

Strengthening MCC's Gender Policy

By Virginia Seitz

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MCC's Approach to Gender Integration

MCC recognizes that gender inequality can be a significant constraint to economic growth and poverty reduction. This economic approach is critical because too often issues of gender equality have been ignored in the economic sectors, and, as the World Bank has stated: "Gender equality is smart economics."¹ By ensuring that gender analysis extends beyond women's traditional roles and traditional sectors, like education and health, to building roads or irrigation systems, or bringing poor farmers into agricultural value chains, MCC's attention to gender equality contributes to poverty reduction and strengthens growth. In doing so, MCC puts into practice the U.S. government commitment that foreign assistance programs ensure that women and girls are not marginalized but mainstreamed into key decision and development processes.

MCC launched its *Gender Policy*² in 2006. This policy commits the MCC and its development partners to integrating gender analyses into consultations, design, implementation and monitoring of projects, and the evaluation of results. However, the task of ensuring that gender really does feature in the projects that MCC funds and the outcomes it expects requires operational tools beyond a strong policy statement. In the four years since MCC's Gender Policy was formalized, MCC and its country partners have learned much about gender integration. Based on these lessons, MCC has developed operational procedures and milestones explained in MCC's *Guidelines on Gender Integration (2011)*³. These milestones and procedures reflect what have been recognized in the gender and development community as the core requirements for gender integration: leadership, mandate, capacity, resources and accountability.⁴ This paper focuses on how these new operational procedures and milestones are strengthening MCC's Gender Policy processes and leading to better gender integration in the projects we fund.⁵

Effective gender integration requires human resources with relevant expertise.

Too often, gender mandates do not also require gender expertise to ensure that they are implemented. MCC has learned from experience that the early engagement of technically qualified staff, both from MCC and partner countries, is critical to conducting effective consultations and to incorporating gender into the project design process.

Consequently, MCC has created a Social and Gender Assessment (SGA) group, currently five staff, in the Department of Compact Operations. They work with their country counterparts and other MCC staff to proactively explain the social and gender context and identify the constraints and opportunities to poverty reduction. They are responsible for ensuring that gender integration is accomplished throughout compact development and implementation phases and that gender milestones are met.

MCC also now requires that its partner countries have staff with social and gender expertise on their Core Teams (the teams that lead compact development on behalf of country partners), as well as in the accountable entity after a compact is signed. Seventeen countries either developing or implementing

1 <http://www.ncrw.org/content/gender-equality-smart-economics-world-bank-group-gender-action-plan-fiscal-years-2007-2010>. Also see: "The empowerment of women is smart economics...studies show that investments in women yield large social and economic returns," Robert Zoellick, President, World Bank Group website 2009

2 MCC's Gender Policy is available at www.mcc.gov/documents/guidance/14-genderpolicy.pdf

3 MCC's Guidelines on Gender Integration is available at <http://www.mcc.gov/documents/guidance/guidance-2011001054001-genderintegration.pdf>

4 InterAction, Transition Foreign Assistance Briefing Book, 2008.

5 A forthcoming paper will discuss a broader set of lessons learned in gender integration efforts in early compacts,

compacts now have gender expertise on staff, and, going forward, MCC will require these to be ‘key’ positions on a compact. This, as well as the other milestones and operational procedures, will be standard practice for MCC and its partners beginning in the earliest stages of compact development and continuing through compact closeout.

The Zambia and Cape Verde compacts, currently under development and pending MCC Board approval, demonstrate how early engagement by technical experts can improve gender integration. In the case of compact development in Zambia, social and gender assessment was on the agenda from the beginning. When MCC made its initial visit to the country to launch the compact development process, MCC’s SGA practice leader accompanied MCC’s lead economist, demonstrating to the Zambian government the importance it places on gender inclusion in the earliest stages of the design of a country’s consultative process. MCC advised the Zambians when they recruited an outreach specialist with a background in women’s issues and developed a consultation strategy. The compact development process was further strengthened when the Zambians hired a senior social and gender expert on Zambia’s core team.

Cape Verde, which is also developing a new compact, has institutional mechanisms to ensure gender integration throughout planning and implementation. In addition to meeting the MCC requirement through the hiring of a senior social and gender expert on the Cape Verde core team, the Cape Verdeans consulted national women’s groups since the early stages of compact development and plan on forming a gender and social stakeholder group for the compact with membership from several leading women’s organizations.

Gender analysis starts with and informs early design processes.

For the potential Zambia compact, MCC and country partners are working to develop two main projects — Greater Kafue National Park Economic Development Project and Lusaka Water Supply, Sanitation, and Drainage Project. These priorities emerged out of Zambia’s analysis of constraints to economic growth, the first step in the MCC compact development process, and were reinforced through broad-based consultations which included the perspectives of women and gender-focused NGOs and other entities. When the identification of constraints to growth led to potential sectors for projects, MCC worked with country partners to ensure that analysis of gender and other social differences and inequalities informed projects considered. For example, conversations with NGOs about the level and depth of gender-based violence including in the workplace led to these issues emerging as relevant to definition of any skills development component in the two projects.

Field visits by staff with gender expertise also identified other significant gender issues relevant to the development of the Greater Kafue Economic Development Project. In the very poor areas around Kafue National Park, there is a high rate of illiteracy for girls and a high rate of early pregnancy and school dropout. This leads to exclusion from jobs and markets, as well as from local decision-making bodies such as those that make decisions about income from wildlife. MCC and its Zambian partners are initiating a study that will help identify how best to address these constraints and to identify opportunities for bringing women and girls, often the poorest of the poor, into the benefit streams of the compact and to ensure that any institutions MCC supports have pathways for their participation and decision-making. As in the earlier stages of compact development, gender analysis is fully integrated into project planning, research and MCC’s due diligence process.

In the development of a potential second compact for Cape Verde, the proposed Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) project presents several opportunities for gender integration. First, key objectives of the project include reducing the health and economic impacts of poor access to water supply and sanitation for Cape Verde’s poor. These impacts have a strong gender dimension—women bear a disproportionate

share of the time, cost and health burdens of poor water supply and sanitation access. Women (and their children) are primarily responsible for fetching water from far away sources, and carrying heavy water loads. Women are also primarily responsible for caring for children and other family members affected by the many water and sanitation-linked illnesses in the Cape Verde population. Gender and social analysis is informing project design—initially through a study of water, sanitation and hygiene conditions, uses and practices, which vary significantly by gender. Including studies of this kind in project design will help to ensure that services and infrastructure are appropriately designed to fit the circumstances of women and men, and maximize their use, maintenance, sustainability and economic impacts.

Due to high economic migration, Cape Verde has a large number of female-headed households (approximately 44% in 2000-2002) and high female unemployment. The project design phase will investigate opportunities for training and employment in the WASH sector—including construction, maintenance, management and health education and outreach—for vulnerable groups, involving men, women and youth. By providing skills and work experience, this approach has the potential to increase not only the economic and growth benefits of the MCC WASH project but also longer-term opportunities for women’s participation in the labor market. Additionally, the proposed project will include information, education and communications activities promoting improved water use, sanitation and hygiene practices. MCC is also working with our country counterparts on how to leverage the community knowledge and expertise of NGOs, community-based organizations and women’s associations to influence project design, as well as potentially serving as project implementers. Finally, MCC and its Cape Verdean partners are assessing the gender context and recent developments in public policy, such as a new domestic violence law and the introduction of gender analysis of public budgets, to see how the potential compact might leverage these developments.

Gender integration can be improved with financial resources and targeted plans.

In addition to human resources, targeted financial resources help support gender integration activities, such as in the Philippines and pending Malawi compacts. MCC’s Philippines Compact includes a project designed to improve lives in rural areas through small-scale, community-driven development projects in communities where poverty exceeds the national average. This project, called Kalahi-CIDSS, is supporting and building on the participatory planning, implementation and evaluation methodology developed by the Philippines Department of Social Welfare and Development in collaboration with the World Bank. With early and consistent involvement of social and gender specialists from both the MCC and the government of the Philippines, gender analysis is improving the design of Kalahi-CIDSS. In addition, the compact funded a \$1 million Gender Incentive Grant under Kalahi-CIDSS to encourage innovation in addressing gender equality in the program.

The recently approved Malawi Compact⁶ aims to reduce energy costs to enterprises and households, improve productivity in agriculture, manufacturing and services sectors, and support the preservation and creation of employment opportunities through improved power supply. The compact includes a designated \$2 million budget for gender integration with funds to be used for targeted interventions developed by MCA Malawi and detailed in a Gender Integration Plan for the compact.

Several current compacts include gender integration plans and they are now required for all compacts going forward. Moldova has recently received approval for its plan and Senegal and Jordan are at early stages of its development. Experience has taught us that the best way to get visible and consistent attention to

⁶ At the time of publication of this issue brief, the Malawi compact had been approved by MCC’s Board of Directors, but not yet signed.

gender across projects in a compact with a variety of stakeholders and interests is to both highlight gender actions as well as mainstream them into other project operational documents. This is especially important in projects where gender impacts and opportunities are not obvious. These plans provide activity-level details on the ‘how, who and what’ of integrating gender analysis in the details of project implementation. To ensure that these plans are not set aside, a further new requirement is that gender integration plans are harmonized with other project work plans.

There are opportunities to improve gender integration during program implementation.

MCC and its country partners are also using the new guidelines to improve current compacts, including those well into implementation. For example, the MCC Compact with Morocco, signed in 2007, did not effectively integrate gender analysis during early stages of development and implementation but subsequent actions have sought to address initial shortcomings.

The Morocco Compact aims to reduce poverty and stimulate economic growth through strategic investments to increase productivity and improve employment in high potential sectors such as fruit tree productivity, small-scale fisheries and artisan crafts. Small business creation and economic growth are also supported by investments in financial services and enterprise support. Morocco’s compact provides a number of valuable lessons with respect to gender integration. The main compact projects—improving productivity and incomes in the fruit tree, small-scale fishery, and artisan sectors—involve activities that are traditionally the domains of men, and thus the majority of project participants are men. More systematic gender analysis at the proposal development stage might have resulted in a different mix of investments from the outset.

However, MCC’s increased focus on operationalizing gender integration has resulted in the development of several actions aimed at benefitting women during implementation. First, gender integration plans were prepared for each project, identifying potential avenues for increasing benefit streams to women within the context of existing activities. Second, approximately \$4 million in compact funds were designated for “pilot projects” that concentrate entirely on developing and supporting women’s small enterprises in the fruit tree and fisheries sectors, involving, for example, processing and marketing. Third, women comprise a substantial portion of the beneficiaries of a linked project on Vocational Training and Functional Literacy. Finally, the Artisan and Fez Medina project, which is strengthening the links between the craft sector, tourism and the Fez Medina’s cultural, historic and architectural assets, will dedicate one of its training, production and marketing sites to a center run by and for women artisans. This will also include spaces for women’s meetings, education and childcare.

MCC’s milestones for gender integration include gender training for project implementers and MCA Morocco (the accountable entity established by the Moroccan government to implement the MCC Compact) and other implementing entities have participated in such training. When MCA Morocco hired a staff member with relevant expertise, she worked with consultants to provide gender training and produce a Gender Integration Plan for the Fruit Tree Project, a highly detailed and practical implementation document. In addition, indicators for the compact’s monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan are currently being revised to expand the collection, reporting and analysis of sex-disaggregated indicators. Where there are significant differences in the involvement of men and women in MCC project activities and projects’ impacts on men’s and women’s income, it is important that MCC and the MCAs learn this through monitoring and evaluation.

Gender integration requires technical analysis and tools across sectors and functional areas.

MCC's approach in the Mongolia and Philippines compacts demonstrate its increased attention to gender in performance monitoring and impact evaluation. Under MCC's new guidelines, SGA staff support M&E staff to ensure gender is integrated into monitoring and evaluation, including baseline surveys, impact evaluations and other evaluations. In many cases sex-disaggregated performance data is analyzed on a quarterly basis and reported as part of implementation reviews.

MCC's Compact with Mongolia aims to reduce poverty and foster economic growth through investments in energy and the environment, health, property rights, vocational education and road infrastructure. Like the Morocco compact, gender issues are now being fully addressed mid-way into implementation. Though a number of projects are likely to have differential impacts, gender analysis was not well-integrated, no gender specialist was in place in the MCA, and data were not being consistently sex-disaggregated – a reflection of the potential challenges of operationalizing a gender policy on the ground. With support from the MCC Resident Country Director and the new MCC SGA staff, a Gender Working Group of interested MCC and MCA staff was formed to identify opportunities where gender integration was still possible and practical. The team has made an effort to sex-disaggregate data and to adjust reporting. The energy and environment program started collecting survey data to assess the gender and socio-economic status of the project's customers. According to the latest figures, women made up 45% of the client base in the *ger* (traditional housing) insulation program. The field survey for the expansion of the peri-urban project will sex-disaggregate data and include a separate qualitative gender questionnaire for herder groups to help better tailor future activities. In addition, a social and gender consultant has been engaged by MCA Mongolia to conduct a comprehensive gender review and provide ongoing support to the team on the ground.

Although the Kalahi-CIDSS project in the Philippines Compact has been rated by the Philippines government as gender-responsive, the MCC and its Philippines partners have identified additional ways to strengthen gender integration. A gender review of the program was conducted, which revealed gaps in the areas of monitoring and evaluation, the lack of a consistent policy framework on gender, deficiencies in staff training, and the inequality in women's access to paid employment opportunities that contrasts with their strong involvement as unpaid project volunteers. This has led to the development of a new Gender Policy for Kalahi-CIDSS, improved indicators as part of monitoring and evaluation efforts and stronger requirements for reporting. A gender toolkit is being developed to help project staff better understand gender requirements, identify issues, and facilitate better gender integration within their communities, as well as promote women's paid employment and skills development as part of an 'apprenticeship' program. A pilot gender impact evaluation will enable the team to evaluate the results of these efforts. This is an example of where work done to ensure MCC- financed programs incorporate best practices in gender integration will have a national impact as these practices are applied not just to the compact but to the national Kalahi-CIDSS program.

Gender integration is strengthened through leadership and accountability.

By elevating gender as an agency priority and institutionalizing this mandate through specific policy and operational tools, such as the *Guidelines for Gender Integration*, MCC is providing leadership both within the USG and the broader development community on putting policy into practice. Looking ahead to the full implementation of the gender guidelines, we expect to continue to strengthen technical capacity within MCC-financed programs and our country partners to ensure that gender analysis informs

all relevant projects. MCC will continue to improve its performance on accountability by maintaining gender integration and social analysis as a critical agency priority that is rigorously documented through transparent monitoring and evaluation. Internally, MCC has aligned institutional incentives with agency priorities by establishing a Gender Integration Award in 2010 (see box) and incorporating gender work as a factor for consideration in performance reviews. MCC will continue to share lessons learned and engage in dialogue with the external development community on gender integration as it moves forward with implementation of new operational procedures and milestones, and we will report on the results of its efforts.

Incentives for Better Gender Integration

Attention to gender integration has always been a part of MCC's approach. Under the leadership of CEO Daniel Yohannes, MCC has recently elevated gender as one of five agency priorities and demonstrated this through an increase in staff with requisite technical capacity. To increase incentives for MCC staff to find creative and meaningful ways to approach gender integration in MCC's work, MCC has also established an award for staff members for their contributions to gender integration.

The first awards were given to two MCC staff in December 2010. In one case, the award went to MCC's Deputy Resident Country Director in Lesotho in recognition of his ongoing support of the Lesotho Compact's Gender Equality in Economic Rights project. He most recently took the initiative to successfully identify a new source of funds for the gender project from PEPFAR and to assist MCA-Lesotho in designing a scope of work and an application for a US Peace Corps Volunteer who will focus specifically on Social and Gender issues.

In the second case, the award went to a Director in MCC's Environment and Social Assessment team who was an early supporter and adopter of the MCC *Gender Policy*. Although he does not have gender specific expertise, he recognized gender as a critical aspect of designing for successful outcomes and thus ensured that gender considerations were incorporated into early as well as later compacts. His leadership on gender in a road resettlement project is an example of international best practice.