



## MODULE 16

# Gender Issues in Monitoring and Evaluation

## Overview

Common sense tells us that if we do not consciously attempt to measure our progress in life, we will not know whether we have achieved our planned impact—in other words, “what gets measured, gets managed.” Given the enormous amounts of money invested in agricultural and rural development by national governments and international donors, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are accepted as important steps for assessing progress toward specific outcomes and for measuring impact. Although gender and social equity are commonly discussed priorities in agricultural and rural development, little progress has been made in measuring outcomes in these areas. This Module aims to address gender concerns in designing agricultural and rural development projects and to provide ideas for improving the M&E of outcomes and impacts. It addresses the question, “How will my agriculture projects improve if I *track and measure* gender?”

### REASONS WE SHOULD MONITOR GENDER

Gender must be addressed in ongoing monitoring and in evaluations for the same reasons we address other issues: in assessing whether an activity is achieving its objectives, we can consider what has been accomplished and what can be learned and fed back into further efforts. Gender is a cross-cutting issue within the development policies of most international donors and national governments. If gender impacts are not evaluated, they are unlikely to be given any attention.

What role do different genders play in agriculture, rural development, and water management? Women are the key agricultural workers in some countries but are not involved at all in others. In many southern African countries, women provide most of the labor for agriculture and small livestock production, yet in many cases they receive little benefit. In Asia different tasks in the agricultural cycle are carried out by men or women. In most countries, large livestock such as cattle are managed by men, although milking may be done by women. Roles (and relative power) in production, processing, and marketing differ by gender—for example, men commonly catch fish and women process or sell them locally. Gender power relations, therefore, lie at the heart of two critical development concerns: who gains access to resources, and who benefits from projects?

When carrying out M&E, the overarching notion of “gender” must be unpacked to reveal the differences within categories of “men” and “women,” as neither men nor women form a homogeneous group. Participatory rural appraisal and gender analysis during planning should provide information on different subgroups of men and women and help design appropriate activities and indicators. For instance, in an environmental administration project in Nepal, an assessment of gender and poverty issues related to industry was done to provide a baseline and better understand the impacts of planned activities on different groups (disaggregated by ethnicity, caste, education, employment, rural or urban location, and other characteristics). M&E should provide feedback on how a program’s various activities affect different subgroups

of men and women. Any disparities in the distribution of benefits must be known for corrective action to be taken.

Women are active in community decision making in some countries, through councils and church groups (for instance, in the Pacific), whereas elsewhere they are almost invisible to outsiders (such as in remote areas of Afghanistan or Nepal). On the other hand, women may have little time for such activities because of their concurrent involvement in household activities and their heavy agricultural work. Such commitments only add to the time constraint when planning for M&E and the inclusion of women in a given program, project, or activity. Box 16.1 lists tools for gender-sensitive monitoring, which is discussed at greater length in all of the Thematic Notes.

#### **Box 16.1 A Selection of Methods and Tools Available for Gender-Sensitive Monitoring**

- Monitoring can be based on *quantitative* measures, such as data issued by statistics offices or specifically collected by project staff.
- *Qualitative* monitoring can be done through tools such as interviews, observation, and focus groups.
- *Participation of intended beneficiaries in monitoring* is a means to ensure ownership and to ensure that an activity is truly benefiting the participants.
- *Participatory monitoring*, on the other hand, is a means of involving stakeholders from the start in such activities as identifying activities and indicators that should be monitored, carrying out the monitoring itself, and analyzing the results for improving future processes.
- *External monitoring or evaluation* provides independent, external feedback on progress and outcomes.
- *Impact evaluations* determine whether a program had the desired effects and whether there were any unanticipated effects.
- *Gender audits* are distinct from regular evaluations in that they are based on self-assessments by a project, organization, or ministry of how gender issues are addressed in program portfolios and internal organizational processes. A gender audit is not an external evaluation, but it should be used to facilitate change and develop action plans and monitoring systems.

Source: Author.

“Monitoring” has been defined as the “continuous assessment of project implementation in relation to agreed schedules and use of inputs, infrastructure, and services by project beneficiaries,” and “evaluation” has been defined as the “periodic assessment of the relevance, performance, efficiency, and impact (expected and unexpected) of the project in relation to stated objectives” (World Bank n.d.). M&E are broadly viewed as a function of project management that is useful for validating ex ante analysis or for influencing adjustments to project implementation.

Traditionally many donors used the logical framework (“logframe”) as the basis for designing M&E. In 2003 the World Bank began using a “results framework” (a simplified logframe) in an effort to focus more on the immediate results of programs and projects. Practitioners now need to link performance with outcomes, with rigorous and credible assessments of progress toward (and achievement of) outcomes. At the “Activity” level in the results framework, “Output Indicators” are used to monitor progress. At the level of “Project Development Objective” and “Components/Results,” “Outcome Indicators” are developed. “Outcomes” reflect the quality of outputs produced and behavioral changes in target groups, as well as changes in institutional performance following “adoption” of project outputs. However, to look at the long-term sustainability of a program, the overall development goal should also be considered, and for this purpose the logical framework remains important. Progress toward higher-level goals can be considered in evaluations by developing higher-level “Impact Indicators” (FAO 2001). This topic is discussed in more detail in Thematic Note 1.

#### **INTEGRATING GENDER IN M&E: LESSONS FROM EXPERIENCE**

Many donors have observed that project monitoring, evaluation, and reporting commonly focus on processes and inputs rather than outcomes and impacts, with the result that only limited learning is gained about any long-term changes a project may have occasioned in people’s lives, including any impacts on gender equity. In fact, M&E of *any kind* are given insufficient attention. For example, a Sustainable Agriculture Systems, Knowledge, and Institutions (SASKI) Thematic Group review of agricultural research and extension projects found that only about 25 percent had adequate M&E plans (cited in World Bank 2006b).

Gender-sensitive monitoring garners even less attention, despite efforts by many donors to promote it and train people to do it (box 16.2). In cases where gender-sensitive indicators

## Box 16.2 Difficulties with Conducting Gender-Sensitive Monitoring and Evaluation Are Found Worldwide

An assessment of project evaluations for the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) (Peck 1998) probably still applies to most donors. Although 65 percent of the SIDA evaluations conducted during 1997–98 mentioned gender, the quality of analysis was poor. Gender was usually discussed briefly, most often with respect to implementation and not to project objectives or results. Rarely was any link made between an intervention and possible changes that may have occurred in gender relationships and the circumstances of the men and women who were the intended beneficiaries. Most projects lacked gender-disaggregated baseline and monitoring data.

A recent review of development cooperation agencies (OECD 2007) found that only 41 percent used gender-sensitive logframes and noted that agencies that had “come more recently to gender and development” had “yet to develop as full a range of monitoring and accountability mechanisms.” On the positive side, however, 70 percent of the agencies surveyed said they

used gender criteria for assessing project/program quality.

AusAID (2002) noted that the degree to which gender is monitored in AusAID-funded activities appears to be influenced by the following:

- The extent to which gender is specified in the design documents, logframes, or gender strategies
- The interest of program staff in gender principles and the extent to which they have a sound understanding of the importance of achieving gender and development outcomes
- The degree to which gender issues and strategies have been articulated in the program, regional, or sector strategy.

Several World Bank reports emphasize that weak gender-disaggregated M&E systems in rural projects have been a serious concern. In 2006, for instance, only a third of rural projects had gender-disaggregated M&E indicators (GENRD 2006, 2007)

Sources: Author, based on AusAID 2002; GENRD 2006, 2007; OECD 2007.

do exist, they are more commonly found at the output and outcome level and only rarely at the impact level. Consequently, any assessments tend to be subjective.

### Why gender disaggregation is often missing from M&E systems

The Nordic Development Fund’s *Gender Equality Study* (NDF 2004) found, “The most commonly cited... major obstacles to women participating and benefiting from development activities include (i) the lack of participation by women in design; (ii) poorly conducted needs analyses; (iii) the lack of baseline data on key gender differences relevant to the specific project; (iv) the failure to address gender issues in project objectives; and, (v) poor monitoring efforts” (NDF 2004: 27).

Even when gender is emphasized at the project design stage, it is sometimes lost in the daily grind of project implementation. The continued collection of gender-specific data (or all monitoring data) can suffer as a result of various difficulties, mainly arising from the lack of time and funds, insufficient follow-up, and poor understanding by local staff

of the importance of monitoring. Day-to-day monitoring usually concentrates on project result areas rather than cross-cutting issues such as gender, and staff may give gender-specific monitoring insufficient attention.

In summary, gender is insufficiently considered in M&E for several reasons, including the following:

- M&E itself is given insufficient attention, and its usefulness is little understood. Often it is regarded as a task required by the donor, so the step of gender disaggregation is considered an addition to an already burdensome task.
- The leadership of agricultural and water projects and programs may be gender blind. Program managers and staff may not see gender as having any importance in achieving the program’s results or its ultimate purpose.
- Field staff may view the work of M&E as gender neutral. Women’s opinions may not be recorded, because women are often not present in meetings or are not confident to speak up (particularly if their native language is an indigenous one).

- Gender-disaggregated quantitative data are not easily available from local government sources but must often be collected separately for a program or project, which can be costly and time consuming. By the time a project is under way and attention is turned to M&E, it may be too late to conduct a project-specific baseline study, which ideally is done before the work begins.
- If gender has not been considered at the program design stage, it may be forgotten during implementation. Inclusion of gender-sensitive indicators in the logical framework or results framework is vital.
- Program implementers may consider that national women's unions or other groups that advocate on behalf of women are "taking care of the women's issues," even at the local level, so there is no need to monitor gender.
- External project supervisors and evaluators do not emphasize gender, so it is "forgotten."

Despite this tendency for gender to remain invisible, unacknowledged, or marginalized, much evidence suggests that gender is important to outcomes, and M&E plays a vital role in demonstrating these benefits. For instance, Bamberger (2002) used gender-disaggregated data from borrowers and nonborrowers to demonstrate that the impacts of microcredit in Bangladesh differ substantially based on whether the borrower is a woman or a man and that the marginal impacts of borrowing are often greater for women than men. Such information is vital to building the case for considering gender in rural development programs.

### Recent attempts to change gender M&E

A number of recent efforts increase the prospects that gender will be incorporated more explicitly in M&E. The FAO and other United Nations agencies have undertaken to improve the availability of gender-disaggregated data (FAO 2003). Through these data, a much clearer picture should emerge of the relationships between gender inequality and agriculture, rural development, and food security.

At the project and program levels, numerous training materials, toolkits, and guidelines can help in implementing gender-sensitive M&E. Most key donors have prepared guidelines for gender mainstreaming. The OECD's guidelines "support partner efforts to formulate clear, measurable goals and expected results relating to gender equity and women's empowerment (focusing on development impacts,

not just the completion of activities)" (OECD 1999: 24). The guidelines indicate that it is vital to "support partner capacity to monitor and evaluate results achievement in projects, programs, and institutions and to understand the reasons for success or failure." SIDA's evaluation guidelines (SIDA 2004) contain a good section on gender in evaluations, covering preparation, fieldwork, reporting, and dissemination and use. The World Bank's short toolkit, *Gender Issues in Monitoring and Evaluation of Rural Development Projects* (World Bank 2005), presents excellent, simple—and unfortunately underused—guidelines. The most recent report on annual progress toward implementing the World Bank's gender-mainstreaming strategy (World Bank 2006a) urges the Bank to "improve the monitoring and impact evaluation of gender integration into Bank policy and project lending," by investing in gathering statistics disaggregated by gender, developing indicators to measure results and impacts with respect to gender, and ensuring that gender is included "as an independent variable in scientific evaluations of the development impact of Bank operations."

### Incentives: ensuring that it happens in practice

Ideally, sufficient training in the purpose and objectives of gender-sensitive monitoring would ensure that the time, funds, and human resources are committed to performing this task and that the results are used. Usually all stakeholders agree in planning meetings and program documents that gender is important and that the gender impacts of a given project should be monitored carefully. Experience has revealed, however, that both a carrot and stick may be needed for gender-sensitive M&E to occur in practice.

External evaluators or donor agency staff can follow up on the issue during monitoring visits: for example, perhaps even requiring compliance with a plan for monitoring gender (box 16.3). The performance evaluations of technical advisers, project staff, or departmental staff might usefully include an assessment of compliance with the gender-monitoring plan. Providing publicity or presenting an award might also offer some incentive to individuals, projects, programs, or government ministries that take very positive action to promote successful gender monitoring. Gender could also be included in the milestones or triggers for annual budget or loan tranche releases (for instance, "Government has recruited new extension staff to reach a minimum of 30 percent women agricultural extension workers in at least 80 percent of districts by March 2008").

### Box 16.3 Compliance with a Gender Action Plan Can Improve Gender-Sensitive Monitoring and Evaluation

One means of ensuring that more attention is given to monitoring and evaluating a project's gender-equity outcomes is to require compliance with a Gender Action Plan. A good example comes from a project implemented by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in Cambodia: the Northwestern Rural Development Project (Hunt and Kheng 2006). When the loan was designed, a high-quality Gender Action Plan was prepared, stipulating that three requirements had to be met for tranche releases to occur: (1) equal opportunity for employing women in road construction; (2) the involvement of women in prioritizing, planning, implementing, and monitoring village-based infrastructure; and (3) women's participation in training and community-based organizations to reach at least 30 percent.

The plan was based on systematic gender analysis, with targets and strategies for women's participation in each component. An assessment of the results showed

*Source:* Hunt and Kheng 2006.

that Gender Action Plans “provided a road map for project teams to ensure that women participated and benefited from project activities.” Compared with another ADB project in Cambodia, the Northwestern Rural Development Project (with its high-quality Gender Action Plan) was shown to have positive results with respect to gender equity. However, the monitoring of participation and benefits still needed to improve, especially with regard to the collection, reporting, and analysis of gender-disaggregated data. The number of gender-sensitive indicators and strategies was not sufficient, and insufficient information was collected to analyze women's participation, benefits, and progress toward gender equity. Although the loan covenants used in this project were useful for improving compliance with gender-sensitive monitoring requirements, greater leadership, commitment, and ownership of the Gender Action Plan were needed.

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER IN DESIGNING A GENDER-SENSITIVE M&E COMPONENT

Several questions emerge in designing a gender-sensitive M&E component for a project or program. Which levels of participants—spanning the range from donors and recipient governments to management and field implementation—are involved? Which instruments are therefore involved? Should gender be mainstreamed across the institution and all parts of the program, or should there be a specific gender component? How much participatory involvement is appropriate, and what must be remembered when scaling up programs to the national level or moving to newer aid modalities? Is the focus on short-term outcomes or longer-term impacts? How will findings and experiences be shared?

#### Levels of participants that need to consider gender in project design and M&E

To make it more likely that gender is considered in project design, monitoring, and evaluation, which participants need to consider which issues or actions?

- *At the management level of the donor agency, implementing ministry, program, or project, participants should be*

involved in setting the indicators at the objective level, providing access to statistical data, and dedicating the staff, budget, and tools to ensure that gender-sensitive monitoring can be done.

- *At various levels within the implementing organization—specifically, among the staff responsible for the horizontal and vertical coordination of operations and gender-specific and M&E components—participants should be involved in coordinating the work and setting indicators for different components, ensuring that gender is considered. The terms of reference for all staff working on different activities need to assign responsibility for achieving gender objectives, strategies, and outcomes.*
- *At the field level, participants need to ensure that access to budget, materials, and equipment is considered, as well as timing. For example, the opinions of women and men may not be considered fully during monitoring if meetings to collect their opinions are scheduled when most women are working in the fields, when women are preparing the evening meal for their families, or when most men are out at sea fishing. Extra funds may be required to ensure that monitoring activities can take place at appropriate locations and times.*

## Mainstreaming versus establishing separate gender components

Gender can be considered as a specific result area or component and monitored as such. This traditional method of treating gender has been used in many projects and is still used in some poverty reduction strategy programs (PRSPs) and other programmatic instruments. Often, however, this approach meant that gender was ignored by many project or program staff and stakeholders, as it was considered “taken care of.” As an assessment of development cooperation funded by Finland reports, “Women are sometimes still seen as a separate sector so systematic work to eliminate gender inequalities is not undertaken within other sectors ... In projects ‘gender mainstreaming’ still usually means small and isolated components dealing with women” (MFA Finland 2003: 11).

Gender mainstreaming across all result areas and activities is now the preferred means of ensuring that gender is considered. “Gender mainstreaming” can be defined as “a commitment to ensure that women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences are integral to the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of all legislation, policies, and programs so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not

perpetuated” (Derbyshire 2002: 9). The drawbacks of this approach are that the impact may be lost, outcomes are much harder to measure, and financial resource allocation by gender becomes increasingly difficult to track (box 16.4). Superficial mainstreaming—in which women are simply mentioned in every project component, or in which gender-differentiated data are collected but not analyzed for program improvements—is also unfortunately too common.

It is important to gain baseline information to ensure that project or program activities do not increase problems in target communities, such as gender-based violence. Gender-mainstreaming activities tend to change gender roles and relations. Unless change proceeds carefully and with adequate awareness raising, domestic violence may arise or worsen as men come to perceive that women’s increased empowerment threatens their position as men and heads of the household and community.

How successful has mainstreaming been, and how can we do things differently? Assessments that look at women’s participation or benefits derived by women in isolation from the overall project context may be inadequate and misleading. Comparisons between women and men in the target group should be made across every project activity and component,

### Box 16.4 Mainstreaming Gender and the Implications for Monitoring and Evaluation

The Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development considers that gender should be integral to all development assistance analyses that are undertaken. Steps to carry out gender mainstreaming include the following:

- Ensure that guides and procedural manuals incorporate gender-equity considerations into the methods to be followed by staff, with priority given to promoting gender analysis at the initial stages of the planning process.
- Ensure that the gender-equity objective is reflected in the development of procedures for results-based management, including the specification of results sought, indicators for monitoring achievements, and evaluation criteria.
- Ensure that gender equity and women’s empowerment measures and indicators are part of the main-

Source: Mason 2007.

stream reporting structure and evaluation processes rather than a separate system.

- Develop and maintain statistical systems and project monitoring systems that provide gender-disaggregated data.
- Ensure that gender equity is addressed in all training and staff development initiatives.

Gender mainstreaming should be considered at all levels:

- At the project level, by designing appropriate gender-sensitive indicators for monitoring and by considering gender at all stages of the project cycle, including reporting
- At the program and policy levels, by carrying out gender evaluations and using the results to guide further activities, through checklists and scorecards
- In multilateral and bilateral development organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and government organizations, by carrying out gender audits and self-assessments of their own organizations.

and the conclusions about benefits or outcomes should be supported by data and analysis. A risk exists in external evaluations that gender is considered only as a separate chapter, unless the terms of reference explicitly state otherwise.

It is also important that mainstreaming be understood to have the goal of *increasing gender equity*, not simply increasing women's involvement. Increasing women's participation in committees or in monitoring teams is *not* mainstreaming if women are not actively involved in improved gender outcomes and impacts (the extra burden on rural women's limited free time should always be considered). At every step, questions must be asked as to who will benefit from proposed activities. If "policy evaporation" occurs—that is, good policy is not followed through in practice—then gender mainstreaming may not have a real impact on gender equity. Moreover, the real impact may not be seen because M&E procedures fail to document what is occurring on the ground.

Box 16.5 presents two ways of treating gender at the national level in PRSPs. One is from Mozambique (where it is compartmentalized) and the other from Vietnam (where it is mainstreamed).

The U.K. Department for International Development (DFID) has chosen to pursue a twin track in which it main-

streams gender by integrating women's and men's concerns in all policies and projects and supports specific activities aimed at empowering women. It may be useful to monitor a targeted output specifically concerned with activities for women, alongside overall mainstreaming (considering outputs for men and women in every activity and result area), in the hope that gender outcomes will improve. It is imperative, however, not to isolate women's activities within one output with a very small claim on resources and no influence on the rest of the policy or project.

### Using gender analysis for monitoring

Gender analysis considers women's roles in production, reproduction, and the management of community and other activities. Changes in one aspect of women's lives may produce beneficial or detrimental effects in others. Gender analysis helps to (1) identify gender-based differences in access to resources to predict how different members of households, groups, and societies will participate in and be affected by planned development interventions; (2) permit planners to achieve the goals of effectiveness, efficiency, equity, and empowerment through designing

## Box 16.5 Compartmentalization versus Mainstreaming of Gender in Poverty Reduction Strategy Programs

Mozambique's second Action Plan for the Reduction of Absolute Poverty—known by its Portuguese acronym, PARPA—treats gender as a separate component. Unfortunately this compartmentalization seems to have led those working on the strategy to believe that they did not need to consider gender outside the gender chapter. Gender is not considered in analyzing the causes of poverty in Mozambique, nor is women's role in economic growth mentioned. The indicators for measuring progress toward development objectives make almost no mention of gender. The causes of gender inequality are not discussed, and few policy interventions are discussed for addressing inequality. National data on school attendance and early childhood growth always include gender, but any differences between boys and girls have vanished in the hands of the government authorities and committees producing the strategy. Gender is considered in the chapter on HIV and AIDS with regard to incidence and causes

Source: Author's assessment.

of infection, but when it comes to the targets and actions to be taken, no further mention is made of women as a key target group.

By contrast, Vietnam's *Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy 2002* includes many aspects of gender in its analysis of the causes of poverty and mainstreams gender considerations throughout the document. A general instruction is given that monitoring should employ indicators "developed in detail by regions, provinces, rural/urban areas, and genders." Even so, crucial omissions are present. The chapter on targets makes almost no mention of gender—only in the paragraphs specifically on gender equity—and the general economic and social targets are not disaggregated by gender. The indicators provided for monitoring the development objectives do include some gender disaggregation, however, and efforts are being made to improve them.

policy reform and supportive program strategies; and (3) develop training packages to sensitize development staff on gender issues and training strategies for beneficiaries, such as the World Bank's *Participation Sourcebook* (World Bank 1996).

Comprehensive gender studies are applied mostly in developing policy or planning programs and projects. Aspects of gender analysis may be applied, however, for intermittent monitoring of gender implications of project activities or outcomes. Simple techniques are useful for this purpose, such as direct observation, focus groups, and time-use studies (for example, women's typical daily routine in terms of housework, income generation, and personal time). Performed consistently as part of project M&E, gender analysis helps build a picture of women's growth as individuals and social beings (for instance, it can assess changes in their standing in the household and in the community). Five major categories of information are required for a comprehensive gender analysis: (1) needs assessment; (2) activity profile; (3) resources, access, and control profile; (4) benefits and incentives analysis; and (5) institutional constraints and opportunities (World Bank 1996).

In monitoring and evaluating any benefits arising from a project or program, the gender considerations include developing indicators that define and measure progress in achieving benefits for men and women, ensuring that gender-disaggregated data are collected to monitor impact with respect to gender, and considering ways of involving women in M&E (ADB n.d.).

Gender-disaggregated data and parameters should be included in M&E systems for all projects and presented in all reports. Gender analysis is vital throughout all stages of the program cycle, from identification and design to implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

### **Impact assessments**

Most monitoring focuses on short-term occurrences, whereas the great challenge is to measure long-term change—the impacts that extend beyond increases in women's participation or incomes during the life of a project or program and that indicate real changes in the lives of poor men and women over the following five or more years. Apart from the design and attribution difficulties, the fact remains that if a project or program has already finished, no one may remain to perform the evaluation, and financing for this activity may not be found. This difficulty is discussed

further in Innovative Activity Profile 2 (available in the online version of this *Sourcebook*).

### **Improved information sharing**

Most projects and programs collect much information regularly from staff and beneficiaries, but it is not always shared effectively. Much of it is fed into the management information system, which produces consolidated data and is used to report to government and donors. However, no point exists in collecting such information unless it is used to improve the program to benefit the people from whom it was collected. Different ways may be employed to interpret and use results to make decisions, modify or improve programming, and advocate to different audiences. Examples of changes in gender equity in a practical sense should be collected regularly through monitoring and shared with a wide range of stakeholders. Improved advocacy can have a very positive feedback effect on the project. For example, an agricultural project in South Africa focused on developing producer groups (particularly women-led groups). As part of its qualitative evaluation, the project collected stories and lessons emerging from this process. These were eventually published by a local agricultural magazine that was distributed beyond the original beneficiary groups and reached other departments of agriculture and farmers.

## **PARTICIPATORY TOOLS AND APPROACHES**

The World Bank places considerable emphasis on participatory M&E, which is an important factor in promoting social sustainability. The Bank's *Social Analysis Sourcebook* (World Bank 2003a: 49) cites participatory M&E as a “means to systematically evaluate progress and impact early in the project cycle by bringing the perspectives and insights of all stakeholders, beneficiaries as well as project implementers. All stakeholders identify issues, conduct research, analyze findings, make recommendations, and take responsibility for necessary action.” The focus is on the active engagement of primary stakeholders and their shared control of the content, process, and results of M&E. This kind of participation is particularly effective because stakeholders, if they are involved in identifying problems and solutions, develop ownership of the project and tend to be amenable if corrective actions eventually prove necessary. In other words, participation can be both a means and an end. Because they live with the results of a project, participants also have a greater

incentive to make changes in project activities and base future interventions on the lessons they have learned. Transparency is enhanced because the intended beneficiaries are involved in making decisions from the start and understand the funding issues. Participatory M&E may also highlight unexpected or unplanned changes, which may not be noticed with traditional indicators and M&E systems. In a project in Vietnam, the gender-disaggregated results of interviews with village women through Most Significant Change monitoring allowed problems with the location of a new road to be raised and dealt with by management (World Bank 2007).

The cost implications (time, money, and other resources; box 16.6) and other considerations of participatory monitoring must be taken into account. For example, it must not be assumed that all women will automatically benefit from efforts to involve some women in project design, implementation, and M&E. Men's and women's groups do not always have the same priorities and understanding of impacts, nor are the opinions of all women the same. In addition, if women are expected to give up their time to participate in monitoring an intervention, a clear means should be present by which their opinions can be fed back into improving future activities. Consultation and true participation in decision making are different and should not be confused.

Participatory M&E can also be a useful tool to improve gender equity, if women are able to take an active role, meet in groups, and build solidarity and confidence (a good example is quoted from Pakistan's Community Infrastructure Project, World Bank 2003b). In many communities, only women can visit other families. Men may not be permitted to speak directly with women who are not family members, so men may not be able to gather essential information for M&E. What may be more difficult is for communities to meet in mixed-sex groups to monitor outcomes and openly discuss how to improve activities. Simple tools may be used to facilitate discussion—for instance, using different-colored voting cards for men and women or for different age or ethnic groups, and then comparing different opinions on topics—or holding separate meetings for different sexes, to prevent men from dominating.

## SCALING UP INVESTMENTS

Scaling up of investments usually implies reaching a larger number of beneficiaries via increases in size, scope, and geographic spread of an activity. This has implications for the methods of financing, administering, and monitoring.

### Box 16.6 The Cost Implications of Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation: Three Examples

How much participation is enough, and what are the costs of participation? Three projects funded by the World Bank offer insight into these questions. In the Andhra Pradesh Rural Poverty Reduction Project, the participation of more than 600,000 women's self-help groups, as well as a local non-governmental organization, improved qualitative process monitoring and revealed unexpected outcomes, which made it possible to develop new indicators. Participatory monitoring also significantly reduced project costs: When women's groups identified poor credit recovery rates, they halted disbursement until the rates improved. In the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan Community Infrastructure Project, participatory monitoring of subprojects reduced the number of dropouts among community organizations, produced a cost savings of 40 percent, and increased the quality of work (compared to work done by government-hired contractors). In Mongolia, on the other hand, the full benefits of participatory monitoring in the Sustainable Livelihoods Project were inhibited by the sheer distances involved and the difficulty of holding community meetings. The cost of ensuring full participation—in transport and time—would have been enormous, so the level of participation was modified.

*Sources:* World Bank 2007 (for Andhra Pradesh), World Bank 2003c for Pakistan, and author for Mongolia (White 2007).

### Local to national, project to program

When programs are scaled up in size, either sectorally or geographically, a need exists to scale up the monitoring. The focus on quantitative indicators tends to increase with scaling up, because qualitative measurements such as interviews and focus groups are more difficult to carry out, record, and analyze on a large scale (box 16.7). One example of this problem is the selection of indicators for monitoring global progress in achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. Data on each indicator needed to be available from all countries and may not be too onerous to collect and compare.

### Box 16.7 Some Difficulties with Scaling Up Monitoring

In its first phase, the Sustainable Livelihoods Project in Mongolia developed a participatory monitoring and evaluation system. The key issue was to find a balance between information required by the World Bank and the project's national office, and information that would be useful to the community and local project representatives. Planners also had to strike a balance between information that would be good to have and information that was essential. Clearly a risk was present of collecting too much information that would not improve participation. An additional consideration was that communication is very difficult in Mongolia because of the large distances and limited infrastructure and equipment. Although experiences with the initial monitoring and evaluation system were positive, scaling up to much greater national coverage in a later stage of the project has proven less successful and led to more direct monitoring by project staff.

*Source:* Author.

For large-scale programs, the gender disaggregation of quantitative data should be a basic requirement, even if the softer M&E tools need to be used less often. For instance, interviews and group work could take place in a few sample areas to supplement quantitative data from national monitoring. It is increasingly important for large-scale projects or programs to tie in with national census and living standards surveys rather than duplicate them.

#### Adapting to reduced international technical assistance inputs

As donors move toward funding larger-scale programs that rely more heavily on national systems and staff and less on specifically recruited international and national staff, local staff will need to build the capacity to incorporate gender considerations into their work. Possibilities for increasing this capacity include the following (OECD 1999):

- Use donor-level gender advisers to regularly support and mentor local gender focal points.
- Give priority to initiatives that focus on partners' capacity to analyze policies, programs, and institutional

cultures and develop change strategies that contribute to gender equity.

- Help partners examine the gender balance within their organizations and identify strategies to increase women's representation at policy- and decision-making levels.
- Increase the availability of gender-disaggregated data by supporting modifications in national and sectoral data collection systems.
- Support research on gender equity by sectoral institutions, research organizations, and advocacy groups to increase the national resources of partners in this area.

#### Monitoring gender in the new aid modalities

To date, little consideration has been given to gender in monitoring PRSPs, sectorwide approaches (SWAPs), and budget support. This issue is discussed further in Thematic Note 2. Although development cooperation is moving away from projects and toward new aid modalities, the following actions are still vital (OECD 1999):

- Strengthen links between the project and policy levels. Improved communication of lessons from the field can act as a reality check at the national level and ensure greater coherence among gender-equity policy objectives, project-supported activities, and the resulting impacts.
- Support partners' efforts to improve project-level monitoring and impact assessment and gain a greater understanding of how projects can contribute to gender-equity objectives, how obstacles can be overcome, and how project design can be improved.
- Analyze the comparative strengths and weaknesses of different interventions used in specific sectors to increase knowledge about strategies that have positive results and are cost effective.

#### Sample indicators for a range of agriculture and rural development investments

Although it is not possible to devise sample indicators to match every situation and intervention, sample indicators for output, outcome, and impact, as well as tools and proposed sources of verification, are provided for a range of topics in "Social and Environmental Sustainability of Agriculture and Rural Development Investments: A Monitoring and Evaluation Toolkit" (Punkari and others 2007).

## CONCLUSION

Several issues emerge from this overview. Despite the fact that development interventions will be improved if we track and measure their implications with respect to gender, it is clear that M&E of gender issues has been done poorly recently, in projects as well as in the newer aid modalities. The following Thematic Notes focus on how to develop a sound M&E system and discuss other tools for supporting project or program staff, such as gender policies, terms of reference, and training (Thematic Note 1); the experience

and tools related to monitoring gender in the newer aid modalities, such as PRSPs, SWAPs, and budget support (Thematic Note 2); and issues related to setting high-quality indicators and the collection and use of data (Thematic Note 3). Two Innovative Activity Profiles are also included, describing methods and practical examples of involving community members in monitoring (Innovative Activity Profile 1) and conducting impact assessments (Innovative Activity Profile 2), the latter in the online version of this *Sourcebook* ([www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)).