

MCC's Commitment to Gender Equality

The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) recognizes that gender inequality is a significant constraint to economic growth and poverty reduction. Consequently, MCC is committed to ensuring that gender is considered in all stages of its work with partner countries at both policy and project levels.

MCC's Gender Policy

Developed in 2006, MCC's groundbreaking Gender Policy mandates consideration of gender differences and inequalities in all aspects of its work: from the selection of eligible countries, the development, design, and implementation of Compact projects, to the monitoring of results and the evaluation of impacts. The policy was developed through broad consultations with internal and external stakeholders and is based on international best practices. A leading advocacy organization has called MCC's Gender Policy "the best and most practical gender policy in the U.S. government," and it is a policy that provides MCC with a unique opportunity to be the lead U.S. Government agency in gender integration.

MCC staff and country partners work together to implement the policy and ensure that gender analysis informs and improves the outcomes of all MCC-funded projects. Countries funded under a Compact are responsible for conducting gender analysis, ensuring meaningful participation of women and men, and designing programs in ways that take into account or correct gender inequalities. MCC is responsible for providing guidance and other resources, as well as integrating gender into its assessment and oversight of a country's performance during implementation.

While the Gender Policy has made a difference in existing programs, a new requirement for gender expertise on teams early in compact development and in implementation will help ensure regular and consistent engagement and technical expertise across relevant activities in all future MCC investments.



Women in Lesotho: Prior to the passage of the Married Persons Equality Act in December 2006, married women were considered a legal minor. With MCC's continuing work with the Government of Lesotho, legislation was changed so that women are no longer considered legal minors. In addition to assisting the government in policy reform, MCC is funding a training and a public awareness activity to make these new rights a reality.

Project Examples



Armenia: adapting project design to address women's underrepresentation in leadership

The irrigated agriculture project was designed so that only members of Water User Associations could apply for related credit lines. However, this effectively excluded many women, including female-headed households, since 99 percent of members in Water User Associations were male. Recognizing that rural Armenian women were underrepresented in the leadership and membership of Water User Associations, the credit activity was modified so that association membership was no longer the sole criterion for gaining access to credit under the project's Water-to-Market activity. To remedy earlier inattention to gender, the project also included gender analysis and the hiring of gender-competent staff to ensure that they would work with a broader range of farmers and agribusiness owners in their training and credit activities.



Honduras: integrating gender analysis into resettlement projects

Gender analysis is relevant to all activities where there will be impacts on people. Road rehabilitation projects, which MCC often funds, are no exception. In the Transportation Project for Honduras, gender analysis was integrated into determining compensation for people whose livelihoods and property were affected. The terms of reference for the Resettlement Action Plan associated with the transportation project specified that compensation would recognize both men and women as heads of household, and gender-sensitive public consultations ensured that women's concerns and needs would be reflected in planning. Women were also targeted for business support activities to help improve their livelihoods. The terms of reference also specified that each of the key Resettlement Action Plan personnel should have experience with gender. Including such specific language in early project documentation set a standard for gender integration throughout implementation. In the project's farmer access to credit component, input from a gender consultant helped ensure that women would become nearly 50 percent of the loan recipients, despite the barriers they traditionally face in accessing credit.



Nicaragua: adapting flexible participation criteria and outreach strategies to mitigate low participation rates

The original participation criteria for the Rural Business Development Project in Nicaragua emphasized the production end of the value chain. There was very limited participation by women because of requirements related to holdings of productive assets. The project began engaging with about 60 female bean producers who wanted to diversify their production to include more high value clusters. While some women would have been excluded under the original participation criteria related to land size, number of cows, beehives or other assets, and primary income sources, the new outreach approach was more flexible and creative. Women producers without

land ownership rights could participate in the project if they had documents clarifying their use rights. Business development workshops and technical assistance were offered to women, whether or not they were land owners. Women's participation increased with this flexibility. The livestock activity increased participation by women from 8 percent to 22 percent in some locations. During implementation, criteria for gender integration were included in all projects to ensure equitable access and benefits.



Philippines: early attention to gender in the compact development phase helps ensure full integration across relevant activities

An MCC gender specialist worked with a Philippine government counterpart to formulate a gender integration strategy early in the development of the Compact, and consultations were held with female stakeholders whose concerns were incorporated into project plans. As a result, gender considerations are fully integrated into relevant projects. The community development project is based on an inclusive decision-making model, but as women have been underrepresented in decision-making bodies, additional attention to outstanding gender concerns is warranted. This project includes two gender components: the piloting of a gender analysis and integration program and the establishment of a \$1 million gender incentive fund. Gender concerns are also being incorporated into the road design and rehabilitation project and addressed in the related resettlement policy framework and activities. The impact of these measures will be monitored through sex-disaggregating data for key interventions and through the impact evaluation for the community development project.