

Gender Mainstreaming

Clarifying Gender-Based Development Issues, Needs and Impacts



Of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), relevant goals are shown in color.

Gender can be defined within social and cultural contexts, and can refer to the roles of men and women as well as their mutual relationship. On a global basis, females are far more likely to be placed in socially, politically and economically

disadvantaged positions than men. As such, one of the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations is “gender equality and the empowerment of women.”

JICA promotes “gender mainstreaming,” a comprehensive approach to incorporate the perspective of gender in all stages of planning, formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation in all policies, programs and projects to clarify gender-based development issues, needs and the impacts.

Overview of Issue

The ultimate goal of gender mainstreaming is to achieve “gender equality”^{*1} in all fields of society. It is a process of identifying men’s and women’s development issues and needs, as well as the impact on men and women of development policies, programs and projects, at each of the stages of planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, on the premise that the formulation processes and impacts of development policies, programs and projects are not neutral but affect men and women differently.

Gender is often unconsciously constructed based on the mentality, culture, traditions and customs of a country and therefore also affects various policies, systems and organizations. Consequently, it is essential to support national machinery (national agencies, mechanisms and organizations striving for joint participation by men and women) such as the Ministry of Women’s Affairs to ensure that the policies and systems in partner countries adopt a gender-based perspective.

In most cases, however, statistics, data and indices are not tabulated according to gender. If a philosophy of gender is introduced without fully comprehending the society in a target region, it may in fact produce negative results such as exacerbating gender disparity. It is critical to collect and comprehensively analyze fundamental data needed for plans and projects by gender, age, ethnicity and religious affiliation, and to develop human resources who have this perspective.

Although it is important to promote women’s empowerment as part of efforts to advance gender mainstreaming, focusing solely on women may not achieve the desired results. This also requires changing the consciousness of men, decision-makers and socially influential people such as administrative officials, educators, politicians and religious leaders. In other words, it is necessary to reform the social structure and systems surrounding women. It is essential to review areas and projects that at first glance may appear not to require a gender perspective and provide support based on the different roles of men and women. For example, one form of support would be developing agricultural equipment that is

easy for women to use since they are responsible for the majority of agricultural work. Another example would be encouraging the participation of women in water quality control organizations.

JICA Activities

For many years, JICA has considered the importance of gender issues and developed a basic strategy for implementing gender-responsive projects. JICA has also established an organizational framework for gender mainstreaming.

Actual assistance includes strengthening organizational capacity and creating policies and systems for gender equality in Afghanistan, Cambodia and Nepal by supporting national machinery such as the Ministry of Women’s Affairs. To promote the empowerment of women, JICA provides support in wide-ranging areas. JICA works to invigorate women’s centers in Nigeria, nurture entrepreneurs, particularly women, in poverty-stricken areas of Honduras [→ See the Case Study on page 93], and improve education for women in Yemen [→ See the Case Study on page 55].

Rather than focus solely on women, JICA conducts activities such as advertising on the radio in order to gain the understanding of husbands and other family members toward women’s centers, and getting religious leaders to convey the importance of education for females to their fathers and mothers.

Moreover, efforts are made to ensure that the perspective of gender is reflected in the results and actions in various fields. In the forestry industry in India, in addition to simply employing women, additional support was provided to generate income so that they don’t have to cut young trees to get wood; they can purchase alternative fuel instead. Under the drive for regional development in Paraguay, workshops were held in which both

*1 According to the “DAC Guidelines for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Development Co-Operation” issued by the OECD Department of Assistance Committee (DAC), “Gender equality does not mean that men and women need to become the same, but that their opportunities and life chances are equal. The emphasis on gender equality and women’s empowerment is not based on a single model of gender equality for all societies and cultures, but reflects a concern that women and men have equal opportunities to make choices about what gender equality means, and work in partnership to achieve it. Because of current disparities, equal treatment of women and men is insufficient as a strategy to achieve gender equality.” (Extract taken from page 13 of the Guidelines)

male and female citizens could participate, and through which the roles fulfilled by each gender were confirmed. Subsequently, efforts were started to establish development programs that benefit both men and women.

In recent years, there has been increasing recognition of the need to address new issues in gender and development, such as trafficking in persons and other forms of gender-based violence. Trafficking in persons is a serious crime and a grave violation of human rights that inflicts severe emotional and physical suffering on the victims, who are mainly women and children, but include men as well. It calls for prompt and appropriate response from a humanitarian perspective, as well as from the perspective of putting a stop to international organized crime. The Japanese government formulated Japan's 2009 Action Plan of Measures to Combat Trafficking in Persons, which was originally established

in 2004, and is now engaged in implementing these measures through associations composed of concerned ministries and agencies, and other efforts.

Trafficking in persons is a complex and broad-ranging issue, and JICA is providing support focused on "prevention of trafficking in persons" and "protection and reintegration of trafficked persons" in Thailand, Viet Nam and Myanmar. In Thailand in particular, a guideline for protecting and reintegrating victims is starting to take shape. It is critical to create a regional cooperative framework because trafficked persons move across borders. Regional seminars are held in Thailand and video conferences are conducted regularly that connect JICA headquarters with the three countries in order to share information on the situation as well as the measures being taken in each country in the Mekong region.

Case Study

Honduras Promotion of Self-management Enterprises of Women in Rural Areas in Honduras

Women in Farming Villages Start Businesses from Nothing

Honduras is one of the poorest countries in Central and South America, with around 60% of the population living in the poverty. Meanwhile, the roots of the male-centered ideology of "machismo" run deep and opportunities for social participation by women are extremely limited.

Since 2003, JICA has provided business development support for poor women in rural areas, who even among the poorer classes, suffer from an acute lack of employment opportunities. JICA established the "The Model for Promotion of Self Management Enterprises of Women in Rural Area" (MeM System) through group organization, training of promoters to encourage systematization, and instruction to teach the necessary knowledge and skills required to start and run businesses.

Empowerment of Rural Women

The first feature of the MeM System is its focus on efforts to start up businesses "from nothing," beginning with the organization of women who had not completed basic education and had never previously left their villages. Rather than expand existing organizations, this project makes it possible for women to form new groups, develop rules, select their industry, learn production and sales techniques through training, and even implement periodic assessment activities.

The system's second feature is its objective of achieving empowerment of participating women. A survey based on 12 indices including "decision-making" and "actions" conducted on these women, who had previously not been allowed adequate opportunities solely on the basis of their gender, and who had low feelings of self-worth, identified a clear manifestation of empowerment. The project did more than simply make the women aware of changes and of their abilities; it also confirmed a positive impact on the awareness and

actions of men with respect to the social participation and abilities of women, thanks to the substantive changes resulting from the women's activities including increased revenue in poorer households.

In addition to the guidelines for implementation

of the MeM System, necessary manuals for organizational operation have been drawn up in seven areas including "training promoters" and "accounting and cost calculation." It is hoped that these will be distributed to and made good use of in other regions.

From the Grassroots

A Woman who Participated in MeM Activities

Right now, I really feel that participation in the activities of the MeM activities has been a wonderful opportunity for us. Previously, we had suffered continued hardship, but now, we are constantly striving to create new products, and we are putting new designs on sale every month. These have been well-received by our customers.



Women in a ceramics group, using molds to create ceramic frying pans, a craft they learned in training.

Project Website: <http://www.jica.go.jp/project/honduras/2391068E0/index.html>