through social mobilization, group formation, group decision making, training for skills development to receive credit, establishment of a credit insurance fund, and registration of village societies as companies. Finally, the committees have obtained majority women's participation, and women have been empowered to manage these financial institutions—an area previously dominated by rich men.

## LESSONS LEARNED AND ISSUES FOR WIDER APPLICABILITY

Through in-built project rules and targets, participation of women and youth in decision-making positions was

**Table 2.4 Representation of Women, Youth, and the Poorest in Decision-Making Positions of Village Organizations**  
percent

Village organization officials	Women	Youth	Poorest
Board of Directors	56	40	11
Finance Committee	60	42	8
Procurement Committee	51	39	10
Social Audit Committee	53	31	8
Subproject Committees	48	40	9
Village Savings and Credit Committees	75	36	5

Source: Project Midterm Review, September 2007.

**Table 2.5 Participation in Village Organization Activities by Selected Groups**

Category	Attendance at meetings	Participation in planning activities	Participation in decision-making activities	Participation in monitoring	Participation in implementation
Women	1.60	1.90	2.00	2.11	2.13
Youth	2.75	2.67	2.68	2.79	2.82
Poorest	1.85	2.38	2.50	2.58	2.38

Source: Project Midterm Review, September 2007.

Note: Reported value is the mean score. The standard errors of the mean are consistently below 0.125. The five-point scale used: Very high—1, high—2, satisfactory—3, low—4, and very low—5. Sample size = 90 VOs. The lower the score, the better the participation.

encouraged from the start and reached expected levels. Core participation of women and youth has injected an important level of commitment and energy to community activities. This is also a very important factor for sustainability. An additional outcome is that the status of women in the project communities has increased.

The earlier pilot villages under the VSHLI have demonstrated that a high degree of women and youth participation in project activities also had high positive benefits to outcomes and to accountability (for example, through active and effective Social Audit Committees).

Additional benefits of the community-managed credit program that were not considered initially include the fact that group members—mostly women—have their capacity and employability increased through accounting and bookkeeping knowledge, and committee members are trained in how to prepare simple business plans. On the other hand, to overcome a bookkeeping turnover problem, a lesson was learned by the project to also target and train as bookkeepers unemployed, senior women members who are unlikely to leave the village.

## NOTES

### Overview

This Overview was written by Regina Birner and Leah Horowitz (IFPRI) and reviewed by Chitra Deshpande, Nata Duvvury, and Catherine Ragasa (Consultants); Neela Gangadharan (FAO); Maria Hartl (IFAD); and Rekha Mehra and Eija Pehu (World Bank).

1. United Nations Development Programme (1997), *Governance for Sustainable Human Development—A UNDP Policy Document*, <http://mirror.undp.org/magnet/policy>.
2. See Transparency International India (New Delhi), “India Corruption Study 2005,” [www.tiindia.in](http://www.tiindia.in).

### Thematic Note 1

This Thematic Note was prepared by Catherine Ragasa (Consultant), with inputs from Regina Birner and Leah Horowitz (IFPRI), and reviewed by Nata Duvvury (Consultant); Maria Hartl (IFAD); and Jock Anderson and Rekha Mehra (World Bank).

1. In 2005, 49 countries have prepared national PRSPs, and these PRSPs are currently guiding assistance strategies of donor agencies, including the Asian Development Bank, DFID, International Monetary Fund, government of Japan, and the World Bank, among others (World Bank and IMF 2005).
2. This is based on the review done by Hild Rynestad. Seven reviewed strategy documents are for Angola, Argentina,

Armenia, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Mozambique, and Vietnam. Initial selection was based on whether “Rural/Agriculture Strategy” is in the report title. This review excludes reports that deal only with specific sectors such as livestock, water, cotton—rather than agriculture or the rural sector as a whole.

3. In contrast to the other budget work that focuses on the distributional impact of budgets, such as pro-poor budgeting, gender-responsive budgeting does not treat households as a single unit but highlights that the access to and control over resources and bargaining power of household members differ. It is carried out by different actors in different countries. Some of the so-called Gender Responsive Budgeting Initiatives (GRBIs) were initiated by the Ministry of Women or Ministry of Finance, some by parliamentarians, and some by NGOs.

4. According to a comparative analysis by UNIFEM (2007) of women in local government in 13 countries in East Asia and the Pacific.

5. The available evidence, based on a cross-sectional comparison, is difficult to interpret because women who are better represented in a particular country or locality may reflect the political preferences of the group that elects them. The correlation between policy outcomes and women’s participation thus may not imply a causal effect from women’s participation (Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004).

6. G. Bantebya-Kyomuhendo, “The Role of National Mechanisms in Promoting Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women: Uganda Experience,” background paper for the Expert Group Meeting “The Role of National Mechanisms in Promoting Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women,” Rome, November 29–December 2, 2004, [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/nationalm2004](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/nationalm2004).

7. See also <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTGENDER/Resources/BeyondVietnam.pdf>.

8. See the report at [www.doingbusiness.org/documents/Women\\_in\\_Africa.pdf](http://www.doingbusiness.org/documents/Women_in_Africa.pdf).

9. Not only is there gender inequality under customary law, but, until recently, married women were legal minors under civil law. The reality was that women could not enter into contracts, get a loan, serve on a board, or engage in other economic activities without permission of their husbands.

10. Social Watch, “Gender Equity Index 2007,” [www.social-watch.org/en/avancesyRetrosesos/IEG/tablas/SWGIEI.htm](http://www.social-watch.org/en/avancesyRetrosesos/IEG/tablas/SWGIEI.htm).

### Thematic Note 2

This Thematic Note was written by Catherine Ragasa (Consultant), with inputs from Fatiha Bou-Salah (FAO) and Rosemary Vargas-Lundius (IFAD), and reviewed by Nata Duvvury (Consultant); Maria Hartl (IFAD); Regina Birner (IFPRI); and Rekha Mehra and Eija Pehu (World Bank).

1. Gender mainstreaming is defined “as the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies, or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy of making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.” See United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (UNDAW), *The Role of National Mechanisms in Promoting Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women*, Final Report of the Expert Group Meeting, Rome, Italy, November 29–December 2, 2004, [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/nationalm2004](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/nationalm2004).

2. The term “national machinery for the advancement of women” referred to the mechanisms established by government to promote and support the achievement of gender equality, including through implementation of the commitments made in global processes, such as the four world conferences on women. See the UNDAW report cited *ibid*.

3. See note 1 above.

4. *Ibid*.

5. The selection of countries was based on the available information that the authors gathered from existing literature and interviews of experts from FAO, IFAD, and the World Bank.

6. This section draws mainly on the papers presented during the UNDAW Expert Group Meeting; see note 1 above and background papers for more details.

7. See note 6 in Thematic Note 1.

### Thematic Note 3

This Thematic Note was prepared by Jeannette Gurung (WOCAN), with inputs from Robin Mearns (World Bank) and Hild Rygnestad (Consultant), and reviewed by Catherine Ragasa (Consultant); Alice Carloni, Maria Hartl, and Annina Lubbock (IFAD); Regina Birner (IFPRI); and Eija Pehu (World Bank).

1. A. M. Goetz and R. Jenkins, “Re-thinking Accountability. Briefing on the Gender-Poverty-Governance Nexus: Key Issues and Current Debates,” paper prepared for Development Cooperation Ireland by C. Server, [www.bridge.ids.ac.uk/reports\\_gend\\_gov.htm](http://www.bridge.ids.ac.uk/reports_gend_gov.htm).

### Thematic Note 4

This Thematic Note was prepared by Jacqueline Ashby (International Potato Centre [CIP]), with inputs from Jeannette Gurung (WOCAN), and reviewed by Alice Carloni and Catherine Ragasa (Consultants); Maria Hartl and Annina Lubbock (IFAD); Regina Birner (IFPRI); and Eija Pehu (World Bank).

1. SHG membership also generated clear benefits for members’ household livelihoods. An impact study conducted in 2005 found that group members experienced fewer months

of food shortage than nonmembers, had better sources of drinking water, owned more consumption assets such as radios and bicycles, had 57 percent of children between 5 and 16 attending school compared to 18 percent among nonmembers, had a better harvest each year and higher fertilizer use, and had lower reliance on moneylenders (Kabeer and Nojonen 2005).

2. See IFAD, “Rural Poverty in Bangladesh,” [www.ifad.org/operations/projects/regions/PI/factsheets/bd.pdf](http://www.ifad.org/operations/projects/regions/PI/factsheets/bd.pdf).

3. Examples from West Africa are *Reseau des Femmes Sahéliennes*, a regional network of Sahelian women that seeks to develop the capacity of women’s groups, the *Fédération Nationale des Groupements Féminines*, which includes about 1 million women and aims to improve credit and market access for women, and the *Directoire de Femmes en Elevage*, with 15,000 members, which works on improving livestock production and marketing.

### Innovative Activity Profile 1

This Innovative Activity Profile was written by Monawar Sultana (ADB) and reviewed by Regina Birner (IFPRI) and Eija Pehu (World Bank).

### Innovative Activity Profile 2

This Innovative Activity Profile was written by Christian Fauliau (Consultant) and reviewed by Catherine Ragasa (Consultant) and Regina Birner (IFPRI). This Profile was drawn heavily from the author’s field experiences and knowledge of the project, with consultations on World Bank (1998) and World Bank (2003).

### Innovative Activity Profile 3

This Innovative Activity Profile was written by Hild Rygnestad (World Bank) and reviewed by Catherine Ragasa (Consultant); Maria Hartl (IFAD) and Natasha Hayward (World Bank). This Profile was drawn from project-specific World Bank documents: “Project Appraisal Document” March 2004, the “Midterm Review Report,” September 2007, and the “Progress Report,” Fourth Quarter 2007.

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