

# **Gender Equality in Sector Wide Approaches**

**A Reference Guide**

Development Assistance Committee, OECD



June 2002



## Introduction

This guide is intended for policy and operational staff in government and development organisations who are interested in sector wide approaches (SWAPs). It is based on case studies examining the experience of sector wide programs in:

- Education (Ghana, India and Uganda, conducted by the United Kingdom).
- Health (Bangladesh and Ghana, conducted by the Netherlands, who also co-ordinated the project as a whole).
- Agriculture (overall, conducted by the World Bank; Kenya, conducted by the Netherlands; Zambia, conducted by Germany; and Mozambique, conducted by the World Bank and supported by Canada).

The case studies were discussed at a consultative workshop hosted by the Netherlands in The Hague in 2001. At the workshop, academics, practitioners and policy makers from donors and from partner countries discussed their experiences and presented frameworks for integrating gender into sector wide approaches. In addition to papers describing the case studies, a lengthier reference guide was prepared by the Netherlands in 2000.<sup>1</sup>

The present guide offers, in distilled form, advice on how to ensure that a sector wide approach:

- contributes to overall sustainability and effectiveness; and
- is fully responsive to the needs and interests of both women and men and helps to promote gender equality.

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1. "Gender Equality in Sector Wide Approaches (SWAPs)", Working Party on Gender Equality, Development Assistance Committee, Development Co-operation Directorate, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 21 December 2000, document DCD/DAC/GEN(2000)6. See [www.minbuza.nl](http://www.minbuza.nl)

Additional information can be found in the background papers presenting the case studies and summarising the Hague workshop.<sup>2</sup>

## **What is a Sector Wide Approach?**

Sector wide approaches to development co-operation involve donor support to the development of an entire sector in a given country. The sector wide approach is contrasted with a project-based approach in which individual donors each support a particular set of activities within the sector (for example, building schools or roads). Budget support, programme aid, sector investment programme are other terms that can be used to mean a sector wide approach.

Ideally, sector wide approaches are developed by the government in consultation with all stakeholders and investors, including donor agencies. Under the leadership of the government, these parties work together to define:

- An overall sector policy framework.
- Priorities and objectives (i.e., strategy), and performance measures.
- Expenditure programmes.
- Institutional reform and capacity building needed for implementation.
- Jointly agreed management, reporting and accounting arrangements.

Major donors would then jointly support the sector programme, preferably using common procedures. Another characteristic is that technical assistance is commissioned directly by governments rather than donor agencies. There can be partial sector wide approaches (e.g., at a sub-sector level such as basic but not higher or specialised education) and SWAP-like programmes that have some but not all of the characteristics of a full sector wide approach. Many of the same principles for integrating gender equality actions apply regardless of whether the sector wide approach meets all of the defining characteristics or only some of them.

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2. “Mainstreaming Gender Equality Through Sector Wide Approaches in Education: Synthesis Report”, January, 2001, DCD/DAC/GEN(2000)7; “Mainstreaming Gender Through Sector Wide Approaches (SWAPs): An Overview of Issues in the Health Sector”, January, 2001, DCD/DAC/GEN(2000)11; “Gender in Agricultural Sector Wide Approaches”, December, 2000, DCD/DAC/GEN(2000)3/REV1; “Consultation Workshop [on] Gender Equality in Sector Wide Approaches”, 22-23 February 2001, The Hague, The Netherlands. Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs & DAC Working Party on Gender Equality, March 2001. See [www.oecd.org/dac/gender](http://www.oecd.org/dac/gender).

## Why Integrate Gender Equality Actions into Sector Wide Approaches?

Equality between men and women was officially recognised as a global goal by the world community in the Charter of the United Nations in 1945, and was later confirmed in several treaties, conventions and agreements, most notably the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Beijing *Platform for Action*, which was endorsed by UN Member States at the Fourth World Conference on Women: Equality, Development and Peace, held in 1995. This *Platform* recognises gender equality as both a human right and a core development issue. The accumulated empirical evidence demonstrates the centrality of gender equality for equitable and sustainable development and poverty reduction.<sup>3</sup> States that fail to promote equality between men and women tend to experience slower economic growth and more persistent poverty in their populations than those that promote equality.

Because sector wide approaches involve shaping an entire sector with the objective of enhancing long-term development, attention to gender equality is critical if the SWAP is to be successful in meeting the goal of equitable and sustainable development. The remainder of this reference guide is devoted to identifying key challenges and entry points for integrating gender equality actions into sector programmes.

## Mainstreaming Gender Equality Actions into Sector Wide Approaches: Key Entry Points

The donor community has adopted a gender mainstreaming approach to development co-operation in which underlying differences in women's and men's resources, power, constraints, needs and interests are explicitly recognised and acted on in all situations, so as to reduce gender inequality. This approach is consistent with sector wide approaches, in which a range of policy and programmatic priorities are considered within the sector.

Despite this endorsement of a comprehensive approach to gender relations, the case studies on which this reference guide is based found that, in most instances, existing sector wide approaches in the education, health and agriculture sectors focused on nar-

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3. World Bank, 2001, *Engendering Development—Through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources, and Voice*, and OECD, 2001, *DAC Guidelines on Poverty Reduction*.

rowly defined investments in women or girls rather than addressing the underlying conditions that produce unequal access for males and females.<sup>4</sup> Most programs restricted their objectives to increasing the number of women involved. The reasons behind women's limited access to goods and services, and their inability to take advantage of them in the same way men do, were often overlooked.

One challenge in establishing sector wide approaches is therefore learning to take a more comprehensive approach to the socio-economic conditions that perpetuate inequality and low productivity, and translating this understanding into effective sector wide policies, budgets and monitoring. The remainder of this section identifies key entry points for doing so.

## Conducting a Comprehensive Analysis of Gender Conditions

An important precondition for developing gender-responsive policy frameworks, strategies and monitoring in a SWAP is understanding gender differences and inequalities in resources, access, needs and potential contributions, particularly as they impinge on the sector. One important initial step in effective sector wide approaches is therefore conducting (or reviewing an existing) *comprehensive analysis* of gender conditions as they impinge on the situation of males and females in the sector. Ideally, these analyses should cover the economy and society as a whole (macro level), the sector and its key institutions (meso level), and households and their individual members (micro level). At all three levels, the goal of the analysis is to understand how societal, sectoral and household-level conditions shape the relative opportunities and resources of males and females vis-à-vis the sector.

Examples of macro, meso and micro-level questions relevant to a comprehensive gender analysis include:<sup>5</sup>

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4. For example, most of the education SWAPs studied focused on increasing female enrolments in basic schooling while ignoring the wider conditions that contribute to low female attendance in the first place. Most of the health SWAPs focused on women's reproductive health needs, ignoring other health needs of women and the broader conditions that produce different health needs and health care access among males and females. The agriculture SWAPs frequently recognized that women are important for agricultural production and food security, but rarely addressed the underlying conditions that reduce women's productivity, such as unequal access to land, capital and other inputs to farming.

5. Resources for gender analysis include: World Bank, *Poverty Reduction Strategy Sourcebook*, chapter on gender, available online at: <http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/strategies/chapters/gender/gender.htm> .

- At the macro level, study of the society’s legal and regulatory framework in order to understand how it affects women’s vs. men’s citizenship rights, access to land, credit and other material resources, access to contracts and other protections of the legal system, freedom of movement, etc.
- Also at the macro level, study of the government’s budget from the point of view of how it impacts males and females (gender budget analysis).
- At the meso level, patterns of paid and unpaid employment among women and men, and how they affect their respective access to services in the sector (considering both monetary and time use implications of employment).
- Also at the meso level, how the structure of sectoral services (e.g., location of clinics, schools or extension sites; types and levels of user fees; gender composition of service deliverers and decision-makers) affects male vs. female access to and use of services.
- At the micro level, the nature of the typical household division of labour between males and females and its implications for access to resources and hence, to services among male and female household members:
  - Time availability—relevant for travel to service points and engaging in service-related activities such as homework among school children.
  - Money—important for transportation costs, user fees, and purchasing needed equipment such as school uniforms or seeds.
  - Help from other family members—relevant for reducing both time and money constraints.

Gender analysis can be enhanced through participatory studies in which women and men in local communities are asked to identify their goals, needs, constraints and access to resources.

In addition to (or in place of) a comprehensive gender analysis pertinent to the sector is the need to ensure that any analytical work in the sector examines the gender dimension explicitly. This may require changes in the way data are collected so as to permit

## **Gender Analysis in the Agriculture Sector Investment Programme – Kenya**

In the Agriculture Sector Investment Programme in Kenya an interesting process of gender analysis took place between 1996 and 1998. A team of the Kenyan Ministry of Agriculture, with support from an external consultant, undertook a study of gender relations in agriculture in three different regions. It brought to light constraints and challenges with regard to equitable agricultural development and found that gender imbalances were rooted in values, norms, myths, taboos and traditions, and widely accepted by both men and women. The imbalances resulted in distorted decision making, unequal access to and control over resources (land, capital, agricultural inputs, income), and a major work burden on women. Many men have migrated out of smallholder farms and this has led to the paradoxical situation where ownership and decision making are in men's hands, while the cultivation and management are done by women. Resulting practical problems include:

- Delayed and inappropriate decisions that negatively affect the productivity or health of animals or crops.
- Lack of resources in the hands of women to buy inputs such as fertilisers, and quality seeds, which keeps general productivity levels low.
- Limited direct financial benefits for women, which is a disincentive to invest their labour in cash farming activities traditionally controlled by men – and which hampers optimal productivity.
- A heavy workload on women, which affects their health and nutrition and that of their children, and which is accompanied by increasing unemployment among men.

In addition, the team conducted an institutional analysis, addressing the main functions of the institutions involved (mission, structure and human resources), and their culture and decision making processes. Noting that organisations are gender-biased in the same way as society, with men and

sex-disaggregated and gender analysis. The case studies found that the sectoral analysis generally used in sector wide approaches was insensitive to gender issues.

### **Ensuring that Stakeholder Consultations are Gender Inclusive—and Influence Sectoral Policy and Strategy**

Although the stakeholder consultations used in the sector wide approaches studied for this guide varied, they tended to share a narrow approach to gender equality issues. This highlights the difficulties of ensuring that stakeholder consultations are comprehensive, gender inclusive and conducted so as to bring to the fore the underlying conditions that result in inequality between male and female access to services and resources. An important challenge for sector wide approaches is therefore conducting stakeholder consultations in a way that gives women and men adequate representation and voice in the proceedings.



male interests being dominant, the study demonstrates that a change of structures and cultures of institutions is essential to address gender issues in a credible and consistent manner. The team submitted a proposal for a Gender Equity Mobilisation Support (GEMS) programme at national, district and community level. This was accepted by the Ministry of Agriculture.

The spin-off effects from the use of gender analysis were:

- Agreement with the Ministry that changes in gender relations are imperative to attaining any one of the Sector's objectives. Improving women's rights to land, control over farm resources, access to credit, extension and general marketing information, involvement in technology development and a more equal division of labour; all help to attain the first three objectives.
- Agreement on the need for a separate objective for gender equality in the sector programme. This offers the direct opportunity for a separate budget line, ensuring the availability of funds for activities to improve women's economic security.
- The four major objectives of the sector programme became: i) enhancing agricultural growth; ii) improving environmental sustainability of agriculture; iii) improving household nutritional status; iv) improving the economic status of women.
- Structures responsible for the implementation of activities to promote gender equality were established at three levels: national, district and community.
- Capacity on gender equality matters was improved among the people directly involved in the sector programming and implementation.

Decentralisation of capacity was promoted by involving districts and communities, and a process of stakeholder consultation was initiated, including awareness raising on issues of gender relations in agriculture.

Experience in a variety of contexts (including stakeholder consultations in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers or PRSPs and in sector wide approaches) suggests that representation of women's interests often needs to be organised with care if women's voices are to be effective during the consultation. This is particularly true in sectors that are viewed as "male" and in societies in which women's voices in public decision-making typically are muted. Under these conditions, a *critical mass* of women's representatives may be important to enable them to speak freely. Pre-consultation *planning* can also help women's representatives identify and prioritise the policies or actions they see as most important. As with gender analysis, there are resources on conducting participatory consultations available.<sup>6</sup>

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6. These include: World Bank, *Poverty Reduction Strategy Sourcebook*, chapter on participation, available on the web at: <http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/strategies/chapters/particip/orgpart.htm> .

## Creating Organisational Structures and Capacity to Ensure Gender Mainstreaming in the SWAP Over Time

Many organisations with policies to mainstream gender equality issues in their work face a dilemma that the sector wide approaches studied for this guide also experienced. Without active and effective “champions” for gender mainstreaming, gender equality issues tend to disappear from the agenda because those staff with other foci (and who lack strong gender equality training) tend to lose sight of gender issues as they work. On the other hand, creating gender “specialists” to champion this issue often gives other agency staff the impression that they no longer need to worry about gender issues because there is a specialist on board who will take care of them. Particularly when the gender specialists are organisationally isolated, gender issues again tend to disappear from the agenda. Finding an organisational structure that will promote gender mainstreaming in sector wide approaches is therefore a major challenge for sector ministries and for donor agencies.

Several models have been used to try to ensure that organisations do not lose sight of gender equality issues as they develop a sector. When strong accountability exists in an organisation, making a particular set of positions within the line management structure (e.g., department heads) responsible for ensuring that gender mainstreaming occurs may be the most effective strategy. In other cases, maintaining a cadre of gender coordinators or specialists who are positioned throughout the organisation and are thus able to work with their colleagues in the various departments may be a more effective approach. Both approaches are difficult to implement, which may explain why none of the case studies provided examples of fully mainstreamed gender equality mechanisms in sector wide approaches decision-making and processes.

Important for the success of gender mainstreaming may be improving the gender balance within sectoral institutions, both in the policy-making/management structures and the implementation structures (schools, health service providers, agricultural extension agencies, etc). All of the case studies found skewed male-female ratios, with stereotyped functions and few women in decision-making positions, in both types of structures. While one would hesitate to imply that men can not be gender-sensitive or that all women are, reorganisation of the ministry and of service delivery structures, with affirmative action to recruit females to male-dominated positions, may be necessary if there is to be any chance of consistent attention to gender issues in sector wide approaches.

## **Ghana: Gender perspectives in health institutions**

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Discussions about gender perspectives in the health sector in Ghana brought to light power structures within the institutions, which constrain women's participation in the sector and their decision making authority. In the health sector, men dominate the medical officer and assistant positions, while the majority of nursing staff are women. The first group takes up most senior positions, as well as international training opportunities. To redress this situation, the decision was taken to do away with the requirement of a medical degree for all positions, except for the medical director of hospitals. This will enable more women, who are less likely to have medical degrees, to be promoted to more senior level positions. Another change was made with regard to training opportunities. Until recently, admission requirements for training in public health and community nursing included the successful completion of a midwifery training, which was restricted to women. This requirement has now been dropped, enabling men to enter into these traditionally female fields.

Capacity building for individuals will also be necessary if the competencies needed to do gender analysis, conduct gender-inclusive stakeholder consultations, create gender-responsive policies and budgets, provide gender-responsive services, and do gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation are to exist.

### **Integrating Gender into National Policies and Budgets**

In many of the case studies, the gender equality policy for the sector was developed in relative isolation, without links to other policies in the sector, to the national policy for gender equality, nor to the country's poverty reduction strategy (in those countries with PRSPs). Ensuring the integration of gender policy into the policies developed under the SWAP is a major challenge.

Links of the sector policy to financial frameworks—such as national budgets and medium-term expenditure frameworks—also need to be established if the gender-responsive policies created under the SWAP are to be implemented. Gender analysis of budgets carried out as part of the analytical work in the SWAP is important.

### **Creating Gender-Sensitive Monitoring and Evaluation**

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of the sector wide approaches studied for this guide are, on the whole, still weak. A variety of instruments are in use, often poorly linked to

## **Uganda: Universal Primary Education**

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An example of an integrated approach to gender equality as part of an explicit national policy can be found in the education sector of Uganda. In 1996, the Ugandan government announced the Universal Primary Education (UPE) initiative: free education for up to four children per family, two of which are to be girls, plus all orphans. As a result of this policy, enrolment figures went up dramatically. To enable the implementation of the policy the Uganda Education Strategic Investment Programme (ESIP) 1998-2003 was developed rapidly, supported by a group of donors. Thanks to the UPE policy and its provision to ensure equal access by girls and boys, the education sector programme had a gender equality component from the very beginning. The positive policy environment for gender issues is further strengthened by the support for gender equality matters by the country's leadership and by the Ministry of Finance.

each other, and many are inadequate for understanding gender impacts. Especially among donors, the link to the Millennium Development Goals in existing M&E also tends to be weak. Creating gender-sensitive M&E is technically not a particular challenge—good models can be found for projects and adapted to sector wide approaches, for example. The organisational challenges referred to earlier, however, tend to result in weak M&E of the gender dimension of sector wide approaches, a challenge that needs to be dealt with explicitly in the development of M&E systems, both by government and donors.

### **Donor Co-ordination for Gender Mainstreaming**

The case studies identified the following major issues for donor co-ordination in support of gender equality and with a focus on building national ownership and leadership:

- Improve dialogue on gender concepts and approaches in order to ensure consistency.
- Include in these dialogues donor agencies that cannot provide budget support.
- Better co-ordinate policy dialogue among donors on gender issues in the sector.
- Improve co-ordination of instruments for gender mainstreaming in analysis, policy formulation, and monitoring & evaluation (M&E).

- Build internal capacity to better address gender issues in sector wide approaches.
- Provide training programmes for gender and sector specialists.
- Co-ordinate support among donors for institution building, capacity building, and programme implementation.

In some cases, lack of communication among donors explains the use of differing definitions of gender concepts and approaches and a lack of harmonisation in dialogue, instruments and monitoring & evaluation. In other cases, these problems may result from the distinct goals that different donor organisations have adopted, particularly the multilateral development banks as opposed to the bilateral donors (whose policies and goals do not always harmonise completely, either). Open communication and good will to harmonise among donors should, however, help to ensure that there is a consistent, government-owned approach to mainstreaming gender equality in sector wide approaches.





