

A central element of good governance is the responsiveness of policies and public institutions to the needs of all citizens. Policies and institutions must represent the interests of women and men and promote equal access to resources, rights, and voice.

# Governance & Gender Equality

## GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT BRIEFING NOTES



GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT GROUP, THE WORLD BANK, APRIL 2006

*Gender equality is essential for participatory development.*

### Reducing Poverty through Good Governance

The current approach to reducing poverty and promoting economic growth stresses the need for communities to be able to influence the public institutions that affect their well-being. Good governance is central to this approach: public institutions must be efficient, transparent, and accountable; and the processes of governance must be inclusive and participatory so that all citizens have opportunities to demand accountability from their governments.

### Why Gender Issues are Relevant to Good Governance

Gender equality is an important goal in itself and a means for achieving development. Development policies and institutions must ensure that all segments of society - both women and men - have a voice in decision making, either directly, or through institutions that legitimately represent their interests and needs. Yet, persistent and pervasive gender disparities in opportunities, rights vis-à-vis the state and public institutions, and voice, particularly limit women's ability to participate as full citizens in social, economic, and political life. The exclusion of women from full participation constrains the ability of public sector policies and institutions to manage economic and social resources effectively. Such gender-based exclusion compromises the prospects for high-quality service delivery.

### Key Issues to Consider

There are several key aspects of public sector good governance, but a few of them in particular have specific gender-relevant considerations worth examining:

- **Citizenship:** To what extent do policies and practices support women and men to realize their duties, rights, and access to services as citizens?
- **Legislation and enforcement:** How do legal and judicial systems improve the socio-economic and legal status of women and men? How effectively do the legal and justice sectors address women's and men's status and protection under the law?

- **Public expenditures:** To what extent do public expenditures reflect governments' explicit gender equality goals and target the delivery of high-quality services to all citizens?
- **Structures and processes of governance:** How can women's participation in political decision-making processes be realized? Do the structures and processes for representation at central and decentralized levels focus on including interest groups which have previously been excluded? Do they include women in critical numbers in key institutions, e.g., parliaments and local governments?
- **Delivery of services:** What priority is given to participatory and transparent decision making? What policies can enhance institutional accountability and responsiveness to women's specific needs for services in key sectors?

### How Gender Issues are Integrated in the Bank's Governance Work

Since 1997, the Bank has invested over \$5 billion annually to help its client countries in a variety of good governance initiatives. These include activities to: reform policies, laws, and institutions; strengthen institutional capacity to enhance service delivery; bring services closer to people through community-driven development initiatives; and make institutions more efficient and accountable through public sector reforms.

### Gender Issues in Public Expenditures

Studies of gender-disaggregated beneficiary assessments analyze the extent to which government policies and programs are aligned with people's priorities and needs. The main tool is a **Benefits Incidence Analysis (BIA)**. A BIA in Cote d'Ivoire found that the current input mix did not match the needs of poor girls, who are less likely than their richer counterparts to go to school. This finding implies that poverty-focused education strategies should specially target girls' education, and budgets should reflect these strategies. A BIA is underway in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

### Promoting Gender-Sensitive Legal and Judicial Reforms in All Regions

The Bank has funded a series of legal and judicial reform loans and grants to increase the capacity of governmental and non-governmental institutions involved in providing legal aid and services to poor communities, including poor women. The primary objectives have been to support and strengthen local initiatives that increase poor women's access to rights, justice, legal literacy, and legal recourse. For example, the **Sri Lanka Legal Aid Services to Poor Women** grant supports local women lawyers' associations to provide legal aid services, literacy programs on laws affecting women, and training for legal and justice sector personnel on women's rights under national and international laws. Similar projects have been completed or are underway in all regions.

### Claiming Citizenship Rights through Birth Certificates and Identity Cards in Egypt

The World Bank's Development Marketplace supported the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights to assist about 60,000 poor Egyptian women and girls to obtain their identity cards. With this documentation, these women have been able to claim all the rights that citizenship entails, such as rights to: services (e.g., health, education, poverty assistance); legal recourse; and resources, such as credit. It has also enabled them to have voice in the decisions that affect their lives, such as voting in elections. Another important result is that with proper documentation of age, birth certificates have allowed enforcement of the legal age of marriage, thereby reducing child marriages and enabling girls to avoid early marriage.

### What Else Needs to be Done?

Despite these initiatives, more needs to be done if the Bank is to mainstream gender issues in good governance initiatives in a more systematic way. Further, there is a need for analytical work on the link between gender and good governance. Three areas require special attention:

1. **Ensuring gender sensitivity in public expenditures.** Public financial management policies, e.g., public expenditure reviews (PERs), can be effective instruments to monitor the use of public funds and link them to performance outcomes, including gender-specific ones. However, more quantitative and qualitative studies of sex-disaggregated benefit incidence are needed. Such tools can assess the gender impacts of public spending and link findings to specific policy actions.
2. **Promoting gender equality in citizenship rights.** Citizenship, constitutional, and other rights determine the ways in which women and men participate as citizens and access and utilize the potential resources and services necessary for the well-being of families and societies. Significant untapped potential exists to study how gender inequalities in citizenship affect access to rights and resources, and countries' growth and poverty reduction prospects.
3. **Creating an enabling governance environment to strengthen women's voices.** The Bank's governance agenda is increasingly emphasizing effective and transparent political processes to ensure effective participation, representative systems of government and the effective delivery of services, especially at the local level. This creates a need to better understand the link between gender issues and the politics of reform. Special attention needs to be placed on reviewing policy options to enhance the ability of national, sub-regional, district and municipal level policy and administrative bodies to effectively represent and give voice to women's and men's different priorities.

### Additional Resources

- Ban, Radu and Vijayendra Rao, 2006, Tokenism or Agency? The Impact of Women's Reservations on Panchayats in South India  
[http://www.cultureandpublicaction.org/bijupdf/reservations\\_0310.pdf](http://www.cultureandpublicaction.org/bijupdf/reservations_0310.pdf)
- U.N. Millennium Project Task Force Report on MDG 3, 2005  
[http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/reports/3\\_gender.htm](http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/reports/3_gender.htm)
- Initiatives in Legal and Judicial Reform, Legal Vice Presidency, World Bank, 2004  
[http://www4.worldbank.org/legal/publications/LJRInitiatives\\_2004.pdf](http://www4.worldbank.org/legal/publications/LJRInitiatives_2004.pdf)
- *Essays on Gender & Governance*. Human Development Resource Center, UNDP India, 2003  
<http://www.undp.org.in/hdrc/pub/books/GnG.htm>
- Integrated Fiduciary Assessment and Public Expenditure Review (IFAPER): Gender Issues in Planning and Budgeting of Cambodia, World Bank, 2003  
[http://intresources.worldbank.org/INTGENDER/Resources/pe\\_razzaz.pdf](http://intresources.worldbank.org/INTGENDER/Resources/pe_razzaz.pdf)
- Chattopadhyay, Raghavendra and Duflo, Ester, 2001, Women as Policy Makers: Evidence from an India-Wide Randomized Policy Experiment  
<http://ideas.repec.org/p/nbr/nberwo/8615.html>
- Ahern P. et al., 2000, *Promoting gender equity in the democratic process: Women's paths to political participation and decision-making*, ICRW and Center for Development and Populations Studies
- *Women's Political Participation and Good Governance: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Challenges*, UNDP, 2000  
[http://magnet.undp.org/new/pdf/gender/wpp/women\\_book.pdf](http://magnet.undp.org/new/pdf/gender/wpp/women_book.pdf)
- Demery, Lionel, *Gender and Public Spending: Insights from Benefit Incidence*, World Bank, 1996  
[http://intresources.worldbank.org/INTGENDER/Resources/pe\\_demery.pdf](http://intresources.worldbank.org/INTGENDER/Resources/pe_demery.pdf)
- Gender, decentralization, and public finance – World Bank Institute Programs  
<http://www.worldbank.org/wbi/publicfinance/decentralization/gender.htm>
- UNDP's Gender and Governance website:  
<http://www.undp.org/governance/gender.htm>