

Mainstreaming Gender Equality

Sida's support for the promotion of gender
equality in partner countries

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Preface

In 1996, gender equality was established as a goal for Swedish development co-operation, and one year later Sida formulated an Action Programme for promoting gender equality. The Action Programme focuses on a mainstreaming strategy for working towards the gender equality goal. According to such a strategy, gender equality should pervade all development policies, strategies and interventions.

The present evaluation deals with gender equality in country strategies and projects. It covers a broad range of issues related to mainstreaming, including institutional structures and ownership. Results from a dozen projects are assessed. It is argued that gender equality objectives should be more clearly stated, and that reinforcing links between the promotion of gender equality and poverty reduction should be made explicit. Sida is recommended to pay more attention to opportunities for dialogue, and to be sensitive to differences in national contexts.

The evaluation is based on case studies of country strategies and projects in Bangladesh, Nicaragua and South Africa. It covers the period 1997 to the present. The projects represent four sectors: urban development, democratic governance, health and education.

The evaluation report is the result of an extended process involving many actors. It rests primarily on contributions from representatives of partner organisations in Nicaragua, South Africa and Bangladesh, and Sida and Embassy staff. The evaluation was carried out by, Cowi Consult, Denmark in co-operation with Goss Gilroy, Canada.

Lessons from the evaluation will be fed into a planned revision of the Action Programme. The evaluation will also form a basis for Sida's reporting to the Swedish Government on the results of efforts to promote gender equality.

Stockholm, January 2002

Stefan Molund
Acting Head of Department for
Evaluation and Internal Audit

The synthesis report and the country reports constituting the Mainstreaming Gender Equality evaluation are listed below:

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|---------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 02/01 | Mainstreaming Gender Equality – Sida's support for the promotion of gender equality in partner countries |
| 02/01:1 | Mainstreaming Gender Equality – Country Report Bangladesh |
| 02/01:2 | Mainstreaming Gender Equality – Country Report Nicaragua |
| 02/01:3 | Mainstreaming Gender Equality – Country Report South Africa |
| 02/01:4 | Integración de la Perspectiva de Igualdad de Género – Informe de País Nicaragua |

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ASK	Ain o Shalish Kendro (Bangladesh NGO), Human Rights and Legal Aid Resource Centre
BNWLA	Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association
BRIDGE	Development-Gender
CAST	Change Assessment and Scoring Tool
CBA	Centre Based Approach
CEDAW	United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CROP	Comparative Research Programme on Poverty
CS	Country Strategy
CUP	Comprehensive Urban Plan (South Africa)
DIC	Drop-In Centre
DNFE	Directorate of Non-Formal Education (Bangladesh)
DWIN	Development Workers' Information Network
ET	Evaluation Team
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FORUMSYD	NGO Umbrella Organisation
GDI	Gender Related Development Index
g/e	Gender Equality
GE	Gender Equality
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
HDI	Human Development Index
HHD	High Human Development
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ICC	International Criminal Court
INIM	National Women's Institution
KCC	Kimberley City Council (South Africa)
LCG	Local Consultative Group (a forum for Government of Bangladesh and its development partners/donors to interact and discuss policy issues. Sub-groups for specific sectors of this forum prepare the background research and position papers for the annual meeting of the Aid Club for Bangladesh)
LFA	Logical Framework Approach

LGDSP	Local Government Development Support Programme (South Africa)
LHD	Low Human Development
M & E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MFA	Ministry for Foreign Affairs
MHD	Medium Human Development
MIFAMILIA	Ministry of the Family, Nicaragua
NFE	Non-formal education
NFE 2	Non-formal Education – Literacy Training Programme for Adults and Youth (Bangladesh)
NFE 3	Non-formal Education – Literacy Programme for Hard to Reach Urban Working Children (Bangladesh)
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
PFA	Beijing Platform for Action
PLCE	Pilot Project on Post Literacy & Continuing Education
PMED	Primary and Mass Education Division (of the Ministry of Education)
PP	Project Proforma
PRODEL	Programme for Local [urban] Development (Nicaragua)
PROSILAIS	Support to Local Integrated Health Systems (Nicaragua)
RAAN	North Atlantic Autonomous Region
RAAS	South Atlantic Autonomous Region
Sida	Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency
StatsSA	Statistics South Africa
STD/Steps	Steps Towards Development (NGO Bangladesh)
SWAP	Sector Wide Approach
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
TA	Technical Assistance
TLM	Total Literacy Movement
TOT	Training of Trainers
TORs	Terms of Reference
TPL	Trees, Paving and Lighting (South Africa)
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UTV	Sekretariatet för Utvärderingar och Intern Revision
WID	Women in Development
WP	Working Paper

Executive Summary

Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation

In April 1997 Sida adopted the Action Programme for promoting gender equality in Swedish international development co-operation. The Action Programme focuses on a mainstreaming strategy for working towards the gender equality goal. The current evaluation has been undertaken to learn lessons from the efforts to promote gender equality and to support the revision of the Action Programme after its first five years.

The purpose of the evaluation has been to assess how Sida's mainstreaming strategy is reflected in the country strategy process, and to assess changes in gender equality that Sida supported interventions may have contributed to. The evaluation was also to provide lessons for a deeper understanding of key gender concepts such as gender equality, empowerment of women, stakeholder participation, strategic and practical changes with regard to gender equality, and mainstreaming.

Analysis of the use of dialogue in promoting gender equality has also been given high priority. Attempts have been made to pay special attention to possible linkages, synergies or conflicts between poverty reduction and gender equality.

The evaluation has been based on three country case studies – Nicaragua, South Africa and Bangladesh, where a Sida country strategy process has been initiated since 1996. Four Sida supported development interventions, which were chosen because they were believed to have contributed to changes in gender equality, were assessed in each country. They represent urban development, democratic governance, health and education sectors.

The evaluation methodology was developed in close co-operation with the UTV and in workshops between Sida staff and the evaluation teams of international consultants and consultants from the three countries. It comprised preparation of concept papers, tools, and study objects guidelines (grids), documentary studies, and individual and focus group interviews with many stakeholders in the three countries and in Stockholm.

The countries and interventions chosen for this study can be seen as broadly illustrative of Sida practice in implementing the first five years of the Action Programme.

Country Strategies and National Contexts for Gender Equality and Development Co-operation

The climate for promotion of gender equality in Swedish development co-operation has varied over time in the co-operating countries as well as between them. These changing national political and cultural contexts have influenced the mutual understanding of goals and approaches to promote gender equality.

Within the 5-year timeframe for the evaluation the Government of **Bangladesh** has had a formal commitment to improving the conditions of women and has incorporated elements of mainstreaming of gender equality in sector policies and national plans. Some progress has been made but changes are slow in a culture where women's exclusion is deep rooted and a context characterised by continuing violence, mixed commitments by power structures and limited capacity and human resources in co-operating organisations.

The climate for promotion of gender equality in **South Africa** was radically changed with the abolition of the *apartheid* system. Concern for all forms of equality were formalised in legislative changes, but a large number of discriminatory acts prevail. The biggest challenge is that there are no plans in place to ensure that legislation is implemented and gender equality is mainstreamed in the implementation of programmes, which the national machinery is mandated to do.

Apparent inconsistencies in the national policy environment for promoting gender equality in **Nicaragua** suggests that it may be most useful for Sida to focus on more micro-level interchange in the non-governmental arena. Sida may also wish to counter the somewhat negative trend at central governmental level by working more intensely on gender equality in relation to other goals such as poverty reduction.

The 1997 Country Strategies of Bangladesh and Nicaragua represent something of a “high water mark” in the central role accorded to gender equality. The ‘second generation’ country strategy for Bangladesh and the regional strategy for Nicaragua reflect some of the difficulty experienced in operationalising the previous country strategies’ commitment to make gender equality a “point of departure”.

Recent country strategy processes, including South Africa, have had access to a strong baseline of national gender equality analyses, but these are not used as much as they could be to enrich the content of the Country Strategies.

The country strategy development process is responding to the continuing pressure and interplay of competing priorities and goals in Sweden's development and foreign policy environments, and to the changing – and sometimes diminishing – interests of host governments.

The development of regional and country strategies should demonstrate how gender equality is addressed both as an end in itself but also as a means of achieving other goals such as poverty reduction. This should be an effective means to ensure that gender equality is not diminished while seeking a more co-ordinated and integrated set of policy priorities.

Of equal importance is the next step of ensuring that the presence of gender equality as a specific goal in the country strategy is followed through in each intervention. This should be the responsibility, not only of Swedish Embassy staff but also of Sida headquarters staff and of project consultants, always in co-operation with partner organisations.

Dialogue on Gender Equality

Dialogue with co-operating organisations on priorities and goals, is considered one of the most forceful tools to promote gender equality. The evaluation focused on three distinct types of dialogue, i.e. government-to-government, intervention specific and dialogue with civil society.

Sweden has been active in all three countries in using dialogue at the different levels to promote public debate and to influence programmes advancing gender equality.

Higher level, *government-to-government dialogue* on gender equality is subject to the same constraints and limitations as other forms of policy dialogue, especially in the area of democratic governance. The capacity and motivation to follow through on mutually agreed initiatives in gender equality varies considerably among partner agencies.

Further, the institutional commitment to mainstream gender equality has varied over time both with Sida and partners and requires continuous dialogue to be sustained.

Intervention-specific dialogue often lacks specificity in that it does not point to practical alterations in programmes to advance gender equality. It also appears to vary in intensity from one intervention to the next in ways that seem to reflect different levels of commitment and interest on the part of Sida staff and consultants rather than differences in the opportunities presented. Practical issues of how to define, monitor and report on expected results in gender equality often provide a concrete and non-confrontational area for dialogue regarding specific interventions.

In all three countries, Sweden has been an important source of *support to civil society organisations* engaged in advocacy for gender equality. Management arrangements of direct support to NGOs through an intermediary organisation such as Forum Syd in Nicaragua are still young but deserve to be tested for their impact on the quality and extent of dialogue and not only on administrative efficiency.

At each of the three levels of dialogue, reported reductions in the size of the staff complement at the Embassy represented a major constraint on how actively Sida is able to interact with partners and retain a dialogue in gender equality.

Of the three different types of dialogue assessed by the evaluation teams in each country, dialogue at the level of specific interventions provides the greatest potential to improve the gender equality results of development co-operation.

Gender Equality Goals

The presence of an explicit gender equality goal in an intervention enhances the possibility that the project or programme will genuinely impact on unequal relations between women and men. The gender equality goal of Swedish assistance aims to contribute to equal opportunities, responsibilities and participation for women and men, and girls and boys. It is to be based on a gender analysis and to be followed through with a mainstreaming strategy. Few of the interventions studied fulfil all these requirements but several are developing in that direction (for example support to the National Police Academy in Nicaragua).

Local government and legal aid support come closest to exhibiting a gender equality goal that goes beyond targeting a percentage of women to address areas such as women's political representation and the protection of legal rights. Programs focused on providing services (health and education) or infrastructure (urban development) have considerable potential to move beyond quantitative participation targets by including a more explicit gender equality goal which addresses unequal opportunities and access for girls and boys and women and men.

A mainstreamed gender equality goal should reach beyond gender “approaches” or targeting a percentage of women in an intervention. Nonetheless, programmes that have a less fully realized “approach” to gender issues, or which have a simple, quantitative women's participation target, may be shown to have had positive effects on some aspects of women's lives. But only indirectly do they work to reduce unequal gender relations that constrain women's and men's right to influence, participate in and benefit from programmes.

The twelve interventions studied exhibited a wide range of variation regarding gender equality goals. In Bangladesh, support to two NGOs with gender equality as an important component of their mandate by definition worked in support of gender equality. A few interventions had explicit gender equality goals that facilitated development of strategies, relevant structures and implementation of specific mainstreaming activities to address gender inequalities relevant to the sector, thus going a long way to meet the requirements of Sida's Action Programme. On the other hand, one intervention had

an explicit gender equality goal, but this was not carried through in a mainstreaming strategy. The most common formulation of gender equality goals was the definition of an explicit objective or target for women's and girls' participation or the implicit encouragement of women's participation. Finally, a few programmes had somewhat vaguely defined "approaches" to gender equality without any clear indication of how these approaches were expected to contribute to change.

Factors supporting the successful inclusion of a gender equality goal, include but are not limited to:

- A strong institutional mandate within Sida, such as in the years of the Action Programme preparation, in which senior management continuously demonstrate commitment and hold all those who work with development co-operation accountable.
- The inclusion of gender equality goals in programme design which becomes more likely when there is national policy commitment to gender equality and support for gender equality initiatives by institutions, experienced gender activists, and advocates in civil society.
- Gender equality goals were most successfully demonstrated to have had an impact on contributing to transform people's lives, when they were linked to targets that could be monitored.

Poverty Reduction and Gender Equality Linkages

Poverty as 'defined' by Sida encompasses the absence or diminishing of security, capacity and opportunities, which affect the potentials for both women and men to influence, participate in and benefit from development processes. Poverty is articulated along different race, class, geographic and ethnic group identity lines as well as along gender lines.

Sida's, other donors' and co-operating organisations' poverty reduction and gender equality strategies address *inequalities*, which are both causes and effects. There are also contradictory interests between different stakeholder groups in retaining inequalities. This complicates a simple identification of synergies or possible conflicts between the two goals.

Each of the Country Strategies for the three countries includes a specific orientation toward poverty, and all direct some attention to gender issues. But specific linkages are rarely explored between the goals of gender equality and poverty reduction. Observations from the interventions also indicate that rarely are linkages between the two goals made explicit despite clear opportunities in such areas as non-formal education in Bangladesh, local governance in South Africa and improved local health services in Nicaragua.

Linkages between poverty and gender equality were often expressed to the evaluation teams in the voices of the poor: Poor urban women in South Africa described how they experienced gender inequality and vulnerability to

poverty in their own lives. For them, equality was a necessary condition for escape from poverty.

Poor women in Bangladesh complained about insecurity and about violence against them by men in their community, but even more so that the opportunities of poor people, – women and men – were stifled by the rich and powerful.

Poor women and men in the Atlantic Coast regions of Nicaragua pointed out that national anti-poverty plans and programs were developed and implemented from a central perspective and did not reflect the commitment of previous governments to regional autonomy.

Factors, which promote poverty alleviation and gender equality, were observed in some interventions, and opportunities for reenforcing synergies were identified:

- Interventions that included employment creation and credit schemes, which explicitly aimed at women and men, exhibited short-term poverty alleviation and met some practical needs of poor women and men. – Potential links to meet strategic gender interests are believed to lie in turning from individual credit to group responsibility, and establishing mechanisms for participation in decision making.
- Social sector support, for non-formal education in particular, enhances the security of poor women and men, youth and children against humiliation, exclusion and violence in the short run and against unemployment in the longer run.
- Knowledge and awareness of women's and children's rights improve the concerned stakeholders' capacity and opportunities to participate in decision making in the communities and to change intra family roles and responsibilities.
- Time is required for turning plans and capacity into practice before equality effects can be measured, in particular in democratic governance and institutional strengthening programmes. There are signs of potential synergies between gender equality and poverty reduction in programmes related to health sector strengthening, local government or urban planning.
- Legal aid interventions in Bangladesh showed the most direct linkage between women's practical needs and strategic interests on the one hand and short-term poverty alleviation and potentials for longer term poverty reduction on the other. Explanatory factors may be the high incidence of poverty and of violence against women. A narrow focus on a few women only, and a highly specialised implementing organisation, are factors, however, which limit multiplication opportunities.

Where *perceived conflicts* arise between the gender equality and poverty reduction goals, they often relate to the following factors: 1) Limited capacity and awareness of opportunities to integrate poverty and gender analysis, by Sida

and its partner organisations. 2) Conflicting interests among different groups of women and men. 3) Cultural norms and traditions which counteract specific policies and strategies, e.g. for combating inter and intra family violence.

Gender disaggregated information is increasingly available but is rarely sufficient to analyse conflicting practical needs of women and men, e.g. for access to health services and employment. Neither is data sufficient to analyse strategic interests of different groups of women and different groups of women and men, for example in legal advice and reform.

Opportunities for optimising synergies between poverty reduction and gender equality goals would benefit from research support. Research to clarify the conflicting interests between different groups at macro, meso and micro levels, would help to better adjust strategies.

Stakeholder Participation

The evaluation team developed an analytical scale to assess stakeholder participation, which is an important tool in mainstreaming the gender equality goal and building ownership.

A variety of ad-hoc participatory activities do take place. However, in the interventions studied the mechanisms for participation were often instrumental. They served to provide inputs for programme managers to make adjustments to the interventions rather than representing direct involvement by primary stakeholders. Relatively passive participation and consultation without the delegation of responsibility was most common in the interventions studied. Some interventions promoted participation for material incentives or encouraged functional participation around predetermined project plans. Truly interactive participation, with women and men from the primary stakeholder groups establishing goals and managing activities in order to achieve them is a rare occurrence in these interventions.

Similarly, the evaluation team found no particular evidence that primary stakeholders were involved in design decisions in the interventions studied. On the other hand, sometimes stakeholders became involved during implementation and, in a single case, also in evaluation.

Sweden has sometimes taken a role in support of the development of national and local supportive environments for participation, which will benefit both women and men. The evaluation has shown that democratic processes – and limitation on these – are important conditions and constraints on primary stakeholder participation.

Experience shows that participatory processes and attempts to involve poor people do not automatically recognise inequalities and differences between women and men. Factors, which influenced the ‘optimum’ form and degree of women’s and men’s participation include keeping dialogue alive about WHY participation of both women and men is vital. A common understand-

ing between key stakeholders on HOW to achieve optimum participation is even more important.

National expertise, including NGOs, institutions or consultants with practical hands-on experience in facilitating gender sensitive participation processes, is a vital resource to help build capacity in interventions over time.

Mainstreaming

Mainstreaming is a relatively new strategy, not only for Sida, but for all agencies working to promote gender equality in development co-operation. The evaluation findings show that there have been serious efforts to work with elements of mainstreaming in many of the interventions studied. The findings also show that these efforts have increased the visibility of gender equality goals.

Because mainstreaming processes are complex and multifaceted, it is not surprising that the interventions studied did not meet the high level of ambition for mainstreaming which was outlined in Sida's Action Programme. Rather than a coherent and integrated mainstreaming process, most interventions exhibited the presence of only a few mainstreaming elements, and in general showed only embryonic evidence of working with gender mainstreaming processes.

The evaluation identified opportunities, which will support further development of mainstreaming processes. These include personal commitment and capacity for promoting gender mainstreaming on the part of relevant stakeholders, and the presence and use of structures to promote gender equality within partner organisations and within interventions.

It is also clear from the interventions studied that gender analysis is a key element of gender equality mainstreaming. Gender analysis need not to “stand alone”, in intervention design for example, but can be integrated into other types of analysis such as poverty and sectoral analysis.

Sida's efforts to support capacity building in gender mainstreaming among its own programme staff and in partner organisations through gender training and development of tools has contributed to learning from nascent efforts to carry out some form of gender analysis in some interventions. The effect of these efforts could be multiplied and the opportunity to learn lessons from mainstreaming enhanced by supporting the development and application of gender sensitive monitoring systems.

The work that Sida has supported in gender training has been important and needs to be continued, both within Sida and in specific interventions. Concerns expressed by staff and counterparts about the length and detail of some of Sida's guidelines should be taken seriously if and when the institution rethinks the issue of appropriate guidelines and other mainstreaming tools.

Problems and missed opportunities in the application of mainstreaming identified during the evaluation do not build a case for abandoning a challenging strategy after a short period of testing and experimentation. Rather, it is now time to consolidate and strengthen the substantial efforts that have already been made by addressing the administrative and organisational constraints noted in the country case studies and by taking advantage of the opportunities that the evaluation has identified.

Effects of Interventions on Gender Equality

The review of gender changes through the lens of practical needs and strategic interests is useful, but it highlights the complex inter-relationship between the two concepts. Often practical and strategic changes appear together. It seems that meeting *practical gender needs* can contribute to *strategic gender changes* in that it strengthens women's group identity and organisational capacity in relation to men.

To a greater or lesser extent, all but two of the interventions examined are contributing to practical gender changes. *Practical* gender needs have been addressed in areas such as health, basic education and urban infrastructure.

The evaluation identified women's empowerment as an explicit programme goal or priority only in a few of the interventions studied. However, *women's empowerment* was an important side effect of some interventions (e.g. Local authorities/democratic governance in South Africa, non-formal education in Bangladesh). Many women participants in the programmes in all three countries reported that they had gained in self-esteem and self-confidence, had acquired new skills and had grown into new roles.

On the other hand, women's empowerment effects were clearly strongest in programmes with a specific set of goals aimed at changing women's status and power relative to men, (e.g. support to the National Police Academy in Nicaragua and legal aid in Bangladesh).

Similarly, where women face critical problems of isolation, literacy and non-formal education programmes with participation targets for women can have a significant *empowerment effect* by improving women's access to each other and to public places. This was particularly evident in Bangladesh.

In only a few interventions was there explicit recognition that empowerment of women would *challenge traditional male roles* and would require efforts to include men in education and dialogue aimed at positive changes in male roles or in reducing male resistance.

The climate for addressing *male roles and masculinities* is influenced by different cultural and political norms and differs considerably between the three case countries. Yet, a few general lessons can be drawn: When interventions achieve results in women's empowerment, they tend to face resistance. Such interventions are more likely to confront the need to constructively engage

men in an effort to redefine roles or at least accept women in new roles. Secondly, the more explicitly an intervention focuses on achieving gender equality goals through improvements in women's relative position of responsibilities and power within a given institution, the more it is likely to challenge existing definitions of male roles and masculinities.

There is a multiplicity of factors promoting or inhibiting gender equality changes at intervention level. Only some of these are internal to the interventions themselves. National, *contextual factors* such as political support and cultural resistance are vital external factors. The absence of a public discussion of gender equality may have an even greater impact on possible changes.

Understanding Concepts

The meaning and use by different stakeholders of the key gender concepts – gender equality, empowerment of women, stakeholder participation, practical and strategic changes in gender equality and male roles and masculinities – have been explored as an input to giving the concepts more relevance in Sida's development co-operation in diverse national and socio-cultural contexts.

The key messages are that it is not useful to search out the 'perfect' definition, but rather to be sensitive to specific national and cultural contexts, at the same time keeping in mind that international agreements and commitments (e.g. CEDAW and Platform for Action) offer basic guidelines as to how gender equality concepts can be defined and used.

Concepts should be used in a way that allows for context specific definitions and application. It is important to determine together with partner stakeholders what issues or dimensions are significant in specific projects and programmes so that concrete expected processes and goals, e.g. women's empowerment, can be agreed on.

Further work on gender analysis from men's perspectives, including the concepts of male roles and masculinities, could prove useful. Civil society organisations have taken up the challenge in Nicaragua and research on the topic is beginning in South Africa. Sweden is well positioned to support such research efforts.

Lessons for Revision of Sida's Action Programme

The thematic finding of the evaluation has been that there is a continuing need to ensure that the goal of gender equality is defined with *clarity* at the level of policies, strategies and interventions. It has been emphasised that clarity needs to be maintained as Sida seeks ways to ensure *convergence* and *complementarity* as the gender equality goal of Swedish development assistance finds its continuing place among other key goals such as poverty reduction. These findings have important implications for the revision of Sida's Action Programme.

Given the many goals of Sida's development assistance, it is important to establish better *synergies* between these. The gender equality goal should be pursued through a two-tiered strategy: on the one hand linking it with other goals of which the poverty reduction goal is paramount, and on the other hand ensuring greater clarity and effective application of the concept in different socio-cultural contexts, especially at the level of specific bilateral interventions.

It is in the area of Sida priorities and policies that the theme of clarity and convergence has perhaps its most important immediate implications for the Action Programme. The renewal of the Action Programme should accept the challenge of establishing a direct link between gender equality and poverty reduction while maintaining the value of gender equality as a goal in itself.

The findings of the evaluation suggest that mainstreaming can be expected to achieve more change as the interventions supported by Sida continue to evolve. In light of this conclusion and lessons learned concerning constraints and opportunities, the Evaluation Team sees a strong rationale for continuing the Action Programme for promoting gender equality between men and women in partner countries.

The findings suggest that a core set of requirements can be established for a reasonable minimum level of gender equality mainstreaming. This is not to encourage Sida staff and partners to achieve only the minimum but to avoid an "all or nothing approach" which too often results in a proforma or simplistic application of the strategy. The basic elements of mainstreaming at the strategic and intervention levels in a given country would include the following:

At the *strategic* level within a partner country, government-to-government dialogue should reflect Sida's sensitivity to the "gender environment". I.e. sound knowledge of political and social developments relating to gender equality in the country and the identification of windows of opportunities – such as linking gender budgeting to financial reform.

At the *intervention* level the core requirements would include: 1) Promoting "ownership" of the goal of gender equality with Sida partners by linking interventions to high level policy commitments made by national governments. 2) A reasonable level of gender analysis specific to the intervention. 3) One or more clear goals relating to changes in gender equality/inequality. And 4) Some means of monitoring and reporting on the changes in gender equality.

The Action Programme may wish to re-examine both the possibilities and limitations of the use of dialogue to promote gender equality at the level of Country Strategies and Interventions. Clearly, Sida faces a strong challenge in responding to the need for trained, motivated and capable staff resources to advance the goal of gender equality in the context of limitations to staff complements and to budgets.

There is a need to re-examine how Sida can be expected to go about the promotion of gender equality when it must do so within a web of different key actors, all with their own interests and roles to play. It is important to reach some agreement on the role and responsibilities of the different actors: Sida itself at Embassy and Head Quarter level, Beneficiaries, Partner Agencies, Co-ordination Offices, Project Consultants and Co-operating Donors.

An important lesson for the revision of Sida's Action Programme for Promotion of Gender Equality is the need to capitalise on the experience that has been gained since the Action Programme was endorsed in 1997. Five years is a relatively short time to internalise the mainstreaming strategy at all levels and by the responsible stakeholders and partners. Perhaps this evaluation report can serve to disseminate some of the most readily evident lessons learned in attempting to implement the mainstreaming strategy over its first five-year span. Continued commitment and experimentation should serve to refine mainstreaming as a strategy and to secure a higher level of effectiveness.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Acknowledgements

The evaluation team sincerely thanks all those who took time and trouble to help us with this challenging assignment. We were grateful to rely on the time and generous participation of officials of ministries and agencies of the Governments of Nicaragua, South Africa and Bangladesh, as well as the staff of civil society organisations and of individual women and men in the different towns and cities we were able to visit. Staff at the Swedish Embassies took time out from very busy schedules to share in constructive and open discussions on gender equality. Dialogue with Sida staff has been highly appreciated and UTV's vivid interest, support and participation in the evaluation process have been invaluable. The team would like to express its appreciation to Prudence Woodford-Berger for her active involvement.

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1.2 Background

A series of events have prompted a Sida gender equality evaluation in 2001. Attention to 'gender issues' has been on Sida's agenda since the first UN World Conference on Women was held in Mexico in 1975. However, it was

the adoption of the *Beijing Platform for Action* in 1995 which accelerated Sida's work towards gender equality; it recognises that gender equality and women's empowerment are essential for addressing the central development concerns of poverty and insecurity and for achieving sustainable, people-centred development.

In May 1996 the Swedish Parliament established the *promotion of equality between women and men in partner countries* as a goal for development co-operation. In June the same year the Swedish government established guidelines for promoting gender equality. These guidelines form the basis for Sida's *Action Programme for Promoting Gender Equality between women and men in partner countries*, adopted in April 1997 for the period 1997–2001.

Gender equality is defined in the Action Programme as *equal rights, opportunities and obligations* of women and men and an increased potential for both women and men to *influence, participate in and benefit from* development processes. Here stakeholder participation is given a central place, as it is in this evaluation.

The Action Programme focuses on a '*mainstreaming*' strategy for working towards the gender equality goal. This strategy aims to situate gender equality issues at the centre of broad policy decisions, institutional structures and resource allocations about development goals and processes. Mainstreaming implies that attention to the conditions and relative situations of different categories of women and men, boys and girls should pervade all development policies, strategies and interventions. This involves systematic *gender analysis*, and *dialogue and consultations* between Sweden and partner countries.

The mainstreaming strategy has now been guiding Sida's work to promote gender equality for five years and it is pertinent to ask: Has the mainstreaming strategy influenced results with regard to the promotion of gender equality? What other factors may be distinguished as important for achieving results? These are core questions of the evaluation.

1.3 Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation

This report is the synthesis of the comprehensive evaluation of Sida's Support to Development Co-operation for Promotion of Gender Equality commissioned by UTV in October 2000¹. The primary aim of the evaluation is to document changes with regard to gender equality and to learn lessons for the interventions and for the forthcoming revision of Sida's Action Programme for promoting gender equality. Since the evaluation started in January 2001 with studies in Nicaragua, South Africa and Bangladesh, Sida has engaged in preparatory studies for revision of its overall Poverty Reduction Policy. The results of the current evaluation will hopefully be of relevance in the revision of both of these policies.

¹ The Evaluation has been carried out jointly between COWI, Denmark and Goss Gilroy, Canada. For organisation of the evaluation and timing of the country studies see Annex 2.

The elaborate TOR (Annex 1) have been a vital guide for the evaluation. At the beginning of the evaluation process, consultations between UTV, Sida staff and the evaluation team on the TOR and the team's interpretation of these helped to balance the evaluation: 1) Emphasis was given to the interventions more than to the country strategies, while analysis of dialogue at all levels was given high priority. Secondly 2) the evaluation was to provide lessons for a deeper understanding of the key concepts: gender equality, empowerment of women, stakeholder participation, strategic and practical changes with regard to gender equality and mainstreaming. In addition to these, it was agreed to pursue the meaning of male roles (and masculinities), if possible. During the consultations it was also agreed 3) to pay specific attention to possible linkages, synergies or conflicts between poverty reduction and gender equality.

1.4 Country Case Study Approach

Case studies have been undertaken at country and intervention levels. The three country cases Nicaragua, South Africa and Bangladesh provide information about how Sida's mainstreaming strategy is reflected in analysis and dialogue during the country strategy process.

At the intervention level Sida had selected four interventions in South Africa and Nicaragua, which are briefly described in Annex 4 together with the interventions selected for analysis in Bangladesh. The selection criteria were that the intervention meets one or both of the following criteria:

- gender equality has been 'mainstreamed' either initially during design or later during implementation;
- may have contributed to practical or strategic changes with regard to gender equality.

Criteria all interventions had to meet were:

- potential to provide lessons for Sida's support to promote gender equality;
- a new agreement has been signed after June 1996;
- representing 3–4 sectors where Sida is involved as a donor.

Selection of interventions in Bangladesh had to await a study on gender perspectives in Sida supported projects. (Rokeya Khatun, Equality Perspective in Planning and Preparation of Development Support Activities in Bangladesh. Swedish Embassy, Dhaka, Sept. 2000). Based on this study, the above selection criteria and discussions with key staff at Sida and the Embassy two interventions were selected within non-formal education and two interventions within democratic governance. The latter ASK – legal aid, and STD – Steps Towards Development, are NGOs that focus on gender equality issues and improving women's status and in that way stand out for comparison as a slightly different category.

The case study interventions represent urban development, the health sector, democratic governance and education:

NICARAGUA:

Urban development, PRODEL – Programme for local development

Health sector, PROSILAIS – Integrated local health systems

Democratic governance – Academia de Policia

Democratic governance – Atlantic Coast, regional and local authorities

SOUTH AFRICA:

Urban development, CUP – Comprehensive Urban Plan, Kimberley

Urban development, TPL – Trees, Paving & Lighting, Kimberley

Democratic governance, LGDSP – Local Government Development Support Programme, Northern Cape Province

Democratic governance – Statistics South Africa – Statistics Sweden

BANGLADESH:

Non-formal Education – NFE 2, Literacy for adults and youth (incl. pilot programme on continuing education, PLCE)

Non-formal Education – NFE 3, Literacy for hard-to-reach urban, working children

Democratic governance – ASK – Legal aid (gender focus)

Democratic governance – STD – Steps towards development (gender focus)

A brief description of each intervention appears in Annex 4.

1.5 Validity of the Country and Intervention Sample

An important question for the evaluation methodology concerns the validity of a sample of three countries and twelve interventions as the focus of the evaluation. To what extent can the findings and conclusions from such a review be reasonably generalised to Swedish bilateral development co-operation as a whole?

The answer to this question lies in the nature of the three countries chosen and the interventions chosen in each country. The selection of Bangladesh, Nicaragua and South Africa was based on a strong belief among knowledgeable persons at Sida that these countries represent situations where it is reasonable to expect the Action Programme on Gender Equality had a significant effect on the shape and content of both the country strategy and on individual interventions – even though those interventions were originally designed prior to the Action Programme itself. Similarly, the interventions chosen were those Sida staff expected had a fairly high likelihood of contributing to changes in gender equality.

In short, the three countries and twelve interventions chosen as the focus of the evaluation were never intended to represent a random sample of Sida supported development co-operation. Rather, they represented a *selected sample* of country programs and interventions which could reasonably be expected

ed to present useful lessons learned in the pursuit of gender equality. Since the main intent of the evaluation was forward looking rather than retrospective, such a selection is entirely justified. The focus was intentionally on finding out how much had been done in these “progressive” country programs and learning lessons on what had worked and what had not.

Given the selection criteria used, the findings and conclusions reached in this evaluation are illustrative of Sida supported development co-operation as a whole. They represent the achievements and weaknesses of support to gender equality through development co-operation in three of the leading country programmes in Sida’s portfolio.

1.6 Attribution of Gender Equality Changes

A second question must be addressed with regard to the methodology used: How can the evaluation team reasonably attribute changes in gender equality to the specific interventions studied since the country reports acknowledge the influence of a wide range of external factors outside the control of projects?

This is a perennial issue in the evaluation of development co-operation programming in the area of social change. Societies inevitably change for a host of reasons and in response to many factors. This evaluation addressed the problem of attribution in two important ways:

1. By relying on fairly intensive interaction with both secondary and primary stakeholders; and,
2. By accepting a model of shared accountability wherein change is never the sole responsibility of one actor or one project.

With regard to point one, the evaluation teams in each country were very careful to seek out and interview in depth the key secondary and primary stakeholders involved in each intervention. This meant they could draw a strong logical connection between the activities and outputs of a given project and the changes in gender equality described emphatically by stakeholders, especially primary stakeholders. In the vocabulary of the teams, the emphasis was on drilling deeply rather than the maximum width of coverage. Teams did insist on interviewing primary and secondary stakeholders at a range of different geographic locations and project sites. Nonetheless, rather than covering an entire province or country, they insisted on sufficient time with key stakeholders to conduct workshops, focus groups or in-depth small group interviews. These were aimed at establishing a strong logical connection between the project and changes wherever they could be substantiated.

With regard to the second point, it is important to note that the Action Programme is focused on ensuring that Sida development co-operation contributes to gender equality, not that it is the sole factor in ensuring gender equality. Indeed, the evaluation teams in each country felt wherever Sida interventions could be shown to be working in combination with or in parallel to oth-

er efforts at producing positive changes in gender equality, this reflected positively on the projects themselves.

Whenever Sida supported interventions had the effect of reinforcing or strengthening the efforts of other actors and, in combination, produced positive changes, the evaluation teams gave full credit to Sida and its partners for those changes. It seems inevitable that the assessment of the results of development co-operation should be based on a model of shared accountability and shared credit for positive results.

1.7 The Evaluation Process

The evaluation has been carried out in close consultation with UTV and with representatives of Sida's different departments and MFA. Several meetings and workshops² were held in Stockholm in order to reach a common understanding of the purpose and scope of the evaluation and to agree on key study objects to be pursued. The results of the detailed assessments were subsequently presented by the evaluation team and thoroughly discussed with concerned Sida staff. The Inception Report, March 2001, in particular outlined the key issues and approach of the evaluation.³

Consultations with the Swedish Embassies in Nicaragua, South Africa and Bangladesh also started prior to the country visits. An Approach Paper was prepared by each country team in consultation with the embassies. The consultations facilitated the common understanding of purpose and planning of logistics.

In the countries the evaluation teams had frequent consultations, both formal and informal, with national stakeholders from government agencies and civil society and other donors. National consultants on the teams facilitated the contacts and meetings with primary stakeholders in particular.

1.8 Challenges in Evaluating Gender Equality

The case study approach was used to respond to specific challenges posed by the Terms of Reference. In particular, the evaluation team was faced with the challenge of evaluating the inter-relationship between gender equality and poverty reduction as complementary goals of Swedish development co-operation. Further, the evaluation needed to develop practical tools to link the overall analytical and conceptual framework to field evaluation operations in

² 1) Meetings with UTV December 7–8, 2000. 2) Meetings and Workshop 30–31 January 2001, 3) Inception Workshop, 8–9 March, 2001 4) Country Studies Workshop, 6–7 September, 2001, 5) Synthesis Workshop, 28–29 November 2001.

³ The evaluation has resulted in the following outputs: Technical Proposal, October 2000; Inception Report, February 2001; Country Report: Nicaragua (Draft), May 2001; Country Report: South Africa (Draft), June 2001; Country Report: Bangladesh (Draft), July 2001; Synthesis Report (Draft), November 2001. The Synthesis Report builds on the previous reports.

the three case study countries. Finally, it was necessary to develop strategies and use evaluation methods capable of ensuring reasonable validity when reviewing large, geographically diverse interventions in a short time frame with limited resources. The conceptual and methodological issues are presented in Annex 3.

Methodology Components: Linking the Analytical Framework to Operational Tools

- CONCEPT PAPERS developed during the inception phase of the study (covering gender equality, participation, practical and strategic changes) have proven essential in establishing a common understanding of key concepts in gender equality across the study teams for each country study and have contributed to an improvement in the precision with which issues have been defined and addressed;
- PROMPT SHEETS (on democratic governance, urban development, education and health systems), also developed during the inception period, served study team members as important resource materials to enrich the lines of questioning used in examining gender equality results within specific interventions and sectors. On the other hand, the prompt sheets had to be made more specific for each intervention since some sectors are very widely defined (democratic development and good governance for example);
- STUDY OBJECT GRIDS (see Annex 6) proved to be one of the most critical operational tools for the evaluation teams. They served to match the more general evaluation issues and questions to the specific data sources, key stakeholders, and locations particular to each intervention.

Validity of Evaluation Results – Dealing with Process Evaluation and the Absence of Goals

- In evaluating *processes* such as the Country Strategy process, evaluation teams were able to gain access to key Sida and Ministry of Foreign Affairs stakeholders and participants at Embassy and Headquarters levels. They were also able to locate and review key documents such as the gender profiles, results analyses reports, and draft and final Country Strategies. On the other hand, since the main focus of the study was on the interventions, and resources were necessarily limited, the evaluation teams were not able to follow all the detailed complexities of these lengthy and multi-phased processes. While the evaluation conclusions remain valid, they necessarily focus on the final product of the country strategy process rather than the intricacies of the processes themselves.
- Evaluating changes in gender equality proved somewhat difficult in that most interventions lacked specific goals and targets relating to gender equality and thus were deficient in monitoring and evaluating gender equality results. In this environment the most reliable and valid guide has been the felt experience of primary stakeholders, including women, men and young people.

1.9 Limitations of the Evaluation

There are topics of increasing urgency in development assistance which have not been directly addressed, and other limitations to what the evaluation has covered:

- The evaluation does not cover support provided through multilateral agencies and through Swedish NGOs,
- It does not focus on gender equality in relation to complex emergencies and natural disasters and Sida's support to these areas,
- There is no assessment of the implications for promotion of gender equality in connection with the increased use of sector-wide approaches (SWAP) and sector support programmes in Swedish development co-operation.

There are limits to what can be extrapolated from the findings of the evaluation of mainstreaming in three country strategies and 12 interventions. However, the cases are illustrative and represent key selection criteria as spelled out in TOR.

Chapter 2

Country Strategies – National Contexts for Gender Equality and Development Co-operation

This chapter analyses how Sida's mainstreaming strategy is reflected in the Country Strategies for co-operation with Nicaragua, South Africa and Bangladesh (Mainstreaming of the gender equality goal in interventions is assessed in section 4.4). The national contexts vary considerably and need to be considered when assessing the scope for gender equality and the quality of the gender analysis. Gender analysis is supposed to facilitate the prioritisation of interventions which optimise gender equality and hence is a key tool for preparing the country strategy.

2.1 The Role and Content of Country Strategies

The evaluation teams examined how Sida's process for developing a country strategy in each of the countries may have contributed to gender equality. The reason for beginning the analysis of the way that Sida's development co-operation may contribute to gender equality with a review of the country strategy is simple: the apparently critical role of the country strategy in establishing the direction of development co-operation between Sweden and the respective country⁴. (The convergence of goals in Swedish international development co-operation is addressed in section 6.1)

Primary responsibility for development of the country strategy resides with the staff of the Swedish Embassy in a given country but also involves considerable work and input from the appropriate sector departments at Sida headquarters in Stockholm⁵. A feature of the process is also consultation with both the host government, and with Sweden's Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs endorses the strategy as the politically responsible authority.

⁴ It is important to note that the country strategies reviewed for this evaluation were developed under guidelines which have subsequently been revised. The new *Draft Guidelines for Country Strategies in Swedish Development Co-operation* were presented in March 2001. They differ from earlier guidelines in that they present poverty analysis as the central theme of analytical work in preparation of country strategies. Equality analysis, including gender analysis, is one of seven key supporting elements in the poverty analysis process.

⁵ *Sida at Work: Sida's Methods for developmental co-operation*, Sida, 1997, p.33.

The key steps in the process of developing a country strategy as described in *Sida at Work* (p.33) are as follows:

- Project group appointed at Sida. Initial meeting between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the regional department (Sida);
- Discussions with the partner country. Review of other donors' country strategies and country analysis. Evaluations finalised.
- Preliminary country analysis and hypothesis on future co-operation.
- Government directives received by Sida.
- Draft country strategy including results analysis presented.
- Management and the Board of Sida examine the proposed strategy.
- Budget request with proposed country strategy, country analysis and draft development co-operation agreement.
- Swedish Government decision on the country strategy.
- Negotiations with the host country on the development co-operation agreement. Decision on the country plan.

The development of the country strategy thus reflects the perspectives of Sida at the embassy and headquarters levels, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and the host government. It is also important to remember that the country strategy itself remains a statement of the policy of the Swedish Government towards the partner country and can only be changed by a new decision of the Swedish Government.

In such a process, there will be legitimate differences of perspective and some competing interests. While all agencies of the Government of Sweden have a strong interest in the economic and social development of partner countries, they may legitimately stress different priorities in such areas as trade development, fiscal policy and even security.

It is only after the country strategy has been processed in the Cabinet Office and the Government of Sweden authorises Sida to conclude a development co-operation agreement that the country strategy is translated into the language used in Swedish co-operation with the country. Host government ownership becomes a reality through the development co-operation agreement rather than the country strategy.

The central role of the country strategy is it relates to the content of Swedish development co-operation as described in *Sida at Work*:

"The country strategy does not stipulate in detail which projects are to be implemented, but it provides guidelines for the development problems which are to be tackled and, in many cases, the working methods to be selected.

The strategy's problem analysis and guidelines must be reflected in Sida's participation in all projects during the entire project cycle. If the strategy places great importance to, for example, issues such as environmental degradation or poverty, this must also govern Sida's selection of the projects which it is prepared to support."

Thus, the question of how gender equality has featured in the development (and final products) of the country strategy process in each of the three countries should be examined.

2.2 National Contexts for Gender Equality

It is important to recognise that Swedish development co-operation faces very different challenges in relation to the promotion of gender equality in each of the three countries under study (while other challenges are common across the three countries). These differences of culture, policy environment, legislation, and current political developments had important effects on the climate in which the Swedish Embassy operated in promoting gender equality. As remarked by more than one Sida Embassy staff person, when these factors combine against an emphasis on gender equality one is really “swimming upstream”.

In each of the three countries, the evaluation team approached the national policy context for gender equality in terms of:

- Commitments to multilateral goals and declarations relating to gender equality such as CEDAW and the Beijing Platform of Action.
- National statements of goals and priorities in gender equality.
- National machinery for advancing gender equality such as independent ministries for gender.
- Recent political developments which may reflect a changing attitude to gender equality and other aspects of governance; and,
- Cultural developments relating to men and women and to gender equality.

The evaluation teams reported important difference in the basic national policy context for gender equality in each of the three countries. (This is discussed further in context of the poverty situation in each country in section 4.2 of this report). Any summary of the situation must, of necessity, fail to capture the richness and somewhat contradictory nature of many developments in the policy context in each country. Nonetheless it is possible and useful to attempt some overall characterisation of the situation in each country.

2.2.1 Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, the evaluation team was struck by the strong formal commitment of the Government of Bangladesh to improving the conditions of women, a commitment, which has been expressed since the earliest days of the country’s existence as an independent nation. The Government of Bangladesh is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and has endorsed, without reservations, the Beijing Platform for Action (PFA). Further, it has enshrined equal rights for women and men in all spheres of the state and of public life as an article in the national Constitution.

Mothers of urban working children benefit indirectly when children share their experiences of non-formal education, Bangladesh. Photo: Britha Mikkelsen.



Similarly, Bangladesh has incorporated elements of multi-sectoral mainstreaming of gender equality into the most recent five year development plan and has advanced a National Policy for Advancement of Women which has been incorporated into sectoral policies in education, health, population, food and nutrition, water and environment.

The overt policy environment for advocacy relating to gender equality in Bangladesh must be seen as very positive. For most external development partners in Bangladesh, the difficulties in promoting gender equality have been much more on the operational side than in the basic policy framework. They have noted that the very large scale and limited resources of many ministries, agencies and programmes has often meant that priorities expressed at the national level are not followed-through with specific actions within development interventions. Or, alternatively, those actions are frustrated by operational issues relating to staff turnover, availability of resources, training and the need to serve very large programme constituencies with very limited resources.

2.2.2 South Africa

South Africa is in a special position with regard to the national policy environment for dealing with gender equality. The change of government away from the *apartheid* system gave rise to a priority concern for all forms of equality in South African life, including a strong emphasis on gender equality. South Africa, like Bangladesh, is a signatory to important conventions meant to advance women and realise gender equality. The South African government has ratified CEDAW with no reservations and has adopted the Beijing Platform for Action. South Africa has prioritised five areas of concern for special focus: Women and Violence, Women and Poverty, Women and Health, Women and Education and Women and Economic Empowerment.

As in Bangladesh, while the legal and political environments can be regarded as enabling, the biggest challenge is the implementation of programmes aimed at attaining this goal. There are no plans in place to ensure that legislation is implemented and monitoring systems are very weak. In addition, the gender structures in government remain relatively weak and under-resourced. They are often linked to transformation units that focus largely on internal transformation without grappling with the larger issue of mainstreaming gender considerations into the services that government agencies provide. The National Gender Policy has not yet been published.

2.2.3 Nicaragua

It is in Nicaragua that Swedish development co-operation faces its most difficult national policy environment if development co-operation is to effectively contribute to gender equality. In Bangladesh and South Africa, problems appear mainly in the form of a gap between public commitments to gender equality and the programmes and resources necessary to close that gap. In Nicaragua, however, current political developments seem to result in a very difficult environment for public policy toward gender equality.

As with Bangladesh and South Africa, Nicaragua has endorsed most of the international conventions that express commitments toward improving the conditions and rights of women including CEDAW and the Beijing Platform of Action. On the other hand, researchers and civil society organisations working on gender equality in Nicaragua have remarked on a large number of apparent inconsistencies in the response of the national government to the goal of gender equality including:

- absorption of the national women's institution (INIM) into the Ministry of the Family (MIFAMILA);
- recent statements and policies of senior cabinet ministers in areas such as restrictions on the teaching of reproductive health and gender rights;
- the apparent close alliance between senior government members and the most conservative elements of the Catholic Church in Nicaragua; and,
- the recent efforts to narrow participation in the party political system to the exclusion of smaller organisations and parties, many of which were vocal in support of gender equality.

More than in South Africa and in Bangladesh, Sweden's development co-operation programme in Nicaragua has been faced with a national policy context, which has made advancing gender equality a difficult cause.

2.3 Gender Equality in Country Strategies

In Bangladesh and Nicaragua, evaluation teams had the opportunity to examine two generations of country strategies from a gender equality perspective. Each of the countries had been the focus of a country strategy covering

a period from about 1996–2000 and each was in the process of developing or finalising a new country (or regional) strategy to cover the programming period from 2001. Thus, the evaluation teams in these two countries not only had the opportunity to examine a baseline strategy (1996/97 vintage) but also to review the transition to a newer strategy.

In the case of South Africa, the evaluation team was able to examine the process leading to the first country strategy for co-operation between Sweden and post-*apartheid*, democratic South Africa.⁶ Each of the country strategies is analysed in turn below:

2.3.1 Nicaragua

In *Nicaragua*, the December 1997 strategy included a strong and explicit statement that gender equality would be one of three priorities for dialogue. And commitment to gender equality would be one of three main objectives for development co-operation with sub-objectives in key areas such as legislation, economic and social participation and reduction of violence against women. The 1997 strategy also included a brief analysis of the situation of women in Nicaragua and of key issues relating to gender equality. This analysis although briefly presented in the actual country strategy document was supported by significant and detailed studies of the gender equality situation including a national gender report compiled in 1994. The 1997 strategy could have been stronger in linking activities in the areas of democratic development and poverty alleviation to gender equality. But on balance it must be seen as representing an important breakthrough in its explicit and direct treatment of gender equality as a shared goal for Sweden and Nicaragua.

Development co-operation between Sweden and Nicaragua in the 2001–2005 period is to be guided under a regional strategy for Central America and the Caribbean which was available for the evaluation team to review during the Nicaragua mission in March, 2001. The draft strategy was informed by a regional situation analysis undertaken by UNDP as well as by formal reviews of the results achieved during the previous country strategies (including Nicaragua's). A feature of this results analysis was a very brief overview of gender equality results with a very limited analysis.

The draft regional strategy does include a reference to the need to increase the participation of women and indigenous peoples in governance and other areas of popular participation. It also notes that special attention must be paid to strengthening the rights of women and children, especially relating to freedom from violence.

Nonetheless, the process of transition to a regional strategy for the period 2001–2005 has coincided with an apparent reduction in the visibility of gender equality as a goal than was reflected in the earlier country strategy for

⁶ *Country Strategy for Development Co-operation – South Africa, January 1, 1999 to December 31, 2003*, Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

Nicaragua. This may reflect over-reliance on a regional gender analysis, the low level of attention given to gender equality issues in the results analysis of prior strategies, or other factors such as competing policy priorities. It is also possible that the appearance of a lower priority for gender equality can be offset during the development of operational plans for the overall programme of co-operation in Nicaragua.

In summary, there was a serious effort to mainstream gender equality into the 1997 country strategy for Nicaragua, although more could have been done in terms of linking the gender equality goal to areas of programming such as poverty alleviation and democratic development. The extent to which gender equality is mainstreamed in the Nicaragua country strategy of 1997 has not been maintained in the transition to a regional strategy.

2.3.2 South Africa

In the case of *South Africa*, the evaluation team observed that the country analysis and the work of gender specialists and advocates based in Stockholm and South Africa was intended to result in a country strategy which prioritised gender equality for the entire strategy for Swedish development co-operation with South Africa.

This intent was not fully realised in the final document, which combined traditional types of development co-operation in sectors and thematic areas such as democratic governance and urban development, with the intention to place increasing emphasis on economic co-operation, such as trade and business alliances between the two countries. The evaluation team heard two points of view from different stakeholders within Sida on the gender equality content of the country strategy. Gender advocates who had been involved in CS preparation felt that gender equality had received less visibility than they had hoped. Others felt that all major themes, including gender equality, had been well covered in the CS. Finally, the process of preparing the CS appears to have resulted in a very abbreviated analysis of the poverty situation in South Africa and no direct gender analysis present in the Strategy document itself.

On the other hand, the country strategy does stress the cross cutting issue of gender equality as a common element in the overall co-operation programme in line with the importance attached by South Africa to the “equality aspects of co-operation”. In the words of the Strategy: “The domestic transformation of society and the combating of poverty should continue to be the main objectives for development co-operation. The goal of promoting gender equality shall continue to permeate development co-operation.”⁷

Although gender equality is an explicit goal, which is intended to “permeate” co-operation between the two countries, it is carried through in the CS explicitly in the fields of democratic governance and education, but not in urban development and housing and in economic co-operation.

⁷ South Africa Country Strategy, p.14

*Women fetching water, Western Cape Province, South Africa.
Photo: Eric Miller/Phoenix.*



In a manner similar to the 1997 Nicaragua country strategy, the CS in South Africa clearly states that promoting gender equality is a priority for development co-operation but does not link that priority convincingly to activities and interventions and thus represents a partial application of a mainstreaming strategy.

2.3.3 Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, as in Nicaragua, the 1997 country strategy⁸ seems to have represented something of a “high water mark” in the explicit and central role accorded to gender equality as a priority for development co-operation. Gender equality and aspects of gender equality were woven through every level of the country strategy. As examples:

- the situation analysis commences with a profile of the conditions of women and a statement that equality is a pre-requisite for poverty reduction;
- equality is advanced as the point of departure in planning Sida/Bangladesh development co-operation activities;
- key strategic sectors such as health, education and human rights include specific gender equality goals, often linked to the Beijing conference and to its action plan and follow up.

The development of the 1997–2001 country strategy for Bangladesh seems to have been the culmination of a period of intense interest in gender equal-

⁸ *Country Co-operation Strategy, Bangladesh: January 1, 1997 – December 31, 2001.* Asia Department, Sida.

ity and promotion of women's interests and was clearly seen as such at the time. Significantly, it was also linked to a separate gender equality strategy for the Bangladesh programme produced by the Embassy in 1996.⁹

The transition to a new country strategy has reflected some of the difficulty experienced in operationalising the commitment of the 1997 Country Strategy to make gender equality the "point of departure" for much sector programming. While the country strategy document refers to *equality* as the point of departure for Swedish development co-operation in Bangladesh, staff interviewed by the project team indicated that during the period of the current strategy this was read as applying to gender equality. The new draft strategy reflects a concern for a more "mainstreamed approach" in that gender equality is to remain a specific goal at the interventions level with perhaps less explicit profile as the central concern of the country strategy.

Nonetheless, it is important to point out that the draft country strategy emphasises continuity in the co-operation between Sweden and Bangladesh including an overall objective in improving the livelihoods of the country's poor people with special emphasis on women and children. The co-operation also intends to continue the support to local governance, democracy and economic development while prioritising areas, which lead to increased decentralisation, local economic development and respect for human rights.

In summary, the 1997 Bangladesh country strategy represents the most complete application of a gender mainstreaming strategy to this level of program planning across the three country programs studied. It does not include explicit reference to means to measure the achievement of gender equality goals but such measures are more important at the level of specific interventions.

2.4 Gender Analysis in the Country Strategy Process

Before concluding a review of the country strategy processes in Nicaragua, South Africa and Bangladesh as it related to gender equality and mainstreaming, it is useful to consider the extent of gender analysis work done in support of the strategy process in all three countries.

In each of the case study countries, a significant body of gender equality related situation analysis work was carried out prior to the development of the country strategies. In the case of *Nicaragua*, for example, national gender equality profiles were developed in 1994 and supplemented with further analysis and updating in 1996 in support of the 1997 country strategy. In *South Africa*, the country strategy process was supported by the commissioning of twenty-one studies on a variety of topics and themes, two of which were extensive reviews of the poverty and gender equality situation in the country. The *Country Gender Profile: South African 1998*, the first such substantive profile in post-apartheid South Africa (undertaken with Sida support), was used to

⁹ *Memorandum: Action Plan for Gender*, Britt F. Hagstrom, Embassy of Sweden, Dhaka, April 1996.

stimulate dialogue with key stakeholders in a workshop setting as part of the development of the country strategy.

In *Bangladesh*, the preparation of the 1997–2001 country strategy was preceded by the development of an *Action Plan for Gender*, which in turn drew on gender analysis reports commissioned by Sida and by other donor agencies. In addition, during the 1997–2000 programme period, Sida in Bangladesh commissioned intervention and sector level gender strategy documents which included gender situation analysis and were carried out by local NGOs.

In essence, the country strategy process in each of the three countries has had access to a baseline of national gender equality analyses. On the other hand, there has sometimes been a disconnect in that recent country strategies in all three countries have imported very little content (perhaps due to space limitations) and have not tended to situate their priorities and goals relating to gender within the results of such analysis.

In a similar vein, results analysis reports prepared for the latest country strategies in Bangladesh and Nicaragua have been somewhat superficial in their treatment of gender equality results of supported interventions. They have limited their comments to remarks on the extent of “gender mainstreaming” but have not provided any clear indication as to how the generally positive remarks on gender mainstreaming can be linked to indicators or to evidence.

Finally, the lack of adequate gender results analysis and gender equality evaluations at the country strategy and intervention levels is striking. It makes it difficult to draw the link back to the original gender analysis supporting each of the country strategies to see how interventions have contributed to goals and priorities.

In summary, while gender analysis in the sense of a detailed situation analysis of the conditions of women and girls in relation to those of men and boys has been *available* during the country strategy process in each country, it is not clear that this gender analysis has *informed* the process in a material way. The very multi-dimensional nature of country strategy documents may limit the extent that any one dimension, no matter how important, is made explicit in the document itself.

Gender analysis has been an important element of the effort to mainstream gender equality into the country strategy process in each of the three countries studied during this evaluation. In each instance, however, operational constraints and competing demands for space and attention from other goals and priorities have limited the impact of gender analysis on the final country strategy documents.

2.5 Conclusion

When looking across the three countries and the evolution of their respective country strategies and relating that process to the issue of gender equality as it is reflected in Swedish development co-operation, the following points are clear.

- The period from 1996 to 1998 when the first “generation” of country strategies was under development, was a period of very high interest and enthusiasm for gender equality as a priority within Sida at both headquarters and embassy level. This spirit influenced the country strategy process in all three countries;
- There is still a strong need in country strategies to ensure that goals in gender equality are explicitly linked to goals in other areas such as poverty reduction and democratic development and to programme sectors such as health, education and urban development;
- Gender analysis and gender equality related situation analyses were available as background information during the process of developing strategies in all three countries. While they are alluded to, these gender analyses are not used as much as they could be to enrich the content of the country strategies themselves;
- The country strategies in Nicaragua and Bangladesh in 1997 raised gender equality as a more explicit, high profile and cross-cutting goal than did the subsequent draft strategy for Bangladesh and the draft regional strategy for Central America and the Caribbean;
- The two “second generation” draft strategies for Nicaragua and Bangladesh and the current strategy for South Africa do retain references to gender equality as an important dimension or cross-cutting theme of Swedish development co-operation and do specifically include women and children as priority target groups;

It seems that the country strategy development process is responding to some extent to the continuing pressure and interplay of at least the perception that there are competing goals in Sweden’s development and foreign policy environments.

Nonetheless, on balance the three country case studies support the conclusion that, at least in the period immediately following the release of the Action Programme, Sida country strategies reflected a serious effort to mainstream gender equality as a goal at the strategic level. Despite some limitations in terms of linking gender equality to other important goals and programme areas, this represented an important achievement which could have served as an anchor point for significant mainstreaming of gender equality into the interventions supported by Sida in each of the three countries.

Chapter 3

Dialogue on Gender Equality

Dialogue on Sida's and partners' priorities and goals is one of the most important tools in Swedish development co-operation. As the term indicates two-way communication is required to reach a joint understanding of the gender equality goal. In assessing the extent and impact of dialogue relating to gender equality the evaluation teams simplified the multivariate nature of such an enquiry by focusing on three distinct types of dialogue:

- formal government-to-government dialogue;
- dialogue on the gender equality dimension of specific interventions; and,
- dialogue with civil society.

In each case, the evaluation teams focused specifically on how the embassy was using each of these three types of dialogue to advance issues relating to gender equality and to ensure that development co-operation supported gender equality.

Table 3.1 below summarises the main findings of each country case study with regard to gender equality focused dialogue:

Type of Dialogue	Nicaragua	South Africa	Bangladesh
Govt-to-Govt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • current (mid-2001) govt. of Nicaragua much less receptive to messages on g/e and other aspects of governance • reduced level of country to country dialogue on policy aspects of development co-operation • Sweden and other donors report limited opportunity for dialogue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • annual consultations important forum for thematic dialogue • gender equality included as a theme in annual consultations • little specific dialogue on g/e goals and priorities • loss of the social development advisor position has hindered extent of specific dialogue • short staffing of Embassy inhibits dialogue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gender equality issues regularly discussed in annual consultations • convergence at policy level of statements from Embassy and GoB on gender • good level of involvement in the past in donor co-ordination mechanisms for g/e dialogue • staff shortages inhibit dialogue

Type of Dialogue	Nicaragua	South Africa	Bangladesh
Intervention Specific	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • little formal record of interventions specific g/e dialogue during annual consultations and/or evaluations (some exceptions) • informal dialogue advanced by Embassy officers in the health and democratic development sectors • variations in dialogue across interventions and officers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • some dialogue on g/e in pre-appraisal missions for interventions • more extensive dialogue on g/e for local govt support and urban development • intervention specific dialogue at higher level before loss of social development advisor position • generalised dialogue on g/e lacks specificity in relations to interventions • small Embassy staff inhibits dialogue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fairly intensive ongoing dialogue in bilateral interventions (especially NFE 2 and 3) relating to g/e goals • quality, frequency, and intent of dialogue on g/e is intensive • government partner agencies often resistant to g/e messages in terms of implementation strategies
Civil Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • direct funding of NGOs now channelled through FORUMSYD • reduced Embassy profile in direct support of dialogue on g/e • Swedish Embassy is seen as source of moral support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a wide range of civil society organisations funded • staff shortages at Embassy limit capacity to dialogue on g/e aspects of NGO work • scope for increased NGO participation in annual consultations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embassy maintains high public profile in advocating around issues of equality, including g/e • gender specific support of activist NGOs working in g/e seen by observers as contribution to g/e dialogue

It is useful to summarise some of the main findings on dialogue across the three countries by type.

3.1 Government-to-Government Dialogue

In each of the three countries visited there has been a strong tradition of Sweden advancing the cause of gender equality during government-to-government dialogue.

In *Nicaragua* the traditional role of Sweden as a key voice in support of gender equality during its dialogue with the national government has been reduced in recent years not, apparently, due to a lack of interest on the part of the Swedish Embassy but due to a very difficult climate for consultation between the two national governments. The current Government of Nicaragua, at the central cabinet level, has reportedly proven less and less responsive to positions put forward by Sweden and by other donors relating to governance, participation and equality in the Nicaraguan society, including gender equality. In practical terms this has resulted in a wait-and-see strategy on the part of many donors. This dearth of direct government-to-government dialogue at the highest level thus may place a premium on other forms of dialogue as a forum for promotion of gender equality in the immediate future in Nicaragua.

In *South Africa*, the evaluation team noted that annual consultations with government are used as an important forum for thematic dialogue and that gender

equality is present as an important theme in that dialogue. It was also noted, however, that there is some lack of specificity in the dialogue in that there does not appear to have been a minuted discussion of how to operationalise the theme of gender equality within specific themes and sectors. The South Africa team also highlighted the fact that staff shortages, especially following the loss of the Social Development Advisor position, hindered the Swedish Embassy to pursue an active programme of government-to-government dialogue on gender equality. This problem was also highlighted in Nicaragua and Bangladesh.

In *Bangladesh*, the evaluation team reported on a seemingly more vigorous effort by the Embassy staff to advance a public and forceful thematic debate on gender equality in discussions with the Government of Bangladesh (GOB), a debate which seemed to be based on a fair degree of convergence with the formal messages emanating from the GOB. Finally, the Bangladesh report notes that embassy staff achieved a high level of visibility in donor co-ordination mechanisms aimed at advancing the gender equality dialogue with the GOB.

In summary, there is a pattern in which government to government dialogue seems to have been at its lowest level (for clear policy reasons) in Nicaragua and its highest in Bangladesh with South Africa represented somewhere in between. All three countries reported important practical limitations placed on government-to-government dialogue by limitations in staff resources.

What is also clear, however, is that bilateral government-to-government dialogue on gender equality has been most successful where it has had a specific purpose (i.e. where the host government could respond with a clear-cut action) and where like-minded donors acted in concert. This occurred in Nicaragua when key donors interested in gender equality were instrumental in the government's decision to restore a considerable level of autonomy to the National Women's Institute (INIM) after placing it under the formal authority of the Ministry of the Family.

3.2 Intervention-Specific Dialogue

What is striking in examining the intervention specific dialogue on gender equality as reported in two of the three countries (*Nicaragua and South Africa*) is the variation in intensity and depth of dialogue from one intervention to the next. In each of these two countries, interested officers seemed to be able to advance a fairly detailed dialogue on the gender equality goals and needs of specific interventions (in health and national policing in Nicaragua and in local government support and urban development in South Africa). In other sectors, especially urban development in Nicaragua, dialogue on gender equality seemed either to continue at a very low level or to be just beginning a meaningful phase as the field evaluations were being concluded. The findings in this area give rise to questions as to how Sida should be working to ensure that gender equality as a priority is communicated to different field and headquarters staff and to project consultants working in different sectors.

In *Bangladesh* the evaluation team reported that a fairly intensive dialogue on the need for a more effective gender equality strategy was ongoing between the Embassy staff and project authorities, specifically in relation to the interventions in non-formal education. Of equal importance in Bangladesh was the effort to supplement embassy efforts with the work of Sida supported local NGOs working in gender so that their expertise might have an impact on the interventions. Unfortunately, much of the impact of this dialogue on gender equality may be lost due to basic administrative weaknesses including massive staff turnover in the implementing agencies.

Dialogue on gender equality at the level of specific interventions has a number of important entry points used to varying degrees of success and with varying degrees of effort across the 12 interventions studied. One of the most important opportunities for dialogue on gender equality arises in specific operational areas such as:

- the identification of required alterations in programme delivery and management mechanisms so that they better meet practical and strategic gender needs;
- the definition of expected changes (results) in gender equality which will result from the interventions;
- the identification of indicators and measures of gender equality results so that goals can be monitored for achievement;
- the establishment of monitoring and reporting systems to gather and analyse gender disaggregated data; and,
- the inclusion of gender equality issues in the terms of reference for project definition missions, results assessment studies and evaluations.

In the case of the PRODEL project in Nicaragua, for example, discussions around the question of designing and implementing a system for monitoring gender disaggregated data seemed to provide a strong catalyst for a fruitful dialogue on improving the gender equality impact of the programme.

3.3 Dialogue with Civil Society

In keeping with their history of supporting gender equality in dialogue with host governments, the embassies in each of the three countries have a strong reputation among civil society organisations engaged in promoting gender equality. In recent years, however, the combination of a changing policy environment (*Nicaragua*) and staff shortages in all three countries has appeared to limit the public profile of Sweden as a force for promotion of gender equality with civil society. The possible exception to this trend is *Bangladesh* where the embassy has maintained a relatively high public profile in promoting the rights of children and women. Also in Bangladesh, Swedish direct support to specific NGOs engaged in advocacy for gender equality is seen as a key contribution to the debate in civil society on these issues.

In the case of *Nicaragua*, the Swedish Embassy has played a critical role in the creation of space for NGOs to influence public policy, especially during the previous government. The decision, – for administrative efficiency and to link Nicaraguan and Swedish NGOs, – to channel direct Swedish assistance to NGOs through Forum Syd has led to a perception that Sida is less active in both direct financial support of gender equality oriented NGOs and in promotion and dialogue on key issues.

On the other hand, in those public fora where donors have an opportunity to state strong political support to gender equality, Nicaraguan NGOs report they are still able to count on the support of the Government of Sweden.

In *South Africa* the evaluation team reported that Sweden continues to support a wide range of civil society organisations working in the areas of gender equality, human rights and popular participation and that there was an opportunity to include more civil organisations in the process of annual consultations with government.

What has worked well in dialogue with civil society regarding gender equality has been the pursuit, at times, of a two-pronged strategy of support. On the one hand, as in Nicaragua in the mid 1990s, Sida has sometimes advocated strongly for civil society organisations to have the “space” to influence public policy and to exchange ideas. At the same time, Sida can be effective in providing direct financial and technical support to NGOs, which are engaging civil society and government in a vigorous debate on gender equality issues.

Finally, in all three countries, the evaluation team noted that limitations in the size of the staff complement at the Embassy represented a major constraint on how actively Sida is able to interact with civil society organisations in the promotion of gender equality.

3.4 Conclusion

In light of the findings noted above, the following conclusions regarding Sweden’s use of different forms of dialogue on gender equality in the three case study countries can be advanced:

- Sweden has been active in all three countries in using dialogue at the different levels (government to government, intervention specific, and with civil society) to promote public debate and to influence programmes in advancing gender equality.
- Higher level, government to government dialogue on gender equality is subject to the same constraints and limitations as other forms of policy dialogue, especially in the area of democratic governance. Sida dialogue with national governments in the area of gender equality sometimes lacks specificity in terms of the expected or desirable response sought from a host government or counterpart agency. There is a need and opportunity to establish clearer objectives for dialogue on gender equality at the policy and intervention level.

- Intervention-specific dialogue sometimes lacks specificity in that it does not point to practical alterations in programmes, which could advance gender equality. It also appears to vary in intensity from one intervention to the next in ways that seem to reflect different levels of commitment and interest on the part of Sida staff (and consultants) rather than differences in the opportunities presented;
- There are important operational opportunities for intervention-specific dialogue on gender equality in areas such as goal setting, results definition, indicator development, monitoring, evaluation and results assessment;
- In all three countries, Sweden has been an important source of support to civil society organisations and has promoted local organisations engaged in advocacy for gender equality. In recent years, Sweden's activity and profile in this area seems to have been diminished, at least in part due to shortages in staff and administrative resources at the Embassies;
- At each of the three levels of dialogue, efforts to reduce the staff complement of embassies appear to have resulted in important limitations on the dialogue in gender equality.

Of the three different types of dialogue assessed by the evaluation teams in each country, dialogue at the level of specific interventions provides the greatest potential to improve the gender equality results of development co-operation. The potential impact of intervention level dialogue is not being realised in many interventions.

Chapter 4

Gender Equality and Selected Development Interventions

The assessment is structured around the guiding questions of the evaluation: *What* findings and lessons can be drawn regarding integration of the gender equality goal in interventions and about its linkage and synergies with the poverty reduction goal? *How* is the gender equality goal being pursued through stakeholder participation and mainstreaming? *Which changes* have been effected regarding practical and strategic gender needs and interests? Analytical frameworks and tools are briefly presented in relation to the different questions. Considerable emphasis is placed on reflecting the complex interplay of various factors that influence the degree to which gender equality is promoted in interventions, e.g. factors relating to organisational, societal and sector contexts, to processes of implementation, and to the roles of various female and male stakeholders.

4.1 Gender Equality Goals in Intervention Design and Implementation

This section examines gender equality goals, giving examples selected from among the interventions studied, and argues that explicit goals in intervention design provide a good basis for promoting gender equality in development co-operation.

Sida's Action Programme for promoting equality between women and men in partner countries defines gender equality as a goal of development co-operation:

“Equality between women and men refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys.”¹⁰

The Action Plan also states the need for an explicit equality goal in interventions:

“The links between the sector goals and equality must be clarified and explicitly stated in project and programme objectives.”¹¹

¹⁰ Action Programme, cover-page

¹¹ Action Plan, p. 11

In examining gender equality goals in the twelve interventions studied, the evaluation team took into consideration the following factors:

- Gender equality goals in an intervention deal with socially defined expectations, changes in gender relations, power relationships and links to economic, political and social considerations, among others.
- Interventions with a 'goal', 'objective' or 'target' regarding only the level of women's participation do not fully address gender equality as outlined in the Action Plan.
- An 'approach' to gender equality is less specific than a gender equality goal and more likely to imply partial treatment of the goal.
- Interventions initiated before the 1997 Action Programme should still be expected to reflect the considerable attention that Sida had devoted to gender equality in its prior development co-operation efforts.
- Some interventions were not new programmes but were later phases of on-going programmes with previously defined goals. All have started a new agreement phase after 1996.

Recognising the high level of ambition of the Action Programme and the fact that it has been in place for less than five years, the evaluation team worked on the assumption that all the interventions studied should in some way have considered whether, if and how a gender equality goal would contribute to improving the situation that the intervention was designed to address. The evaluation identified five differing scenarios regarding gender equality and other types of goals in the twelve interventions studied. These are summarised in the following table:

Table 4.1 Five Scenarios on Gender Equality and other Goals in Interventions Studied

Type of Intervention	Type of Goal	Examples
Gender-oriented or gender-sensitive NGO	Gender equality/equity and gender justice are integral to the overall vision and mandate of the NGO	Steps/STD ASK
Sectoral or thematic-based intervention (e.g. democratic governance)	Intervention objectives are related to the sector or theme being addressed; includes an explicit gender equality goal, with follow through such as a strategy and structure for implementation	Support to the Police Academy Local Government Development Support Programme
Sectoral or thematic-based intervention	As above, with an explicit gender equality goal, but with no or inadequate follow through in implementing the goal	Statistics South Africa
Sectoral or thematic-based intervention	No explicit gender equality goal; rather a less visible, less explicit “approach” to gender equality which provides a basis for some specific gender-relevant activities	Comprehensive Urban Plan Prosilais
Sectoral or thematic-based intervention	Women’s participation, rather than gender equality, is stated as an objective or target	Prodel Democratic Development, Atlantic Coast Trees, Paving & Lighting NFE 2 Literacy Training Programme NFE 3 Hard to Reach Children Programme

Examples are given of each of the above five scenarios.

1) Non-governmental organisations that work with gender equality:

Two interventions in Bangladesh have promotion of gender equality as their *raison-d’être* (Steps/STD) or as an integral and explicit part of their overall vision or goal (ASK).

ASK may serve as an example. In *ASK*, gender equality issues are linked to and integrated with other aspects of its work as a human rights and legal aid resource centre. The organisation’s goal is “to establish the rule of law based on principles of justice, gender equity and human rights.” *ASK* follows through in implementing this goal by aiming at a gender-balanced staff composition, by providing legal aid to the disenfranchised (particularly poor women, workers and working children), and by integrating gender justice issues into its human rights advocacy and legal awareness training. Although *ASK*, as is the case with many human rights organisations, emphasises women’s rights and women’s empowerment, the framework for its activities is based on analysis of gender inequalities in Bangladesh law and society.

2) Sectoral/thematic interventions with an explicit gender equality goal, followed through in implementation

Two of the interventions studied conform most closely to the high level of ambition regarding gender equality goals and explicit links to sector goals as outlined in Sida's Action Programme: *Support to the Police Academy* and the National Police in Nicaragua and the *Local Government Development Support Programme* in South Africa. Both interventions are described briefly here, since an explicit linking of sectoral and equality goals makes it more likely that a structure, a strategy and other mainstreaming activities are implemented in order to make a significant impact on changing people's lives for the better.

The programme design for the first phase of Sida's *Support to the Police Academy* included objectives to meet the practical gender needs of women police cadets (such as improvements in dormitories, security and counselling). As implementation progressed, and related to the increasing gender sensitivity of the National Police, other important elements have influenced programme implementation: *inter alia* a formal commitment to gender equality and establishment of a National Gender Council by the National Police and establishment of special police units to deal with cases of violence against women, youth and children. This intervention focuses on women's practical needs and strategic interests. However, the intervention does not take account of inequalities between women and men, which lead for example to gender-based violence that the police are being trained to redress. The intervention is also beginning to address men's roles and masculine identities, as these are related to gender inequalities.

Phase I of the *Local Government Development Support Programme* (LGDSP) had explicit goals to integrate gender equality and poverty alleviation into the entire programme. Furthermore, the structure for implementing this programme included a provincial task team responsible for working with selected municipal task teams to address problems of poverty, gender, children's issues and disability in Northern Cape Province. One municipal task team was charged with mainstreaming a gender perspective in Kimberley City Council both as an employer and as a service provider. The overall programme had a strategy for addressing gender inequalities, linking inequality with poverty alleviation and mainstreaming activities for implementing its goals.

3) Sectoral/thematic based interventions with an explicit gender equality goal that is inadequately followed through in implementation

There was one example among the twelve interventions: *Statistics South Africa – Statistics Sweden Technical Assistance Programme* (StatsSA). This on-going programme covers many areas of statistical development (census, socio-demographic surveys, developing provincial statistical offices, training, strategic planning and strengthening of institutional infrastructure). Among the many specific programme objectives was the stated intention to make women visible in statistics by developing a framework for compilation and presentation of gender issues and gender sensitising all relevant statistics. These explicit objectives are inadequately carried through in implementation of the many

areas of co-operation between StatsSA and Statistics Sweden. Because another bilateral donor has supported the small Gender Unit at StatsSA, the gender equality objectives have not been adequately integrated into other important areas of Swedish-South African statistical co-operation.

4) Interventions with an approach to gender equality, rather than a goal, that is reflected in some aspects of implementation

Two interventions developed an “approach” to gender equality rather than an explicit programme goal: *Comprehensive Urban Plan* in South Africa and *Prosilais* in Nicaragua. Approach, though not defined clearly by the interventions, would seem to reflect recognition that gender inequalities and gender relations may in some way be relevant to the sectoral objectives and activities in the intervention. Therefore, some attention is paid to gender issues in a few, or some intervention activities. However, an approach is less specific than a goal, less visible and more likely to lead to partial treatment of equality issues in some activities but not in others.

Prosilais, which supports the development of locally integrated health systems in selected Departments in Nicaragua, can serve as an example. This intervention did not have a gender equality goal, but rather the stated goal of “improved health care with a gender approach.” The evaluation team found that stakeholders attributed differing meanings to what a gender approach entailed: 1) attention to women’s health needs only; 2) attention to both sexes, which in some cases led to a distorted application by diverting health resources away from women to men; and 3) attention to perceived inequalities in women’s and men’s situation (related to intra-family violence for example). Not only is the meaning of a gender approach interpreted differently by various stakeholders; the intervention does not have a mainstreaming strategy for implementing the approach; therefore gender inequalities in health care are not addressed systematically.

5) Interventions in which women’s participation is a goal, objective or target

Four of the interventions studied had women’s participation as an explicit goal, objective or target: *Prodel* in Nicaragua, *Trees, Paving and Lighting* (TPL) in South Africa and *Non-Formal Education – Literacy Training Programme* (NFE 2) and *Non-Formal Education – Hard to Reach Children Programme* (NFE 3) in Bangladesh. A fifth intervention, *Democratic Development on the Atlantic Coast* in Nicaragua, had no explicit objective or target for women’s participation. However, the intervention did encourage a high rate of women’s participation in technical training and in employment opportunities in Municipal Technical Units. The current local economic development component of the programme is expected to include a women’s participation target.

NFE 2 is an example of an intervention with a women’s participation objective. This programme of literacy training for youth and adults requires that a minimum of 50% of learners should be female, and the literacy curriculum includes some material on women’s and children’s rights. The evaluation team noted that more than 50% of learners are women and female youth. However,

the programme has not gone beyond the emphasis on quantitative targets to address the constraints affecting both women's and men's participation. NGOs that implement the pilot programme under NFE 2 may or may not have and/or implement gender equality goals. Sida's efforts to improve the gender equality content of the programme have been met with considerable constraints on the part of the implementing agency. In this situation, the quantitative target tends to become an end, rather than a means for moving forward to work on important aspects of gender inequalities in non-formal education.

*Trees, Paving and
Lighting project,
South Africa.
Photo: Hartmut
Schmetzer.*



Similarly, *Prodel*, *NFE 3* and *TPL* all emphasise women's participation targets or quotas which are not situated within a broader goal of working towards greater equality between women and men, girls and boys.

In summary, the twelve interventions exhibited a wide range of variation regarding gender equality goals. Two NGOs with gender equality as an important goal or aspect of their vision or mandate necessarily worked with these issues. Two interventions had explicit gender equality goals that facilitated development of strategies, relevant structures and implementation of specific mainstreaming activities to address gender inequalities relevant to the sector, thus going quite a long way to meet the requirements of Sida's Action Plan. One intervention similarly had an explicit gender equality goal which was not carried through in a mainstreaming strategy. Two interventions had "approaches" to gender equality or – in the case of the largest number (five) – explicit objectives or targets for women's and girls' participation or implicit encouragement of women's participation.

4.1.1 Analysis of the Significance of Gender Equality Goals

Does it make a difference whether gender equality goals are clearly stated and linked to the intervention sector or theme, or not? Is an intervention with

a gender equality goal likely to have more positive impact on changes in women's and men's access to livelihoods and services, to their knowledge and ability to exercise their rights, and on unequal power relationships? In general, the evaluation found that the answers to these questions are yes. The two interventions with explicit gender equality goals, namely the Police Academy and LGDSP, were also the interventions in which the evaluation found the most evidence of mainstreaming and of positive effects on gender inequalities or good potential to have such effects in the future.

The *Police Academy* provides an instructive example that gender equality goals do not have to be formalistic (that is, written down in the design from day 1 of the intervention). Even without a clear gender equality goal at the beginning of phase 1, over time more and more explicit gender equality content and mechanisms for implementation have been included in this programme. What has been important, it appears, is that issues of gender equality and women's empowerment have been increasingly urgent and visible and have been accepted by various stakeholders as an important and legitimate part of the activities being implemented. The evaluation was able to document that the importance given to gender equality goals in the Police Academy had led to significant changes. Some were practical changes (improvements in practical conditions of life of female police trainees), others were strategic (the challenge posed to traditional female and male roles, within police culture) and others supported women's empowerment (women police cadets' improved knowledge of their rights such as freedom from abuse).

Thus, the Police Academy appears, to the evaluation team, to have gone quite a long way towards meeting Sida's Action Programme vision: that "equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for and indicator of sustainable people-centred development."¹²

The other intervention, *LGDSP*, had a clearly stated and explicit gender equality goal from the beginning of phase 1 – largely due to Sida's work "behind the scenes" to ensure that an appraisal mission improved on the original proposal which did not emphasise gender equality. Because *LGDSP* has completed only its first two-years however, it is too soon to be able to document substantive changes in unequal gender relations. The evaluation team noted, however, that many stakeholders, both implementers – such as municipal officers and elected politicians – and primary stakeholders in communities had begun to discuss gender inequalities. How these are related to efforts to alleviate poverty, to protect children's rights, to increase women's political participation and to bring men into the discussion were included. Many said this was the first time that gender issues had been raised, in the context of their own lives and work. Without an explicit goal, it is unlikely that the high profile that gender equality issues have achieved in intervention areas within this conservative, Afrikaans-speaking province would have materialised.

¹² Action Programme, cover

One intervention that has a target for female participation as its goal, *NFE 3 – Literacy Training for Hard to Reach Children*, provides a contrast to the above two programmes. Other than the target of at least 50% girls' participation, this intervention has no other gender goals or mainstreaming elements. Based on wide ranging discussions with many stakeholders, the evaluation team was able to make suggestions about effects that the programme has had (or may have had): overcoming the isolation of young women, improving young women's and men's knowledge of their rights, linking literacy training with skills training to achieve better livelihoods, etc. However, none of this is made very explicit in the programme, especially whether and how a target or quota for female participation contributes to redressing gender inequalities since NFE 3 has no gender mainstreaming strategy nor a monitoring system adequate to track changes.

The evaluation identified important *factors* supporting the inclusion of a gender equality goal in some of the interventions studied. These include the following:

- Early introduction through dialogue about the value-added that a gender equality goal will bring to the impact of a proposed or planned intervention in a particular sector and on changing people's lives in a positive direction.
- Commitment and work by Sida, both in Stockholm and at the embassies, to ensure that the relevance of gender equality goals for achieving sectoral objectives and to fostering links to poverty reduction is appreciated. This entails understanding of power relations and other social, economic and political considerations, which are to be included in programme design at the inception of the intervention. A pre-appraisal report should analyse whether, and specifically how, gender equality goals are relevant and important in specific sectoral, national, regional, etc. contexts.
- A strong institutional mandate within Sida, in which senior management – and not primarily gender advocates at middle management level – continuously demonstrate commitment and conviction and hold those who work with development co-operation accountable.
- National policy commitment to gender equality, interest and also commitment by institutions and agencies within a country, and support from experienced gender activists and advocates in civil society organisations are crucial. When these factors are present in the partner country environment, the inclusion of gender equality goals in programme design becomes more likely – either at the beginning, or as part of an organic process as design features change over time and new areas of emphasis are added.
- In some interventions there was a mechanism for consultations among the implementing partners in or related to an intervention (national institutions, NGOs, another bilateral donor, etc.). Consultative mechanisms can bring the importance of gender equality goals front and centre during the life span of long-term interventions that have second and subsequent phases.

At the same time, the evaluation found important missed opportunities among the interventions studied:

- An implementing agency may express sympathy for some type of gender goal in a programme, but in reality may prove unable or unwilling to carry through. This was the case with DFNE in Bangladesh, for example. Although Sida made many efforts to strengthen gender equality work in this department, there were few tangible results, in view of the amount of work invested.
- Interventions that have an “approach” to gender equality, rather than an explicit goal, implement some activities but not others, in what seems to the evaluation team a rather *ad hoc* manner. An approach to gender equality in urban development programmes, for example, may not lead to an analysis of gender issues in many relevant sub-sectors of urban planning, such as employment creation which has potential to have a significant impact on women’s and men’s livelihood possibilities.
- The presence of a women’s participation target tends to limit consideration of ways of addressing gender equality. Implementation usually becomes focused on quotas, reporting of numbers, etc. Programmes that have women’s participation targets only are usually not designed to take account of the unequal power relations between women and men which are important in the context in which interventions function at community level.

The evaluation team noted that interventions that did not have explicit gender equality goals, or which had “approaches” or which emphasised women’s participation rates, might have begun to work with some elements of mainstreaming – although usually not in a structured and systematic way. Given the long-life span of many Sida-supported interventions with their complex and changing activities and directions, it is important to recognise that changes in the direction of gender equality *can be* included in project strategies and activities as implementation proceeds. On the other hand it is not easy to introduce gender equality goals mid-way in programmes which have a long history and a lengthy life span, (e.g. non-formal education), and in which Sida is only one of several or many key stakeholders.

4.1.2 Conclusion

Based on the findings, the evaluation team has concluded that the presence of an explicit gender equality goal in an intervention enhances the possibility that the project or programme will genuinely impact on unequal relations between women and men which may prevail in a given sector or area of operation. Inclusion of gender equality goals can improve a Sida-supported intervention so that women and men, of all ages, have more equal access to livelihood possibilities, to services, to knowledge and to the ability to protect and exercise their rights – whichever of these are most relevant to the sector specific goals.

The absence of explicit goals contributes to a situation in which monitoring, evaluation and other learning and accountability tools are not used to address whatever gender equality contributions the intervention may make. As a result, the intervention may miss opportunities, which arise over its life cycle, to make alterations in programme design and operations so that gender equality impacts and effects are increased. Programmes that have a less binding “approach” to gender equality, or which have a women’s participation target, may be shown to have had positive effects on some aspects of women’s lives; however, they do not, except indirectly, work to reduce unequal gender relations that constrain women’s and men’s right to a decent life. The evaluation team does not contend that gender equality goals over-ride other priorities, such as poverty reduction. Rather that a Sida-supported intervention should recognise where, if and how a contribution to gender equality can and should be a goal in combination with and linked to Sida’s other cross-cutting goals and to sector-specific goals.

4.1.3 Lessons Learned

- 1 *Clarity* about gender equality as a goal of development co-operation is necessary: how gender equality is related to achieving sectoral objectives, the specific ways that it is linked to other cross-cutting goals – not least poverty reduction, and in general why development processes are improved when gender equality is clearly integrated with other goals of development co-operation.
- 2 An *explicit* gender equality goal in the design of an intervention, or integration of an explicit gender equality goal during implementation, enhances the likelihood that mainstreaming processes will take place.
- 3 *Institutional commitment* by partners and by Sida to promote the gender equality goal and national policy commitment to gender equality are crucial factors for effective follow through in interventions.
- 4 Gender equality goals can be demonstrated to have contributed to transformation of people’s lives, when they are linked with *targets* that can be monitored.
- 5 *Women’s participation* goals do not meet Sida’s Action Programme guidelines unless they clearly contribute to addressing, and changing, gender inequalities.

4.2 Poverty Reduction – Links, Synergies and Conflicts with Gender Equality

4.2.1 Poverty Reduction and Gender Equality Goals

Links, synergies or potential and open conflicts between the gender equality goal and the overall goal of poverty reduction of Swedish development co-

operation, has been a guiding question for the evaluation team, both in analysis of country strategies and interventions. The question is important for development agencies that pursue several goals, in order to prevent that overarching goals such as poverty reduction and gender equality are addressed in isolation as if each goal were the only goal of the organisation.

There is evidence in studies from the 1990s of certain causal relationships between gender equality and poverty reduction. Better access to education for girls, where they have been disfavoured against boys, is the classical example that can be traced in improved health of their children and families and of the educated women themselves¹³. Yet, ‘not all women are poor, not all the poor are women’ as expressed by N.Kabeer (1994) in a discussion of conceptual, methodological and empirical issues in the analysis of gender and poverty. Kabeer’s and others’ research on ‘feminisation of poverty’ prove that the question of linkages and synergies are vital, but also that there is no simple linkage or causality between gender equality and poverty/well-being.¹⁴

4.2.2 The Poverty Concept – Measures, Indicators and Analytical Framework

The evaluation team has applied a multidimensional interpretation of poverty and poverty reduction in line with Sida’s Poverty Programme (1996) and MFA’s key poverty document “The Rights of the Poor” (MFA 1996/97:169). The latter ‘defines’ poverty in terms of the absence or diminishing of three basic dimensions:

- *Security* (against e.g. sickness, accidents, natural disasters, unemployment, injustice, violence, economic and political crises and security in old age).
- *Capacity* (to develop poor people’s own resources in the form of income, assets, savings, health, knowledge and skills).
- *Opportunities* (e.g. civil liberties and human rights, participation in decision-making processes and economic policy).

The document argues that the multidimensional nature of poverty is captured when poor people describe their own situation.

Poverty Measures and Indicators

A multidimensional interpretation of poverty provides for a distinction between *measurable poverty* and less easily measurable *experienced poverty* as illustrated by examples of indicators in Table 4.2.

¹³ E.g. Cagatay, N: Gender and Poverty, UNDP Social Development and Poverty Elimination Division, WP no 5, 1998.

¹⁴ See Briefing paper on the feminisation of poverty. Prepared by BIDGE for Sida, April 2001.

Table 4.2 – The Poverty Concept	
Income/Consumption-Poverty	Deprivation
Is measurable: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low income • Low consumption • Un/underemployment Σ Poverty Lines	Is experienced: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of physical necessities, assets and income • Social inferiority • Isolation and exclusion • Physical weakness • Violence • Vulnerability • Seasonality • Powerlessness • Humiliation Σ Poor women's and men's realities are local, complex, diverse, and dynamic

On the one hand, the income/consumption indicators provide quantitative measures of poverty (see table 4.3 in section 4.2.3) and are used for defining the poverty line below which the absolute and extreme poor are found. On the other hand, deprivation indicators are hard to measure but provide for a picture of poor women's and men's realities as being local, complex, diverse and dynamic.

To what degree experienced deprivation is gender specific depends on a particular context. In this evaluation the indicators of isolation and exclusion, violence and powerlessness showed a particularly strong bias towards women.

Consultations with different stakeholders including representatives of target populations, i.e. poor women and men, boys and girls, during the country studies made it possible, however, to get some direct impression of primary and secondary stakeholders' experience of poverty and their interpretations of gender equality. When possible such experience indicators were identified through consultation workshops (e.g. CUP, Prosilais), SWOT exercises (e.g. ASK, NFE 3), and focus group discussions (e.g. Prodel, LGDSP).

Analytical Framework

The evaluation team's analytical framework for assessing linkages, synergies or conflicts between the poverty reduction goal and the gender equality goal takes as its point of departure Sida's and MFA's interpretations of the multi-dimensional poverty concept and indications of linkage between Sida's Action Programmes:

"The principal goal of Swedish development co-operation is to raise the quality of life of poor people...Raising the quality of life is not a matter simply of improving the incomes of the poor. It consists also of guaranteeing the poor, particularly

women and children, their human rights and freedoms, opening up their range of choice, improving their environment and security and enabling poor women and men to participate in development processes. Most of all, it means increasing people's capacity to provide for themselves and lift themselves out of poverty." (Sida's Poverty Programme, 1996:1-2)

It is made clear that there is no internal ranking order among the main objectives for the focus and design of Swedish development assistance. The first four of these have been in force since 1962 and were later supplemented with the goals of environment and gender equality. The six main objectives are,

- economic growth
- socio-economic equality
- economic and political independence
- democratic development
- environmental protection
- gender equality.

Nor is there a ranking among the goals of Sida's four action programmes, which are 1) The Environment Programme, 2) the Democratic Development Programme, 3) the Gender Equality Action Programme, and 4) the Poverty Programme.

The *relationship* between the development goals is expressed as:

"The principal goal of Swedish development co-operation is to raise the quality of life of poor people. The concept 'quality of life' includes people's opportunities for making a secure living in a manner that is foreseeable and safe, to be in good health and to have access to education and other social services. The objectives laid down by Parliament ... complement and reinforce one another in the overriding goal of reducing poverty." (Sida's Poverty Programme 1996:2)

Building on Sida's overarching goal, as stated above, the multidimensional interpretation of poverty – security, capacity and opportunities – and experience from Poverty Reduction Evaluations (Danida, 1996), an analytical framework was applied in the Gender Equality Evaluation, which included the following elements and approaches:

1. Stakeholders' perceptions and the team's own observations of relations between *Income/Consumption Poverty* and *Deprivation* on the one hand and *Gender Equality* on the other.
2. Interpretation of *poverty* as a social process captured in the four core indicators of poverty/well-being, i.e. *Livelihoods*, *Resources/Services*, *Knowledge and Rights*.
3. A tool for assessing gender equality and poverty reduction changes, the Change Assessment and Scoring Tool (CAST) – composed of the four core indicators mentioned in point 2 above and additional indicators, pertaining to the selected aid interventions.

4. Relationship between different dimensions of poverty reduction and the different categories of gender equality changes – specifically practical and strategic changes.
5. A distinction is made between *poverty alleviation* and *poverty reduction*. Short-term poverty alleviation addresses the effects of poverty, e.g. deprivation of basic human needs.
6. Poverty reduction addresses the causes of poverty, e.g. unemployment and powerlessness.
7. There is resemblance between *poverty alleviation* and *practical changes in terms of gender equality*, and between *poverty reduction* and *strategic changes*.
8. Poverty reduction strategies pursued in country strategies and in specific interventions may be *direct*, focusing for example on a specific priority target group, e.g. women-headed households, mothers and children, (1996:9), or be *indirect*, emphasising economic growth and “trickle down” or expansion of physical infrastructure.
9. Combinations of direct and indirect approaches to poverty reduction appear at *macro, meso and micro levels*.

The findings that follow examine the relationship between gender equality and the various dimensions of poverty, appreciating the dynamics of poverty and the importance of local context which shape poor women’s and men’s, boys’ and girls’ access to livelihood improvement, to resources and services, knowledge and rights¹⁵.

4.2.3 Synergies and Perceived Goal Conflicts in Country Strategies

National and Local Contexts

Poverty is a brutal reality in all of the three countries. It has certain gender dimensions common to all three. This is illustrated in table 4.3 showing aggregated dimensions of poverty and gender in the Human Development Index, HDI, and in the Gender Related Development Index.

¹⁵ “Promoting Sustainable Livelihoods” (1996) devotes comparable ideas with those adopted by the evaluation on interpretations of and measurement of poverty. “It is noted that some combination of four interacting factors – lack of material assets, low level of development of human resources, lack of power and vulnerability – is frequently identified as a manifestation of poverty”. Central to the type of analytical framework proposed by the report is contextual poverty analysis on a micro level, as well as a broader, more general macro-level poverty analysis. The intersection between gender-based inequalities and poverty is underlined, and poor women and men are depicted as potentially competent and motivated social actors. It is emphasised that poverty is neither static, nor a homogenous phenomenon and that a complex and multifaceted social phenomenon like poverty call for comprehensive and diversified perspectives and methods.

Table 4.3 HDI and GDI for South Africa, Nicaragua and Bangladesh

Human Development Index (HDI) Rank out of 174 countries	Country	Gender Related Development (GDI) Index Rank out of 174 countries 1998	Life expectancy at birth (years) 1998		Literacy % 15 years old and above 1998		Combined Primary, Secondary and Tertiary gross enrolment ratio % 1997		GDP per Capita (PPP US \$) 1998	
			F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
103 (MHD)	South Africa	85	56.2	50.3	83.9	85.4	94	93	5,205	11,886
116 (MHD)	Nicaragua	97	70.9	66.1	69.3	66.3	65	61	1,256	3,039
146 (LHD)	Bangladesh	121	58.7	58.6	28.6	51.1	30	40	744	1,949
High Human Development (HHD)			81.0	74.6	98.4	98.7	93	90	16,987	31,100
Medium Human Development (MHD)			72.2	65.8	85.0	90.4	72	73	3,948	8,580
Low Human Development (LHD)			64.7	62.2	59.6	78.1	50	60	1,549	2,587

Source: Human Development Report, UNDP 2000

These aggregated, quantitative measures do illustrate significant differences between the three countries as well as big differences between the situation of women and men, e.g:

- South Africa falls in the Medium Human Development (MHD) group on all indicators except for gross school enrolment ratio – over 90 per cent – which is in the High Human Development (HHD) group.
- Nicaragua falls in the MHD group but has a considerably higher life expectancy than South Africa, probably reflecting the impact of HIV/AIDS in the latter country.
- Bangladesh falls below the average for the Low Human Development (LHD) group on all indicators, but upholds higher life expectancy at birth than South Africa. – However, contrary to global trends, Bangladesh exhibits a female life expectancy rate which is as low as that of men’s – i.e. 58 years.
- The income (poverty) measure GDP per capita shows that in all three countries women’s share is less than half of men’s.
- On the social indicators – life expectancy, literacy and school enrolment, females in Nicaragua and South Africa score as good or better than males. This is in stark contrast to Bangladesh where female literacy (28 per cent) and school enrolment (30 per cent) is abysmally low, but males also score very low.

What the figures do not show are *distributions* and *changes* over time in poverty/well-being indicators, e.g. a) Intra regional differences within the countries in terms of sex dis-aggregated poverty indicator proxies, and b) intra female and intra male group differences. The interventions studied in this evaluation were situated in the poorer regions.

Country Strategies and Analysis

The Country Strategy is one of the most important instruments for focusing Swedish assistance on the struggle against poverty. Each of the Country Strategies for the three countries includes a specific orientation toward poverty, and all direct some attention to gender issues. But specific linkages between poverty reduction and gender equality are rare in the strategies.

In the Country Analysis, poverty in **South Africa** is characterised as having a “strong gender dimension”. Attention is drawn to the large number of female-headed households and the havoc wrought by *apartheid* on family life, women’s higher rate of unemployment by comparison with men’s, their lack of access to basic services and the high incidence of rape. Therefore the strategic priorities outlined in the Country Analysis include a focus on gender and poverty “in parallel”, to be addressed through dialogue with the South African government, approaching all interventions with a “gender and poverty perspective”, and interventions “directly aimed at gender and poverty”.

In a gloomy picture of widespread poverty in **Bangladesh** where 60 million people live in poverty – of which 30 million are estimated to be in extreme poverty, and where two out of three children do not receive sufficient daily nutrition, – the Country Analysis also reports on gradual changes. Slowly improving education, increased employment opportunities, not least for women, and a general opening up of society to the outside world and of the family and kinship group to the community, exemplifies synergies between poverty reduction and gender equality. Sida’s strategic priorities are identified to include economic and social empowerment for both men and women, which needs to take place parallel to economic gains. This involves increasing literacy rates and social awareness, decreasing oppression on women, increasing community participation in local decision-making and increasing women’s options in society. Poverty reduction is therefore closely inter-linked with other development goals, such as gender equality, environmental sustainability, democracy and human rights and, not least economic growth.

The description of activities to be supported by Sida in the **Nicaragua** Country Strategy under the three goals of democratic development, gender equality and poverty reduction are distinct and separate despite the statement that gender equality should be transversal (i.e. mainstreamed). Part of the strategy illustrates ways in which democratic development activities and poverty reduction actions can and should be linked to gender equality.

4.2.4 Links and Synergies in Interventions

Observations from the interventions indicate only a few explicit links between gender equality and poverty reduction goals. Since these goals have rarely been explicitly integrated with each other in the design of the interventions the team’s observations on links and synergies are stated mostly as opportunities in the analysis that follows.

Poor urban women whom the evaluation team met in *South Africa* expressed how they experienced the links between gender inequality and vulnerability to poverty in their own lives. For them, equality was a necessary condition for escape from poverty.

Unequal gender relations make women responsible for poverty reduction:

– “Poverty is more of a woman’s problem – men always expect things to be done for them. Even if you discuss poverty problems in the house, the man expects you to deal with the situation. On top of that, women are sometimes beaten up because there is no food in the house.”

– “Poverty is a problem for everyone in the house, but the woman is the only one who does something to solve the problem. Children expect the mother to solve, not the father. They know he will sit at home the whole day. He is not doing anything, he is there – just a living ghost.”

Poverty and men’s roles: – “When women earn money they put food on the table, and when men earn money they drink to ignore their poverty problem.”

Gender equality as a necessary pre-condition for poverty reduction:

– “Give jobs to women so that women can be less dependent on men. If she doesn’t have to depend on his salary, she will be able to take care of the family. She will be free to do what *she* believes is the right thing to do. Then women can be more independent.”

The voices illustrate how some poor women experience poverty: relations between male roles and intra family violence, poor nutrition and incomes, isolation, exclusion and unemployment on the one hand and poverty on the other. They illustrate women’s strategic gender interests – to have access to jobs and incomes and the right to use their incomes to lift themselves and their dependants out of poverty. Future development co-operation partnerships in South Africa should bear in mind such clear statements about gender and poverty synergies.

Employment and jobs for women are repeatedly mentioned as means to alleviate poverty in the short run, with the potential of meeting both practical gender needs and longer term strategic gender interests. This is also where some of the interventions address poverty and have potential synergies with gender equality. The *Comprehensive Urban Plan Project, CUP* in Kimberley, South Africa, highlights job creation, and support for the informal sector and *Trees, Paving and Lighting, TPL*, put job creation into practice, albeit on a limited scale. However, many stakeholders do not make any analysis of the relationship between gender equality and poverty but state, “unemployment affects both women and men”, meaning that any poverty reduction effort will more or less automatically assist both.

A stronger poverty perspective was built into the design of the *Local Government Development Support Programme, LGDSP* promotes an excellent multi-dimensional understanding of being poor in South Africa: “Isolation from the community, malnourished children, crowded homes, using basic forms of

energy, no-one in the household is employed and families are split up as individuals leave for migrant work, or dependants are sent to live with wealthier relatives” (Training module, *Fighting Poverty*). The programme stresses getting women into decision-making positions and improving residents’ access to services from their local governments. *Statistics SA* has taken important steps to improve documentation of the country’s poverty situation. For these programmes poverty reduction strategies could be further strengthened if they were grounded in gender analysis.

In *Nicaragua* in at least three of the four interventions studied (*Police Academy*, *PRODEL*, *PROSILAIS*) the issue of poverty seems to be clearly inter-linked to the question of gender equality – though not explicit in project designs. In these interventions there are opportunities for a more effective gender equality approach, which can and should be linked to more targeted and effective measures to deal with poverty.

The synergy between poverty reduction and the promotion of gender equality is not automatic and must be addressed in the intervention design and development process if poverty alleviation and gender equality activities are to be effectively linked. For example, the five year modernisation plan for the National Police may be improved through more explicit recognition of the need to provide all women (and especially poor women) with access to justice and employment and improved personal security.

Similarly, *PRODEL* could be modified in its design in order to ensure that women as clients have more equal access to the positive economic benefits of the programme and by doing so could extend its anti-poverty impact to some critical populations it may not be reaching.

Early morning class before going to work in the match factory, to do house-work, sell fruit etc. Photo: Britha Mikkelsen.



The *non-formal education programmes* in *Bangladesh* by definition aim at poverty reduction in targeting the millions and millions of illiterate women and men, youth and working children. Both the *NFE 2 Literacy Programme for adults and*

youth and NFE 3 Literacy Programme for urban working children, have as a goal a minimum of 50 pct. women centres and students. This goal has been realised in both programmes. Beyond the parity goal gender equality is not made explicit in the programmes. Yet a number of effects have been identified which link gender equality and poverty reduction in areas such as breaking isolation and exclusion, mobility, students' and parents' participation in centre committees, awareness of gender roles and responsibilities in private and public spheres, etc.

These links and synergies could be strengthened and improve the programmes, if they were made explicit and were addressed in the approaches. This would not necessarily mean a lot of extra work but could be integrated with the poverty reduction thinking which is already built into the *Pilot Project on Post Literacy and Continuing Education*. PLCE aims to provide employable skills and is testing skills training as an addition to literacy and numeracy training. Gender analysis opens the avenue for better linking the gender equality and poverty reduction goals.

4.2.5 Constraints and Opportunities

Aid evaluations can provide valuable hands on information to uncover the synergies – and potential conflicts – between gender equality goals and poverty reduction and to translate them into operational strategies. But the evaluation team is convinced that substantive, long-term *research* is required to help understand the parameters and dynamics of poverty reduction processes at macro, meso and micro levels. To disentangle the synergies between gender equality and poverty reduction is part of the required research.

In the following it is attempted to outline *potentials* for linking gender equality with the goal of poverty reduction for the interventions studied in this evaluation. Tables 4.3 a–c are structured along the following dimensions, which are used to categorise each intervention:

- *Target group and poverty indicators* (gender disaggregated)
- *Level of intervention*: Macro level (national policies and structures), meso level (sectors/programmes, sub-national regions) and micro level (communities, households, individuals)
- *Opportunities and Participation*
- *Practical and Strategic gender needs and interests*. The assessment indicated that these dimensions often relate to *Security* and *Capacity* (MFA's poverty reduction 'indicators').

There seem to be several linkages and un-exploited potentials for linking the gender equality goal with the poverty reduction goal in the interventions studied in Nicaragua: The choice of *target group* sometimes include 'poor women and men' but could be more focused. e.g. extending the target group to high-risk, vulnerable groups (PROSILAIS in health, and PRODEL with its focus on

Table 4.3a Linkages between Gender Equality and Poverty Reduction in the Assessed Interventions – Nicaragua

Intervention	Target group and poverty indicators	Intervention level – Macro, meso and micro	Opportunities and participation	Practical and strategic gender needs and interests	
				Security	Capacity
Nicaragua Police Academy	– Target group/clientele: poor women, children, youth and men, and police force – rights awareness and enforcement	– Macro and meso levels re clientele – Micro level re police force	Access to civil liberties – knowledge, rights, – pol/soc interactive participation and self-mobilisation – self esteem	Security – against violence, injustice, abuse	Capacity to develop knowledge of rights, of gender/male roles – and to influence reforms of laws and regulations
Democratic Dev. Atlantic Coast RAAN/RAAS	– Local authorities employment – access to services and infrastructure – rights awareness and enforcement	Mainly effects on macro and meso level – micro level effects in the longer run	Civil liberties, transparency, accountability; Participation in political decision making – functional participation	– Security – control of resources, NRM, longer term	Capacity to dev. good governance – sustainable econ. Dev. – to minimise national/regional/ gender disparities
PRODEL, Local Urban Development	– Urban poor – not the poorest (women majority) – Credit, income, employment	Mainly effects on micro and meso level. Potential for extending credit model to macro level	Build empowering consultative mechanisms with clients; Interactive ec/soc Participation	Security against unemployment, Identify 'gender sensitive' financial packages – raise own resources/income; Augmentation of Conflict between cost-recovery and inclusion of (extreme) poor women	Capacity to identify gender roles and responsibilities, – include wider priority groups – enhance business skills – adjust programme structure
Prosilais, Integrated local health systems	– Identification of High Risk groups – (reproductive) health indicators	Mainly effects on meso and micro level. Potential for influencing macro policies	Access to and functional participation in management of basic social services	Security against sickness and reproductive health problems – maternal and children's malnutrition – intra family violence	Capacity to enhance knowledge and skills of own and family health and nutrition – to influence macro policies

urban poor/women). *Poverty indicators*, – measurable and less easily measurable, experienced poverty indicators – are available but often need to be *gender dis-aggregated* (e.g. employment, health, rights and access indicators).

The interventions exhibit different forms of participation, and several have potentials or *opportunities for strengthening participation* towards interactive participation (Prosilais, PRODEL). The interventions address macro-meso-and micro levels to various degrees depending on the objectives. *Security*, e.g. women's security against violence and vulnerability and reproductive health risks, is a direct or indirect aspect of several of the interventions, which needs to be addressed at both micro and macro levels.

An institutional capacity building project like RAAN/RAAS entails a possibility to increase its effects on poverty reduction and gender equality at *com-*

community (*micro*) level, e.g. by addressing *practical gender needs* (employment, credit). There is a potential for increasing poor women and men's awareness about their rights in RAAN/RAAS and in the Police Academy and in PRODEL. PRODEL and the Police Academy furthermore entail possibilities for developing *capacity to influence laws and regulations* which affect *strategic gender interests*.

*Health centre,
Managua,
Nicaragua.*

*Photo: Tina Gue/
Phoenix.*



There are potentials for enhancing empowerment in the capacity to develop further the knowledge and claim of reproductive rights (PROSILAIS) of women and adolescents, and of human rights, women's and children's rights (Police Academy). Potentials for transforming practical gender changes to strategic changes, e.g. for generalising the credit initiatives to women and men in PRODEL to become a national, macro level model may be another area where synergies between gender equality and poverty reduction can be explored. The need for research to elaborate such linkages is warranted.

There is a potential to enhance the target group focus to reflect poverty and gender equality perspectives in more of the interventions. Statistics, South Africa could help to speed up this opportunity and provide *gender dis-aggregated poverty and gender data* that reflect unequal access to resources and services by race, class and sex. *Gender and poverty budgeting* is an area where new 'templates' linking causes and effects between poverty and gender is warranted.

Opportunities for stakeholder participation are generally kept to information giving and consultations, but could be extended towards interactive participation. Both CUP, if replicated, and LGDSP have opportunities for addressing both practical gender needs (security against exclusion and violence) and strategic gender interests such as awareness of legal rights. The replication of CUP in other urban development projects, has a potential for pursuing the inherent linkages between gender equality and poverty reduction, in particular when urban plans are turned into implemented projects in which women and men

Table 4.3b Linkages between Gender Equality and Poverty Reduction in the Assessed Interventions – South Africa

Intervention	Target group and poverty indicators	Intervention level – Macro, meso and micro	Opportunities and participation	Practical and strategic gender needs and interests	
				Security	Capacity
South Africa CUP, Comprehensive Urban Plan, Kimberley	– Organisational support – Employment – informal sector activities	Meso effects in the short run, – potentials for micro and macro level effects in the longer run	Opportunities of inclusion, access to services, and to participation in decision making	Security against unemployment, exclusion, violation of rights	Capacity to participate in decision making and in implementation- Awareness of legal rights
TPL, Trees, Paving & Lighting, Kimberley	– Limited employment	Mainly meso (town), micro (street) effects. Few prospects for macro replication	Opportunities – environmental awareness Participation in community decisions	Security – against violence	
Statistics South Africa	– Organisational support – Potential for contributing to much enhanced sex – disaggregated data, linking gender equality and poverty	Mainly macro and meso utility	Opportunities to better understand linkages, causes and effects between poverty and gender – for interactive participation within StatSA		Long-term prospects for new poverty reduction/gender equality templates – e.g. gender budgeting
LGDSP, Local Government Development Support Programme	– Institutional support Gender, Poverty, Children focus/indicators	Mainly meso effects – potential for macro replication	Opportunities – for women in decision making positions	Security against unemployment	Capacity created for multi-faceted, gender-sensitive poverty and rights awareness

can play an active role, – *participating in decision making, e.g. on service types and levels* and in jobs that ensure their implementation, as well as in management of initiatives.

Linkages between investment in lighting and women’s improved security against violence (outside the home), hence a contributing factor to breaking isolation, was embryonic in the small, and now completed, TPL project. Whether there is scope for scaling such linkages up to a meso (regional) and macro (national) level should depend on the priorities and willingness of civil society, CBOs and NGOs, to take on the responsibility.

Bangladesh is characterised by a very low literacy rate, of women and girls in particular as captured in the GDI and in the HDI (See table 4.3). This is reflected in the *50% female/male, girls and boys target group* of the non-formal education programmes. There are obvious potentials for enhancing the synergies between gender equality and poverty reduction in NFE 2 and NFE 3 in a way that addresses *unequal opportunities* between the sexes and goes beyond the 50-50% target.

This is partly what is being attempted in the Post Literacy and Continuing Education Pilot Program, which addresses post-literacy/continuing educa-

Table 4.3c Linkages between Gender Equality and Poverty Reduction in the Assessed Interventions – Bangladesh

Intervention	Target group and poverty indicators	Intervention level – Macro, meso and micro	Opportunities and participation	Practical and strategic gender needs and interests	
				Security	Capacity
Bangladesh NFE 2 Literacy programme	Literacy/ numeracy for adults and youth - 50% female target	Mainly effect on meso and micro level	Access Inclusion Ec/pol/soc participation Civil liberties	Security against e.g. unemployment, violence, injustice	Capacity to develop own (and group's) resources, income, knowledge of rights, gender roles, skills and family health: – empowerment
PLCE – Pilot proj. on Post-literacy & continuing education	Literacy and vocational skills – 50% female target – geographical poverty areas	Mainly effects on meso and micro level	Access, e.g. to credit Inclusion Ec/pol/soc participation Employment Civil liberties	Security – against e.g. unemployment, violence, injustice, exclusion	Capacity to further develop own (and group) resources, income, knowledge of rights, gender roles, and skills: – empowerment
NFE 3 programme for hard to reach urban working children	– 50 % girls and boys – Literacy and numeracy	Mainly meso and micro effects – macro effects in longer run	Piloting post literacy & skills training Inclusion Parents' participation in governing	Security against e.g. violence, injustice, humiliation, exclusion	Capacity to further develop own (and group) resources, income, knowledge of rights, gender/male roles, and skills: – empowerment
ASK – Human Rights and legal aid resource centre	– Violated women (and men) – Life expectancy of women and men – Violence/crime rate	Micro level effects in short run, meso and macro effects in longer run	access to civil liberties, justice, knowledge of rights, inclusion, participation in decision making	Security against e.g. injustice, violence, exclusion, humiliation, evictions	Capacity to further develop knowledge of gender/male roles and human/women's rights, – advocacy for others', – Claiming rights, legal reforms: – empowerment – improved national governance
Steps Towards Development, STD	– Organisations and management staff – Gender awareness – Gender equality 'literacy'	Mostly meso level (organisations)	Access to knowledge of human and women's rights, inclusion, ec/pol/ soc participation	Security against e.g. injustice, violence, exclusion, humiliation – in longer run. Not immediate effect	Capacity to develop organisation's gender awareness, advocacy role and contribute to legal reform

tion for adolescents, women and men. Attention to *women's and men's different practical needs*, (e.g. skill types, income opportunities) is an entry point for optimising synergies between the gender equality and poverty reduction goals. In a longer term perspective there are potentials to enhance relational and collective *empowerment*, e.g. mobilising capacity by trained leavers to establish access to income and resources. However, it will require concerted effort to realise such opportunities, given the current focus on quantity rather than quality in mass education, which becomes a constraint on poverty reduction.

The two non-formal education programmes do pay some attention to women's and children's rights in curricula, and the mere bringing together of girls and boys (NFE 3) for training entails opportunities to experience and discuss *rights issues of children and of poor women and men*. These rights are the direct focus of the legal aid programme, ASK, and of the services provided by STD. The *advocacy role* of these two NGOs implicitly links gender equality and poverty reduction goals. To make the link explicit and clear in their policies as well as in interventions could enhance pursuance of the synergies between the two goals even further. The need to improve *security against the extreme forms of violence*, exclusion and injustice for poor women and men is dramatically evident and requires that the capacity to deal with these conditions is strengthened at all levels, possibly to meet *strategic gender interests through legal reform and enforcement*.

Research and Practice

Reducing gender inequality and poverty involves technical and aid administrative procedures. Appropriate analytical tools, operational guidelines for implementation and systematic monitoring and evaluation of processes, results and impact are important to pursue the goals and to know whether the livelihoods of poor women and men are improving, why or why not. But more than technical and administrative procedures are required. – The political dimension – the will of those with power to influence policies and strategies, to enhance gender equality and combat poverty – is part of the national context that sets the parameters for optimising synergies and addressing open or perceived conflicts.

Poverty is articulated along different race, class, geographic and ethnic group identity lines as well as along gender lines. Poverty and gender inequality are part of a social and symbolic hierarchy in which poverty and inequality are functional and beneficial for some groups in societies. This is reflected in the voices of the poor:

Poor women in Bangladesh expressed that the victory for womenfolk (legal aid) often seems to become more of a class issue where the poor and powerless triumph over the rich and powerful, than a gender issue.

There are indications (mass education programmes, Bangladesh, LGSDP, South Africa) that women's empowerment is more important to poor women and men than to the richer groups in the society.

The synergy and conflict perspectives need to be addressed in *research*, which may bring development assistance strategies ahead in the area of linking gender equality and poverty reduction and optimising synergies.

Concerned development agencies like Sida and concerned governments and partners who aim for appropriate strategies for poverty reduction and gender equality are faced with the problem that expressions of poverty and inequality appear both as causes and effects. *Security, capacity and opportunities* – or the lack of the same – influence the ‘potentials for both women and men to influence, participate in and benefit from development processes’.

However, “to make a full analysis of the capacity, security and opportunities of poor men, women and children, even in a limited geographical and social setting, is a very demanding – if not impossible – task. Nor is it easy to make a selection of some dimensions and disregard the others” (Peck & Tobisson, 2001:39)

These issues have to be taken into consideration in poverty and gender analysis and when formulating strategies and interventions, and stipulate the need for enhanced co-operation between researchers and practitioners.

4.2.6 Conclusion

The evaluation has relied on how women and men express their experience of poverty, of gender roles, and changes. Quantitative indicators provided a map of three substantially different contexts in which experiences of different stakeholder groups are interpreted. Poverty and gender equality can only be partially measured by quantitative indicators (e.g. the GDI) but are largely experienced conditions in multiple ways as documented for the three countries.

The interventions studied were situated in the poorer geographical regions in the three countries. Poverty in RAAN and RAAS, Nicaragua for example has a regional dimension and is linked to resource extraction, autonomy, conflict over land and exploitation of indigenous people. Interventions based in urban areas focused on national poverty dimensions, e.g. StatsSA, or on specific target groups such as hard-to-reach urban working children in Bangladesh.

Several inter-linkages between gender equality and poverty reduction were observed in national policies and in the interventions studied in this evaluation (e.g. access to education, credit and jobs and women’s rights and struggle against violence). In order to transform such linkages into sustainable and effective poverty reduction strategies, which are explicitly inter-linked with strategies for gender equality, it is necessary to address the conflicting interests between different groups in a given society at macro, meso and micro levels. This was not explicitly done in any of the interventions.

In the formulation of future Country Strategies Sida will have new opportunities to strengthen linkages between the gender equality and poverty reduction goals in partnership with the public authorities and civil society. It will be important that future Country Strategies and future project and programme

designs are based on solid analysis of the relevant local poverty situation, drawing attention throughout to its gender dimensions. The evaluation team is of the opinion that a multi-dimensional understanding of poverty must necessarily be gender sensitive. But gender equality must be an explicit goal when linked to poverty reduction to ensure that gender issues are not taken for granted and therefore not addressed.

Actual and possible linkages and synergies between the gender equality goal and the goal of poverty reduction are rarely made explicit in interventions and hence they are difficult to trace – least to quantify. If made explicit in intervention design and implementation they are likely to improve the relevance and effect of the interventions.

4.2.7 Lessons Learned

The lessons learned from studying gender equality in perspective of poverty and poverty reduction are:

- 1 Poverty is articulated along different class, geographic and ethnic group identity lines as well as along gender lines. There are indications (mass education programmes, Bangladesh, LGSDP, South Africa) that women's empowerment is more important to poor women and men than to the richer groups in the society.
 - a) Synergies between poverty reduction and gender equality are the rule rather than the exception. Where perceived conflicts may arise between the two goals, these seem to be connected to one or more of the following factors: limited capacity and experience of the implementing organisation and staff of undertaking poverty and gender analysis separately or in conjunction, and in pursuing these in implementation and follow up.
 - b) The social differentiation, which characterises the primary target groups of women, men and children – the fact that “not all women are poor. Not all the poor are women”.
 - c) National and local historical contexts and cultural norms and traditions, which counteract policies and strategies of poverty reduction and of gender equality, i.e. a gap between policy and practice, exacerbated where the political will may be questioned.
- 2 Interventions that included employment creation and credit schemes, which explicitly aimed at women and men, exhibited short-term poverty alleviation and met some practical needs of poor women and men. The potentials could be further exploited for developing the links to meet strategic gender interests, e.g. turning from individual credit to group responsibility, for institutionalising job opportunities, and establishing mechanisms for participation in decision making.

- 3 Social sector support, for mass education in particular, enhance the security of poor women and men, youth and children against humiliation, exclusion and violence in the short run and against unemployment in the longer run. Knowledge and awareness of rights improves their capacity and opportunities to participate in decision making in the communities and to change intra family roles and responsibilities. The balance between quality and quantity of the programmes question their effectiveness, and could be made explicit when revisiting the possible synergies between poverty reduction and resource allocation.
- 4 Democratic governance programmes and institutional strengthening programmes, e.g. for the health sector, local government or urban planning, tend to have indirect poverty reduction effects. Effects of democratic governance programmes in terms of practical and strategic changes take time.
- 5 Legal aid interventions (Bangladesh) showed the most direct linkage between both women's practical needs and strategic interests on the one hand and short-term poverty alleviation and potentials for longer term poverty reduction on the other. Explanatory factors may be the high incidence of poverty and of violence against women, national policies that support strategic changes, and a highly competent implementing organisation.

4.3 Stakeholder Participation

4.3.1 Analytical Framework

Opportunities for stakeholder participation, the possible conditions and constraints for participation in given contexts and possible effects in terms of gender equality, is a central question in the evaluation. Several examples were given in the previous section on links and possible synergies between the gender equality and poverty reduction goals.

To deal with the issue of stakeholder participation the evaluation has examined its meaning and manifestation in the selected interventions. Key questions are: 1) Who participates? 2) In what? 3) Why? and 4) How?¹⁶ The analytical framework included the following:

¹⁶ The analytical framework used in the evaluation relates to central debates on perspectives on participation for poverty reduction, recorded i.a. in Andrea Cornwall: *Beneficiary, Consumer, Citizen: Perspectives on Participation for Poverty Reduction*, Sida Studies no.2, 2001. Important Sida sources are also Per-Ulf Nilsson and Prudence Woodford-Berger: *Using Participatory Approaches in Bilateral Development Co-operation – Some Sida Experiences 1980–2000*, Sida, Sept. 2000 and Prudence Woodford-Berger: *Brief LFA/PCM Gender and Participation Reference Guide – Some Questions*, Sida, Note, 2001). The concepts are elaborated in the analytical framework in Concept Paper No. 2: *Gender Equality, Participation and Governance*, February 2001.

Stakeholders

Who participates? Women and men who have an explicit or implicit interest in a development intervention, according to the following definition:

“**Stakeholders** are individual persons, groups or institutions with vested interests in an intervention. **Primary stakeholders** are those who will be directly or ultimately affected by an intervention, either positively (beneficiaries) or negatively. **Secondary stakeholders** are intermediaries such as implementing organisations, or other individuals, persons, groups or institutions involved in interventions including funders. **Key stakeholders** are those of the primary and secondary stakeholders who can significantly affect or influence an intervention either positively or negatively during its course, and who will share responsibility quality and sustainability of subsequent effects and impact.” (Sida 2000:11)

An important qualification is that stakeholder groups may experience racial, social, economic, political and cultural inequalities cutting across gender lines, which influence their opportunities for participation.

Participation in What?

Participation in *what* was classified along the project cycle steps and participation in vital decision making moments. In this evaluation the question of democracy and governance pose specific challenges to an ‘acceptable’ level of gender equality:

- Participation by women and men in *intervention design*, in the *implementation, management, monitoring and evaluation* of development co-operation interventions;
- More equal participation and burden sharing by women and men in *daily life and labour* and in *decision making within families*;
- More equal participation by women and men in the *economic, social, cultural and political* life of their communities (and nations); and,
- Improved democracy and better governance through both *better representation of women* in political processes and through legal and institutional measures to advance women’s interests.

Why Participation?

A perspective on ‘*why* participation’ is to look at the interests involved. I.e. what does participation mean to the implementing agency? And what does participation mean for those on the receiving end? Answers to these questions are expected to be sensitive to national contexts, to political, social and legal structures and to traditions for giving women and men and youth a ‘voice’. The question why – whether participation has an instrumental or a transformative goal and is seen as a means or as an end in itself – complements the scale below that was applied in the evaluation.

How?

To address the *how*, a scale was adopted which ranks stakeholder participation across seven different levels:

1. Passive Participation (as recipients of information)
2. Participation in information giving
3. Participation by consultation
4. Participation for material incentives
5. Functional participation (forming groups to meet pre-determined project objectives)
6. Interactive participation (participation in joint analysis leading to action plans and the formation of new local institutions)
7. Self-mobilisation (taking initiatives independent of external institutions)

During the assessment a category “representative participation”, ranging between 5 and 6 was added. Table 4.4 below summarises findings along these dimensions of the analytical framework for the interventions studied.

Context for Stakeholder Participation

The assessment has considered some qualifying premises and questions, which could not be exhausted, but are still important. It would be misleading to think that only forms of participation, which rank high on the scale of participation in practice, are acceptable.

Experience shows that participatory processes do not automatically recognise inequalities and differences between women and men.¹⁷ Attempts to involve poor people do not automatically include women. Specific issues to address include:

- a) Power imbalances in communities.
- b) Intra-household and intra-family relations.
- c) Different constraints, such as work load and responsibility for child care.
- d) Different abilities to participate, e.g. confidence.
- e) Perceived benefits of participation.

Question of ‘optimum’ participation (Cornwall 2001:55) and Sida’s role as a donor are important, i.e.: 1) What is optimal participation in the interventions at a given point in time, in specific national, historical contexts and local situations? 2) Given that the context is development co-operation and development interventions, implemented through government or civil society partners, Sida as the donor has a role in facilitating, encouraging, supporting etc. the level and form of participation. What is Sida’s optimal role in promoting stakeholder participation at different points in time and in different sectoral contexts?

¹⁷ Sida, Prompt Sheet on Participation & Equality between Women and Men. 1998.

These premises are important for the analysis of stakeholder participation in the interventions studied in the three visited countries, Nicaragua, South Africa and Bangladesh.

4.3.2 National Contexts for Participation in Nicaragua, South Africa and Bangladesh

The importance of the national context, history and current political and administrative structures is clearly illustrated in *Bangladesh*. In the mass education programmes, project design decisions on target groups of women and men, youth and children, on curriculum and teaching materials, place of centres, etc. are made centrally. However, there is an explanation for the limited stakeholder/user participation, which affects much GoB managed development work in Bangladesh. Only in a few instances do development interventions include consultative participatory mechanisms with the primary stakeholders. This is linked to the issue of decentralised management for which the GoB has no clear strategy yet. An infrastructure for decentralised management does exist in the primary education and non-formal education sub-sectors, but it is not managed in a true decentralised manner.

Decentralised management and community ownership of education are also linked to a civil sector reform agenda, which the Government has not addressed. Hence, the constraints facing consultative, interactive participatory mechanisms are deeply entrenched in inefficient administrative structures but are also rooted in socio-cultural traditions of exclusion of large population groups and of women in particular. The latter has undergone radical changes in the last decade, when an effect of globalisation has been a great demand for cheap women labour. Thousands of women have found employment in the garment industry. This has contributed to break women's isolation, but at the same time it has prompted tensions in the labour market between men and women and brought the long prevailing violence against women into the public sphere.

What is important in this connection is that key parameters of democratisation and participation of women and men in social affairs, such as decentralisation and administrative reforms, are now getting a lot of attention both from civil society organisations and from concerned parties in the government structures, and in the donor community. Conditions for stakeholder participation in decision-making, and for women's participation in particular, are increasingly on the agenda in civil society organisations and discussed in the media. In areas such as women's rights there are better prospects thanks partly to advocacy and action by organisations like ASK.

In *Nicaragua* media and periodic opinion surveys report perceptions among large segments of the population that democratisation processes are being reversed by means of arbitrary measures taken by the present government that have greatly limited participatory mechanisms. One of the most difficult measures for women's organisations was the so-called "pact" or agreement

between the party in government and the main opposition party, the FSLN, allowing legislation which effectively eliminates smaller parties from participating in national elections slated for November 2001.

This trend towards a party political system dominated by two or three large parties of the centre right and centre left is seen by many analysts and observers (especially by representatives of women's rights organisations such as the members of the Network Against Violence) as a serious threat to progress in support of gender equality. It replaces a strategy of openness (associated with the previous government) and reduces the space for small parties and organisations of civil society. This threat is made more serious by the perception that the party currently in power has a strong interest in promoting policies under a "pro-family" rhetoric in order to actively undermine commitments and progress towards gender equality. The climate for dialogue between the government and civil society has deteriorated and has affected projects like PRODEL and PROSILAIS, and possibly RAAS-RAAN. It may therefore seem to be somewhat of a paradox that a new network for advocacy and discussion of male roles in perspective of violence against women has recently been established by males in Nicaragua¹⁸. Such initiatives, like also the gender equality initiatives of the Police Academy are particularly important in contexts where participatory mechanisms are deteriorating.

The climate for stakeholder participation in advocacy and actions for equality in **South Africa** has undergone the most radical changes with the abolition of *apartheid* policies. In all spheres, however, it is an ongoing struggle to turn egalitarian policies and laws into practice and to overcome deep-rooted discrimination in terms of race, class and gender. This was most clearly experienced in the Local Government Development Support Programme and in the urban projects. StatSA was also taking a very careful line of aiming for gender visibility, but in statistics only, and did not yet involve stakeholders (users of statistics) in defining issues that might be considered as sensitive in terms of equality for example.

A lesson is, that the national contexts keep changing, even in deeply conservative societies, and change the conditions for different groups of women's and men's participation. A supportive factor for participation at all levels, from national macro-policies to micro-level community and household affairs, is when Governments are signatories to relevant international conventions like CEDAW. Government support to policies and legislation regarding human rights are vital for projects, which directly or indirectly promote women's rights as do many of those supported by Sida.

4.3.3 Participatory Mechanisms in Interventions – Findings and Analysis

Across the continents, the sectors supported and the interventions reviewed the observation is that participatory mechanisms, structures and processes for

¹⁸ Susanne Krogstrup, News from Nicaragua: Soft Men against Violence. (in Danish) Kontakt 3, 2001:24

some form of stakeholder consultation and stakeholder involvement in programme planning and direction were included. In several interventions though (e.g. PRODEL, Mass Education and TPL) these processes were limited and did not encompass some major components of the interventions. The evaluation team found no particular evidence that key stakeholders, including primary stakeholders, were involved in design decisions in the interventions studied. Sometimes stakeholders became involved during implementation (e.g. PRODEL, ASK, TPL) and in a single case also in evaluation (STD/NFE).

The mechanisms for participation, consultation and dialogue are often “instrumental” in the sense that they serve to provide inputs for programme managers to make adjustments to the interventions rather than representing direct involvement by primary stakeholders in programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation (RAAN-ASDI-RAAS, NFE 2 and NFE 3, StatsSA).

Stakeholder participation is practised to some degree in project implementation; in the mass education programmes mainly through the Centre Management Committee structure. In reality they are often dormant or inactive. ASK- legal aid, practices consultation with primary and secondary stakeholders in legal aid and training activities, and STD has participatory approaches included in its gender training.

Some programmes have clear structures to facilitate stakeholder participation – primary, secondary as well as key stakeholders (e.g. LGDSP, Police Academy, ASK), to ensure that women and men are represented and that diverse views are incorporated into the planning and implementation of activities. Representation in elected councils, employed officials on task teams, consultative councils and consultative workshops are examples of mechanisms which facilitate “functional” participation.

Sida and its partners are faced with an institutional choice concerning participatory mechanisms, i.e. whether to work through intermediaries or to integrate participatory mechanisms in the organisations. NGOs are often relied on in implementation (e.g. mass education, credit components, local government support, legal aid). The experience is that they vary considerably in terms of experience with stakeholder participation and gender issues. NGOs tend to take an interest in these areas, but their experience cannot be taken for granted. Better screening of their capacity and relevant experience would enhance the quality of using NGOs as intermediaries.

The use of Technical Assistance has a better chance of targeting priority areas. The priority areas in interventions, however, are often tangible outputs. Approaches such as dialogue on gender equality and time-consuming consultative participatory processes tend to be given less priority and are easily postponed, especially if there is no overt demand from users/primary stakeholders for being involved in decisions. In one case, an NGO, STD, functioned as TA and intermediary for institutionalising gender equality capacity in the mass education programmes in Bangladesh largely by use of participa-

tory methods in gender training. The relationship and outcomes were successful for a while, but has not been continued partly due to turnover of key staff in the partner organisation. Nevertheless, such models of using intermediaries where the partner organisation does not have in-house capacity deserve more consideration and pilot testing.

In the following tables an attempt is made to summarise the lessons on stakeholder participation in the analysed interventions along the dimensions in the analytical framework. A stakeholder mapping was undertaken during the documentary assessments of each intervention. This was followed up in the field where the evaluation team met with representatives of primary, secondary and key stakeholders. This is equally relevant in South Africa and Nicaragua where national gender expertise is also available.

Intervention	Participatory Mechanism	Stakeholders Participating	Level of Participation	Link to Gender Equality
NFE 2, Non Formal Education – Basic Literacy for Youth and Adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Centre Management Committee (CMC) – few functional – Dialogue through intermediaries/NGOs and TA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary Stakeholders in courses (50 pct. female) – limited in decision making to a few Learners' guardians – in principle one woman pr CMC Secondary/NGOs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 (Passive) 2 (Information receiving) 3 (consultation w. implementers/NGOs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential for functional (level 5) participation, e.g. enhancing relevant gender contents in curriculum and – for interactive participation (level 6) incl. women and male learners in longer run and in few centres through enhanced intermediaries (and TA)
PLCE – Pilot project on Post-Literacy & Continuing Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CMCs – Implementing NGOs – NGO 'forum' and TA facilitation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary sth. in courses – limited in decision making – more than 50 % female learners Secondary/NGO 'forum'; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 (Passive) 2 (Information/ training receiving) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential for functional (level 5) participation, e.g. enhancing gender relevance of skills training, and – for interactive participation (level 6) incl. women and male learners – through enhanced intermediaries and TA
NFE 3, Basic Education for Hard to Reach Urban Working Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – CMCs – (few are functional) – staff training – needs assessment workshops (UNICEF) – teachers' meetings – NGO and TA participatory approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary stakeh. girls and boys in courses – Guardian representation on CMC Secondary stakeholders/NGOs varying participatory experience and participation in dialogue with DNFE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 (Passive) 2 (Information receiving) 3 (consultation w. implementers/NGOs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential for functional (level 5) participation, e.g. enhancing relevant gender contents in curriculum and – for interactive participation (level 6) incl. women and male learners in longer run and in few centres through enhanced intermediaries (and TA)

Intervention	Participatory Mechanism	Stakeholders Participating	Level of Participation	Link to Gender Equality
ASK – Human Rights and Legal Aid Resource Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Advocacy on HR through media, campaigns, seminar – yet consultations with GoB (and NGOs) – Legal awareness training of local support persons – Monitoring of/with clients of HR violations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Primary and secondary stakeholders in concrete legal/ court cases – e.g. on violence – Secondary and key stakeholder participation in advocacy and actions towards legal reform (Strategic gender interests) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 (Information giving to public and stakeholders) 3 (Consultative process w. GoB) 5, 6, 7 (Functional, interactive and self-mobilisation) practised within ASK and in relations with civil society, GoB and international partners – e.g. on trafficking of women and children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Links to issues of violence, abuse, rights and empowerment of women, (men) and children at household and community level – Legal reforms potential (meeting strategic interests)
STD – Steps Towards Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – STD approach, tools and concepts – Gender advocacy through DWIN and PNGOs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary and secondary stakeholders in training, capacity dev. etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 (Information giving) 3 (Consultation with DWIN, PNGOs, GoB, Sida) 6 (Interactive participation in training and internally in STD) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explicit ref. to Sida's Gender policy

Not surprisingly the two NGOs, ASK and STD, have integrated mechanisms for stakeholder participation in their operations, i.e. for secondary stakeholders such as other NGOs in the DWIN network, more than for ultimate beneficiaries. Obstacles to stakeholder participation, beyond the potential representation of centre committees CMCs in the mass education programmes, are embedded in national policies – or the lack of the same, e.g. efficient decentralisation.

Primary stakeholder participation in the courses provided by the mass education – programmes – if mainly passive and information giving forms of participation – provide opportunities for addressing the ‘multiple constraints’ on women’s and girls’ participation that are pronounced in Bangladesh. Participation in the mixed girls and boys courses in NFE 3 provide opportunities for sharing light on children’s and women’s rights and some understanding of gender responsibilities.

Paradoxically secondary stakeholder participation, which takes the form of monthly meetings between the implementing NGOs in the NFE 3 literacy for urban working children is criticised by the partner organisation and NGOs themselves for being somewhat irrelevant. The meetings require long trips from the participating cities to Dhaka, the meeting agendas tend to concentrate on administration rather than on action on common problems, and many resources are tied up in not too productive meetings.

The Embassy actively seeks to promote mechanisms for participation and stakeholder involvement in dialogue on gender equality in public appearances, donor fora and interventions. Both the Embassy and partners are faced with frequent staff turnover and reductions, which affect relevant memory and experience. How best to optimise limited resources to facilitate participation for gender equality, i.e. through intermediary TA and NGOs on an off-and-on or on a continuous basis requires continuous attention.

Table 4.4b Participatory Mechanisms in Four Interventions, Nicaragua

Intervention	Participatory Mechanism	Stakeholders Participating	Level of Participation	Link to Gender Equality
Police Academy	Consultative Counsel	women primary and secondary	3 (Consultative)	6 (Interactive) Direct link to gender goals
Police Academy and National Police	Workshops on 5 Year Plan	women and men secondary	3 (Consultation)	Direct link to gender in some elements of 5 year plan
Police Academy	Consultations with Civil Society	Secondary stakeholders	3 (Consultation)	Links to issues of violence
RAAN/ASDI/RAAS – Support to Strengthening Democracy on the Atlantic Coast	Municipal Technical Units	Women primary stakeholders	4 (Material Incentives)	Women beneficiaries of technical training
RAAN/ASDI/RAAS	INDEL (Local Development)	Women and men primary stakeholders	5 (Functional)	Women involved (with men) in designation of public works
PRODEL – Programme for Local Development	Micro-Credit	Women and men primary stakeholders	4 (Material Incentives)	Consultation as clients – technical aspects of credit
PRODEL	Infrastructure	Women and men primary stakeholders	5 (Functional)	Women involved (with men) in designation of public works
PROSILAIS – Support to Local Integrated Health Systems	Municipal Level	Women and men secondary stakeholders	6 (Interactive)	Establishing annual operational plans
PROSILAIS	Community Level	Women and men secondary and primary stakeholders	5 (Functional)	Network of volunteers and health workers with potential to emphasise gender changes

The Police Academy intervention and PROSILAIS both provide some examples of the use of consultative mechanisms to develop or guide initiatives relating to gender equality. PRODEL has included a fairly strong mechanism for primary stakeholder participation in the infrastructure component but has limited opportunities for participation beyond level four (material incentives) in the credit component of the programme. “The exclusionary character of many participatory interventions” and “the power effects of differences within the category ‘woman’ “(Cornwall 2001:53) is a fact as credit in the present form cannot include the poorest women.

In PROSILAIS participatory consultation is often used for operational planning but can be linked to gender issues such as family violence. In the case of the Police Academy and National Police intervention, participatory and consultative mechanism have a diagnostic and strategy planning function and are directly linked to gender equality. In all the interventions there is a clear potential for stakeholder participation to serve as a medium for strengthening the gender equality focus of the interventions in later phases.

Table 4.4c Participatory Mechanisms in Four Interventions, South Africa

Intervention	Participatory Mechanism	Stakeholders Participating	Level of Participation	Link to Gender Equality
Statistics SA	Provincial Statistical Forum	Government Departments and NGOs	3 (Consultative)	Stakeholders are clients (statistics users), no direct link to the GE goal
LGDSP – Local Government Development Support Programme	Consultations with civil society, Task teams, Surveys	Women and men primary and secondary	2 (information giving) 5 (functional participation) – also representative participation in task teams	Direct link to gender goals in some components of the programme design
CUP – Comprehensive Urban Plan	Public Participation Process – consultations with civil society	Women and men primary and secondary SDA	2 (information giving) 3 (consultative)	Direct link to intervention “gender approach”
TPL – Trees, Paving and Lighting Project	Community meetings, labour intensive works	Women and men primary and secondary	2 (information giving) 4 (material incentives)	Target for women's participation

Democracy in South Africa is still deeply affected by the apartheid years. The lost opportunities for genuine and equal participation by people of all races and both sexes affect the structures of Sida’s partner organisations, which today are to promote community participation in interventions. There is only a very short history of consulting with people, on which to build. Many stakeholders, and not only those who are foreign and external, do not fully comprehend the constraints embedded in this historical fact.

Two interventions (LGDSP and CUP) intended to give people a voice in determining their own development through “representative participation”. This type of participation, in which mechanisms are developed that give people the opportunity to take part in decision-making and to genuinely influ-

*Urban development,
a local meeting
place in Port
Elizabeth, South
Africa.
Photo: Hartmut
Schmetzer.*



ence decisions need careful approaches and must grow over time. In NCP where there are race/ethnic, gender and class divisions, an intervention of short duration can establish a basis for working towards meaningful types of participation, rather than treating beneficiaries as passive recipients of information or as providers of information to meet project objectives. Although there should be care in designing approaches to participation, meaningful participation is vital in overcoming the heritage of exclusion.

The types of participation identified in the interventions included some attention to gender issues. Some interventions integrated gender equality into participatory mechanisms through representation and participation of women and men – in task teams, at meetings and so on. For some implementers, the realisation that women’s voices were important because they had their own priorities was an eye opener. “I would never have learned to listen with ‘gender-sensitive ears’ if it hadn’t been for CUP,” said one white male urban planner. KCC officials said that they had come to realise, in retrospect, that meetings could have been better timed to suit the diverse needs of community members. Rather than working entirely through wards, they now saw the necessity of getting all people involved, “including at street level.” And they had discovered that they should have analysed the responses of women and men to various urban planning issues collected during the PPP and reflected these in the Plan. Such learning experiences provide an important basis for taking participatory processes forward.

4.3.4 Conclusion

Short duration interventions and interventions that enable building on lessons learned from one phase to the next, provide opportunities to link participation and gender equality. Opportunities lie mainly in ensuring continuity – i.e. in keeping dialogue alive about WHY participation is vital. HOW to achieve optimal participation is even more important.

Assuming that staff in government partner organisations have the necessary commitment, resources and skills is risky. The evaluation team believes that national expertise, e.g. NGOs, institutions or consultants with practical hands-on experience is a vital resource to help build capacity in interventions over time.

More lessons need to be gained on how Sida best works with partners through intermediaries. The evaluation team witnessed scattered, but growing, interest and willingness to work with community stakeholders, demonstrating that opportunities have been created through the interventions. These opportunities should be nurtured or they risk being lost.

It is important to be realistic about stakeholder participation when pursuing gender equality and poverty reduction. Allowing rhetoric on poverty reduction, gender equality and participation to prevail without serious accompanying actions undermines people’s confidence in the benefits of democracy and development.

4.3.5 Lessons Learnt

- 1 A lack of specificity in Sida programme and project documentation that makes it difficult to determine *who actually participates* in ‘participatory’ interventions is confirmed by field assessments. ‘Clarity through specificity’ at all levels can be much enhanced in implementers’ perceptions and subsequently in documentation. Opportunities for working through *intermediaries*, e.g. TA and NGOs need careful consideration.
- 2 Limited *primary stakeholder participation* in design and in decision making in interventions and in community affairs is a reflection of *national contexts*. Sweden has taken a role in and should continue to support the development of national and local supportive environments not only for *instrumental participation but also for transformative participation*.
- 3 The types of participation identified in the interventions were mainly *passive, information giving, consultation or participation for material incentives*. Some interventions integrated gender equality into participatory mechanisms through representation of women and men – in task teams, at meetings etc. Listening to women’s voices and appreciating they had their own priorities was an eye-opener for some implementers. What is ‘*optimum*’ *participation* is not constant and should be addressed as interventions develop and staff capacity permits other forms.
- 4 Issues of *difference* evoke a number of paradoxes for participatory development. An obvious issue is the extent to which a singular voice of ‘women’ masks the multiple voices of elite, illiterate, rich, young, poor, religious or ethnic majority or minority women. The exclusionary character of many participatory interventions compound exclusion of both poor women and poor men.
- 5 Dealing with *conflicts of interest and values* in participatory events, between different groups and sometimes between women and men, poses a number of dilemmas which project implementers need to be equipped to handle.

4.4 Mainstreaming

This section first reviews the concept of mainstreaming, as stated in Sida’s Action Programme and as further developed by the evaluation. The findings of the evaluation on important components of mainstreaming are presented. This is followed by an analysis of the opportunities for mainstreaming taken up by the interventions as well as on the problems encountered and opportunities that were missed. The section concludes that the experience and interest in gender equality mainstreaming that has been gained in a short period of time and the efforts that have so far been made deserve to be continued and strengthened. Doing so should increase the likelihood of achieving the stated goal of reducing gender inequalities to improve the lives of people whom the interventions reach.

4.4.1 The Concept of Mainstreaming and its Application

Mainstreaming is the most important strategy for achieving gender equality goals, both in Swedish development co-operation generally and in specific programmatic interventions. Sida's Action Programme provides the following explanation of mainstreaming:

*Mainstreaming implies that attention to equality between women and men should pervade all development policies, strategies and interventions. . . It aims to ensure that women as well as men are involved in setting goals and in planning so that development meets the priorities and needs of both. . . Mainstreaming requires that analysis is made of the potential impact on women and men of development interventions in all areas of societal development. Such analysis should be carried out **before** the important decisions on goals, strategies and resource allocations are made.¹⁹*

The evaluation team noted in one of its concept papers the need to take account of different institutions or levels where mainstreaming is relevant: "changes are required in order to mainstream gender equality considerations in Sida as an institution IN ORDER TO improve programmatic interventions IN ORDER TO influence the lives of women and men in partner countries."²⁰ The team also noted that mainstreaming does not refer primarily to increasing the number of women who participate in an intervention activity or who receive services through the intervention, unless the form of women's participation is situated in a deeper understanding of gender equality as encompassing relationships between women and men.

The evaluation developed a scaled, process model of mainstreaming, based on the assumptions that gender equality goals in programme design were important and that gender analysis was the key entry point to mainstreaming. This six-point model of a mainstreaming process includes the following components:

- 1 *Zero*: no mention or superficial reference to gender equality;
- 2 *Pro Forma*: only scant mention of gender equality in documents, with no gender analysis;
- 3 *Integrated*: some gender analysis carried out but not used to influence intervention design;
- 4 *Institutionalised*: results of gender analysis evident in some aspects of intervention design;
- 5 *Implemented*: gender-sensitive elements of the intervention, as designed, actually implemented; and,

¹⁹ Front cover of Sida's Action Programme, April 1997

²⁰ Evaluation of Sida's Support to Development Co-operation for Promotion of Gender Equality, *Inception Report*, Annex 6.1: "Goals of Gender Equality," February 2001, p. 38.

- 6 *Monitored and evaluated*: systems developed and data collected and analysed to report on gender equality results in the intervention.

4.4.2 Overall Findings on Mainstreaming

The evaluation team set out to assess how mainstreaming in the interventions studied corresponded with the above-mentioned “mainstreaming scale.” For a number of reasons the evaluation team found that the envisioned “process” of mainstreaming did not correspond well with the reality of the specific interventions. Rather than a coherent and systematic mainstreaming “process,” the steps in the model constituted a “menu” of choices, from which interventions mainstreamed in an eclectic manner. Thus, for example, even if an intervention had no gender equality goal, gender analysis or other evidence of mainstreaming, an evaluation of one phase of the intervention might include attention to gender equality among its objectives. Even where a gender analysis had not been made, some elements of mainstreaming – such as a structure for mainstreaming gender equality – might be institutionalised and activities implemented.

LGDSP in South Africa was the only intervention with a well-developed mainstreaming strategy and a fully developed programme structure to implement it although the Support to the *Police Academy* intervention included many key elements. The other interventions did not have a clearly defined mainstreaming strategy. In *NFE 2* a gender strategy was drafted but not (yet) accepted by the governmental implementing agency. In the pilot project on *Continuing Education* under *NFE 2*, some individual participating NGOs had their own institutional gender policy and strategy, but there was no consistency or conformity across the intervention as a whole.

In general, then, key mainstreaming elements were dispersed across the interventions but were not brought together into a recognisable strategy in individual interventions. The majority of the interventions showed only embryonic evidence of progress towards gender mainstreaming. The two interventions that showed the greatest degree of efforts towards gender mainstreaming (*Police Academy* and *LGDSP*) also had the most explicit gender equality goals.

The interventions that limited their attention to gender equality to establishing a specific level or rate of women’s participation often showed little evidence of most elements of gender mainstreaming. On the other hand, interventions that targeted women’s participation had often undertaken some gender sensitisation training, which is typically one of the necessary inputs to gender equality mainstreaming.

In order to unpack the broad concept of gender equality mainstreaming, the evaluation looked at important elements, within interventions and across the three country case studies. These elements, which are part of mainstreaming processes or which effect or impact on the degree of mainstreaming, will be discussed separately in subsequent sub-sections:

- Gender analysis based on gender and sex-disaggregated data;
- Establishment or availability of permanent structures to promote mainstreaming;
- The roles and responsibilities of different actors;
- Ownership of interventions and mainstreaming processes;
- Institutional aspects, such as capacity and resources;
- Building capacity: gender training, tools and expertise; and,
- Variation in the possibilities provided by intervention design and history.

4.4.3 Gender Analysis; Availability and Use of Data

Sida's Action Programme establishes gender analysis as the key entry point to mainstreaming of gender equality considerations into intervention design and implementation. A gender analysis, as part of the design process prior to programme inception, reveals gender inequalities specific to the chosen sector or relevant to the intervention theme. The findings from a gender analysis assist key stakeholders to make programmatic choices and decisions so that the planned intervention will have the greatest potential for making a positive contribution to changing unequal gender relations.

Gender analysis, as part of intervention design process, requires that sex-disaggregated statistics and gender-relevant data are already available or can be obtained, for example through needs assessment studies or surveys. This requires resources – human capital (gender expertise), time and funds. These requirements, in addition to the fact that gender analysis was a relatively new and unfamiliar activity to many whom the evaluation team met, perhaps explain why gender analysis was not consistently practised, as per Sida guidelines, in the interventions studied.

Efforts in this direction were, however, identified. For example, in Bangladesh *NFE* attempted with help from *STD* to make a gender needs assessment. The initiatives by the *National Police* to equip police officers to handle cases of family violence and to ensure justice for women and children obviously grew out of analysis of serious problems in these areas in Nicaraguan society. Two interventions conducted baseline studies (*NFE 3 – Literacy Training for Hard to Reach Urban, Working Children and LGDSP – the Children's and Poverty Alleviation Task Teams*).

Although sex-disaggregated data were collected in both cases, these were not systematically recorded, analysed and reported. Hence the opportunity was lost to follow up the findings by making alterations to programme implementation or to use for monitoring. Indeed, lack of monitoring and follow-up on the gender equality effects of interventions is a common reality for most of the interventions studied by the evaluation team.

The lack of availability and/or inadequacy of sex-disaggregated statistics and gender-relevant data have been identified, in the Fourth Global Confer-

ence on Women in 1995 and subsequently, as an obstacle to documenting gender inequalities as an important step to taking actions to address them. On the other hand, in Nicaragua and to some extent in Bangladesh there are at least some research studies, which may provide an analysis of gender inequalities generally or in specific sectors.

The situation in *South Africa* is somewhat different, in that the relative situations of poor women and men, girls and boys, of different population categories is only now being documented and analysed by *Statistics SA*, including with Sida support. The comprehensive information in the excellent South African *Country Gender Profile*²¹ commissioned by Sida was available too late to make an impact on programmatic decisions in the interventions studied. The country strategy process could have reflected more of the Country Gender Profile. For new interventions the *Country Gender Profile* should be a significant resource for gender analysis.

In summary, the evaluation found that some form of gender analysis had been undertaken in some of the interventions studied. The evaluation team concluded that it is important to encourage the further use of gender analysis in the design phase of new interventions as one way of providing a basis for programmatic choices that will have potential to make positive contributions to changing unequal gender relations. In the absence of current capacity and other resources to undertake an intervention-specific gender analysis, country profiles and other available statistics and documents could be utilised. These can assist interventions to make a more specific connection between gender inequalities and sectoral goals. (See section 2.2 on national context).

There is also a clear need to work harder to ensure that gender analysis which is carried out finds a more concrete reflection in the design and implementation of specific Sida supported interventions.

4.4.4 Structures to Promote Gender Equality Mainstreaming

A ministry, government department, local government or other agency that implements an intervention provides a permanent institutional structure capable of supporting a gender mainstreaming process, in contrast to a temporary structure created specifically for programmatic purposes. At the same time, gender mainstreaming should be promoted at both levels – institutional and intervention. A variety of situations were found in the twelve interventions studied.

The *Police Academy* in Nicaragua provided an example of the importance of institutional development and links between permanent institutions to support gender mainstreaming. The Police Academy is linked to and supported by a counterpart, the National Police, which increasingly has appreciated the benefits of working towards gender equality. It has created the National Gender Council, a structure that supports gender mainstreaming. In addition, the

²¹ Country Gender Profile: South Africa 1998, by Sally Baden, Shireen Hassim and Sheila Meintjies, Sida

*Police officers in
Ocotal, Nicaragua.
Photo: Magnus
Rosshagen.*



National Police has links with local civil society organisations that promote gender justice.

A good example, among the interventions, of an entire institution which has developed some awareness of the importance of gender equality mainstreaming is *Kimberley City Council*, one of the implementers of *LGDSP* and also responsible for two other interventions – *CUP* and *TPL*. The fact that only modest progress was made is not due to lack of organisational commitment, at least during the period when the Gender Mainstreaming Task Team existed, but rather to lack of experience and capacity. In other interventions, one part of the implementing institution – rather than the institution as a whole – took on gender mainstreaming responsibility. In *StatsSA*, for example, the Gender Unit has this responsibility; however, it is small, not very visible within the overall structure, and has deliberately chosen not to be highly pro-active on promoting gender equality throughout the entire institution at the present time.

A single post is not sufficient to promote mainstreaming within a large and complex institution. One government agency implementing two interventions, the *Directorate of Non-Formal Education* in Bangladesh, created but then abandoned a gender focal point position. In any case, experience has shown that successful gender mainstreaming requires institutional commitment as a whole, rather than restricting the issue as the responsibility of a single person or small unit.

The evaluation found examples in which a mainstreaming structure had been developed at intervention level. The youth clubs that focus on sex education and gender relations, under *Prosilais* in Nicaragua for example, are a single programme element out of many. In contrast, mainstreaming was incorporated into the programme structure as a whole in *LGDSP* in South Africa. In this intervention the provincial task team to promote gender equality

and poverty alleviation was well integrated into the phase 1 programme structure but was not a permanent part of the implementing agency, the Department of Housing and Local Government. Similarly, the Gender Mainstreaming Task Team at *Kimberley City Council* (KCC), also a part of the LGD-SP structure, was a temporary body that initiated interest in mainstreaming within the Council during a specific period. The Task Team was not systematically linked to the promotion of mainstreaming in the two other Sida-supported interventions implemented by KCC during the same period, CUP and TPL.

In summary, the interventions exhibited diverse arrangements with regard to structures to promote gender mainstreaming, including a single post, a structure or mechanism within an intervention, a unit within a permanent structure, the creation of links among co-operating partner agencies (as with the Police Academy) or a commitment on the part of an entire institution.

In general terms, the more permanent the structure created to promote gender equality, and the more clear the support it received from senior managers, the more likely it was to provide leadership and accountability on the issue for Sida's partner institution.

4.4.5 Roles and Responsibilities of Different Actors

Success in gender equality mainstreaming is dependant on many actors who share a conviction that equality is a pre-condition for meaningful development co-operation, who are committed to the strategy of mainstreaming and who are equipped with skills to play their role in the larger exercise. Evaluation findings about the roles of individual actors within Sida, within the implementing institutions and within civil society revealed the complexities of the many dimensions of this issue.

Sida Staff

Sida's Action Programme is clear that all staff have responsibility to support partners to work towards gender equality through a strategy of mainstreaming. Despite this, the evaluation found – not surprisingly – differences in the level of interest and commitment of staff, both at headquarters and in the embassies. The “personal factor” plays an important role in influencing whether or not opportunities to mainstream are identified and taken up, either at design stage or subsequently.

From the positive perspective, committed and interested programme staff with significant mainstreaming experience and skills have been in a position to ensure that gender equality mainstreaming is prioritised in the design and inception of particular interventions. The evaluation team met such “gender advocates,” both at headquarters and at the Embassies. They seem to have played a particularly important role in contributing to some intervention designs in *South Africa*. In *Bangladesh* gender advocates at the Embassy were instrumental in forging the link between STD and DNFE. At the same time they were very active in

feeding ideas into the formulation of Sida's Gender Equality Action Plan. The gender equality "stamp" on the Country Strategy 1997 was also significant and for a while made the CS a show-piece concerning Gender Equality.

Similarly in Nicaragua, it seems striking that Sida has had more success in working on ownership of the gender equality goal with the very large Ministry of Health (MINSA) than in working with some smaller partner agencies (e.g. PRODEL). PRODEL being responsible for the urban development project could be expected to be much more open to influence by Sida in its role as the primary donor agency.

An issue raised in both *Nicaragua* and *South Africa* was the role of a specific officer with particular responsibility for promoting gender equality: the gender focal point or, in the case of South Africa, the Social Development Adviser. Evidence from *Nicaragua* and *Bangladesh* shows that a gender focal point has the potential to promote gender equality mainstreaming. However, there is some risk that the gender focal point will be assumed to carry the major burden of responsibility for promoting gender equality so that others in the embassy may become less concerned with its success.

A more substantive post for gender equality mainstreaming as in South Africa also made a difference in increasing the capacity of other Embassy staff and of intervention personnel.

The evaluation team was told that some Sida staff understood that the gender focal point should take the *main* responsibility for gender equality mainstreaming, with correspondingly less responsibility taken up by others. The balance of roles of the Social Development Adviser in South Africa (1996–99) was also viewed by some as problematic: transferring skills to and supporting other Embassy officers on the one hand versus working on a hands-on basis with intervention personnel on the other.

It is evident that a responsive environment exemplified in the personal commitment of the Ambassador and of a few staff with long-term gender equality commitment and memory is vital to the full implementation of mainstreaming as a strategy.

Many Sida staff whom the evaluation team met emphasised the importance of personal interest in and commitment to gender equality mainstreaming by senior management. Where the Ambassador or the head of department, for example, was a gender advocate, there appeared to be more consistent support for and concrete work on the equality goal and the mainstreaming strategy.

Programme Implementers

Programme implementers include individuals in partner organisations implementing an intervention. They may be officials of government departments or of other national institutions. Or they may be nationals who have been contracted by a programme implementation office for a fixed period. The evaluation team found that the commitment – or on the other hand the resistance – of a key manager or leader (department head, mayor, etc.) can

make a difference in the degree to which mainstreaming elements are taken on board by others in the institution. The same was the case with Sida staff. Progress towards gender equality was found to be positively influenced by a “trend setter,” who required that all staff take the issue seriously or – on the other hand – negatively affected by a “resister” who paid only lip-service to dialogue on gender equality and set an example to others, of ignoring the issue.

The evaluation findings confirmed that the role of consultants and technical assistance personnel, sometimes nationals but more often externally recruited persons is crucial. The evaluation found one example (*CUP*) where the consultancy firm that won the tender decided to include a gender approach in designing and implementing the intervention. Although Sida usually includes some reference to “gender issues” in TA terms of reference or job descriptions, key informants in Stockholm emphasised to the evaluation team the need for precision and clarity in TA contracts as well as mechanisms to hold consultants accountable.

This issue is particularly complex since much TA is concerned with administration of programme implementation or with sector-specific and highly technical issues, neither of which make consultants instant gender equality experts or sensitive to national social and cultural conditions for integrating equality issues. Some international TAs take it for granted that gender equality is taken into consideration in their work, since they count themselves as socially conscious and gender sensitive individuals. The point is that good intentions are not sufficient. A clear definition of the role and accountability of consultants and TA in working with gender equality mainstreaming was emphasised by many at Sida as an important priority.

Members of Civil Society Organisations

Members of relevant civil society organisations also play an important role in mainstreaming. The Bangladesh country study, for example, demonstrated that members of individual gender-sensitive and gender-responsive NGOs implementing activities under *NFE 2 – Pilot Project on Continuing Education* made important contributions and provided models and inspiration to others of what is possible. In *Nicaragua*, as well, gender activists and advocates made positive contributions to some of the interventions studied. However, in the South African study it was found that there are, as yet, only weak civil society structures in the *Northern Cape Province* where three of the interventions were located. In this case there were fewer opportunities to link local gender activists and advocates with the promotion of gender mainstreaming in specific interventions, although opportunities existed to make use of national expertise.

In summary, findings from the interventions showed the important role that diverse actors have in working with Sida’s gender equality mainstreaming strategy. Key actors, such as Sida management personnel, all Sida programme officers, leaders in partner organisations and programme implementers – in particular external consultants and TA – are crucial to taking gender mainstreaming processes forward. (See chapter 3 on dialogue and actors).

4.4.6 Ownership of Interventions and Mainstreaming Processes

The Action Plan states that “mainstreaming of attention to equality between women and men. . . is the responsibility of governments.”²² Therefore, national ownership of the development co-operation programme and ownership by the implementing partners of the interventions that comprise it is critical. The evaluation found that the reality of ownership varies according to the relative strength and capacity of the partner and the opportunities for Sida to take a pro-active role when confronted by resistance or apathy.

The three countries presented interesting contrasts regarding ownership. The *South African* national authorities support gender equality; however, individual institutions have little if any experience with mainstreaming, and there is bureaucratic resistance in some institutions where race and cultural differences continue to be an issue. Thus, there is genuine national-level ownership, which may not be reflected however in some institutions implementing Sida-supported interventions.

The current government of *Nicaragua* is not open to discussion of gender equality and other issues of democracy and justice and, despite policy commitments, cannot be said to “own” this issue. However, the evaluation team found that at institutional and programme level there is considerable interest in addressing the equality goal and in working with mainstreaming processes.

In Bangladesh, the situation is different again: gender equality has been integrated into key policy documents over the last decade, and a considerable commitment to the issue can be registered in government circles; but there is also a large gap between policy and practice in some of the government institutions which Sida supports.

To what degree has Sida been an “intervening” actor that attempts to push an intervention (and the institution implementing it) in the direction of “owning” responsibility for gender equality mainstreaming? A pro-active stance by Sida in influencing the design of the *LGDSP* in South Africa had positive results in that the programme (but not necessarily the government department hosting it) clearly saw itself as owning the issue. In contrast, the Embassy in *Bangladesh* has been very pro-active and creative in linking gender equality activists and advocates to the Department of Non-Formal Education in an attempt to promote more ownership within the institution. The immediate results may seem limited, compared to the large investment of effort, but this does not rule out that similar attempts should be pursued again.

In *Nicaragua* Sida has had some success in promoting ownership in its support of programmes at the Ministry of Health (PROSILAIS) partly because of the common support of gender equality as a goal by all the donors and technical partners supporting the SILAIS system. In contrast, there are other partner agencies in Nicaragua which present opportunities for a more vigorous dialogue on ownership of gender equality as a goal.

²² Action Plan, p. 9

In general, the evaluation team found that although individual institutions and interventions may endorse the importance of mainstreaming, national ownership of the issue is critical and requires a continuous and pro-active stance on the part of Sida. It is a challenge for Sida to tap into the opportunities created in supportive policy declarations and to adjust its own gender equality and mainstreaming policies to specific national policies. The challenge is particularly difficult in situations where the gap between policies and practice is gross or where momentary apathy and resistance is dominant and reluctance to dialogue persists.

4.4.7 Institutional Aspects, such as Capacity and Resources

Potentials for gender equality mainstreaming are also related to other institutional aspects, in addition to ownership.

The length of time during which Sida has supported an intervention can make a difference in whether, and to what degree, some components of mainstreaming have been put in place. For example, three of the four interventions examined in *South Africa* had either completed one implementation phase only or had been completed in a period of less than two years. This is an inadequate amount of time in which to see components of gender mainstreaming taking root. All of the interventions studied in *Nicaragua* had gone through two or more phases. Those that had featured attention to gender equality in some specific ways over the years had potential to continue to strengthen mainstreaming components in the future. On the other hand, Sida's direct support to gender mainstreaming in the Department of Non-Formal Education in *Bangladesh* encountered problems of rapid staff turnover and apparent lack of interest which have limited its effectiveness.

One determining factor is institutional memory, which is often lost in conditions of high staff turnover as in the *DNFE* in Bangladesh. Staff members trained in gender mainstreaming have left, and there are no mechanisms within the department to preserve and build on the institutional memory of what took place with regard to mainstreaming in the past, to assess whether it was effective or not and how to go forward in a constructive way.

The loss or dilution of institutional memory of gender equality initiatives is inherent in much development co-operation, including at the embassy itself. Some of this could be countered by better monitoring systems.

In general, the evaluation found that there was only limited structured monitoring, of gender equality in particular, both by the interventions studied and by the institutions within which interventions are situated. Without explicit gender equality targets, it is hard to measure effects. *Prosilais* in Nicaragua has a health information system that is not designed to provide sex-disaggregated information, making it impossible therefore to track changes over time. In general, all of the partner organisations examined across the three country studies had weak monitoring and data management capacity.

An important question is whether an intervention and its implementing agency/institution is able and willing to allocate resources for monitoring, including GE monitoring. It was the impression of the evaluation team that sometimes resources seem to be available but not necessarily used with great efficiency. In Bangladesh, for example, the DNFE has a large monitoring team, some of whom have a limited sense of the purpose of their work, who work with outdated monitoring forms and whose data seem to have limited applicability, at least in the *NFE 2* and *NFE 3* projects. An ongoing revision of the M & E system will hopefully integrate GE monitoring data.

In summary, although the evaluation team received the impression that the longer duration of some projects *may* be a factor in the degree to which mainstreaming becomes more institutionalised, this is almost impossible to verify with any precision. Institutional memory, about what has worked in the past and what has not – and why, is important. An important challenge now for Sida and its partners is to learn more specific lessons about gender equality mainstreaming through supporting the development of appropriate M & E systems.

4.4.8 Building Capacity: Gender Training, Tools and Expertise

The evaluation found that in almost all interventions, and across the three countries, Sida had supported efforts to build gender equality mainstreaming capacity.

Many Sida programme staff have taken the gender training course in Stockholm. In addition, some have participated in training exercises for Embassy officers or in intervention level training. Many of those interviewed expressed appreciation for training that had increased their understanding of how attention to gender equality issues adds value to development co-operation efforts. However, they also said that the training did not always provide mainstreaming skills sufficiently specific to the sectors or countries in which they work. As staff have left the institution or have taken on new types of responsibilities, and new staff are recruited, additional demands arise for continued training and for follow up.

Sida has also been active in all three countries in supporting gender training within and across interventions. In *South Africa*, for example, the Embassy supported gender training for the urban development interventions and *LGDSP* organised gender training for members of municipal task teams. However, recipients noted that one-off training, although opening up a new field of interest for some, alienated others who were resistant to equality values in the first place, and, without follow-up and reinforcement, was insufficient to promote mainstreaming. In the *urban development interventions* where the Social Development Adviser at the Embassy participated as a co-trainer, recipients told the evaluation team that a general introduction to gender equality assisted with creating awareness and appreciation of the issue. But also that the training, which came mid-way through the implementation period,

could not have been expected to make the required impact on processes that were already well underway.

In *Bangladesh*, Sida was instrumental in supporting a new NGO, Steps Towards Development (*STD*), as a gender training resource for other agencies. Sida's efforts to link *STD* in providing gender training to *DNFE*, as the implementer of literacy programmes was very successful while committed staff supported the endeavour. Problems later arose because of waning capacity within *DNFE* in the wake of high staff turnover coupled with questions about the relevance and quality of *STD* training.

Sida has devoted a great deal of effort to developing and circulating a wide range of tools for gender mainstreaming: sector-specific guidelines, "think pieces" on concepts, short "prompt sheets" on thematic topics and so on. The evaluation team found that although some of these tools had been distributed to partners, there was little evidence that they had been used. Some partners found them "not relevant" to the local context. One intervention, *LGDSP*, developed its own manuals as the main output of the first phase. However, the practical advice in the *LGDSP* Gender Mainstreaming Manual was not integrated into the companion manuals on Poverty Alleviation or on Children's Issues, demonstrating that local intervention-based expertise may need to be supported by guidance on linking cross-cutting development issues to each other. There is opportunity for this in Phase 2.

In embassies, programme staff told the evaluation team that some of the guidelines were too long and detailed to be easily used, and that other tools were too brief and/or too general.

In summary, the evaluation found that short training courses, both for Sida officers and for intervention staff and their partners, are the most commonly used method to build capacity. Although training has contributed to increased awareness of the importance of gender equality issues in development generally, it has often been a one-off exercise or was too short in duration and not sufficiently sector- and thematic-specific to make the expected impact. Despite Sida's work to develop tools for gender mainstreaming, these appear not to be widely used.

The general feeling, both on the part of the evaluation team and those interviewed, was that the whole issue of tools for gender mainstreaming needs to be re-thought, especially in the context of their utility for programme staff who are faced with heavy work burdens and pressures of time. As one aspect of supporting capacity building of partners, the possibility to locate locally developed mainstreaming tools and share these with partners is important.

In addition, there appears to be scope for improving the effectiveness of training in gender equality if this training can be directly linked to other operational tasks (monitoring and evaluation for example) relevant to the sector at hand. Managers need to see how the gender equality goal is relevant and can be implemented in the sector, target group and geographic concentration area of the interventions.

4.4.9 Variation in the Possibilities Provided by Intervention Design and History

The evaluation team found that Sida's processes of working with intervention design was an important factor in heightening or limiting possibilities for promoting gender equality mainstreaming in the context of the history of particular interventions.

With newly proposed projects or programmes, Sida has scope to request a partner to think about the relevance of gender equality within the particular sector or theme in question. It also has the possibility to react to a partner's proposal and to incorporate greater emphasis in pre-appraisal missions and reports on the way in which gender mainstreaming will enable the intervention to have more impact in changing unequal gender relations.

The evaluation found that Sida had taken up the possibility to engage in constructive dialogue on intervention design in some cases, as with *LGDSP*. However the proposal for *Trees, Paving and Lighting* project in Kimberley, where a women's participation target was included as requested by Sida, gender equality considerations were not elaborated on.

In contrast to new interventions, where Sida has scope to promote gender equality mainstreaming with partner agencies, other programmes have long histories with design elements that have changed over time. The evaluation team envisioned this as "jumping onto a moving train," where the cars are filled with many passengers (that is, different categories of stakeholders) and much baggage. Thus, GE had to be addressed as an add-on in the already on-going non-formal education project in *Bangladesh*. Both the late entry as well as the mass nature of the programmes would have made it difficult to establish a GE mainstreaming strategy.

In addition to the contrast between small projects such as TPL and massive programmes that target millions of people such as the literacy programmes, mainstreaming of gender equality into intervention design is also related to the sector. Where experience has already been built up, as in the *health* sector in Nicaragua, design issues are more easily tackled than in sectors, such as *urban planning*, which comprise many technical specialities, in some of which gender mainstreaming experience is quite recent.

In summary, the evaluation found that potentials for including a gender equality mainstreaming perspective may be present (but not always seized) in new interventions and in specific sectors where experience has accumulated; and that more difficulties are encountered in programmes that have a long history or in sectors where mainstreaming has not yet generated considerable experience on which to build.

4.4.10 Analysis – Constraints and Opportunities

Mainstreaming is a relatively new strategy, not only for Sida but for all agencies working to promote gender equality in development co-operation. Al-

though many agencies and development-oriented stakeholders were working with mainstreaming before 1995, it was only at the Fourth Global Conference on Women (Beijing 1995) that the *Platform for Action* clearly stated that a mainstreaming strategy was a priority. Sida's Action Programme of 1997 endorsed mainstreaming as the key strategy for promoting gender equality in development co-operation. Four years is a short period of time to assess whether mainstreaming "works" or not.

The evaluation findings show that there have been serious efforts to work with elements of mainstreaming in many of the interventions studied. The findings also show that these efforts have increased the visibility of gender equality goals intended to improve the quality of the intervention and hence its effects and impacts on women's, men's and children's lives.

Because mainstreaming processes are complex and multi-faceted, it is not surprising that the interventions studied did not meet the high level of ambition outlined in Sida's Action Programme. This would probably have been too much to expect, in the short period since integration of a mainstreaming approach has begun and given that some of the interventions studied were initiated earlier.

It is also not surprising that, rather than a coherent and integrated mainstreaming process, most interventions exhibited the presence of only some mainstreaming elements, and in general showed only embryonic evidence of working with gender mainstreaming elements and processes.

The evaluation identified some of the important opportunities present in some of the interventions, which will support further development of mainstreaming processes. These include:

- The personal commitment to, interest in and capacity for promoting gender mainstreaming on the part of relevant stakeholders, both Sida programme officers and partner and programme staff working within their own areas of responsibility.
- Sida's efforts to be pro-active in fostering a sense of ownership of gender equality mainstreaming, at national level and by implementing partners.
- The presence and use of structures, both within partner organisations and within interventions, in which commitment to and responsibility for mainstreaming is located.
- Efforts made to ensure that relevant gender expertise is made available in some interventions to enhance their ability to work with mainstreaming processes.
- Sida's efforts to support capacity building in gender mainstreaming among its own programme staff and in partner organisations through gender training and development of tools.

At the same time, the evaluation found that there were weaknesses as well as opportunities and potentials that would have supported a more comprehen-

sive approach to mainstreaming in the interventions. Among these are the following:

- Although new interventions, as they are being designed, offer good opportunities to work with a gender equality mainstreaming process, it is important that some of these do not “slip through the cracks” in Sida’s procedures. Interventions that target women’s participation, for example, do not meet the gender equality goal and offer limited potential for gender mainstreaming. Explicit consideration of how GE goals could complement women’s participation targets would be a way of addressing opportunities.
- It is easier to establish mainstreaming structures within interventions than it is to advocate for and support permanent mainstreaming structures within partner institutions. However, permanent structures within institutions (such as departments) with a responsibility to promote gender equality mainstreaming – gender units, focal points, etc. – offer more potential for sustainability of mainstreaming efforts than do time-bound intervention structures such as GE teams, WID-committees and so on. This means that Sida needs to explore the opportunities and to be patient and pro-active, often over a substantial period, while at the same time continuously engaging in dialogue with partners on the purpose of a possible supportive structure for GE mainstreaming that will not be isolated or marginalised within the institution.
- At national level as well, Sida, as an intervening, pro-active partner, needs to demonstrate long-term commitment to gender equality. All opportunities to take advantage of openings and changes in a national environment in which there is an awakening interest among many stakeholders who are increasingly advocating for gender equality should be pursued. In particular, continuing if not increased support to civil society organisations that work with gender equality, gender justice and women’s empowerment is important.
- Efforts to promote gender mainstreaming are still highly dependent on particular individuals (gender advocates at Sida and trendsetters within partner institutions). Although all programme officers have the obligation to work with development co-operation goals, there is wide variation in how particular individuals carry out their responsibilities. Sida has no system of incentives and sanctions related to production of positive results (or otherwise) in gender mainstreaming. The evaluation team was told by some key informants that it is almost as if gender mainstreaming is “voluntary.”
- It is rare and perhaps early to find a comprehensive and integrated gender mainstreaming strategy in interventions, against which lessons could be learned and progress tracked. However, further work on strategies to address the various elements of gender mainstreaming, also clearly linked to poverty reduction strategies within the intervention, would enable interventions to go beyond the embryonic and eclectic nature of mainstreaming efforts that the evaluation noted.

- It is important to encourage, build on and learn from what seemed to be nascent efforts in some interventions to carry out some form of gender analysis. When sex-disaggregated data have been collected, for example, there is an opportunity for Sida to engage in dialogue to ensure that it is rolled up into reports and fed back into a learning process. Dialogue, and if necessary provision of gender expertise, can demonstrate how sector-specific gender inequalities can be identified through analysis.
- Sida should take every opportunity to support existing M & E systems, where necessary making them more gender sensitive, and to promote the development of relevant M & E systems in interventions/institutions where these do not exist. The evaluation team recognises the demands that monitoring places on resources to build and sustain capacity. However, without M & E the opportunity to learn lessons and to make adjustments within interventions becomes problematic. It is also important that Sida continues to systematically include gender equality mainstreaming efforts and effects in review and evaluation TORs, as was the case with one intervention studied in Nicaragua.
- Although Sida has made significant efforts to provide gender expertise to programme officers and to the interventions, the evaluation noted that the effort has been fragile, with posts being cancelled, responsibility rotated or changed, and lack of clarity about the division of responsibility between gender experts and others that work with intervention design and programming. The evaluation team is of the view that gender equality mainstreaming is a professional skill, and that there are opportunities (in pre-appraisal missions, sector reviews, programme reviews and evaluations for example) to ensure that expertise – preferably local – is present.
- The amount of work that Sida has invested in gender training has been important and needs to be continued, both within Sida and in support to interventions. Gender training of consultants and TA is an important priority. At field level opportunities need to be identified to support capacity building through more locally provided sector-specific and “hands-on” training, which is of good quality, provided at the correct time, and followed up and reinforced after an initial introduction. Dialogue on this specific issue can be directed to finding local resources including expertise, written resources and tools that can assist interventions to train relevant stakeholders. Regular reviews and updating of GE training materials used in Sida’s short courses could take advantage of using pertinent case studies and examples developed in intervention-related training.
- Despite the efforts Sida has made to develop and circulate guidelines and other tools on gender mainstreaming, the evaluation team found little evidence that these are used or are felt to be suitable for specific purposes. In some respects, the evaluation got the sense, from key informants, that some officers will be resistant to working with gender mainstreaming tools despite all efforts to make them usable and relevant. On the other

hand, the evaluation team felt that the concern about length and detail of some of Sida's guidelines should be taken seriously if and when the institution re-thinks the issue of appropriate guidelines and other mainstreaming tools.

4.4.11 Conclusion

The evaluation has recognised that gender equality mainstreaming is relatively recent, complex and requires bringing together many elements including gender analysis, development of relevant structures, involvement of many different types of actors and stakeholders, local ownership and development of institutional capacity. The evaluation also recognises that conditions in interventions that have a long history, that were initiated before publication of Sida's Action Programme and that involve many stakeholders make it more difficult to establish processes and elements of mainstreaming.

However, the evaluation did find evidence that many of the interventions studied had taken up some elements of mainstreaming, albeit in a partial way. It is encouraging that in some interventions progress has been made towards building some of the specific components of a mainstreaming strategy: national and intervention ownership of the issue, anchoring mainstreaming within institutional and intervention structures, making use of gender expertise and gender sensitisation of a wide variety of stakeholders.

In particular, one must recognise the importance of personal and institutional commitment and ownership to making progress in mainstreaming in order to achieve changes in unequal gender relations. Fostering commitment and ownership requires promoting understanding that gender equality mainstreaming improves development co-operation for the benefit of all primary stakeholders. Development co-operation structures not only need committed staff, however, but accountability mechanisms as well.

The constraints and missed opportunities identified do not build a case for abandoning a complex strategy after what has been a short time of testing and experimentation. Rather, it is now time to consolidate and strengthen the substantial efforts that have already been made, by addressing the problems and taking advantage of the opportunities that the evaluation has identified.

The stage has now been reached in all three case study countries where interest in gender equality mainstreaming has been generated. The many components of a mainstreaming process can be further addressed as on-going interventions enter new phases and as lessons from interventions that are completed are transferred to new programmes and projects within the same sector. There is increasing recognition that continuing efforts within Sida to support gender equality mainstreaming so as to reduce glaring gender inequalities that limit individuals' access to livelihoods, services and knowledge and that allow them to exert more control over their own lives should be strengthened, and not be abandoned at this early stage.

However, some rethinking of Sida's mainstreaming strategy may be in order. The evaluation findings suggest that mainstreaming should not be presented as a rigid process, which implies an "all or nothing" approach. Rather, that in addition to trying to achieve more consistency on incorporating the basic features of gender equality mainstreaming into the design of future interventions, opportunities to continue to work on mainstreaming in on-going programmes are not lost sight of. The optimal entry points for engaging in mainstreaming strategies cannot be identified a priori but need to be considered from case to case. It will also be important in the future to integrate gender equality mainstreaming into poverty reduction initiatives in such a way that GE does not lose its visibility.

4.4.12 Lessons Learned

1. Mainstreaming has many facets and components and is therefore a complex process. Nonetheless, and although the strategy is relatively recent and mainstreaming results are still embryonic, the interventions studied exhibited some progress in mainstreaming. To further promote mainstreaming Sida can encourage learning mechanisms and more overall accountability when new interventions are being designed. At the same time, potentials and opportunities that exist or arise in established, long-term interventions (e.g. non-formal education) should not be lost sight of.
2. *Gender analysis* needs to be recognised and supported as a key element of development thinking. Gender analysis does not necessarily need to "stand alone," as in intervention design for example, but can be clearly integrated into other types of analysis such as poverty and sectoral (e.g. health and education) analyses.
3. Progress towards mainstreaming is enhanced when there is a "*gender enabling corporate culture*" (i.e. organisational structures, procedures and norms) within Sida and when development co-operation supports the development of a similar culture, both within partner agencies and in interventions (e.g. urban and local government capacity building).
4. Mainstreaming will be promoted by more rigorous *learning mechanisms* and *accountability* required of programme managers and follow-up by senior management in assessing the performance of programme staff in delivering gender equality results. This applies not least to *consultants* and TAs who play an important role in managing interventions and whose accountability should be clear and enforced.
5. Mainstreaming requires adequate *resource allocation* – in programme funding, in development of monitoring and evaluation capabilities, in training and in delivering gender equality advisory services (e.g. in literacy programmes) – at appropriate levels of specialisation when these are needed.
6. The principle of national and partner *ownership* in development co-operation does not mean that Sida cannot be a pro-active partner in supporting

mainstreaming at national, institutional and intervention levels. Consistency and continuity in working with partners to increase commitment to gender equality is important.

7. The experience and *capacity of consultants and TA* who are so important in managing interventions on behalf of Sida and its partners could be more systematically addressed. Good will, or a stated responsibility to “work with gender,” has been shown to be insufficient, in the absence of proven skills and capacity. *Terms of Reference* and *job descriptions* could be much more explicit about responsibilities for gender equality mainstreaming with respect to specific sectoral issues (e.g. urban development and education). In addition, the inclusion of accountability mechanisms in TA contracts would make development co-operation efforts more focused and, ultimately, more meaningful to beneficiaries. TA themselves often need gender equality training and sensitisation.
8. Sida should continue to promote mainstreaming by supporting partner gender and poverty reduction activists from *civil society* as these are important in advocating on difficult or controversial issues (e.g. gender violence, macro-economics and national budgeting) and in pressing for change.
9. *Gender training*, within Sida and within interventions, is important and deserves continued support. Care needs to be taken, however, that training is work-, sector- and/or intervention-specific and that gender issues are mainstreamed into other training areas such as M&E and LFA. In partner countries Sida can play an important role to facilitate links between professional national/local trainers who can deliver relevant training at intervention level. Local gender trainers can also assist to provide relevant guidelines and tools.
10. It is important to strike a balance between the need to *skill* all programme and intervention personnel (including consultants) with general capabilities in gender equality mainstreaming and the need to recognise that gender equality is a field of *professional expertise* that some interventions may require.

4.5 Effects of Interventions on Gender Equality

Perhaps the most important question facing the evaluation teams in each country concerned what had been the changes in gender equality brought about, or at least contributed to, by the interventions under study. Since the prime purpose of the evaluation was to assess how Sida’s development co-operation has contributed to gender equality, it is at the level of the interventions that one could expect the clearest set of answers. Specifically, the evaluation teams aimed to identify and classify different types of changes in gender equality which could be linked to the interventions:

- Changes in women’s practical gender needs and strategic gender interests;

- Effects of the interventions on women's empowerment; and
- Changes relating to men, male roles and masculinities.

In addition, it is important to examine some of the factors contributing to or detracting from the positive changes in gender equality associated with each of the projects. The methodology for measuring changes, and the limitations involved are discussed in chapter 1.

4.5.1 Practical Gender Needs and Strategic Gender Interests

One definition of practical gender needs and strategic gender interests was presented by the evaluation team in the *Evaluation of Sida's Support to Development Co-operation for Promotion of Gender Equality: Inception Report*.

Practical gender needs and changes:

Practical gender needs derive from daily living conditions and the prevailing gender roles of women and men. Therefore, women and men – when consulted separately – will often identify different practical needs, for example, women for an easily accessible water source and men for roads. Because practical gender needs are related to daily living conditions and women's and men's needs to meet their basic welfare requirements, they are quite easily perceived and articulated. Because practical needs are embedded in the existing gender-based division of labour, women and men may agree on the changes but realising these needs may be difficult.

Strategic gender interests and changes:

Strategic gender interests are related to power structures and derive from the subordinated position of women in relation to men. Strategic gender interests exist at several levels, for example women's lack of voice within the household, women's lack of influence on decision making in government and lack of recognition and value placed on unpaid household work in national accounts Strategic gender changes are related to strengthening women's position in society in relation to men. These changes include women's increasing consciousness of their subordination, increasing their opportunities for choice and self-determination and organising together to bring about transformation of their own position and of the prevailing social order in which they live. Strategic gender interests and changes are, therefore, highly contested.

It seems, therefore, that the key differentiation between changes in gender equality at the level of practical needs and strategic interests can be found in the distinction between changes that do or do not challenge pre-existing, gender based, divisions of labour and roles and which do or do not strengthen women's social position in relation to men (with the latter much more likely to be contested).

When these distinctions are made clear, it is possible to begin to classify most of the gender equality changes associated with each of the interventions under study. It has to be recognised though, that practical and strategic changes do not exclude each other but in reality often appear together.

In the case of *Nicaragua*, all four interventions produced notable *practical gender changes* in that they provided improvements in the infrastructure and living conditions of women participants or they provided improved services and/or training and employment. The police academy and PRODEL projects provided improved infrastructure and living conditions for women participants while PROSILAIS provided improved health services to women in reproductive roles. Similarly, the Police Academy project in Nicaragua supported improvements in personnel and health services to women police cadets (and graduate officers), while the Atlantic Coast project in local governance provided employment and training to women working in municipal technical units.

When it comes to producing or contributing to *strategic gender changes* however, there is a strong distinction across the four Nicaragua interventions in that the Police Academy and PROSILAIS have a much clearer claim to such impacts than the Atlantic Coast or PRODEL interventions. This can be directly linked to the fact that, over time, the Police Academy (or rather support to the National Police) project incorporated a series of goals and targets that directly challenged the prevailing gender based division of labour within the national police. In the case of PROSILAIS, the goals were less explicit but the emerging “gender equality approach” pursued by this intervention in locally based primary health care seems to have allowed the exploration of different gender based roles in both providing and consuming health services.

In the case of the Police Academy intervention, changes in the self-awareness of women police cadets and officers in terms of their relative position of power to men was linked to emerging efforts to counter male officers’ resistance. In addition, the institution established and began to achieve quantitative targets in enrolment, graduation, leadership and non-tradition assignments for women officers who represent a direct challenge to pre-existing roles and power relationships. In the case of PROSILAIS, the evaluation team reported evidence that the gender equality approach to locally administered health services was including attention to gender relations among youth and was encompassing non-traditional male roles in childcare and health care.

In *South Africa* the major gender equality change noted across all the interventions reviewed was a contribution to more awareness and understanding of gender equality concepts (often noted as coming from the interventions and from parallel initiatives in gender equality throughout South African society). This change could be seen as a pre-cursor to other, more tangible changes in gender equality – both practical and strategic. On the other hand, the South Africa evaluation team also strongly emphasised that the improved awareness and sensitivity to gender equality which was given momentum by Sida support may be lost if concrete support to gender equality is not provided in the future.

Other than the important raising of awareness and sensitivity to gender equality, the South Africa evaluation team noted that concrete changes in the direction of gender equality reported by the programme implementing bodies were modest.

Some components of the Local Government Development Support Program (LGDSP) and the Trees, Paving and Lighting Project (TPL) reported employment benefits for women participants along with a specific effort to increase women's participation in employment in both projects. Similarly, LGDSP reported modest increases in the number of women councillors, though this was not due to the intervention specifically. It should be noted that one component of the Trees, Paving and Lighting Project contributes to high mast lights in residential areas with high crime rates can be seen as a potentially strategic change in that it may reduce women's extreme vulnerability to sexual assault in these neighbourhoods with an attendant improvement in their security and mobility.

Perhaps the most important long-term, and at least potentially strategic, gender change associated with the interventions in South Africa was reported in relation to the Statistics South Africa programme. Since StatsSA is the only institutional partner in the South Africa interventions with a Gender Unit, it is able to use that unit to introduce gender issues into the design of statistical instruments such as survey questionnaires. The Gender Unit has successfully introduced new questions in surveys in order to acquire better data on topics and in sectors where women's contribution has not been visible or has been poorly counted. Better statistical information on women of all races, by comparison with men, represents a change that has strategic implications.

It seems that the Statistics South Africa intervention provides the best example of a programme, which may make a longer-term contribution to strategic gender change in South Africa. However, since the Gender Unit was not supported directly by Sida but by another donor, the case illustrates that it is still important for Sida to keep up dialogue with other stakeholders, including other donors, in order to influence shared goals. Dialogue also ensures that Sida keeps abreast with national priorities and for discussing optimal approaches to gender equality mainstreaming and changes.

In the case of *Bangladesh* each of the four interventions studied were able to identify (although not necessarily to quantify) significant gender changes for women and girls who participated. In the case of the Non-Formal Education interventions (NFE 2 and NFE 3) a range of changes were reported through workshops, observations at training sessions by the evaluation teams and through interviews with programme staff, social scientists and participants. Table 4.5 below illustrates some of the different gender changes associated with NFE 2 (adult literacy training) and NFE 3 (literacy training for hard-to-reach urban youth).

In the social context of Bangladesh, where isolation of women from each other and from group socialisation, and from socialisation with men outside their families, has been a critical barrier to gender equality, it seems that mass education programmes such as NFE 2 and 3 have a major contribution to make to strategic gender changes through reducing the isolation and marginalisation of specific groups of women.

Table 4.5 Practical and Strategic Gender Changes Associated with Non Formal Education Programmes in Bangladesh

Category of Gender Change	NFE 2 (Adult Literacy)	NFE 3 (Hard-to-Reach Youth)
Practical Gender Changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – participation goal (50%) ensure women participate in literacy benefits – regular attendance and better performance than men contributes to women's self esteem – young women have gained employment as teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – majority of learners are girls and majority of teachers are women (although majority supervisors are men) – better attendance and completion rates for girls – learners and teachers afforded opportunities for further education
Strategic Gender Changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – training has made women more effective at working in groups and improved community acceptance of such work – participation in group literacy training has a direct impact on reducing women's isolation and breaking down "purdah" – range of women's participants age from 11 to 45 has promoted generational exchange of understanding on gender – rights information content of training improves awareness of rights of women and men 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – socialising with teachers, supervisors and community management committees contributes to breakdown of stereotypical gender roles – diminished isolation of girls and increased mobility (especially for domestic servants) – gender equality content contributes to understanding of rights and sense of empowerment

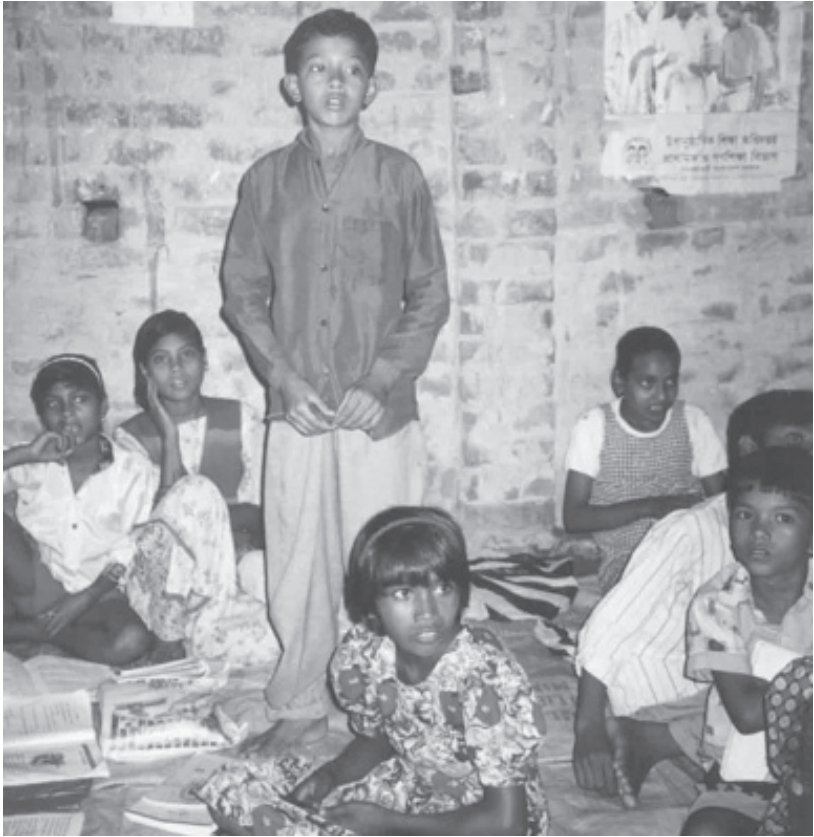
Unlike the evaluation teams for Nicaragua and South Africa, the Bangladesh evaluation team was able to examine two gender equality specific interventions in the form of support to two Bangladeshi NGOs with strong mandates for the promotion of gender equality.

Ain o Shalish Kendro (*ASK*) was set up as a human rights and legal aid resource centre in 1986 by a group of Bangladeshi lawyers, journalists and social development workers. It proclaims its goal as “to establish rule of law based on principles of justice, gender equity and human rights”.

ASK focuses primarily in practical gender needs in that it provides direct legal aid to Bangladeshi women and girls who otherwise would have no means to access basic protection or justice. They represent individual women and girls in their legal efforts to combat injustices in areas relating to early marriage, polygamy, oral divorce, violent abuse of women and girls and in combating violence relating to dowry.

The study of ASK illustrates how responding to practical gender needs in an area such as legal services merges into challenging gender determined roles and contributing to strategic gender changes. For example, legal clinics and drop-in-centres were intended to meet the practical, survival needs of women and children victims of abuse and violence. However, the act of attending the clinics has the effect of reducing isolation and confinement of women under *purdah* practices. Legal assistance has also contributed to a growing awareness of women' rights among the clients and their families.

*Mixed literary
classes for urban
working children
help break segrega-
tion between girls
and boys.
Photo: Britha
Mikkelsen.*



Steps Towards Development (*STD*) as an organisation supported by Sida in Bangladesh has focused directly on playing a catalytic role in support of gender equality and thus may be seen as representing a form of strategic change in its own right. It has focus on gender training and the establishment of a network of development workers with a strong grounding in gender analysis and the principles of gender equality. Similarly, STD has focused on efforts to institutionalise gender equality within government agencies like the Department for Non-Formal Education (DNFE). Thus far, STD's efforts may be seen as having the potential to contribute to strategic changes in that it will take more time and more monitoring to establish that STD's efforts have brought about significant gender equality related change in institutional behaviour.

Conclusions: Practical and Strategic Gender Changes

- To a greater or lesser extent, all but two of the interventions examined are contributing to practical gender changes. The most significant practical gender changes reported by the evaluation teams have been experienced in relation to projects in health (PROSILAIS), democratic development (Police Academy in Nicaragua and ASK in Bangladesh), urban infrastructure (PRODEL Nicaragua and TPL South Africa) and basic education (NFE 2 and NFE 3 in Bangladesh).

- In Nicaragua the interventions with the most significant strategic gender needs (Police Academy and PROSILAIS) are also those with the most explicit gender equality goals and/or “approaches”.
- In Bangladesh, a key aspect of women’s strategic gender interests involves breaking down the isolation which traditional gender roles and cultural practices have resulted in. For this reason, mass education programmes with significant women’s participation targets have a strategic gender impact despite their lack of explicit gender equality goals.
- It is important not to overemphasise the distinction between practical gender needs and strategic gender interests as experienced by women and men involved in the interventions studied. In a number of interventions (Support to the National Police Academy in Nicaragua, and support to DNFE in Bangladesh for example) meeting practical gender needs with improved infrastructure or access to services could be seen as an essential step to the identification and addressing of strategic gender interests – e.g. influencing laws and regulations.
- The review of gender changes through the lens of practical needs and strategic interests is both practical and useful but it highlights – as in the case of ASK in Bangladesh – the complex inter-relationship between the two concepts. It seems that meeting practical gender needs (such as infrastructure needs for women police cadets or the need for legal representation for women in Bangladesh) can contribute to strategic gender changes in that it strengthens women’s group identity and organisational capacity in relation to men.
- In South Africa, one intervention, Statistics SA, exhibited potential to make a lasting and long-term impact on changes in strategic gender interests, though results may require more donor co-ordination and dialogue in future.

4.5.2 Women’s Empowerment

In only four of the twelve projects (Police Academy and PROSILAIS in Nicaragua and ASK and STD in Bangladesh) would it be fair to say that the evaluation teams identified women’s empowerment as an explicit programme goal or priority. As reported by the South Africa evaluation team, however, women’s empowerment was an important side effect of some of the other interventions. Many women participants in the programmes in all three countries reported that they had gained in self-esteem and self-confidence, had acquired new skills and had grown into new roles. As one woman in South Africa expressed this; “I never thought that one day I could stand in front of people and address them”.

In *Nicaragua*, as noted above, the Police Academy and PROSILAIS interventions reported the strongest contributions to women’s empowerment. In both cases a feature of this empowerment effect was an increased sense of *group* identity among women participants and a sense that there was *greater accept-*

ance among men of the new roles and increased relative power and prestige of women within the institutions as a result of the initiatives. In the case of PRODEL and the Atlantic Coast interventions in Nicaragua, the self-reported sense of empowerment of individual women participants came about through their access to either services, training or economic resources. As such the empowerment they reported was not so much a group as an individual experience.

As noted in the case of *South Africa* empowerment for many women was experienced as a side effect of participation and their experience in taking decisions within the structures of the projects themselves or within partner institutions.

In *Bangladesh* women's empowerment may be found in the benefits of participation in NFE 2 and NFE 3 mainly through the effect these programmes have had on reducing women's severe isolation. Perhaps of equal importance, women have reported improvements in their self-confidence and self-esteem as a result of the fact that women have generally experienced better attendance and better results than men in the literacy training provided under these two initiatives. The legal services provided by ASK in Bangladesh represent a direct contribution to empowerment in that they quite literally provide women with some of the necessary tools for exercising their legal rights (with greater or lesser success). Finally, there is a potential that STD's focus on gender training will, over the longer term, contribute to women's empowerment but this effect has not been directly observed by the evaluation team.

Conclusions: Empowerment of Women

- Women's empowerment effects were strongest in programmes with a specific set of goals aimed at changing women's status and power relative to men (PROSILAIS, Police Academy, ASK);
- Similarly, in Bangladesh where women face critical problems of isolation, mass education programmes with participation targets for women can have a significant empowerment effect by improving women's access to each other and to public places;
- In other programmes, those empowerment effects reported by women were mainly a side effect of their participation with the exception of economic empowerment resulting from training (Atlantic Coast) or access to credit (PRODEL).
- In only two interventions was there explicit recognition that empowerment of women would challenge traditional male roles and would require efforts to include men in education and dialogue aimed at positive changes in male roles or in reducing male resistance (Police Academy and PROSILAIS).

4.5.3 Men, Male Roles and Masculinities

The three country evaluation teams reported a very different cultural and political context for a discussion of male roles and masculinities in Nicaragua, South Africa and Bangladesh.

In Nicaragua, for example, the very high level of public concern with the issue of family violence and the role of “machismo” in Nicaragua society has contributed to an overt national debate on masculinity in Nicaraguan popular culture and its association with violence. There is a national network of men working toward a re-definition of masculinity in Nicaragua which is not so closely associated with violence and which is more open to equal gender relations.

This is clearly in contrast to the situation in South Africa and, especially, in Bangladesh, where recent political, social and religious developments have tended to reinforce male stereotypes, especially relating to control over women and their movements and to the use of violence.

Nonetheless, it is useful to consider how the interventions under study have contributed to a change in accepted male roles and to men’s (and women’s) concepts of masculinity.

In *Nicaragua* only the Police Academy and POSILAIS programmes showed evidence of either raising a challenge to accepted male roles or contributing in some small way to the social definition of masculinities. These interventions, because they address the relative positions of women and men in the hierarchy and operations of the health system and the police, provoked a reaction and placed male roles in question.

Since the police and security forces in any country enjoy a monopoly on the socially legitimate use of force, efforts to promote women’s roles in operational aspects of policing call into question the popular association of masculinity and violence.

PROSILAIS has found its way into the national debate on male roles and masculinities mainly through the issue of men’s roles in reproduction and childcare. As PROSILAIS works to provide women more choice in reproductive and sexual health it calls into question men’s traditional exclusive right to decisions in this area. Similarly, PROSILAIS attempts to assert the responsibilities of men in relation to child health and to provision of childcare which raises issues regarding men’s traditional roles and responsibilities within the family.

In the case of *South Africa* the evaluation team found little evidence of any thinking on male roles in the context of progress towards gender equality and women’s empowerment in the four interventions. The team was told by a few key informants that men have a responsibility to contribute to equal opportunities for both women and men but heard no examples of male roles being questioned.

In the case of *Bangladesh* male and female roles may be influenced through the four Sida supported interventions (for example the role of women and girls in community gatherings and discussions as a result of NFE 2 and NFE 3). However, changes are rarely talked about in terms of male roles and masculinities within the programmes or in the gender discourse in Bangladesh. At the same time, the mass education programmes do provide forums for discussion of issues relating to male roles such as acid throwing and violence.

And the work of ASK and STD is focused on dealing with gender inequalities and re-dressing power balances, both of which call male roles into question. There is an opportunity for each of the four interventions studied in Bangladesh to be extended to include a more overt discussion of male roles and masculinities.

Conclusions: Male Roles and masculinities

- Only two of the 12 interventions, and only in Nicaragua, provided evidence of a direct intent to deal with issues of male roles and masculinities through elements of the programmes themselves.
- The more explicitly an intervention focuses on achieving gender equality goals through improvements in women's relative position of responsibilities and power within a given institution, the more it is likely to challenge existing definitions of male roles and masculinities;
- As interventions achieve results in women's empowerment, they face resistance and are more likely to confront the need to constructively engage men in an effort to re-define roles or at least accept women in new roles;
- In the case of Bangladesh, the four interventions studied lack an articulate vision of how they might address changing male roles and masculinities but they do have opportunities to begin such a dialogue (despite the very conservative cultural, political and religious environment).

4.5.4 Factors Affecting Change in Gender Equality

In light of the findings and conclusions reported in this section it is possible to isolate the following factors either promoting or inhibiting gender equality changes in relation to the countries and interventions under study.

Factors Promoting Gender Equality Changes (At Intervention Level)

- In the absence of explicit gender equality goals, and monitoring of goals attainment, participation targets and improved access to services and infrastructure for women and girls still have the potential to contribute to practical gender needs (and may, in doing so, establish pre-conditions for identifying and perhaps even addressing strategic gender interests);
- It is clear that the higher the visibility and specificity of gender equality goals (especially as they relate to changing women's roles and powers in relation to men) the more likely a given intervention is to contribute to achieving women's strategic gender interests;
- A flexible approach to programme design and development which permits gender equality goals and targets to be articulated and implemented during the life of the programme instead of only at specific design stages seems to increase the possibility of gender changes;

- Both practical and strategic gender changes can be dramatically advanced when programmes include permanent measures and administrative/consultative structures to identify and advance gender equality targets and goals;
- “Ownership” of the gender equality theme by the host institution is a critical factor enabling gender changes. This ownership can sometimes be enhanced by linking gender equality to other goals such as institutional modernisation (Police Academy) or to reformed and modernised public services (PROSILAIS in health);
- Institutional ownership of the gender equality goal can be enhanced by the development of a “constituency” of key managers within the institution in question. This constituency should include men as well as women; and,
- If an intervention is to achieve specific gender equality changes, these can be improved and amplified if they are linked to a public debate of the issues concerned and if they are subject to advocacy by civil society organisations (i.e. the Police Academy and PROSILAIS projects and ongoing debates on family violence in Nicaragua and Bangladesh).
- Participatory approaches and dialogue are crucial. Sida will only understand the priorities of women and men through a process of joint reflection that involves the intended beneficiaries as agents in their own development.

Factors Inhibiting Gender Equality Changes

- Lack of specificity in gender equality goals and targets in programme design;
- Absence of efforts to monitor and evaluate gender changes and gender equality results;
- Absence of ongoing dialogue on gender equality with the programme authority and limited Sida input over time due to staff shortages;
- Resistance by conservative interests at the political and institutional level and active or passive resistance by men who may have an interest in maintaining inequalities at an institutional level (especially if the programme does not acknowledge and address potential resistance);
- Cultural resistance or the absence of a public discussion of gender equality as a challenge to conservative political and religious movements; and
- Basic organisational and administrative weaknesses in host institutions so that limited staff capacities, very high staff turnover rates, poor data management abilities, weak reporting and similar factors act to block efforts at organisational change in support of gender equality.

Chapter 5

Understanding Concepts

This chapter has two sections. The first section, on local meanings and uses of concepts, use the central concept of gender equality to explore the diverse ways in which the concept resonated with various stakeholders in the three country studies. The second section represents a broader view, in which general lessons for the applicability of the concepts are pulled out. The key messages are that it is not useful to search out the ‘perfect’ definition, but rather to be sensitive to specific national and cultural contexts. At the same time keeping in mind that international agreements and commitments offer basic guidelines as to how gender equality concepts can be defined and used.

5.1 Local Meanings and Uses

One component of the evaluation was to examine how concepts of gender equality, empowerment of women, stakeholder participation, practical and strategic gender equality changes and effects and mainstreaming are understood and used by various stakeholders in the three country case studies, as an input to giving these concepts more relevance in Sida’s development co-operation in diverse national and socio-cultural contexts.

5.1.1 Gender Equality

In addition to defining gender equality as equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of *women* and *men* and *girls* and *boys*, the Action Programme makes the following points:

- Equality is not a “women’s issue” but concerns both women and men;
- *Gender* refers to socio-cultural relationships between women and men, girls and boys, which vary across time and place; and
- The structural causes of inequality, that constrain economic independence, political decision making, exercise of human rights, ability to be free of poverty and violence and that are often related to socio-cultural factors such as negative attitudes about girls and women, are part of a broad understanding of what gender equality means.

The evaluation findings in the three countries showed that there is a shared understanding of these main aspects of gender equality between Sida, other bilaterals, and some partners: academics, members of women’s organisations, workers in progressive NGOs, counterpart agencies of government

and project staff. In general, this means that gender equality refers to unequal power relationships between women and men and that addressing inequality means dealing with the structural causes mentioned in the last bullet, above.

However, the evaluation also found some difference of opinion.

For example, in *Bangladesh* the human rights NGO, *ASK*, uses the concept of *gender equity*, arguing that this is a broader, more inclusive concept than *gender equality* which, they say, refers narrowly to a 50:50 formula, as in distribution of assets to female and male inheritors. The evaluation team noted that *equity* is often used by human rights organisations that focus on legal frameworks. However, *ASK* takes account of more than the legal framework by including in its understanding of *equity* the political, socio-cultural and economic dimensions that others include in the concept of *equality*. The evaluation team also encountered other instances, as in South Africa, where *equality* and *equity* appear to be used as synonyms.

The evaluation found that stakeholders associated with a particular intervention may attribute a wide range of possible meanings to gender equality, each of which may be relevant in a particular context. To continue with the example of *ASK*, key informants told the evaluation team that they have deliberately chosen to move away from a universal definition and to work instead with particular meanings that resonate with different stakeholder groups. What is interesting about the *ASK* example, is that the several interpretations of the gender equality concept are purposefully related to the lived realities of the diversity of primary stakeholders with whom the NGO works.

By comparison to the way in which *ASK* explores the various connotations of gender equity, the evaluation found that it was common for many stakeholders to use *gender equality* (also the less specific concepts of *gender*, *gender focus* or *approach*) to refer to one or more of a broad range of meanings, including:

- Specific attention to women;
- Numbers (quotas, targets, representativity) of women and men;
- Unequal rights between women and men, related to the concept of *empowerment*, and the human rights of women; and
- Equal access to and control over resources by women and men.

The first bullet point, above, deserves particular mention. There is still a misunderstanding by many persons involved in development work that “gender” is a synonym for “women,” and this of course has implications for the way in which this understanding is translated into objectives and activities.

Several of the interventions examined did not use the concept of gender equality to clarify unequal relations between women and men. Instead, the focus was narrowly limited to numbers, quotas and targets of females and males.

However, the evaluation also found that the focus on numbers takes on meaning in a historical context where discrimination under *apartheid* has distorted the opportunities and choices of women and men of different races. In

South Africa, the meaning and use of gender equality, or a gender approach, was often taken to mean *representativity*: how many women and men, of the different population categories, are present in staffing structures, for example, and whether government policy to transform institutions through, *inter alia*, affirmative action is bringing more black and coloured women and men into higher positions. This understanding of gender equality had a significant effect on the way in which objectives and activities in the four interventions studied were defined – with emphasis on numbers, rather than on unequal relations between women and men.

The *South African* country case study also revealed the importance of sensitivity to the effects of *apartheid* on people’s understanding of concepts, and to the differing views that stakeholders of different population groups had about equality, race and culture. White secondary stakeholders usually did not speak of race and culture in relation to gender equality, whereas black women (in particular) stressed that gender equality could not be understood apart from *respect* for cultural and racial difference, *tolerance* of diversity and recovery of a sense of individual *dignity* as a human being of a specific race, class and sex. The evaluation found that in the interventions studied, project staff found it easier to work with an understanding of gender equality based on numbers and representativity, than with a broader view that takes relations between women and men, of different races and cultures, into consideration. On the other hand, primary stakeholders associated with the South African interventions could articulate many differing interpretations of gender equality, encompassing unequal gender relations as well as equal opportunities and rights.

In interventions in *Nicaragua* that are implemented among ethnic communities on the Atlantic Coast, the evaluation team was told by partner agencies that the concept *gender equality* lacks meaning among primary stakeholders. Women and men react to the term as if it implies “sameness,” in other words no physical differences between women and men, and is therefore absurd. On the other hand, primary stakeholders could and did respond to the idea of *inequalities* between women and men, since these could be relatively easily identified at community level and could be seen to be unfair. Thus, in this region with a history of ethnic conflict and strong ethnic identities, use of the equality concept might cause unnecessary dispute whereas the identification of inequalities in relations between women and men was a more fruitful starting point.

In summary, the evaluation found that although there is a common general understanding of the concept of gender equality on the part of Sida and certain of its co-operation partners (government representatives and progressive civil society organisations, for example), the concept is narrowly interpreted as numbers by many and is nuanced differently in different historical and cultural contexts.

The evaluation concluded that its findings on meanings and usages of gender concepts have important implications for work at intervention level. In cases where “gender” is misunderstood and conflated with “women,” there is an opportunity for Sida programme officers to work with stakeholders to arrive

at a more comprehensive shared meaning of women's and men's relationships with each other, rather than the focus on women in isolation. The former is, after all, one of the main thrusts of Sida's Action Programme.

The evaluation also concluded that the tendency to interpret "gender" as numbers of women and men, rather than as relationships between women and men is translated into intervention goals that also focus narrowly on numbers. Although "numbers" may be critically important in the way in which gender equality is interpreted to redress the injustices of past discriminatory practices, as in South Africa, there is a strong basis for a more comprehensive understanding. Thus, there is also an opportunity for Sida to work with partners, not only to appreciate the representativity focus but also to try to broaden the discussion – particularly as new projects and programmes are developed.

The lesson from both South Africa and the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua is that efforts must be invested, at design stage and in connection with gender analysis, to learn which concrete meanings of broad concepts will have most resonance in a particular situation. Although the Action Plan discusses the clarity of gender equality goals and targets in specific *national contexts*²³, there is no discussion of the importance of understanding local meanings and usages of concepts to improve specific interventions.

5.1.2 Lessons Learned

- 1 The concept of gender equality is still, and too often, interpreted narrowly – to mean numbers of women and men, girls and boys, represented in and participating in intervention activities. This interpretation limits a deeper understanding of gender equality goals and of mainstreaming elements and processes.
- 2 An imposed universal definition of gender equality is, however, not appropriate in cases where the concept has a concrete and particular resonance with stakeholders in specific cultural contexts.
- 3 Investigation of local meanings and of usage of the gender equality concept in the specific context in which interventions are located can open windows of opportunity for local appreciation of this universal goal.

5.2 Lessons for Use of the Gender Concepts

This section looks at what has been learned about the concepts, both specifically and as a group, and pulls out general lessons for use of the key concepts.

Conceptual clarity without rigid definitions

While conceptual clarity is crucial, it is vital that Sida not get 'bogged down' in attempts to put together one definition of empowerment or gender equality that everyone, everywhere will agree on. The evaluation documented how

²³ Action Plan, p. 3

concepts are used in different ways in different situations – yet there was generally a core common meaning. It is important that this common core be recognised and built on. Agreement on specific generic sub-definitions or specific wording of definitions is not needed.

The experience of the evaluation team also highlighted the idea that some concepts are useful as ‘sensitising concepts’ – in particular the paired concepts of strategic and practical changes. A ‘sensitising concept’ can alert people to aspects of an issue that they otherwise might not have considered. In the example of practical and strategic changes, this distinction was rarely used by stakeholders. These concepts were not part of the dialogue between Sida and stakeholders/partners. Yet members of the team found that it was a useful idea for them to think about. Its value as a concept was to point out that not all changes for women may relate to changes in gender roles and relations. There may be changes in the lives of particular women (their lives may be better off through improved income or education) but these changes may not translate into a sustainable narrowing of gender inequalities. Thus these changes are more at the ‘practical’ level. Thus the practical/strategic distinction can sensitise observers to this distinction and prompts them to think more about gender relations (not just whether or not women have been involved or benefited in a specific way). Its usefulness is as an ‘alerting’ concept, rather than providing a full-fledged analytical framework. It has a declining usefulness if people try to spend significant time trying to categorise each change as ‘practical’ or ‘strategic’ or reduce the concept to saying that one form of change is ‘good’ while the other is less so.

In the Northern Cape Province key respondents told the evaluation team that gender equality was an unfamiliar and – many said – a threatening concept, despite the Constitutional provisions and other undertakings by the democratic South Africa government.

– South Africa country study

The evaluation also confirmed the insight that these concepts are multi-dimensional. For example, the concept of empowerment can involve both a process and a goal. It can also have individual or collective aspects. As well, the concepts can change over time, and can encompass numerous sub-facets or issues (economic, political, emotional, social, institutional, etc.). They are also rarely seen as neutral or used in a neutral way. In the majority of cases, we are interested in gender inequalities and differences as part of a change agenda. This complexity is often messy and easy answers are hard to come by.

Context-specific definitions and use

The country studies and the preceding section of this chapter outline how different organisations and individuals use the concepts and ideas relating to gender equality in different ways. Of particular interest are the insights from primary stakeholders. They often identified how and why gender inequalities were relevant to them, emphasising specific aspects or elements. Race, class, and ethnicity assumed greater or lesser importance across the initiatives studied.

ASK staff ... report to have purposely moved away from a fixed interpretation of gender equality concepts and, instead recognise diverse definitions among their different levels of stakeholder groups. For example, to the women's movement gender equality may mean a total overhaul of discriminatory laws. For a mother concerned about her children's nutritional status it may mean a chance for her to earn an income. For a school headmaster it may mean a certain percentage of girls enrolled in primary classes. For a village family it may simply mean not having to pay dowry for their daughter's marriage.

– from the Bangladesh Country Study

The concrete exploration of 'what does gender equality mean in this situation' is a crucial step in the definition of expected results and relevant indicators. This evaluation has found that when interventions include a clear definition of what is expected in rela-

tion to gender equality issues, then changes in the direction of more equal gender relations are more likely to be achieved. The setting of clear objectives is only possible if an analysis has been carried out in the first place. The abstractness of gender, gender equality, and empowerment should be replaced by a clear vision of priorities and elements in a specific project.

When project implementers are asked 'have you integrated a gender perspective into your project', without a clear definition of what is meant, various answers are possible. The example of the StatsSA project in the South Africa study provides an illustration. The project did have a programme objective "to gender sensitise all relevant statistics". Yet, there were different interpretations of what gender mainstreaming involved in this specific context. Both Swedish and South African officials working on the initiative saw gender issues as limited to provision and improvement of sex-disaggregated statistics and the relative staffing profiles of women and men inside the institution. The evaluation team did raise the possibility of interpreting this programme objective in ways relating to not just dis-aggregating statistics on the basis of sex, but attempting to provide data on different dimensions of inequality and assisting in the process of determining 'what is behind the numbers.'

An implication is that project implementers must have the capacity to deal with gender equality concepts in an agile and flexible way. For example, training should not focus on the transfer of rigid 'frameworks', but rather aim to convey the basic ideas and insights behind specific concepts and encourage staff to explore what these mean within specific contexts and to specific interlocutors.

International Commitments and Definitions

Although context-specific usage and definitions are important, these usages should not be considered in isolation. It is important not to fall into a completely relativist position on gender equality issues and accept the statement that "all positions on gender equality are equally valid." If the 'acceptable' definition of 'gender equality' is left to a narrow group of national counterparts, there is a potential danger that Sida accepts a position on gender issues

that actually does not promote equality. There are numerous voices in partner governments and not all of them agree with the commitments of their governments to equality between women and men.

Sida's Action Programme and the Inception Report for this evaluation take note there are international norms and agreements that should be used as the 'touchstones' of understanding, dialogue and the establishment of goals: CEDAW, the Beijing *Platform for Action*, ILO conventions, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, etc.

The international commitments are the fundamental starting point in a 'rights-based approach' that was mentioned by the South Africa country study. It points out that the meaning of gender equality in the South African context is based on a human rights perspective as enshrined in the Bill of Rights of the Constitution (women and men 'should be treated with equal concern and respect, and should be entitled to develop their full human potential').

Demystification of Concepts

Despite the production of tools and analysis, there still appears to be significant difficulty in understanding how and why gender relations and inequalities are relevant in specific contexts. There is still significant 'mystification' of the basic concepts. Many informants still seemed unclear as how and why this goal was important or relevant in their work.

Perhaps this problem is most evident in the discussions around gender equality and poverty reduction. The evaluation team heard from Sida staff that they were looking for more guidance on how to concretely link gender and poverty analyses and to ascertain whether all gender equality concerns can be subsumed under a poverty reduction goal. When specific interventions are examined, analysis reveals substantial and concrete linkages. For example, the Nicaragua study found that in three of the four interventions studied, the issue of poverty was clearly inter-linked with gender inequalities: "In these interventions, a more effective gender equality approach can and should be linked to more targeted and effective measures to deal with poverty."

Understanding these linkages – between gender inequalities and poverty and between gender equality and other development goals – requires analysis. Furthermore, the country studies point out that it is crucial to be clear about these linkages in the design and development stage of the project cycle.

Male Roles and Masculinities

The country studies found varying discussions of male roles and masculinities in the interventions examined. For example these ideas were present in Nicaragua but only to a lesser extent in Bangladesh and South Africa.

In the Nicaragua country study, the evaluation team found that the concept of male roles and masculinities was used in two different ways. First, stakeholders pointed out that measures to advance women's interests often chal-

*Health centre,
Managua,
Nicaragua.
Photo: Tina Gue/
Phoenix.*



lenged accepted male roles (for example, having women in charge of functional police areas such as traffic or criminal investigations required officers to take orders from women superiors). Second, there were questions raised around the negative aspects of ‘masculinity’, particularly in the case of violence against women and children. The country study notes that one of the clearest lessons learned in Nicaragua is that the question of re-defining male roles and masculinities is a legitimate social concern and that it is linked directly to gender equality.

To date much of the work on gender issues has been done by women, from the perspective of women, with the goal of achieving greater equality for women. There is a need to understand these issues from men’s perspectives and flesh out the other side of this relationship.

Technical and Ideological Perspectives

Words themselves are often political, giving rise to contestation over meanings and definitions. For example, even the word ‘gender’ has produced its share of advocates and critics. Some feminists have argued that it should not be used as it takes away from women’s struggles for equality. Therefore it is important to look at how concepts are used and by whom and for what purposes.

One element of this political side can be seen in the way efforts to support greater equality between women and men are met with resistance. There are examples of different forms of resistance to working with gender equality throughout the country studies. In South Africa, for example, the evaluation found that use of the concept ‘women’s empowerment’ was deliberately avoided in one intervention, for fear of provoking negative reactions from local male politicians and municipal officers.

Within Sida, staff say they want tools to work with gender equality, but then when tools are produced these are said not to be relevant for the context in which particular officers work. This type of reaction can lead to the emphasis given to gender equality being downgraded in light of other stated priorities. It is important to anticipate and understand these numerous forms of resistance.

In many cases, the reason that progress towards the implementation of a mainstreaming strategy was slow was not due to a lack of conceptual clarity. Instead it often seemed to be a result of lack of support or political will to carry through on priorities that had been identified. For example, the Bangladesh report noted how the implementation of the country strategy fell short of its stated objectives to put gender issues front and centre in the country programme because of a rather *proforma* commitment by the national government. The discussion of the South African country strategy notes differing views within Sida, as to whether gender equality is adequately mainstreamed. In these cases, as in others, there was not a failure of the concepts, rather the policy process was affected by differing political and ideological perspectives in the efforts to bring about change. In supporting the voices for change and developing strategies to overcome resistance, the building of alliances and contact with gender equality advocates, both individuals and organisations, is crucial.

5.2.1 Conclusion

In this chapter the evaluation has brought out key findings and insights along several dimensions of understanding and using gender equality concepts:

- The importance of context-specific (national, regional, stakeholder) definition and use of concepts so as to improve intervention design, especially goals and clarity on what results can be expected.
- The role of good analysis in order to demystify concepts and to show concretely how they are linked to Sida's development co-operation goals (and the goals of the international community in general).
- Recognition that resistance to the ideological connotations of concepts embedded in goals will be encountered and strategies will be needed to overcome this.

It is also important for a development co-operation agency to have a certain degree of humility about its role. An organisation like Sida can facilitate, encourage, or support but it is rarely the primary engine of change in a specific country. Building more equal relations between women and men is a long-term process. The contributions of specific interventions are important, and it is through the cumulative effect of these kinds of changes that overall change will come. However, the processes of building more equitable societies, institutions and economies for all are multifaceted, complex and built over generations and not over the relatively short life cycle of a single project.

5.2.2 Lessons Learned

- 1 Given the general broad agreement on the concepts in all three country studies, it is not useful to search out the 'perfect' general definition – in the abstract.
- 2 Concepts should be used in a way that allows for context-specific definition and use. It is also important to determine what issues or dimensions are important in specific projects so that concrete expected results/goals can be agreed on.
- 3 Context-specific definitions and usage should still be linked to international agreements and commitments to equality between women and men.
- 4 More work is needed to ensure that gender analysis is understood, carried out and linked to other development priorities.
- 5 Further work on gender analysis from men's perspectives, including the concepts of male roles and masculinities, could prove useful.
- 6 There are at least two sides to work on gender equality: the technical side (involving definitions, tools, guidelines, support, etc.) and the ideological and political side. An understanding of concepts must also incorporate the insight that work towards greater equality between women and men also involves political issues and often conflicts reflecting differing ideological positions.

Chapter 6

Lessons for Promotion of Gender Equality through Development Co-operation

The purpose of this chapter is to pull together the most important lessons learnt from the evaluation for promotion of gender equality through Swedish development co-operation. The overall conclusion is that much valuable experience has been gained on mainstreaming gender equality, which is vital to pursue the need for clarity as well as convergence between the gender equality goal and other policy priorities. The seeming tension between these needs are seen in perspective of the recent history of co-operation between Sweden and the three countries studied. The last section, 6.3, then further synthesises lessons of particular relevance for a possible revision of Sida's Action Programme for the Promotion of Gender Equality.

6.1 Clarity Versus Convergence in the Promotion of Gender Equality

6.1.1 An Overall Theme Evident in the Evaluation

On reviewing the results of the three country case studies and the evaluation of 12 development interventions, one of the strongest themes of the evaluation can be seen in the apparent tension between two key characteristics which must be present if gender equality is to be successfully and strongly supported by development co-operation efforts.

The first characteristic is evident from the way the evaluation reports presented repeated examples of the need for clarity, explicitness and visibility in the statement of gender equality as a goal, and a priority at all levels. Without the clarity called for, there is an evident lack of follow through and an absence of focus, not least with regard to follow-up, monitoring, evaluation and other aspects of accountability. The outcome of a lack of clarity seems to be that gender equality is often left to the hazards of personal interest and chance.

The need for clarity and visibility in pursuit of gender equality has been largely met at the policy and strategy level for Sida as a whole and to varying degrees in the three country strategies but remains largely unmet, with some

notable exceptions, at the operations level; the level of the interventions and their components.

On the other hand, as country strategies have been implemented and translated into interventions, the evaluation teams have encountered and recorded real frustration on the part of Sida staff and counterparts with the question of how to integrate or mainstream gender equality goals at intervention level. They have also encountered the mix of other priorities, especially horizontal, cross-sectoral priorities such as poverty alleviation and democratic development. The question at this level seems to be how to achieve a second necessary characteristic of the pursuit of gender equality through development co-operation: convergence, linkage and synergy so that the achievement of one policy priority can be realistically linked to the pursuit of another. In the increasingly polyvalent world of development co-operation where no group's rights or no thematic pursuit can be used to trump another, interventions will be increasingly expected to achieve multiple thematic goals.

This theme of the tension between clarity on the one hand and convergence on the other can be seen as we review the historical pattern of Swedish development co-operation in the three country case studies and as we examine the individual interventions.

6.1.2 The Recent History of Gender Equality in Swedish Development Co-operation in Nicaragua, Bangladesh and South Africa.

If the era covered by the three case studies can essentially be limited to the period from 1996 to 2001, it represents a critically important and interesting time in the evolution of gender equality as a goal and priority for Swedish development co-operation. At the level of institutional policy and country strategy, gender equality achieved a very high degree of specificity and clarity so that, in two of the three countries at least, Sida had an acknowledged leadership position in the promotion of gender equality.

Development of Sida's 1996/97 *Action Programme for promoting equality between women and men in partner countries* was supported by committed champions at headquarters and field level who commissioned or undertook key analytical work in support of the country strategy process.

Similarly, during the first few years following the release of Sida's Action Programme, Sida staff at embassy level were notably active in the promotion of dialogue with governments and civil society in support of gender equality as a national goal. The visibility of the gender equality goal is reflected in the country strategies developed at the same time as the Action Programme. In contrast, subsequent country strategies in Bangladesh and Nicaragua (the Regional Strategy for Central America and the Caribbean) are being prepared in the context of a more crowded policy environment, with economic co-operation and trade liberalisation issues among others being added to the existing policy agenda. In the case of South Africa, where the first country strategy was prepared somewhat after the 1996–97 period, an increasingly

crowded policy agenda may explain why gender equality was not as thoroughly mainstreamed in the country strategy as in, for example, Bangladesh.

At the operational level the progress achieved under Sida's Gender Equality Action Programme seems to have been much more limited in the 1996 to 2000 time frame. This reflects a wide range of factors presented and discussed in the evaluation reports for each country, but it may also reflect the rather longer and less distinctive time-frame of the evolution of bilateral development interventions. If there was a trend visible at the operational level across the three countries it was more in opportunity and interest than in the substance of individual interventions. At least in Nicaragua and South Africa the teams reported that their evaluation coincided with a period of openness and interest on the part of counterparts and Sida staff alike in pursuing operational clarity through the revision of project activities, outputs and accountability structures and systems, including gender indicators. So it may be that the operational reflection of gender equality as a goal is simply a longer-term phenomenon than at the country strategy and dialogue levels.

Of equal interest, the trend in the development of country strategies in all three countries seems to be a reduction in the clarity and visibility of gender equality as a high level priority and goal. In the case of Nicaragua and Bangladesh this trend is reported as country strategies evolve from their 1996/97 to the 2001 versions.

In the case of South Africa, this relative reduction in the essential characteristic of clarity of linking gender equality to all priority sectors seems to have occurred during the development of the current strategy, but the trend is the same in all three countries. The crowding and jostling of important, legitimate policy priorities in Swedish development co-operation reduces the room for an explicit commitment to gender equality, at least as one of very few uniquely visible priorities.

The evaluation points to the conclusion that the situation in Swedish development co-operation in the mid-1990s was one in which gender equality as a priority and goal achieved its greatest visibility and clarity at the levels of overall institutional policy and country strategies. In the same time frame, clarity was largely lacking at the level of specific interventions.

Trends at the country strategy level suggest that it is at least possible that this situation may be reversed in the future. The distinct visibility of gender equality as one of very few priority goals for Swedish development co-operation as described in country strategies may diminish as greater emphasis is given to other cross cutting themes such as poverty alleviation and democratic governance. Ideally, this process would involve the preservation of a strong gender equality orientation for country strategies, most likely in the form of linked priorities such as gender equality as a means of poverty reduction or poverty reduction with a gender equality focus.

At the same time as the distinctive profile of gender equality as a priority may be reduced at the policy and strategy levels, it may be increased at the opera-

tional level in specific interventions, thus reversing the current pattern, provided sufficient effort and institutional support and commitment is forthcoming. The great risk, of course, is that the trend to merging gender equality with other policy priorities at the level of policies and strategies will not be accompanied by increased clarity at the intervention level and a general reduction in the commitment to gender equality will take place.

A possible future national strategy for promoting gender equality through development co-operation for Sweden would seek to accelerate these possible trends in a proactive way. Sida would conduct policy development and strategic work at the institutional and country levels so that they emphasise the strong convergence of policy priorities and goals while, at the same time, promoting operational clarity within specific interventions as to the bread and butter issues of how specific goals in gender equality (and other priority areas) are to be achieved.

6.2 Overall Conclusion

The thematic finding of the evaluation has been that there is a continuing need to ensure that the goal of gender equality is defined with clarity at the level of policies, strategies and interventions. Further, this clarity needs to be maintained as Sida seeks ways to ensure convergence and complementarity between the gender equality goal of Swedish development assistance and other key goals such as poverty reduction.

At the same time, the evaluation supports the conclusion that the development and implementation of Sida's Action Programme for promoting equality between women and men in partner countries has represented an important and positive effort in the improvement of Swedish development co-operation. It has, in the short four years of its history, had considerable influence on some country strategies²⁴ and their content and has begun to influence the content of interventions – many of which were designed prior to the programme's start in 1997.

The experience of implementing the Action Programme has demonstrated many of the difficulties and constraints facing Sida as it pursues, in partnership with developing country governments, the goal of gender equality. Mainstreaming, in particular, has not yet produced many of the more significant changes in the content of bilateral interventions that were expected of it.

On the other hand, Sida supported interventions as evaluated have made some important contributions to movements toward gender equality. These contributions appear to result from some early or "embryonic" elements of gender mainstreaming found in the interventions. These elements have included, for example, improvements in primary health services so that they

²⁴ It is worth noting that the evaluation team confined its review of the country strategy process to three countries and it is possible that the Action Programme had a more limited impact in other Sida Programme Countries.

better meet women and girls traditional gender needs and the development of gender equality materials in non-formal education programs.

Most often, these improvements in interventions in order to better meet practical gender needs have not been supported by a systematic gender analysis exercise and have not included efforts to monitor changes in gender equality.

More importantly, the evaluation indicates that mainstreaming can be expected to achieve more change as the interventions supported by Sida continue to evolve and move through new phases of design, approval and implementation.

In light of this conclusion, the evaluation team sees a strong rationale for continuing the Action Programme for promoting gender equality between men and women in partner countries. Section 6.3 below discusses some challenges and possible solutions for the renewal of the Action Programme.

6.3 Lessons Learned and Implications for Sida's Action Programme

In keeping with the Terms of Reference, the preceding chapters of this report discussed gender equality in Swedish development co-operation under the headings of the country strategy process, dialogue, gender equality goals, mainstreaming, poverty, stakeholder participation, and concepts in gender equality. The results of the evaluation, as reported in those sections give rise to a series of observations or lessons which seem to arise in parallel or at a tangent to those reported. On reviewing the country reports it seems that implications for the renewal of the Action Programme can be discussed under the headings of:

- Policies and Priorities
- Strategies and Methods
- Resources
- Actors and Their Roles
- Context
- Changes in Equality and Inequality

Each is discussed briefly below:

6.3.1 Policies and Priorities

It is in the area of Sida priorities and policies that the theme of clarity and convergence has perhaps its most important immediate implications for the Action Programme. As new policies and policy frameworks are established at Sida to better link gender equality, democratic development, human rights, and other goals under the general and overarching goal of poverty reduction, it will be critical to defend the sustained existence of gender equality as both an end in itself and an essential component of poverty reduction. The renew-

al and revision of the Action Programme should accept the challenge of establishing a direct link between gender equality and poverty reduction while maintaining the value of gender equality as a goal in itself.

One of the recurring themes of discussions with Sida staff at field level was the crowded nature of the policy agenda. In many instances it seems that Sida staff (as well as the staff of partner agencies and civil society organisations) see development goals and their accompanying policies as mutually exclusive. An emphasis on one is seen as diminishing the emphasis on another.

The theme of convergence raised by this evaluation suggests that it is essential to demonstrate clearly to Sida staff and to Sweden's partners in development co-operation that effective action on gender equality can and should be an integral element in efforts to reduce poverty, encourage democratic development and promote human rights.

6.3.2 Strategies and Methods

a) *Mainstreaming*

Mainstreaming represents the central strategy for ensuring that Swedish development co-operation promotes equality between women and men in developing countries. Based on the evaluation's review of an admittedly small number of interventions, mainstreamed activities targeting gender equality – and hence mainstreaming benefits – remain embryonic in most Sida supported bilateral interventions at this time.

The report also details a number of procedural and resource constraints still faced by mainstreaming. These include human resource weaknesses in counterpart agencies, variations in the knowledge and interest in gender equality among Sida staff and consultants, limited use of gender analysis when it is carried out, absence of mechanisms for sharing lessons learned in gender equality at the embassy level and, weaknesses in systems and procedures for monitoring results in gender equality.

There is an apparent need for a set of core requirements that represent the reasonable minimum for gender mainstreaming. This should be done not to encourage Sida staff and partners to achieve only the minimum but to avoid an “all or nothing approach” which too often results in a pro-forma or simplistic application of the strategy.

The findings of the evaluation suggest that a core set of requirement for mainstreaming gender equality at the intervention level includes the following:

- 1 reasonable level of *gender analysis* specific to the intervention.

Too often gender analysis carried out at the national level is not linked to specific interventions. Alternatively, the level of gender analysis at the intervention level is often limited to a simple “head count” of women and men participants. At a minimum, interventions supported by Sida should include in their design phase (or at the time of their renewal or reform) an

analysis of the extent to which women's and men's practical and strategic needs may differ in the area (sector and geographic) served by the intervention. This analysis can be either a matter of observation and analysis by a trained professional or, an interactive and participatory process facilitated by Sida, partners or a third party. It should, however, result in an agreed description of how gender needs may differ and how the intervention can best address them.

A gender analysis of this type could reasonably be linked to a discussion of poverty and poverty reduction in that poverty analysis will also require an assessment of inequalities of gender as well as other social dimensions such as class, ethnicity, religion, etc. The project's expected impact on gender inequalities can be examined in light of impacts on other forms of inequality.

- 2 One or more *clear goals* relating to changes in gender equality/inequality.

Mainstreaming, it should be clear, involves some statement of how an intervention may be expected to either promote more equal gender relations between women and men or reduce a particular inequality identified through the analysis described above.

- 3 Some means of *monitoring and reporting* on the changes in gender equality addressed in the intervention.

If a given intervention has one or more goals in promoting gender equality, then it stands to reason that the programme should include a systematic effort to monitor progress toward that goal. Monitoring methods and systems may be both qualitative and/or quantitative. They need not be overly complex or costly, but they should recognize that contributing to gender equality represents one success measure for the intervention.

b) Dialogue

The Action Programme may wish to re-examine both the possibilities and limitations of the use of dialogue to promote gender equality at the level of country strategies and interventions.

The evaluation results reported in the country case studies indicate that dialogue has been used more effectively at the overall strategy and policy level in each country than it has in relation to specific interventions. Embassy staff may be more effective in the use of dialogue if:

- dialogue at government-to-government level is continuously adjusted based on the receptiveness of key organizations of the national government. Resistance at one level (or sustained inability to address an agreed gender equity goal) may be effectively countered by a switch of emphasis so that dialogue is opened with more receptive ministries or with other levels of government or civil society as required;
- dialogue with civil society organisations is consistently maintained at the highest level of activity which the embassy and its partners can sustain. Thus arrangements such as the management of direct support to NGOs

in Nicaragua through an intermediary Swedish organization (Forum Syd) should be assessed for their impact on the quality and extent of dialogue as well as on administrative efficiency;

- messages in dialogue on gender equality are coordinated among like minded donors as was done with regard to preserving the autonomy of the National Women's Institute in Nicaragua; and,
- gender equality dialogue at the intervention level is systematically recognised as a key staff function for all Sida staff at the embassy.

There is also a need to recognise that dialogue alone may not be sufficient to achieve even a minimal level of mainstreaming. The Action Programme will need to consider how dialogue can be linked to other tools such as technical assistance, capacity building in gender equality, gender analysis and gender equality monitoring and evaluation.

The funding by Sida of NGO involvement in developing a gender strategy for Department of Non-Formal Education in Bangladesh represents an interesting experiment in linking dialogue and technical support. Financial commitments in support of these essential elements of a mainstreaming strategy will be necessary if dialogue is to be effective in supporting gender equality at the intervention level.

6.3.3 Resources

Achieving a meaningful level of mainstreaming and optimizing the use of dialogue will obviously require adequate staff and other resources for Sida, especially at the embassy level. Indeed, the continuing overcrowding of the policy, dialogue, and operational agenda for Sida staff at embassies was a common theme of all three country case studies.

a) Human Resources

There is an obvious need for a strong complement of trained and motivated Sida staff (international and national) working on gender equality mainstreaming at the embassies if the Action Programme is to be fulfilled. The results of the evaluations suggest that:

- There is a recognisable need for strengthening the capacity of the Sida personnel complement at embassy level if gender equality is to be effectively supported and if convergence between different goals is to be reflected in practical terms at the level of interventions. One means of achieving this might be the re-instatement at embassy level of the position of social development advisors, although the evaluation team recognises the obvious resource implications;
- It may be possible to make more effective use of national consultants and/or the capacity of national NGOs to carry out gender analysis and to assist in establishing goals and carrying out monitoring and evaluation of gender equality results;

- Gender equality training of Sida staff needs to be continued and, perhaps, made more relevant by being linked to the needs of specific sectors and interventions. Training in gender equality, preferably integrated with subject matter training, will also need to be available to local staff hired to coordinate projects, and to consultants.
- Gender equality training is still required for personnel in partner agencies of governments but some solutions will need to be found for the problems of excessive rotation and turnover in these agencies. These may include more use of national personnel on medium term assignments to partner agencies and the use of national consultants;
- There is often a tendency at Swedish embassies – and to a considerable extent at headquarters – for Sida staff to work in relative isolation as they support sector-focused interventions. Many times, staff interviewed by the evaluation team noted that they lack opportunities for working in teams and for cross-fertilising gender equality ideas and solutions from one intervention to another. There is a need to examine work methods at embassies to see how more teamwork can be encouraged if gender equality (and other cross cutting thematic goals) are to be effectively supported;
- Opportunities exist in many interventions supported by more than one donor agency for donors to combine resources and for Sida to ensure that the programme benefits from the gender equality expertise of partnering donor agencies.

Clearly, Sida faces a strong challenge in responding to the need for trained, motivated and capable staff resources to advance the goal of gender equality in country strategies and interventions while dealing with the reality of limited staff complements and budgets. There is an inherent contradiction, however, between the continuing development of more sophisticated development co-operation goals and policy structures and efforts to deliver programmes with a relatively small staff complement at embassy level.

b) Tools

The evaluation teams in each country noted that there are many high quality tools already available to Sida staff and partners, many as a result of the Action Programme itself. These include policies, guidelines, concept papers, sector prompt sheets and training courses in gender analysis and gender equality. The key problem at this point in time is to ensure that the available tools are being used by more Sida personnel in each of the embassies and at headquarters.

In particular, it is important to emphasise that the gender focal point in each embassy is *not* to assume sole responsibility for ensuring that gender equality is mainstreamed in intervention and available tools are used by all staff. Rather, the gender focal point should be responsible for keeping staff informed on new developments in gender equality and for providing a spark of advocacy while perhaps facilitating team sharing of experience. Beyond that point, gender equality mainstreaming is the responsibility of all Sida staff.

6.3.4 Actors

There is some need to re-examine how Sida can be expected to go about the promotion of gender equality when it must do so within a web of different key actors, all with their own interests and roles to play. The actors most critical to the success of the Action Programme at the level of specific interventions include:

- Women and men participating in the interventions as beneficiaries;
- Staff in partner agencies delivering the interventions (usually government agencies);
- Staff in local coordinating offices supported by the interventions;
- Project consultants;
- Other donor organisations; and
- Sida staff.

a) Beneficiaries

The term beneficiaries does not do justice to the many roles possible for women and men intended to both participate in and benefit from the interventions supported by Swedish development co-operation. The evaluation indicates that the potential for primary stakeholders to contribute to the intervention is often under utilised because approaches to participation are mainly instrumental. In terms of gender equality, there is a clear potential for primary stakeholders to make a much stronger contribution to an understanding of gender differences through participatory gender analysis. They can also be expected to contribute much more strongly to participatory evaluation and monitoring of gender equality changes.

b) Partner Agencies

The evaluation results delineate a very wide range of capacity and interest regarding gender equality on the part of the agencies implementing Sida supported development interventions. Some agencies have both the capacity and interest to sustain a meaningful effort to improve their own internal structures relating to gender equality. They are also able to implement and monitor programs so that they may contribute to positive changes in gender equality. Other partner organisations lack the basic institutional capacity for such an undertaking. They are subject to understaffing, poor training, and excessive staff rotation. For these organisations, training which does take place is often wasted from an organisational perspective.

One must question whether gender equality goals can be meaningful when the key implementing agency lacks even the basic capacity to implement programme changes and to monitor them.

Of equal importance, some agencies acting as partners to Sida suffer from relative indifference on the part of senior and middle managers to the whole concept of gender equality as a concrete goal of programming. The problem of how to establish “ownership” of the goal of promoting gender equality

with a given Sida partner agency can, to some extent, be addressed by linking interventions to high level policy commitments made by national governments. At the organisational level, however, ownership of gender equality as a goal encounters all of the very real problems of changing organisational cultures and the management of change.

These issues give rise to questions of how Sida chooses partners in the interventions it supports and to what extent the capacity and willingness to conduct meaningful work in support of gender equality should be criteria for continued Sida support of projects. The Action Programme has always acknowledged that mainstreaming is the responsibility of governments whose programmes Sida supports. This raises the issue of how or even if interest and capacity in gender equality is a critical factor in the choice of partners – be they government or civil society organisations.

c) Co-ordination Offices

Many Sida supported initiatives are implemented by a government agency or agencies with the co-ordination and technical support of either a local NGO or a specially created and project funded co-ordination office. Many NGOs have their own programs of gender equality training and advocacy for their staff. Indeed, many have made gender equality an important element in their mandate. On the other hand, some NGOs clearly have not made a strong effort to include gender equality as an element in the services they provide to interventions.

Perhaps more importantly, Sida funded project coordination offices are often staffed by personnel chosen mainly for their technical and administrative competence in the sectors involved. These persons are more directly involved than Sida officers in day-to-day contact and dialogue with the staff of the implementing agency. It is critically important that they have access to training courses and that they are supported in the use of gender equality tools (whether developed by Sida, other donors, or local organisations and institutions).

d) Project Consultants (International and National)

For many interventions, the person most consistently involved in project design and development over the longest time frame is an international specialist in the sector involved. Similarly, national or international consultants are often retained to undertake project evaluations. Indeed, the evaluation teams reported that external consultants have an especially important influence on the design and evaluation of many of the interventions examined. There is a clear need for the cadre of external consultants frequently employed by Sida to have the capacity to at least understand and support gender analysis and the definition and monitoring of goals in gender equality.

This does not mean that they need to subordinate other concerns and considerations to the goal of gender analysis. Rather, in keeping with the theme of convergence, project consultants should be capable of understanding that an intervention can and should contribute to a broader set of goals. They need

to understand and accept that gender equality is a concept with meaning in their own area of specialisation.

e) Cooperating Donors

Donors providing support to the same interventions as Sida are an obvious if somewhat underutilized resource for providing advocacy, dialogue, and technical support services in gender equality. Indeed, the evaluations provided examples of bilateral donors (Norad, GTZ) and multilateral agencies (UNICEF and PAHO) providing key inputs to the pursuit of gender equality in more than one intervention. There is an opportunity for Sida to make a more systematic use of the capacities of other donors (bilateral and multilateral) to support gender equality in the interventions it supports. Perhaps most importantly, there is scope to improve the coordination of donor messages in dialogue.

f) Swedish Embassy Staff

Sida staff working in embassies must work to support gender equality within a web of key actors who may, ultimately, have more impact on the gender equality content and impact of Sida supported initiatives. This requires not that they dictate the actions of other key stakeholders but that they seek innovative and flexible methods for influencing those actors.

One area of opportunity for embassy staff lies in facilitating the sharing of experiences between NGOs and government partners as they engage in promotion of gender equality – as was done by GTZ in promoting a role for the national network to combat violence against women in the development of police training materials in Nicaragua.

Wherever possible, as in the selection and training of consultants, it is important that Sida headquarters should act to reinforce the authority and influence of embassy staff as they advocate with other actors for more effective action in gender equality.

Finally, embassy staff will require continued training support to achieve this increased effectiveness in dealing with key stakeholders. They may also benefit from an increased emphasis on teamwork within the embassies themselves. At a minimum, this will require periodic sharing of experience and of proven practices in the promotion of gender equality.

6.3.5 Context

One of the key factors determining how well Sida supported interventions have supported the goal of gender equality is the variation in the context faced by each of the different interventions studied. At a minimum, important variations in context faced by the interventions include:

- The differing attitudes of national governments;
- The different social and economic contexts of gender equality in each country;

- The differing capacities and interests of the implementing (usually government) agencies and Ministries;
- Different ethnicities, languages, and cultures at national, regional, provincial, and even community level in each country.

Clearly these differing contexts for Sida supported development co-operation initiatives influence not only what can be achieved in support of gender equality but how best to go about the task.

The evaluation reports indicate that Sida as an agency needs to develop better approaches to ensuring that staff and projects are sufficiently responsive to changing contexts which present opportunities as well as challenges. Initiatives which confront barriers as a result of the organisational or social context often can be refined or re-positioned so that they make better use of opportunities presented by agencies and social groups which are not monolithic and do not represent a single co-ordinated reality.

As an example, the central cabinet of a given national government may be dominated by more conservative voices ideologically opposed to efforts to promote gender equality in areas such as reproductive and sexual health. At the same time, the Ministry of Health and its sub-divisions may be quite positive about efforts to improve services so that they contribute to reduction in gender inequalities. They may also have a high degree of administrative freedom to implement service improvements and thus represent a good opportunity for Swedish development co-operation to promote gender equality despite a difficult formal policy environment.

This was the case with the Ministry of Health in Nicaragua and its sections dealing with autonomous local health systems. The Sida supported PROSILAIS programme in Nicaragua has gone some way toward capitalising on this relative openness to change at the working level.

6.3.6 Changes in Gender Equality/Inequality

The interventions which Sida supports often confront a problem with the ultimate goal of gender equality when it is presented as the starting point for analysis or for setting specific project level goals and indicators. Indeed, even at the conceptual level, some primary stakeholders have difficulty with the concept of equality between genders (which they define as the two sexes – women and men), interpreting it as sameness rather than equality within diversity.

This gives rise to the question of whether the Programme of Action may improve its effectiveness at the interventions level by considering the use of gender *inequalities* as a key starting point for both gender analysis and for the development of goals and monitoring indicators. There seems to be stronger support and understanding of the need for identifying and redressing gender inequalities than for the attainment of the ultimate goal of full gender equality.

A focus on identifying and redressing gender inequalities would also facilitate closer linkage of gender and other inequalities relating to goals such as poverty reduction since inequalities measured along other social stratifications (class, ethnicity, region etc.) are so critical to poverty analysis.

The evaluation team recognises that there is a risk of losing sight of the ultimate goal of gender equality. To borrow a phrase from the civil rights movement it is important to keep ones “eye on the prize” of equality, but perhaps a strong start can be made in identifying and redressing inequalities.

6.3.7 Summary

In summary, the evaluation results reported in the sections above have the effect of providing a rationale for continuing and renewing the efforts to promote gender equality under the Programme of Action begun by Sida in 1997. The results reported in the evaluation provide important lessons in the constraints faced by the Programme and its central strategy of mainstreaming, but they also show that the Programme is achieving results and that the strategy of mainstreaming can be more effective as interventions evolve through new phases.

Significant and highly valuable experience with gender mainstreaming has been gained since the endorsement of Sida’s Gender Action Programme in 1997. Many opportunities have been grasped in Swedish development co-operation, and at the same time the constraints on promoting gender equality are clearer today than they were five years ago. This is an important time for Sida and its partners to appreciate that gender mainstreaming is both worthwhile and possible as illustrated in the gains that have been made. Sida now has a possibility to bring its gender mainstreaming strategy a step further when linking a clearer gender equality goal with poverty reduction and other goals to the benefit of development interventions. It is also an important moment for Sida to capitalise on its shared experience with partners and to be relied on for its continued commitment to gender equality as an important goal of international development co-operation.

The Evaluation has provided some insights into ways in which the Programme of Action might be improved. Much of the analysis carried out by the evaluation team has reinforced the central point of the Programme of Action; the need for Sida supported development co-operation activities to make a clear and readily evident contribution to improvements in gender equality.

Annex 1

Terms of Reference

1 Background

Equality between women and men is now firmly placed on the international agenda after the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. The *Beijing Platform for Action* adopted at the Conference clearly recognises that gender equality and women's empowerment are essential for addressing the central development concerns of poverty and insecurity and for achieving sustainable, people-centred development. This recognition is also reflected in development policies of bilateral donors and international agencies as well as of partner countries in the south.

In May 1996 the Swedish Parliament established the *promotion of equality between women and men in partner countries* as a goal for development co-operation between Sweden and partner countries. The focus on equality between women and men is based on two important premises: firstly that equality is a matter of human rights; and secondly that equality is a precondition for effective and sustainable people-centred development.

Gender equality may be defined as *equal rights, opportunities and obligations* of women and men and an increased potential for both women and men to *influence, participate in and benefit from* development processes.¹ Through this definition, stakeholder participation is given a central role in all efforts to promote gender equality. Consequently, it will also play an important role in the evaluation outlined below.

In June 1996, the Swedish government established guidelines for promoting gender equality in Swedish international development co-operation. These guidelines form the basis for Sida's Action Programme for promoting gender equality, which was adopted in April 1997. The Action Programme comprises a policy, an experience analysis and an action plan. It covers a five-year period, 1997–2001. The Action Programme *emphasises the importance of understanding and affecting the structural causes of gender inequalities*, particularly those related to economic decision-making and economic independence; representation in political decision-making and management; and human rights.

¹ Sida's Action Programme for promoting equality between women and men in partner countries, Sida, April 1997

The Action Programme focuses on a ‘*mainstreaming*’ strategy for working towards the gender equality goal. This strategy aims to situate gender equality issues at the centre of broad policy decisions, institutional structures and resource allocations about development goals and processes. Mainstreaming implies that attention to the conditions and relative situations of different categories of women and men, boys and girls should pervade all development policies, strategies and interventions.² Analyses of their respective roles, responsibilities, access to and control over resources and decision-making processes, needs and potentials, was clearly established in the Platform for Action as the first important step in a mainstreaming approach. The evaluation outlined below will assess whether some kind of systematic *gender analysis*³ has been done and has been allowed to influence the intervention, either initially during design or later during implementation and follow-up. Has a mainstreaming strategy formed part of the factors that influence results with regard to the promotion of gender equality⁴? What other factors may be distinguished as important for results?

Mainstreamed interventions are to be combined with *dialogue and consultations* between Sweden and partner countries. In, for example, the country strategy process⁵ and in annual negotiations on specific sector programmes, equality between women and men should be taken up as an integral part of discussions on national development. The dialogue should be utilised to come to agreement on the appropriate goals, targets and indicators of progress for promoting equality between women and men at national level in Sida’s country strategy process and within the context of individual projects and programmes.

2 Reasons for the evaluation

Sida has previously commissioned studies that assess how and to what extent gender equality and poverty issues are treated in country strategy documents and evaluation reports.⁶ The value added from this evaluation is that it goes

² All personnel working with development cooperation are expected to have the basic competence to promote equality between women and men in relation to whatever issues they are working on and to recognize when there is a need for expert competence.

³ Gender analysis: Please see Action Programme page 6 and Making a difference – gender equality in bilateral development cooperation, Sida, December 1998, pages 45–47.

⁴ Selection criteria for interventions to be assessed in the evaluation, please see page 5 in this ToR.

⁵ The Country Strategy is the most important instrument governing Sweden’s development cooperation with a country. Normally, a new country strategy process for each country is started every third year. The background material for a strategy is a Country Analysis and a Result Analysis. The country strategy is operationalized in a Country Plan that outlines the activities that Sweden will be involved in during the entire strategy period. Please see Sida at Work Sida’s methods for development cooperation for more information on the country strategy process, Sida, 1998, pages 31–40.

⁶ Sida Studies in Evaluation 97/2: Poverty Reduction and Gender Equality – An assessment of Sida’s country reports and evaluations in 1995–96, Eva Tobisson and Stefan de Vylder. Sida Studies in Evaluation 98/3: Evaluating Gender Equality – Policy and Practice – An assessment of Sida’s evaluations in 1997–1998, Lennart Peck. En Studie av jämställdhet i tio av Sidas landanalyser och landstrategier, Jessica Pellerud, 2000

beyond analysing documents and reports to assess, as far as possible, the changes with regard to gender equality that interventions may have contributed to. As Sida's Action Programme for promoting gender equality will be revised during 2001, it is important to gain more knowledge about the results and lessons of the efforts to promote gender equality in development co-operation.

3 Purpose and scope of the evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation is:

- To assess how Sida's mainstreaming strategy is reflected in the country strategy process, i. e.
 - to assess the quality of the gender analysis in the country strategy process;
 - to assess if and how gender equality is promoted in the dialogue with the partner country during the process.
- To assess the strategic and/or practical changes with regard to the promotion of gender equality⁷ that interventions supported by Sida have contributed or may contribute to.
- To provide an input to a deeper understanding of the concrete meaning of the following concepts in interventions supported by Sida: gender equality, empowerment of women, stakeholder participation, strategic and practical changes with regard to gender equality and mainstreaming.

Users of the lessons learned in the evaluation outlined here are Sida staff in Stockholm and in the countries involved. Lessons learned will also be of interest to other stakeholders in partner countries. The evaluation process should be designed so that both Sida staff and stakeholders in partner countries receive feedback on evaluation results.

⁷ Strategic changes with regard to gender equality relates to strategic gender interests/needs. They imply changes in economic, political and/or legal structures or frameworks at local and/or national levels so that equality between the sexes is promoted. Changes of this kind challenge the prevailing power relations between females and males.

Practical changes with regard to gender equality relates to practical gender interests/needs. They are reflected in the reduction of gender disparities in basic subsistence and service provisioning e.g in health status and access to health care, levels of education and access to information, access to food and livelihood security, etc. Practical interests/needs do not *directly* challenge the prevailing distribution of labour. They are experienced by women and men within their traditionally accepted roles in society.

Based on definitions in *Striking a balance – On women and men in development cooperation*, Sida, 1999, page 11.

4 Methods

4.1 Case studies

Case studies will be undertaken at country and intervention level. The Consultants are not specifically requested to make any linkages between these two levels.

At the country level, the Swedish support to three countries are selected as case studies, South Africa, Nicaragua and Bangladesh. These cases are to provide information about how Sida's mainstreaming strategy is reflected in analyses and dialogue during the country strategy process. The cases are selected for the following reasons:

- they represent different regions where Sida is active as a donor;
- the countries have adopted the Beijing Platform for Action;
- the countries have ratified the CEDAW, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (Bangladesh with reservations);
- a country strategy process has been started and completed after June 1996;
- gender equality issues are included in the goals and direction of the Country Strategy;
- gender equality objectives are included in the agreements on development co-operation.

At the intervention level, Sida has selected four interventions in South Africa and Nicaragua respectively. These are listed in Annex 1. Selection criteria are listed below.

Interventions that meet one or both of the following criteria:

- where gender equality has been 'mainstreamed' either initially during design or later during implementation;
- that may have contributed to practical or strategic changes with regard to gender equality (an alternative where 'mainstreamed interventions' has not been a possible selection criteria);

Interventions that meet all three of the following criteria:

- with potential to provide lessons for Sida's support to promote gender equality;
- where a new agreement has been signed after June 1996;
- representing 3–4 sectors where Sida is involved as a donor.

As concerns Bangladesh, the Embassy of Sweden is carrying out a study looking at how the gender equality perspective has been guiding when planning interventions during 1997–2000. The Consultants are to use this study for the selection of 1–2 interventions to assess. The Consultants are to apply

the selection criteria above that are applicable. Sida is to approve of the selections made.

Within the framework of the interventions selected, the Consultants are to identify interesting study objects and elaborate on these choices in their inception report.

4.2 Stakeholder participation

Concepts such as gender equality and women's empowerment are broadly defined (please see annex 1) in Sida's Action Programme. These concepts may have been understood and implemented in various ways in different contexts. Furthermore, progress towards equality and empowerment may be realised at two main levels, at the level of the individual and in a wider sense at structural levels involving change for categories of individuals or groups. Consequently, stakeholder participation is crucial for the realisation of this evaluation.

Stakeholder participation is to take the form of active consultation with female and male stakeholder groups within the partner countries, such as beneficiaries, project implementers, ministry officials etc. and stakeholder groups within Sida and the various Swedish Embassies. It is important to combine methods such as focus group discussions with individual interviews and to crosscheck analyses with stakeholders.

4.3 Gender disaggregated data

Needless to say, all information in the evaluation report should be gender disaggregated.

5 The assignment

This section of the Terms of Reference will consist of three different parts following the 'Purpose and scope' of the evaluation.

5.1 How Sida's mainstreaming strategy is reflected in the country strategy process

The Consultants are to analyse the country strategy process documentation and interview stakeholders.

5.1.1 *The quality of the gender analysis in the country strategy process*

- Has a gender analysis preceded or been integrated into the background material for the Country Strategy (Country Analysis and Result Analysis)? Does the Country Strategy document itself reflect such analysis with respect to gender? In other words, is the Country Strategy 'mainstreamed'?

- Does the gender analysis take into consideration and reflect the following issues about the local context when it comes to gender equality:
 - the strategic and practical interests/needs prioritised by the national government;
 - the strategic and practical interests/needs prioritised by major NGOs and/or other civil society institutions;
 - constraints and problems in addressing these interests/needs;
 - ways to address these constraints and problems;
 - participation by women and men, girls and boys in addressing these interests/needs;
 - other important factors in the local context?
- To what extent are the gender equality priority areas in the Country Strategy guided by the priority areas raised in Sida's Action Programme; and the priority areas raised in Sida's Special Handbooks for mainstreaming gender perspectives into different sectors?
Specifically, do the gender equality priority areas in the Country Strategy reflect the emphasis on strategic gender interests in the Action Programme? Does the analysis in the Country Strategy reflect the gender equality approach in the Action Programme or does it reflect a 'Women in Development approach'⁸?
- Is it possible to see any links/synergies and/or conflicts in the country strategy process between the gender equality goal and the other goals of Swedish development co-operation, particularly the overall goal of poverty reduction?⁹

5.1.2 Dialogue during the country strategy process

- How were negotiations with the partner country conducted with regard to gender equality? Was there a dialogue between the governments on issues of gender equality? What issues were raised in the dialogue?

5.1.3 How are gender analyses and dialogue reflected in key documents and agreements?

- Do the Country Plan and the Agreement on development co-operation between Sweden and the partner country in question reflect the gender equality concerns expressed in the Country Analysis and Country Strategy? Do the Country Plan and Agreement reflect the gender equality is-

⁸ Please see page 24–25 from *Evaluating Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment – A DAC Review of Agency Experiences 1993–1998*, Prudence Woodford-Berger, 1999

⁹ The overall goal of Swedish international development cooperation is poverty reduction. To provide guidance for Sweden's contributions to the reduction of poverty, the Swedish Parliament has laid down six goals for Swedish international development cooperation: economic growth; economic and social equality; economic and political independence; democratic development; environmental care; and gender equality.

sues raised in the dialogue between the two governments? Are there objectives and/or indicators for what to achieve when it comes to gender equality? That is, is the content in the Country Plan and the Agreement on development co-operation between Sweden and the partner country in question ‘mainstreamed’?

5.2 Strategic and practical changes with regard to the promotion of gender equality

The Consultants analyses are to be based on interviews with stakeholders and analysis of country and project documentation. Given the difficulties in measuring and assessing strategic and practical changes with regard to gender equality, it is crucial that the Consultants work in an analytical way and in the evaluation report discuss challenges regarding methods that will arise. The Consultants are to have close contacts with Sida during this part of the evaluation assignment.

5.2.1 Stakeholder analysis for the evaluation

In order to define what stakeholder groups that are to be consulted during the evaluation, the consultants are to carry out a stakeholder analysis. The Consultants are first to establish what primary and secondary stakeholder groups that have been identified in the project documentation for each intervention and their composition as regards sex and other key factors. With this as a point of departure, the Consultants are to further elaborate this stakeholder analysis, if deemed necessary.

5.2.2 Objectives and indicators of progress towards gender equality in interventions

The concept of gender equality tends to be loaded with values and take different meanings in different contexts and even for different individuals. Further, promoting gender equality involves promoting a process of change and change may be elusive to capture in indicators. Consequently, the objectives and indicators of gender equality in interventions need to be context specific. The first step in identifying context specific objectives and indicators is to establish what objectives and indicators that are defined in project documentation. Secondly, the Consultants are to select and interview representatives of primary and secondary stakeholders in the intervention. If there are strong diverging opinions among stakeholders during the interviews on objectives/indicators these should be accounted for and form part of the analysis of strategic and practical changes with regard to gender equality. The second step, interviewing stakeholders, will become even more important if the objectives/indicators in project documentation are not specific enough to use when carrying out the evaluation.

5.2.3 Strategic and practical changes with regard to the promotion of gender equality

- The Consultants are to assess the strategic and/or practical changes with regard to the promotion of gender equality that the interventions selected for this evaluation have contributed or may contribute to. If practical changes are identified, the Consultants are to discuss whether these may lead to strategic changes.

What activities have been performed within the framework of the intervention? What are their immediate intended or unintended effects with regard to gender equality? What are their immediate positive and negative effects on gender equality? If there has been immediate effects on gender equality, what may be said today about whether the effects may be lasting?

- A complex interplay of various factors influence the degree to which gender equality is promoted in interventions: factors in the *societal context* and in the *sector* of the intervention (e.g. health) together with factors that have to do with the *implementation and organisation* of the intervention and the roles of various *female and male stakeholders* in this implementation and organisation. These last two factors are specifically important to assess. The Consultants are to discuss what may have caused or may contribute to promoting effects on gender equality. What factors have been of importance for promoting gender equality and/or impeding the promotion of gender equality? Why?
- What has been the role of different stakeholder groups in influencing the promotion of gender equality? Have they played an active or passive role? Specifically, what has Sida's role been in influencing gender equality in the interventions? Has Sida raised the gender equality issue in discussions with co-operating partners? Has Sida played an active or passive role?
- What analysis of the gender equality aspects of the intervention is carried out in Sida's Assessment Memorandum? When assessing the quality of the gender analysis consider the same issues as in section 5.1.1. Is it possible to say anything about the relationship between the quality of the gender analysis in the Memorandum and how gender equality issues are integrated in the intervention?
- Is it possible to see any links/synergies and/or conflicts in the intervention between the gender equality goal and the other goals of Swedish development co-operation, particularly the overall goal of poverty reduction?
- In the case of Bangladesh, an intervention selected for this evaluation *may* be a Sector Programme Support (please see Annex 1). Should this be the case, the Consultants are to assess *Sida's* position and role when it comes to mainstreaming gender equality in the design process for the Programme – potentials, problems and lessons. The Consultants are *not* to assess results of the Programme.

5.2.4 *Understanding concepts*

The Consultants are to discuss the concrete meaning of the following concepts in the selected interventions: gender equality, empowerment of women, stakeholder participation, strategic and practical gender equality effects and mainstreaming. How the concepts are understood and implemented by primary stakeholders may serve as an input towards a deeper understanding of the concrete meaning these concepts may take in Sida supported interventions.

5.3 Conclusions and lessons for development co-operation

The Consultants are to discuss lessons for Sida and for partners involved in the interventions on how to strengthen support to promoting gender equality, i.e. lessons about:

- how to strengthen the gender analysis and dialogue in the country strategy process and in interventions;
- factors that have been of importance in influencing change towards gender equality, what has worked well/not so well and why;
- problems and possibilities when using measures/indicators of progress towards gender equality;
- the concrete meaning of the following concepts in interventions supported by Sida: gender equality, empowerment of women, stakeholder participation, strategic and practical gender equality effects and mainstreaming;
- implications for the interventions assessed on how to improve their work for promoting gender equality;
- implications for the revision of Sida's Action Programme for the promotion of gender equality.

6 Competence

The evaluation is to be carried out by a team with advanced knowledge of and experience in:

- gender analysis
- anthropology or similar human or behavioural social science;
- participatory evaluation methods in field situations;
- local context in Bangladesh, South Africa and Nicaragua (probably links with local consultants)
- gender equality issues in the following sectors: education, health, democratic governance, urban development.

The team leader is to have documented experience in the management of evaluations.

At least one team member must speak Spanish and one team member must have the ability to read Swedish.

7 Work plan

The study is envisaged to require an estimated 90–100 person weeks.

The tentative time schedule for the study is:

August/September 2000	Tender invitation
December/January 2001	Inception report (discussions with Sida), including analysis of country and project documentation for the selection of “study objects” – please see ToR 8. Reporting
January/May 2001	Field work (+seminars in partner countries)
May/June 2001	Draft country reports (+seminars at Sida)
August 2001	First draft synthesis report (+seminars at Sida)
September/October 2001	Final reports

8 Reporting

The Consultants are to submit the following reports to Sida:

1. An *inception report* commenting and interpreting the Terms of Reference and providing details of approach and methods for data collection and analyses. Country and project documentation are also to be analysed in order to identify interesting study objects within the framework of the interventions selected for this evaluation. The inception report shall include a work plan specifying how and when the work is to be performed.
2. Three *draft ‘country reports’* summarizing for each country the findings both on the country strategy process and the interventions selected as case studies, as specified in the ToR 5.3 Conclusions and lessons for development co-operation.
3. A *draft synthesis report* in English summarizing the findings, as specified in the ToR 5.3 Conclusions and lessons for development co-operation. Format and outline of the report shall be agreed upon between the Consultants and Sida. The report shall be kept rather short (60–80 pages excluding annexes). More detailed discussions are to be left to annexes.
4. Within three weeks after receiving Sida’s comments on the draft report, a *final version* in two copies and on diskette shall be submitted to Sida. When the report has been approved by Sida it should be translated into Spanish, so that it is available both in English and Spanish. Subject to decision by Sida, the report will be published and distributed as a publication within the Sida Evaluations series. The evaluation report shall be written in Word 6.0 for Windows (or in a compatible format) and should be presented in a way that enables publication without further editing.

The evaluation assignment also includes the production of a Newsletter summary following the guidelines in Sida Evaluations Newsletter – Guidelines for Evaluation Managers and Consultants (Annex 3) and also the completion of Sida Evaluations Data Work Sheet (Annex 4). The separate summary and a completed Data Work Sheet shall be submitted to Sida along with the final report.

Consultation and dissemination of emerging findings and lessons will be important throughout the study (please see ToR 7. Work Plan) and the Consultants are to include a budget for this in their tender. However, dissemination activities following the publication of the evaluation report will be covered by a separate budget and contract between the Consultants and Sida. A decision on dissemination activities will be taken at a later stage in the evaluation process.

Annex 1: List of interventions selected as case studies

Nicaragua

Urban development, Prodel – Program for local development
Health sector, Prosilais – Integrated local health systems
Democratic governance – Academia de Policia
Democratic governance – Atlantic Coast, Regional and local authorities

South Africa

Urban development, CUP – Comprehensive Urban Plan, Kimberley
Urban development, TPL – Trees Paving & Lighting, Kimberley
Democratic governance, Local authorities, Northern Cape Province
Democratic governance, StatsSA – Statistics Sweden

Bangladesh

The Embassy of Sweden in Bangladesh is carrying out a study looking at how the gender equality perspective has been guiding when planning interventions during 1997–2000. The Consultants are to use this study for the selection of 1–2 interventions to assess. Sida is to approve of the selections made.

Within the framework of the interventions above the Consultants are to identify interesting study objects and elaborate on these choices in their inception report.

Annex 2: Broad definitions

Gender equality: Equal rights, opportunities and obligations of women and men and an increased potential for both women and men to influence, participate in and benefit from development processes¹⁰.

Empowerment of women: Women gaining increased power and control over their own lives. It involves awareness-raising, building self-confidence, expansion of choices, and increased access to and control over resources.¹¹

Stakeholder participation: A process whereby those with rights and/or interests play an active role in decision-making and in the consequent activities which affect them¹². From any stakeholder's perspective there are a number of possibilities for participation. One stakeholder may inform other stakeholders, consult them or actually be in partnership (equal powers of decision-making) with one or more of the other stakeholders.

Sida has initiated a project to develop guidelines for the organisation on participatory methods. It is expected that a definition and discussion on stakeholder participation will be available during September/October 2000.

Strategic changes with regard to gender equality relates to strategic gender interests/needs. They imply changes in economic, political and/or legal structures or frameworks at local and/or national levels so that equality between the sexes is promoted. Changes of this kind challenge the prevailing power relations between females and males.

Practical changes with regard to gender equality relates to practical gender interests/needs. They are reflected in the reduction of gender disparities in basic subsistence and service provisioning e.g. in health status and access to health care, levels of education and access to information, access to food and livelihood security, etc.

Practical interests/needs do not *directly* challenge the prevailing distribution of labour. They are experienced by women and men within their traditionally accepted roles in society.¹³

The strategy for working towards the goals and achieving the effects mentioned above is *mainstreaming*. The first important step in a mainstreaming approach is an analysis of the situation of women and men, boys and girls, i.e. analysis of the roles, responsibilities, access to and control over resources and decision-making processes, needs and potentials of women and men, boys and girls (gender analysis).

¹⁰ Sida's Action Programme for promoting equality between women and men in partner countries, Sida, April 1997.

¹¹ Sida's Action Programme

¹² Stakeholder Participation and Analysis, ODA, 1995

¹³ Based on definitions in Striking a balance – On women and men in development cooperation, Sida, 1999, page 11.

Annex 2

Organisation of the Evaluation

	Core Team	Advisory & QA Team Lars P Christensen Beth Woroniuk
	Britha Mikkelsen, Team Leader	Country Teams
Nicaragua Team (19 March–7 April)	Ted Freeman ** Ane Bonde Britha Mikkelsen	Milagros Barahona Guadalupe Salinas Sarah Forti
South Africa Team (23 April–13 May)	Bonnie Keller ** Britha Mikkelsen	Rose-Pearl Pethu Serote Kgotso Schoeman Susanne Possing Sarah Forti
Bangladesh Team (14 May–7 June)	Britha Mikkelsen ** Ted Freeman**	Sevilla Leowinatha Jowshan A. Rahman Mirza Najmul Huda

** Country Co-ordinator

Annex 3

Conceptual and Methodological Issues

1 Conceptual and Methodological Issues

Evaluation planners at Sida had anticipated that the evaluation would need to address a series of critical conceptual and methodological issues. The evaluation was not to focus on a specific program or a set of activities linked together to pursue a common purpose in a single country. Rather, this evaluation was to focus on how Sida's ongoing support to development co-operation in a range of countries contributes to gender equality. Thus the evaluation attempted to link Sida's Action Programme for promoting equality between women and men in partner countries to specific development interventions and to see how those interventions contribute to gender equality.

Specifically, this approach gave rise to the following issues:

- How gender equality relates to other cross cutting priorities and themes of Swedish development co-operation such as poverty reduction and democratic development;
- How key concepts in gender equality and development co-operation are used by researchers, program planners and key stakeholders, including concepts such as:
 1. Gender equality;
 2. Empowerment of women;
 3. Stakeholder participation;
 4. Strategic and practical changes in gender equality; and,
 5. Male roles and masculinities.
- How to select countries and interventions that would provide a reasonable test of how well, or how poorly, Sida's support to development co-operation may be contributing to gender equality.
- How to evaluate the mix of strategies, processes and interventions which make up the Sida development co-operation matrix in a given country from the perspective of gender equality.

- How to focus evaluation activities in each country relating to each intervention so that reasonably robust and valid conclusions could be reached within the time and resource constraints of the evaluation.
- How to ensure consistent and transparent use of key concepts in gender equality by the evaluation team members.

This section provides an overview of how these and other conceptual and methodological issues were addressed by the evaluation.

1.1 Gender Equality and Poverty Reduction Priorities

The existence of links, synergies or actual or latent conflicts between the goals of gender equality and poverty reduction has been a central concern of the evaluation. It is clear from relevant policy documents that the issue cannot be clarified by ranking gender equality above or below poverty reduction on a scale of Sida priorities. Rather, the methodological solution to the problem of evaluating gender equality and poverty reduction seems to reside in the multi-dimensional definition of poverty which is reflected in Sida's Poverty Programme.

In order to operationalise their examination of the relationship between gender equality and poverty reduction in the interventions under study, the evaluation teams relied on a five part process which is described in more detail in section 4.2 but which has the following components:

1. assessment of stakeholder perceptions of the linkages and relationships between gender equality and poverty;
2. examination of poverty under four dimensions including livelihoods, resources/services, knowledge and rights;
3. use of a specific tool for assessing gender equality and poverty reduction changes (the CAST tool);
4. assessment of the relationship between different dimensions of poverty reduction and the different categories of gender equality changes (specifically practical and strategic); and,
5. examination of how poverty reduction strategies have been described in each of the countries under review.

Not surprisingly, the specific results of each of the country studies vary in their detail and, to some extent, in their direction. However, the results of the country evaluation reports do provide some important insights into the relationship between poverty reduction and gender equality.

1.2 Key Methodological Components: Linking an Analytical Framework to Operational Tools

In order to lay the basis for an effective field evaluation phase, the evaluation team members developed a series of analytical tools aimed at providing a

central forum in which team members and Sida staff could review, question and contribute to the understanding of basic analytical building blocks for the evaluation.

These tools included a series of *concept papers* which gathered together information from Sida policy documents and from a wide variety of other sources including other donor publications, UN material, academic papers and guidelines from multilateral organisations such as the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD and which presented a brief overview of the team's understanding of "state of the art" thinking on key topics such as empowerment of women, stakeholder participation and gender equality, and practical and strategic gender changes.

Since the interventions chosen came from four sectors of development co-operation, urban development, primary health care, education and democratic development, there was a clear need to provide the team members with guidance as to where to look for gender equality dimensions and changes in development co-operation in these sectors. As a result, the team prepared a series of *prompt sheets* which described some of the most important collective experience of those who have attempted to design, implement and/or evaluate gender equality results in each of the sectors involved.

The concept papers and prompt sheets were presented in the Inception Report to the evaluation, prior to the teams' departure for fieldwork in the chosen case study countries.

While the concept papers and prompt sheets provided the teams with a strong common conceptual background for the evaluation, there was still a need to translate this common understanding into operational plans which could be implemented at field level. This involved the production by each team of the following components:

- a) A *document review* summary of all available documentation on each of the 12 interventions (four per country) chosen for the evaluation as provided to the team by Sida;
- b) A set of detailed *study object grids* for each of the chosen interventions and for the country strategy process in each country which identified the main evaluation questions pertinent to each intervention. The grid also identified the key stakeholders to be contacted and interviewed along with their organisational and geographic co-ordinates along with other data available from documentary sources;
- c) The preparation of a detailed *country case study planning note* identifying the key stakeholders to be interviewed and locations to be visited by each country evaluation team along with logistical requirements and a suggested detailed itinerary. These were shared with the appropriate Sida staff in the Embassies of the three countries and formed the basis for more detailed operational planning of each country case study; and,

- d) A common *country case study format* and table of contents to be followed by the three country case study teams and used to report results to Sida.
- e) Since each of the country case studies combined document reviews, individual interviews, group interviews, and workshops with key informants, the evaluation team also had access to tools such as *the CAST*, in order to deal with specific issues relating to gender equality changes and poverty reduction (for example).

Equipped with these conceptual and operational tools, the three country case study teams undertook fairly intensive field evaluation missions to Nicaragua, South Africa and Bangladesh. They relied on the knowledge and experience of a wide range of key informants from Sida, host government, implementing agencies, NGOs, local experts and, most important of all, on the experience of men and women primary stakeholders in the interventions involved.

1.3 Validity of Evaluation Results

One of the key questions faced by any field evaluation, which must of necessity be limited in duration and resources, concerns the ultimate validity of the results reported. How could each evaluation team be sure to have examined the interventions concerned in enough detail, over a reasonable time frame and with enough geographic reach to ensure that the results could be generalised first to the intervention in question and then to Sida's development co-operation programme in each country?

In essence the questions of validity can be summarised as follows:

1. How can we be sure that the *processes* reviewed by the evaluation teams - the country strategy process, the intervention development and implementation process – including mainstreaming of gender equality, processes of dialogue on gender equality, and processes relating to evaluation and monitoring for gender equality – have been adequately reviewed, clearly understood and fairly assessed by the evaluation teams in the country reports?
2. How can we be sure that the *changes in gender equality* identified by the teams in relation to each intervention are real, and that they represent the most important changes?
3. How can we be confident that the *attribution* of changes to the interventions under review is reasonable? Would the same changes have occurred without the interventions?

Each of these questions is worth examining in turn.

1.3.1 Evaluating Processes

The starting point for the evaluation teams in examining each of the critical processes under review from a gender equality perspective, i.e. the country strategy process, the shared process of developing, designing, implementing and evaluating interventions, and the processes of dialogue with key stakeholders has always been a combination of:

- the guidance provided in Sida's Policy, Programme and Action Plan for promoting gender equality as a guide to organisational expectations;
- the social, economic, and policy context of gender equality in each of the three countries (as a guide to what was possible in the national context); and,
- the historical development of the intervention itself (as a guide to what was reasonable in light of the history of the intervention).

With this as a starting point each evaluation team assessed the processes concerned based on a review of the documents produced by the process, where possible, and through a series of key stakeholder interviews and discussions which encompassed the staff at the Swedish Embassy, key government ministries and agencies, implementing agencies, NGOs with experience in the sector, local experts in the sector and in gender equality and key Sida and MFA headquarters staff.

One of the factors which became evident early on in the review of processes, was the relative shortage of staff time at the Embassies as one key input to strengthening Sida processes from a gender equality perspective.

It can be seen from the above, that the question of how to validly assess Sida processes relating to gender equality is not so much a problem of having a wide enough reach in the evaluation process since the number of individuals involved in key planning and decision making steps can be quite limited. Rather it is a question of understanding the complexities of the processes involved and the time frames in which they occurred. The teams dealt with this by trying to interview in person or by telephone a range of persons involved at different stages of the processes under review. While this helped with the problem of duration, it did not solve the problem of complexity.

The complex nature of some of the processes under review meant that it was important always for the team to step back from a detailed flow charting of every decision point. Rather the team had to focus questions on essential points in the processes where it could be reasonable to expect gender equality to have influenced the decisions made.

1.3.2 Assessing Changes in Gender Equality (Scope and Depth)

As discussed above, the evaluation process for each country team began prior to departure for Nicaragua, South Africa and Bangladesh with a joint review of the key concepts so that members could be sure that they had a common model of what changes could be expected, including in difficult areas such as empowerment and the distinctions between practical and strategic changes.

The question remained, however, as to what would be the final arbiter of which gender equality changes had occurred and which were significant. In essence, each team included in their review of gender changes those which could be *observed* by an outside reviewer.

Observed changes included statistical changes (for example, changes in the number of women police officers in operational positions of command), especially when those changes were proportional in the sense that they altered the percentage share of women and men in certain key indicators of advancement, power or influence. Similarly, observed changes could include improvements in access to key services in health and education and to decision-making positions by women and girls. Alternatively, they could include changes in the behaviour of women and girls as primary stakeholders which were reported by intermediaries and which related to knowledge, self-esteem, independence, and group identity.

Ultimately, however, the most weight was attached to changes in gender equality as *experienced and reported* to the evaluation team members by women, girls, men and boys among the primary stakeholders of the interventions under evaluation.

This raises the obvious question of how did the evaluation teams manage to meet sufficient numbers of stakeholders to be confident of the changes reported. The approach used was not to attempt to survey a statistically valid random sample of participants across the entire program. Rather, the teams visited as many different communities and sites as possible and interviewed or held workshops with groups of key stakeholders including project staff and participants. In these interviews and workshops a key focus was determining the type and extent of gender equality changes experienced by participants over time. In this sense, the evaluation team used an approach which is similar to the use of sentinel sites in primary health care research in that a series of small samples was drawn from a range of sites to ensure that the consistency of the results reported could be determined.

1.3.3 Attributing Changes to Interventions

One of the key findings of the evaluations has been that gender equality changes seem to have their origin in a diverse set of circumstances and actors. Sometimes, for example, women and girls participating in literacy programs as in Bangladesh may improve their knowledge of and capacity to pursue their rights. This may come from the content of the training courses used to develop literacy and livelihood skills. At the same time, however, village level health and population workers may consistently provide messages concerning women's rights relating to sexual violence and reproductive health. In such a context it is very difficult to establish a direct causal link from one intervention to the changes reported. i.e. can behavioural changes be attributed to the education programme, to health service messages, to both or to other factors.

The evaluation teams dealt with the problem of attribution in three ways. In the first instance, they asked project staff and participants to describe *how* the intervention (and its activities and outputs) contributed to the reported gender equality change. In this way, participants themselves were asked to make the causal link between some aspect of the intervention and the change they experienced.

In the second instance, the evaluation teams were careful to allow for combinations of projects and programs which might *jointly* contribute to a change in gender equality. For example, Sida's program to support modernisation of the national police in Nicaragua did not directly include Sida funding of the development of curricula on inter-family violence or on providing effective police services to women and girls in the context of Nicaragua's culture and society. The fact that this material was developed by a local NGO with support from GTZ in Germany did not detract from the fact that when integrated into the Sida supported modernisation program, the material can produce a positive change. Thus the evaluation teams did not expect that every single contributing factor to a given change in gender equality should come from a Sida supported intervention. Rather, they were careful to allow for shared attribution of a diverse set of inputs.

Finally, the evaluation teams in each country were careful to acknowledge the element in gender equality change which can be found in the motivation and actions of women and men who are project participants (primary stakeholders) as well as program staff. If the intervention used participatory methods and/or sustained an atmosphere in which women and girls, men and boys were *enabled* to instigate changes in gender equality and supported by the different design aspects of the intervention, then a given gender change could reasonably be attributed to the intervention and its participants.

Conclusions: Methodology Issues

In light of the findings, the evaluation team has identified the following conclusions regarding methodological issues and challenges faced in assessing the ways in which Sida development co-operation supports gender equality.

Gender Equality and Poverty Reduction

- A key to evaluating the linkage between poverty reduction and gender equality has been the use of a multi-variate definition of poverty which encompasses different dimensions such as livelihoods, services, knowledge and rights;
- Sida supported development interventions have resulted in many situations in which key stakeholders (including primary and secondary stakeholders) have identified real or potential interfaces and linkages between poverty reduction and gender equality. These stakeholders represent a valuable methodological resource for assessing this linkage;
- Poverty reduction strategies and programmes at national and local levels can be used as one element in establishing the context and framework for linking poverty and gender equality. Unfortunately, they seldom contain explicit linkages other than identification of women and children as key target groups;

Methodology Components: Linking the Analytical Framework to Operational Tools

- *Concept Papers* developed during the inception phase of the study have proven essential in establishing a common understanding of key concepts

in gender equality across the study teams for each country study and have contributed to an improvement in the precision with which issues have been defined and addressed;

- *Prompt Sheets*, also developed during the inception period, served study team members as important resource materials to enrich the lines of questioning used in examining gender equality results within specific interventions and sectors. On the other hand, the prompt sheets had to be made more specific for each intervention since some sectors are very widely defined (democratic development and good governance for example);
- *Study Object Grids* (see annex 3) proved to be one of the most critical operational tools for the evaluation teams. They served to match the more general evaluation issues and questions to the specific data sources, key stakeholders, and locations particular to each intervention.

Validity of Evaluation Results

- In evaluating *processes* such as the Country Strategy Process, evaluation teams were able to gain access to key Sida and Ministry for Foreign Affairs stakeholders and participants at Embassy and Headquarters levels. They were also able to locate and review key documents such as the gender profiles, results analyses reports, and draft and final Country Strategies. On the other hand, since the main focus of the study was on the interventions, and resources (as a fact of life in evaluation work) were necessarily limited, the evaluation teams were not able to follow all the detailed complexities of these lengthy and multi-phased processes. While the evaluation conclusions remain valid, they necessarily focus on the final product of the country strategy process rather than the intricacies of the processes themselves.
- Evaluating changes in gender equality proved somewhat difficult in that interventions lacked specific goals and targets relating to gender equality and thus were deficient in monitoring and evaluating gender equality results. In this environment the most reliable and valid guide has been the felt experience of primary stakeholders, including women, men and youth.

Annex 4

Brief Description of the Interventions

Interventions Studied:

Interventions in Nicaragua

The intervention to provide *support to the National Police Academy* has been a single phased project running from 1998 to 2001 and encompassing improvements in physical infrastructure at the academy, training of police instructors, technical assistance on curriculum development, and socio political studies on policing issues. The results of the socio-political studies and consultations with civil society have been incorporated into the draft medium term plan for the modernization of the National Police in Nicaragua. In addition, the intervention included the development of a training program for management level professional officers in the National Police of Nicaragua. The stated objective of the intervention was: “To contribute to the strengthening of democracy and security of civil society in Nicaragua through support to the Police Academy and the building of a professional and modern police corps who respect its mandate and human rights.

The evaluation focused directly on the campus of the Police Academy located in Managua and on National Police headquarters, also in Managua. Because recruits are drawn from across the country and graduates are posted to precincts throughout Nicaragua, the impacts of the intervention can be expected at national level.

The *PROSILAIS* intervention aims to establish locally autonomous and integrated and comprehensive health systems in Nicaragua. It is currently in its third phase (2000–2003). *PROSILAIS* builds on the *SILAIS* model for local health systems which encompasses 17 health districts across the country and is active in only 6 of those (Léon, Chinandega, Estelí, Madriz, Nueva Segovia, and the Autonomous Region of the South Atlantic). *PROSILAIS* is based on a model of health care delivery which expands the outreach of the *SILAIS* system through community health providers. The model also relies on an extension of epidemiological and disease surveillance systems so that they can support the work of mobile health brigades.

The objectives of PROSILAIS include decentralization of management, improved quality and coverage of health care, improved health knowledge in the population, improved local capacity, and improved integrated health care for women with a gender focus.

The Local Development Project (*PRODEL*) focuses on providing services to the poor in urban settings in Nicaragua in order to mitigate the negative effects of structural economic adjustment and to support the peace process and decentralization. PRODEL was in the late stages of its second phase (1998–2001) during the evaluation team’s field work in Nicaragua. It has supported improvements to urban infrastructure, credit for housing improvements, credit to micro-enterprise and institutional support to the executing agency.

The intervention for Strengthening Democracy on the Atlantic Coast in Nicaragua (*Programma RAAAN-ASDI-RAAS*) was established to build on substantial Swedish support to the democratic process of regional elections held in the North and South Autonomous Atlantic Regions in 1994. The six year program (1994–2000) was extended into 2001 and a further phase was in its early design stages during the evaluation field work in March 2001. Support to democratic development on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua has focused on supporting the evolution and development of regional and municipal democratic institutions. The program has encompassed support to electoral processes, regional counsels and administrations, and direct support to the administrative capacity of municipalities. In its latest phase, the RAAAN-ASDI-RAAS program has also included investment in small scale local public works and an industrial development component. In assessing this intervention from a gender equality perspective, the evaluation team had to be especially sensitive to the interplay of political, social, economic and ethnic tensions that dominates relations between the Atlantic Coast regions and peoples and the remainder of Nicaragua.

Interventions in South Africa

Statistics South Africa – Statistics Sweden Technical Assistance Programme:

StatsSA brings together two sister statistical bureaux. Since 1996, personnel from StatsSA have visited Sweden, and a great many long- and short-term consultants from Statistics Sweden have worked with their partners in South Africa. The long-term objective of the co-operation has been to develop “an efficient statistical organisation able to produce relevant, reliable, objective and timely statistics and able to meet changing needs of statistics in the areas of co-operation.” The first phase of the programme (1996–1998) included co-operative work on the 1996 Census, development of demographic and socio-demographic statistics in surveys, support to the development of provincial offices and training. The second phase (1999–2003) has focused more on strengthening the institutional infrastructure through strategic planning and management and administrative support systems, in addition to specific work on bodies of statistical data. The evaluation team was told by key in-

formants from Sida and by consultants interviewed that the programme was considered very straightforward because of the long experience of the two co-operating institutions. Statistics Sweden has extensive experience in co-operating with statistical bureaux elsewhere, and StatsSA has its own long history and experience, albeit mostly in the context of *apartheid*. The technical assistance aimed among other things, therefore, to increase statistical knowledge about South Africans who had been invisible in the past.

Local Government Development Support Programme:

LGDSP has completed one phase (July 1997–December 2000), and a second phase was approved during the evaluation period. The overall aim of Phase 1 was “to support the Department of Housing and Local Government in its efforts to assist the municipalities to improve their service delivery capacity, based on the needs of the people.” The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and the Swedish Institute for Public Administration, in co-operation with the provincial department, implemented LGDSP. In order to build the capacity of elected councillors and employed officials in municipalities, LGDSP created municipal task teams in seven towns or clusters of small towns throughout the province, each of which took up one theme (such as financial management or human resources development) to improve their delivery of services to local residents. In addition, two provincial task teams provided backstopping on crosscutting themes to the seven municipal task teams. Given the size and complexity of this programme, the evaluation team focused its efforts on one provincial task team, Gender, Poverty and Children’s Issues, and on four municipal task teams, those that worked on gender mainstreaming, poverty and job creation, children’s issues and water and sanitation.

Comprehensive Urban Plan (CUP)

CUP was a planning project to give “support to planning procedures and introduction of new planning components and aspects” at Kimberley City Council (KCC). It was implemented by a Swedish consultancy firm, Hifab International, together with councillors and officials at KCC. During the eighteen months of the project, from June 1997–December 1998, there were many short-term consultants at KCC preparing reports on such topics as land use management, housing, urban agriculture, environment, bicycle lanes and human resources. The major output of CUP was the plan itself,¹⁴ supplemented by a few specific supportive and some follow-up projects. Although CUP was of short duration, KCC is now implementing or planning to implement major recommendations in the Plan within the context of government’s policy and legislation on integrated urban planning.

Trees, Paving and Lighting Project (TPL)

TPL was implemented by KCC between July 1997 and March 1999 and was related to CUP. The latter did not produce visible, tangible results in a city

¹⁴ *Caring for our Future – Comprehensive Urban Plan*, City of Kimberley, November 1998.

that – like all South African cities – had been “disintegrated” during the long years of separate development and where the majority of citizens received inadequate municipal services. TPL was therefore conceived as a “fast track project” in parallel with CUP “to demonstrate visibly, in the short term, results of the co-operation agreement between the Governments of Sweden and the Republic of South Africa.” “Fast track” meant that quickly delivered improvements to the urban environment would demonstrate to residents in disadvantaged city suburbs that their Council had will and capacity to improve the outward appearance of their neighbourhoods. The components of TPL therefore included planting trees along public walkways, paving sidewalks and frequently travelled streets, putting in storm drains and providing security lighting.

It is important to note that three interventions were directed at institution strengthening and capacity building and did not have primary stakeholders as direct beneficiaries. In the case of *StatsSA*, the activities undertaken were to improve statistical coverage of the majority of South Africa’s citizens who had been invisible in the *apartheid* era. The resulting statistical products would serve, *inter alia*, to provide government with a sounder basis for policy making and development planning. *LGDSP* and *CUP* directly targeted servants of the people – municipal councillors and officials – although residents of municipalities were expected to participate and benefit. Only *TPL* directly targeted ordinary urban residents, either as workers or as beneficiaries of the improvements that the project delivered.

Interventions in Bangladesh

The Non-Formal Education Project-2 (NFE 2), of 5 years duration, 1996–2001 has the main objective to provide Non-Formal Education to illiterate children, adolescents and adults.

The target group of the NFE-2 is 6.1 mil. and covers the whole range 11–45 years, 50% of the beneficiaries being female illiterates, and each age group with a specific programme.

The project is being implemented by the Directorate of Non-Formal Education (DNFE) through government agencies, NGOs and CBOs.

The total cost of the project was estimated at US \$ 64 million (equivalent to SEK 490 million) including Swedish contribution of US \$ 20 million (equivalent to SEK 150 million). Total disbursement of Sida’s contribution till March 2001 amounted to SEK 92.2 million, including TA costs. Other co-financiers with Sida to the project are GOB and Norway.

The following are the three main approaches:

- 1) Total Literacy Movement (TLM), a volunteer-based approach involving the surrounding community, offering in “learning centres” a six-month literacy and a three-month post literacy programme; implemented by the local government machinery.

- 2) Centre-based programme through NGOs with a one year programme (literacy and post literacy) for adults and two-year (literacy and post literacy) for adults and adolescents.
- 3) Distribution of free textbooks to voluntary and philanthropic organisations.

This evaluation has concentrated on the Centre Based Approach and on the Pilot PLCE Project.

The *Pilot Project of NFE2 on Post-Literacy & Continuing Education (PLCE)* completed in March 2001 was delivered through 23 NGOs. The participants in the PLCE are “neo literate” persons who participate in a further 3 months of post literacy training and 6 months of continuing education with an occupational focus – i.e. needs based skills training that should be related to market demands.

Sida has been providing Technical Assistance including local consultancy on gender for the NFE 2 and NFE 3 projects in the areas of monitoring, PLCE, and human resources development.

The NFE 3 programme for Hard to Reach urban, working children is undertaken by the Government¹⁵ with assistance from UNICEF, Sida and DFID to provide 351,000 hard to reach urban working children with basic non-formal education including basic literacy, numeracy and broader life skills. Special attention is given to children at risk, i.e. girls and children in hazardous and exploitative child labour. Girls are particularly targeted as one of the most at risk groups due to their vulnerability to exploitation and traditional constraints to their education. The aim is that a minimum of 50% of the learners will be girls. The NFE 3 project is the first of its kind to be conducted by the GOB. Therefore, although it is not called a pilot project it is considered to be so.

Ain o Shalish Kendro (ASK) was set up as a human rights and legal aid resource centre in 1986 by a group of Bangladeshi lawyers, journalists, and social development workers. ASK has grown to be one of the most influential voices on legal reforms in Bangladesh.

The organisation provides direct legal aid services and at the same time raises public awareness and presses for reform of discriminatory and repressive laws at the national level.

Legal aid is considered the most important program of ASK. The organisation provides free legal aid to the disenfranchised, particularly poor women, workers and working children to enable them to negotiate their rights. Forms of aid consist of legal counselling, mediation, and litigation. These services are provided through the legal clinics cum drop-in centres in Dhaka and a selected set of 5 districts¹⁶. ASK refers its clients to other specialised organisations that provide assistance for more permanent housing and longer term medical care.

¹⁵ Yet, GoB has not signed the ILO charter on children working in hazardous occupations.

¹⁶ (the first set of districts is purposely chosen for their proximity to Dhaka to allow for close monitoring.)

In 1996, the Swedish Embassy invited ASK to write a concept paper on human rights issues in Bangladesh. Sida funding began in 1997. Core funding is now provided by a consortium of donors.

Steps Towards Development (Steps/STD) was established by a group of young development workers from different NGOs working on information and communication in November 1993. Sida has taken on the role of its sole financier since 1994 up to now.

STD's goal is

“... to institutionalise gender (*sic*) in the governmental and non-governmental development agencies through specific gender planning and integrating interventions for reducing gender inequality in development areas.”

STD distributes its personnel under 4 substantive components beside administration: 1) training, 2) materials development and policy advocacy, 3) audio-visual, 4) Development Workers Information Network, under which a documentation and resource centre and a research unit also operate. The organisation develops training modules and materials to deliver regular gender analysis training, as well as sector- or issue-specific training related to gender and development, on demand. It also publishes information on CEDAW, the Platform for Action, etc., a journal for development practitioners with GAD contents, and campaign materials.

As part of its attempt to institutionalise gender analysis into development agencies, STD has also initiated a Gender Trainers' Core Group consisting of representatives from GOs, NGOs.

Annex 5

Executive Summaries from the Three Country Reports: Nicaragua, South Africa, Bangladesh

Executive Summary – Nicaragua Report

1.0 Introduction

In 2000 Sida commissioned an *Evaluation of Sida's support to development cooperation for the Promotion of Gender Equality* with three objectives: 1) to assess how Sida's mainstreaming strategy is reflected in the country strategy process; 2) to assess the strategic and practical changes with regards to the promotion of gender equality that interventions supported by Sida have contributed to or may have contributed to; and 3) to provide an input to a deeper understanding of the concrete meaning of concepts in interventions supported by Sida (gender equality, empowerment of women, stakeholder participation, strategic and practical changes with regard to gender equality and mainstreaming). The evaluation included three country case studies. This report covers Nicaragua, with Bangladesh and South Africa the subjects of separate reports.

The Nicaragua study team assessed the treatment of gender equality in the Country Strategy (and most recently in the Regional Strategy). They also analyzed the gender equality content and results of four interventions selected for detailed study: Support to the National Police Academy, Urban Development (PRODEL), Support to Local Integrated Health Systems (PROSILAIS), and Support to Democratic Development on the Atlantic Coast (RAAN-ASDI-RAAS). The Nicaragua Country Study took place from March 18 to April 6, 2001. The team comprised Ted Freeman, team leader; Guadalupe Salinas, Olimpia Torres and Milagros Barahona, national consultants; Britha Mikkelsen, overall evaluation coordinator from COWI who participated for the final week; and Sarah Forti and Ane Bonde, also of COWI.

The key study issues derived from the Terms of Reference for the overall study are:

- To what extent is Sida's mainstreaming strategy reflected in the *Country Strategy Process* for Nicaragua?
- What has been the *gender equality content* of the four chosen Sida supported interventions in Nicaragua?
- What is the relationship in each intervention between the pursuit of gender equality as a goal and the need to address *poverty reduction*?
- *Which changes* have occurred in the gender equality situation as a result of the four interventions?
- How can the experiences of the four interventions reviewed assist in a deeper understanding of the use and *meaning of concepts* such as gender equality, women's empowerment, and practical and strategic changes.

A major goal for the evaluation was to identify lessons for future policy and strategy revision and to facilitate the use of these lessons in practical development cooperation efforts.

The evaluation team relied on key informant interviews with Sida staff in Stockholm and Managua, with partner agency staff, with service delivery personnel, with cooperating and observing civil society organizations, with local experts and, most importantly, with women and men (and youth) participating in the four interventions. These interviews were sometimes combined with workshops and small group work on analytical tools such as SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats). In addition, of course the evaluation team carried out a structured review of all available documentation on the gender equality situation in Nicaragua as well as documents relating to the Sida Country Strategy and to the four interventions. A series of structured guidelines, concept papers and checklists were used by the evaluation teams in each country to ensure a common approach to the evaluation. For a review of the team's experience in applying the methodologies of the country study for Nicaragua, see Annex 1 to the Report.

2.0 The Environment for Gender Equality in Nicaragua

Gender equality remains a challenging goal in the Nicaraguan context. On one hand, there is clear evidence of the burden of inequality which women face in terms of differences in income and the experience of poverty, in negative health outcomes, in victimization due to inter family and sexual violence and physical abuse; and in under-representation and poor access to political decision making. For the most part these costs of inequality are recognized in Nicaragua by civil society and by government.

It is also clear however, that there have been inconsistencies in the response of the national government to the goal of gender equality. Serious challenges to local groups working for the promotion of gender equality and for international cooperation to promote gender equality include the absorption of the National Women's Institute into the Ministry of the Family; recent statements and

policies put forward by senior cabinet Ministers in areas such as teaching of sexual rights; the apparent close alliance between some government Ministers and the conservative elements of the Catholic Church; the stance of the Government of Nicaragua at recent international conferences relating to gender equality; and the relative closure of the party political system.

In contrast to the more open approach of the previous government, the current stance (2001) means that local and international agencies promoting gender equality are now “swimming upstream” to a large extent and limits the opportunity for overt dialogue and advocacy.

On the other hand, there are recent signs of a political re-examination of at least the intensity of opposition to many gender equality measures and goals. Of equal importance, there remain opportunities to work with a number of agencies and departments of the Government of Nicaragua. As pointed out to the team by Sida officers and others in Managua, at program and project level there is considerable interest in addressing the goal of gender equality.

It is important not to discount the difficulty, at present, for a bilateral donor to conduct an open and meaningful dialogue with the Government of Nicaragua at highest levels on the problems and possibilities of gender equality. On the other hand, there are avenues for promoting gender equality within and outside the Government of Nicaragua.

3.0 Country Strategy and Dialogue on Gender Equality

The 1997 *Country Strategy* for Nicaragua benefited from a very intensive review of the national situation in gender equality carried out in 1994 and followed up with further work in 1996. The CS also was developed in a period of very high interest in gender equality (Nicaragua was one of five countries participating in an initiative to promote increased partnership in gender equality emanating from the Programme of Action for Promoting Equality Between Women and Men in Partner Countries) at Sida headquarters and in the Embassy in Managua.

The resulting 1997 *Country Strategy* included a specific priority objective for gender equality based on a sound analysis of the conditions of women and men. It also made gender equality a strategic focus for dialogue with the Government of Nicaragua. On the other hand, the transition from a *Country Strategy* specific to Nicaragua to Nicaragua's inclusion in the *Regional Strategy* for Central America seems to have contributed to a diminishing of the visibility of gender equality as a priority goal. In this type of transition, it seems to be critical that gender equality issues and actions are maintained in terms of visibility and clarity and, in particular, that country programs developed out of the regional strategy retain a focus on gender equality.

In Nicaragua, Sida has continued to conduct a *dialogue on gender equality* at government-to-government, intervention specific, and civil society levels. Unfortunately, government-to-government dialogue has been severely constrained

by the strong differences between the two governments over important policy matters.

Intervention-specific dialogue on gender equality varies in intensity from one Sida supported intervention to the next, largely dependant on factors such as the experience and interest of the Sida managers involved and receptivity and interest of national counterparts. There has been an absence of a systematic approach to assessing the opportunities for gender equality dialogue in each of the interventions and responding to those opportunities.

Turning to dialogue with civil society, it does not seem that the difficulties of dialogue with government have led Sida to systematically increase its efforts at dialogue along the intervention-specific and civil society axes. Despite the positive aspects of the FORUMSYD administered Gender Equality Fund, both parts of the changed Sida strategy toward civil society organizations and NGOs (a more technical working relationship and the administration of a key program through FORUMSYD) have contributed to the perception from some on the Nicaraguan side of a reduced profile and a diminished commitment to working outside government.

This perception may be unfair given the commitments made and it may be a temporary problem present only while the new program gains momentum. On the other hand, coming as it does during a period of diminished dialogue with government, the perception that Sida is less committed to working directly with civil society presents a serious challenge to efforts to promote gender equality.

4.0 Mainstreaming Gender Equality

4.1 *Gender Equality Goals*

While the original focus of the National Police intervention was improving the human rights situation in Nicaragua through improved police training and policies, it did include efforts to address practical gender needs of women police trainees. In addition, the intervention benefited from a prior recognition within the National Police of a need to address gender equality issues and from the work of other international cooperation agencies (GTZ, for example, funded gender equality curriculum components in as a supplement to the traditional curriculum of the academy). Finally, the Police Academy intervention did include specific gender equality components relating to the post-graduate training course and the medium term modernization plan.

Faced with a high level of conflict, political instability promoted by the major national political parties and a strategic focus on improving the transparency and accountability of regional and local structures, the RAAN-ASDI-RAAS program has not, until now, included an explicit effort to address gender equality in democratic governance on the Atlantic Coast. The recent Sida funded evaluation of the program did address gender equality, and (as detailed in the sections which follow) there are opportunities for the program to address gender equality goals much more directly in future phases.

Gender equality goals are present in PROSILAIS, but they tend to be focused on different levels of understanding and different definitions of what is gender equality, ranging from attention to women-specific diseases to efforts (in the youth clubs for example) to directly address gender relations in sexual behavior. PROSILAIS presents an example of the co-existence of different definitions of gender equality and different responses to the problem of how to promote gender equality. What is not clear yet is how extensive and effective are the efforts to make the different goals in gender equality operational.

PRODEL, on the other hand, has reportedly achieved a high level of participation by women and has explicitly targeted those high levels. At the same time, however, this targeting is not based on an analysis of gender differences in the need for credit and other forms of support in urban programming. PRODEL's targets for women's participation are also not accompanied by either a gender equality strategy for the program or by efforts to monitor and evaluate gender equality.

If there was one strong theme emphasized repeatedly during the interviews, workshops and group meetings carried out with Sida staff, delivery agencies, government counterparts, women's rights organizations and participants in each of the programs it was the fact that the time for addressing gender equality is now. Each of these interventions as it enters its next phase has at least reached a stage of strong interest among key stakeholders in a more structured attempt to define gender inequalities and identify meaningful gender equality goals, strategies, activities, and measures.

4.2 Gender Mainstreaming

None of the four interventions evaluated in Nicaragua presents a fully developed model of gender mainstreaming. The intervention which shows the most clear signs of an effort to mainstream gender equality is the support to the Police Academy and National Police which combines some diagnostic mechanisms for examining gender equality (with elements of both gender analysis and participatory program development) with fairly explicit gender equality goals, targets, and follow up mechanisms and benefits from a receptive institutional culture and support from other international agencies.

PROSILAIS is the next most active intervention from a gender mainstreaming perspective in that it does encompass both gender equality goals (with varying interpretations) and measures to implement them. On the other hand, it lacks a systematic approach to monitoring and evaluating gender equality and some of its gender equality focused activities are somewhat uncoordinated and partial.

PRODEL represents perhaps the most disappointing of the four interventions assessed from a gender equality mainstreaming perspective. A program in urban development which focused on public infrastructure and credit support to poor families for housing and enterprise development would appear to demand a gender equality strategy and a mainstreaming approach based

on evaluative experience over the past ten to fifteen years around the world. Perhaps because of its already high participation rate for women, the previous phases of PRODEL have not included a structured analysis of different needs of men and women or of the inequalities which may be present in the system of credit application approval and use.

Finally, the Democratic Development on the Atlantic Coast intervention has, over its first two phases, chosen not to attempt a gender equality mainstreaming approach based on the need to build a legitimized system of local democratic institutions (including a transparent system with reasonable financial accountability) during a period of conflict and political instability.

The evaluation team identified a series of factors which seemed to constrain or facilitate gender mainstreaming in the four interventions:

Constraints to mainstreaming relating to Sida's capacity and operations

- Absence of gender equality expertise in the design phase of Sida support to interventions;
- An apparent absence of the required competency in analysing gender inequalities among some Sida staff;
- A possible expectation that the problem of gender equality is the responsibility of the gender focal point at the Sida Embassy and that other officers are not equally responsible for implementing the gender equality policy and strategy;
- Differences in the level of interest and commitment of Sida staff responsible for a given intervention;
- Perceived conflicts between the policy of gender equality as a priority and the operational needs of projects and interventions;
- Lack of use of sector-specific guidelines, prompt sheets and other tools relating to gender equality mainstreaming;
- Non-inclusion of gender equality issues in many project and program evaluations, reviews, assessments, results reports, etc.

Constraints Relating to Conditions Outside Sida

- The existence of national and regional conditions (for example post-conflict peace-building) which contribute to the over-riding of gender equality as a priority;
- The requirement for socio-economic programs to be economically and financially self-sustaining;
- Limited gender equality skills and capacities among the staff of partner agencies;
- Indifference or resistance on the part of senior and middle managers in partnering agencies.

Clearly, with appropriate planning, training, resources and consistent senior management support Sida and its partners in developing countries may be able to convert each of the constraints listed above to an enabling factor for gender mainstreaming. The Report points out that conditions in each of the four interventions visited suggest that there are significant opportunities for strengthening gender mainstreaming in further phases and that in some interventions, steps are being taken to do so.

5.0 Gender Equality and Poverty

In each of the four interventions examined there are opportunities to better link gender equality efforts to the combating of poverty. For example:

- in the intervention supporting the National Police and the Police Academy there is the clear possibility of linking improvements in more equitable and more effective police services for women and girls to efforts to improve the poverty situation of women and their families;
- in the PRODEL project there is an opportunity to support the economic assistance provided to women for housing and commercial credits with a higher level of non-financial support to improve the effectiveness of the financial credits and support gender equity in the commercial arenas;
- in PROSILAIS, improvements in health service to meet the gender needs of women and girls can be linked to efforts to improve the economic and work status situation of women health workers and volunteers, and,
- the public works and small scale industry components of the Atlantic Coast project can be strengthened from a gender equality perspective going forward. Perhaps more importantly, the gender needs of women and girls in the two Atlantic Autonomous Regions can be fully incorporated into efforts to develop and implement regional anti-poverty programs.

6.0 Participation and Gender Equality

Each of the four interventions examined included mechanisms, structures and processes for some form of stakeholder consultation and stakeholder involvement in program planning and direction. In some of the interventions (PRODEL, RAAN-ASDI-RAAS)¹ these processes were limited and did not encompass some major components of the intervention program. They are often “instrumental” in the sense that they serve to provide inputs for program managers to make adjustments to the interventions rather than representing direct involvement by primary stakeholders in program design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

¹ As noted above, participatory planning methods through workshops with key stakeholders are being used in the preparation of the third phase of RAAN/ASDI/RAAS although it was not clear at the time of the team’s evaluation mission to Nicaragua how much these processes would influence the gender equality content of this intervention.

Nonetheless, the picture painted by these four interventions with respect to stakeholder participation *as it relates to gender equality and women (and youth) participation* can be described as positive with a potential for further development. The participatory mechanisms developed and implemented for each intervention have at least some degree of relevance for addressing issues of gender equality. In the case of the Police Academy and PROSILAIS, (and to a lesser extent perhaps, the infrastructure component of PRODEL) the evaluation team was able to identify instances where the participatory mechanisms had been used by women stakeholders to identify and pursue objectives and interests directly related to gender equality. This may have occurred in RAAN/ASDI/RAAS as well but the evaluation team's limited time in the Atlantic Region did not allow for a full examination of the Technical Units and INDEL components of the project.

7.0 Changes in Gender Equality

At least some gender equality changes have been identified in relation to each of the four interventions examined.

In order of significance, intensity and durability of the gender equality changes observed, the Support to the Police Academy and National Police program has clearly seen the largest number and the most significant changes. This was foreseeable in that the intervention was the only one that specifically targeted a major cultural and organizational change in gender equality within an institution. Further, the Police Academy intervention was complementary to structural changes and initiatives already under way within the police force and to support from other donors and NGOs. The key challenge for this intervention will be to follow through so that gains made are not lost but are extended throughout the National Police.

In the case of PROSILAIS, significant practical and strategic gender changes have been identified in reproductive health and family planning choices and in improved access to services for women. It is not clear how widespread these changes may be or to what extent they will be extended in future.

In the case of PRODEL and the Atlantic Coast interventions, observed changes for individual women participants came about through access to services and resources. In a sense, since they do not imply a *change* in either the rate of women's participation or in their roles, one might question whether they represent gender equality changes at all.

It is clear, however, that only PROSILAIS and the Police Academy interventions successfully extended gender equality changes into the area of women's strategic gender interests. This seems to be a consequence of their explicit recognition of gender equality goals (and in the case of the Police Academy, targets for change in gender equality).

Finally, the Police Academy and PROSILAIS projects have also had more significant impacts on women's empowerment and on the recognition of

necessary re-examination of male roles and masculinities in their prospective institutions. Once again, it is important to draw some link between these two interventions and their associated effects and the relatively higher level of mainstreaming (and of participation) noted for each of them when compared to PRODEL and to RAAN/ASDI/RAAS.

Factors Promoting Gender Equality Change

- It is not surprising, perhaps, that the two interventions with *the most significant level of mainstreaming* (the National Police Academy and PROSILAIS) also provide evidence of the most significant associated gender equality changes observed by the evaluation team members and by external stakeholders.
- The linking of gender equality in service delivery and in internal institutional arrangements to an important and immediate institutional imperative such as modernization and professionalization for the National Police or improved effectiveness in health services for PROSILAIS helps to build an internal constituency for gender change and thus influences results;
- Formal or informal structures such as the consultative counsel on gender in the Police Academy project (formal) or the informal networks of women and men health professionals with an interest in gender in PROSILAIS can serve as both a monitoring mechanism and a source of internal advocacy in support of gender equality change;
- One of the key factors in enabling and sustaining gender equality change at the institutional level is the presence of publicly (within the institution) designated leadership for gender equality goals at the most prestigious levels of the organization; and,
- Interventions which establish explicit and quantitative goals in gender change, (such as the goals in the National Police to reach higher levels of women's representation in key managerial and operational functions historically almost exclusive to men) have an advantage in the promotion of more strategic gender change since the associated change in traditional male and female roles and the institutional share of power is very visible.

8.0 Lessons Learned

8.1 Country Strategy and Dialogue

1. In preparing a country or regional strategy document, it is essential that the gender analysis component of the country context be explicitly included (with sufficient space) in the appropriate section of the strategy document and that it should be linked to activities and interventions described under different priority areas and not only to gender equality as a separate priority.
2. In the transition from a country-specific to a regional Sida strategy it is important that gender analysis and gender equality content is developed for

each country in the region. The transition to a regional strategy also means that country program plans become critical in the development and description of gender equality goals for the strategy and for interventions.

3. Sida's historical record of strong and public support to gender equality in any country can represent an important organizational asset, especially in relation to policy dialogue. This asset can be sustained and renewed over time. Indeed, civil society organizations involved in supporting gender equality tend to place considerable importance on the continued public presence and leadership of Sida as a representative of international donor sentiment regarding gender equality.
4. Sida seems to lack a structured and systematic approach to determining which should be the key messages conveyed in dialogue with partners concerning the policy content of specific interventions, especially with regard to cross cutting priorities such as gender equality. Without such an approach the extent and quality of dialogue on gender equality tends to vary according to the personal interest and capacity of the officers (and international consultants) involved.

8.2 Mainstreaming

5. There is a need for greater recognition of the essential role of systematic and structured gender analysis in the design, development and evaluation of Sida supported bilateral interventions if the strategy of mainstreaming is to prove effective as a means of achieving the goals established in the Policy and Action Programme.
6. There are still important institutional obstacles to the effective implementation of a mainstreaming strategy at Sida (many are common to most bilateral development agencies). These include: apparent lack of available gender equality expertise during the design phase of interventions; perceptions that the gender focal point bears most responsibility for addressing gender equality; differences in personal interest among Sida officers; insufficient questioning of some "technical" factors which at first appear to inhibit the gender equality potential of some interventions; under-use of design tools in gender equality; and lack of attention to gender equality issues in intervention monitoring and evaluation.
7. It is difficult for Sida alone to advocate for and ensure the presence of meaningful gender equality goals. In those cases where the counterpart agency has started its own process of identifying and achieving gender equality goals, Sida's support can be much more effective. This benefit of the counterpart agency's receptiveness is magnified if other international sources of support are also addressing gender equality.
8. Where Sida has a long history as the key partner providing support to a major initiative and its implementing institution, there is a clear opportunity for the agency to introduce and to sustain a strong dialogue on gender equality which should, in turn, contribute to mainstreaming.

9. There are often opportunities to link gender equality objectives from one intervention to another as one means of mainstreaming. In Nicaragua for example, three of the four interventions studied involve agencies already working together in some region of the country on issues which relate to gender equality (support to the National Police, Democratic Development on the Atlantic Coast and PROSILAIS) yet none of the interventions provided direct support to that interaction. Staff at the embassy acknowledged in discussions that this would be a fruitful area to pursue for strengthening the gender equality impacts of the different interventions.
10. The understanding of gender equality is not uniform over the life of an intervention or even among the staff at different levels of an intervention at any point in time. Definitions and understandings of gender equality may develop and improve during the life of a program. With this in mind, program managers need to be open to a gradual focusing and improvement in gender equality goals during any given phase of a program. They need not necessarily wait for the four yearly transition from one phase of an intervention to the next to refine and improve gender equality goals. This, of course, would imply an ongoing investment by Sida in training and mobilization for field and headquarters officers so that they are equipped to take advantage of the opportunities which may arise for promoting gender equality during the life of a given intervention.

8.3 Poverty Reduction

11. The issue of poverty reduction is often inter-linked with the question of how best to address gender inequalities. The interventions in Nicaragua provide examples of how efforts to address gender inequalities could be linked to strategies to reduce poverty. Examples include improved access to gender strategic health services for women, better access by women to effective protection from violence and improved access by women to fair treatment by the justice system. At the same time there is no automatic link between measures to address gender inequality and efforts to reduce poverty. It will require an explicit analysis of how gender inequality relates to poverty if attempts to address one are to assist in mitigating the other. For example, knowledge that the National Police force provides one (admittedly difficult) road out of poverty for some Nicaraguans, heightens the urgency that young and poor Nicaraguan women be provided a reasonable chance of taking that road.

8.4 Changes in Gender Equality

12. Where interventions have contributed to a group sense of women's empowerment through improved knowledge, access to redress for rights infractions, support to women by senior institutional officers, etc. this empowerment has provoked some resistance and has necessitated bringing men into the loop of attention to gender inequality. Of equal importance, empowerment may be restricted to part of an institution or community and can prove short-lived when changes are not rolled out through the

entire organizational culture. Empowerment of women will thus require extended work throughout institutions to avoid reversals.

13. Effective programs to address gender inequality and to promote women's empowerment will, sooner or later, require direct attention to male roles and to socially determined definitions of masculinities. In Nicaragua, at least, there is an existing national debate on this issue. At the same time, violence by men against women and children is a key entry point for the discussion of male roles and masculinities and represents one possible path for dialogue on gender inequality and its redress. The topic of intrafamilial violence and violence against women remains very controversial in Nicaraguan society. If it is to be used as a valid entry point for discussion of masculinities, great care must be taken in the design of initiatives in this area.
14. The more specific and complete the definition of gender equality used in the evolution of a specific intervention, the more likely it is that the intervention will be designed and implemented to contribute to strategic gender changes. This places an even greater importance on the use of gender analysis and of mainstreaming as a strategy for achieving gender equality, despite the apparent institutional obstacles.
15. Besides the strength and clarity of gender equality goals and the extent of gender mainstreaming, there are other factors which influence the different types of gender change associated with Sida supported interventions. The most apparently important of these include:
 - The linking of gender equality in service delivery and in internal institutional arrangements to an important and immediate institutional goal other than gender equality;
 - Formal or informal structures within programmes and institutions to serve as both a monitoring mechanism and a source of internal advocacy in support of gender equality change;
 - Designated and visible leadership for gender equality goals at the most prestigious levels of the implementing organization; and,
 - The presence of explicit and quantitative goals in gender change since they highlight the visibility of proposed changes in traditional male and female roles and of a different sharing of power within the institution concerned (although this may give rise to resistance and a need to more visibly and formally include men).
16. In the period since 1996, civil society in Nicaragua (and some of the institutions supported by Sida) has begun a re-examination of traditional male roles and masculinities and a nascent national dialogue on the need to re-define masculinities in a more positive way. Sida gender interventions in the future will need to consider how they can creatively contribute to this dialogue in Nicaragua and in other countries.

Executive Summary – South African Country Report

1.0 Introduction

In 2000 Sida commissioned an *Evaluation of Sida's support to development cooperation for the promotion of Gender Equality* with three objectives: 1) to assess how Sida's mainstreaming strategy is reflected in the country strategy process; 2) to assess the strategic and/or practical changes with regards to the promotion of gender equality that interventions supported by Sida have contributed to or may contribute to; and 3) to provide an input to a deeper understanding of the concrete meaning of concepts in interventions supported by Sida (gender equality, empowerment of women, stakeholder participation, strategic and practical changes with regard to gender equality and mainstreaming). The evaluation included three country case studies. This report covers South Africa, with Nicaragua and Bangladesh the subjects of separate reports.

The South African study team assessed the treatment of gender equality issues in the Country Strategy and analysed four interventions that had been selected for detailed study: Statistics South Africa, Local Government Development Support Programme, Comprehensive Urban Plan and Trees, Paving and Lighting. The country study took place from 22 April–11 May 2001. The team comprised Bonnie Keller, team leader; Pethu Serote and Kgotso Schoeman, national consultants, Britha Mikkelsen, overall evaluation team leader from COWI, who participated for one week, and Sarah Forti and Susanne Possing, also from COWI.

The key issues derived from the Terms of Reference for the overall evaluation are:

- To what extent is Sida's mainstreaming strategy reflected in the *country strategy process* for South Africa?
- What has been the *gender equality content* of the four interventions in South Africa, including the *goal* of gender equality as reflected in intervention design and implementation and the use of a *mainstreaming strategy*?
- What is the relationship in each intervention between the pursuit of gender equality as a goal and the need to address *poverty reduction*?
- *Which changes* have occurred in the gender equality situation as a result of the interventions?
- How can the experiences of the four interventions reviewed assist in a deeper understanding of the use and *meaning of concepts* such as gender equality, women's empowerment and practical and strategic changes?

The main intention of the evaluation was to identify lessons for future policy and strategy revision and for the application of these lessons in practical development cooperation.

The evaluation team clarified conceptual and analytical issues and developed frameworks to operationalise the Terms of Reference and to bring consistency across the three country case studies. Issues and frameworks covered:

- Dialogue on gender equality between governments, with interventions and with civil society partners;
- Defining gender equality goals;
- Mainstreaming, including a 6-point scale to assess level of mainstreaming;
- Synergies and links between gender equality and poverty reduction;
- Stakeholder participation and gender equality, including ranking primary stakeholder participation across 7 levels; and
- Changes in gender equality, based on observed or reported differences among women and men beneficiaries and including empowerment and practical and strategic changes.

Data collection methods included 1) extensive document review; 2) interviews with Sida programme staff, intervention staff and consultants; and 3) group discussions and participatory focus groups and workshops with project implementers and primary stakeholders.

2.0 The Environment for Gender Equality in South Africa

The issue of gender equality has become more visible with the change of government from the *apartheid* system to democracy in 1994. The Constitution provides the foundation for gender equality. Although Parliament has made some progress to pass legislation meant to change both the position and condition of women, discriminatory acts from the past still exist. Government structures for working towards gender equality have been put in place: the Commission on Gender Equality, the Office on the Status of Women and a Parliamentary Joint Monitoring Committee on the Improvement of the Quality of Life and Status of Women. The main function of these structures is to mainstream gender in all legislation, government policy and planning. However, although the legal and political environments can be regarded as enabling of gender equality, the biggest challenge is the implementation of programmes aimed at attaining this goal. In general, gender structures in government remain weak and under-resourced.

NGOs are mainly represented in urban areas where most of the mobilisation around social issues took place in the past. Most organisations that have taken the lead in lobbying for and working towards gender equality, as in relation to violence against women and HIV/AIDS, are women's organisations. After 1994 NGO leaders were recruited into government, thus leaving a leadership vacuum in civil society and weakening what had been, before then, an organised women's movement.

Local government is the ideal site to impact on gender inequalities because it is responsible for delivery of services which impact on women's and men's lives. However, in rural provinces where poverty is most acute, the limited financial base of local government is a serious problem and the structures to promote gender equality are weak. Much of the report deals with interventions located in Northern Cape Province (NCP), which has its own unique history and social characteristics. It is a large province, predominantly semi-desert and rural, Afrikaans speaking, with high levels of joblessness and poverty and relatively few civil society organisations.

3.0 The Country Strategy and Dialogue on Gender Equality

The First Country Strategy in Democratic South Africa: In early 1998 the Swedish Government took a decision to prepare a Country Strategy for Development Cooperation with South Africa for the period January 1, 1999–December 31, 2003. A general consideration of development cooperation was that “Swedish support is motivated primarily by the extreme income gaps and special difficulties that have been inherited from the apartheid period. South Africa is, however, a country with rich resources and good prospects . . . capable of making itself independent of donor assistance. This perspective . . . opens the possibilities for development of new and long-term sustainable forms of co-operation.”

The Country Analysis states, as strategic priorities, that gender and poverty issues should be approached “in parallel” – in dialogue with South Africa, by approaching all development interventions with a “gender and poverty perspective” and by interventions that are “directly aimed at gender and poverty.” The intent to ensure that all development interventions have a “gender and poverty perspective” is made clear.

South Africa does not have a poverty reduction policy, and the draft *National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality* was not, and still is not, available as a guide for development cooperation. South Africa's priorities in its cooperation with Sweden, as stated in the Country Strategy, include support for the cross-sectoral area of gender equality.

Dialogue during CS preparation took several forms: meetings between the Embassy and the Department of Finance, semi-annual and annual consultations on government-to-government cooperation, commissioning of studies and networking. Official discussions between the two governments included key South African stakeholder institutions – Finance, Foreign Affairs, sectoral departments and the parliamentary Women's Empowerment Unit. Commissioning of 21 studies to provide concrete information was seen as an important part of dialogue during CS preparation. Two of these studies were extensive reviews of the gender equality and poverty situations. The Embassy told the evaluation team that, in retrospect, the process of CS preparation could have included more discussion with a wide variety of South African

stakeholders, rather than reliance on inputs from many studies, most of which were not later used.

The Strategy does not completely follow through with its stated principal, that gender equality should be a *common element* in the overall cooperation programme. The need for a gender equality perspective is made explicit in democratic governance and education but is not mentioned in the areas of urban development and housing and in economic cooperation. Sida gender advocates who had been involved in CS preparation were of the view that gender equality had received less visibility than they had hoped. Others felt that all major themes, including gender equality, had been well covered in the CS.

There were opportunities that were not taken in the CS: to make a more concrete analysis on the nature of the links, and potential synergies, between gender equality and poverty reduction and to carry through with the mainstreaming principle in urban development and housing, where interventions were already underway, and in economic cooperation.

Dialogue on Gender Equality: Sida normally emphasises the goal of supporting progress towards gender equality in government-to-government dialogue, the most important formal occasion being at Annual Consultations. However, there is usually no further minuted discussion of gender equality at the Consultations, either in general or with reference to a specific intervention or theme. Annual Consultations are now organised by discussion of themes, rather than programmes, and this provides scope for integrating dialogue on gender equality *into* discussions on other specific themes and sectors. It is important that any such discussions be minuted. At intervention level there was significant and detailed dialogue in the past, particularly between the Social Development Adviser and specific intervention partners. However, the role of the SDA was not always clear – whether adviser within the Embassy or “consultant” to interventions. Given the heavy responsibilities of Embassy staff that make field visits infrequent, it is important that gender equality is integrated into items on the agenda for sector reviews and, again, that discussions are adequately minuted. The extensive dialogue with civil society organisations appears to have decreased since the posts of SDA and her local successor were terminated. However, other opportunities such as inviting civil society representatives to Annual Consultations, are now being taken.

To be an effective mechanism in development cooperation, there are opportunities for more specific dialogue about gender equality in specific thematic areas and sectors. A representative from Department of Finance was of the view that key issues could be used as a point of departure at each Consultation and that the inclusion of national poverty and gender experts from government would assist to make the dialogue at formal discussions more concrete.

4.0 Mainstreaming Gender Equality – Four Interventions in South Africa

4.1 *The Four Interventions*

Statistics SA – Statistics Sweden Technical Assistance Programme (StatsSA) included cooperation on a variety of statistical products and on strengthening the institutional infrastructure. The Local Government Development Support Programme (LGDSP), phase 1, was a programme to assist municipalities in Northern Cape Province to improve their service delivery, based on the needs of the people. The Comprehensive Urban Plan (CUP) consisted of preparation of an integrated urban development plan for Kimberley. The Trees, Paving and Lighting Project (TPL) improved aspects of the urban environment in disadvantaged city suburbs of Kimberley.

4.2 *Gender Equality Goals*

Sida's *Action Programme* states that interventions should be explicit regarding equality goals. The interventions studied in South Africa exhibited considerable variation with regard to the nature of equality goals in programme design. Sida or Swedish consultants took a pro-active role to include some form of gender equality goal in the interventions in the Northern Cape, where lack of experience and resistance made ownership of gender equality problematic in the beginning.

The two democratic governance programmes included rather explicit goals linking equality in some way with the specific sector – gender sensitising all relevant statistics (StatsSA) and integrating gender into the local government programme (LGDSP). The gender equality objectives in the StatsSA programme derive from a clear rationale, and the institution was supportive. The gender equality goal in LGDSP was also explicit, but the issue of ownership by the partner government institution was more problematic than in the case of StatsSA. The CUP design was less explicit but included “gender” as one of several new components to be included in urban planning. The inclusion of a gender perspective in this technical planning project was not based on a sense of ownership by the local partner, at least not in the beginning. The TPL design had a women's participation target, which was not framed in the context of unequal gender relations.

The presence of clear, explicit gender equality goals in an intervention is important to enhance the possibility that activities will have an impact on unequal gender relations. The absence of explicit goals means that monitoring and other learning and accountability tools are not used to address whatever gender equality contributions the intervention may make. The evaluation team does not contend that gender equality goals over-ride other priorities, such as poverty reduction. Rather, that a Sida-supported intervention should recognise where, if and how a contribution to gender equality can and should be a goal in combination with and linked to Sida's other cross-cutting sector-specific goals. If gender equality goals are clearly stated, it is easier to work with them during implementation of intervention activities. If there is

no gender equality goal in intervention design, it is still possible to work within implementation processes to raise awareness and to begin to address gender equality issues.

One lesson learned from the Northern Cape experience is that when Sida works with programme designs originating from more conservative institutional partners, it is important to discuss the implications of South Africa's national and international commitments to gender equality for a specific programme.

4.3 Mainstreaming Components and Processes in the Interventions

Statistics SA: Gender equality mainstreaming within the programme of cooperation between Statistics Sweden and StatsSA has concentrated on supporting affirmative action to increase the representation of black persons and women within the institution. Over time it has been taken to be the main focus of working with gender issues in the programme. Although affirmative action is important, there has been no explicit effort to work with mainstreaming in some relevant components where Swedish TA has played an important role, such as training in statistical methods and developing a clientele of users. The small Gender Unit in StatsSA is responsible for improving gender-relevant statistics. Sida was active at the beginning of the cooperation programme in dialogue with StatsSA on ways to support the Gender Unit. However, because of an existing agreement between StatsSA and Statistics Norway, this planned component did not take place. The Gender Unit has been working to improve the gender-relevant statistics captured by surveys, and there are indications that recognition of the importance of these statistics is increasing within the institution. Thus, there is potential to work with a broader interpretation of gender mainstreaming, in addition to affirmative action, in the future.

LGDSP: LGDSP had an effective intervention structure, with a provincial-level Gender, Poverty and Children's Issues Task Team responsible for gender mainstreaming in the entire programme. The programme developed a gender mainstreaming strategy suitable to the local conservative environment and deliberately chose the least threatening approach, focusing on building gender awareness and on working towards gender balance. This strategy included only limited analysis of gender inequalities in the province. However, gender training increased awareness of general gender issues, and community-based surveys opened up the possibility for working with sex-disaggregated data and with more specific gender analysis in the future. The duration of Phase 1 was perhaps too short to enable key stakeholders to expand the concept of mainstreaming to include systematic work on gender inequalities, related to racial and socio-economic inequalities. The main output of the first phase was a series of Training Manuals, including one on Gender Mainstreaming. There is an opportunity in phase 2 to integrate a broader approach to gender mainstreaming in other thematic manuals, such as that on Poverty Alleviation and Job Creation.

CUP: CUP received support for gender equality mainstreaming from the Embassy and from the TA which managed the intervention; the reception by Kimberley City Council was positive, and gender training was provided. Gender mainstreaming was implicit in CUP, rather than an explicit strategy. During the consultative and information-sharing Public Participation Process, substantive efforts were made to be gender sensitive and to hear women's as well as men's views. However, a Gender Review commissioned by Sida noted that integration of gender mainstreaming in PPP was ad hoc, rather than systematic. The efforts invested are not fully reflected in the main output of the intervention, the comprehensive plan, where gender-differentiated needs are not highly visible in some relevant sections.

TPL: TPL did not have an explicit gender equality mainstreaming strategy, but rather an implicit approach which translated into a rather narrow focus on women's representation in project implementation mechanisms and in their participation in labour intensive works. Gender training was provided. As with CUP, the evaluation team found that some key stakeholders (KCC officers, councillors, community leaders) had become more familiar with working with gender issues during implementation. As pointed out by the Gender Review, however, the intervention had a narrow interpretation of gender mainstreaming, focusing on women's representation and participation.

4.4 Analysis of Gender Mainstreaming

The evaluation findings showed that the four interventions had taken up some elements of mainstreaming, to varying degrees and in a partial way. It is therefore instructive to examine various components that are important in contributing to the process of mainstreaming, by looking across all four interventions.

Mainstreaming strategy: One common finding was that key mainstreaming elements in interventions were not brought together in a systematic way. It is perhaps too soon to have expected this, given the timing of the interventions in relation to Sida's *Action Plan* and the fact that experience had not yet been acquired. The South African interventions offer instructive lessons, however, on the way in which explicit equality goals in intervention design are strengthened if they are linked to an overall strategy, as in LGDSP.

Gender analysis: Although initial efforts were made to work with analysis of gender issues in urban planning and to commission studies, as in LGDSP, this was a new area to most intervention stakeholders. If more systematic gender analyses had been undertaken and findings integrated into implementation design, it is less likely that the major focus of some interventions would have remained only at the level of women's representation and participation.

Mainstreaming structures: LGDSP had a well thought-out intervention structure to promote mainstreaming, but it was not permanently institutionalised within the host department – and hence, in the long run, not sustainable. StatsSA, on the other hand, has a Gender Unit and thus the potential to make a long-

term and lasting impact on mainstreaming gender equality. The mechanisms to promote mainstreaming at KCC were also intervention related and thus short term.

Roles and responsibilities of key actors: The evaluation team learned that interventions had benefited most during the time that a specific position to work with gender equality existed at the Embassy. Although work to advance Sida's development goals is the responsibility of all programme staff, the team is fully aware that time, pressure of work, competing demands and availability of resources may make this difficult. One issue that staff at headquarters emphasised to the evaluation team was the key responsibility for working with gender equality of TA and consultants and that accountability mechanisms for all programme officers and TA are necessary.

Ownership: Although ownership – commitment to and willingness to work towards gender equality – by partners is less of an issue in South Africa than in some other countries, in some cases such as small municipal councils in the Northern Cape bureaucratic resistance and the problem of lack of ownership was experienced. In such cases, Sida has an opportunity to be more proactive in its dialogue with interventions, by referring to SA's own policies on gender equality and women's empowerment in order to broaden the interpretation of gender equality, beyond gender balance.

Institutional capacity and resources: Given staff turn-over and project implementers who are on fixed period contracts, it is important that monitoring systems to track the effects of gender mainstreaming are established or, where they already exist, made gender-relevant. The evaluation found no systematic monitoring in the interventions.

Building capacity: Gender training was an important mainstreaming component in all interventions except StatsSA, but constraints such as the timing of training and the lack of follow-up to introductory training were noted. The evaluation team noted that opportunities to build capacity of local civil society partners in gender training and gender analysis and to link them to interventions could contribute to sustainability of efforts.

The evaluation team concluded that Sida needs to persist in working to support mainstreaming, within Sida itself and with partners. It is the most viable strategy for achieving gender equality goals. It is important to recognise that development of mainstreaming capacity takes time, much more time than the short life span of these interventions allowed. Now that some basis for gender mainstreaming has been established, there are good opportunities for Sida in partnership with South Africa to promote gender equality as a means (to democracy and development) as well as an end.

5.0 Poverty Reduction and Gender Equality

By African standards, South Africa is a rich country but also one with severe poverty that has racial, gender and regional dimensions. Poor urban women

whom the evaluation team met clearly expressed how they experienced the links between gender inequality and vulnerability to poverty in their own lives. One said, for example, “When women earn money they put food on the table, and when men earn money they drink to ignore their poverty problem.”

The interventions made diverse contributions to poverty reduction. CUP highlighted job creation as a poverty alleviation strategy, and TPL put job creation into practice, albeit on a limited scale. Both interventions gave poor people access to knowledge and the possibility to exercise the right to express their views about local governance issues. LGDSP had an explicit poverty alleviation strategy, focused primarily on job creation, but in addition supported women’s access to decision-making positions and the improvement of residents’ access to services from local government. StatsSA has taken important steps to improve documentation of the country’s poverty situation. Apart from StatsSA, the evaluation team did not find that the links between poverty reduction and gender equality had been explicitly made in the interventions.

The contributions made by the interventions to poverty reduction were important but at the same time provided lessons about the value that could be added by more clearly linking poverty, gender and other dimensions of social difference. The findings support Sida’s view that a multi-dimensional understanding of poverty must be gender sensitive. The team also wishes to stress that gender equality must be an explicit goal when linked to poverty reduction to ensure that gender issues are not taken for granted and are therefore not addressed.

6.0 Stakeholder Participation and Gender Equality

Democracy in South Africa is still deeply affected by the *apartheid* years. The lost opportunities for genuine and equal participation by people of all races and both sexes affect the structures of Sida’s partner organisations, such as KCC and other municipalities, which today are to promote community participation in interventions. There is only a very short history of consulting with people, on which to build.

At StatsSA the evaluation team looked at participation by provincial statistical offices and users of gender-relevant statistical data. The statistical office for the Northern Cape in Kimberley described itself as marginalised. StatsSA in NCP told the evaluation team that they had not yet had a purposeful dialogue on gender issues with local users of statistics. The evaluation also looked at participation from the point of view of provincial users of statistics to understand to what degree users are aware of the relevance of gender dimensions in sectoral planning and whether there is current or potential demand for gender-relevant data. The findings from a workshop indicated that this was a new way of thinking and that greater familiarity with gender issues will be needed before users become more pro-active clients/participants vis-à-vis StatsSA.

The three interventions that worked at community level all developed approaches to foster community participation. In LGDSP gender equality issues were addressed through representation of both women and men in municipal task teams. Some initiatives were made to solicit the views of members of communities that task teams represented, but gender issues had limited visibility within these initiatives. KCC worked with participatory issues for the first time in the context of Sida-funded projects. In CUP there were extensive efforts made through the Public Participation Programme to give residents, including women, the ability to exercise their right to make their voices heard. Diverse views, from women and others, were not clearly reflected in the Comprehensive Urban Plan, however. In TPL there were efforts to establish mechanisms to inform and to consult with residents, to engage them in the work opportunities that the project offered and to include women as well as men.

The interventions therefore made progress in fostering some types of participation (such as participation by consultation), but none reached the level of interactive participation in which people are able to have a say in decisions that impact on their own welfare. However, the evaluation team witnessed growing interest and willingness to work with community stakeholders, demonstrating that opportunities have been created through the interventions. Just as with poverty reduction, it is necessary to make explicit links between gender equality and participation.

7.0 Changes in Gender Equality

7.1 Concepts – their Locally Constructed Meanings

An evaluation objective was to provide a deeper understanding of the local concrete meanings attached to specific concepts such as gender equality. The evaluation team asked, “what do these concepts mean in the context of South Africa, given its particular history and current social dynamics, and what do they mean to various stakeholders in the context of the four interventions?” Locally constructed meanings are one of the factors that play a role in influencing how gender equality has been approached and what changes may have been set in motion.

Five dimensions of the meaning of gender equality, as key institutions in South Africa use the concept, were found to be common: a *human rights perspective* – the equal and inalienable rights of all women and men that are enshrined in the Bill of Rights of the Constitution; *unequal gender relationships* that have to be challenged to move forward; *empowerment of women* – both a means for achieving gender equality and a goal in its own right; *transformative social change*, to eliminate all inherited structures and practices of injustice and inequality; and *representativity* – how many women/men of which races in which positions in which institutions.

These dimensions of gender equality concepts resonated differently with various categories of stakeholders in NCP. Secondary stakeholders associated

with the interventions tended to single out representativity – that gender equality had to do with achieving gender balance in numbers of women and men in an activity. In contrast, primary stakeholders explained the concepts more with reference to their social positioning. Thus, black men were comfortable with representativity because they believed this would not significantly challenge their position of superiority. Black women identified more broadly with a rights perspective and with women’s empowerment. Also that equality means treating people with tolerance and respect and honouring their dignity as human beings – an explanation that is rooted in local experience that reflects historical realities.

The widespread interpretation of gender equality as more balanced participation of women and men had an obvious effect on the way in which gender goals in the interventions were interpreted, and thus on the way that mainstreaming was applied.

7.2 Changes towards Gender Equality

None of the interventions had targets or indicators, except TPL (a *pro forma* target for women’s participation in some project activities). M & E systems had not yet been developed to allow the possibility of tracking changes over time. The evaluation team therefore grappled with the question of change by asking diverse stakeholders whether the interventions with which they had been associated had produced changes, and if so – of what type and in which direction.

Programme implementers reported modest concrete changes produced by interventions in the direction of gender equality. However, there was one important intangible output by the interventions in NCP that was mentioned to the evaluation team over and over again. This was the increased awareness of gender issues – whether expressed as “gender balance,” or as “involving women” or as a deeper understanding of engendered needs and interests.

One could not expect to see many changes directly attributable to the interventions, given their short duration. However, the creation and strengthening of awareness of and support for gender equality is a critical change that will be important in supporting future development cooperation initiatives. Sida needs to be persistent and to provide support and continuity over a sufficiently long period of time so that opportunities, that have taken time to create, are not lost.

8.0 Lessons Learned

8.1 Lessons for the South African Programme

1. Expanding the mainstreaming perspective in the CS: The clear link with democratic governance has supported work on gender equality in interventions in this sector, which have more explicit goals and have made some progress in mainstreaming. Similar progress could be made in other sectors and focus areas of

development cooperation, if the links to gender equality were spelled out clearly in the CS.

2. *Analysis of gender and poverty links in the country programme:* Preparation of the next CS gives an opportunity to make brief but explicit links between gender equality, sectors or themes (such as economic cooperation) and poverty reduction.

3. *Sida's dialogue with the South African government:* The efforts that the Embassy is currently making to dialogue with partners are considerable. Ways of increasing and making more concrete the dialogue on specific gender equality issues, linked to poverty, to sectors and to meaningful participation strategies could be explored.

4. *Sida's dialogue with the national gender machinery and with civil society:* In addition to the dialogue that the Embassy currently conducts with civil society, it is important to find ways of strengthening contacts.

5. *Integration of a gender perspective in new programmes:* Good opportunities to include a gender perspective in programmes now in their initial stages exist and should be utilised, such as the new Budget Poverty Reduction Project with the Department of Finance.

6. *Working with gender equality in the South African context:* The evaluation findings showed that *locally important meanings* of gender equality vary but that, for those who previously suffered social exclusion, gender inequalities are linked with race and class. Many key stakeholders are able to go beyond a conservative interpretation of the gender equality goal (gender balance) and to reflect on *South Africa's national goals* (gender equality and women's empowerment), giving an opportunity for Sida to work with interventions on gender equality goals that go "beyond numbers."

7. *Mainstreaming lessons:* The main lesson learned from the interventions studied was that mainstreaming *is* taking place, albeit in an embryonic way. It is important to build on the experiences that have been obtained. These experiences show that more substantial gender analysis will improve the effects of the intervention on those who are intended to benefit. One lesson learned from the evaluations studied in NCP is that a gender analysis based on locally available sex-disaggregated statistics and gender data would have made mainstreaming efforts more focused. Intervention experiences with gender training showed that continued training should be supported, made as specific to intervention issues as possible and optimised by being followed up with further training. None of the interventions studied monitored the effects and impacts of activities. To support further development of mainstreaming capability, Sida can work with the planning of new interventions on clarity of gender equality goals and objectives, realistic targets and indicators and supporting development of gender-sensitive monitoring systems.

8. *Application of lessons learned by interventions:* The lessons from working in NCP, such as the gender-race-poverty dynamic, have relevance for other Sida-sup-

ported provincial interventions. LGDSP can build on experiences gained in working with gender mainstreaming and poverty alleviation to create links between these in the second phase. The lessons from KCC, on gender perspectives in participatory processes and working to include different stakeholders' needs and priorities in municipal service delivery, are relevant to other Sida-supported urban development interventions.

9. *Synergies between gender equality and poverty*: The evaluation findings demonstrated that a foundation has been built in the interventions to make more explicit links between poverty reduction and gender equality in the future. The way in which poor urban women were able to articulate these links demonstrates that it is possible to go beyond general statements and build on the perceptions of deprivation of particular primary stakeholder groups.

10. *Stakeholder participation*: The evaluation findings showed that much of the effort to promote participation focused on information sharing and consultation. The intention to give people a voice in determining their own development through more representative participation appeared in planning documents but was largely not realised. The lesson learned is the need for strategies to capacitate and maximise the potential and experience that local groups provide.

3.2 Lessons for Swedish Development Cooperation

11. *Gender equality goal*: The findings from South Africa showed that making gender equality a strategic priority in the CS and following through with incorporation of gender equality goals in interventions produced results. The evaluation team learned from discussions at Sida that, although some of the early momentum has now dissipated, there is still *great will and commitment to the goal*. Sida's commitment to gender equality should be strengthened, even as Sweden's policies on development cooperation change. One reason for loss of momentum is that Sida programme officers find it difficult in practice to work with all Sida's development cooperation goals and action programmes. There is an advantage to linking gender equality to other development cooperation goals, to facilitate identification of synergies. It is also important that the *visibility of the gender equality goal* is maintained.

12. *“Women”*: The South African findings showed that there is still a tendency by diverse stakeholders to equate gender equality with promoting women's participation, in isolation of the context of gender inequalities. More rigorous scrutiny by Sida of project proposals and programme designs of planned interventions could support gender equality in development thinking, rather than a narrow focus on women's participation.

13. *Mainstreaming strategy*: The South African findings showed that many stakeholders (Embassy, implementing partners) *are* increasingly working with mainstreaming components and elements, albeit it in an eclectic way. Mainstreaming has been on the international and Swedish agenda for a relatively short period, and the evaluation findings give cause for optimism. Main-

streaming should continue to be supported, not just in new interventions but in on-going ones where there is potential to support incorporation of mainstreaming elements.

14. Sida's gender equality goal and mainstreaming strategy have *resource implications*. In interventions where there is a clear rationale for gender equality mainstreaming, adequate funding to support this is necessary – whether for training (of TA, at intervention level, etc.), delivery of national gender equality advisory services, development of a gender-sensitive monitoring system, etc.

15. *Accountability*: Mainstreaming will be further promoted by more rigorous accountability required from programme implementers. Accountability mechanisms can be included in programme designs and requested in reporting. Accountability is especially necessary in TORs and contracts of *consultants/TA* who manage interventions on Sida's behalf.

16. *Gender skills and expertise*: Working with gender equality goals and mainstreaming is the responsibility of all Sida programme officers. The South African findings showed that their gender skills, acquired from Sida's training or through experience, are enhanced when there is professional gender expertise available, both to the Embassy and to the interventions. This lesson has resource implications. If it is not possible to have a staff position for a gender expert at an Embassy, such expertise can be budgeted for specific tasks, such as working with a partner organisation on a project proposal, participating in a sector review, etc.

Executive Summary – Bangladesh Country Report

1.0 Introduction

In 2000, Sida commissioned an *Evaluation of Sida's support to development cooperation for the promotion of Gender Equality* with three objectives: 1) to assess how Sida's mainstreaming strategy is reflected in the country strategy process; 2) to assess the strategic and/or practical changes with regards to the promotion of gender equality that interventions supported by Sida have contributed to or may contribute to; and 3) to provide an input to a deeper understanding of the concrete meaning of concepts in interventions supported by Sida (gender equality, empowerment of women, stakeholder participation, strategic and practical changes with regard to gender equality and mainstreaming). The evaluation included three country case studies. This report covers Bangladesh, with Nicaragua and South Africa the subjects of separate reports.

The study team assessed gender equality issues in relation to the Country Strategy and analysed four interventions that had been selected for detailed study: Non-formal Education NFE 2 – Literacy for adults and youth (including the pilot programme on continuing education, PLCE), Non-formal Education NFE 3, Literacy for hard to reach, urban, working children, Ain o Shalish Kendro, ASK – Legal aid, and Steps Towards Development, STD –

Training on gender and related issues. ASK and STD differ from all other interventions studied in the evaluation in explicitly emphasising gender equality as a core organisational objective.

The country study took place from May 14–June 2, 2001. The evaluation team was composed of Ted Freeman and Sevilla Leowinata of Goss Gilroy, GGI, Canada, Ms. Jowshan A. Rahman and Mirza Najmul Huda, national consultants of Bangladesh assisted by Prabin Behari Barua, and Britha Mikkelsen of COWI, Denmark. Ted Freeman and Britha Mikkelsen shared the role of team leader during the evaluation mission.

The key issues derived from the Terms of Reference for the overall evaluation are:

- To what extent is Sida's mainstreaming strategy reflected in the *country strategy process* for Bangladesh?
- What has been the *gender equality content* of the four interventions, including the *goal* of gender equality as reflected in intervention design and implementation and the use of a *mainstreaming strategy*?
- What is the relationship in each intervention between the pursuit of gender equality as a goal and the need to address *poverty reduction*?
- *Which changes* have occurred in the gender equality situation as a result of the interventions?
- How can the experiences of the four interventions reviewed assist in a deeper understanding of the use and *meaning of concepts* such as gender equality, women's empowerment and practical and strategic changes?

A major aim of the evaluation was to identify lessons for future policy and strategy revision and for the application of these lessons in practical development co-operation.

Data collection methods included 1) extensive document review; 2) interviews with Sida programme staff, intervention staff and consultants; and 3) group discussions and participatory focus groups and workshops with project implementers and primary stakeholders. A series of structured guidelines, concept papers and checklists prepared by the evaluation team prior to the field studies helped to ensure a common approach to the evaluation in all three countries.

2.0 The Environment for Gender Equality in Bangladesh

Since its early days as an independent country, the Government of Bangladesh, GoB, has written policies and plans sensitive to the situation of women and their role in society. The overall goal of Bangladesh's current national development agenda is the alleviation of poverty and the reduction of gender differences is seen as an important factor in achieving that overall goal. A range of initiatives is ongoing in an attempt to improve women's access to opportunities for education and training, information, and other resources.

Examples of commitments by the Government of Bangladesh to address the situation of women include:

- The present national five year plan emphasises the promotion of equal sharing of power and decision making between women and men at all levels of society, in recognition of the need for women to be ensured of equal rights.
- The GoB is a signatory to UN conventions on gender such as the UN Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, CEDAW (with reservations) and a commitment to equal rights for women and men in all spheres is enshrined in the Constitution of Bangladesh.
- A national policy for women's advancement (NP) was declared by the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs in 1997. This was translated into a National Action Plan in 1998 as one element in the implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action.
- Gender concerns have been incorporated into a number of national sectoral policies.
- Sub-national level co-ordination committees have been established in a number of thanas, e.g. for assessing the situation of violence against women.

In civil society a number of Non Government Organisations, NGOs play the role of advocate of social justice, especially of women, children and the poor.

Despite commitments by government and the parallel work of NGOs in addressing gender inequalities, sex dis-aggregated key human development indicators and gender related indices show persistent and deep gender inequalities, in literacy, health care, asset ownership and income. On the other hand, there has been some progress in women's participation at the local government level and a special initiative has recently been put in place by the government to appoint more women at senior levels of the public service.

At community level, data and popular perception point to an alarming increase in the prevalence and severity of violent acts against women. These acts, frequently reported in the media, include murder for non-payment of dowry, acid throwing, abduction, battering, sexual abuse and trafficking. To a certain extent, at least in popular opinion and in the press and media, there seems to be a violent backlash to the increase in women's visibility and apparent freedom of movement which has accompanied industrial change and the increasing role of women in urban or peri-urban industrial centres.

In view of the continuing relative deprivation of women and their apparent vulnerability to violent repression, the reported positive response of men to the idea of women's empowerment represents a powerful paradox. One explanation may be found in the fact that increased participation by women in economic activities brings irrefutable benefits to the welfare of entire families.

In general terms, indicators of women's relative position in Bangladesh society have slowly improved over the last 20 years for reasons such as improved access to education and to the labour market – despite persistent gender differences.

Interestingly the empowerment of womenfolk is often interpreted by poor people as a class issue where the poor and powerless triumph over the rich and powerful. Thus the achievement of gender equality has the potential to produce a unifying effect for women and men among the poor and powerless. This positive attitude of poor men to an increase in women's empowerment as a form of class advancement is in direct contrast to the conventional belief that gender equality is often a divisive issue for poor men and women.

3.0 The Country Strategy and Dialogue on Gender Equality

Sida's development co-operation with Bangladesh currently operates under a Country Strategy developed in 1996 and covering the period January 1997 to December 31, 2001. The development of the 1997–2001 Country Strategy for Bangladesh seems to have been the culmination of a period of intense interest in gender equality and promotion of women's interests and was clearly seen as such at the time. It was also one element in a specific gender equality strategy. The Strategy linked aspects of gender equality to goals and priorities in each of the key sectors of Sida's development co-operation. While somewhat short on the specifics of how gender equality was to be pursued in each major element of Swedish development co-operation, the Strategy did include a very direct statement of the high priority of gender equality in all aspects of Sida co-operation in Bangladesh. On balance, there could not be a more explicit indication from Sida than the 1997–2001 Country Strategy for Bangladesh, of its intent to ensure that programmes supported by Sweden in poverty, health, education, and human rights and democratic development are expected to address issues of gender equality and to have considerations of gender equality mainstreamed into them.

It is the feeling amongst Sida staff that gender equality may be less prominent in future as an explicit goal – or “point of departure” as it was phrased in the 1997–2001 Country Strategy – for Sida's development co-operation than in the previous period. This view holds that gender will be more fully mainstreamed into the actual programme and to the various sub-sectors of co-operation in future but with a somewhat diminished level of visibility.

This seems to be a realistic assumption if one is to go by the draft Country Strategy for 2001–05. It emphasises continuity from the co-operation between Sweden and Bangladesh as well as renewal to accommodate ongoing changes in Bangladesh. It is significant that the draft Country Strategy pays special attention to women and children as a particularly vulnerable group and includes an analysis of both historical and recent changes in discussing equality.

As already noted the climate for promoting gender equality in Bangladesh through development assistance is conducive in terms of supportive legislation and officially stated priorities. However, it is important that the programmes resulting from the Country Strategy include practical measures for mainstreaming gender equality and for continuing gender equality elements of current sector programmes. In this process of moving from the Country Strategy to changes in planned or current programmes, dialogue on gender equality remains a central tool.

Dialogue on Gender Equality between GoB and Sida/Swedish Embassy has developed positively through the different phases of co-operation. This dialogue has been facilitated by GoB placing Gender Equality centrally in key policy documents and by Sida's promotion of the issue in annual negotiations and in relevant fora. However, experience suggests that Sida has also met considerable difficulty in achieving a positive response to gender equality messages and institutional measures, sometimes as a consequence of factors outside a partner agency's control such as staff rotation within the public service. Nonetheless, Sida has persisted in attempting to communicate key messages on gender equality and has worked to maintain a fairly high public profile concerning the priority of equity issues.

There is a risk in Bangladesh as in other partner countries that preparation of the Country Strategy in the Swedish language through a prolonged internal process, limits the depth and relevance of dialogue between the Swedish Government and key stakeholders in GoB partner agencies.

4.0 Gender Mainstreaming

The Evaluation Team assessed gender mainstreaming in the interventions in accordance with the Action Programme's suggested components which include: explicit gender equality goal, gender analysis and sex dis-aggregated data, mainstreaming structures, roles and responsibilities of key actors for gender mainstreaming, ownership, institutional capacity and resources, and capacity building, e.g. gender training. It is important to note that the Evaluation Team did not apply an 'all or nothing' judgement. Instead, the process was appreciated, which leads to and deepens the integration of a mainstreaming strategy. To capture the mainstreaming process the Team developed a 6-point mainstreaming assessment tool.

Both the NFE 2 and NFE 3 programmes have formulated *gender equality goals* as numeric targets (i.e. 50% women learners, 50% girls and teachers). They recognise the need for targeting women and girls specifically. As long as gender equality goals are limited to a parity of women and men, this does not ensure that deeper inequalities than access to training are addressed. However, there are some indications that gender sensitivity (e.g. discussion on women's rights) has also been considered and introduced in the curriculum contents.

The two NGO interventions, STD and ASK, are distinctly different from those in non-formal education in that they include GE an explicit part of

their organisational goals. Hence, they should also be equipped to undertake *gender analysis*.

With gender justice being an integral part of its goal, *ASK* not only analyses gender inequalities and abuse of women's rights, but also implements Gender Equality and monitors trends through the sex dis-aggregated data it collects for routine reporting. Exposure of discriminatory laws as well as illegal application of laws in the form of discriminatory practices are major parts of *ASK*'s work. Despite the centrality of Gender Equality there is scope for a more systematic orientation to gender analysis and application of gender analysis tools among the staff.

The establishment of *STD* was based on a joint recognition by Sida and a group of concerned Bangladeshis that there was a need for support to other institutions – Government Organisations, GOs and NGOs – in the area of gender analysis, working with and institutionalising gender equality goals. *STD* has since developed the tools for gender analysis, which are central in its gender training activities.

The targeting on a 50% participation of women and girls in the NFE 2 and NFE 3 programmes indicate, that some gender considerations have influenced the goal-setting. Gender analysis that could have gone behind the quantitative target and highlighted unequal access and opportunities for women and men, girls and boys seem to be absent.

If gender analysis from the outset was limited, some gender disaggregated information is gathered during implementation at the centres. But the data is not consolidated and analysed at the central level at Directorate for Non-Formal Education, DNFE, in Dhaka where capacity is currently very low after the high staff turn-over.

It should be noted that the evaluation team was not able to secure quantitative *gender disaggregated data* on NFE 2 outcomes during repeated visits to DNFE headquarters. There seem to be considerable difficulty with the local and regional compilation of data and its transfer to DNFE headquarters for further compiling and analysis.

In the spirit of Sida's Action Programme the responsibility for mainstreaming gender equality lies with the implementing partner organisations. Sida's role can be characterised as facilitating the promotion of gender equality. The GoB has established *mainstreaming structures*, i.e. mechanisms and bodies at national and than a level with the responsibility to promote and monitor gender equality. It is the impression that there is a long way between these and specific interventions, in which gender mainstreaming structures are generally not established.

The support given by Sida to gender consultancy Technical Assistance for DNFE is a good example, of where *Sida's role as a facilitator* can be traced. The Local Gender Consultancy, LGC of *STD*, was contracted to promote gender equality in all DNFE's activities, including NFE 2 and NFE 3. A DNFE Gen-

der Focal Point was created by assistance from the LGC. A major activity was “Expertise Development Training” for 20 DNFE officials and for batches of 67 DNFE officials in April–May 2000.

At the level of NFE training centres the establishment of Centre Management Committees, CMCs, may be seen to entail an embryonic structure for promoting gender mainstreaming. However, few of the CMCs are active, and gender equality is not seen to be explicitly part of their agenda.

With limited staff resources available at the Embassy Sida’s most obvious role seems to relate to its ability to facilitate dialogue and networking between concerned stakeholders in gender equality which will contribute to strengthen institutional capacity. This is also where Sida is seen to have contributed to formation of mainstreaming structures and *capacity building* in the different partner organisations. Sida is well positioned to facilitate between implementing agencies and NGOs and the national machineries and national gender expertise.

Sida has been determined to help *institutionalise gender awareness* and establish mainstreaming structures. This was the justification for starting to support STD in the first place. Through technical assistance provided by the STD’s Local Gender Consultancy to DNFE attempts have been made to identify the gender gaps in the NFE Programme Portfolios, in teachers and Supervisors Guide, and in literacy materials.

The LGC, Technical Assistance gender training in DNFE helped to build capacity for a while. The gender sensitised staff were a resource that could have strengthened institutional capacity and sustained the short-lived gender focal points. In view of staff turn-over and other priorities by DNFE the initiatives have been fragile and suggest that one off gender training is not sufficient to ensure gender equality mainstreaming but needs follow up.

Provision of technical support to the new clause on gender recently agreed among the NFE 3 partners, should also be helpful for more careful monitoring to improve project effectiveness

It seems essential that efforts to strengthen NFE *monitoring* should not only concentrate on improved data collection at field level but on much improved transfer, compiling and reporting of data at headquarters level.

As NFE 2 winds down there are opportunities to transfer Gender Equality lessons to newer programmes in literacy, post-literacy and continuing education. To exploit such opportunities future programmes, which are oriented to skills training and employment must be examined from a Gender Equality perspective if gains made in NFE 2 are to be consolidated.

In relation to the process oriented model of mainstreaming developed by the evaluation team the interventions in non-formal education (NFE2 and NFE3) have achieved a partial level of mainstreaming which could be described best as pro-forma (level two). In some aspects a gender mainstreaming strategy is somewhat institutionalised (level four) in that they have includ-

ed specific participation targets and have made some effort to monitor gender disaggregated data but have fallen short on implementing a gender equality strategy or monitoring and evaluating changes in Gender Equality.

In contrast, and not surprising given their core mandates, ASK and STD have had a much more explicit commitment to Gender Equality and a higher level of mainstreaming from a process perspective. If NFE 2 and 3 have elements of a level 2 (pro-forma) and level 4 (institutionalised) mainstreaming, ASK and STD represent more of a level 4–5 implementation rate with elements of monitoring and evaluation of mainstreaming gender equality - an area in which opportunities are not fully exploited.

5.0 Poverty Reduction and Gender Equality

Sida finds common ground with the Government of Bangladesh in the fact that poverty reduction is the overall objective of their development co-operation and national development policies respectively. This is a useful entry point through which gender equality can be further pursued.

Whether measured as income-consumption deficiencies or as experienced forms of deprivation such as violence, isolation and powerlessness, poverty in Bangladesh has a gender bias. ASK directly targets the synergy between poverty reduction and gender equality, supporting poor women defending their human rights. STD addresses the linkage between poverty and gender equality at a conceptual level in its gender training activities, but has not made this linkage explicit. STD also advocates for gender affirmative action, particularly pointing to women's productive and human resources potentials.

For both NFE 2 and 3, literacy and education are seen as key pathways from poverty. Because of the tendency for poverty to be feminised, an emphasis on female education has been included in GoB national policies. This is a vital focus, but the mass nature of the programme has necessarily detracted from efforts to improve learning quality and to make it more relevant to livelihoods. The two non-formal education programmes would benefit from a more explicit poverty orientation with a gender perspective. The absence of a gender sensitive skills-based programme – and hence a potential for economic returns – has somewhat reduced the perceived relevance of the interventions to the poorest women and men. Plans for the continuing education pilot PLCE component of NFE 2 as well as a future NFE 3 may help to remedy this perception of reduced relevance.

The embassy staff noted at the time of the evaluation mission that they planned to use the PLCE pilot program to gain experience to benefit more viable continuing education programmes with a stronger Gender Equality content. This approach should also provide more information on strengthening the link between continuing education programs and poverty alleviation.

Economic emancipation by poor women and men has also often led to their political emancipation. The somewhat greater say women now have in deci-

sion making in the family and in public tends to threaten the status quo. The backlash stemming out of progress women have made on the economic and political fronts is registered most dramatically in violence against women, which is frequently resorted to by those who feel their position threatened. These changes in power relations require sensitive handling on the part of development workers and implementing NGOs.

6.0 Stakeholder Participation and Gender Equality

The climate for stakeholder participation in Bangladesh is reported to be changing in connection with debates about decentralisation. A change in this essential approach to addressing the needs and interests of poor women and men is of concern to large sections of civil society. Non-formal education programmes may be particularly important for promoting stakeholder participation and dialogue at different levels. On the other hand, smaller and more flexible interventions like ASK find it easier to adjust their orientation to include changes in strategy and operations for promoting gender equality.

Participation in NFE 2 by primary stakeholders is often largely passive, or at best at a level where the learners serve as informants in occasional surveys. This should not be seen as reflecting a diminished role for NGOs since they play an important role in the delivery of both NFE2 and NFE3. Rather, it should be noted that some NGOs visited by the evaluation team implement programming in NFE2 in such a way that learners play a mainly passive role as the recipients of instruction, with little or no influence on how instruction takes place.

Generally speaking, in the elements of NFE2 implemented by NGOs, the quality of participation by primary stakeholders varies with the background and orientation of the NGOs involved. One factor, which seems to hinder NGOs in investing in participatory methods, is the very low allocation of resources for administration and overhead which limits their ability to experiment.

On the other hand, functional participation is common in Bangladesh because group formation is invariably used to organise new credit schemes, agricultural programs, trades development initiatives and similar community actions. For many NGOs involved in administering NFE2 centres, literacy training can be integrated into other activities in the communities and serves as both a tool for recruitment and a service to be provided to existing members.

In its approach to participation NFE3 benefits from UNICEF's involvement in organising popular participatory workshops. The intervention is reported to have made efforts on consultative participation and even interactive ones with the primary stakeholders.

ASK consults with both primary service users and secondary government stakeholders among its key stakeholders. Both ASK and STD provide frameworks for interactive participation with their primary stakeholders at sub-na-

tional levels. Some of these groups are reported to have practised the much higher level of participation represented by self-mobilisation.

Finally, within Sida's country programme in Bangladesh, there are informal exchanges among like-minded Sida partner organisations. For example, ASK and STD occasionally share audio-visual materials or information that they each publish. There are some opportunities for Sida to facilitate more structured linkages between NGOs but even more so between NGOs and government agencies. The experience of DNFE-STD collaboration amply demonstrates the enormous challenge such an effort faces. Nevertheless, in view of the roles government and NGOs will continue to play in the development of Bangladesh, this difficult cross-fertilisation is a worthwhile cause.

7.0 Changes in Gender Equality and Other Effects – Including Gender Roles

The NFE literacy training interventions offer opportunities for girls and boys, women and men to interact in safe learning environments. They also offer opportunities for demystifying stereotypes and changing the participants' perceptions of each other and themselves. In addition, they offer a forum for the participants to question and challenge certain manifestations of gender-based behaviours, such as violence against women. Learners report a greater awareness of rights and experience of a form of relational empowerment in making their own decisions to spend what they earn.

Political empowerment is also indicated by the women's reported new awareness of their right to work outside the home, to cast votes for their preferred candidate, and of control over family expenditures.

To what extent lives of new learners have changed as a result of the non-formal education interventions is perceived slightly differently by learners, centre supervisors and NGO management staff. However, everyone agreed that the experience of learning together helps women emerge from isolation, become more aware of their situation and rights, and develop a greater self-confidence.

Improved GE considerations are also particularly important in the pilot PLCE project if the model is to succeed and have a wider influence on the emerging NFE programmes. The pilot PLCE model has a strong potential to assist in addressing women's practical needs.

Sida efforts to promote GE as part of project goals and in capacity building of staff at all levels in DNFE were hampered by problems in staff turnover and a difficult human resource management environment which resulted, in part, from changes in national policy on civil service advancement and mobility. The Local Gender Consultancy group managed, however, to train and motivate a number of DNFE staff in spite of the massive turnover that followed.

The newly developed monitoring, evaluation and reporting system, MER, must also incorporate gender disaggregated data if DNFE is to be successful

in tracking even the most basic participation data for women and men. While this data is reported partially in the most recent programme reports, officials at DNFE were careful to point out to the evaluation team that data collection and collation at field level in the centres themselves does not support gender disaggregated reporting.

Work by ASK has apparently contributed to concrete impacts in the reduction of polygamy, early marriage and *hilla* (intervening marriage), oral divorce, wife beating, and dowry incidence rates. All of these changes translate into an improved quality of life for women.

One of the most empowering experiences for women participating in these programmes is the mere fact of escaping isolation and sharing experiences with other women. It is in such situations that the line between women's practical needs and strategic interests blur. The opportunity for women and girls to assemble with others like them and also with men and boys provides them with access to safe places and to services and opens doors to other mainstream resources and opportunities.

The changes resulting from breaking exclusion of women from most public spheres have affected the traditional gender roles and the relationships between women and men, girls and boys in Bangladesh. It is noteworthy that progress in women's empowerment and achievement of gender equality appears to have a unifying effect for women and men among the poor.

At a strategic level the most significant of ASK's gender mainstreaming achievements may lie in the successes the organisation attains in influencing national laws to be more gender sensitive. ASK's work illustrates meeting certain women's practical needs through legal aid provision, but it is an impact limited to specific women clients and their families. In contrast ASK has also been able to help change the lives of many more women in the country through the legislative changes that they advocate.

The restriction of the right to issue *fatwas* by religious leaders and the recognition of mothers as legal guardians are among the significant milestones in renegotiating the balance of power between all women and men in contemporary Bangladeshi society.

STD is also regarded as having played a catalytic role in raising gender awareness. It has developed into an important multiplier of gender trainers and supplier of supportive resources. There are now 179 local NGOs in 14 districts that are part of STD's Development Workers Information Network, DWIN.

Another important GE change to note concerns the approach taken by the NGOs in challenging male dominance. The interventions by ASK and STD show that women's economic contributions can be effective arguments in support of changes in gender relations. On the other hand, structural changes in power sharing are extremely slow in emerging. To address the hostility and resistance from the male establishment which often accompanies women's empowerment, efforts are made to specifically target male leaders and community opinion makers for gender education.

These lessons on how effective changes in gender equality have been gradually shaped deserve to be shared and replicated widely. There is an opportunity for Sida to provide a link among its partners, especially with the Government of Bangladesh, which has the power to scale up the replication of effective strategies. Many NGOs, such as those delivering literacy training on behalf of DNFE, have strong links to government as contracted deliverers of services. The challenge is to deepen this relationship so that the experience of NGOs in promoting gender equality feeds back into policy development and program design.

8.0 Lessons Learned

- While Sida's Country Strategy for Bangladesh (and the process of its development) has provided an explicit requirement that gender equality should be mainstreamed in interventions supported by Sida, the translation of the strategy into specific interventions requires that gender equality should be strengthened in each of the interventions. As the transition is made to a new Country Strategy for Bangladesh, close consideration will need to be given to how to translate a priority for gender equality into concrete programme design considerations, especially where sectoral approaches are adopted.
- The strong public profile of the Swedish Embassy in Bangladesh with regard to issues relating to equality (including especially, equality for children and youth) can be built on through continued emphasis on issues concerning gender relations and equality for women and girls.
- Sometimes, as in Bangladesh, continued Sida emphasis on equality issues in dialogue with counterparts encounters either active resistance or problems of continuous change and turnover in personnel which tend to weaken its impact. This highlights the fact that dialogue on gender equality is a continuous process with a need to renew its impact on a regular basis and to be tactically sensitive to setbacks and required changes in direction and emphasis.
- If very large interventions in areas such as literacy are to move beyond a simple target rate for women's participation and address issues of gender relations in a mainstreamed approach, the problem of quality assurance in mass participation programming will need to be addressed. The need to keep per capita programme costs low in a programme with millions of participants must be balanced with the need to provide critically important, reasonable quality, gender equality content.
- The innovative attempt to link gender-specific support to local NGOs to Sida supported efforts in non-formal education through the Local Gender Consultancy mechanism represents an important experiment in promoting gender equality linkages across different Sida supported interventions. While it has experienced difficulties specific to the counterpart

agency in Bangladesh, it should not be abandoned as a possible model for wider use in Sida supported interventions.

- Experience in Bangladesh suggests a strong correlation between poverty reduction efforts and the promotion of basic legal and human rights. Provision of basic access to the judicial system and a reasonable chance of securing legal redress seem to reduce economic vulnerability for assisted people. There is an opportunity in Bangladesh and elsewhere to explore the links between gender equality, poverty and legal rights.
- One of the most often cited and most significant impacts of establishing participation rate targets for women and girls in literacy programming seems to be the possibility that such participation in a public and social experience can help to overcome the serious problem of isolation and lack of communication among women in some communities. The experience of Bangladesh may prove useful in other countries where social and religious practice isolates women and makes them more vulnerable.
- Programmes directly addressing the legal rights of women and girls and providing them with representation and support can have strong practical and strategic effects. To some extent they may be seen as an important adjunct to an effective mainstreaming strategy.

Annex 6

Sample of the Evaluation Study Objects Grid with Key Questions – StatSA, Prosilais, NFE 2

ANALYTICAL FRAME WORK I: Statistics South Africa. Co-operation in the Field of Statistics between the Republic of South Africa and the Government of Sweden

		Intervention Level			
	Study Objects	Specific questions	Geographical or institutional concentration of evaluation	Key informants, focus group participants, etc.	Methods and tools
WHAT?	Gender Equality goal reflected in intervention design and implementation	Roles of & dynamics among stake-holders in promoting g/e goal: Stats Sweden, Stats SA, Embassy, Norway? Why less Swedish support to gender stats in the programme than originally planned? To what degree was a gender perspective integrated in design of all relevant programme components (censuses, household surveys, training, provincial offices, user-producer dialogue)? 2 meanings of gender perspective: institutional & operational – how used? Which emphasised? Even if not explicit in design, was a gender perspective included in implementation? Obstacles to m/s gender? Missed opportunities? Implications of decision not to support gender stats in phase 2?	Statistics SA Pretoria & Kimberley Statistics Sweden Sida/Stockholm & Embassy	Stats SA top management Statistics Sweden consultants Sida officers, Stockholm & Embassy Gender Unit, Stats SA, & their gender network	Review of project design & M&E documents Review of statistical products & publications Key informant interviews, including by telephone Focus group work with Gender Unit & their gender network
HOW?	Poverty reduction – links/ synergies/conflicts with Gender Equality Stakeholder Participation (Including Children and Dialogue with Sida)	Link between Phase 2 objective, to support poverty & living conditions stats (eg censuses, household surveys), and gender statistics? Extent of dialogue between Embassy & Stats Sweden on supporting gender stats? Between Stats Sweden & Stats SA? Type, quality & depth of participation by gender statisticians & by gender networks in engendering stats products? Type and quality of participation by users of gender stats, to influence availability & relevance to needs? Influence, role of other technical co-operation partners (Norway)?	Same as above Stats SA, Pretoria & Kimberley Statistics Sweden Sida/Stockholm & Embassy	Statistics SA Stats gender experts in Sweden, Norway & SA Consultants, Statistics Sweden Embassy & Socio-cultural adviser Stats SA managers, Gender Unit & gender network	Include in focus group work, as above Review of Minutes, Annual Negotiations Key informant interviews, including by phone Focus group work with Gender Unit & their gender network

	<p>Mainstreaming strategy – degree.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zero evidence? • Pro Forma? • Analytical? • Design Integration? • Implementation? • Evaluation and Monitoring 	<p>Stated 1996 strategy of 'foregrounding' and 'main-lining' gender equality by building institutional capacity; to what degree was strategy implemented in key programme components? Fate of this strategy in Phase 2 (when no direct support to gender stats given)?</p>	<p>Statistics SA, Pretoria Sida/Embassy</p>	<p>Same as above</p>	<p>Review of statistical products & publications Key informant interviews Focus group work, as above</p>
<p>WHICH CHANGES?</p>	<p>Effects of intervention on Gender Equality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical gender needs/strategic gender interests and changes • Men and Male Roles • Effects of intervention on women's empowerment; violence against women • Intended/unintended and missed opportunities 	<p>Population representativity (by sex, race) at Stats SA improved? Statistical products meeting women/men's, girls/boys' strategic interests; to reveal the realities of their lives (living conditions, livelihoods, gender violence, etc.)? Have women been 'made visible'? Have needs and demands for gender stats by users been met? Did the gender audit/review change the nature/design of statistical outputs? Have censuses, household surveys, economic stats series, training courses been engendered?</p>	<p>Statistics SA, Pretoria & Kimberley National & provincial institutions – users of gender statistics</p>	<p>Stats SA managers in key Directorates National gender experts/users of stats Provincial & municipal users of gender statistics (govt. NGOs & civil society, researchers, media) Statistical officers</p>	<p>Review of statistical products & publications Key informant interviews Focus group work with Gender Unit & national gender experts Mini-workshop with statistics staff and provincial & municipal statistical users Focus group with statistical officers</p>

ANALYTICAL FRAME WORK I – Nicaragua: PROSILAIS

		Intervention Level			
	Study Objects	Specific questions	Geographical or institutional concentration of evaluation	Key informants, focus group participants, etc.	Methods and tools
WHAT?	<p>Gender Equality goal reflected in intervention design and implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obstacles and missed opportunities? 	<p>How health needs of women and men were incorporated into design of SILAIS health services packages, especially sexual and reproductive health and rights?</p> <p>How needs of women and men health workers and volunteers were incorporated into design?</p> <p>Participatory health assessments at local level include women and men as specific groups identifying needs?</p>	<p>Managua (MINSa/OPS/UNICEF and Sida) In Esteli, Nueva Segovia and RAAS at four key levels of SILAIS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Departmental SILAIS offices; • Municipal Health Centres; • Puertos de Salud; Casas Base 	<p>MINSa PROSILAIS MINSa integrated health services for women PAHO PROSILAIS PAHO integrated health services for women; UNICEF PROSILAIS staff Sida advisor SILAIS directors at department level Atencion integrale a la mujer at SILAIS offices Advisory councils of SILAIS Infermeras Paid auxiliary health workers Volunteer health leaders</p>	<p>Review evaluations and monitoring documents as well as health needs assessment reports Key informant interviews with Sida advisor, with MINSa/PAHO/UNICEF SILAIS, atencion integrale a la mujer and gender staff and with advisory councils and directors of SILAIS Participatory workshops with paid and voluntary women and men (most will be women) health workers.</p>
	<p>Poverty reduction – links/ synergies/ conflicts with Gender Equality</p>	<p>Sida and Nicaragua poverty strategies and interventions include health?</p> <p>Sex desegregated data on health outcomes gathered in PROSILAIS?</p> <p>SILAIS policies and service packages consider economic impact of user fees, differential effect on women and men?</p> <p>Health outcomes as element in poverty as felt by women and men?</p>	<p>Swedish Embassy in Managua MINSa/PAHO/UNICEF offices All four levels of SILAIS structures Non-SILAIS health levels such as hospitals</p>	<p>As above but with special emphasis on four levels of SILAIS health administration in Esteli, Nueva Segovia and RAAS</p>	<p>Review of poverty strategy documents Key informant interviews Workshops with health workers and volunteers.</p>
HOW?	<p>Stakeholder Participation (Including Dialogue with Sida)</p>	<p>Nature of participation by women and men health workers and health volunteers in planning at the SILAIS level? Different ways women and men have participated in</p>	<p>To be addressed at both the headquarters of Sida, MINSa, UNICEF, PAHO and at Departmental level in Esteli,</p>	<p>As above but with special attention to paid and volunteer health workers and to assessing Sida/MINSa dialogue</p>	<p>As above plus focus groups with women and men health service providers at local levels (volunteer and paid);</p>

<p>WHICH CHANGES?</p>	<p>Effects of intervention on Gender Equality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical gender needs/strategic gender interests and changes • Men and Male Roles • Effects of intervention on women's empowerment • unintended/missed opportunities 	<p>See first item under what above: Gender equality goal reflected in intervention design and implementation?</p> <p>Special focus on design elements aiming at reproductive health and sexual health and women's rights?</p> <p>Women specific health interventions and health status issues monitored at national and SILAIS levels?</p> <p>Evaluation and monitoring of economic impacts of SILAIS service policies regarding essential drugs and cost recovery as they impact women and men?</p>	<p>To be addressed at both the headquarters of Sida, MINSA, UNICEF, PAHO and at Departmental level in Esteli, Nueva Segovia and RAAS. Each SILAIS to be observed at departmental, municipal health center, health post and basic health leader levels</p>	<p>Full range of key informants as detailed above, namely: MINSA PROSILAIS, MINSA integrated health services for women, PAHO PROSILAIS, PAHO integrated health services for women, UNICEF PROSILAIS staff Sida advisor SILAIS directors at department level Atencion integrale a la mujer at SILAIS offices</p>	<p>Special focus on Sida dialogue with MINSA and other donors and multilateral organizations to determine which are focusing on gender and how.</p> <p>Key informant interviews and reviews of SILAIS monitoring and evaluation reports.</p>
	<p>decisions on service content and delivery? Role of advisory councils to SILAIS Sida/MINSA/PAHO/UNICEF dialogue on gender equality aspects of SILAIS systems?</p>	<p>Nueva Segovia and RAAS. Each SILAIS to be observed at departmental, municipal health center, health post and basic health leader levels</p>	<p>To be addressed at both the headquarters of Sida, MINSA, UNICEF, PAHO and at Departmental level in Esteli, Nueva Segovia and RAAS. Each SILAIS to be observed at departmental, municipal health center, health post and basic health leader levels</p>	<p>Key Informant interviews at all institutional levels noted; Reviews of SILAIS monitoring and evaluation reports; Participatory with paid and volunteer health workers in the SILAIS system.</p>	

ANALYTICAL FRAME WORK- I: Bangladesh: Non-formal Education Project- 2 (NFE-2): Literacy for Adults and Young People

Study Objects		Intervention Level		
	Specific questions	Geographical or institutional concentration of evaluation	Key informants, focus group participants, etc.	Methods and tools
<p>What?</p> <p>Gender Equality goal reflected in intervention design and implementation.</p>	<p>Literacy needs of women and men incorporated into design of NFE-2? Proportion of female and male literacy workers (teachers, supervisors) and volunteers incorporated in project design? Gender issues included in the Training Module for training of key staff (teachers and supervisors, etc.)? Education materials gender sensitive? Were the gender issues considered in socio-economic studies, planning component and implementation strategy?</p>	<p>Primary and Mass Education Division (PMED), Directorate of Non-Formal Education (DNFE), Project Implementation Unit (PIU) of NFE-2, Swedish Embassy in Bangladesh. Office of the Sida TA staff in Dhaka. Offices of NGOs participating in the NFE2 Pilot Program.</p>	<p>Key staff of Swedish Embassies, PMED, DNFE, NFE-2, partner NGOs, Deputy Commissioners & UNOs of respective districts & upazilas, teachers, supervisors and learners (female & male). Sida technical advisor to DNFE</p>	<p>Key informant interviews, reviews of curriculum of education materials and training modules, focus group discussion with key staff (ngo staff, teachers, supervisors, coordinators, etc.) and the learners (female & male). Evaluation documents</p>
<p>How?</p> <p>Poverty reduction links/ synergies/ conflicts with Gender Equality.</p>	<p>Was there any link established between literacy and poverty reduction in NFE-2, especially for women beneficiaries? Opinions of women and men about literacy as a contributing factor towards poverty reduction? Vocational training component of DNFE2</p>	<p>PMED, DNFE, NFE-2, Swedish Embassy in Bangladesh.</p>	<p>DNFE staff, Project Director and other key staff of NFE-2 & partner NGOs, key staff of Swedish Embassy in Bangladesh. District level DNFE staff.</p>	<p>Key informant interviews, Focus Group Discussion with key staff of the project and beneficiaries (learners, both female and male).</p>
<p>How?</p> <p>Stakeholders' participation (including Dialogue with Sida)</p>	<p>Distinctive participation for women and men specified during planning and implementation of the programme? Sida intervention through dialogue on gender equality? Key policies were identified as the focus of Sida dialogue with partners?</p>	<p>Swedish embassy in Bangladesh. PMED and DNFE including district offices. NFE-2 and NFE2 Pilot Project to be observed at departmental and field level.</p>	<p>Sida, PMED, DNFE and NFE-2 staff. Sida TA and Local Gender Consultants Team.</p>	<p>Key informant interviews, review of project design and agreed minutes of different meetings, monitoring and evaluation documents.</p>
<p>How?</p> <p>Mainstreaming strategy-degree</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zero evidence? • Pro forma? • Analytical? • Design integration? 	<p>See first item under "what" above: Gender equality goal reflected in intervention design and implementation? Sex disaggregated data used in monitoring and/ or evaluation of the project activities? Were the achievement on enrollment of and completion of literacy course by women beneficiaries (learners)</p>	<p>Swedish Embassy in Dhaka, Sida TA team Offices, DNFE, PIU (NFE-2) partner NGOs, selected districts & upazilas administrations.</p>	<p>Sida staff, TA Team members, NFE-2 project staff, DNFE, partner NGOs' staff, selected staff of concerned district and upazila administrations, LGC team members.</p>	<p>Key informant interviews.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation? • Evaluation and monitoring <p>Links to other Gender Equality initiatives in policy formation.</p>	<p>assessed against targets? Were attempts made to assess impact of literacy on perception of neo-literate (both women & men) about poverty and income?</p>	<p>Swedish embassy, PMED, DNEF, NFE-2, Partner NGOs, Literacy centers in selected communities, Sida TA office. Selection district and upazilla offices.</p>	<p>Sida staff, DNEF, NFE-2 & staff of partner NGOs, district & upazilla level relevant staff, men and women and youth learners</p>	<p>Key informant interviews, review of NFE-2 monitoring & evaluation reports, participatory group meetings with neo-literate program participants.</p>
<p>Which Changes?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effects of intervention on Gender Equality • Practical gender needs/ strategic gender interests and changes • Men and male roles • Effects of intervention on women's empowerment: intended/unintended/ missed opportunities. 	<p>What were the effects and impacts of literacy through NFE-2 on women and their access to socio-economic development activities? Gender differences among neo-literate/ in the project area taken into account in enrollment? Women beneficiaries conscious of their rights and obligations? Reported roles women and men (neo-literate) played in the family, and the workplace? Changes reported in work roles for women and reactions by men? Family violence reduced or increased in the project area? Changes occurred in the roles and the power of male and female project staffs of all levels?</p>			

Annex 7

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