

**GENDER AND GOVERNANCE:
A PROPOSED WORLD BANK ACTION
PLAN**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspectives in all levels of decision- making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved." Beijing Platform for Action

- a. "Good governance" and "gender equality" have been at the cutting edge of development debates over the last decade. Empirical evidence shows that both are central to development. But the relationship between the two has only just begun to be explored, albeit in the context of a deeper understanding of both these two issues.
- b. Originally viewed primarily in economic management terms, there is a growing appreciation that "good governance" can only prevail if citizens are able to elect and remove governments; if there is rule of law; if an enabling environment is created for the private sector and civil society; and if a robust system of checks and balances prevails. With the growing shift in emphasis in development assistance from short- term economic stabilization to long-term sustainable development, there has been a greater emphasis in recent years on strengthening institutions of governance and boosting investment in human capital.
- c. Simultaneously, and especially since the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, women have been demanding equality of outcomes- not just of opportunity. The mid term review of the Beijing conference in New York in June 2000 showed that while there is increasing political commitment to, and a growing number of constitutional and legal reforms aimed at achieving gender equality, there are still major gender gaps in every sphere of life, and in every region of the world.
- d. This gap between de jure and de facto equality has sharpened the focus on women's access to, and participation in, structures and processes of governance. It is now generally accepted that unless women constitute a "critical mass" of at least one third of those in decision- making, their mere presence makes little difference to the outcomes of governance. This explains the growing attempts to achieve targets of one third of women in decision making by some governments and inter-governmental organizations (among them, the World Bank); as well as efforts to remove institutional barriers to the effective participation of women such as more family friendly work practices.
- e. The mere presence of women in structures of governance – justifiable in its own right in equity terms- does not guarantee that gender considerations are

- mainstreamed in laws, policies and programmes. But a growing body of literature suggests that, where women are present in critical numbers and are able to participate effectively, the result is more socially responsive governance outcomes.
- f. A growing body of research in the corporate sector points to the business advantages of increasing diversity in the workplace. Studies from Scandinavia (quoted more extensively in Section II) show that the participation of women has contributed to marked changes in legislative and policy agendas towards advancing equality between men and women.
 - g. Far more research of this nature needs to take place in developing countries where there are now several examples of women achieving a “critical mass” in different areas of governance (for example, in parliament, in South Africa; in local government, in India and Namibia; and in the civil service in Botswana and the Caribbean). But anecdotal evidence suggests that the “voice” of women in these structures makes a difference. It is no coincidence that South Africa, for example, which has a strong presence of women both in parliament and civil society, has taken a lead role in the gender budget initiatives now being piloted in various countries around the world. These initiatives, which provide an excellent mechanism for women to participate in economic governance, are examined in considerable detail in the paper.
 - h. The World Bank’s forthcoming annual Policy Research Report (PRR) argues that one part of a three- prong strategy for “Engendering Development” must be *“taking active measures to improve women’s command of resources and political voice.”* As detailed in Section III, there has been some research, thinking and engagement between the Bank, governments, NGOs and other intergovernmental organizations on tools for measuring the differential impacts of public expenditure on men and women as well as encouraging the participation of women in economic policy and budgetary debates. As part of the growing work in the Bank on legal reform, there has been pioneering work in the African and Latin American regions on women and the law; and there is a Women and Law thematic group in the Bank.
 - i. The Bank is engaged in ongoing efforts to integrate gender into its organizational framework and at a policy level through such instruments as the Country Assistance and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) as well as in Bank lending. But these mainstreaming efforts are not sufficient. Much needs to be done to expand the existing work on gender and governance; as well as give it coherence.
 - j.** In addition to conducting a literature review and an audit of Bank work on gender and governance (see Terms of Reference at **Annex A**), the main purpose of this paper is to outline critical areas of concern; explore areas of comparative advantage; and propose an action plan for the World Bank on gender and governance. A list of those interviewed is attached at **Annex B**.

- k. The report is organized as follows:
- I. Overview
 - II. Key Gender and Governance Issues
 - III. Comparative Advantages of the World Bank
 - IV. Towards a World Bank Action Plan on Gender and Governance
 - V. Conclusions
- l. The underlying **principles** of the recommendations are the need for:
- A few small, but strategic research projects that will add to the empirical evidence on, and understanding of, the links between gender and good governance.
 - Forging a greater internal consensus around gender and governance broadly; and around gender and macroeconomic/budgetary issues specifically.
 - Building incrementally on a few pilot projects that demonstrate value added and then mainstreaming these into World Bank tools/instruments.
 - Aiming, in the long term, to mainstream gender in all bank work on governance.
- m. The proposed **World Bank Action Plan on Gender and Governance**, summarized in **Table One** below, has **five strategic objectives**, and several suggested action points. The first addresses the **process** by which consensus is built on a more coherent gender and governance programme within the Bank; and by which this is built into a strategic framework, within the Bank and in the consultations at country level. The second concerns **catalytic research** to gather greater evidence on the impact of gender and governance- critical to taking this work forward within the Bank and at country level. The next three objectives concern **integrating gender into key governance initiatives** of the Bank in its priority economic, institutional and judicial reform areas of operation.
- n. To ensure an **incremental and prioritized approach**, each action point is categorized into short, medium and long term. The intention is not to try and do everything at once. However, in embarking on immediate measures, such as catalytic research on gender and governance, it is important to have some medium to long- term perspective on where this research might lead.
- o. An important underlying premise of this paper is that ultimately- in keeping with its overall policy position on gender mainstreaming- gender considerations should be integrated into all the Bank's governance work. But a clear rationale for doing so needs to be established through research, evidence and pilot projects that demonstrate concretely the links between gender, governance and poverty reduction: the Bank's single most important policy imperative.
- p. Finally, the intention is that the proposed action plan would be thoroughly debated at the Bank-wide consensus- building workshop on gender and governance. All the recommendations in the paper arose from the interviews with Bank staff at **Annex B**. The author exercised some judgement in the sequencing and prioritizing of these recommendations. But this is far from the

final word. Further debate will no doubt lead to further focusing and refinement, based on the Bank's core competencies, the priorities of clients, and the potential for creating value added in this relatively new area of endeavour.

TABLE ONE: SUMMARY OF PROPOSED WORLD BANK ACTION PLAN ON GENDER AND GOVERNANCE

| STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE | ACTION | JUSTIFICATION | PARTNERSHIPS | TIME FRAME |
|---|--|--|--|-------------------------------|
| <p>ONE: <i>To build internal consensus on, and develop a framework for, a gender and governance programme in the World Bank, with particular emphasis on economic governance.</i></p> | <p>1.1 Bank wide consensus building workshop and a more detailed mapping of what has been done in the Bank with regard to gender and governance.</p> | <p>The Bank has been at the coalface of debates on gender and governance- two critical development issues in the 21st century. There is increasing evidence of the links between good governance, gender equality and poverty reduction. The Bank is involved in ad hoc projects on gender and governance. It works daily with governments around the world. A composite programme on gender and governance has the potential to contribute to the Bank's overarching objective of poverty reduction. Because of its reach and the extent of its involvement the Bank has the potential to add value both in the discourse, and practices on gender and governance.</p> | <p><i>Internal-</i> PRMGE, Gender Co-ordinators in regions; PRMPS; Gender Sector Board; Women and the Law Thematic Group; World Bank Institute etc</p> | <p>ST, before FY01</p> |
| | <p>1.2 Incorporate gender and governance issues in forthcoming gender strategy paper</p> | <p>The Bank has already carried out considerable work on the links between governance and poverty reduction; gender equality and poverty reduction; as well as rights-based approaches to development. These need to be woven together in a clear gender and governance strategy.</p> | <p><i>Internal-</i> PRMGE, Gender Sector Board</p> | <p>ST, before FY01</p> |
| | <p>1.3 Update the CAS to incorporate gender and governance; raise these issues in policy dialogues.</p> | <p>The Bank's participatory policy dialogue with clients provides an excellent opportunity to stimulate discussion and action in new areas. Pressure on governments to take gender and governance issues seriously is creating demand for support in this area.</p> | <p><i>Internal-</i>PRMGE; President's office; country representatives</p> | <p>ST, before FY01</p> |
| <p>TWO: <i>To conduct catalytic research on gender and governance in developing countries so as to strengthen the existing evidence on the benefits of engendering governance.</i></p> | <p>2.1 Conduct research on the qualitative impact of women in parliament and senior management in countries that have achieved a "critical mass" in these areas.</p> | <p>Much of the research to date has concentrated on the quantitative side: affirmative action to ensure the presence of women in structures of governance. The limited qualitative research- what impact does the presence of women have on policies, legislation, service delivery etc- has mostly been in developed countries. There is need for more qualitative research on gender and governance in developing countries.</p> | <p><i>Internal-</i> PRMGE <i>External-</i> Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU)</p> | <p>ST- MT</p> |
| <p>THREE: <i>To enhance economic governance and poverty reduction through engendering budgets, public expenditure reviews and</i></p> | <p>3.1 Support the training of women legislators and NGOs in gender budgeting/economic policy analysis.</p> | <p>The Bank has learned in its budget reform activities that it is more strategic to focus on systems and capacity than direct intervention in budgeting processes. Women legislators and NGOs are well placed to ensure that a gender perspective is systematically integrated into present and future budget processes; but often lack the requisite skills.</p> | <p><i>Internal-</i>PRMGE; PRMPS (PRE's) <i>External-</i> Commonwealth UNIFEM</p> | <p>ST-MT</p> |

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| <i>macroeconomic policy.</i> | 3.2 Support, in collaboration with other inter governmental organizations working in this area, a few pilot gender budget projects, with a view to using the findings to engender the Bank's Public Expenditure Review. | Pilot projects are an effective way of obtaining first hand evidence of the efficacy of policy propositions. The work of other IGOs such as the Commonwealth Secretariat and UNIFEM on gender and budgets has stimulated considerable demand for such pilot studies. To the extent that gender budgets open budgeting processes to greater scrutiny and can lead to a reallocation of resources in favour of the poor, the Bank's PER's are a natural tool for engendering budget processes. The multiplier effect of incorporating a gender perspective into PER's, rather than engaging in ad hoc initiatives, is potentially high. | <i>Internal</i> PRMGE PRMPS (PRE'S) <i>External</i> Commonwealth UNIFEM NGOs involved in gender budgeting | MT |
| | 3.3 Forge an internal consensus on the links between gender and macroeconomic policy through further engagements with experts in this field; mainstream gender in structural adjustment lending. | There is presently fragmentation in the Bank's approach to engendering economic policy making. Gender has been built into the PRSPs, but not (in a systematic way) into macroeconomic policy formulation processes. There is clearly still a discomfort within the Bank on the links between gender and macroeconomic policy. Greater exposure, debate and internal consensus building is required. As the key macroeconomic policy tool of the Bank, it is critical in the long term to integrate gender considerations into structural adjustment lending to ensure that this reflects and seeks to enhance gender equality. | <i>Internal</i> PRMGE Chief economists <i>External</i> Commonwealth UNIFEM Feminist economist networks | LT |
| FOUR: <i>To integrate gender considerations into institutional reform, so as to ensure greater responsiveness and effectiveness of these institutions in enhancing good governance and poverty reduction.</i> | 4.1 Documenting pilot projects on integrating gender into institutional reform. | Institutional reform is a cornerstone of the Bank's governance work. Studies show that institutions that are not representative of the population, and that are not themselves gender sensitive, are unlikely to deliver socially responsive outcomes. In response to the demands of one government- Ecuador- the Bank has already carried out some practical work in integrating gender into institutional reform. Because of the Bank's substantial involvement in institutional reform around the globe there is scope for a considerable multiplier effect through a more systematic mainstreaming of gender in its work in this area. | <i>Internal</i> PRMPS; PRMGE <i>External</i> UNDP | MT |
| | 4.2 Global review of the organizational and institutional measures taken by governments and the private sector to promote diversity and equality in the work place. | Knowledge management and dissemination is a new Bank priority. Given its considerable practical involvement in institutional reform, and access to information in this area, the Bank is well placed to assemble a body of knowledge on the relatively new area of gender and institutional reform- an area in which there has been much discussion, but little actual assembling of data by other donor agencies that are less directly involved in institutional reform than the Bank. | PRMPS, PRMGE | MT-LT |

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| | 4.3 Mainstreaming gender in governance indicators, institutional and governance reviews. | If it is accepted that there is a link between integrating gender into governance and more responsive outcomes that contribute to better governance and poverty alleviation, it follows that mechanisms need to be found for systematically integrating gender into all areas of governance. In the Bank context, the most effective tool for doing so are the governance indicators, institutional and governance reviews. The PRSP tool kit provides a useful template for integrating gender into governance tools. | <i>Internal</i> PRMPS, PRMGE <i>External</i> Economic Commission on Africa | LT |
| FIVE: <i>To strengthen women's rights and access to justice.</i> | 5.1 Best practices on harmonizing dual legal systems | Dual legal systems, based either on customary or religious law, continue to deny women their fundamental rights in many countries. This includes the right to property fundamental to good governance. Dissemination of best practices on harmonizing dual legal systems would add considerable value. | <i>Internal</i> -PRMGE, Africa region, Women and the Law TG. | MT |
| | 5.2 Women and work | The growing entry of women into the labour force in developing countries over the last decade has created demand for advisory services on labour law and pay equity issues. Innovative work is already being carried out by LAC. Greater utility could be obtained through sharing of information/replication of best practices. | <i>Internal</i> PRMGE; PRMPS <i>External</i> UNIFEM Dept for the Advancement of Women- UN | MT |
| | 5.3 Special courts for addressing violence against women. | The Bank is increasingly involved in judicial reform in many countries. Studies on violence against women have repeatedly pointed to the inadequacies of the criminal justice systems of most countries for addressing violence against women. There is increasing demand within countries for special courts to address violence against women- which is increasingly being accepted as a gross violation of human rights. As part of its judicial reform lending the Bank should seek to support and replicate special courts for addressing violence against women. | <i>Internal</i> PRMGE; Women and the Law Thematic Group <i>External</i> UNIFEM NGOs involved in women's rights | MT |
| | 5.4 Access by women to justice | The Bank's PRR " <i>Engendering Development</i> " documents the heavy gender biases in the courts. A pilot project in Ecuador has demonstrated the potential for integrating gender considerations into judicial reform to ensure greater access by women to the courts. Mainstreaming gender considerations into all judicial reform loans has a potentially huge multiplier effect. Guidelines for this need to be drawn up in the same way as they were drawn up for the PRSP. | PRMGE, Judicial Reform Unit; Women and the Law Thematic Group | LT |

