
Chapter 9: Approaches to Mainstreaming Governance and Gender in Local Government at ADB

The question of what can be abstracted from the project and applied more broadly in ADB activities is a challenging one. The project emphasizes two of the three pillars of the poverty reduction strategy, good governance and inclusive social development, and also focuses on capacity building which has recently become a new cross-cutting theme. In the project, various initiatives to reduce poverty were undertaken. Creating an interface among local stakeholders including the poor, women representatives, and government officials directly addresses one of the primary concepts of the poverty reduction framework. Moreover, through the social mobilization of women members in the forums, various government employment and training opportunities and social sector programs were made available to the poorest women, men, and youth thereby reducing their economic vulnerability. Because of the training and support they received from the project through participating NGOs, the women members gained confidence in their abilities and became more active in their roles in local bodies and in the local affairs of their communities. These outcomes address the need of poverty initiatives to empower the poor whether as elected members or as constituents, and to expand their opportunities and increase their inclusion in the social life of their communities.

The outcomes of the project suggest that focusing on improving the transparency and accountability of local government and on the more efficient management of government resources can be achieved by creating an ongoing interface through local forums that regularly bring stakeholders together. What makes this project unusual is the effort to make women representatives more effective in their roles in local government bodies and to involve them in mobilizing and negotiating resources for the poor from government officials. The fact that a majority of the women members were themselves poor means that the training and support they received through the project expanded their own social capital in addition to ensuring access to resources for their poor constituents.

Steps for Mainstreaming Gender and Governance in Local Government in ADB Operations

A unique outcome of the project was the support it won from its major stakeholders. At the workshop in Manila, all the participants recommended that ADB extend the project, and in Bangladesh, the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development asked the Economic Relations Division of the Ministry of Finance to request that ADB extend the project beyond its time line. The project was accordingly extended through December 2004. BRAC is now planning to use the forums, interface, and capacity building training of the project framework to train female representatives starting in 2005 as part of their ultra-poor program. In Nepal, women's forums are integrated into Didibahini's program in the Parsa and Mahotari districts, and the operational manual developed for the VDCs has been endorsed by the Ministry of Local Development. The forums will be formally registered as CBOs and will be included in VDC planning. A gender and governance committee will be formed in each VDC to address those issues. District development committees are committed to facilitating the access of women's forums to relevant line agencies and to establishing district information resource centers for them. In Pakistan, the National Reconstruction Bureau has approved the training manual, and the Rural Support Program Network plans to share it with other NGOs to train female representatives in all provinces of the country. Furthermore, the Network has worked with the Government on the Local

Government Ordinance since its inception in 2000 and so has the capacity to follow up on the formation of CCBs and women's work in local government bodies. The partner NGO Sarhad Rural Support Program is presently working with the Devolution Trust for Community Empowerment to form CCBs in Mansehra and Abotabad districts in NWFP. Women councilors will be engaged in organizing and assisting women in their communities to form CCBs in their respective union councils. This level of stakeholder support clearly indicates the success of the project's framework and approach and suggests they could be mainstreamed into ADB poverty reduction programs.

Country Poverty Analysis and Poverty Reduction Partnership Agreement

The country poverty analysis creates mutually agreed goals in a poverty reduction partnership agreement between ADB and a developing member country. The analysis is used to guide country strategy and program preparations. This process creates the opportunity to promote gender equity and good governance at the grassroots level.

While the countries in the South Asian region vary in their forms of local government, there are governance and gender issues common to all of them. For example, there is generally a lack of understanding about the systems of government and how they operate. Without such knowledge it is difficult to implement effective governance reform measures or to proceed in ways that will insure success. Moreover, the lack of participation in local governance indicates that one means of insuring accountability of government line officers and locally elected councilors is often missing.

The country poverty analysis should include governance at the grassroots level. This would include how the informal systems of government work; what the local political economy is and how it operates; and the degree to which citizens can exercise their rights, have access to information and government programs, and influence governance processes.

Country Strategy and Program

The importance of governance as one of the main pillars in poverty reduction means it has a central focus in country strategy programs in South Asia. Among the elements of ADB's operational strategy for supporting good governance is the recognition of the importance of institutional development and capacity building aimed at improving service delivery to consumers of government services, particularly the poor. However, the focus of most country strategies is on institutional and capacity development on the macro and meso levels rather than at the grassroots level. More could be done to focus on local governance issues and to plan for the mobilization of citizens and capacity building of local bodies, particularly of elected women representatives and line agency officials. This is one way to establish an environment in which local governance can be more effective. Without transparent, accountable, and efficient local governance, poverty reduction strategies are unlikely to reach their targeted populations.

The inclusion of trained women as elected representatives increases the likelihood that the interests of the poor will be represented and lessens the likelihood of the misdirection of resources. Also essential to improve service delivery is the creation of an interface among local bodies, poor constituents, and line agencies that includes the main stakeholders to increase transparency, accountability, and efficiency in the management of development resources. A third element in developing both institutional and individual capacity at the local level is the inclusion of local NGOs in training and social mobilization of the poor. Part of their inclusion could involve strengthening their own institutional capacities.

The analyses of the local governance ordinances found both strengths and weaknesses. While the ordinances brought women into public office, there remain problems with their structures and implementation. In country programming, emphasis should be given to projects that focus on reforming and effectively implementing these ordinances.

Sector Loans

Projects focused on agriculture, social sectors, and devolution offer great potential to build a framework for improving local governance and gender equity. Feasibility studies, the design of project components, monitoring and evaluation, and results-based outcomes need to be considered in local governance and gender projects.

Step 1: Feasibility Studies

The poverty and social analysis section of feasibility studies should include a local stakeholder analysis with a focus on the following:

- identification of key stakeholders delineating who are most influential and the role and inclusion of women and the poor;
- analysis of the intra-government relations;
- analysis of the context in which local governance operates;
- analysis of citizens' participation in local governance particularly knowledge about and access to government, NGO, and private-sector programs;
- exploration of the channels of communication among local community groups, their elected representatives, and government officials;
- analysis of the political economy that influences the operations of local governance;
- exploration of the roles of women representatives in local governance and the impediments to their effective participation;
- analysis of constraints to poor people's participation in local governance and in obtaining access to development and project resources.

Step 2: Designing Project Components

Project components should identify activities that will incorporate the findings from the poverty and social analysis sections of the feasibility studies. Suggested interventions include the following.

- Provide tailor-made capacity building for key local stakeholders. This includes training and social mobilization activities focused on addressing major issues for each stakeholder group. Key stakeholders include local communities, especially the poor and women, elected representatives of local bodies, and line agency officials.
- Insure that gender-based planning is included in capacity building for locally elected bodies and officials.
- Provide gender sensitivity training for key stakeholders. This training is important in order to enhance better working relations among male and female representatives and male government officials.

- Develop an interface among the key local stakeholders noted above, among NGOs, and among civil society organizations. This interface will provide a mechanism for developing accountability and transparency.
- Create separate forums for women and the poor so they can actively pursue their own interests.
- Select NGOs with institutional strengths to lead capacity building and social mobilization activities.
- Create a process to disseminate knowledge to local communities about government and NGO programs.
- Generate specific monitoring indicators to measure project outcomes on local governance and gender issues. Indicators should include both immediate and intermediate outcomes to enhance results and future action.
- Include indicators that will lead to data disaggregated by gender, governance, and poverty.
- Establish grassroots, participatory monitoring of project activities involving women's and poor people's access to project resources.

Step 3: Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are critical in ascertaining on a regular basis how the project is faring. Monitoring involves checking to insure that local resources are reaching targeted populations and that project activities are running smoothly. Evaluation involves the assessment of how project components have worked and what could be done to improve them. In incorporating gender and governance issues in monitoring and evaluation, the following activities should be pursued.

- Encourage regular reporting about project activities from implementing agencies.
- Assess the effectiveness of project activities. Monitoring should assess the extent to which project resources reach intended targets.
- Evaluate different aspects of project activities to ascertain outcomes related to:
 - (i) capacity building to improve planning, implementation and targeting of intended beneficiaries;
 - (ii) social mobilization to get access to information by women, poor people, and other segments of local communities;
 - (iii) creation of the interface to bring key stakeholders together to pursue project activities;
- Explore the extent to which capacity building has increased the social capital of women representatives, community women, and the poor. Examples are access to information, increased confidence of the poor in their local representatives, and access to local government officers.

Step 4: Results-Based Monitoring

In order to maximize project inputs and to plan future actions for long-term results, a results-based monitoring system should be included in the design of the project at its inception. While not all project outcomes need to be incorporated into activities related to results-based management, some of the most important outcomes need to be selected and then pursued at the next level of project assessment and planning. The move from immediate outcomes to intermediate results should be observed as the selected outcomes continue to be effective over time.