Gender Equality

The Primary Sources of lessons in this document are projects within DFID's Rural Livelihoods Programme (RLP). The evidences for these lessons mainly come from evaluations of the projects carried out by the Rural Livelihoods Evaluation Partnership (RLEP). The evidences in this document are included as key findings. The Thematic Lessons Paper (TLP) series documents are available in many formats based on stakeholder demand for product style identified through a communications needs assessment survey. This document is the 'Master' or full version of TLP, which includes more detailed lessons clustered under key issues and their evidences recorded as key findings. The TLP series also has available a two page policy brief or 'Summary Sheet' both in English and Bengali. All the documents produced under TLP series are accessible at www.lcgbangladesh.org/rlep.

Thematic Lessons Papers (TLP) are intended for stakeholders who are involved in policy/programme design and influencing, in order to assist them in making informed decisions in the future.

The TLPs draw together experiences of livelihoods programme in a particular thematic context. This paper focuses on the Gender Equity theme. The lessons in this document are grouped under the following key issues:

- Gender Analysis
- Diversity
- Women's Empowerment
- Exercising Rights
- Working with Women
- Gender Mainstreaming
- Dealing with Resistance

8 PROJECTS WITHIN DFID'S RURAL LIVELIHOODS PROGRAMME (RLP)

1. Fisheries Training and Extension Project- II (FTEP II)
2. Agricultural Services Innovation Reform Project (ASIRP)
3. Research and Extension in Farm Power Issues (REFPI)
4. Poverty Elimination Through Rice Research Assistance (PETRRA)
5. Support For University Fisheries Education and Research (SUFER)
6. Fourth Fisheries Project (FFP)
7. CARE Rural Livelihoods Programme (CARE RLP)
8. Community Based Fisheries Management (CBFM2)

KEY LESSONS SUMMARY

1. Unequal relationships between women and men affect their opportunities to participate in and benefit from development interventions. These differences should be analysed and addressed at design phase, otherwise programmes may perpetuate or sharpen gender inequalities. The FFP and FTEP-II Aquaculture Training and Extension programme, for instance, successfully addressed women's lack of mobility through pond-side training. This helped involve women and achieve the goal of increased fish production.

2. Women's needs and interests vary widely across socio-economic, political and cultural contexts. In northern Bangladesh, for example, homestead gardening skills helped women raise their incomes and status within the household. The same programme had limited benefits for women in Chittagong where men were more resistant to women's participation. This indicates that there are no blue-print solutions to women's empowerment: different strategies will be needed to work with diverse groups of women and to deal with resistance.

3. Women's relative lack of control over resources is a key factor perpetuating gender inequality. A rights-based approach to development addresses this by promoting women's rights and entitlements to resources and services. The CARE Rural Livelihoods Programme is building women's technical skills as well as organisational skills, awareness of their rights and capacity to claim government services. This can help ensure that women benefit from increased production and are not merely becoming more efficient producers of resources that men control.

4. Building women's awareness of their rights can be a crucial step towards empowerment, but this should be embedded within a risk analysis and backed up by other forms of support. Some civil society organisations (CSOs) promoting poor people's land rights, for instance, have helped women and men defend their land, address gender based violence in the home and to lobby for legal change recognizing women's land rights. This suggests the need for strategies to build women's capacity to claim their rights as well as State and other duty-bearers' capacity to listen and respond.

5. A quantitative approach to setting targets for working with women in pre-defined projects can be tokenistic and entrench resistance to change. Some fisheries projects, for instance, invited women onto management committees, in which they had no active role, discrediting women's involvement and the Committees themselves. Participatory approaches can be more successful: e.g. REFPI helped increase women's income through involving women in the design of locally appropriate food processing technologies.

6. 'Gender mainstreaming' means revising development policy, institutional norms and procedures and resource allocation to ensure that women benefit equally with men. Mainstreaming is more effective when there is a clear gender policy, gender-related objectives and qualitative indicators to measure change in gender relations. CARE has developed a gender policy, gender action plan and gender related criteria used in its staff appraisal procedures as well as qualitative indicators to measure programme impact on gender relations such as 'change in women's decision-making role within the household'.

7. In promoting gender equality, strategies are needed to deal with active and passive forms of resistance including the threat of violence. Strategies can include building alliances with local leaders and the media and ensuring that, within institutions, incentives exist to promote gender equality. The CSO Bantche Sheka, for instance, has promoted a women-led approach to community based fisheries management. However, the management committees have sought men's co-operation by inviting local leaders onto an advisory board.

Photo Credit: Tara Vickers

INTRODUCTION

The Bangladesh National Constitution guarantees equal rights to all citizens, prohibits discrimination based on sex and pledges to promote social and economic equality. Yet, these guarantees in formal law are not reflected in practice.

Inequality between women and men persists, with continuous discrimination against women (DFIDB 2004). Discrimination against women is reflected in national statistics such as higher malnutrition rates for women than men, higher mortality rates for girls than boy children and one of the highest maternal mortality rates in Asia.

In this context, the Government of Bangladesh has identified gender inequality as a key, if not the main constraint to poverty reduction and has made a strong policy commitment to address it.

Yet, gender equality can be an elusive goal. Efforts to promote women's empowerment and equal benefits from development to men need to be grounded in a sound analysis of gender relations in each specific context.

Gender relations-the relationships between women and men are complex, diverse and dynamic: promoting gender equality is therefore a continuous process that needs to be built in to development policy and planning.

THEMATIC LESSONS

There are no 'gender neutral' development interventions: projects and programmes either promote gender equality, or they perpetuate and may reinforce existing unequal relationships between men and women which generally discriminate against women. To promote gender equality effectively, interventions need to be based on a sound analysis of existing gender relationships and of opportunities for women's empowerment.

Key lesson for 'better practice'

Donors and partners should ensure that gender analysis is built into programme design from the start, to ensure that women as well as men will benefit and that specific gender related constraints facing women will be addressed.

Lessons Learnt

■ **Gender awareness.** In some areas of work the gender issues are not obvious, especially when planned activities traditionally involve men rather than women. Nonetheless, development interventions have an impact on women as well as men, even if this is only through reinforcing women's exclusion. It may be necessary to challenge preconceptions about which issues concern or have an impact on women.

■ **Building analysis into design.** Some programmes have tried to take gender equality issues on board as an after-thought and often in response to external pressure. Yet, where efforts to 'include gender' are not informed by good quality gender analysis, this may be reduced to attempts to include women in project activities whether or not these activities are likely to benefit women. In this case, there may even be unintended negative impacts on women and on overall programme effectiveness.

■ **Qualitative change.** Where gender analysis has not informed initial programme design, there may still be opportunities to enhance its success and its benefits for women, through adjusting the aims and activities to meet women's specific needs and interests. However, this implies a qualitative change, not just the quantitative addition of more women to participate in programme activities.

■ **Contribution to overall goals.** Where the initial project design is informed by gender analysis then the links between women's involvement, expected benefits to women and the overall success of the project are generally more evident and tangible.

■ **Shared understanding.** Where programme managers feel that the need to incorporate a concern with gender inequality has been imposed, for example by donors, this creates internal resistance and may backfire if attention to 'gender' or 'women' is superficial and tokenistic. This highlights the importance of a shared analysis of factors that perpetuate gender inequality and of how promoting equality can contribute to overall programme goals.

Key Findings

■ Following donor recommendations, the Department of Fisheries (DOF) Fourth Fisheries Programme (FFP) set a target of including more women. However, it was not clear from project documents why women should participate or what constraints facing women the programme hoped to address. This suggests lack of a shared analysis.

■ In the Community Based Fisheries Management (CBFM) component of FFP, the attempt to include women in a pre-designed programme resulted in adding on parallel activities such as micro-credit schemes for women. Yet, these did not necessarily contribute to CBFM goals or fall within the skills of CBFM to manage. Meanwhile, women who were invited to sit on CBFM Management Committees in order to meet the target for including women were, in practice, unprepared for their role and often lacked any voice on those committees.

■ By contrast, the Aquaculture Extension and Training (AET) component of FFP conducted a prior analysis of constraints facing women who might want to participate in aquaculture programmes. Recognising that women's mobility is often constrained by

cultural norms, the project aimed to involve women through pond-side aquaculture, close to the homestead. This strategy ensured wider relevance and outreach of the project and hence contributed towards the overall goals of the FFP; namely, sustainable growth in fish production and poverty alleviation.

- Addressing what is generally seen as a male dominated area of production, the 'Poverty Elimination Through Rice Research Assistance (PETRRA)' project identified women's key role in rice seed health, storage and sanitation. One of its key projects was directed at working with women to improve capacity and outcomes in these areas. Indirectly, men are also beneficiaries of improved rice seed health.

Key Issue   2   Diversity

Gender relationships and women's livelihood strategies vary widely across different social, economic, political and cultural contexts as well as through time and at different stages in women's lives. Strategies that contribute to women's empowerment in one context may provoke resistance or create a backlash in others. Understanding diversity is key to effective strategies for promoting women's empowerment and gender equality.

Key lesson for 'better practice'

To ensure equitable benefits, programme design and implementation methodologies should take account of the diverse situations, resources and opportunities of different groups of women and men. Participatory methodologies are often the most useful in achieving this.

Lessons Learnt

- **Context specific.** Gender relations are dynamic and vary across time, context and place and between different social groups of women and men; this means that analysis should be on-going and context specific.

- **Risks of blue-prints.** The tendency of some programmes to use a 'blue-print' approach (one model for all purposes) has proved to be problematic and does not allow the programme to address the specific constraints or identify key opportunities for promoting gender equality in different contexts. Some organisations have recognised this: CARE, for example, has begun to invest in a detailed analysis of economic, social and power relationships in the different areas in which it works. This analysis helps to identify the key entry points and opportunities for promoting women's empowerment in different contexts.

Key Findings

- NGOs have found that they need different strategies to work with women in different communities. In new *chars*[1], for example, women tend to have greater independence than in old chars where communities are more settled. Social class is also an issue: for instance, the poorest women are often more willing and able to participate in paid manual labour. Women who are slightly better off may be more constrained by social norms that restrict their mobility, in order to retain the little social capital that they do have.

- The CARE homestead gardening project, SHABGE, has focused on working only or mainly with women. This was effective in Northern Bangladesh where kitchen gardening is mainly a women's activity and the project helped women raise their income and thus their social status. By contrast, men in the Chittagong area were more resistant to women's participation and the project had less impact on women's control over income or their household status. This suggests that different strategies to reach women and to address resistance are needed in different contexts.

Key Issue   3   Women's empowerment

A shift in approaches to poverty reduction, from projects aimed to increase the economic output from natural resources to programmes focused on strengthening sustainable livelihoods, has contributed to a more holistic analysis of the problems facing rural development. The sustainable livelihoods framework identifies different forms of capital (including natural, physical, human, social and financial

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[1] Strip of sandy land rising out of a river bed.

resources) that together form the basis for sustaining and improving livelihoods. Analysis of rural livelihoods helps reveal that women's relative lack of access to or control over resources constitutes an enormous obstacle to women's empowerment and to rural development more broadly. It also helps identify strategic entry points to address this. This is consistent with a rights-based approach to development that aims to build people's capacity to claim their rights and entitlements.

Key lesson for 'better practice'

A rights-based approach to rural development promotes gender equality by recognising and enhancing women's rights and entitlements to natural, physical, human, social and financial resources on an equal footing with men.

Lessons Learnt

■ **Creating a space.** When women have traditionally been excluded from public forums and decision-making, they may lack confidence and skills to take up public roles. Creating a separate space for women to organize, articulate their views and develop their organisational and leadership skills can be a key step in building women's confidence and capacity to participate in wider public arenas.

■ **Knowledge is power.** Transferring apparently uncontroversial technical skills to women, for example to improve homestead agriculture, can contribute to women's empowerment as technical skills lead to increased production and this in turn may contribute to higher income and, or status for women within the household.

■ **Building social capital.** Building technical skills alone, however, does not ensure that women will reap the benefits of their learning. When land and other resources are largely controlled by men, women's increased efficiency will not necessarily translate into better livelihoods for women. Women are likely to benefit more when technical training is complemented by other measures to build their social capital, such as developing problem-solving and organisational skills that can help them claim their rights to resources and services.

■ **Common struggles.** When women and men work together in the same struggle, for example to defend their land or water rights, this can help build women's confidence and social status. However, it may not be enough to ensure respect for women's independent right to resources of their own. Additional measures to strengthen women's capacity to claim their rights may be needed, including strategies for dealing with resistance and even legal changes.

■ **Addressing resistance.** Mobilisation and joint struggle for control over resources can be empowering for women as a process, but may fail to address inequalities between women and men at household level. Gender relationships involve relations of power and challenging these can be threatening, not only to men who oppose their own loss of power (without realizing the benefits to be gained from greater equality) but also to women who have invested in the status quo. Unless there are strategies to deal with resistance, efforts to promote women's empowerment can provoke resistance or lead to a sometimes violent backlash.

Key Findings

■ The SHABGE homestead gardening project under CARE's Rural Livelihoods Programme found that the transfer of technical skills through Farmer Field Schools (FFS) had important benefits to women in helping them increase production and that this sometimes had the effect of raising their status within the household. However, there was a strong risk that when the FFS programme ended women participants would lose the potential benefits of organising together. In response, CARE adapted the programme to help women FFS members develop their organizational skills, build awareness of their formal rights and lobby for access to the Government services (such as livestock extension) which they are formally entitled to.

■ Women's rights are not isolated from the broader context of poor people's access to resources. The Community Based Fisheries Management (CBFM) programmes, for instance, have sometimes tried to set up community management structures for open water bodies, only to face elite capture of the water resource.

■ Comparative experience from outside the RLP provides valuable lessons on an alternative approach to empowerment. The civil society organisations (CSOs) Nijera Kori and Samata, for instance, have developed a range of strategies to promote poor people's land rights through enhancing their social capital. Helping people to form groups, develop their organisational skills, lobby in favour of their rights and take collective action for example, to occupy Khas land have helped poor communities to gain or retain control over the main resource that guarantees their survival.

- For Nijera Kori and Samata, gender equality constitutes a central value. Both have adopted the strategy of working separately at first with groups of women and groups of men; but mobilising and building skills around common issues starting with land rights. At a later stage, when women have gained more confidence, women and men work together in joint committees. Meanwhile, separate groups provide a relatively safe starting point for women and men to begin discussing more personal, gender issues, such as early marriage, dowry and domestic violence. This strategy has proved to have empowering results for women: not only because the households they live in have gained or been able to retain land; but also because women have gained status in the household and the community through joining in struggle with their men.

- Building women's social capital through common struggle with men has not been enough to ensure their right to resources. In some cases, legal changes have also been needed: for instance, to allow women's names to appear jointly on land titles with male family members.

| Key Issue | 4 | Exercising Rights |

Women in Bangladesh have equal rights with men under the National Constitution; but in practice they face huge barriers in exercising those rights. Raising people's awareness of their rights is an important step towards empowerment, but it is far from sufficient. When poor people struggle for their rights they can be exposed to enormous risks. As disadvantaged members of society, women are particularly vulnerable. This indicates that support structures are needed for people to claim their rights effectively. Furthermore, the process cannot be one-sided: state institutions and service providers also need capacity to respond.

Key lesson for 'better practice'

Organizations promoting women's rights should move beyond awareness-raising to ensure that support structures exist (such as institutional support, social networks or access to legal aid) to help women articulate and claim their rights. This can include support to building social capital, forming alliances and advocacy.

Lessons Learnt

- **Rights awareness.** Relationships between women and men at household and community levels are more often governed by social and religious norms that discriminate against women than by the formal law. Where social hierarchies and economic interest groups exclude women from access to or control over resources, restrict their mobility and deprive them of opportunities (e.g. for education), then building women's awareness of their human and legal rights can be a crucial first step towards empowerment.

- **Vulnerability.** When poor people try to defend their rights, however, this exposes them to risks and danger. Women are particularly vulnerable. The threat to women can include physical abuse even within their own households. This illustrates that helping women to become more aware of their rights may not help them to enjoy those rights and may expose them to greater risk including violence. Awareness-raising should be carefully embedded within a risk analysis and accompanied by other strategies to support women's empowerment.

- **Multiple strategies.** RLP projects have increasingly adopted a 'rights based approach' to development; but still have to resolve the issue of how far to intervene in supporting peoples struggle to claim their rights. Comparative experience from CSOs such as Samata and Nijera Kori shows that multiple strategies of support including building social capital, networking and advocacy - are needed to help poor people in general and women in particular to effectively enjoy their rights.

- **Capacity to listen.** People's enjoyment of their rights depends not only on their own capacity to claim those rights but also on the capacity of the state and other duty bearers to respond. This suggests that if Government is serious about promoting gender equality, then it needs to ensure that mechanisms are put in place to support women's claims and facilitate their access to resources, to services and to justice through appropriate conflict resolution mechanisms.

Key Findings

- The CARE RLP has responded to women's concerns around such issues as early marriage, dowry and unfair divorce procedures by building rights awareness into their rural development programme. This has helped strengthen women's voice on these issues in local forums.

- Despite joining a common struggle with men to defend their land rights, women members of Samata found they were still vulnerable to discrimination and abuse within their own households. This led Samata to set up Women's Action Committees specifically to address family-level issues of gender-based discrimination and violence. These committees have played a significant role in de-legitimising the practice of violence against women and in helping to solve local conflicts around such issues as early marriage and dowry payments.

- CSOs that work through an organisational structure of primary groups that are federated at higher levels, such as Union and District levels, have found that this structure lends increasing strength to the voice of individual members. It reduces vulnerability and helps poor and marginalised groups including women to raise their voice at a national level. Samata, for instance, was able to use its federal structure and networking with lawyers and the media to achieve a change in the legislation on land rights, allowing women to register their names together with men on land titles.

- Some CSOs are promoting women's direct participation in local decision making bodies such as *salishes* (traditional community courts) and in local government. This can help create greater sensitivity and responsiveness to women's concerns.

Key Issue   5   Working with Women

Women, especially those who are poor and vulnerable, often face gender-specific barriers to participating in and getting benefit from development interventions or opportunities. These may include women's time constraints (due to their heavy domestic work load), other resource constraints (such as lack of property or capital), social constraints (e.g. purdah, religious norms) as well as the risks involved in challenging the status quo (e.g. the potential threat of violence against women who break with social norms). Strategies for working with diverse groups of women and girls need to take these issues into account.

Key lesson for 'better practice'

Participatory methodologies that combine technical training with leadership and organizational skills may help to move away from programmes that simply 'include women' to those that help build social capital and promote women's empowerment.

Lessons Learnt

- **Qualitative not just quantitative.** Setting targets to include women as beneficiaries can act as an incentive for programme managers to work with women. In projects that simply set quantitative targets to include women, however, women's participation is likely to be tokenistic at best and at worst it may backfire. Strategies for working with women should be based on analysis of women's specific needs and interests and on efforts to resolve the specific constraints they face to participation in and benefit from the programme.

- **Women-led approach.** If women are given support to lead on an initiative, such as setting up a committee to manage water resources, this can avoid the problem of tokenism. However, there may be a need for strategies to minimize resistance and gain men's support.

- **Parallel programmes.** Parallel activities designed to run alongside the main project to ensure that women are involved may bring benefits for women. However, they are unlikely to contribute to overall project goals and this suggests that the gender dimensions of the intervention (its likely significance for and impact on women and on men) have not been analysed or addressed.

- **Household approach.** Setting up programmes to work with women and men from the same households but in separate groups can reduce men's resistance to women's participation. However, this methodology may not necessarily alter women's subordination to men within the family.

- **Participatory methods.** Top-down and didactical methodologies for training and programme extension are often ineffective in reaching poor and vulnerable groups including women. Participatory methods are proving more successful in identifying the different needs and interests of women and men and in finding locally appropriate and context specific ways of responding.

Key Findings

■ In CBFM projects where women were invited to sit on local Management Committees, but had no active role, this discredited both women's involvement and the overall role of the committees. Local Authorities saw these committees as weak and this reduced the incentive to award them access to water resources.

■ The CSO Bantche Sheka applied the trust it had built up through long term engagement with local communities to initiate a women-led CBFM project, where Management Committees for open water bodies have been formed only or mainly by women. However, men's support is solicited through community orientation sessions and through inviting men, including local leaders, to form an advisory committee. This has helped to ensure that women have a greater voice in and benefit from the management of water resources, whilst avoiding male resistance.

■ Some CBFM projects operate micro-finance schemes aimed specifically at women. The justification is that these schemes should help fishing communities to diversify their sources of income at the same time as taking other measures to preserve and improve fishing resources. In practice, however, these initiatives have often run in parallel to the main project. Quite often, the micro-finance scheme beneficiaries were not from fishers' households and the loans taken were not used to diversify household income. Whilst there may have been some benefits to women, this did not contribute to the goal of better management, nor protect women from the consequences of poor water resource management. Namely, a depletion of fishing resources has increased the labour load on women, who are expected to compensate for men's loss of income.

■ The Aquaculture Extension and Training component of FFP notes far greater success in involving women since adopting a participatory approach. CSOs that focus on social mobilisation around issues of common concern to the poor, such as land rights, have also achieved a high level of women's participation including in decision-making.

Key Issue	6	Gender Mainstreaming

At an institutional level, gender mainstreaming is a strategy for promoting gender equality through ensuring that gender difference is taken into account in all aspects of an organization, including policy making, planning, implementation, service delivery, human resource management and resource allocation. At policy level, mainstreaming gender does not mean including women in a predetermined development agenda: it means revising that agenda to ensure that development interventions benefit women equally with men.

Key lesson for 'better practice'

Gender mainstreaming involves a transformational process in which institutional rules and procedures, programme objectives, resource allocation and monitoring systems are revised in order to ensure equal opportunities and benefits to women and men as staff, clients and beneficiaries.

Lessons Learnt

■ **Policy processes.** Efforts to promote women's empowerment tend to be more effective when the institution concerned has a clear policy on promoting gender equality and when there are institutional incentives to implement the policy: for example, when indicators to measure progress towards the gender policy objectives are clearly incorporated in log frames and programme monitoring systems. Ideally, the gender policy should be developed through a participatory process that involves key decision-makers within the institution. Otherwise, the risk is that no-one will take responsibility for implementing it.

■ **Objectives and indicators.** If an organisation is committed to gender equality this should be reflected in programme and project design, starting with the overall objectives. These should be consistent with activities and indicators. Unless there is a clear definition of transformative objectives (i.e. which explicitly aim at reducing gender inequality, not just 'reaching more women'), it is unlikely that the intervention will effectively promote gender equality.

■ **Implementation.** Within an institution, 'champions' are often needed to take forward the gender mainstreaming strategy. However, Gender Advisers or Focal Points have often been over-stretched, under-resourced and isolated within the organisation. Broader strategies are needed to ensure that all staff including senior management take on responsibility for gender mainstreaming, with guidance from gender experts where necessary.

- **Human resources.** Institutional commitment to gender equality involves ensuring that there are equal opportunities for women and men within the institution itself. This means taking gender differences into account including the specific barriers to women's career advancement as well as creating a 'gender friendly' environment. It also means building staff competence for gender mainstreaming. This includes capacity for gender analysis and gender sensitive planning.

- **Financial resources.** Gender experts and gender training for staff may prove ineffectual in promoting gender equality unless adequate time and financial resources are allocated to make the necessary institutional changes. For example, this may involve more detailed data collection and analysis, revising human resource policies and revising internal norms and regulations such as programme design procedures, to ensure that these take gender differences into account.

- **Monitoring and impact assessment.** Good gender policy can 'evaporate' (i.e. fail to be realized in practice), unless the objectives and practical steps towards meeting them are clearly laid out and indicators to measure progress towards gender equality goals are incorporated in the monitoring and evaluation systems. The starting point is to ensure sex disaggregated data are collected. Yet, merely quantitative indicators (e.g. 'number of women') can lead to tokenism: indicators should be qualitative and able to measure change in gender relationships (e.g. 'reduced gender gap in access to services').

Key Findings

- The CBFM-2 project employed a consultant to draft a gender policy. However, once the consultant completed her task there was little follow-up, suggesting a low level of institutional commitment to the policy or to gender equality goals. By contrast, CARE used a participatory process to help the staff in formulating a gender strategy. This has been complemented with a Gender Policy and Operational Plan (2003). CARE also appointed a Gender Adviser at mission level to promote implementation of the strategy and plans. Commitment to this strategy is reflected in project log-frames at the level of objectives around gender equality and gender sensitive indicators.

- A number of CSOs are taking special measures on affirmative recruitment of women staff and creating a 'gender friendly' environment (e.g. through ensuring staff awareness of gender issues, providing child care facilities, adequate physical conditions for privacy and hygiene at the work place, specific measures to ensure the security of women staff when they have to travel).

- CARE is implementing a programme for management trainees which special experience and training for women to help them take up management positions.

- The Agriculture Services Information and Reform Project (ASIRP) included activities to build institutional capacity of the Department for Agricultural Extension to mainstream gender.

- Some projects are moving away from merely quantitative process indicators (e.g. 'Number of women present at the meeting') towards qualitative data able to measure outcomes and impact on gender relations. CARE's RLP, for instance, is developing tools to measure the perceived changes in women's decision-making power at household level. A range of indicators was developed in consultation with women beneficiaries and includes such things as women's role in decision-making with regard to household income.

Key Issue   7   Dealing with Resistance

Given existing unequal power relations between women and men, when the mutual benefits to be gained from gender equality are not well understood then efforts to promote it provoke hostility and resistance. This can include internal resistance within an institution and external resistance within the communities and constituencies that an organization works with. Resistance can be open and aggressive, or hidden and passive. Developing strategies to overcome resistance at different levels is a key factor in achieving progress towards gender equality.

Key lesson for 'better practice'

Policy makers should ensure clear and concrete links between gender equality and overall programme goals are established and understood. Within constituencies, strategies can include building women's social capital, alliances, and incentives for   men to support women's decision-making role.

Lessons Learnt

- **Entry points.** A good understanding of gender relations in the local context is needed to identify the best entry points for working with women and for dealing with resistance at community level. Strategies may include orientation sessions for the whole community, finding allies amongst local leaders including religious leaders and reaching women and men in the community with the same messages around rights and entitlements.

- **Recognizing violence.** Violence and the threat of violence against women needs to be recognized and addressed as an obstacle and aspect of resistance to women's empowerment.

- **Building alliances.** Effective strategies for dealing with resistance have to go beyond local community level to deal with broader social and political constraints to women's empowerment (e.g. religious conservatism, political violence, corruption); requiring sustained long-term efforts and building links between poor women and men and allies who are able to lobby with them and on behalf of their interests.

- **Institutional incentives.** At an institutional level, clearly establishing the links between gender equality and achieving programme goals (e.g. food security, poverty reduction) has proved to be critical in ensuring commitment to gender equality. Gender awareness is not enough, however, to ensure that staff are responsible to implement gender policies. Gender equality goals need to be reflected in overall programme objectives and in process, outcome and impact indicators. Criteria around gender mainstreaming competence and achievement should also be built into staff appraisal. Without such measures, gender policy is liable to 'evaporate' i.e. fail to be translated into action.

- **Tracking resources.** Allocating specific financial and human resources to gender mainstreaming and to strategic activities to promote women's empowerment can ensure that resources are available to promote gender equality and that these resources can be tracked.

Key Findings

- CARE through its RLP launched a programme of awareness raising with poor people in general and women in particular around their formal rights and entitlements. Issues that women particularly wanted to discuss included early marriage, dowry and divorce procedures. Whilst CARE staff were able to provide information on the formal law around these issues, however, they did not have a clear strategy to facilitate change in current practices that discriminate against women. Nor did the organisation have a clear strategy to deal with resistance to its own programme interventions involving women: in the Chittagong area, for instance, some men were aggressively opposed to women family members joining the SHABGE programme.

- In facilitating poor people's mobilisation and struggle around their rights, CSOs such as Nijera Kori and Samata have developed multiple strategies for dealing with resistance. This includes promoting members' participation in local government and dispute resolution bodies, lobbying, advocacy and networking with lawyers associations, with the media and with influential people in local and national government. An organisational structure of primary groups that are federated up to Union and District levels has also lent increasing strength to the voice of individual members in these organisations.

- Samata Women's Action Committees specifically address violence and the threat of violence against women (see 'Exercising Rights', above).

- CARE in its RLP has included review of performance against gender action plans in its staff appraisal procedures.

WAY FORWARD?

- The inception phase of a project or programme should include gender analysis in the locally specific context and should identify opportunities to ensure that women will not only benefit from the intervention but also that the specific, gender-related constraints women face will be addressed. FTEP for instance recognised that women's participation could be hampered by time constraints, illiteracy and social difficulties in working with male trainers. In response they adopted a pro-women recruitment strategy, reduced the use of printed materials for training and promoted homestead based technologies such as fish culture in ponds and in cages.

- To take account of the diverse needs and interests of different groups of women, programme and project design should be flexible, context specific and participatory. SUFER gradually recognised the need for more participatory methods to involve women in the design of appropriate aquaculture technology which they could own and use, such as shrimp cages, mollusc and seaweed culture and new fish drying techniques.

- Sustainable change requires moving away from promoting women's involvement in isolated projects towards systematically promoting women's empowerment through a broad, programmatic approach to development interventions.

- The problems in addressing gender inequality are inter-related, so solutions need to be multi-dimensional. For example, technical skills that help women increase their production may not necessarily lead to better nutrition or higher income for women. CARE and SUFER found in some cases that profits were raked off by male household members, employers or other intermediaries. Additional measures may be needed, such as building women's organisational skills, addressing resistance from men and fending off elite capture of resources.

- Questions of women's access to resources and decision-making at a household and local level should be linked in to strategies that address broader social and political constraints, through networking and advocacy for legal and policy changes. CSOs promoting land rights, for instance, have helped build women's organisational skills but also to link up with lawyers, the media and politicians to secure legal reform protecting women's land rights.

- Development organisations should draw up a gender policy and action plans using a participatory and learning-centred process with staff including senior decision-makers. The gender policy should reflect and be reflected by the overall development goals of the institution.

- Human and financial resources should be allocated to facilitate and support implementation of gender policy and action plans and to enable the institutional changes required for gender mainstreaming to take place. Social development expertise will be needed to guide and support this.

- Monitoring and impact assessment systems should include qualitative indicators able to measure progress in closing the gender gap (i.e. in reducing inequalities between women and men). These could include indicators around intra-household changes in decision-making, income and food allocation; community perceptions of gender roles; relative work load of women and men and relative direct and indirect benefits accruing from the programme.

- Accountability against gender objectives should be built in to organisational rules and procedures including staff appraisal.

- Developing and implementing strategies to promote gender equality should be an on-going and iterative process, wherein experience, activities and progress are continually reviewed in order to adapt and refine the strategies.

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More information on these themes and issues can be found in Project Output to Purpose and End of Project Review documents accessible at www.lcgbangladesh.org/rlep.