

Gender and Development

Clarifying Gender-related 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”* 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. The process is based on the premise that the formulation processes and impacts of development policies, programs and projects are not neutral because they 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 gender equality) 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 Cambodia and Nepal by supporting national machinery. To promote the empowerment of women, JICA provides support in wide-ranging areas including education for women, improving maternal and child health, and supporting female entrepreneurs.

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 increase their income so that women don’t have to cut young trees to get firewood; they can purchase alternative fuel instead. Under the Smallholder Horticulture Empowerment Project (SHEP) in Kenya, JICA focused on the role that women play in agricultural activities. The project secured the equal participation from both men and women in all types of farming activities, and conducts educational activities for men and women about gender related issues.

In recent years, there has been increasing recognition of the need to address new issues in gender and development,

*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.”

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. In 2009, JICA started a project in Thailand to strengthen the capacity of organizations and staff to combat trafficking in persons. JICA also launched two new projects in

Myanmar and Vietnam to reinforce regional measures to combat trafficking in the Mekong region, based on the experience in Thailand.

In Nicaragua, serious crime is increasing and social risks young people face in this country have become an enormous problem. Domestic violence and sexual abuse are also increasing. To reduce these social risks, a JICA project is working on developing an integrated service mechanism for social risk prevention and effectively responding to the needs of communities and families.

Case Study **Cambodia**
Technical Cooperation Project “Project on Gender Mainstreaming Phase 2”

Strengthening the capacity of national machinery for supporting Women’s Economic Empowerment

There was an enormous loss of life in Cambodia during the civil war that lasted more than 25 years. Women have played an important role in the country’s recovery and development because the male population in their 40s and older is much smaller than the female population in this age segment due to the conflict. However, women have a lower social and economic status than men, and many female-headed households are forced to lead impoverished lives. To eliminate discrimination against women and create a fair and equitable society, the government of Cambodia established the Ministry of Women’s Affairs (MOWA) in 1996 for promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment.

Since the establishment of MOWA, JICA has been dispatching experts to MOWA to support the priority areas of the ministry. Examples are providing advice to line ministries for promoting gender mainstreaming and supporting collaboration and cooperation with related ministries. The Technical Cooperation Project “Gender Mainstreaming and Policy Development through Upgrading Information and Research Capacity Project” took place between 2003 and 2008. This project was focused on capacity development of MOWA staff for data gathering, investigation; policymaking and implementation; and monitoring and evaluation. Also, through the implementation

of pilot projects in Kampong Cham Province, policy recommendations to integrate a gender perspective into the sectoral policy of each line ministry were prepared and an effective mechanism for gender mainstreaming was formulated.

A subsequent technical cooperation project called “Gender Mainstreaming Project, Phase2” (2010-2015) is providing technical support to firmly establish the introduced mechanism during the previous phase for gender mainstreaming within the government. Another goal is to create an operational effective system for implementing women’s economic empowerment activities by the partner line

ministries (at central and local level) under the coordination of the MOWA. As a part of these activities, the project includes two pilot projects related to “agricultural production” and “agro-processing” for enhancing the capacities of relevant stakeholders in order to promote gender mainstreaming in each organization. Through the implementation of these activities, many positive effects are observed at the beneficiary level. These effects include a decrease in the amount of loans for agricultural inputs; coping with sudden expenditure such as child’s education and health care; a decrease domestic violence; a decrease in seasonal work; increasing opportunities for participating in decision making; and increasing harmony within families. Through the continuous efforts of this project in the future, it is hoped that the capacity of officials in MOWA and partner line ministries at the central level will be enhanced by using the feedback of several lesson learned from field level. Based on the experience of the project, comprehensive guidelines for the women’s economic empowerment will be developed at the end of the projects.



The Minister of Women’s Affairs (right center of photo) observes agro-processing pilot project activities.



Women learn about chicken raising techniques at the agricultural production pilot project.