

MCC Gender Policy and Gender Integration Approach

Background:

To achieve its mission of reducing poverty through economic growth in some of the poorest countries in the world, MCC devotes special attention to gender issues and vulnerable population concerns. In 2006, MCC formalized its Gender Policy in order to institutionalize gender concerns and integrate gender analysis in all of MCC's work. External stakeholder groups heralded the policy and pointed to it as an example of strategic agency-wide focus on the issue. In 2008 and early 2009, MCC conducted an internal review of progress in the implementation of the Gender Policy. The review is helping MCC take inventory of important lessons learned and is deepening the discussion about how to ensure that the most vulnerable populations are a key concern in developing poverty reduction strategies in countries where local capacity, political constraints, and socio-cultural norms offer unique challenges, as well as opportunities, for significant progress. MCC's internal assessment is an ongoing exercise that has been and will continue to be discussed with counterpart organizations that follow the issue in order to leverage experiences and resources and advance progress to date.

About MCC's Gender Policy:

MCC supports the involvement of men and women as participants and beneficiaries in MCC-funded programs. MCC consulted gender experts within and outside the organization and applied international best practices to formalize a Gender Policy in 2006. The Policy is available at: <http://www.mcc.gov/mcc/panda/activities/gender/index.shtml>

About MCC's Gender Review:

MCC conducted an assessment of ongoing program activities in order to examine the implementation and impact of the Gender Policy. The review focused on MCC compact programs in five countries: Armenia, El Salvador, Honduras, Mali, and Nicaragua. Notably, each of these countries developed or signed MCC compacts prior to the formal adoption of the Gender Policy but received guidance on implementing the policy in compact

implementation. A team of MCC staff and social/gender consultants conducted extensive interviews. MCC staff in Washington and in the field, MCA staff (that is, implementing entity staff in the partner country), and some NGOs and contractors in Washington and the field responded to a standardized interview addressing some of the following questions:

- ★ What have the staff and consultants from MCC and the MCAs done to advance the integration of gender issues?
- ★ What could be improved or added?
- ★ How has gender analysis informed the implementation of compacts, including performance monitoring and impact evaluation?
- ★ What are the most important next steps for continuing the integration of gender analysis as standard practice for the work of MCC and the MCAs?

These interviews and the expert analysis identified key successes, challenges, and recommendations for MCC and the MCAs. Following is a summary of some of the key findings.

Key Findings

The gender assessment reveals important progress in gender-inclusive program design and in the implementation of MCC's Gender Policy and helps identify areas where additional effort and resources can help maximize its impact moving forward. The review finds that the development and implementation of the MCC Gender Policy provides visibility and draws attention to gender differences and inequalities to inform the final design of programs, consideration of the diversity of beneficiaries, and oversight of social impacts. It identifies a number of successes, including:

- ★ MCC is working to strengthen gender integration in compact development and implementation processes.
- ★ The development of the MCC Gender Policy provides opportunities for learning and capacity-building across MCC sectors, and raises awareness of the importance of gender integration to compact success.
- ★ Early attention to gender by MCC staff encourages countries to broaden their interest in social and gender assessment, and in several cases resulted in the hiring of MCA staff responsible specifically for monitoring social and gender issues.
- ★ When MCC staff with social and gender expertise and interest engage early, there is improved quality of gender integration in contractor deliverables.
- ★ MCAs themselves are strengthening gender integration efforts.

Evidence of Progress

Armenia: Under the Water to Market project, training and credit activities initially focused on members of Water User Associations (WUAs). After conducting a gender analysis, MCA-Armenia recognized that rural Armenian women were underrepresented in the leadership and membership of WUAs, and revised the project design so that WUA membership was no longer a criterion for gaining access to credit under the Water-to-Market activity.

El Salvador: Household surveys for the roads and electricity components of the El Salvador compact surveyed both male and female heads of household during project design. Surveys interviewed both males and females separately by a male and female enumerator, respectively. This allowed for the collection of data that was not only sex-disaggregated, but also useful in terms of identifying varying interests and priorities of males and females within households to ensure that gender differences in roles as well as needs were taken into account in design.



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Honduras: Gender-sensitive public consultations, a sex-disaggregated survey in the construction zone of the Transport Project, and language specifying that compensation will recognize both men and women as heads of household resulted in a fully gender integrated Resettlement Action Plan (RAP) in the Honduran Transport Project. Objectives include promoting the participation of women as a means of developing a sense of community in resettlement areas. The RAP has three social compensation programs, including support for women's businesses. Both men and women in households were part of the process leading towards the signing of the acceptance letter that agrees to the terms of the resettlement compensation plan.

Mali: In the design of the Alatona Irrigation Project, irrigated land plots will be titled to women's associations. Forming and developing women's producer associations as holders of formal title is a safeguard measure to ensure sustainability of women's control of these lands. The project appraisal process determined that titling land to individual women in male-dominated households would not likely result in women having control of productive land, so titles are made to women's associations and women will receive support and training for market production.

Nicaragua: MCA-Nicaragua's approach to gender integration was developed in coordination with a local NGO, the Council of Western Women, the regional UNIFEM office in Honduras, and Nicaragua women's movement leaders. MCA-Nicaragua hired a member of the NGO as lead staff for gender and developed a quality gender

integration strategy. Successes have included the Rural Development Project, which has flexible participation criteria and outreach strategies; this encourages the participation of women who would have been excluded under typical participation criteria related to land size, numbers of assets, and primary income sources. For example, to achieve the minimum number of cows for the dairy activity, the project allowed family members to loan cows to women to meet the minimal requirement.

Challenges

Even with an innovative policy for gender integration in place, the review finds that MCC faces challenges common to other international organizations in aligning resources with emerging needs, technical expertise with diverse project characteristics, and in engaging counterparts on gender integration at the earliest possible stages. There are several areas in which MCC intends to engage more effectively with the most vulnerable populations in its work to reduce poverty, including:

- ★ Engaging earlier and in more depth with in-country civil society actors with specific knowledge about social and gender issues in the local context.
- ★ Reviewing, with the intent of increasing, the resources necessary to more effectively build capacity related to MCC's Gender Policy with MCA counterparts.
- ★ Providing regular training for MCC and MCA staff on the gender policy implementation.
- ★ Increasing to the greatest extent possible female participation in MCC-funded projects, by focusing at an early stage on project design, outreach, or execution of plans with the appropriate capacity and staff with gender-competency.
- ★ Examining, within the context of the FY 2011 Budget, increases in the number of social and gender analytic experts on the MCC staff to ensure the quality of social and gender deliverables and provide oversight of gender integration into compact projects.
- ★ Ensuring that the MCAs have social assessment and gender competency on their staff during both compact development and compact implementation.

Looking Forward

MCC is committed to building upon its successes and learning from current challenges in order to strengthen gender integration and ensure consistent application of the MCC Gender Policy throughout compact development and implementation. Based on a number of the findings in the gender review, MCC is taking actions, both immediately and in the long-term, to ensure further integration of gender issues in its work. Areas of particular emphasis will include:

- ★ When warranted, compact investments will describe how gender analysis has or will be incorporated into final designs and will identify the strategy for integrating gender in those investments.
- ★ Annual social and gender assessment training will be offered for all MCC staff and will be mandatory for all new MCC employees.
- ★ MCAs in new compact countries will be expected to engage social assessment specialists with gender expertise at an early stage, with training for all MCA staff on gender and other social issues.
- ★ Gender integration will become part of all implementation workshops in compact countries.
- ★ Gender integration will be a recurring topic at MCC University, the annual conference for all MCA directors.
- ★ Sectoral guidance and due diligence questions will be updated to include questions and considerations directly related to ensuring full consideration of the requirements of the Gender Policy.
- ★ Updates on gender integration and consideration for vulnerable populations will formally be included in every internal MCC quarterly country portfolio review.