



Addressing Gender Concerns: The Success of the USAID Gender Plan of Action and USAID Country Programs

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Background

USAID has a long history of involvement with women in development efforts, beginning with the establishment of the Office of Women in Development in 1974 in response to the so-called “Percy Amendment” of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1968. In recent years the Agency has maintained a powerful commitment to gender integration despite severe budget cuts and closures of a number of Missions.

Strengthening Existing Policies

This commitment is reflected, first, in the strengthening and enforcement of historically existing structures and policies:

- USAID was one of the first donors to adopt a women in development policy back in 1981. It calls for gender integration in all USAID programs, and its tenets are being implemented.
- The budget of the Office of Women in Development has been substantially maintained despite an environment of severely constrained resources for development assistance.
- In addition, the technical capability of the Office of Women in Development has been strengthened with appropriate, expert staff.
- USAID has played a key role in the series of United Nations conferences that have addressed issues of great importance for women: Cairo, the Social Summit, and Beijing.
- USAID has developed a strong collaborative relationship with the non-governmental sector in strategizing about how best to ensure that gender issues are addressed in development assistance.

The Gender Plan of Action

The second way in which commitment to gender integration is reflected is in the expansion of historically existing policies and structures with the adoption of the Gender Plan of Action in March 1996, with additional actions put in place in June 1996. This plan explicitly recognizes the broad institutional changes that are required to effectively ensure gender integration in our programs. It has three main goals:

1. To build commitment to consideration of gender issues as key development issues — acknowledging that these issues must be addressed in the strategic framework which now guides all of our programming;
2. To build the capacity, or capability, to address gender in all Agency programs — in recognition that policy has to be supported by know-how; and

3. To build incentives for consideration of gender issues — that is, to reward appropriate attention to these issues.

The Gender Plan encompasses more than fifteen specific actions including the introduction of gender expertise as a consideration in the award of USAID contracts and grants; the introduction of performance on gender integration as a factor in staff performance ratings and, for foreign service officers, for tenure and promotion considerations; the implementation of a women in development fellows program to help build a technical cadre knowledgeable in these issues; the incorporation of gender considerations into the Agency's technical training programs for field officers; and a commitment, in our new results-driven systems, to determine and incorporate the appropriate indicators of USAID program impact on women.

Implementation of the Gender Plan of Action has been achieved in several areas. The Agency's strategic framework has been revised to better reflect the importance of gender considerations. The framework's preamble now explicitly states USAID's commitment to full participation by women in all sustainable development activities. The key role of women is noted in statements of goals for Democracy and Governance, Human Capacity Development, Population, Health and Nutrition, and Humanitarian Assistance and women are specifically targeted in strategic objectives under each of these goals.

Gender has become a key cross-cutting issue that must be addressed in what is referred to as our R4 process — that is Results Review and Resource Request, the process by which the Agency is tying the achievement of concrete results in the field to the allocation of resources.

A highly successful women-in-development Fellows program has been established. Agency technical training through the Global Bureau now addresses gender considerations. The Agency's competitive assistance guidelines have been revised to include language on the importance of addressing gender issues in grants and cooperative agreements.

Data and Indicators. USAID continues to work on developing a centralized system of data reporting, most likely through a revamping of project coding in the NMS. In the meantime, we have been quite successful in ensuring that we are able to determine the impact of USAID programs on women in the field. In the Africa region, at least 17 Missions are now collecting and reporting sex-disaggregated data in the Agency's Results Review and Resource Request (R4) process. In Asia and the Near East, 10 Missions are reporting the impact on girls and women of programs with a focus ranging from broadened participation in local decision making to improved coastal resources management. In the Global Bureau, our centrally funded programs report sex-disaggregated data in population, health and nutrition programs; democracy and governance; education; economic growth; and, of course, women in development.

This data reflects the strategic objectives set by each USAID operating unit. It is thus not uniform and cannot easily be aggregated. Its richness lies in its variety, demonstrating the many different ways in which USAID is improving women's lives.

The table below shows a selection of indicators being collected by various Missions.

USAID MISSION	SECTOR	INDICATOR
Ethiopia	Education	Gross enrollment rate by sex
Ghana	Democracy	% of women voters who vote in District Assembly elections
Malawi	Economic Growth	% of registered smallholders who are women
Indonesia	Democracy	Increase in number of effective NGO advocacy campaigns focused on women's issues
Morocco	Economic Growth	Number of business licenses issued to women
Albania	Economic Growth	Number of clients receiving business services, by sex
Macedonia	Democracy	Number of female candidates put forward by target parties as % of all candidates
Ecuador	Economic Growth	Increase in number of micro-entrepreneur borrowers, by sex
El Salvador	Education	Annual achievement test scores in 3 rd grade, by sex

Pending Actions. Our work continues on a number of pending actions including personnel-related elements of the Gender Plan of Action (e.g., consideration of accomplishments in addressing gender issues in assessments of staff performance; explicit responsibility for addressing gender issues in position descriptions); the introduction of capability to address gender issues as a consideration in the award of USAID contracts; and a new or updated policy paper on women in development. While USAID has been cited as a model for institutionalizing gender considerations by the President's InterAgency Council on Women, the Advisory Committee on Voluntary Foreign Aid (ACVFA), and the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD/DAC), these elements are expected to have fundamental and far reaching effects in furthering USAID accomplishments in this area.

Improved Results. In virtually all field Missions there is a notable increase in the extent to which a main consideration in programming is whether and how programs will affect women. The Office of Women in Development is responding to an outpouring of requests for assistance in addressing gender as field Missions develop or revise their strategic plans, and design and implement the activities that will support their strategic plans. WID Office sector and regional specialists, including our contractors and collaborators, are truly considered key team members throughout the Agency and its field Missions. In each region of the world, we have seen positive impacts on the status of women.

Africa

Economic Growth. Economic growth and agricultural development programs in Africa seek to foster increased incomes for farmers, an enhanced role for private sector participation in the economy, and improvements in marketing, trade and investment. Gender is well-integrated into these programs, and women comprise a substantial proportion of beneficiaries. In Uganda, South Africa, and Kenya, for example, women constitute between 60 and 90 percent of USAID-funded

microenterprise loan recipients. These loans help entrepreneurs to expand their businesses, increase their incomes, and generate employment. Incomes of women farmers in Malawi increased by 40 percent between 1991 and 1997 as a result of market liberalization policies and technical innovations introduced by USAID. The Agency's promotion of non-traditional agricultural exports has benefited women farmers in Uganda and Ghana, who make up one-third of the producers of crops such as pineapples, vanilla, mushrooms and oil palm. The value of these exports quadrupled between 1992 and 1997. USAID/Ghana also provided support to the Ghana Association of Women Entrepreneurs to host the annual meeting of the International Federation of Women Entrepreneurs, attracting 400 participants from 30 countries to attend a week-long conference and forum on improving women's roles in international trade and investment.

Population, Health and Nutrition. USAID's population, health and nutrition programs have traditionally targeted women and their children, and have focused on establishing sustainable programs in family planning, child survival, and HIV/AIDS prevention. Nearly 600,000 women die every year from causes related to pregnancy, childbirth and abortion — and almost half of these maternal deaths occur in Africa. In response to this challenge, seventeen bilateral Missions and two regional programs support family planning by providing training, logistical support, commodities, and/or institutional capacity-building, with a strong emphasis on increasing access and improving the quality of services. In Kenya, where USAID has long been the lead donor, total fertility has declined by almost 40 percent over the life of the program, while Tanzania has seen a doubling of the contraceptive prevalence rate in the past five years, from under six percent to almost 12 percent of women of reproductive age. The adoption of modern methods of family planning delivers benefits to women and children in the form of reduced burdens of illness and death.

Child survival interventions form integral parts of wider programs of support to maternal and child health. The integration of services has important economic as well as health-related benefits for women and children. USAIDs/Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Malawi have all been successful in increasing the rate of immunization coverage, which in Eritrea went up from 41 percent to 55 percent, with equal benefits to girls and boys, in just two years. Eritrea has also made iodized salt available through commercial channels, with important benefits for women in their childbearing years. Targeted programs to improve the rate of polio immunization have been highly effective and have benefited girls and boys. As a direct result of USAID collaboration with the Ministry of Health, 98 percent of under-fives in Tanzania are now protected from polio, dramatically reducing the risk of death or permanent disability.

Women in Africa are far more vulnerable than men to the risk of STD and HIV infection, and much less able to negotiate the use of protective measures. They also shoulder the burden of providing comfort, care and financial support to AIDS victims, including orphaned children. USAID programs are addressing these gender issues through: the social marketing of male condoms, often in conjunction with training for women in negotiation skills; feasibility studies, clinical trials and limited social marketing of female condoms; training, often through local NGOs, in home-based care and counseling; prevention-focused information campaigns; and provision of social support services and income-generating opportunities for orphans. USAID support has contributed to significant declines in HIV seroprevalence at target sites in Uganda. Sales of USAID condoms doubled between 1996 and 1997 in Mozambique, Kenya, Tanzania and Ghana, and increases in the use of condoms in high-risk sex, particularly for women, have also been

recorded. In Tanzania, a network of more than 200 local NGOs works in 9 regions, containing over half of the population, to provide support services for AIDS patients and survivors. USAID/Tanzania has also established a funding mechanism to provide support for innovative approaches to orphan assistance, thus relieving some of the burden that women carry.

Environment. In Africa, USAID environmental programs are often integrated into sustainable agriculture programs. These provide direct benefits to women, who make up well over half of the region's farmers. USAID/Senegal has recorded the increased adoption and spread of key natural resource management practices by groups of women farmers in target regions. For example, the proportion of women using improved seed increased from none to 18.5 percent between 1992 and 1996, generating significant increases in productivity. The women's groups reported that the USAID project had given them their first opportunity to play a significant role in decision-making at household and community level, and to demonstrate that productivity and income improve if women have access to improved technology. USAID programs in Kenya, Namibia, Ghana and Zimbabwe have increased labor and income-generating opportunities for women living adjacent to national parks and reserves. Women participate in, and control the earnings from, such diverse activities as organic cocoa production, silkworm farming, sheep-rearing, and local formal employment. They have also become an integral part of the decision-making process for the distribution of revenues generated from natural resources-related activities at the community level.

Democracy and Governance. Seventeen Africa programs have democracy and governance objectives. Most of these programs emphasize participation, either through civil society engagement or the increased effectiveness and inclusiveness of local government institutions. USAID/Kenya has explicitly targeted the strengthening of civil society through increased participation of women. Sixty percent of the organizations supported work in rural areas and half have an explicit gender focus. Data from the recent Kenyan elections demonstrate that women have made considerable gains both as voters and as office-seekers, at national and local levels. The number of women nominated to stand for Parliamentary seats increased from 25 in 1992 to 63 in 1997, and 78 women won seats on local government bodies, compared with 48 in the earlier election. USAID-supported networking and skill-building activities were instrumental in these accomplishments. In Nigeria, the Mission has supported work primarily at the grassroots with women's organizations. Over 1,000 women's groups with over 800,000 members participated in networking and coalition-building programs. They have advocated for reform of traditional practices and have won a judgement in favor of inheritance by women of the husband's estate in one region of the country. Other programs that have been successful in promoting aspects of women's legal rights include Senegal, where female genital cutting has been outlawed; and Tanzania, where a woman's right to inherit land has been recognized in the Land Bill after intensive lobbying by the USAID-supported Tanzania Gender Networking Program.

Human Capacity Development. USAID has accomplished landmark achievements in improving girls' and women's access to basic education in sub-Saharan Africa. Seven country programs have an explicit focus on basic education and each of these programs has incorporated strategies to address issues of access, enrollment, retention, and completion for girls. Malawi's GABLE program has had a positive impact on creating demand for girls' education and removing barriers to their enrollment and persistence in school; the proportion of girls in the primary school population increased (approaching parity) from 39 percent in 1992 to 48 percent in 1997 as a

result of the program. The gross enrollment of girls has also increased in Benin and Ethiopia. In Uganda, not only enrollment but performance and completion rates have improved. USAID/Uganda has also implemented an incentive grants program to encourage schools and communities to develop their own strategies for overcoming constraints to girls' performance and retention, and helped to design gender-sensitive teacher training materials.

Case Study: Guinea.

USAID/Guinea has fully integrated gender issues into its assistance program. Activities implemented in all program areas have addressed the needs of women, especially resource-poor women in rural areas. Women have been targeted for improved access to agribusiness and enterprise training, to credit, and to marketing opportunities. The critical role of women in natural resource management has been promoted and they are the key beneficiaries of resource management activities. In the health sector, women have benefited from family planning and HIV prevention activities. Partnerships with the Government of Guinea and local and overseas NGOs have resulted in notable increases in girls' enrollment in primary school. Participant training programs have enabled Guinean women to move into key decision-making posts.

USAID/Guinea operates under four strategic objectives and one special objective, each of which impact women.

Strategic Objective 1: Growth in agricultural markets. This program aims to assist all Guineans who engage in agricultural production. Women have benefited the most because they comprise the majority of farmers and provide the bulk of agricultural labor. The rehabilitation of rural roads, a key activity under this SO, has improved the links between producers and markets, and reduced transportation costs and travel time. Women in target areas who used to carry their produce on their heads and walk for hours to the markets can now bring more produce to the markets by vehicle, at affordable cost and with significant timesavings. The result has been increased participation in marketing activities and increased income for women. The road projects have also increased women's access to services, especially health services.

The credit program implemented under the integrated rural enterprise development activity has assisted resource-poor Guineans, especially women, to start micro and small enterprises, which generate jobs and incomes. As of late 1997 over 36,000 loans totaling more than \$8 million had been disbursed, 70 percent of them to women. Women have also participated actively in medium and large-scale agribusiness activities supported by the Mission. Women are active in the leadership of the agricultural marketing and investment activity, occupying several positions on the board of directors, and have also participated strongly in agribusiness training programs.

Strategic Objective 2: Family planning and health. In addition to supporting family planning, child survival, and HIV/AIDS interventions, of which women are the principal beneficiaries, USAID/Guinea has also undertaken to address the issue of female genital cutting (FGC). FGC is widely practiced in Guinea, affecting up to 90 percent of women. Working with a local NGO (CPTAFE: La cellule de coordination sur les pratiques traditionnelles affectant la

sante des femmes et des enfants), the Mission is funding research, building capacity at CPTAFE, and developing a strategy to promote eradication of the FGC practice in the country.

The family planning and HIV/AIDS activities have emphasized service provision for rural women who previously had no access to commodities or prevention education. The Mission-supported social marketing program is also making supplies and services available through private-sector channels, improving access and options.

Strategic Objective 3: Increased primary school enrollment. Low enrollment, especially of girls and in rural areas, is a critical problem in Guinea. With USAID/Guinea and G/WID support, girls' enrollment increased from 19 percent of the total first grade enrollment in 1991, to 35.5 percent in 1996/7. The improvement has been even greater in rural areas, with the proportion of girls rising from 24 percent to 46 percent of total primary enrollment between 1992 and 1996, an increase of 92 percent. This increase can be attributed to parents' growing awareness of the indisputable investment value of girls' education. The Mission and its partners are also emphasizing the quality of education, and are addressing gender considerations in every aspect of basic education: curriculum design, instructional materials, teacher training, classroom management and practices, and safety and security. The program also emphasizes building partnerships between civil society organizations, communities, the private sector, and government agencies that will address the needs of girls and rural children in the educational system.

Strategic Objective 4: Civil society and good governance. USAID/Guinea is helping to foster the participation of citizens in democratic processes by working with grassroots associations and rural group enterprises, applying principles of rigor, transparency, participation and cooperation. In 1996 53 percent of the participants in group activities and associations were women, as were one-third of the field assistants and organizers working with the groups. The partnership activities described under SO 3 also serve to increase civil society participation and to promote good governance.

Special Objective: Protecting the environment. The special objective focused on protecting the fragile agro-ecological environment in the Fouta Djallon Highlands, and included women in every aspect of its development activities. Watershed women have been provided with a platform to debate critical resource management and economic issues in the community. Women make up almost half of the membership of community groups, which are responsible for stewardship of common resources. They have also benefited from the development in the project area of small enterprises such as pepper and onion production, soap making, indigo dying, and poultry. Through these programs access to credit, and women's income, have both increased. Women were also targeted for time and labor saving interventions, including well improvements to increase domestic and irrigation water supplies. The training component has focused on women at several levels: as leaders and change agents, as entrepreneurs, and as farmers.

USAID/Guinea has also had a special initiative to provide long-term training to women to obtain undergraduate degrees. In 1997, ten women teachers received scholarships to earn

bachelor's degrees in science education. Many alumna of the participant training program have moved into key decision-making positions in both the public and the private sectors.

Latin America and the Caribbean

Economic Growth. Under its economic growth and agricultural development goal, the Agency works to promote prosperity and eradicate poverty and discrimination in the hemisphere by strengthening markets and expanding economic access and opportunity for the poor. Toward this end, Agency programs provide credit, technical assistance and other financial services to both women and men entrepreneurs in the informal sector. In 1996, for example, more than 260,000 women in the region participated in such programs and numbers are growing. Women represent approximately 70 percent of participants in projects in Bolivia and Ecuador, and about 79 percent of active clients in a microenterprise program in Honduras.

Other economic initiatives supported by USAID in Latin America and the Caribbean include those dealing with agricultural production and export, financial services and land tenure. Activities supporting nontraditional agricultural exports in Nicaragua resulted in significant job creation for both women and men, with almost 9,000 jobs — 39 percent of the total — created for women in agricultural processing alone. In El Salvador and Honduras, land-titling projects are providing individualized land titles to farmers, with about 25 percent of those titles issued to women.

Human Capacity Development. In the goal area of human capacity development, activities in the region emphasize the expansion and improvement of basic education. USAID works with education, government and private sector leaders on innovative ways to extend access to quality education, especially to girls from indigenous and low-income groups who are more likely drop out before completing primary school. Programs in Bolivia, Guatemala and Peru focus on mobilizing local and national decision makers to understand the importance of educating girls. Other examples include the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Jamaica and Nicaragua where activities are improving the quality of and access to education for both girls and boys, taking into account the needs of female students and teachers in the projects' design and implementation. Elsewhere, alternative education systems are making a difference for those who have already left school. A recent study confirmed the value of this approach. In Honduras, for example, the gender gap in income between men and women in such a project narrowed from 42 to 15 percent when women completed grade 6 through alternative education, and civic participation by women increased from 44 to 57 percent after just nine months.

Democracy and Governance. In the democracy and governance area, USAID focuses on strengthening the rule of law and respect for human rights, supporting the political process, strengthening civil society, and making government more responsive to the people. In this context, Agency programs address critical constraints to women's access to justice in six country programs. For example, in Colombia, USAID provides alternative dispute resolution through its judicial services centers, which have proved more accessible than the court system to women, who represent at least 75 percent of the users. In another example, the LAC Regional Program works closely with the Inter-American Institute for Human Rights, located in Costa Rica, to extend training, outreach and public education on domestic and sexual violence, as well as other human rights issues. In Paraguay, USAID worked with Paraguayan NGOs on voter registration

and civic education initiatives to increase participation in the 1996 and 1998 elections. As a result, the percentage of women registered to vote increased to 45 of the total in 1998, an increase of 2 percentage points in two years.

Population, Health and Nutrition. Under the Agency goal to stabilize world population and protect human health, specific programs work toward sustainable reductions in: unintended pregnancies, child and maternal mortality and transmission of STDs and HIV. Toward this end, women in El Salvador are trained as health promoters in addition to receiving health services through two USAID supported health projects. In Brazil, institutional strengthening for organizations working with at risk youth has resulted in youth who are better equipped to avoid sexual exploitation, pregnancy and HIV/AIDS infection. In Recife alone, the pregnancy rate dropped to less than 1 percent for 1000 adolescent women assisted. And in Bolivia, program participants are increasing their ability to build coalitions, work with their municipal governments and advocate for sufficient resources for reproductive health services.

Environment. Finally, the Agency encourages sound environmental management through its focus on six areas critical to sustainable development: forests, water, agricultural lands, coastal resources, energy production and use, and urban and industrial pollution. Program activities recognize and plan for women's roles as natural resource users and managers. In Jamaica, for example, 3700 women farmers learned about and used technologies suitable to their crops and rugged terrain. Not only were fragile environmental areas protected, but also production and productivity levels actually increased by 50-200 percent for this project as a whole. Similar activities in Ecuador, El Salvador and Peru have incorporated women to a significant degree as well. The Peru case employs a highly innovative approach to solid waste collection in a poor section of northern Lima. As a result, one female owned business now employs 17 people, turns solid waste into compost at its own sanitary landfill and supports tree planting and other community campaigns. The business serves as a model to other women-owned and operated solid waste microenterprises throughout Peru.

Asia and the Near East

Economic Growth. Economic growth and agricultural development programs in Asia and the Near East seek to foster increased incomes for farmers, an enhanced role for private sector participation in the economy, and improvements in marketing, trade, and investment. USAID/Bangladesh has focused three economic growth objectives on improving the lives of the rural poor, with a strong focus on women. Food programs are targeted to vulnerable groups, especially female heads of household and pregnant/lactating women. Approximately 75 percent of the farmers benefiting from interventions to increase their agricultural productivity in vegetable and fish production are women. A micro enterprise program continues to give project loans primarily to women. Food-for-work programs are targeted to vulnerable groups, especially female heads of household and pregnant/lactating women. Egypt and Jordan have developed programs, which understand that policy-level changes will affect men and women differentially. With women as only 11% of the work force in each country, policies are now being reviewed to determine their people-level implications.

Human Capacity Development. USAID assistance to basic education programs concentrates on boosting girls' access to quality basic education and on improving women's literacy. The five USAID basic education countries in the Asia and Near East region achieved a dramatic reduction in the primary school gender gap — the difference between boys' and girls' enrollment rates -- over the past decade. The regional average gap fell from 30.4 percent in 1986 to 20.8 percent in 1996. At the country level, the gender gap fell from 26 percent to 18 percent in India, from 35 percent to 24 percent in Morocco, and from 53 percent to 33 percent in Nepal. Despite this impressive progress, each of these countries still has along way to go to reach gender equality. Progress has been slower in Cambodia and Egypt, though the gender gaps there have been smaller than in other countries in the region.

USAID supported literacy programs for adult women and out-of-school adolescent girls were implemented by local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The programs helped raise the literacy rate among adult women in the targeted districts from less than 22 percent in 1991 to 28 percent in 1996. In 1997, more than 100,000 women learned to read, write, and count in USAID-sponsored literacy classes. An evaluation of these programs detected several changes in the behavior and attitudes of women who have become literate. These include greater political awareness, greater participation in groups outside their families, increased control over income, greater influence in household decisions, more mobility, enhanced self-confidence, greater respect from family and community members, and increased ability to envision a different future for themselves and for their children.

Population, Health and Nutrition. USAID's population, health and nutrition programs have targeted women and their children and have focused on establishing sustainable programs in family planning, reducing maternal mortality, child survival, and HIV/AIDS prevention. USAID/Egypt has supported local groups in their lobbying against female genital cutting. As a result, female circumcision has been banned, even if a girl has signed permission from her family.

Environment. USAID focuses on women's participation in natural resource management, water supply and demand as the heart of bilateral development issues and regional concerns for sustainable development. USAID/Philippines' program has done an excellent job of promoting women's participation and leadership in community-based natural resource management, with women as 40 percent of the forestry users groups' members. In Indonesia, USAID studied the differential access to urban environmental infrastructure by female vs. male-headed households.

Democracy and Governance. Ten ANE Missions have democracy and governance objectives. Most of these programs emphasize participation, either through civil society engagement or the increased effectiveness and inclusiveness of local government institutions. USAID Missions in Bangladesh, Morocco, Nepal, and India have explicitly targeted the strengthening of civil society through increased participation of women. USAID/Bangladesh focuses its democracy activities largely on women. Particularly exciting was the GOB's new law in 1997, mandating the election of women to one-third of all local political offices. Due to USAID's voter education efforts, in the most recent elections, over 80 percent of eligible women voters voted, double the number in 1991 — and contributing to the country's largest turnout ever (74%). In India, the mission has launched a participatory process for the preparation of a national status report on domestic violence against women, which will be used by Indian advocacy groups in the future to advocate for change. The Mission itself is wisely adopting a neutral position, assisting with the

provision of facts. The Mission has also supported a Special Objective to increase women's decision-making to reduce violence against women. A National Advisory Committee was formed on violence with an established consensus among partners on key conceptual issues and active engagement in planning the research for a national status report.

Europe and the New Independent States

Economic Restructuring. USAID's initial efforts in economic restructuring included women largely as microentrepreneurs in beginning new businesses. As a group, women often comprised the majority of recipients of micro loans. While these efforts were worthwhile and resulted in a more dynamic entrepreneurial sector, they fell far short of ensuring that women received equal pay for equal work, were protected from sexual harassment, received equal access to larger loans, and were adequately trained in business skills. Recognizing this programmatic shortfall, USAID has taken measures to bridge the gaps in this area. Many Missions now stipulate that women must comprise at least half of all persons trained in business. A four-country program is investigating how women have been disproportionately disadvantaged during the transition with regard to their economic rights, and is making policy recommendations to remedy this situation, as well as working with local women's organizations to plan effective advocacy campaigns. Not only does a regional strategy for small and medium enterprise now integrate gender, but also specific programs are underway which specifically focus on women's unique needs in business. Such programs include:

In Russia, USAID works to enhance the development of the small business sector by facilitating re-employment, business start-up and expansion, and public recognition of the role of small businesses. By establishing small business incubators and operating self-sustaining lending/leasing programs in four cities, the programs provides business training, business incubator services, and credit for Russian entrepreneurs. During the past four years, this program has received nearly \$6 million; approximately 80 percent of clients are women.

In Hungary, USAID supports the development of policies that are favorable to small and medium enterprises and private sector development. Fully one-third of the beneficiaries of this \$5 million program are women. Surveys, association training, economic roundtables and small working group sessions are included in this assistance. One such survey led to the establishment of a Women's Department at the Ministry of Labor (now called the Equal Opportunity Office).

Democratic Transition. USAID's commitment to building sustainable democracies is highlighted throughout the region. But vibrant democracies depend on the full and equal participation of women — at all levels of society. Since the transition to a market-based economy, women have comprised the majority of citizens working on civil society issues. Yet their participation in formal decision-making has plummeted from roughly one-third of all elected officials to between 3 and 20 percent. No longer protected by quotas, which guaranteed their participation in the Communist regime, women must now establish themselves as viable candidates in societies, which all too often marginalize their concerns. In addition, respect for their rights has waned. Human rights groups throughout the region decry the increase in abuses

directed toward women, such as gender-based violence and sexual trafficking. And women's right to full economic participation has yet to be realized in any country in the region.

Seeking to remedy these serious problems, USAID has adopted a two-pronged approach to assisting women in the democracy portfolio. First, specific programs aimed at women's needs have been launched in nearly every country in the region. Second, existing programs are beginning to more successfully integrate women's issues into their current programming efforts. As a result, USAID is now leading the way for other donors to invest in this area and achieve meaningful contributions for women in the region.

A few examples of such assistance include:

- In Bosnia, Croatia, and Macedonia, USAID fosters women's participation in developing civil society through training women's NGOs in effective advocacy techniques. Such training includes capacity building in public policy advocacy, democracy leadership, sustainability, and linkages to other sectors. A broad range of activities such as newspaper publishing, support for crisis centers, and women's voter education have been supported. Nearly \$1 million has funded this three-year program; 100 percent of the beneficiaries are women.
- In Russia, the American Bar Association incorporates gender concerns into its existing program through a focus on violence against women. Activities include roundtables with women's rights activists, legislators, and academics; policy dialogue; review of existing laws; and drafting legislation. In Central Asia, ABA is helping to establish women's bar associations as well as training lawyers on the gender dimensions of the law.
- Social Stabilization. The transition to a market-based economy has severely affected both women and children. Generous maternity benefits are no longer in place. Child care centers have either closed or no longer offer the quality of care that was available during the Communist regime. Pensioners — the majority of whom are women — continue to see their meager resources shrink. Homelessness has become a serious problem, particularly among aged women.
- USAID's increased commitment to women is exemplified in USAID/Central Asia's approach to this sector. Requesting a gender assessment by the Office of Women in Development, the Mission actively sought areas in which USAID assistance could better integrate women in this sector. Following this assessment, the Mission identified the issue of gender-based violence as one in which they would invest, and is actively seeking ways in which to address this problem. In a similar vein, USAID/Russia specifically requested a design team to incorporate issues of violence against women into a new program for maternal and child health. Awareness of the unique contributions that women offer, coupled with a deeper understanding of constraints that they face, have resulted in this increased commitment to expand this assistance area to better respond to the needs that local women themselves have vocalized.

Other examples of USAID assistance in this area include:

- In Moldova, over \$600,000 of medical equipment, outfittings, consumables, supplies, and vehicles were delivered to the Institute for Mother Child Health Protection. Nearly three-quarters of beneficiaries were women;
- In Russia, USAID developed 24 regional women's health education centers throughout the country. Nearly 250,000 women have been included in safe motherhood training. One hundred percent of the beneficiaries of this \$550,000 program are women.

A Special Focus on Girls' Education

Under USAID's Third Goal, *Human capacity built through education and training*, USAID works to *expand access to quality basic education for under-served populations, especially for girls and women*. USAID places special emphasis on expanding and improving primary education, while supporting pre-primary and lower-secondary education where conditions warrant. The objective also includes literacy programs for adults and out-of-school children, with a focus on women and girls.

Many developing countries fail to ensure that girls have adequate access to basic education, despite the well-known benefits of educating girls (i.e. higher labor productivity, improvements in child survival, reductions in fertility rates, and support for the education of the next generation).

Thus, while most developing countries have made substantial progress in recent decades in raising total primary and secondary school enrollment rates and achieving basic literacy, the gap in boys' and girls' enrollment and school completion often remains high. This is especially true in Africa and in many countries of the Asia/ Near East region.

Highlights of USAID's Recent Accomplishments in Girls' and Women's Education. The following examples highlight successes in USAID's work in human capacity development with a focus on girls or women .

- Community Schools

Throughout Africa, communities are increasingly involved in educational reform, particularly in school management. With USAID assistance, communities in **Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Mali,** and **Malawi** have formed committees of parents, teachers, and community leaders to evaluate and address the development and maintenance needs of local schools.

A Community School Grants Program, established in the northern and southern provinces of **Ethiopia** is helping improve the classroom environment for children, particularly girls. USAID-sponsored development agents work with local communities to help them draft action plans that prioritize the needs of local schools and outline a strategy for reaching their goals. USAID awarded community seed grants averaging about \$400—matched by community contributions, often as high as five times the initial grant—to fund activities ranging from the construction and repair of latrines and classrooms to the purchase of educational materials for students and

teachers. More than half the schools in the northern region have participated in the program since 1994, helping maintain primary enrollment ratios well above the national average.

With USAID sponsorship, a U.S. private voluntary organization (PVO) actively promoted community-school partnerships in **Mali** and **Malawi**. The goal was to establish primary schools in remote areas where none existed. Teachers for these schools, unlike for traditional government schools, are selected by the community from among its own members and typically have no more than a primary school certificate, but receive substantial supervision and in-service training. Teachers often give instruction in the local language and scale down and adapt the curriculum to local needs. The school calendar is adapted to local needs, and greater effort is made to promote community participation than is typical in government schools. Classes are smaller (restricted to 30 in Mali and 50 in Malawi) and girls' enrollments are substantially higher in these schools compared with public schools. Children in the targeted schools performed as well as or better in all subjects than children in government schools. Repetition and dropout rates in targeted schools were lower than in government schools, and promotion rates were higher.

- Using Food Aid to Boost School Completion

In **Bolivia**, USAID's Food for Education Program (Public Law 480 Title II) supported a school feeding program designed to encourage poor rural families to keep their children in school rather than allowing them to drop out before graduation. Grade completion rates for boys and girls rose from 84 percent in 1996 to 89 percent in 1997 in USAID-targeted schools. For girls alone, the completion rate rose from 86 percent to 90 percent, while the dropout rate for both genders fell from 11 percent to 7 percent, well below the target of 9 percent in 1997.

- Increasing School Completion through Improved Educational Quality

For many years, USAID has supported efforts by the Ministry of Education in **Honduras** to improve educational quality, including funding the development and adoption of improved textbooks and teacher training in improved teaching methods. These efforts contributed to a 280 percent increase in standardized test scores from 1990 through 1997. The improved quality of schooling in turn helped boost sixth-grade completion rates, which rose from 55 percent in 1986 to 73 percent in 1997. In both measures, the gains achieved by girls slightly exceeded those of boys.

- Increasing Mathematics Achievement

In **Jamaica**, the second phase of USAID's Primary Education Assistance Program supported teacher training and improvements in the primary mathematics curriculum and related teaching materials. The program helped train educational assessment coordinators for local primary schools and master math teachers, who provide ongoing support for other teachers. Although the program ended in 1996, the government of Jamaica has continued to pursue these improvements using its own resources. Together, these efforts helped boost average performance of third-grade students on standardized math tests by 4 percent from 1996 through 1997, exceeding expectations and reversing a steady 10-year decline in national indicators of education performance.

- Increasing Women's Literacy

Basic education programs supported by the Bureau for **Asia and the Near East** concentrate on educating girls and illiterate women. In **Nepal**, USAID supported literacy programs for adult women and out-of-school adolescent girls implemented by local and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The programs helped raise the literacy rate among adult women in the targeted districts from less than 22 percent in 1991 to 28 percent in 1996. In 1997, more than 100,000 women learned to read, write, and count in USAID-sponsored literacy classes. An evaluation of these programs detected several changes in the behavior and attitudes of women who have become literate. These include greater political awareness, greater participation in groups outside their families, increased control over income, greater influence in household decisions, more mobility, enhanced self-confidence, greater respect from family and community members, and increased ability to envision a different future for themselves and for their children.

- Expanding Basic Education through Distance Learning

In **Honduras**, the USAID-supported Education for All Program uses distance learning techniques to reduce educational inequities and improve incomes. The program helps out-of-school youth and adults, both men and women, complete their basic education, using radio or cassette instruction supported with texts and volunteer facilitators. Local municipalities and the private sector and municipalities have provided impressive support. For example, in 1997 14 private sector employers started sponsoring Education for All programs in the workplace, providing class time, lesson facilitators, and tape players. Municipalities honored volunteer facilitators with certificates of recognition or monthly stipends. The program provided some 53,000 student-years of basic education in 1997. An evaluation concluded that students earned an extra \$40 a year for each year of the program completed, achieving a financial rate of return greater than 200 percent.

- American Schools and Hospitals Abroad

The American Schools and Hospitals Abroad program, managed by the Bureau for Humanitarian Response, provided grants to overseas secondary schools, colleges, and universities founded or sponsored by U.S. citizens. The schools serve as demonstration centers that promote U.S. ideas and practices. The grants supported improvements in facilities and equipment, including the adoption of state-of-the-art American technologies. For example, USAID funding led to the completion in 1997 of a women's dormitory at the Pan-American School of Agriculture in **Honduras**.

The dormitory contributed to a 38 percent increase in female enrollment at the school.

Results Achieved. These approaches have had a discernable impact. Among the nine USAID basic education countries in the Africa region, the average gender gap declined markedly from 28.1 percent in 1986 to 23.5 percent in 1996. The five USAID basic education countries in Asia and the Near East region also achieved a dramatic reduction in the primary school gender gap over the past decade. The regional average gap fell from 30.4 percent in 1986 to 20.8 percent in 1996. In Latin America and the Caribbean the already low regional gender gap fell from 6.2 percent to 4.5 percent from 1986 through 1996.

A Special Focus on Women's Legal Rights

Vibrant societies rely on protecting the rights of all people under the law. Sustainable democracies depend upon the fair and impartial administration of justice and rule of law. Yet despite recent advances in helping countries come to grips with such equitable legal principles, limitations on women's rights remain despread. Such constraints undermine democratic reform, inhibit economic and social progress, and reduce the effectiveness of development programs in all sectors.

At the United Nations Fourth World Conference in Beijing, then-UN Ambassador Madeline Albright announced a new US Government Initiative which would have far-reaching effects on women's lives around the world. The Women's Legal Rights Initiative, administered by the Office of Women in Development, seeks to help women understand and use the legal system to promote their participation in social and economic life. The Initiative focuses on key issues regarding legislation, the judiciary and community-level norms. Components include support for the research and action programs of several USAID development partner organizations, and a centrally-funded technical support activity currently underway.

Now completing its second year, the Initiative has already achieved important results for women in both decision-making and advancing legal rights.

Women's Economic and Legal Rights in Asia. A multi-country program in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Nepal and Sri Lanka, appries women workers of their legal rights, develops strategies for protecting their legal and economic interests, trains paralegals to provide legal assistance for women, and undertakes public interest litigation to promote the acknowledgement and extension of women's rights.

- The case for a class action suit in *Bangladesh* regarding loss of life in an industrial accident--the first of its kind in that country--has been identified and is undergoing legal analysis for trial. The case involves 8 women garment workers who perished in a factory fire. This case will set a legal precedent that government and private industry must be adequately accountable for the health and safety of workers;
- Of 160 cases filed on behalf of *Bangladeshi* women garment workers in the labor courts, 10% have already been successfully resolved through mediation with employers;
- In *Cambodia*, the program enables women market vendors working in the informal sector to formulate clear and practical strategies for responding to the problems they face, and in the process facilitates their participation in public decision making. This program is particularly compelling in light of the current political situation in Cambodia, in which the possibility for true democratization is dependent on increasing opportunities for advancing citizen's rights, collective action, and advocacy. The program's target population, poor women vendors, is significant as the informal sector is the largest employer of women in Cambodia, and many of

these women work as independent sellers in Cambodia's markets. Working with a Phnom Penh-based NGO, this initiative enables women to organize into savings and credit groups as an innovative entry point for collective action. The women, who are predominantly illiterate, have successfully addressed significant security problems due to lack of lighting in the markets by applying as a group to an international donor for a grant. Lights have now been installed in one of the markets, reducing theft and the physical harassment of the women vendors and their children who work and sleep there. In addition, the women have — for the first time ever — initiated negotiations with local authorities aimed at reducing the physical, verbal and economic abuse women micro vendors face in the market places; improving the unsanitary conditions of the markets; and exploring ways to decrease the arbitrary collection of taxes and fees the vendors are required to pay.

Promoting Women in Development through Advocacy and Research ("PROWID"). The PROWID program distributes small grants to women's NGOs on a variety of cutting-edge issues worldwide. Several of these grants (averaging \$90,000 over a two-year period) address women's legal rights. One project has already demonstrated impressive results:

- The South African Department of Land Affairs has changed the national system of land distribution from being based on the household to accounting for the individual, thereby ensuring gender equity in land ownership and tenure;
- In 1997, a Senegalese women's NGO publicly pledged to ban female genital cutting (FGC) in their community. Through theater, public debates, and a house-to-house campaign, women convinced their husbands, relatives, and traditional and religious leaders that the practice was harmful and needed to end. Women from several other villages have now joined these efforts and were praised by the President of Senegal who cited their determination and success when he proposed a new law prohibiting the practice. Parliament has recently approved the law, which institutes prison terms of up to five years for ban violators.

Privatization and Legal Rights in the New Independent States. USAID is also funding a program that focuses on women's economic security during privatization. The program includes research, public education, and the development and introduction of new legislation in compliance with international human rights law. Preliminary research findings in Russia, Ukraine, Bulgaria, and Poland reveals that privatization generally increases women's chances of being laid off, lowering their incomes, and worsening their work conditions. Moreover since female labor is perceived as expensive because of a strong tradition of additional benefits for working mothers, female unemployment is expected to persist for some time. In response, some women resort to "informal survival responses" by engaging in low-income activities, such as knitting and sewing at home, petty trade, domestic food production and the operation of small-scale enterprises. Such activities can be extremely precarious and represent little more than disguised unemployment in many cases. Therefore female wages in economies undergoing large-scale privatization decrease in both relative and absolute terms, widening the gender gap.

A Special Focus on Microenterprise Development

USAID's Microenterprise Development programs also bring a special focus on women. Overall USAID supports loans and business services for a clientele of microentrepreneurs that is more than 50% female. In many cases, women constitute up to 90% of entrepreneurs receiving services or loans for business development. In recent years, this has translated into approximately \$150 million a year focused on women business owners. USAID has maintained this focus on women as entrepreneurs for over a decade and will continue to do so in future programming.

A Special Focus on Reproductive Health

USAID has been a leader among international donors in providing an integrated reproductive health focus to family planning. By addressing women's health, family planning, nutrition and breastfeeding, USAID's reproductive health programs seek to enable women to achieve their desired family size while protecting both the woman and child's health. In addition, two fundamental principles of USAID-supported reproductive health programs include quality of care — where the needs of the woman come first — and ensuring that services are truly voluntary.

Building on more than two decades of experience prior to Cairo in training women managers of family planning programs, USAID has been helping countries to engage women leaders and work with women's groups and organizations to expand the availability of reproductive health information and services. Many women's groups have strengthened their advocacy for women's needs, including health care. In Turkey a women's network supported by USAID has recently persuaded top political leaders to increase funding for family planning.

The USAID-funded ENABLE project strengthens the capacity of institutions to deliver family planning services and supports other activities that enhance women's participation in family planning. Its predecessor, the ACCESS project, worked with 72 NGO projects in 14 countries. It established program linkages with community organizations involved in literacy, political participation, and economic empowerment. It also trained field workers to address social issues that affect women's reproductive rights, thus enhancing their credibility in the community and empowering them to be catalysts for change. For example, in Nigeria, women have joined together to advocate against female genital mutilation.

Critical research studies also help guide program and policy decisions in the design and implementation of reproductive health programs. For instance, the 5-year USAID-funded Women's Studies Project studied the impact of family planning on women's lives. In studies conducted in 10 countries, the project examined how women's experiences in using (or not using) contraception affected their roles as individuals, family and community members. The studies found that women derived multiple benefits from using family planning. A study in Bolivia found that women using family planning were more likely to be working for pay than non-users. In the Philippines a study found that women with three or fewer children earned twice as much as those with seven or more children.

Violence against Women. Violence against women is the most pervasive form of human rights abuse in the world today. It includes assault, battery, rape, sexual slavery, mutilation and murder. It also has implications for development. Domestic violence alone costs billions of dollars in employee absenteeism, use of health care and legal services, and poor work performance. Child survival hinges on the health and welfare of the mother. Women are often prohibited from using family planning, threatened with violence, both inside and outside the home.

USAID is focusing on two areas of violence against women: female genital cutting and trafficking.

Female Genital Cutting: Female genital cutting (FGC) is a harmful traditional practice affecting an estimated 85-115 million women and children (WHO, 1994). It occurs in over 30 African countries. FGC is performed on infants, children, adolescents, single, married pregnant and post-partum women. This practice is used for a myriad of purposes, such as control of women's sexuality, creation of the appearance of virginity, and initiation rite for pre-pubescent girls and a prerequisite for marriage.

FGC involves often extensive cutting or removal of parts of the female genitalia, and usually is performed with unsterilized and crude instruments and without anesthesia. It has serious health consequences, greatly increases complications during childbirth, and can lead to death. While recognizing that FGC is a highly-sensitive issue, USAID is committed to supporting efforts to eradicate this practice. USAID-funded research in Kenya, Mali, Guinea, Eritrea and The Gambia is developing and testing programs to prevent FGC. As a result, new information and education materials have been produced, including a training manual of reproductive health guidelines in Egypt. In addition, a special module on FGC has been used by the USAID-funded Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) to collect data in Sudan, Yemen, Cote d'Ivoire, Egypt, Mali, Central African Republic, Tanzania and Eritrea.

The 1995 Egypt Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) found that 97 percent of ever-married women had undergone FGC, a finding which overturned assumptions that FGC was a practice limited to the illiterate and impoverished. According to the Egyptian NGO Task Force on FGC, these survey results had a critical impact on their work, leading to an ambitious new strategy to eradicate FGC through education, lobbying and mobilizing support from all sectors of Egyptian society. The Task Force also noted the value of related USAID-funded research on the experience of NGOs in the field that resulted in improvements in program design. The range and caliber of participants at a 1998 conference demonstrated the progress Egyptian activists have made in securing support from leaders in government, religious institutions, the medical field and local communities.

In Egypt as well as other countries, USAID and its partners are collaborating to strengthen the efforts of women's groups and community organizations. Their activities focus on educating communities, policymakers and the media on the human rights aspects of FGC, and the implementation of preventive programs and legal reform.

Anti-Trafficking Strategy: Throughout South and South-East Asia, girls as young as 7 are trafficked within their own countries and across international borders in a modern-day slave trade. Often duped and sold by families desperate for money, these girls find themselves forced to work in brothels, sweatshops or in private homes as domestic laborers. The UN conservatively estimates that four million people globally are smuggled into foreign countries each year.

Trafficking is an economic problem, as the vast majority of women, seeking to escape poverty, are lured into trafficking by the false promise of economic gain; it is a health problem, as trafficked women and children are among those most at-risk for HIV infection; and lastly, it is a legal problem, as the victims are stripped of their human rights and lack any access to redress the crime committed against them.

As a response to this emerging crisis, President Clinton issued an Executive Memorandum on International Women's Day in March 1998 committing resources to combating trafficking in women and girls. Working closely with the Department of State, USAID is currently developing an Asian regional activity that will support efforts to prevent trafficking, protect those already victimized and enforce the law. In the Ukraine, where the economy has collapsed and as many as 80 percent of unemployed are women, a program is already underway. USAID is supporting the development of a national TV docu-drama to educate young girls in villages; a Women's Economic Empowerment Project aimed at providing employment and job training; opening trafficking prevention centers in three high-risk areas where women can come for information, counseling, or be referred to a USAID-funded health center; and providing grants to NGOs working with trafficking issues.

Conclusion

USAID has made substantial progress in addressing gender considerations throughout its programs and policies. Addressing women in development concerns is seen as a clear priority not only at senior management levels but also throughout the Agency. While additional progress is required, the institutionalization of gender considerations is solidly underway through programming approaches, and personnel and procurement policies that are making gender a fundamental issue in all of the Agency's work.