



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 has committed itself to ensure that gender is considered in all stages of its work with partner countries. From the selection of eligible countries and development and design of its Compact programs, the assessment and implementation of projects funded by the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA), the monitoring of program results, and the evaluation of program impacts, gender equity plays an important role that has been recognized by the development community and counterparts worldwide. MCC's groundbreaking Gender Policy lays out the MCC's commitment to this important aspect of its work to reduce poverty through growth.

MCC's Gender Policy

MCC supports the involvement of women in MCC-funded programs through a Gender Policy adopted in October 2006, developed through consultations within and outside the organization, and based on international best practices. A leading advocacy organization has called it "the best and most practical gender policy in the U.S. government," and MCC has received considerable support from the NGO community and Congress for its Gender Policy and MCC's attention to gender equality in the Lesotho compact.

MCC staff and country partners are working to assure that gender analysis both informs and improves the outcomes of all MCC-funded projects. While there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that the Gender Policy has made a difference in the way that new programs have been developed, MCC is also reviewing programs already being implemented to identify promising practices related to gender and to improve those that can be improved. The goal is to move forward to ensure that gender analysis becomes standard practice in our work with country partners and that women and men are able to fully participate and benefit from MCC investments.

MCC Compacts and Threshold Programs are already supporting women through a variety of initiatives and investments:



"An organization such as MCC must have a policy that does more than define what it believes; the policy also must outline practical ways to ensure gender equity in our programs."

*—Ambassador
John Danilovich
at the presentation
of MCC's
Gender Policy,
December 2006*

Benin



MCA-Benin is sponsoring training and is helping raising awareness in the design and implementation of the four Compact projects: Access to Markets, Access to Justice, Access to Land, and Access to Financial Services. The training was designed to increase understanding of the concept of gender, the approach to gender and the analysis of gender. For example, the discussion of Access to Land and Access to Financial Services highlighted the requirements to specifically notify women of the upcoming project and to provide special training to encourage and help women to participate. For these projects the goal is to ensure that women are full participants and can receive the benefits associated with obtaining land titles and receiving loans for microfinance projects.

Lesotho



MCC worked with the Government of Lesotho to ensure that gender equality in economic rights was legally guaranteed before signing its Compact agreement. MCC is continuing its support for additional legal reform and is funding a training program and a public awareness campaign to strengthen women's rights. The largest component of the \$363 million Lesotho Compact is aimed at strengthening the delivery of essential health services, largely maternal and child health and HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment, through human resources investments and public and private health infrastructure improvements. In Lesotho, more women than men are infected with HIV/AIDS and at a younger age.

Madagascar



In Madagascar, which has a \$110 million Compact, the land and property rights project includes provisions for the joint titling of both husband and wife.



Women in Lesotho: Prior to the passage of the Married Persons Equality Act in December 2006, married women were considered a legal minor. MCC is continuing to work with the Government of Lesotho to assure gender equality in economic rights. 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.

Mali



In Mali, which has a \$461 million Compact with MCC, women will have access to irrigated agricultural land in two ways: through the land allocation process that is coupled with land rights education and agricultural training efforts and through an allocation of market garden plots. Mali recognizes the rights of women to grow what they choose on these lots for home consumption or for sale at market.



Photo by Marc Tkach

Nicaragua



In Nicaragua, which has a \$175 million Compact, women from the Northwest region formed a council to represent the interests of women farmers. As a result, MCA-Nicaragua, the entity tasked with implementing the Compact, established a consultative council with female representatives to help shape the rural development and land titling components of the Compact. This consultative council continues to support implementation and monitoring of progress of the gender integration strategy.

Women in Mali.