

Gender and Development

Clarifying Gender Responsive 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, women are far more likely to be placed in socially, politically, and economically disadvantaged positions compared to men. As such, the UN Millennium Development Goals has outlined gender equality and the empowerment of women as an important goal.

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

● Overview of the Issue

Gender mainstreaming aims to achieve “gender equality and women’s empowerment”¹ in all fields of society.

In societies where gender inequality exists, there is the possibility of having a different effect on men and women in seemingly “neutral” development policies, measures, or projects. Therefore, it is necessary to incorporate the view of gender equality into each of the stages of planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of all development policies, programs and projects, in consideration of the issues and needs resulting from the difference in the societal roles of men and women and their power relationship. This process is called “gender mainstreaming,” aimed to achieve the empowerment of women in the community and gender equality.

Generally, the fixed roles and responsibilities of men and women in a society tend to be subconsciously specified according to the sense of value, culture, tradition, and custom of the people in the region. That is to say, various kinds of policies, systems and organizations are also subject to the subconscious determination. In addition, regardless of whether it is in advanced or developing countries, the conventional wisdom and social system in the modern world are likely to be formed based on a male perspective. Thus, the philosophy of gender that has been shaped in a male-dominated society and culture features the unequal power contained in gender relationships. In light of the gaps and power relationships among men and women, it is essential to support national machinery, such as national agencies, mechanisms, and organizations striving for gender equality, including the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, to ensure that the policies and systems in partner countries adopt a gender responsive perspective.

In most cases, however, statistics, data, and indices are not tabulated according to gender. This problem also poses an obstacle to understanding the differences in the social status of men and women and the issues and needs related to the difference. If a philosophy of gender is introduced to the policy-making process or institution-building without fully comprehending the society in a target region, it may in fact produce negative results for women, such as exacerbating gender disparity. Therefore, it is critical to collect and comprehensively

analyze fundamental data needed for plans and projects by region, gender, age, ethnicity, and religious affiliation, and to develop human resources that have this perspective and can reflect the results in policies and systems.

It is important to promote women’s empowerment as part of efforts to advance gender mainstreaming. At the same time, it is also essential to make efforts to change the consciousness and actions of men, decision makers and those who have social influence in the community (e.g., administrative officials, educators, politicians, and religious leaders).

● JICA Activities

For many years, JICA has developed a basic strategy for implementing gender-responsive assistance projects and has made clear the issues to put priority on. JICA has also established an organizational framework for gender mainstreaming.

Actual assistance includes creating policies and systems and strengthening organizational capacity for promoting gender equality in Cambodia, Nigeria [→ see the Case Study on page 54], and Nepal. 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 in various fields to ensure that the perspective of gender is reflected in the results and actions that should be achieved through projects.

Under the Smallholder Horticulture Empowerment Project (SHEP) in Kenya, JICA focused on the role that women play in agricultural activities. The project secured equal participation from both men and women in all types of farming activities, and it conducts educational activities for men and women about gender-related issues. As a result, their marital relationships were encouraged to shift from a management-labor relationship to a relationship of equal business partners. On this account, this project demonstrated its contribution to the achievement

1. According to the “DAC Guidelines for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Development Cooperation” 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.”

of improving farm incomes. For projects in areas affected by conflicts in Afghanistan, Mindanao, and Sudan, JICA is actively engaged in improving women's livelihoods by conducting preferential hiring of women who have lost their husbands in battle and providing women with vocational trainings.

In recent years, there has been increasing recognition of the need to address gender-based violence, including human trafficking as a new issue in gender and development. Human trafficking is 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. In 2009, JICA started a project in Thailand to strengthen the capacity of organizations and staff to combat human trafficking. JICA also launched two new projects in Myanmar and Viet Nam in 2012 to reinforce regional measures to combat human trafficking in the Mekong region, based on the experience in Thailand.

Case Study **Nicaragua: Project for Enhancing Integrated Service Delivery for Social Risk Prevention and Attention for Families and Communities**

Protecting Women and Young People from Social Risks

Nicaragua has growing social problems faced by women and young people, such as sexual assault, abuse, and child labor. JICA is assisting in strengthening the administrative capabilities of the country to prevent these social risks.



Smiling girls at a community facility run by the Ministry of Family.

Administrative Services from the Viewpoint of Gender and Women's Human Rights

Since the number of crimes has tended to increase in recent years in Nicaragua, deterioration of public security has become a social problem. In addition to this, Nicaragua also has growing social risks, such as domestic violence, sexual abuse, drug addiction, and child labor, which severely threaten the livelihoods of the people.

Many of the victims of these issues are women and children, who are especially vulnerable to various social risks. Some

research shows that about 30% of Nicaraguan women have experience with physical or sexual violence. As for sexual violence, over 80% of the victims were abused by people close to them, such as family members, relatives, or neighbors; and, 80% are girls under age 18. This research indicates that home, which should be the safest place for people, can be the most dangerous place for women and girls in Nicaragua.

In these circumstances, the Ministry of Family, Adolescents, and Children (hereinafter called the Ministry of Family), responsible for the protection of children and young

people and the provision of welfare services, is aiming to provide effective administrative services to the people in cooperation with relevant governmental agencies, society, and community human resources.

For example, in cases that abuse or neglect is considered to violate the human rights and dignity of children and young people, it is important not only to protect them in a quick and appropriate manner, but also to provide their families with training programs and counseling for improving their familial relationship. As well as preventive measures, including educational activities for risk avoidance, JICA is also promoting activities that encourage people to realize potential social risks lurking in the community, such as drug, child abuse, and violence against women.

In terms of human security and inclusive development, JICA is assisting in strengthening administrative capabilities in order for the Ministry of Family to provide administrative services from the viewpoint of gender and women's human rights, considering the social risks for girl and women as well as needs that can hardly be visualized.

It is important not only to protect girls and women who are victims of sexual abuse from secondary damage, such as sexist treatment in the process of administrative counseling, but also to ensure they receive the necessary support. To do so, JICA is providing training programs to administrative officers of the branch offices of the Ministry of Family, who are responsible for handling consultations with people. In addition to this, JICA is also working on activities to strengthen the partnership with other administrative agencies, as well as improving human rights consciousness among people.