

NPRS-PRF

Helping Accelerate Poverty Reduction in Asia and the Pacific

SUPPORT FOR IMPLEMENTING GENDER REFORM ACTION PLANS IN PAKISTAN

A technical assistance was initiated in Pakistan with the overall goal “to strengthen implementation and integration of gender policy commitments in poverty reduction and governance reform programs.”

The quality of life for women and girls in Pakistan has improved in recent decades.¹ School enrollment, immunization, and infant mortality rates have improved for girls and boys. Women’s participation in paid labor has increased, particularly in agriculture, and their involvement in the political process has risen—thanks to a federal mandate in 2000 to reserve seats for women in local government.

However, large gender inequalities persist in education, health, employment, and in the political sphere. Although more girls are in school, a substantial gender gap in enrollment remains and worsens significantly as girls transition from primary to middle school. Women’s use of reproductive health services is low, and maternal mortality ratios remain high. In the labor market, lower educational attainment—coupled with social norms that restrict mobility—confine women to a limited range of employment opportunities and low wages. While reforms are improving women’s political representation at a local level, women still lack access to the means for political participation (e.g., political skills, financial resources, education, training, and information) because of cultural barriers, male domination of political parties, and the bureaucracy. Women are mostly excluded from political and administrative governance structures. They are seldom appointed to decision-making positions and their representation in political parties is low.

Women’s poverty is exacerbated by legal, judicial, and political systems that fail to protect them. Violence is an everyday experience for many women, both within and outside the home. The legal provisions themselves did not fail, but federal, provincial, and local agencies did in implementing them.

Achieving the Millennium Development Goals will require significant reductions in these gender gaps.

Gender and Governance

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has two major programs on gender and governance reform in Pakistan: the Decentralization Support Program (DSP) and Access to Justice Program (AJP). DSP

seeks to impact on poverty reduction by creating an enabling environment for improved public access to equitably delivered and sustainable services. AJP aims to contribute to poverty reduction through improved rule of law and transparent, accountable, and legitimate governance. Although these programs provide a high-level framework for policy dialogue with the Government on gender and governance issues, this has been sporadic as both programs have awaited a firm commitment from the Government to an overarching package of legislative, political, administrative, and fiscal reforms.

With support from ADB,² the Ministry of Women’s Development and provincial Women’s Development Departments—through a consultative process—led the preparation of one national and four provincial Gender Reform Action Plans (GRAPs). These were aimed to fulfill the Government’s commitment to gender and governance issues. The GRAP process included identifying gender issues through situational analysis, followed by a process of learning and synthesis of ideas at workshops, meetings, and presentations. An important stage of the process was preparing pre-GRAP plans that focused on four areas of gender reforms:

- i. institutional structures,
- ii. women’s political participation,
- iii. women’s public sector employment, and
- iv. policy and budgetary reforms.

GRAPs focused both on key reforms needed to enhance the participation of women in the governance sphere, as well as support for implementing these reforms. Through effective policy dialogue, the reforms contributed to bringing gender issues into mainstream development discourse, including a wider acknowledgement of the importance of addressing gender inequality in Pakistan.

Technical Assistance (TA) 4602: Ensuring Implementation of Gender Reforms

ADB’s experience in supporting the development of GRAPs gave momentum to identifying a specific instrument within the much

larger decentralization process to leverage support for their approval and implementation. Creating a separate technical assistance loan and mechanisms for supporting technical advisors and grants for pilot activities parallels the approach envisaged by a GRAP. Specific gender targets are identified by GRAPs (with strong ownership from the Government), budgets are made available through DSP loans and grants, and political support is fostered through links with other DSP activities as well as through those specifically allocated.

TA Implementation and Outputs

The overall goal of the TA is “to strengthen implementation and integration of gender policy commitments in poverty reduction and governance reform programs.” Its purpose is to ensure that GRAPs are integrated into the AJP and DSP.³

The TA has two outputs with four components:

Output 1: GRAPs are integrated into devolution, judicial, and provincial public resource management reform programs.

- Component 1: Providing support to DSP and AJP through the provision of “gender governance” specialists at federal and provincial levels. Their key task is to support staff of these programs in implementing GRAPs in a number of key areas.
- Component 2: Providing a Gender and Governance Resource Pool (GGRP) to provide funding to government and civil society organizations for GRAP-related activities. GGRP guidelines neither contain reference to poverty nor to poverty reduction activities.

Output 2: Effective policy dialogue on gender reforms informed by analysis of governance program’s performance monitoring and results.

- Component 3: Monitoring and evaluation, including the need to “progressively evaluate and inform policy makers of the impact of reforms on access, equity, and sustainability of services.”
- Component 4: Providing strategic information for policy makers drawn from research and lessons learned from the implementation of GRAPs.

Project Results

GGRP was operationalized in December 2006. By July 2007, proposals had been received and assessed, and the following projects were selected for implementation:

- i. Institutional Support to National Commission on Status of Women (NCSW);
- ii. Strengthening of Gender Studies Department, Peshawar University;
- iii. Gender Strategy for the City District Government of Faisalabad – Empowerment and Employment;
- iv. Punjab Female Internship Program;
- v. Gender Mainstreaming through the Media; and
- vi. Women’s Political and Parliamentarian Development.

In addition, a second round of GGRP was underway and some technical assistance had been provided through AJP for initiatives, including a public awareness campaign on gender policy actions, gender sensitization and rights-awareness

training for court personnel and shelter and crisis center staff, and a human rights law book for children. Reviews of AJP and DSP from a gender perspective were also underway.

Lessons Learned

The TA will not be completed until May 2008. However, important lessons can be drawn from the experience in TA 4602 with regard to the:

- importance of concerted, long-term support in promoting efforts at gender mainstreaming.
- importance of ensuring that previous gender policy commitments in GRAP are implemented, drawing support from specialist advisers; and
- goal of the TA was to strengthen gender policy commitments in both poverty reduction and governance reform programs, but its emphasis was more on governance reform programs (AJP and DSP) and less on poverty reduction (NPRS). Performance targets and indicators were mostly quantitative and financial, thus missing the opportunity for more qualitative monitoring of the poverty impacts of implementation of gender policy commitments through the TA.

Endnotes

- ¹ World Bank. 2005. *Pakistan Country Gender Assessment*.
- ² Technical Assistance (TA) 3832-PAK: Gender Reform Program.
- ³ The cost of the TA was \$5.6 million, of which \$800,000 was provided by the Poverty Reduction Cooperation Fund (contributed by the United Kingdom Department for International Development Fund and administered by ADB), and another \$3,665,000 by the Canadian International Development Agency. The TA will be implemented from May 2005–May 2008.

This case study was written by Social Development Direct (RETA Consultant) under Regional TA 6270: Facilitating Knowledge Management for Pro-Poor Policies and Projects with inputs from Altaf Afridi, Project Officer of TA 4602, and Sonomi Tanaka, Senior Social Development Specialist, ADB. The views and assessments contained herein do not necessarily reflect the views of ADB or its Board of Directors or the governments they represent. ADB does not guarantee the accuracy of the data and accepts no responsibility for any consequences of their use.

For any queries, contact:

NPRS-PRF Secretariat
nprs-prf@adb.org

