

# **MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORPORATION**

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## **REMARKS**

### **Millennium Challenge Corporation Holds a Meeting on MCC's Gender policy**

**January 11, 2007  
Millennium Challenge Corporation  
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#### **Speakers:**

**Frances McNaught,  
Vice President for Congressional and Public Affairs  
Millennium Challenge Corporation**

**Ambassador John J. Danilovich,  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Millennium Challenge Corporation**

**Virginia Seitz,  
Director, Social and Gender Assessment,  
Millennium Challenge Corporation**

**Sylvia Torres,  
MCA-Nicaragua Gender Specialist**

**Ritu Sharma,  
Co-Founder and President,  
Women's Edge Coalition**

**Caroline Moser,  
Visiting Fellow,  
Brookings Institution**

MCNAUGHT: Good afternoon. I'm Fran McNaught, vice president for congressional and public affairs. And I'd like to welcome you all to the Millennium Challenge Corporation. And we are pleased that we have such a good turnout and so much interest in our gender policy.

We consider our gender policy key to achieving our mission, which is reducing poverty through economic growth. And you're going to hear much this afternoon about the importance of taking gender concerns into consideration in making our programs as effective as possible as we go about our mission.

To start off today, Ambassador John Danilovich, which is our chief executive officer, is going to talk about our commitment to incorporating gender concerns into our work.

Ambassador Danilovich almost literally just got off a plane from Nicaragua, where he was part of the U.S. official delegation to the inaugural of the new president of Nicaragua. And, as you'll find out later, if you didn't already know, Nicaragua is one of our compact countries.

I think he has to leave shortly after his remarks, but, under the circumstances, I think we can forgive him for that.

Then we will have a panel that will discuss the various dimensions of MCC's gender policy and its context in the field. Then we'll have time for your questions and comments.

So, to begin what promises to be a most informative discussion, I'm happy to invite Ambassador Danilovich to the podium.

(APPLAUSE)

DANILOVICH: Thanks very much, Fran.

And good afternoon to all of you, and welcome to the headquarters of the Millennium Challenge Corporation. Thank you for joining us today to learn more about how MCC incorporates our gender policy into our work. We appreciate your insight into this topic and the valuable expertise that you bring and that you share with us.

The first-rate panel that has been assembled today will fully brief you on every aspect of MCC's gender policy and take your questions. But I'd like to begin with some key points that frame our approach to gender-related concerns, and reaffirm our utmost and continued commitment to addressing them.

We cannot talk about poverty reduction and economic growth, which is the mission of the Millennium Challenge Corporation, without talking about gender equality. Decades of experience and research demonstrate that when differences in roles, resources and power between men and women are neglected, international assistance programs fail to meet their goals. We know that gender inequality is a significant constraint to sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction.

In this context, let me outline three concrete ways that are under way at the MCC to ensure that concerns about gender equality and gender roles in development are integrated into every aspect of MCC's operations.

First, I'm extremely pleased to have recruited and brought onboard MCC's gender specialist and adviser, Ginny Seitz, who is our director of social and gender assessment. Ginny has extensive expertise in conducting gender-based analysis and in effecting participatory processes internationally. She integrates gender issues into how we conduct our business at the MCC and serves as a resource to all MCC staff. She's a very valuable asset to the organization.

Second, we maintain that the job of effectively including women in the process of developing and implementing MCC compacts involves the diligence of more than one individual or one office. And we are conducting training programs for MCC staff.

This will help us to better understand gender-equality issues and will enhance our capacity to put our gender policy into operation within our other areas of responsibility. We are committed to building organizational capacity and staff expertise in this area.

Third, we have adopted a gender policy to ensure that gender is considered in the selection of eligible countries and integrated into the development and design of compact programs, the assessment and implementation of MCC-funded projects and the monitoring of program results.

In short, MCC's gender policy requires the integration of gender into all stages of MCC's assistance programs, including country selection, compact development and implementation, and program monitoring and evaluation.

We provide guidance to countries to ensure that they effectively design and implement programs in their compacts that takes the social roles, behaviors and responsibilities of both men and women into consideration, and address gender inequalities that are constraints to economic growth and poverty reduction.

We've incorporated gender into our country guidance documents, so that eligible and compact countries understand our requirements.

Our panel today will go into more detail on how gender considerations are integrated into our assistance.

Let me share a few examples of how the role of women is already being included in MCC's work.

MCC statute directs us to take into account and assess the role of women and girls. Issues of gender equality are incorporated into the country selection criteria, and are measured by multiple indicators to capture different elements.

These include social investment, such as girls' primary education completion rates, and measures of political and social rights, such as civil liberties as well as voice and accountability, which evaluate gender equality amongst other factors.

Where there are gaps in our indicators, we provide our board with supplemental information to gauge country performance on gender equality before they commit MCC to any compact.

One of our new indicators that was used as supplemental information for 2007 that will be applied in the 2008 selection process includes measurements of gender equality with regards to land access.

When I visit Burkina Faso next month, I will see girls learning in new schools constructed through our \$13 million threshold program. Our 132 girl-friendly schools are being built throughout the country, which encourage the attendance of female students by providing day-care centers, on-site canteens, separate male and female bathroom facilities, and female mentoring.

A gender expert has been engaged early in the consultative process in Burkina Faso to ensure that poor rural women have opportunities to participate in consultations to develop the country's compact proposal.

In Cape Verde, a women's NGO, one of the largest providers of microfinance in the country, was particularly active in the early consultations and in designing the compact agreement's projects.

In Nicaragua, which I had the experience of seeing first-hand just yesterday, a local gender expert was hired to develop a gender-integration strategy for the Nicaraguan entity implementing the MCC compact.

We made women's legal and economic rights a precondition to the signing of any compact with the government of Lesotho, where married women were considered to be minors. This was the first time U.S. foreign assistance has been conditioned on gender equality. The recent enactment of a law by the parliament of Lesotho removing the minority status of married women is a tremendous step in the right direction.

In our compact with Honduras, the impact of rural roads will be measured by evaluating the extent to which reduced travel time and cost to market and public services apply to both men and women.

In our compact with Madagascar, we will assess and know for the first time how many men and women actually have land titles.

You will hear additional examples during the panel presentation.

In February of last year, Representative Jim Kolbe, who played an instrumental role in establishing the MCC, said, "When you exclude women, you exclude half the talent in a country. From an economic standpoint, this doesn't make sense." Frankly, I would add that from every standpoint this does not make sense.

At MCC, we recognize this reality. Our approach is one where projects are designed to ensure that gender inequalities are addressed and where both women and men can fully participate in every way, thus maximizing the results for poverty reduction and economic growth.

I'd like to thank you again for being here today to listen to the MCC gender policy initiatives. I invite you to fully engage with our panelists in this fruitful discussion on this significant topic.

Our team has worked hard on its creation, and it's already being implemented. And I believe it's a policy of which we can be justifiably proud.

Thank you very much.

(APPLAUSE)

MCNAUGHT: Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.

And now I'm going to ask the panelists to take their seats.

We have four very distinguished panelists, each with a very impressive resume. But in order to not spend the entire time introducing them instead of letting them talk themselves, I'm just going to give very brief remarks about their credentials. And I'll do it in the order in which they will present.

First, Dr. Ginny Seitz, MCC's director of social and gender assessment. She will provide an overview of our policy. She's responsible for developing our gender-integration strategy to ensure that gender analysis informs and improves the design and implementation of programs in our partner countries. She also coordinates internal capacity-building in the area of gender and development. Ginny has more than 25 years in research, evaluation, training, program design and management, and has worked in more than 20 countries.

Our second presenter will be Sylvia Torres. She's MCA-Nicaragua's gender specialist and is tasked with implementing our gender policy throughout all of MCA-Nicaragua's program efforts. Certainly she can offer the perspective from the field. Currently a PhD candidate at the University of Pittsburgh, Sylvia has worked on gender equality issues for various international and regional organizations, including UNIFEM, Save the Children, and the group El Feministe de Leon, all in her native Nicaragua.

Third, we're pleased that Ritu Sharma, co-founder and president of the Women's Edge Coalition, has joined the panel. Ritu will discuss the role of the U.S. NGO community in relation to MCC's gender policy. She is a leading voice on international women's issues and U.S. foreign policy. She's played a pivotal role in ensuring that the interests of poor women worldwide are incorporated into U.S. economic assistance and trade policies and, in some cases, into U.S. law itself.

Also, her presentation will be available after the event, if you want to pick it up on your way out.

And Dr. Caroline Moser, our world-renowned scholar and practitioner and author of many publications, including the very influential book, "Gender Planning and Development." Caroline is currently a visiting fellow at the Brookings Institution and a senior research association with the Overseas Development Institute. In addition to her work on gender and development, she has expertise in the areas of social policy and development, urban poverty and inequality, social protections and human rights. She will discuss MCC's gender policy within the larger context of international development.

These experts have much to share, so let's start with Ginny.

SEITZ: Thank you.

I want to add my welcome and thank you for coming to MCC today.

And, also, special thanks to Ambassador Danilovich and Rodney Bent, our deputy CEO, for the leadership that they have shown around our gender policy.

As we introduce this policy to you, it is important to put it in the context of MCC. MCC's mission, as you've heard, is poverty reduction through economic growth.

MCC provides grants to countries that have demonstrated a commitment to good governance, economic freedom, and investing in their people. Eligible countries develop a proposal for Millennium Challenge Account funds, and the MCC engages in a due-diligence process to assess the feasibility and impacts of those proposed investments.

Operationally, our partner countries are responsible, with our assistance, for both developing and implementing their programs. And you'll hear more about that from our panelist Sylvia Torres, from Nicaragua, in just a moment.

MCC's gender policy reflects this mission and operational approach through the recognition of gender inequality as a constraint to growth and poverty reduction and through the very important concept of country ownership.

The policy clarifies roles and responsibilities for both the country and MCC with emphasis on the country's role. MCC guides the country to consider gender throughout the compact process, from the critical period of initial consultations and program prioritizations through project implementation, monitoring and evaluation. And we recommend highly and widely accepted conceptual frameworks and tools, including the analytical framework developed by Caroline Moser, on our panel today.

The policy document does not stand alone. Gender is being integrated into all of our guidance documents and our guidance practices.

We've also tried to reflect the policies and practices and lessons from the field of gender and development.

For example, organizationally, our focal point, function, is integrated into an operational division -- environment and social assessment -- and is represented on each transaction team. The transaction team is the interdisciplinary team within MCC that works with the country throughout the development and implementation of a compact.

Operationally, gender analysis is integrated throughout the compact process, both here and in the eligible countries.

And, substantively, the approach maintains the overall program focus on economic growth and poverty reduction. So that means that the focus of our gender policy is increasing program effectiveness in reducing poverty.

In developing the gender policy in the past year, we listened to our NGO partners -- and Women's Edge has played a very important role in this -- and we learned from the experiences of other development institutions.

Our internal policy development has included all of our operational units and moved the policy through the organization, from our gender working group to our managing directors and then on to senior management.

We know that the real challenge for the gender policy is ahead of us. And we are working to build the capacity of MCC's staff to fully engage in their guidance and oversight role. Our strategy includes workshops, seminars, trainings, and sectoral and cross-sectoral collaborations between gender experts and MCC staff.

We have a gender integration working group, representing every operational function, as I mentioned. And the social and gender assessment function is present in every transaction team through the environment and social assessment team member.

Regarding our partner countries, we are engaging with them early on in the process of developing their proposals, through guidance missions and by identifying gender expertise in those countries.

We know that there is a lot of capacity in the South, in government ministries that are probably not the ministries leading the MCA process, and in the NGOs, universities and more broadly in civil society. This is where our NGO partners here in the U.S. can, and have, assisted us, by informing their local partners about the compact development process and working to engage local gender expertise early on.

We will continue to look for ways to collaborate with other donors and organizations in order to best leverage the work of others, as we build the capacity of this organization and our partner countries in implementation.

What has made a difference at MCC, and what will continue to make a difference as we move forward, is the high level of commitment to gender integration from our senior management. Ambassador Danilovich has made this clear, both internally and in public events, from my first day at MCC almost one year ago.

In addition, Deputy CEO Rodney Bent and our other vice presidents, many of whom are here today, have also demonstrated a high level of leadership in moving MCC forward on gender. MCC's position regarding women's economic rights in Lesotho is a good example of this resolve.

I also want to especially thank Margaret Kuhlow, my managing director, and Haven Ley, our program officer, for their support and contributions.

Finally, in the audience here today are a number of MCC staff from many parts of this organization -- country relations, economic analysis, monitoring and evaluation, development policy, environment and social assessment, financial and private-sector development, agriculture, infrastructure, education, health -- all of whom have had a stake in the successful implementation of our gender policy.

Before we move on, I would like my colleagues, including the members of the gender working group, to stand up and be noted. And hopefully we'll get to engage you, as well, in the discussion after this panel.

(APPLAUSE)

So thank you very much, and I'm now going to turn it over to Sylvia.

TORRES: Thank you. I will present the response from September 2006 for the signing and starting the implementation of a gender strategy that assure men and women equal access to the opportunities MCC/MCA is providing to Nicaragua.

The \$175 million goes into three projects: one, securing land rights; second, transportation; and third, rural business. The compact signed between the United States of America and Nicaragua states the gender consideration should be included in all project activities.

In regards to one of the components, rural business, a gender strategy should be in place before any technical and financial assistance is provided. Consistent with the gender policy of MCC and the requirement of the compact agreement, MCA-Nicaragua is developing a gender strategy that responds to Nicaraguan women's demands for inclusion. They presented a proposal for inclusion to MCC/MCA before signing the compact.

In response to those demands, the strategy has three main components: One is information; second is participation; and third, measure for equality.

The strategy of gender seeks to provide accurate and timely information about the content and requirement of the projects so women, as well as men, will know the chances and the ways to access them.

Women demanded information. So, along the design and consultation of the strategy, MCA-Nicaragua has constantly maintained a contact with organized women.

The rationale of the gender strategy is that providing specific information about requirement for participation within each specific agricultural product will allow the program to design a specific and practical measure.

Throughout this process, gaps in the equal access to benefits provided by MCC should be identified. The gender strategy also contemplates a (inaudible) report on the participation of women in the project.

Now, regarding to the second point, participation, in instances of decision, the gender strategy includes the installation of a women consultative council, which will oversee implementation and monitoring of the progress of gender-integration strategy. So far, the business, the water-share, and the land regularization project were discussed with this council.

The third component, measures to guarantee equal access, are being specifically designed. We are conducting a gender assessment of the specific of the values and the cultural products supported by MCA, such as milk and root vegetables, expecting that this will provide us with information about possible gender gaps.

Now, as for the implementation of measure to secure the inclusion of women, Nicaraguan women have been often not recognized participants within the economic sector. By promoting them to be equal power in this investment, MCA/MCC-Nicaragua will then materialize the potential they have.

The intervention is going to be done by contracting a harvest developer. These contractors have a mandatory disposition to use a gender analysis and to implement measures that address gender gap application, but provide evidence of providing opportunities for women will be preferred.

Also, before being considered by the investment committee, all terms of reference for contracts has to have a clearance by the gender specialist.

In addition, given that this project of rural business has a global value-chain approach, it is our task to identify which position women have in the chain. The purpose of this strategy is that women will participate on those link in which more profit is added. Oftentimes, women participate in production and in the value chain, but they don't -- they are more people that gain more profit. So we want to identify their place so they will be endorsed. It's not that they just will be participating by itself.

For example, in the gender chain, the project we're doing in Malpaisia for example, women that take 100 hundred liters of milk has a daily profit of 110 cordobas. However, the broker that take this milk from Malpaisia to Leon get daily profit of between 600 and 800 cordobas. So that's a gap that, with our intervention, should be and it's going to be fixed or improved.

Accessing new technologies and technical assistance through our intervention will allow men, as well as women, to have a bigger part of the profit they're creating. And that will put more dynamic to the economy.

Regarding the third component of the project, land regularization, in Nicaragua, many women have non-recognized land rights. And this prevents them from accessing credit and technical assistance. The MCA-Nicaragua compact has specific goals for achieving that, at the end of the program, at least 40 percent of women own a clean land deed. And it's going to be 43,000 new sanitized deeds.

So we will have an important number of women that, with that measure, will be part of the formal economy. Now they are in the informal economy and, you know, losing money and power.

Regarding the land regularization, there's also some benefit that cannot be measured in terms of economic indicators but are also important. It has been proven that owning a property improves women's chances to age with dignity, because the possibility to being able to inherit a property prevent women from being abused or being considered a burden on their family.

We don't have a Social Security system, so you depend on your family to be taken care of when you're aging. And that is a simple but very important fact in women life, knowing that she has property of her own.

Now, regarding the transportation component of the compact, the regularization of property as well as the improvement of roads. That's going to be -- we're going to have, in five years, when this program is finished, we're going to have the best-connected region in the area.

Having these roads will mean to save two and a half hours of time for farmers to take from there to their markets. And this is important for women too, and specifically for women, because oftentimes women prefer not to go to the markets because of domestic obligation. The milk-producing women I already talked about, because by reducing the time between their farm and the market, they will be in a better position to negotiate prices.

I asked her, "Why don't you take your milk and take it to the market?" Because, at the same time, she has to take care of the cows, the husband, the dog, and everything in her household.

(LAUGHTER)

Now, with the implementation of a gender strategy, MCA-Nicaragua has started to make a difference, a big difference, to overcome cultural obstacles. These obstacles have been often reinforced by development program, but especially in the economy field, to not recognize women as social and economic actors on their own, but to be secondary players.

It has been hard for rural women to be included in projects that have investment as part of them. In fact, for many years, the priority for women was subsistence and upkeep of farms.

In the pilot project executed in the initial stage of MCA-Nicaragua that was started in September last year, women have been important actors. For example, there is planned in the pilot the investment of six milk-recollection (ph) centers. Those are investments that are higher than \$10,000, and for Nicaragua this is a huge amount.

And of those, of the two actually approved, one is being led by a milk association that doesn't have many women in their ranks, and the other is being led by women of two associations in Achuapa, a very remote municipality in the north of Orleon.

And in the same project of 15 model farm plans, six are going to be led by women. This model farm is going to be able to translate new technologies that will improve the quality of the projects they're doing.

They receive now two cordobas per a liter. By just supplying simple measures like washing their hands, washing the breast of the cow, and having proof over the place in which they do that, they can raise the price of their product up to four cordobas all year. So this simple thing, simple technologies that can be easily obtained that, if we do that, that will improve the economy in the sector.

So six of these farms are being led by women. They include men in the people they're serving, but the leadership is on them. This presents a great challenge for us, because sometimes when economic projects fail, everybody is there to blame the project, the design, the weather, the help.

(LAUGHTER)

But when a project that includes women fails, it is because women are no good for that. So there's a big challenge for us, to make those projects work.

As I was saying, MCC/MCA-Nicaragua has started to make a difference by establishing interlocution with women and providing access to new technologies. By doing this, we're contributing to position them as a new legal actor in the public space.

For example, the Council of Western Women, organized through (inaudible) their participation in MCC/MCA program, has been already signed agreement with other project development, such as Decopin. Because their reaction is that, if this big project, MCC/MCA-Nicaragua, is talking to them, they might be good somehow. So just by taking that dialogue with them, we're helping to place them in a new position.

The impact of the action done so far on the one we're going to do (inaudible) democracy by extending the benefit of equal opportunity to the economic area too. Having now a gender policy for the corporation is a big support to continue to achieving goals and to promoting the equality of women as the Millennium Challenge goals have said in the third objective of them.

So it's a big challenge. This is just the beginning, but I think it's going to be great result. Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

SHARMA: Thank you very much, Sylvia. I could listen to you all day long.

It's not often that I find myself in the position of giving laudatory remarks for presidential initiatives...

(LAUGHTER)

... so I'm really deeply proud and excited to be doing that here today.

And I can say, really unequivocally, that the new MCC gender policy is definitely the most comprehensive and practical and most likely-to-be-successful U.S. policy on gender that I have ever seen. And I've seen many, many, many, many of them commend different iterations out of the U.S. government.

You will hear from Dr. Caroline Moser about some of the technical aspects of the plan and whether it's strong, from a gender-analysis perspective. But what I'd like to focus on a little more is where we go from here.

There are really two reasons to support women around the world that are often used as advocacy tools. And one is to say that it's the right thing to do, and the other is to say that it's the smart thing to do.

When we first approached the MCA about three years ago, we brought with us all of the evidence that, if the MCA did not include an analysis of men and women's roles in society at every single stage of the process, the MCC would simply not succeed, whether or not you cared about women's equality or not.

It's simply a matter of efficacy. And the MCA could not risk failure. And since that very first meeting until now, we have consistently found that the leadership of the MCA and the MCC is smart and does not want to take that kind of risk.

This gender policy is also right, in the sense of doing good. As Ginny was saying, and I think as Sylvia's example from Nicaragua really brings to light, even in the process of creating this gender policy and engaging the country in discussions about it, it has already led to new rights for women in Africa, new access to school for girls, and, however unintentionally, new attitudes for some in MCC country governments around the world.

So this policy has already created very concrete, real change in the lives of millions of women around the world. And this is just the beginning.

I want to thank many people at the MCC for the clarity of their vision, for their very rigorous thinking on this issue, and for their real political savvy in maneuvering this to make it happen.

And starting, obviously, with Ambassador Danilovich and your deputy, Rodney Bent, Chuck Sethness, Sherri Kraham, Margaret Kuhlow, and, of course, Ginny Seitz, which put her shoulder to the wheel as soon as she came here and began to create this policy.

I also want to thank all of the organizations who've worked with Women's Edge to make this happen. It was very much a collaborative effort, where the NGO community brought its best thinking, its experience from years of work and development in the field, to bear.

I would like to particularly recognize the International Center for Research on Women, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'Is, the Academy for Educational Development, Bread for the World, The Hunger Project, Amnesty International, Interaction, the Basic Education Coalition, and World Learning.

So, at Edge, as you can see, we never do anything alone. And working on this MCC gender policy was no different.

I also want to thank a very special person who couldn't be with us today and in whose stead I am speaking. And that is Nora O'Connell, whom many of you know. Nora is our vice president for global development policy, and she's the one who really led these efforts with the MCC from the very beginning. She really, really wanted to be here, but a very little boy -- eight pounds and six ounces, to be exact -- has her focus at the moment. But I did want to acknowledge Nora's leadership here.

I don't want to minimize the incredible effort that has gone into creating this gender policy when I say that that was the easy part. Now is going to come the test of your leadership and of your tenacity and your commitment.

This gender policy is either going to spring to life or it's going to wither on the vine based on how everyone at the MCC, starting with Ambassador Danilovich and extending to every country team, every negotiations officer, every monitor, every clerk who chooses to stand by it or not.

The gender policy will live or die in the thousand small moments when you must decide whether to hold on to it or let it go; when you either push a country to redo its analysis or you just accept it; when you either make clear that a ministry must implement the gender aspects of its country's compact or you subtly signal that it's OK to ignore them; and when you insist that there must be capable female extension agents somewhere in the country or just accept the pat claim that no such women exist.

Every woman, boy, girl and man in every MCA country is depending on you to make the right decision in that moment. So, no pressure.

(LAUGHTER)

So, I won't forget this day. I want to thank you very much for coming, for learning about the policy, for working on the policy, for being committed to the policy. And I look forward to our discussion.

Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

MOSER: Thank you. I would like to start my comments by, first of all, congratulating the MCC for their development and adoption of this gender policy and, like others, to acknowledge the critical importance of Ambassador Danilovich and the whole senior management team in achieving this.

I have been asked to comment on the policy in the context of international development. And, as the last speaker, moving on fast, I will just make three short points.

First of all, the policy's underlying approach. In the past 25 years, as many of us know, we've come an incredibly long way in our conceptualization of gender issues. We started with women and development; we moved to gender development; and now we have gender mainstreaming. And yet, it is still clear that we have a lot of challenges, or we wouldn't need a gender policy.

So I think we have to start by recognizing that a gender policy, as MCC recognizes, has a role to play. And we wouldn't need a policy if there wasn't that need. So I think that's really important.

Underlying the policy approach has been a shift over the last 20 years in the private, underlying logic behind it, from what we used to call "welfare" to "equity" to "efficiency" and, most recently, to "empowerment" and even through to rights-based purposes.

Given the MCC's focus on poverty reduction through economic growth, I would like to endorse the gender policy's adoption of the economic efficiency approach. They have adopted an approach that relates them and positions them within the economic approach of the whole MCC policy.

And while, from a gender perspective, this may not go far enough for some, it's a very realistic approach for a policy that needs to be mainstreamed into MCC country practice.

When Karen Mason and her team at the World Bank developed the World Bank's gender strategy a few years ago, she made the same strategic decision. It means that valuable time is not spent justifying the policy approach and that this can be focused on more important issues of implementation.

And I think that that's a decision that's a good one, and it brings me to my second point: the challenges in the implementation of the policy.

As my colleagues here have said, as we know, getting a policy in place is only half the story. It's the implementation in practice that is now the litmus test of its success.

As many of us know only too well, we have a lot of what we call policy evaporation -- when good policy intentions fail to be followed into practice. However, this is a slightly more complex issue.

I recently did some work on gender auditing for the U.K. Department of International Development, of their program in an African country. And I found that, yes, there was evaporation, but there was also invisible-ization, when monitoring and evaluation procedures failed to document what is actually occurring on the ground. So the issue of monitoring and evaluation and getting that right is so important.

And secondly, there is resistance: when effective mechanisms block policy implementation with the opposition essentially based on power relations -- and, as we know, often on gender power relations -- rather than on technocratic or procedural constraints. Now, such resistance can be both internal inside MCC, or it can also be external within the country teams designing the compacts.

I think the other thing that we need to consider in looking at this, which is really interesting, is that the teams have chosen to work with the terminology. They're talking about "gender integration" rather than "gender mainstreaming."

And this is very interesting; in terms of the whole way they go forward. There's much contention around the whole concept of gender mainstreaming. And I think that what we know is the need to be constructed, to move in a way forward where we understand that gender mainstreaming or gender integration can have two components.

One is to ensure that men and women's concerns are equally integrated into policy and programs. But also, this is with the understanding that there may be specific measures and programs that are required for women themselves, to empower them, to assure them that they, themselves, can be integrated into such processes.

And I see this as a twin-track process. And I acknowledge to them, taking this word, "integration," is useful.

So how can successful implementation be guaranteed? I have four cheerful comments that I think pull this together, and they're similar to my colleagues'.

I think strong leadership is absolutely critical. And this must go beyond endorsements of the policy, to provide substantial support and sustained support as the implementation process rolls out.

Secondly, a highly skilled technical capacity is critical.

And here I would like to really congratulate MCC on their appointment of Ginny as director of this work. As her bio shows, she not only has a lot of knowledge of gender analysis, but, for me, what she brings, even more importantly, is a professional background in gender policy and planning -- the whole implementation process, which often gets ignored.

I think we've seen, in the past decade, extraordinary steps forward on gender analysis. That we've got all right. But actually how you get it right in the implementation process -- if you listened to Ginny talking, she was talking about what are the institutional processes, the institutional structures that you need to put in place, what are the operational procedures, the TORs, these boring things that actually have to be.

It's much easier -- the gender analysis is the easy bit. It's the planning and implementation that is so difficult. And I think you have an extraordinary person in leading this here, somebody who's rolled up her sleeves and has actually worked in the trenches, which is essential for this type of job.

To ensure this goes further, as has already been mentioned, there's been discussion of building up the technical capacity, steeling (ph) the capacity within the MCC staff, both here and in-country, with appropriate entry points.

And I think here we also have to recognize that we've moved beyond generic gender training. It's not a panacea. What we need is more tailor-made, operationally

focused types of strengthening of capacity, where this is really quite minute at times and very specific, rather than just rolling out a program. So that, to me, is very important.

Finally, I think we need the support of highly skilled, gender-aware women in the South in the MCC-eligible countries. We have one right here; I have one right here on my right.

I think the monitoring of women's organizations in the North is essential, and that's what we've heard about from the role that Women's Edge has played, which has been so critical, but so, too, is the participation of women in the South, whether it's members of women's organizations working as consultants or bureaucrats within government ministries.

I think that this is the most important resource that will ensure success and will ensure country ownership. So, therefore, we have to think very seriously about giving space to these types of social actors and also to the political positions that they hold within their societies.

Gone are the days, thank goodness, when gender and development was considered a Northern construct exported to the South. Women in the South are highly aware of gender issues within their own culturally specific interpretation. Many of them have undertaken graduate work, and they are authorities in their own right. They are inside government; they are outside government. They are playing important roles all over the world.

Thus, to end, I'd like to say that I hope that the MCC does not invisible-ize this critical resource, but ensures that such women are incorporated into the design and implementation process.

Many of these women face a lot of resistance in their own contexts. I think that Nicaragua is a very poor country, but it's a wonderful example of a country that has a very articulate and highly organized civil society and a very strong women's movement.

And I think, even then, there's a way to go. But let's consider some of the other countries where you work, where you neither have such a strong civil society and you do not have a long, historical process of the role of a strong women's movement in pushing the agenda.

And it's those women in those countries where I think the MCC can play an important role, as a catalyst -- and we've heard an example from Africa of this already -- to assist in leveraging the gender priorities that they identify.

So I wish you lots of luck with this challenging endeavor. I hope the MCC will have a similar event in a few years so we can review the progress with a similar level of transparency as today's event.

Thank you very much.

(APPLAUSE)

MCNAUGHT: I think I suggested it would be an informative session, and thus far it most assuredly has been.

We are ready now to take questions for the panelists. If you have some or a comment, we have a roving mike, carried by Nate. And we'll start with the front row here.

Let me know to whom you wish to address it, or you can leave it to me to guess.

QUESTION: Hi. I wanted to thank all the panelists. This was a terrific subject and terrific representation of the topic, which is so important, obviously, from the fullness of this room.

One of the most exciting things that I saw in your gender policy was in the very last section of the policy where it talks about disbursement of MCA funds which may be conditioned upon the satisfaction of targets and progress on indicators measuring project performance.

And so, I wanted to address this to Ginny, but also the rest of the panel is equally welcome to respond.

I wanted to know more about this, because I think a lot of the problems that occur with gender policies is that they have no teeth. And funds is certainly a good way to ensure that some progress is made and that this just isn't lip service like a lot of other organizations, you know, who try to incorporate gender but ultimately gender goes by the wayside for other reasons.

SEITZ: I'm going to ask Margaret to answer that.

MARGARET KUHLOW, MANAGING DIRECTOR, ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIAL ASSESSMENT, MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORPORATION:

Thank you very much for the question.

I think the fundamental response to the question gets back to the point that a number of the panelists made earlier, that we've made a very strong effort to ensure that the gender policy is tied to the efficacy of the programs.

And where, in our process of due diligence, one of the things we look at from a gender point of view is: Are there gender issues in the sector, in the particular program, as it's designed, that might undermine the effectiveness of the program? And where there

are, there we try to add conditions such that you ensure the program will be more effective.

So it's not, per se, making sure that you're sort of dripping gender conditions throughout a program, but taking a look at what will make a project work or not work and ensuring that the conditions are right and that we can tie the funds to making the conditions right to make the program work.

QUESTION: I have a follow-up question, a clarification, for Dr. Moser.

You discussed gender mainstreaming or gender integration. Are you really using those concepts simultaneously or with similar meaning? Or -- the reason I raise that question is because there could be some problems with mainstreaming in comparison to trying to integrate into a new policy.

The second question is probably for Dr. Seitz and other members of the panel, and that has to do with the assessment and the evaluation, which is a follow-up to the previous question.

The first response seemed to be more generic in nature, but are there particular plans, say, for example, in Nicaragua, to do some types of specific assessments in-country that would really make it helpful and then might have lessons for Lesotho and other places?

MOSER: Thank you very much.

What I was actually saying -- and I probably rattled off rather fast -- is that gender mainstreaming, as a term, has become very contentious, and there is a lot of debate and discussion about what it actually means, and a lot of concern about the, quote, "failure" of gender mainstreaming. And I think that it is very adroit of this policy to avoid that term and to use the word "integration."

And all I was saying is that in some other work that I've been involved in, we have really tried to unpack what mainstreaming means. And, for me, it is around integration of both men and women's concerns.

But I think there's a second track which we also need to think about, which is that there are contexts where women are so excluded that we need to focus on interventions and specifically address their needs.

So I was really saying that I think, by avoiding this word, "mainstreaming," they're getting away from a lot of contentious debate which has gone on around such a term. And really, what they are talking about, as the policy shows very clearly, is integration.

SEITZ: For some specific examples, I can point to something that I thought Margaret might have mentioned but she didn't have the mike long enough.

For example, if women in Honduras were to be full beneficiaries of one of the agricultural projects, we knew that best practice was that you needed female extension workers in order to be able to reach these women. And so, when the compact was designed, there was a condition in the compact about the involvement of female extensionists.

And what makes this story very interesting is the learning process that went on from this early example. The implementing entity came back and said, "Well, we developed an ad for female extensionists, and we said we wanted agronomists with 10 years of experience in extension." And, lo and behold, they had only had women involved in this training for 10 years, so obviously they couldn't find women with 10 years of experience.

So there was a negotiation back and forth, and finally a decision was made that they still had to have women involved in the extension activities, and that women who had less experience or who were new graduates in agronomy would be mentored and employed and their skills, as extensionists, developed.

So the lesson for MCC in this was that the goal was to involve women farmers. The best practice that we knew of were female extensionists. But there was a moment to learn that even the reviewing of the terms of reference of the implementer about the qualifications of the extensionists was a place where you had to think about gender. So it was an organizational learning.

And I think those are the kinds of examples that will build our capacity to really implement this policy.

SHARMA: I wanted to add two points on monitoring.

I think the fact that this gender policy follows through to monitoring and evaluation is hugely significant, because that has also never happened with the U.S. government, but also because it directs that data collection much be sex-disaggregated.

And, for those of you who've worked in the field, you know that one of our biggest challenges, in many of these economic areas, is that there's no data on women's participation vis-a-vis men.

And so, I think that, as the monitoring for the MCC rolls out, it will list the whole field of monitoring and evaluation for gender in general, as it encourages countries to begin collecting data.

And the second point on monitoring is that many of the MCC countries -- in particular, we've been doing a lot of work with the women's movement in Sri Lanka -- are

setting up an independent monitoring coalition, similar to Nicaragua, where they will be monitoring the MCC project parallel to the official government process. And that, so far, what we've seen in Sri Lanka is a really fruitful collaboration -- independence, but collaboration -- with the MCC on monitoring.

MCNAUGHT: OK. More questions?

QUESTION: The question I have is, I'm wondering if there have been any discussion -- it seems that, for each compact or each project, there are many lenses that we're going to be looking at it: through an environmental lens, through an economic, and now through a gender lens.

And I'm just wondering how much weight is going to be given to each of these lenses, and, if there is an instance where there is competing priorities, where, let's say, there's a project that does meet environmental and economic conditions but may not necessarily meet gender conditions, what kind of discussion will happen?

It's sort of an implementation question. Like, what sort of discussions will be happening behind the door, and how much weight is given to the gender lens?

SEITZ: I'll take a stab at answering that one.

I don't see a gender lens as a separate way of looking at your analysis of the issue or of the sector. As a matter of fact, all of our guidance documents integrate gender into the analysis and guidance we offer countries, whether it be on the different sectors or on economic analysis.

But to the extent that you are looking at programs that have beneficiaries and that are people, in order to design the best possible project, you have to be analytical about the differences that people experience in being potential beneficiaries.

So, in that sense, gender equality doesn't become a separate condition or a separate way of looking at the decision process.

There will be many instances, I'm sure, where it might be more difficult to see where gender plays into an analysis of a situation, such as, say, a large energy project, a dam. But there are tertiary benefits on out where you see the impacts on people.

So we are working with our colleagues across the organization to have that gender lens be something that is what you use in all of your analytical work at the MCC.

TORRES: Yes, in regarding to that question, for example, in discussing the rural business office guide plan to apply, which includes the points, contractors are going to have to value their bidding to manage one part of our project. I am not allowed to say but a very important percentage of the points goes to including gender considerations within their proposal.

And that has been made public. If you address, use this so-and-so gender assessment and provide measure, you're going to be privileged, you're going to have more points. They don't know how many, but they know now, because often that is not included within the terms of reference.

And that's one of the measures. And the other has been that it's now in place that -- it's known, for example, in microfinance that women are better payers, because they don't drink the money...

(LAUGHTER)

... and because they improve women life and because of many of those things, you know. But then, that applies also for other bigger investments. And so, that's part of the social capital, and that has been recognized.

The other thing we have made to argue in favor of why it's good to achieving the goal of the project, even if you hate gender or hate women, whatever...

(LAUGHTER)

... is that they have been already part of the sector that dynamized the economy. And what the women's movement did in Nicaragua, in the proposal, was to GPS their participation.

When you see a map of a place, it has nothing. It doesn't have people, it doesn't have social subject. It's supposed to be genderless. When you talk about economy, it's supposed to be genderless. This proposal was -- it did, in a rapid appraisal assessment, was to identify which are those initial economics women are involved in. And so, you know, make a survey. There's bio-gas (ph) production there. There's exporting of chicken there. There are these activities, and GPS then puts them in a map.

So, if they presented their proposal, it was an empowering moment for everybody, especially for women, to see, you know, the picture of the product and a point in the map. And you see an empty map at the beginning, and three or four minutes later you see a map full of dots that represent actually places they can identify with a GPS to say, "Those are women, so they're really in the economy."

So it's placing them as social, economic subject. And that makes a chip (ph). It's symbolic, but it's very important in terms of changing cultural constraints about how you deal with women. So that GPS was amazing because nobody know even the measure of the capacities so far to present and document that they were actors in that, that women did it.

So that was great, and has been an experience that, now, with the gender strategy at MCA, that was a rapid appraisal supported methodologically by UNIFEM, but now

that we have in power what we're going to finish the mapping of women participation in the economy.

That will be even a good analysis for the MCA-Nicaragua program, but analysis for the government and analysis for Nicaragua to see that women are there and that women are not just being housewives or, you know, producing chicken and pork and pigs, but that they are exporting, that they're transforming, that they are making those big, big business, that they are not supposed to be there even if you see them. You see them, but you don't. So that GPS map helps us a lot.

QUESTION: Aside from the ambassador's introductory couple of remarks about education, I haven't heard the panelists address it very much. I know that a couple of the Millennium goals are dealing with access to education.

I'd also like to ask, what, if any, of your Millennium activities are focused on using the nature, the content, the curriculum of education to advance gender equity in many aspects of society? Question number one.

And question number two: What percentage of the Millennium Development Corporation funds are going to gender equity education activities?

Thank you very much.

SEITZ: I can start answering that question.

As we said, the countries propose programs which include sectors or areas that they identify as constraints to growth and poverty reduction. And particularly in more recent proposals, there have been significant education components.

I personally am working on Namibia, so I know a little bit about that, and that proposal includes an investment of over \$100 million in education. I believe some of our other countries have pretty substantial vocational and technical education components.

But the rationale for designing an education program within a compact is to address a particular constraint to growth and poverty reduction. Within that, we would conduct a gender analysis of the type of education program that is designed to ensure that gender differences and inequalities are addressed.

I don't know whether or not -- I certainly can't talk about a specific amount of funds, because it really isn't the way we assess the proposed programs.

MCNAUGHT: Let's see. Yes, we'll go there and then there.

QUESTION: I'm with the Norwegian embassy. I would like to commend the MCC for once again coming out with very interesting policies, and we will be very interested in following this also very closely and work closely with you hopefully also.

Gender and women is one of the four main priorities of the Norwegian government in our development policies. And we see human rights and human-rights instruments, global conventions -- there's a convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, which we believe is probably the most important instrument.

Will this be -- will the human-rights perspective be incorporated? It's not mentioned specifically, but will that be incorporated in MCC's work on gender?

MCNAUGHT: I'm going to ask Sherri...

SHERRI KRAHAM, MANAGING DIRECTOR FOR DEVELOPMENT POLICY,  
MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORPORATION:

First I'll take the liberty and just quickly address another girls' education program, and that's in the threshold program, which is addressing countries' weaknesses in the policy criteria. So, in the selection criteria, we signal the importance of investing in girls' education.

We have one program ongoing, as the ambassador mentioned, in Burkina Faso. It's quite likely that we'll be seeing a new proposal with this round of threshold countries. Niger has huge constraints to girls' participation in schools. Actually, it's pretty universal. But we will be expecting or anticipating a proposal in that regard.

With regard to human rights, we look at human rights in several of our indicators. And what we have found is that the gender issues don't always show up, if they are a problem, in the indicators because they measure so many things.

So one of the things that the ambassador also mentioned is our ability to provide the board with supplemental information about how a country performs in a given area. And we have raised issues of gender discrimination, inequities in laws and rights for the board to consider in making decisions about countries' participation in our program.

And it's certainly something that me and my team engage directly with countries as they strive to qualify and participate in the MCC program. So it is something that we do discuss regularly with countries.

MCNAUGHT: I see it's just about 4:30, so we'll have time for one more question. And it looks like -- wait.

Did you not have a question? No, behind you. OK. You're going to be the last question.

QUESTION: From the presentation, I've gathered quite well how MCA is integrating their gender policy through this staff and through the governments that are working with MCA.

But for those of us who represent consultancies and contractors who help implement the projects that come through the threshold projects or through the compacts, can you speak a little bit more about tangible approaches that we can use as we work with the countries to implement the projects, things that you're looking for so that we are supporting the governments as they try to meet their targets and their goals that they've set?

SEITZ: Well, as far as implementation, the programs are implemented -- the compacts' projects are implemented by the country. We don't implement; they do.

We do, however, engage with the development community and industry, in a very deep way, in helping us assess the feasibility and impacts of what is proposed in what we call this due-diligence process.

And, more and more, we are going to be making sure that those who bid on contracts to conduct due diligence have good capacity to conduct gender analysis in all of the sectors where we're asking them to take a look.

And it's not necessarily something that every organization has. And so, it's important for the development community to understand that, in our due-diligence process, we're going to expect that capacity to be there. And it is written into our terms of reference.

MCNAUGHT: Once again, I want to say thank you for joining us today.

Just in case you were a little distracted at some point and didn't get it all, we will have a transcript on our Web site by tomorrow. So you can go back over and see what all was said here today.

Our Web site is [mcc.gov](http://mcc.gov), and we invite you to go there for all kinds of the latest news and information about our work. It's obviously available 24-7.

Again, thank you for joining us today.

(APPLAUSE)