

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR OVERSEAS AID
GENDER EQUITY WORKING GROUP



Draft Background Paper
Gender Indicators Workshop
by
Jenny Riley and Joanne Crawford

Background Paper Gender Indicators Workshop

This background paper is prepared for participants at a Gender Indicators Workshop being planned for the first half of 2006 (probably April) by the Gender Equity Working Group (GEWG) of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID). This early exposure draft is being circulated to solicit input and comment, at Beijing +10 and elsewhere.

International Women's Development Agency (IWDA), a member of the GEWG, is convening a workshop at Beijing +10 with the working title *Gender Indicators— Measuring progress for women: opportunities and challenges*. It will bring together leaders in the gender and development field to talk about the work their organisations have been doing in the area of gender indicators. This work represents a key strategy for measuring change in development projects for women and, as such, could be seen as a major area of implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. This draft background paper will be revised following the workshop and circulated for further input, including via field level meetings, ACFID's 2005 Council and the Association for Women in Development conference in October, before a final revision.

The intention of the final background paper is to provide a shared level of understanding among participants at a workshop in 2006, to assist discussion about meaningful, workable indicators that can be used across the development sector to assess the extent to which activities are contributing to gender equality. The intention is to keep the paper short and accessible, and while it may cover ground with which many may be familiar, it seeks to refresh thinking and provoke inspiration for the workshop.

The paper is divided into three parts: firstly, a rationale - why embark on this process now? Secondly, a quick overview of indicators, including their function, types of indicators, and usage. Finally, some examples of indicators used in the international arena including the OECD Development Advisory Committee (DAC) Gender Equality Guidelines, the UN Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) and some of the indicators used by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

1. Rationale

1.1. Why review the use of gender indicators?

In July 2003, in Australia, a group of local and international consultants, NGO workers, academics and gender specialists came together for a Gender and Development Dialogue, 'GAD and Intersectionality in the Region: Forging the Future', to address the challenges and opportunities associated with gender mainstreaming.

There was general consensus that, despite sound policy statements affirming the goal of gender equality and the multitude of tools and checklists available, both the amount and quality of gender-informed development work was of concern. There was widespread commitment to gender and development approaches but clear evidence that achievement of objectives has been partial at best. A number of key priorities and recommendations emerged from the dialogue including the need for clarity of language and concepts, cross-sector collaboration and ongoing review of gender work to assess whether approaches were progressing gender equality.

There was also general recognition that the current environment of increased demand for transparency, accountability, greater quality in development work and measurable outputs and impact provided some opportunities to advance issues relating to gender equality. All parts of the sector are under pressure to show evidence of outcomes, with calls for greater accountability and effectiveness coming from various stakeholders including donors, public, beneficiaries and workers in the sector.

The emphasis on accountability offers, at least potentially, a vehicle to strengthen reporting on gender and development commitments. It provides a basis for those concerned about persistent gender inequalities to highlight the gap between policy and action and call for steps to be taken in response. Similarly, the focus on effectiveness of aid is an opportunity to look carefully at what works and what doesn't in terms of promoting gender equality. Identifying effective, agreed, workable indicators of progress in promoting gender equality is critical if we are to make the most of these opportunities.

The April 2006 workshop is designed to provide an opportunity for participants to review international developments in the area of assessing and monitoring gender work, share experiences and learnings, and explore the potential and value in identifying indicators that are agreed as offering effective tools for measuring change.

1.2. Setting Aims and Objectives for the Workshop

From discussions at the 2005 Gender and Development Dialogue in Australia, some key working principles for achieving gender equality in development work were clarified:

- a need for a system that allows for quantitative and qualitative measurement of gender (in)equality within development projects and programs
- a need for clear language, concepts and objectives
- an environment that encourages collaborative learning through sharing of best practice and stories of 'we could have done that better'.

These working principles, in conjunction with the increasing use of indicators at international and national levels to measure accountability and effectiveness, give rise to a range of questions. How should we measure progress towards gender equality? Which indicators have proved most useful, at what level? Which should be avoided? Do we have all the indicators we need, or do we need new indicators to better capture the complexity of gender realities in the varied contexts in which we work? What indicators are available to assess the extent to which our organisational processes and design approaches are advancing gender equality, given the virtually universal lag between commitment to and implementation of gender and development policies? How will we know if we are making progress towards the goals we have identified? What benefits would flow if all players agreed to use a common suite of indicators in their work, providing for some consistency and potential for comparison? What are the challenges involved in moving in this direction? How might we move forward in a way that strengthens accountability and progresses gender equality?

Against this background, some aims of this workshop might be to:

1. Assemble the current state of international experience with gender indicators including type, use and application.
2. Identify current clusterings of indicators that may assist the organisation of indicators for analysis and discussion.
3. Reach a cross-sector consensus on a menu/suite of indicators that all players involved agree to use in their work, so there is increased consistency and potential for comparison across time and space.
4. Develop some indicators for organisational processes and design approaches.

This list is indicative, intended as a starting point for broader discussion at the workshop. Once some agreements on the broader aim and objectives of this endeavour are reached, the focus will shift to the specific, that is to:

- Identify indicators that measure how development work contributes to gender equality, gender inclusiveness and gender equity.
- Identify process indicators that maximise opportunities to increase gender equality and minimise hindrances that may contribute to gender inequality in development work (this could include gender mainstreaming methods, gender analysis and organisational and individual performance measurement tools).
- Identify methods of reporting and consequent follow up.

Some discussion is needed about how the results from our thinking/workshopping will be used, for example, next steps such as taking the outcomes of the workshop back to our organisations for further feedback, and recommending a proposed approach to peak bodies, networks, agencies and key industry players.

2. A brief overview of indicators

At the level of concept, indicators are simply tools to assess if we have achieved what we set out to achieve. They can be used at various levels (activity, project, program, policy or organisation) and to measure different types of factors, as in the table below. Once most common in project management, indicators have become ubiquitous in line with the focus on measuring progress. The United Nations and its agencies, and international financial institutions such as the World Bank, have used indicators to map, monitor and forecast development priorities. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) incorporate macro-level indicators of development, with global targets and indicators of progress in reducing poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination against women by 2015 (UN Millennium Project, 2004).

Table 1: Descriptions of various program/project indicators

| | |
|---|---|
| Risk/enabling: | Measure the influence of external factors on the project or program |
| Input: | Concern resources devoted to the project or program |
| Process: | Measure delivery activities of the resources devoted to a project or program. They monitor achievement during implementation, serving primarily to track progress towards intended results. |
| Output: | Identify intermediate results, for example at a point when donor involvement is close to complete. |
| Outcome: | Identify immediate results, for example at a point when donor involvement is complete. |
| Number of indicators can be quite small, and a rule of thumb is that up to six indicators should be chosen for each of the above types. | |

Source: Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), 1997: 17.

Indicators can be in the form of numbers, recorded facts, opinions or perceptions that look into and measure changes of specific conditions or situations. Indicators allow participants and beneficiaries of development projects to monitor and evaluate their stated goals and objectives. Indicators can assist the assessment of efficiency through the measurement of inputs and outputs. They also provide an important tool in evaluating the longer-term impact of development work – has change occurred? Is life getting better? Are inequalities and inequities being reproduced? (CIDA, 1997: 5)

The Logical Framework (logframe) approach, as its name suggests, provides a framework for setting out the purpose, goals, objectives and associated activities of a program or project and integrating indicators of success at each level of activity, as in the example below from the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID).

Logframe matrix structure

| Project Description | Indicators | Means of Verifications (MOVs) | Assumptions |
|--|--|---|---|
| 1. Goal | Indicators | MOVs | |
| 2. Purpose | What are the conditions that suggest the objective has been achieved - these indicators are usually the sort that would be used to evaluate the end result of a project. | Project base-line data Post project evaluation exercise. | This section should state underlying assumptions that have been made in conceiving and designing the project, and any of the risks that may affect the project overall. |
| 3. Component Objectives | | | |
| 4. Outputs, what the project will achieve in terms of products, services and skills delivered to external users (the beneficiaries). | For each output there must be indicators of success against which the project may be monitored. These must measure what is | The points contained in this column answer the question, "How will we be able to measure our Indicators?" The value of an indicator is limited by | This section should state underlying assumptions that have been made regarding the implementation and |

| | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| Outputs are the tangible results of applying Inputs and undertaking project activities - they are what the project manager guarantees he/she will deliver - the deliverable products stated as results. | important, must be plausible, and must be targeted in terms of quantity, quality and time. | the means available to verify it. Verification in some instances may simply be through effective record keeping, in other instances it may require specific data collection. Means of verification must be realistic and achievable. | management of the project, and any of the risks that may need to be managed in an ongoing fashion. |
| 5. Activities, or inputs: Project activities and the resources required to achieve them. List the activities, followed by the resources that will be required. Activities and Resources carried and applied effectively will lead to the outputs in the section immediately above. | For each activity there must be indicators of success against which the project may be monitored. These indicators should be Specific, Measurable, Appropriate, Relevant, and Time-bound. | This column captures the source of the information that will tell us whether or not our indicators are being achieved. Means of verification must be realistic and achievable, i.e. work plans and management reports on physical and financial progress | This section should state underlying assumptions that have been made regarding the implementation and management of the project, and any of the risks that may need to be managed in an ongoing fashion. |

Source: AusAID, 2004a, 2004b.

2.1. Gender-sensitive indicators

Gender sensitive indicators enable us to track changes over time by gender, either by disaggregating general indicators by gender or by designing indicators specifically to provide information on gender-related changes (e.g. number of reported cases of sexual abuse).

Gender indicators assume that gender roles exist and enable measurement of changes in the status and roles of men and women over time. By using gender indicators, development workers can monitor and evaluate the impact projects and programs have on gender roles, gender relations and gender discrimination.

Existing gender indicators are based on analytical models developed from a feminist analysis of societies, relationships and development, for instance measuring unpaid work in the household. However there has been considerable criticism from gender specialists who argue that the majority of macro-indicators are unable to capture the complexity of women's experience, especially in terms of empowerment and participation. Nevertheless, carefully chosen gender indicators can be a good pointer to the status of women, and women's and men's access to resources, opportunities and choices.

Examples of gender indicators used at the macro level include UNDP Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) and Gender Development Index (GDI), the World Bank Women in Development Indicators, and the MDGs. They are discussed in the third section of this paper.

Gender indicators are appropriate at any level or stage where gender analysis is appropriate. Program planning and annual planning provide opportunities to set goals, objectives and

corresponding indicators that ensure gender is integrated at all levels. Annual review processes then enable reporting on gender-sensitive indicators. The logframe process provides opportunities to undertake a gender analysis and include appropriate gender indicators. A similar approach can be used at the organisational level, to systematically identify, measure and check progress on incorporating gender perspectives and progressing gender issues.

It is also important to look beyond project and program design to broader planning decisions, particularly initial decisions on areas of focus and resourcing. Gendered budget analysis is a method of assessing access and benefit by gender that can be used at all levels – international, national, regional, agency, organisation, program and planning.

3. Examples of gender indicators at the international level

The range and diversity of indicators available in the international arena is notable. To assist in conceptualising types of gender indicators, Beck (1999: 8) identifies 10 clusters:

1. Population composition and change
2. Human settlements and geographic distribution
3. Households and families, marital status, fertility
4. Learning in formal and non-formal education
5. Health, health services, nutrition
6. Economic activity and labour force participation
7. Access to land, equipment and credit
8. Legal rights and political power
9. Violence against women
10. Macroeconomic policy and gender

Classifying gender indicators by these major sites of gender difference helps ensure that particular areas are not overlooked. For example, while UNDP's annual Human Development Report, which records national indicators of development, reports against a total of 43 indicators in six tables, none relate directly to violence against women.

There are many other international agencies that report against indicators relating to gender in all or some of the above clusters depending on their mandate. Here is a brief overview of the approaches and range of indicators used by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations and its agencies, the UN Millennium Development Goals project and the World Bank.

3.1. DAC Gender Equality Guidelines

The Development Cooperation Directorate (DAC) of the OECD's Gender Equality Department have produced the 'DAC Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development Cooperation'. These guidelines provide direction for DAC members in implementing the Beijing PFA, the 1995 DAC High Level Meeting statement on gender equality and policies and programs consistent with international and domestic commitments on gender quality. Generally the guidelines are aimed at national level machinery.

Another useful resource produced by the OECD Gender Equality Department is the 'DAC Source Book on Concepts and Approaches Linked to Gender Equality'.

The OECD's DAC Network on Gender Equality is currently working with the OECD's statistics division on a special report on development assistance, focussed on the achievement of gender equality. Drawing on the data that members provide, the report will use the gender policy marker to get a measure of how much development assistance is being targeted to gender equality activities. It will be launched at Beijing + 10 as a contribution to the debate from the DAC Network on Gender Equality.

3.2. United Nations

The United Nation's main reports, databases and archives relating to gender equality and women's human rights are listed and briefly described in Appendix 1. Appendix 2 lists 310 separate gender indicators in main areas of interest, by agency, and specific statistical databases on the Internet.

UNDP's gender indicators, published in its annual UNDP Human Development Report, are among the most widely cited and used. Many of the standard statistics (i.e. income, health, education) in the annual Human Development Report are sex-disaggregated. The Human Development Index (HDI) attempts to measure well-being through a composite measure of life expectancy, education and income. It goes beyond traditional economic measures of development by measuring development as a combination of income and other non-income variables.

Since 1995, UNDP has used some of the available sex-disaggregated indicators to publish two composite measures focused on gender, the Gender Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measures (GEM) (UNDP, 2004). The GDI was formulated to overcome the fact that the HDI did not account for inter-group inequalities, adjusting the average achievement measure of the HDI to reflect inequalities between men and women in the same dimensions¹. Adjusting for gender disparity will make the GDI lower than the HDI (unless no gender disparity exists). The difference between the HDI and the GDI depends on the size of the gender gap in each component and the penalty factor applied to this gap (Bardhan and Klasen, 1999: 986). For example, the HDI for Australia in 2004 was 0.927, but the GDI was 0.901 whereas for Saudi Arabia the HDI was 0.762 and the GDI was 0.514. The penalty applied for gender inequality in each country (by subtracting the GDI from the HDI) is 0.010 (2.8%) and 0.248 (32.5%) respectively. As demonstrated a country's HDI can dramatically change when calculated as a GDI.

The aim and underlying premise of the GDI is not to measure women's achievements but rather, to include gender inequality in an overall assessment of a country's achievements. This identifies gender inequality as a human development issue, not a woman's issue.

The GEM focuses on women's opportunities rather than their capabilities, through charting progress toward gender equity in the following areas:

1. Political participation and decision-making power, as measured by women and men's percentage share of parliamentary seats.

¹ A long and healthy life measured by life expectancy at birth, knowledge, as measured by the adult literacy rate and combined primary, secondary and tertiary gross enrolment ratio, a decent standard of living, as measured by estimated earned income (PPP US\$).

2. Economic participation and decision-making, as measured by two indicators- women's and men's percentage shares of positions of legislators, senior officials and managers, and women's and men's shares of professional and technical positions.
3. Power over economic resources, as measured by women's and men's estimated earned income (PPP US\$).

The GEM therefore attempts to measure equity in *agency* rather than achievements in well-being (Bardhan and Klasen, 1999). The GEM for Australia in 2004 is 0.806 and for Saudi Arabia, 0.207.

A major criticism of the GEM is that although it measures significant aspects of women's agency, it does not account for the important political and economic roles women play outside of national politics (ie. at the local community level) and the formal economy (Bardhan and Klasen, 1999). Also, women's and men's estimated earned income for poorer sections of the community may be effectively zero, meaning that this measure may only account for the elite.

Both of these measures provide important means of analysing gender inequality and its impact on overall development. By measuring changes in gender disparities over time and across regions, in areas such as education, health, income, and political participation, policy makers can use the GDI and the GEM to help focus debates on gender inequality, its causes and its consequences (Bardhan and Klasen, 1999).

3.3. Millennium Development Goals

'At the United Nations Millennium Summit in September 2000 world leaders placed development at the heart of the global agenda by adopting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which set clear targets for reducing poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation, and discrimination against women by 2015.' (UN Millennium Project, 2004).

The MDGs comprise eight goals supplemented by 18 numerical and time-bound targets and 48 indicators intended to improve living conditions and remedy key global imbalances by 2015. Goal 3 calls for gender equality and women's empowerment: 'Promote gender equality and empower women'. The indicators to measure this goal are:

- Ratio of girls to boys in Primary, Secondary and Tertiary education
- Ratio of literate females to males (aged 15-24)
- Female share of non-agricultural wage employment (%)
- Seats in parliament held by women

These are the same indicators used to make up the GDI and the GEM. No new indicators have been developed since 1995 to measure the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment.

None of the other indicators for monitoring MDGs 1 through to 7 are sex-disaggregated. One indicator for MDG 8 differentiates between males and females (youth unemployment).

The MDGs and associated processes have prompted much discussion among those concerned with promoting gender equality about whether and how to engage and the extent to which the

MDGs present useful strategic tools to advance gender equality, economic justice and peace. A key concern is that Goal 3, which calls for the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, does not recognise that gender equality is not just an objective by itself but also key to achieving the other seven Development Goals.

Others worry about reducing the resolutions, platforms, programs and declarations of the UN conferences of the '80s to eight objectives which exclude concepts, indicators and issues - such as gender-based violence and political participation - that are key to the advancement of women's human rights. The indicators are also quantitative, which limits their ability to measure empowerment.

Nonetheless, the emphasis on monitoring progress re the MDGs is producing useful investments in the capacity of countries to collect disaggregated data. Country reports on the MDGs provide those concerned with gender equality to include specific goals and indicators at the country level. And the MDGs are providing impetus for monitoring developed country policies and contributions.

The MDGs have, as a consequence, become a site for some valuable work on ways to integrate gender (see appendix 3). They have also provoked some high level statements about the centrality of gender to achieving all of the MDGs. In its April 2004 monitoring report on the MDGs, for example, the World Bank recognised that 'the goal of empowerment of women calls for gender concerns to be fully integrated into policymaking more broadly.' And 'Cutting across this agenda is the empowerment of women by removing barriers to their fuller participation in the development process. Promoting gender equality is not only an important social goal itself, but is also essential for the achievement of the development goals more broadly.'¹⁷

While the MDGs have put gender at the heart of the current global development agenda, and given increased profile to gender issues, those who have witnessed the promise and disappointment of gender mainstreaming know that being integral to the development task is no guarantee that issues will be addressed.

The MDGs, appropriately engendered, can be a framework of accountability for governments. A sub-group on Gender Indicators of the Inter-agency and Expert Meeting on the Millennium Development Goal Indicators is but one of the high-level groups working to assist this. But as Noeleen Heyzer wrote in the preface to *Progress of the World's Women 2002*, 'for commitments to have an impact, we need accountability, action, and political will.' As always, that is the challenge.

It is a challenge that has both technical and political dimensions, and the workshop being planned for early 2006 and its development processes is intended to tackle each of these. By taking stock of developments on gender indicators, collecting and reviewing experience in using indicators of various kinds, identifying those that are most useful in measuring progress towards gender equality, and building commitment to their use, we hope to help narrow the gap between policy and change.

¹⁷ Studies find that gender equality contributes to better education and health outcomes (see, for example, Behrman and others 1999). Research on Sub-Saharan Africa shows that greater gender equality in farm inputs could increase farm output by up to 20 percent (Udry 1996). More recent cross-country research has found that gender inequalities in education impede economic growth (Klasen 2002)

3.4. World Bank

The World Bank (2002) has an online database of gender statistics called Genderstats: <http://genderstats.worldbank.org/>. It provides a summary gender profile, thematic data, gender monitoring and data by region. This information can be provided on a country by country basis and international comparisons are available. These statistics are published in the annual World Development Indicators handbook. The Women in Development table in the most recent 2004 version (World Bank, 2004) includes the following indicators:

- Female population (% of total)
- Life expectancy at birth (males vs. female in years)
- Pregnant women receiving prenatal care (%)
- Teenage mothers (% of women aged 15-19)
- Literacy gender parity index (ages 15-24)
- Labor force gender parity index
- Women in non-agricultural sector
- Unpaid family workers (% of male employment vs. % of female employment)
- Women in parliaments (% of total seats)

A number of partners assist the World Bank to compile the data including the US State department, OECD, FAO, IMF, the United Nations and various UN agencies such as UNESCO, UNEP, UNICEF and various independent research institutes (World Bank, 2004b).

3.5. Comparative strengths of the various statistical measures

Of the various statistical measures available, the United Nations and the World Bank have the longest running databanks and the broadest coverage in terms of countries, regions and thematic areas. This enables users to track changes across regions and over time. There is an overlap between the sources of data collected by the World Bank and the United Nations and its agencies, enabling an important cross-checking process. More and more of the statistical measures available are presented as sex-disaggregated statistics where possible.

Available composite measures such as the HDI, GDI and the GEM are useful, but they are only as good as their components and the methodology applied to construct them. For example, in the case of the GDI, greater weight was given to income earned, making the indicator inherently biased in favor of economic measures of development. Nevertheless, such composite measures provide a quick reference point for development that is not solely economically derived.

Gender indicators need to be used critically given that many of the statistics available are problematic and do not accurately or fully reflect women's experiences on the ground. However it is only through engagement with statistics and indicators that we can continue to improve this important method of tracking and evaluating development for women and men (Danner, Fort and Young, 1999).

4. Cross-sector indicators: towards a common vision

The previous section outlined some of the national-level indicators available. These indicators reflect national level data and are recorded through national machinery such as national census

departments. Similar types of indicators can be identified at other levels. Various handbooks and other publications suggest various gender indicators that might be used to monitor progress at the program and project level.

A key challenge we aim to address through this process is identifying and agreeing on some common indicators that reflect how our varied programs and policies can contribute to gender equality. This is difficult not only because of differing reporting procedures within organisations but also because organisations have different strategic objectives, focus on different aspects of development and use different approaches. The diversity of approaches in use means that the development community brings a rich experience to exercises such as this, but this diversity also makes sector-wide approaches and monitoring a challenge. Identification of sector-wide standards and tools to promote gender equality through our work may be a venture through which different development approaches can converge.

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