

BUILDING EXPERTISE, SKILLS, AND LINKAGES: THE WID OFFICERS' WORKSHOP

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The U.S. Agency for International Development held a four-day workshop for its women in development (WID) officers June 22-25, 1998, in Rosslyn, Virginia. The first two days of the WID officers' workshop were devoted to a discussion of gender issues within sectoral, regional, structural, and programmatic frameworks. The last two days focused on building participants' skills in the areas of facilitation, strategic influencing, and presentation, all of which are critical in successfully bringing attention to gender issues. To familiarize participants with the wealth of available resources and information, a reception was organized hosting 15 organizations and approximately 150 people with WID expertise and resources. In addition, a workshop notebook—including state-of-the-art gender analysis tools, data resources, and sector-specific reading materials—was provided.

The goal of the workshop was to improve the capacity of WID officers to be a strong resource on women in development and gender issues for their colleagues in Missions and strategic objective (SO) teams. The objectives of the workshop, jointly developed with the participants, were improved abilities to:

- Communicate effectively an understanding of the USAID Gender Action Plan and the strategies and resources of USAID's Global Bureau/Women in Development (G/WID) office;
- Identify when and how to select technical expertise;
- Report to their colleagues on best practices and strategies of other Missions for mainstreaming gender into their SOs;
- Use facilitation skills more fluently in a variety of situations; and
- Develop strategies to influence and build alliances within the Missions and with partners to integrate gender concerns better into USAID's development assistance.

Among the 19 women participants were 14 WID officers, one SO team leader on women's empowerment, two regional WID advisors, and two monitoring and evaluation specialists. These participants shared a strong interest on WID issues, some *de facto* responsibility for integrating gender issues into Mission programming, and, for most, a lack of prior WID training. With the exception of two full-time WID officers, most participants handled WID duties between 5 and 50 percent of their time. The Missions that participated in the workshop included six from Africa (Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Madagascar, Mali, and Tanzania), three from Asia and the Near East (Indonesia, Nepal, and Philippines), three from Europe and the New Independent States (Croatia, Lithuania, and Ukraine), and five from Latin America and the Caribbean (Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Haiti, Peru, and Paraguay).

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

USAID Commitment and Resources. Three senior women at USAID discussed the Agency's Gender Action Plan, which supports gender integration through building capacity and providing staff incentives. New cooperative agreements and grants are required to include gender issues and expertise; new job description criteria solicit WID expertise; gender issues are a routine part of technical training; and mid-career WID fellows are supported.

Building Sectoral Expertise. Technical experts from G/WID staff and contractors presented gender issues in key development sectors such as democracy and governance, agriculture and economic growth, environment, education as well as population, health, and nutrition. Each participant also had in-depth discussions on two sectoral issues in small groups. A sectoral tool book was provided as well.

Building Strategic Expertise on Data Collection and Use in Mission Programming and Reporting. Lively discussions were focused on a range of strategic opportunities for addressing gender in Mission programming, as well as gathering, using, and reporting sex-disaggregated data.

Building Regional Linkages and Sharing Best Practices. Three senior participants from Nepal and the Regional Economic Development Services Offices in East and Southern Africa and West and Central Africa shared their best practices in integrating gender into Mission strategies and programs. Participants also gathered in regional groups to discuss region-specific constraints and opportunities in integrating gender into Mission programming.

Building Skills: Facilitation, Presentation, and Strategic Influencing. A skills trainer provided participants with lectures, notes, and practice in facilitation, strategic influencing, and presentation skills. Practical exercises in strategic influencing provided participants with an opportunity to

analyze the supports and barriers in their own Mission and to make individual plans for catalyzing greater Mission attention to gender integration.

SUMMARY OF WORKSHOP LESSONS

1. Strong support from top Mission and Agency management is critical to the successful integration of gender issues in Mission programming. USAID's commitment to implementing its Gender Action Plan is not evident in the Missions. At the Mission level, the integration of gender issues still depends on individual commitment rather than institutionalized systems.
2. A WID officer's role is to provide support to Mission staff in identifying people-level dimensions of proposed strategies and activities so that gender issues can be appropriately addressed. WID officers initiate, pursue, and follow up opportunities while educating, challenging, encouraging, praising, and reinforcing Mission staff and their partners to address gender concerns in their activities.
3. G/WID provides technical resources to assist WID officers. Technical assistance is provided not only through experts but also through such vehicles as the workshop notebook, sectoral gender databases, and an upcoming information/communication service activity.
4. Improved sex-disaggregated data collection in key Mission activities—such as quarterly reports, small focused studies, and strategic use of technical assistance—will help achieve better program results.

PARTICIPANT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ACTIONS

A. Structural and Organizational Issues

Clear Agency Commitment. USAID's senior level commitment for gender integration needs to be regularly communicated and reinforced to

senior staff at the Bureaus and Mission directors, staff, and partners.

Regional Bureau Support. Regional Bureaus should create a positive climate for integrating gender issues from R-4 guidance to support for regional WID advisors and gender training in Missions.

Mission Leadership Support. Mission management needs to send a clear signal of support so that gender issues are integrated strategically rather than at last minute reviews.

Incentives and Resources for Mission Staff. Resources should be made available for gender expertise or relevant focused studies. All position descriptions and annual performance appraisals should evaluate expertise and achievements in gender issues.

Core Support for Gender Integration. Besides the WID officer, Missions should have a WID representative on each SO team who can form the WID committee that provides the core support for gender integration at the Mission.

Empowering WID Officers. To empower WID officers as a resource, Missions should decrease their other responsibilities, clarify their roles, and provide them with the resources to seek technical expertise, training, and networking opportunities.

Mission WID/Gender Strategy. To provide a framework for gender integration, Missions should consider developing WID and gender strategies with clear descriptions of the responsibilities of the WID officer, the SO members, and the Mission director as well as sector-specific WID objectives to guide SO team work.

In-country Gender Linkages. Missions should create in-country linkages with nongovernmental organizations, women's groups, and other donors to share gender expertise and information to increase attention to gender issues in development programs.

Gender Sensitive Scopes of Work, Terms of Reference, and Partner Relationships. Through Mission contracts, grants, and amendments, Mission staff have opportunities to require partners and consultants to report on gender issues or develop gender expertise. Sometimes, this may require tailored gender training for host country partners. Procurement officers may also need training on the requirements of USAID's Gender Action Plan.

Leveraging G/WID Resources. G/WID serves as a catalyst, coordinator, and provider of technical expertise, resources, and training on gender issues. However, Missions should leverage these resources with other funds from USAID and partners to achieve program results. G/WID should emphasize two-way communication with Mission directors and WID officers and encourage electronic linkages on best practices, lessons learned, and funding sources.

B. Program Issues

Gender Guidance on R-4s. Regional Bureaus should provide appropriate guidance and create financial, merit-based, and other incentives for Mission management and staff to integrate gender into R-4s during planning, baseline establishment, and reporting periods.

Comprehensive Attention to Gender Issues. A WID officer's day-to-day involvement as an SO team member is the best opportunity for systematic input on gender issues related to SO planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Gender concerns and indicators should be incorporated at the beginning of an activity, and performance monitoring plans should be explicit as to how sex-disaggregated data and gender relevant information would be collected. Sector assessments, strategies, and customer surveys are other important opportunities for gender input.

Access to Sex-Disaggregated Data. Missions should allocate resources to collect, analyze, and train WID officers to work with sex-disaggregated data.

Information Dissemination. G/WID, Global Bureau, and Missions need to continuously disseminate success stories, lessons learned, and best practices on gender integration in development assistance. This includes comparative studies between gender-led programming and gender-integrated approaches to create a dialogue about appropriate strategies for different country programs.

Gender Integration in Sector Meetings. Sector-specific meetings for regional or all-Agency staff should include gender on the agenda or through separate sessions.

Dialogue with Host Country Partners. Missions need to take advantage of new government laws, policies, and international conventions, all of which provide excellent opportunities to increase dialogue with host country governments and partner organizations about improving the participation of women in development programs.

Training of Women. WID officers should be included on the selection team for participant training. Quotas should be set for women, and partner institutions should face consequences if female quotas are not met in training.

Skills Issues

WID Officers. Sector-based training and skills training in communication, strategic influencing, and presentations seem to be more effective than just general training on gender issues for WID officers.

Mission Staff. SO team members who become point people for gender issues should also receive regular gender training in their respective sectors. Mission contracts officers should be trained on the new requirements of the Gender Action Plan.

Mission Management. Mission directors need training on strategic gender programming, gender and procurement, and G/WID resources to become more informed about opportunities for gender integration in development assistance.

WIDTECH supports innovative approaches to technical assistance and training that take into account women's roles and contributions and enhance the effectiveness of USAID's development assistance.

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