

CREATING AND SHARING KNOWLEDGE ON GENDER EQUALITY

By creating and sharing knowledge on the links between gender equality and development, the World Bank is helping to improve women's and girls' lives. Enhanced knowledge helps countries understand why and how gender equality contributes to development. This section details some of the Bank's efforts to strengthen our knowledge of gender equality and development issues.

SUPPORTING ANALYTICAL WORK

Shortly after Beijing+5, the World Bank undertook a major study of the costs of persistent gender disparities to well-being and countries' development prospects, to better understand the links between gender equality and poverty reduction. This work culminated in the report, *Engendering Development—Through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources, and Voice* (World Bank 2001a). The report provided empirical evidence that gender equality promotes development, and helped the World Bank and its partners make the economic argument that equality-promoting interventions are more effective than development policies that fail to reduce gender inequalities.

Building on *Engendering Development* and in partnership with the Netherlands government, the World Bank is currently completing a work program that examines the gender impacts of several types of country economic policies and disseminates these findings to Bank staff and policymakers. The policy areas covered in this work include public sector downsizing, trade and competitiveness, public expenditures, pension reform, labor markets, child labor, and safety nets and transfers. The studies provide information to help development practitioners decide whether analysis of gender issues should be a high priority in particular economic policy areas, and tools to conduct the analysis.

In line with the World Bank's country-specific approach to development assistance, the Bank is also contributing to improved understanding of the importance of gender equality for poverty reduction and economic growth in specific countries and regions. Reports include *Gender in Transition* (World Bank 2002c),

which details the changing nature of gender issues in the transition countries of Europe and Central Asia over the last decade, and *Gender and Development in the Middle East and North Africa: Women and the Public Sphere* (World Bank 2004b), which argues that women's increased participation in the public sphere is critical for the region's development. In 1999, the World Bank issued a regional report on gender issues in Africa, *Gender, Growth, and Poverty Reduction* (Blackden and Bhanu 1999), which described many of the critical ways that gender inequality was hampering Africa's development.

The Bank has also completed (alone or in partnership with governments, civil society, and other development agencies) more than three dozen country gender assessments. Many of these assessments have influenced government poverty reduction strategies and the Bank's policy recommendations. For example, the Benin CGA informed a Bank-led public expenditure review and influenced poverty reducing expenditures in that country. In Uganda, the CGA built on extensive in-country work on gender issues and underpinned the integration of gender issues into the country's poverty reduction strategy, as well as into the Bank's budget support. The CGA is also being used to inform the government of Uganda's revised National Gender Policy, and poverty assessment. Likewise, Vietnam's CGA influenced the Bank's recent country assistance strategy. The Vietnam country program included activities such as re-titling land to include the names of both husbands and wives, training provincial authorities to mainstream gender issues in the implementation of Vietnam's Poverty Reduction Strategy, and addressing gender issues in anti-poverty lending.

The World Bank has also produced research on a variety of specific gender issues related to development, including the gender dimensions of alcohol consumption in Latin America and the Caribbean (World Bank 2002b), globalization and the gender wage gap (Oostendorp 2004), and the prevalence, causes, and costs of gender-based violence (Morrison and Orlando 2004). In addition, analytical work in specific sectors has influenced Bank recommendations to governments. In Vietnam, for example, analysis of the impact of public sector downsizing on male and female workers found that displaced female employees would benefit more from lump-sum compensation than from standard severance packages (Rama 2002). Based on this finding, the Vietnamese government modified its assistance package for workers displaced during state-owned enterprise downsizing to include a substantial lump-sum component.

INVESTING IN KNOWLEDGE NETWORKS

The World Bank recognizes the importance of local ownership of development agendas. It supports local knowledge networks and helps them build capacity to



better address gender issues. For example, in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), through the Development Grant Facility and in partnership with UNDP and the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations, the World Bank is supporting the MENA Regional Gender and Development Network. First established in 2001 in Arab-speaking countries, the initiative has created an active network of policymakers, academicians, NGOs, and donor organizations concerned with gender and development issues. It not only provides a platform for much needed policy dialogue on otherwise “ignored” and sensitive gender topics, but also reinforces the work of individual organizations in gender training and research. In July 2004, the network was expanded to include Persian-speaking scholars, NGOs, and policymakers in addition to the original Arab speakers.

In Europe and Central Asia, the World Bank has supported a long-distance video dialogue series that focused on the challenges of implementing gender-responsive legislation in Central Asia. With funding from the government of the Netherlands and in partnership with UNDP, the initiative helped build local capacity among government and civil society representatives from Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan to ensure gender equity as these countries reform their legal systems.

The World Bank Institute (WBI) also plays an important role in building capacity on gender equality issues in the Bank's member countries. Every year WBI organizes about 1,000 training activities that reach approximately 75,000 participants, including parliamentarians, government ministers, other government officials, and university students. Women currently represent over one-third of the trainees, and women's participation has been increasing mainly in "hard sector" training, such as anti-money laundering, governance, and private sector development.

IMPROVING SEX-DISAGGREGATED STATISTICS

Increasing the availability of user-friendly data on gender differences and characteristics is essential for countries to better measure development determinants and outcomes. The World Bank is supporting several initiatives aimed at making sex-disaggregated data readily available to governments, civil society, and development partners. These initiatives include GenderStats, a global electronic database of gender statistics and indicators, and regional databases for Africa, Europe and Central Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Middle East and North Africa.

The World Bank is also working to enhance countries' statistical capacity to generate data on gender differences and issues. For example, the Bank worked with the national statistical agencies of Bolivia, Honduras, and Peru to enhance their capacity for generating and analyzing gender statistics and is working with the Kosovo statistical office to build gender-monitoring capacity.

BOX 3.1 Raising Awareness about the Links between Gender and the MDGs

In response to the MDGs' promise as a global action roadmap, the World Bank produced a special report on the links between gender equality and the MDGs, and hosted an international conference on the same topic, jointly organized by the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality, the Multilateral Development Bank/International Monetary Fund Working Group on Gender, and the OECD/DAC Network on Gender Equality. Workshop participants identified three strategic ways to integrate a gender perspective in MDG policies and interventions: engendering national planning processes, mobilizing grassroots support for gender equality, and sex-disaggregating MDG monitoring. They proposed follow-up actions in each area. Both the report and the conference made clear that gender equality is important for achieving all the MDGs, not just the third goal.