
**STATEMENT BY J. BRIAN ATWOOD
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**GENDER PLAN OF ACTION
MARCH 12, 1996**

More than twenty years ago, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) officially recognized the critical role of women in development by establishing an Office of Women in Development. This was only a first step in a long journey to fully address gender issues in USAID programs.

USAID has played a leadership role in the donor community in focusing on the crucial role of women in advancing social and economic development since the early 1970s. During the last several years, USAID has made significant increases in the level of funding directed to programs that directly benefit women and girls. The agency has also launched major new initiatives in the areas of reproductive health for women, girls education, women and microenterprise, and women's political participation and legal rights.

These represent significant accomplishments. But perhaps the greatest accomplishment is the increasing realization that for development to be effective, programs must pay attention to the central role of women in the economic and social advancement of a nation.

But does the agency still miss opportunities because we have not designed and implemented our activities in light of the different roles and needs of women and men in development? Undoubtedly.

We must make the most of our opportunities to achieve lasting results:

Our efforts to strengthen democratic institutions must always consider the obstacles that women face as they attempt to gain access to their own political and legal systems;

Our efforts to improve incomes must regularly consider whether the new earnings will be controlled by mothers who — research has found — who are more likely than fathers to spend it on children's nutrition; and,

USAID's credit services and training programs must always make sure that office hours and course schedules take into account the different time constraints that men and women face.

To make sure that USAID programs continue to achieve their best results, we will make some changes in the way we do business. We will ensure that our systems facilitate and

encourage attention to gender issues, and we will strengthen our technical capacity to address women's issues as development issues.

Some actions can be taken right away — and we are taking these actions. This year, the Agency Sector Reviews, in which we examine Agency performance against each of its objectives, will focus particularly on gender issues. We will modify the Agency's Strategic Framework to reflect the key role of gender considerations in the achievement of USAID goals. We have appointed a senior policy advisor on Women in Development, in the Bureau of Policy Planning Coordination, to reinforce the integration of gender issues into Agency policies across sectors. We are implementing a Women in Development fellows program to help build our technical expertise. Several other key measures, noted in this Gender Plan of Action, will soon be underway.

Equally important, we explore additional measures that will ensure continued attention to gender issues in USAID — measures that might be taken in the areas of data collection and analysis, personnel recruitment, training and performance, or procurement systems.

To this end, I have charged the Agency's Counselor to draw on your expertise, and to work closely with the staff who will ultimately be held responsible for implementing such actions. While there may be some options that we will not be able to pursue for lack of resources, I am confident that actions we take will yield results in program performance. I look forward to receiving the results of the Counselor's work by May 31.

Through attention to gender issues, our development assistance programs will be more equitable, more effective, and — ultimately — more sustainable. We can all do a better job of making this come to pass.

USAID Gender Plan of Action

March 1996

For more than 20 years, USAID has worked to ensure the integration of gender considerations into its programs. The Agency is continuing to foster the institutional changes needed to support women in development. Having reviewed a variety of options for "institutionalizing" attention to issues concerning women in development, USAID has developed this Gender Plan of Action.

In order to build commitment to consideration of gender issues as key development issues, USAID will:

- Modify the Agency's strategic framework — objectives, approaches and indicators, as appropriate — to reflect under each strategic objective the key role of women in development;
- Update and strengthen the Agency's Women in Development Policy Paper; and,
- Ensure that gender considerations are incorporated into the key strategic framework forthcoming implementation guidance.

In order to build capacity to address women in development issues in all Agency programs, USAID will:

- Appoint a senior policy advisor on women in development in the Policy Planning Coordination Bureau to reinforce the integration of gender issues into Agency policies across sectors;
- Implement a women in development fellows program to help build a technical cadre to support the integration of gender issues into development programs, and to allow for the assignment of advisors in all USAID Bureaus;
- Develop guidance regarding the authority, mandate, and technical qualifications of women in development officers and coordinators throughout the Agency; and
- Incorporate gender considerations into Agency guidance on re-engineering and re-engineering training that encompasses all functions, including monitoring and evaluation; CDIE training in the development of indicators; new entry training; and sectoral training.

In order to build incentives for the consideration of gender issues, USAID will:

- Establish a women in development Performance Fund to award supplementary program funds to Agency programs that best address gender issues as integral components of effective development assistance.

Finally, the Agency's Counselor will:

- Report to the Administrator regarding the feasibility of actions such as addressing program performance on women in development via the Agency's system for evaluating the performance of personnel; improving direct-hire staff expertise in women in development through the Agency's system of technical backstops and/or training of personnel; improving USAID's collection and use of sex disaggregated indicators of results; and, providing incentives for improved women in development expertise among contractors and collaborators via USAID's procurement procedures.
- Develop and report to the Administrator on implementation plans for those actions deemed necessary and feasible.
- Monitor the overall implementation of the Gender Plan of Action, including such additional feasible actions as are agreed.

In undertaking this charge, the Counselor will consult with, and receive the strong support of USAID central and regional Bureaus. The Counselor will also consult with the USAID partner community — nongovernmental organizations (and, in particular, the Advisory Committee on Voluntary Foreign Aid), universities, and consulting firms. The Counselor will report to the Administrator as follows:

- By May 31, 1996, provide recommendations regarding the feasibility of various options for further building USAID's ability to incorporate women in development considerations throughout its programs.
- By July 31, 1996, provide implementation plans for feasible actions approved by the Administrator.
- By October 31, 1996, report on the overall implementation of the Gender Action Plan. It is expected that, at this point, the Plan in its entirety will be substantially implemented.

USAID GENDER PLAN OF ACTION: ADDITIONAL MEASURES
JUNE 12, 1996

- Position descriptions for Agency Program Officers will be revised to specifically include responsibility for addressing gender issues.
- Experience and understanding of women in development issues will be taken into consideration in recruitment for Program Officers and appropriate technical officers.
- Guidance concerning the critical need to address gender issues in development will be issued to the staff and committees that rate the performance of both civil service and foreign service personnel, and to the boards that select foreign service personnel for promotion.
- USAID competitive assistance guidelines will include a requirement that applicants for assistance demonstrate their abilities to address gender/WID issues. In contracting, a methodology will be developed for including a technical requirement regarding gender issues in statements of work for RFPs.
- Indicators of program impact on the social and economic status of women will be included in the "menu" of indicators being developed for USAID missions. In addition, the Agency Strategic Framework will be supported by sex disaggregated results indicators and the collection and analysis of sex disaggregated data, as appropriate.
- Language will be included in the Automated Directives System specifying that strategic planning and results reporting documents should indicate how gender considerations are being addressed.
- Each full mission will review and revise its Mission Orders as necessary in order to apply to its directives the forthcoming revision of the Agency's WID Policy .