

CHAPTER 3

Development, Aid Effectiveness and Gender Equality

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The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are accepted as the international framework for development until 2015. While all eight of the MDGs have gender equality dimensions, it is clear that at least six of them cannot be achieved without integrating a gender perspective. Issues of gender equality, therefore, are central to the aid effectiveness agenda.

In March 2005, 35 donor countries, 26 multilateral agencies, 56 countries that receive aid and 14 civil society organisations (CSOs) signed up to the Paris Declaration for Aid Effectiveness. The Declaration focuses on improving the quality, management and effectiveness of aid and on increasing its impact on development. It defines principles and processes – country ownership, alignment, harmonisation, managing for results and mutual accountability – to ensure that aid benefits those for whom it is meant. Its targets and indicators are also related to these aspects. The Declaration makes only a passing reference to gender equality (para. 42), and this is mainly in the context of harmonisation. Nevertheless, it offers a real opportunity, through its implementation and monitoring and evaluation processes, to bring gender centre stage.

It is of particular importance at this stage, therefore, to assess the manner in which gender equality is being brought into the implementation of the Paris Declaration agenda. This is both from the perspective of a continuous assessment of the way in which gender equality is being addressed, and also in preparation for the Accra High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, ‘Assessing Progress and Deepening Implementation’, which will take place in September 2008. This forum will assess how the principles of the Paris Declaration have been operationalised, identify good practices and problem areas, and chart the way for the remaining years of the Declaration’s programme; in fact, it is a mid-term review of its implementation. It will also examine issues related to broadening participation, mutual accountability and the choice of aid instruments.

The focus of this chapter is twofold. First, it examines the extent to which gender equality has been promoted in the implementation of the aid agenda; second, it proposes actions that can be taken by various stakeholders to ensure that gender moves from the margins to the centre of this agenda.

The Story So Far

From the mid-1990s onwards several factors have combined to lead to greater awareness, both in countries and partner agencies, of the need to promote gender equality for development. These include events like the Fourth World Conference on Women, which agreed on the Beijing Platform for Action, widespread commitment to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the adoption of the MDGs as the international development framework.

The last ten years have also seen major changes in the way in which aid is disbursed. Project approaches found to be non-sustainable, donor driven and non-strategic have given way to other aid instruments. This section, based on existing reviews and evaluations, focuses on the manner in which the new aid modalities and country-led planning processes promote or impact on gender equality and related development outcomes.

Direct budget support

In theory, direct budget support offers an opportunity to enhance policy dialogue between donors, civil society and other actors, and the harmonisation aspects can increase institutional capacity for results-oriented planning and budgeting. In practice, reviews have indicated that equity issues are not automatically addressed. A joint evaluation of general budget support 1994–2004 undertaken through the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) network indicated that gender was ‘boxed in’ rather than mainstreamed (Gaynor, 2006). The first-hand experience of advisers for the UK Department for International Development (DFID) also emphasises that for direct budget support the principal interlocutors are usually the ministries of finance and planning, and that not only do the issues of social exclusion and gender take a back seat but also the organisations that represent these issues barely have a voice in determining priorities (Social Development Direct, 2006).

Sector-wide approaches (SWAps)

The experience of SWAps is better, but the positive experiences mainly relate to education, health and agriculture. Approaches like the Fast Track Initiative for girls’ education illustrate the nature of progress that is possible when donors come together to harmonise their work and align it with country programmes. In other sectors, such as water, transport and rural infrastructure, gender perspectives are rarely integrated.

Poverty reduction strategies

Analytical reviews of poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs) highlight the gender blindness of the first generation strategies. A study of 13 PRSPs completed in 2002 (Zuckerman and Garrett, 2003) indicated that while three were gender sensitive, eight dealt with gender primarily in a limited context – reproductive health and education – and two did not address gender issues at all. The joint staff assessments for funding were found to have only superficial gender analysis.

However, there are several examples where in second generation PRSPs special efforts have resulted in gender being taken into account. In Uganda, as a result of a process driven by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, a Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) gender action team has been established with membership from CSOs. In Pakistan, a special paper on gender was commissioned with a view to integrating its findings into the new poverty reduction strategy. However, it should be pointed out that the lapse between the original strategy and the introduction of gender has taken seven years.

Joint assistance strategies (JAS)

JAS make it easier for countries to coordinate donor interventions and align them with national priorities, and to mainstream gender equality. In Ghana, Kenya, United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia, government JAS are being or have been developed. While it is too early to assess their impact on implementation, resource allocation and prioritisation, it is clear that in these countries 'gender' is more visible than in the earlier aid modalities.

In Ghana, various mechanisms are in place such as the Aid Harmonisation and Effectiveness Action Plan and a partnership strategy in preparation the drawing up of a JAS for 2007-2010. A Gender Equality Standing Team has been formed to harmonise an approach to gender equality and women's rights. Although policies are in place, resource allocations to the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Children are insufficient for it to influence the process. The Ministry was not invited to take part in the JAS consultation processes and had to fight for observer status (UNIFEM, 2006).

In Kenya, a Harmonisation Alignment and Coordination Group has been formed to draft a JAS. UNIFEM is working on engendering the process through the recruitment of a gender adviser. In Zambia, a pilot country for the aid harmonisation and alignment agenda, donor partners have supported the Government in the development of the Fifth National Development Plan. Gender has been identified as a cross-cutting issue, but also recognised as a sector within the plan. The impact of this on implementation has yet to be seen.

Gender audits of donors

A recent review of the approach of DAC members to gender equality presented to the OECD Gender Network summarised the progress thus:

Almost all DAC members have gender equality policies and many members have strengthened these policies since 1999. But almost none of them have the staff, budgets and management practices needed to implement these policies. Lip service looms large, practice remains weak. (Mason, 2006)

The review concluded that while on the one hand the MDGs had helped to focus attention on gender equality, the move to country ownership and programme-based approaches had made the promotion of gender equality far more dependent on country

views. However, 'what partner countries emphasise often reflects the incentives that donors provide'. Only three of the donors (out of 27) reported that 'most' of their programmes take gender into account – in other words that they have successfully mainstreamed gender into all their activities (Gaynor, 2006).

The majority of agencies perceived the lack of concern of some partner governments as a constraint to official development assistance being used to promote gender equality. Issues identified ranged from poor participation of CSOs in consultation to the problems of conducting a dialogue on gender equality in a country where the issue is not a priority. However, at country level this is viewed differently. In Zambia, for instance, the UN is the lead cooperating partner for gender. This highlights two issues: first, the very important point made by a Zambian official about the 'low levels of interest exhibited by most cooperating partners in being selected to the gender cross-cutting issue' (Lupunga, 2007); and second, that the UN will be dependent on other bilaterals to support this agenda.

National action plans for gender equality and women's empowerment

Since 1995 many countries have developed national action plans to promote gender equality and promote the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. This process has invariably been led by the national women's machineries (NWMs), which have inadequate resources and usually are not strategically located where they can have a significant influence on other departments and ministries. National policies for gender equality and women's empowerment have not always translated into the necessary prioritisation and mainstreaming of gender into the planning process or the allocation of resources. In fact, as noted above, most of the first generation PRSPs were completely gender blind.

Thus while there may be greater awareness of the need for gender equality, this does not always translate into country-led processes. Moreover, the recent experience of Ghana and Zambia in the formulation of JAS indicates that 'gender' does not appear to be a priority concern for external partners. The neglect of gender mainstreaming can seriously jeopardise the achievement of development outcomes, however. For development, aid has to be linked to these.

Gender Equality and Development Outcomes: Strategies and Opportunities

In the context of the transformation of the aid environment and the very significant scaling up of aid, the central issue – especially given past experience and the critical role of gender equality – is how to take advantage of opportunities and influence current strategies to promote and impact on gender equality for development effectiveness.

This section sets out some of the strategies, priorities and opportunities on which it is important to focus in order to effect change within the framework of country-led harmonised processes for administering development assistance.

At country level

Participation of and consultation with organisations representing women's interests in all planning processes

In order to ensure that national plans and strategies reflect women's needs and interests, the systematic and regular participation of NWMs and CSOs in the planning processes (including PRSPs) and consultations is essential. 'Ownership' must include both men's and women's voices. Women's organisations have made a big contribution through analysis of the existing situation and have influenced policy changes. Examples are the Tanzania Gender Networking Programme in the United Republic of Tanzania, the Women's Budget Group in the UK and the Self-Employed Women Association (SEWA) in India.

While many national plans include women, quite often the association is limited to specific sectors, especially education, health and welfare. But many other sectors impact on the lives of women – including transport, rural and urban infrastructure and legal reforms – where there is a need for their interests to be represented. There should be participation at all stages – planning, policy formulation, programme implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.

Gender-responsive budgets

As increasing amounts of aid will be passing through the budgetary process it is important to be able to track the gender impacts of expenditure and revenue-raising measures. Analysis and tracking of the resources allocated for women's needs and interests and assessment of their impact on gender equality are critical for achieving development outcomes. In a way the importance of this has been recognised – almost 60 countries worldwide have adopted gender-responsive budgeting (GRB), and Commonwealth Finance Ministers at their meeting in 2005 made a commitment to report every two years on the progress made in their countries. Many countries are still at an initial stage of awareness raising and capacity building, but some, such as India, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania, have gone beyond this, so that the budgetary processes, called circulars, take gender into account.¹ In some cases, analysis of the impact of user fees and land registration systems have resulted in policy changes that are friendly to women.

Capacity building of NWMs and other organisations

NWMs and CSOs that represent women's interests are not always well equipped to deal with issues related to macro-economic processes. In order for them to participate meaningfully in consultations it is important to enhance their capacities to enter into dialogue. For example, the Commonwealth Secretariat has launched a series of regional workshops on gender, trade policy and export promotion with a view to integrating gender analysis into trade policy formulation, implementation and planning. The participants include NWMs, trade ministries, export promotion boards and CSOs, as well as multilateral and bilateral organisations.

Capacities also need to be strengthened for gender audits and monitoring so that NWMs and CSOs can contribute effectively to monitoring and evaluation processes (discussed next).

Monitoring and evaluation of processes

- *Improving statistical systems for generating sex-disaggregated data:* The lack of information and availability of data on access to resources by women and men, and girls and boys often limits the design and understanding of various developmental issues. In the case of the Zambian JAS, strengthening the Central Statistical Office has been given priority. This is an area where development partners can often help to share good practice across the world so that time is not lost in re-inventing the wheel. For instance, countries such as Australia, India and New Zealand could share some of their experiences of time-use studies.
- *Impact assessment and evaluations:* As in the case of the environment, systems need to be adopted that ensure that there is a gender audit or impact assessment of all new proposals. In New Zealand, all cabinet proposals are accompanied by a statement setting out their gender implications. Indicators in national planning processing and PRSPs need to be able to measure progress against gender equality objectives to strengthen accountability. Joint evaluations and monitoring should build in gender assessments.

Public sector performance

In many countries, there has been tremendous progress since the 1990s. ‘Gender’ has entered the development jargon, but this has not been accompanied by the necessary attitudinal changes, mainstreaming and prioritisation in the public sector as a whole. The adoption of GRB and gender impact assessments of all proposals would bring about some change in the public sector, but this needs to be accompanied by gender sensitisation across departments. In order to deal with much of the resistance that exists in this area and enhance accountability for gender equality performance appraisal, it is important to make the promotion of and impact on gender equality a key parameter. Needless to say, this will depend on political will.

For development partners

Influencing the Paris Declaration agenda

Multiple ways have been identified (Gaynor, 2006) to influence the Paris Declaration agenda. The GenderNet of OECD-DAC has been working very systematically on ‘engendering’ the Declaration. It has pioneered and disseminated papers and is working closely with other DAC networks and the working party on aid effectiveness, whose main remit is to facilitate and monitor the Declaration’s implementation.

A recent example of this collaboration was a workshop on ‘Development effectiveness in practice: Applying the Paris Declaration to advancing gender equality, environmental

sustainability and human rights', jointly organised by these networks in Dublin in April 2007. The purpose of the workshop was to assess what lessons had been learnt so far from the field about the implementation of the Declaration, and to identify what needs to be done to improve its implementation for cross-cutting issues. There was a strong view that indicators need to be developed under the five principles of the Declaration to reflect progress on gender equality.

Peer review

The impact of peer review of policy and practice within donor agencies on the implementation of gender mainstreaming has been cited as one of the most useful mechanisms for assessing the progress and commitment of various agencies to gender equality in the aid effectiveness agenda. At the Dublin meeting it was felt that this should be systematic and frequent.

Mainstreaming gender within agencies

Donors need to work towards mainstreaming gender in their own internal processes. This means consciously working towards enhancing capacity across the organisation for gender mainstreaming, greater accountability for meeting gender equality objectives and increasing the number of gender specialists and financial resources committed to this. While GRB measures commitment within countries, donors can apply the same principles to their own budgets.

Strengthening country processes and mutual accountability

Donors need to consciously support all interventions that will strengthen the commitments of countries to gender mainstreaming. It is also important to work together with the countries to meet broader international commitments and to ensure that gender equality forms part of performance assessment frameworks. The observation cited above in the case of Zambia suggests that mainstreaming gender as an approach in JAS has been problematic when it comes to implementation. In the case of Ghana too it was observed that:

... although development partners in Ghana have adopted gender policies there is limited policy alignment among them due to differing political agendas. As a result there is an uneven level of commitment and accountability for gender-responsive development outcomes. (UNIFEM, 2006)

It is clear from other cases that it is often easier to support gender as a sector rather than mainstream it.

Aid instruments

There is evidence, especially in education and health, of the effectiveness of SWAs and a harmonised approach, resulting in significant progress. Before the Accra High Level Forum in September 2008 it is important to evaluate the impact of different aid instruments on the promotion of gender equality. This will help in reviewing the manner in

which resources are allocated for gender equality, and in understanding the importance of looking beyond the public sector to the financing of CSOs that work on gender equality and women's rights.

Conclusion

While the struggle to promote gender equality and empower women in development assistance continues, and the approach to gender equality tends to be dominated by functional and instrumental arguments about its impacts on development, it is important to remember that gender equality is not a means of development; it is actually the end and goal. There can be no development without gender equality.

Notes

1. Two country studies on India and Uganda were published in 2008 by the Commonwealth Secretariat.

References

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