Chapter 4

Challenges to Gender Mainstreaming

This chapter focuses on challenges to gender mainstreaming in the World Bank by examining, first, the adequacy of the Bank’s existing gender and development policy, and second, the Bank’s track record of integrating gender issues into its development assistance.

Adequacy of the Existing Policy Framework

The Bank’s gender and development policy is embodied in three documents:

- **Operational Manual Statement 2.20.**\(^{43}\) Issued in 1984, this statement presents an overview of the general objectives and key features of the appraisal of investment projects. Within this

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\(^{43}\) World Bank, 1984.
broad framework, it discusses investigating and addressing impacts of investment projects on women. As part of the process of converting Operational Manual Statements to Operational Policy and Bank Procedures statements, new language on the economic, financial, social, and institutional analysis of investment projects is being developed. Gender issues in investment lending will be considered within this process.

• A World Bank policy paper, Enhancing Women’s Participation in Economic Development, was discussed at the Board of Executive Directors in April 1994.44

• Operational Policy 4.20, “The Gender Dimension of Development.” Operational Policy 4.20 (Box 1.3) was issued in 1994 after Board discussion of the accompanying policy paper and a draft policy.

Of these three documents, Operational Policy 4.20 provides the most accessible and comprehensive statement of the Bank’s policy framework. It describes a basic approach in which gender issues are analyzed in each member country and then selective actions are taken to assist the country. These actions include helping member countries to design policies and programs that are “equitably beneficial” for both men and women (including those designed to change men’s attitudes); assisting them to review, modify, and put into practice legal and regulatory frameworks to improve women’s access to assets and services; helping them to strengthen their database for, and train country officials in, gender analysis; and where needed, helping them to obtain financing (including Bank lending) to implement these actions.

Although Operational Policy 4.20 lays out a sensible framework for approaching gender mainstreaming—first analyze the

nature of gender issues in member countries, then assist governments to take selective actions that will help to reduce poverty—there is no statement of Bank Procedures to accompany the policy. The result is the perception of some degree of ambiguity as to the precise implications of the policy for operations.\(^{45}\) This suggests that implementation of the strategy would be more effective if a procedures statement were to accompany the Operational Policy. Explicitly identifying poverty reduction as the goal of gender-related actions would also help to clarify the policy. The Operational Policy will be revised and a Bank Procedures statement written as part of implementation of the strategy.

More generally, in the context of the clarification, revision, and updating of operational statements into the Operational Policy/Bank Procedures format, the issue of the treatment of gender considerations will be taken up. In addition to the statement on the appraisal of investment projects, other relevant operational statements where work is underway include Poverty Reduction, Investment Lending, and Adjustment Lending.

In summary, although the existing policy framework is consistent with the Bank’s mission and contains a mix of comprehensiveness and selectivity that many find appropriate, the existing policy documents contain ambiguities that need to be removed if Bank staff are to fully understand the policy’s implications for operations.

**The Bank’s Track Record**

A recent desk evaluation of the Bank’s record on gender mainstreaming, along with two earlier studies, suggests that attention to gender and development issues in the Bank has grown over the past two dozen years, but could become still more effective.\(^{46}\) Box 4.1

\(^{45}\) World Bank, 2000b.

\(^{46}\) World Bank, 2000b; Murphy, 1995; Murphy, 1997.
Box 4.1 Evolution of the Bank’s Attention to Gender and Development Issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>First Women in Development Advisor is appointed.</td>
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<td>1984</td>
<td>Operational Manual Statement 2.20 addresses the impact of Bank assistance on women as part of project appraisal for certain types of projects.</td>
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<td>1986</td>
<td>A full Women in Development Unit is created.</td>
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<td>1990</td>
<td>Operational Directive on poverty reduction recommends that women’s issues be considered in designing poverty reduction programs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Operational Policy 4.20 is issued; the goals of reducing gender disparities and enhancing women’s participation in the economic development of their countries are established.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>External Gender Consultative Group is established; progress report on gender mainstreaming is given to the Board of Executive Directors’ Committee on Development Effectiveness.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Gender and Development Board is established; progress report on mainstreaming is prepared for the Committee on Development Effectiveness.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Position of head of the Gender and Development Board is raised from a chief/manager to a director level.</td>
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summarizes some of the steps taken by the Bank to enhance attention to gender and development issues in its work, through changes either in policy or in organizational structure. In their day, some of these steps were landmarks. For example, the Bank was the first multilateral donor organization to mandate consideration of impacts on women as part of project appraisal.

Several steps taken in the past four years have given greater visibility to gender and development issues within the Bank. The Gen-
der and Development Board has sponsored several thematic groups focused on gender and development issues. With the Development Economics Vice Presidency, the Gender and Development Board co-sponsored Engendering Development. The World Development Report 2000/2001: Attacking Poverty has also raised awareness of gender issues, in part by expanding the framework for poverty reduction to include security, opportunity, and empowerment. The intellectual framework and knowledge base for integrating gender issues into the Bank’s work have thus been strengthened in recent years.

The record of integrating gender issues into Country Assistance Strategies has been encouraging. Over time, increasing numbers of CASs have discussed gender issues, and in the most recent period, the proportion discussing gender issues in depth has risen substantially.\(^{47}\) There is evidence that the Bank has been integrating gender issues more consistently into its policy dialogue, and there are also many examples suggesting that the focus on gender has increased over the past two to three years in some regions and sectors. On the other hand, attention to gender issues—and gender-responsive actions—is still relatively infrequent in certain aspects of the Bank’s work, especially investment projects outside of the human development areas. This suggests that more systematic attention to gender could be achieved.

An important finding from the Operational Evaluation Department’s study of gender in Bank products in 27 countries was that the eight countries in which Country Gender Assessments were prepared had a better overall integration of gender issues into their Poverty Assessments, Public Expenditure Reviews, and Country Assistance Strategies than did the remaining 19 countries.\(^{48}\) An informed understanding of gender issues in a country helps Bank staff and counterparts do a better job of integrating gender issues into other aspects of country-level work.

\(^{47}\) This finding is from data prepared for the 2000/2001 CAS Retrospective.

\(^{48}\) World Bank, 2000b.
This chapter’s overview of the Bank’s track record in integrating gender issues into standard Bank products suggests that there has been considerable progress, but that there is room for further improvement. Particularly in need of improvement is the depth with which gender issues are integrated into analytical and lending operations. The evidence that country-level products do a better job of integrating gender issues when a gender assessment has first been prepared strongly suggests the value of making country-level gender assessments part of the Bank’s core analytical work.