

## Executive Summary

Launched in 2007, the World Bank Group Action Plan “Gender Equality as Smart Economics” (GAP) aimed to advance women’s economic empowerment by redefining the way the Bank does business in the economic sectors. The GAP represented a commitment by the World Bank to intensify gender equality, focusing on labor, land and agriculture, private sector development and finance, and infrastructure markets.

In 2007, the Bank's track record in implementing policies to promote gender equality was mixed, and performance was particularly weak in the economic sectors. The logical answer was an Action Plan that more fully utilized the Bank’s comparative advantage in these sectors and in analytical work. The GAP targeted operations, rather than organizational change and processes; was evidence-based and oriented to measuring results, and used incentives to generate demand for gender-informed policies and operations. Its two main objectives were: (i) to change the way the Bank does business by enhancing awareness of gender issues in economic sector operations, and (ii) to influence the gender and development discourse.

Externally, the GAP contributed to placing women's economic empowerment squarely on the international development agenda, galvanizing donor and member countries to action. Women’s economic empowerment and “gender equality as smart economics” have taken center stage in international gender and development discourse, while resource mobilization remained strong throughout the GAP. By December 2010, financial support for the plan amounted to US\$ 70.0 million in pledges—an additional US\$ 45.5 million above the original four-year budget of US\$ 24.5 million. By the close of the GAP, Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Italy, the Nike Foundation, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom had pledged a total of US\$ 56.0 million to the plan.

Internally, Bank operations have become significantly more gender-informed since the launch of the GAP, particularly in the economic sectors. A renewed commitment of Bank senior management to gender equality as a strategic development priority was made in tandem with the plan’s implementation and helps to explain the Bank’s improved performance on gender mainstreaming.

Through US\$52.2 million allocated to 270 initiatives in more than 78 countries, the GAP influenced the Bank’s analytical and operational work in the economic sectors. The Action Plan’s largely demand-driven allocation mechanisms and reliance on incentives revealed a strong internal demand for work on women’s economic empowerment. It also helped to broaden the base for gender-informing the Bank’s policies and operations. 120 Task Team Leaders (TTL), whose primary function does not include gender issues, and their team members, gained hands-on experience in addressing gender concerns in their analytical and operational work through “learning-by-doing.” The GAP also showed that modest amounts of funding can leverage change in large-scale operations. Through competitive grant allocations, US\$ 4.1 million in small grants helped enhance gender integration in 75 Bank operations. Combined loans for these operations amount to US\$ 8.6 billion. And finally, GAP awards were accompanied by a strong “matching funds” contribution from Bank budgets, with little evidence of crowding-out or substitution effects.

GAP-supported evaluations have informed government scale-up of pilot interventions in several countries, including Liberia, Morocco and Tunisia. GAP research is also providing new knowledge for evidence-based policy making. For instance, research on the impacts of economic crises find that women are primary ‘adjusters’: women are more likely to be shed by firms in the case of Indonesia; in Cambodia they are more likely to join the labor force to compensate for loss of household income.

While the GAP focused on influencing Bank operations and the gender and development discourse, results on the ground already reflect an expansion of women’s economic opportunities in client countries. Examples include the 12.9 million women that gained land rights due to joint titling in Ethiopia, the 2,500 women entrepreneurs who accessed US\$86 million in loans thanks to IFC’s support, and the US\$ 120 million that will be channeled through innovative product lines to provide financial services to women entrepreneurs in Egypt.

Overall, a new way of integrating gender issues into Bank business has emerged. This new way: (i) seeks to expand girls’ and women’s economic empowerment; (ii) incorporates gender issues into the “hard” sectors that had stubbornly resisted mainstreaming in the past; (iii) embeds gender analysis into core diagnostics; and (iv) invests in the development of a rigorous evidence base and pilot experiments to inform operations.

Changes at the operational level have been accompanied by Bank commitments to gender equality, as illustrated by the six new gender commitments made by President Zoellick in 2008, the selection of gender equality as a “Special Theme” of the IDA16 replenishment, and the decision, for the first time in history, to focus the World Development Report 2012 on gender equality and development.

While progress has been made, looking ahead further work is needed to leverage new and unprecedented opportunities to promote gender equality—at the Bank and in client countries. Main challenges include: applying the lessons learned from the GAP; scaling up girls-and women-specific initiatives, such as the Adolescent Girls Initiative (AGI); increasing the cadre of the Bank’s senior and mid-level managers and country teams committed to the Bank’s gender agenda; fully embedding gender analysis in the Bank’s knowledge agenda and country-level core diagnostics; and leveraging the 2012 WDR and the IDA16 Gender Special Theme to raise demand for gender-informed development activities in client countries.

Steps have been taken to respond to these challenges. A three year “Transition Plan”<sup>1</sup> to strengthen the implementation of the Bank’s gender policy was presented to the Board in June 2010. The Plan draws on the lessons of the GAP and seeks to apply these to mainstream gender in Bank operations (2011 -2013). The findings of the final independent evaluation of the GAP – set to launch this spring – will further inform efforts to mainstream and scale up successful approaches and initiatives.

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<sup>1</sup> “Applying Gender Action Plan Lessons: A Three-Year Road Map for Gender Mainstreaming (2011-2013),” May 25, 2010. [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTGENDER/Resources/336003-1241561860207/GAPtransitionplan\\_may25.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTGENDER/Resources/336003-1241561860207/GAPtransitionplan_may25.pdf)