

A Primer On Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and Gender

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Abstract

This primer introduces Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs); explains why PRSPs must be engendered to meet their poverty reduction goals using sector examples; introduces tools for mainstreaming gender into PRSPs; analyzes the PRSP gender mainstreaming experience to date based on country examples; discusses why so few PRSPs have mainstreamed gender and why Rwanda exceptionally did so; and concludes with recommendations for engendering PRSPs and investments flowing from them.

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Why PRSPs and What are PRSPs?

In 1999, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) launched PRSPs in response to civil society demands for reducing the unsustainable debt poor developing countries owed these multilateral financial institutions. The Bank and the Fund introduced PRSPs as a prerequisite for the poorest countries participating in the Highly Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) initiative to have their Bank and IMF debts reduced. Subsequently, the Bank and the Fund have introduced PRSPs in non-HIPC developing and transition countries too (World Bank 2002). Mandatory PRSPs have come to legitimize Bank and Fund lending in increasing numbers of developing and transition countries.

PRSPs have become de facto Bank/IMF-mandated national economic plans directed at reducing poverty. They are supposed to be country-owned, expressing not only government but also broad civil society interests solicited through a participatory process. In some countries, bilateral aid agencies like the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and in others multilateral agencies like the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have been underwriting PRSP preparation. Many PRSPs are still in draft, many others have yet to be formulated, and existing PRSPs will be reformulated periodically to reflect changing needs.

Because PRSPs play a critical role in country eligibility for multilateral investments, Gender Action, a new non-profit promoting gender equality in work of the multilateral financial institutions, has made Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) an initial gender mainstreaming target.

Box 1: Mainstreaming Gender and Engendering Development: Terminology

Two terms used interchangeably in this paper are “**mainstreaming gender**” and “**engendering**”. Mainstreaming gender aims to ensure that both women and men are involved in development design, planning, implementation and follow up and that development projects promote women’s rights and equality between men and women. Mainstreaming gender requires analyzing the potential impact on women and men of all development interventions. Engendering also means mainstreaming gender. This use of engendering became popular following the 1995 Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women. An example of its use is in the title of the World Bank’s 2001 flagship Policy Research Report, Engendering Development (World Bank 2001a).

Why Must PRSPs Mainstream Gender?

PRSPs must mainstream gender to achieve their poverty reduction goals. Although women and men share many of the burdens of poverty, they frequently experience poverty differently, have different poverty reduction priorities and are affected differently by development interventions. These gender differences have been insufficiently captured in conventional poverty analyses, designs and monitoring systems, weakening the chances of success of poverty reduction interventions. Addressing the gender dimensions of poverty and creating gender responsive interventions enhances the likelihood of success of poverty reduction strategy efforts (Bamberger et al 2001).

PRSPs must also be engendered because research compellingly correlates greater gender equality with more equal human rights for men and women and greater poverty reduction and

economic growth (World Bank 2001a). Although women's status has improved in most countries over the last half century, gender disparities persist everywhere and remain most acute in the poorest countries. Across and within countries, gender disparities in education, mortality rates, health, political participation, financial assets and other social and economic indicators are greatest within poorer income groups. Gender inequalities impose large costs on the well-being and health of the poor, diminishing their productivity and potential to reduce poverty and ensure economic growth. In most societies women have more limited opportunities to express their needs, improve economic conditions and access services than do men.

Usually women and girls bear the brunt of gender inequalities. Identifying and redressing these inequalities tends to have high social, economic and financial returns. Nevertheless, as this primer demonstrates, PRSPs have hardly acknowledged gender inequalities.

WID vs GAD and Women's Rights Approaches. The majority of PRSPs produced to date weakly apply an obsolete women in development (WID) approach -- mentioning a few female problems in isolation such as girls not attending school and women's reproductive health problems. They neither apply a gender and development (GAD) approach -- analysing inequalities between males and females and proposing programs to eliminate these inequalities nor do they promote women's human rights. GAD and rights approaches mainstream gender by analyzing and monitoring women's and men's roles and rights sector by sector and issue by issue. This is the essence of the engendering approach that is essential for reducing poverty.

Consequences of Producing Unengendered PRSPs. Unengendered PRSPs become national development strategies that do not promote gender equality. The consequences of implementing unengendered development strategies are slower development and perpetuation and deepening of gender inequalities. Implementing unengendered national strategies reinforces unequal gender patterns that hinder development.

Sector Examples of Why PRSPs Must Mainstream Gender

Issue and sector examples of why PRSPs must mainstream gender to reduce poverty are provided in Box 2 (Zuckerman 2001):

Box 2: Examples of Why PRSPs Must Mainstream Gender to Reduce Poverty

Poverty. The essence of the PRSP analysis concerns poverty. Poverty is multidimensional, yet traditional poverty analyses rarely acknowledge that different household members experience poverty differently. Many PRSPs analyze households, the poor, poor people, poor households, vulnerable/disadvantaged/at-risk groups, communities, etc., but rarely poor women and men, girls and boys.

Typical poverty analyses use generic household consumption and welfare data which do not disaggregate intra-household income and resource distribution. Household level poverty analysis is based on the false assumption that households pool income and allocate resources for consumption, production and investment equitably. In many countries intrahousehold distribution is unequal but traditional survey data do not reveal if men or women and girls or boys receive more or less access to education, nutrition, health care and other needs.

Average household or average per capita estimates of consumption and expenditure often underestimate poverty among certain household members, particularly women and girls. Some household members suffer deprivation within households with average per capita incomes above the poverty line.

PRSPs should carefully analyze sex-disaggregated data to distinguish how poverty and its component elements affect men and women and boys and girls differently. Sex-disaggregated data analysis is a part of gender analysis necessary for targeting the poor to reduce poverty.

Rights. In some countries, women lack rights to liberty, free movement, privacy, vote, be elected, work, obtain education, own land, manage property, conduct business, travel and other rights (AWID 2002a). Although legislation granting women these rights is a critical step forward, often such legislation is not implemented (Gopal and Salim 1998). Men often resist losing their old privileges and women often remain ignorant about their new rights (Zuckerman 2000). PRSPs need to include measures, including information campaigns, to promote gender-equal laws.

Voice and Empowerment. With few exceptions, poor women, even more than poor men, do not participate in decision making on matters that directly affect their lives, whether these relate to public institutions, civil society organizations, or the household. Gender inequality and powerlessness are learned from early childhood around the world. Women lack power to influence resource allocation and investment decisions in the home, community and nation in societies where men are assumed to speak for the whole family. Although the need for beneficiary consultations is now widely acknowledged and is a required PRSP process, the track record of PRSP participatory consultations demonstrates that socially and economically weak and voiceless groups usually are marginalized or excluded from the consultation process. In societies where men speak for the whole family, women are voiceless in development projects. For example, social funds are frequently praised for their community demand-driven project selection. However, in many countries, women hardly participate in community meetings selecting social fund projects (Zuckerman 1998). Focus group interviews with women make clear that the opinions of men rarely represent the interests of all household members. PRSP consultations need to take measures to ensure women's and men's voices are heard equally.

Agriculture. Women are significantly more active in African agriculture than are men. Women comprise over 70% of total African agricultural labor and up to 90% of the labor engaged in food production (Blackden and Bhanu 1999). But men have much greater access to farm inputs and earn much more farm income than do women. Blackden and Bhanu estimate that more equal control of inputs and farm income by female and male farmers in countries such as Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Kenya, could raise farm yields by as much as a fifth of current output. PRSPs need to analyze men's and women's structural roles in agriculture, their respective control of agricultural resources and promote women's access to and control of farming inputs and income. They need to ensure that agricultural research and extension institutions recognize and respond to gender-differentiated roles. This might alter research priorities, selection and development of agricultural technologies, prioritization of crops and tasks, and extension messages that are developed and delivered. As gender experts have long advocated, the tiny proportion of African female extension agents needs to be vastly increased in countries where customs dictate that male extension agents cannot easily mingle with women farmers. PRSPs could create monitoring indicators on the proportions of males and females controlling production, the amount of income each garners, and the proportion of agricultural extension agents by gender.

Credit. Because microcredit programs targeted to poor women have gained fame, it might appear that women's access to credit is more substantial than the reality suggests. In African countries, women still receive less than 10 percent of all credit reaching small farmers and only 1 percent of the total credit reaching the agricultural sector (Blackden and Bhanu 1999). When females access credit, average loan sizes are smaller than those loaned to males. PRSPs should promote expanding poor women's access to credit and create a monitoring indicator on the proportion of credit loaned to men and women. Monitoring should continue until sex no longer determines access to credit.

Structural Adjustment. MDBs have long promoted structural adjustment programs that typically require countries to liberalize markets and prices, cutback public spending, raise taxes and take other measures that increase the cost of living for the poor (Zuckerman 1989). Poor men and women suffer the consequences of structural changes differently, for example, when they lose their traditional sources of livelihood or migrate to inhospitable cities or mines in search of new employment (Bamberger et al 2001). Structural transformation of economies, demographic changes and informalization redefine working conditions for both women and men and modify gender roles in the labor market. Women tend to be more vulnerable, finding themselves in the least-protected sectors of the economy, often the first to be laid off and the last to be hired because of cultural norms valuing men as the main breadearners. With the growth of female-headed households, the insecurity of women's employment more directly affects children and other dependents. Women's unpaid labour increases with the removal of subsidies on social services (AWID 2002b).

When men lose jobs during structural changes and can no longer make an important economic contribution to the household budget, their frustration and depression often results in family conflicts and domestic violence (Hahn 1999). Although domestic violence is a leading cause of injury and death to women worldwide, many states ignore or even condone it on the grounds that it is a private matter (Shrader 2000).

PRSPs should not be a new vehicle promoting traditional structural adjustment measures which have often exacerbated poverty and gender conflicts. Instead they should live up to their poverty reduction objectives by promoting programs to help the poor.

Education. Gender disparities in education increase acutely at successively higher levels of schooling. These disparities are a drag on economic growth and poverty reduction. It is estimated that had Sub-Saharan African countries closed the education gender gap at the rate achieved by East Asia from 1960 to 1992, their income per capita could have grown by more than 0.5 percent higher per year, a substantial increase over actual growth rates (Klasen 1999). A worldwide analysis concluded that if the share of women in secondary schooling increases by one percent, per capita income increases by 0.3 percent (Dollar and Gatti 1999).

Many studies demonstrate that better-educated women contribute to the welfare of the next generation by reducing infant and child mortality, lowering fertility, and improving the nutritional status of children (Hill and King 1995; Klasen 1999; Smith and Haddad 1999). Both better educated women and men enjoy stronger human rights and command higher earnings. Although women's earnings remain lower than men's, women invest more in their children (Birdsall and Sabot 1991). To attain their poverty reduction and growth objectives, poverty reduction strategies must prioritize reducing gender gaps at all levels of education.

Health. Although women have different health needs and priorities than do men including distinct reproductive health and HIV/AIDS prevention needs, health services often are not as accessible to them. In sub-Saharan Africa in 1990, reproductive illnesses caused almost 40 percent of all disability and premature death among reproductive-age women (ages 15-44), and about 8 percent in similarly aged men. Today the disproportionate reproductive health burden of women is even higher. Women are seven times more vulnerable than men to reproductive illnesses and poor women experience the greatest risks because they lack access to services and information (Population Action 2002). For example, data for Uganda indicate that the AIDS incidence is six times greater among young girls aged 15-19 compared with boys of the same age (Bamberger et al 2001). PRSPs must target health interventions according to gender needs.

Time Burden on Women and Children. Women worldwide have heavier time burdens than do men due to simultaneous productive, reproductive and community roles. Women's multiple roles limit their ability to benefit from poverty reduction strategy interventions unless women receive specially targeted support. Even where women have equal education and experience to men, their heavier domestic work burden reduces their opportunities for economic participation and income generation. The combination of visible paid work time and invisible unpaid work time results in women being overworked. For example, time use studies demonstrate (Bamberger et al 2001):

- ◆ In Uganda, women work 12-18 hours per day and men 8-10 hours per day.
- ◆ In Kenya, women work 50 percent more hours than do men on agricultural tasks.
- ◆ In Tanzania, women have two hours leisure per day while men have 4.5 hours leisure per day.

Children also are closely integrated into household production systems in poor households. Sometimes boys are disadvantaged but more often it is girls. While girls perform essential household tasks like carrying water, agricultural production and other economic tasks, boys usually go to school. Domestic chores, notably fetching water, are a major factor limiting girls' access to schooling. African girls spend four times more time on productive tasks than do boys (Blackden 2001).

PRSPs need to address women's and children's onerous time burdens. They need to design interventions to expand women's time for income-earning activities and leisure, and children's opportunities to attend school and obtain other rights and long-term income-earning opportunities.

Technology. A major reason for poor women's and children's excessive time burden is the almost total absence of basic technology in rural areas of the poorest countries. For example:

- ◆ Few African rural households have access to piped water. Women and girls often walk several hours per day to fetch (often contaminated) water.
- ◆ Women spend hours collecting firewood, often several times weekly, in some cases daily because low-efficiency cooking stoves necessitate frequent trips to collect wood.
- ◆ Almost all domestic transport tasks are performed by women in Africa (Malmberg Calvo 1994). But women lack access to basic transport technology -- to bicycles, wheelbarrows and pull-carts. Men frequently have access to such vehicles although their carrying burden is much smaller than women's. In Zambia, 96% of domestic travel time is attributed to women, only 1% to men and 3% to children. African women carry most domestic loads, usually on their heads, while walking.
- ◆ Limited availability or affordability of simple hand grinders or shellers makes manual food processing, especially of hard grains such as maize and rice, another time-consuming chore for women and female children.

PRSPs should prioritize targeting appropriate technology to women and children to reduce their time-burden and weight loads, including providing piped water to households, improving access to means of transport for carrying loads and to labor-saving technologies for household tasks. PRSPs also need to promote greater gender balance in domestic work and ensure all school-aged children attend school.

Social Capital. Compared to men, women generally have more limited social and business networks of the type that facilitate access to financial services and income (Bamberger et al 2001). PRSPs could promote mentoring programs and public-private partnerships to support the establishment of networks involving women.

National Budgets. PRSPs contain national budget or "costing" data for priority interventions. In determining PRSP budgets, it is important to ensure that 1) both women and men are involved in the budget development process; and 2) resources are allocated for priority investments that respond to the needs of both women and men. To achieve these goals, increasing numbers of countries are undertaking gender budgeting exercises (Esim 1999; Budlander 2000). PRSPs should incorporate gender budget analyses to achieve their goals.

Tools for Mainstreaming Gender into PRSPs

Mainstreaming gender into PRSPs is a straightforward process. There is nothing unusually challenging in terms of technique.

The main tool available for demonstrating how poverty affects men and women differently is gender analysis and it is suitable for PRSPs. Gender analysis examines the access and control that men and women have over resources. This includes analyzing the sexual division of labor and the control women and men have over labor inputs, and outputs or benefits. Gender analysis also systematically determines men's and women's differing development needs and preferences, and the different impacts of development on women and men. Ideally, it takes into account how class, race, ethnicity, disabilities and other diversity factors interact with gender to produce discriminatory results (Bamberger et al 2001).

PRSPs can use a range of data collection methods to address the gender dimensions of poverty. No single method can cover all of the issues, and it is important to combine quantitative and qualitative methods. Conventional poverty research and analysis tools can address most gender issues. Sex-disaggregated data can be collected through standard data collection methods including household and labor market surveys, focus groups, direct observation, clinical records, anthropometric studies, time use records, diaries, etc (Bamberger et al 2001).

All data collection methods can be gender-sensitive. When gender issues are not addressed in poverty analyses, this is likely more owing to lack of awareness of the importance of gender than to limitations in data collection methods. Absence of gender analysis tends to signify a lack of knowledge or recognition by policy makers and planners of the importance of gender as a key development issue. Suggested questions to ask to conduct gender analysis are proposed in Zuckerman 2001. In the latter paper, using the Rwandan example, Annex 1 provides a broad PRSP gender analysis overview while Annex 2 provides an in-depth example of a PRSP macroeconomic chapter gender analysis (Zuckerman 2001).

The PRSP Gender Mainstreaming Experience to Date

Few PRSPs to date have applied a GAD approach by mainstreaming gender issues. This conclusion was reached through analyzing several PRSPs and interviewing PRSP stakeholders. Most PRSPs have applied a weak obsolete WID approach, typically mentioning a few female problems inconsistently. Most PRSPs include few sex-disaggregated data even if they are available.

Civil society groups and some World Bank staff have tried to mainstream gender into PRSPs but the payoff of these investments has been low. This primer tries to answer why by examining the type of investments made so far to engender PRSPs. Then the paper describes techniques that have worked to mainstream gender into the Rwandan PRSP.

Table 1 presents an overview of the extent to which five IPRSPs and PRSPs have addressed gender issues. Although a sample of five is small, it builds on and reinforces the findings of earlier analyses of about 20 PRSPs and IPRSPs which reached similar conclusions (Bamberger et al 2001; Zuckerman 2001).

Table 1: Gender Treatment in Select PRSPs¹

Country PRSP Interim (I) or Full (F) and Date	I/F PRSP Gender Treatment
Armenia I: March 01 F: Expected by fall 2002	<p>Gender is not mainstreamed.</p> <p>Contains a few gender statements including the need to pay special attention to women's full scale participation in economic and social life and a concern that more women than men lost jobs since independence contributing to greater poverty among women than men. But these statements hang by themselves rather than being mainstreamed.</p> <p>Macro analysis including public expenditure, debt, WTO/trade and the financial sector, as well as agriculture, civil service, health care, education, social protection, environment etc compose a shopping list of needs that neglect gender roles.</p> <p>The sector by sector policy matrix addressing health care, labor policy etc is almost devoid of gender.</p> <p>Men including PRSP writers believe Armenia does not have gender inequalities because there are gender-equal laws and they believe gender refers only to women.</p> <p>CSOs expect the PRSP will address gender more fully.</p>
Nicaragua F: June 2001	<p>Does not mainstream gender and missed many opportunities to address it eg macro, trade, property rights, monitoring. Contains a paragraph on each of gender, ethnic groups and the disabled and occasional references to more girls than boys in school, women's reproductive health problems and domestic violence harming women but these are in freestanding paragraphs.</p> <p>The section on cross-cutting themes includes environment, decentralization, and social equity for the poor and the vulnerable including indigenous people, orphans, the handicapped and abused women but gender itself is not a cross-cutting theme.</p> <p>Indicators are not engendered.</p>
Rwanda F: March 2002	<p>Gender is mainstreamed with only a few gaps.</p> <p>Gender is singled out as one of several cross-cutting issues which "must therefore be mainstreamed into sector strategies..." and the Ministry of Gender and the Promotion of Women offers to assist sector ministries with engendering know-how as needed.</p> <p>Sex-disaggregated data are presented wherever available but much more sex-disaggregated data need to be collected.</p> <p>Poverty monitoring indicators require using any available gender-disaggregated data.</p> <p>Poverty, water, education, HIV-AIDs, education and other sectors contain strong gender analyses. The gendered analysis of reproductive health impacts is powerful.</p> <p>Gender sensitive participatory processes are analyzed creatively and usefully.</p>
Uganda F: March 2000 Update underway	<p>Gender is lightly and implicitly addressed but not at all mainstreamed.</p> <p>Contains a handful of gender references, eg education for girls, but they are inconsistent and few.</p> <p>Macro, trade, health, rural/agriculture/land, vocational education, water, etc. discuss the poor generically without mentioning male and female needs.</p> <p>Lacks gender specific indicators.</p> <p>The Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development writing team lacked gender-aware expertise and neither the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development nor women's CSOs contributed to PRSP formulation despite highly intensive gender inputs into the participatory, capacity-building and other preparatory activities. Uganda's costly, gender-inclusive participatory process (UPPAP) is hardly reflected in the PRSP. A second UPPAP is underway and CSOs are trying to ensure the next PRSP is better engendered.</p>
Vietnam I: March 2001 F: Expected 2002	<p>Gender is mentioned in only a few instances and not at all mainstreamed.</p> <p>Repeated discussions about poverty, macroeconomic issues, state-owned enterprise equitization (a euphemism for privatization), and trade liberalization neglect gender ramifications. A wish list matrix featuring these and other themes like the environment and urban poor also is gender blind except for promoting gender equity in leadership.</p>

¹ This table synthesizes information collected by both reviewing PRSPs and interviewing PRSP stakeholders in the countries listed in the table. The author and Emma Bell of Bridge, IDS, the University of Sussex conducted stakeholder interviews in Armenia, Nicaragua, Uganda and Vietnam for an Oxfam Great Britain assessment of the extent to which Oxfam's PRSP advocacy work has been mainstreaming gender (Zuckerman 2002a; Zuckerman 2002b).

	<p>Although a Gender Working Group and Gender Task Force promoted PRSP gender mainstreaming, nevertheless the PRSP is not expected to address gender inequalities systematically because the drafting team consists of gender unaware male government officials. They believe Vietnam does not have gender inequalities because there are gender-equal laws and party-based mass women's organizations, and they believe gender refers only to women.</p> <p>There are few sex-disaggregated data available although recent gender analyses exist that the PRSP neglected to use.</p> <p>The PRSP budget is expected to be gender blind.</p> <p>Although the PRSP will not be strong on gender, it will treat gender better than do other official documents.</p>
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Analysis of the above PRSPs and previous more extensive PRSP analyses combined with recent stakeholder interviews demonstrate that very few PRSPs mainstream gender. Most merely contain a couple of WID references, typically mentioning a few female problems.

Except for Rwanda, participatory inputs including gender issues have not fed into PRSPs. Rwanda's PRSP exceptionally mainstreams gender better than do other PRSPs. This reflects a major effort and commitment by various Rwandan sectors to engender the PRSP.

Why so few PRSPs have been engendered and why Rwanda succeeded in engendering its PRSP are examined in more detail below.

Why have so few PRSPs been engendered?

The Role of the Participatory Process. One reason so few PRSPs have been engendered is because they were prepared based on the assumption that participatory processes would feed into PRSPs. Thus civil society organizations (CSOs), unions, religious groups, parliamentarians and others have been trying to influence PRSPs participatory processes as a critical entry point for steering the multilateral agenda in the direction of poverty reduction (World Vision 2002). These groups were cognizant that this strategy ran *'the risk of getting engaged with nothing else than rhetoric'* but felt it was a worthwhile enough opportunity to take the risk (Oxfam International 2001). In their participatory advocacy, these groups placed considerable effort into ensuring participatory processes were gender inclusive and flagged key gender issues.

Uganda provides the best example of such effort. Ugandan women's groups played a key role in the participatory process. Uganda's extensive 1998-2002 gender-aware Participatory Poverty Assessment Programme consulted the poor including women to ensure their voices would be integrated into the national planning process (UPPAP 2002). UPPAP included gender training on what gender means, how gender influences people's vulnerability to poverty and how to collect sex-disaggregated data and it convened women's focus groups to overcome reluctance to speak publicly. However, when it came to the national participatory synthesis workshop, gender was diminished. Previously disaggregated data was aggregated, obscuring gender differences and inequalities. A similar aggregation of sex-disaggregated data also occurred in Ghana following its participatory process thereby undermining the potential to challenge gender-blind policies (Debyshire 2002). Uganda, in preparation for its next PRSP, is undertaking another participatory effort which is even stronger on gender issues than was the first.

Other countries had weaker participatory exercises, especially former state-administered transition economies. Some countries restrict PRSP participation to a very short list of government-recognized NGOs.

Even if women's groups are integrated into participatory exercises, women generally remain marginalized from government, civil society and grassroots decision-making and women's organizations feel removed from macroeconomic debates central to PRSPs (Derbyshire 2002).

The Role of PRSP Writing Teams. Even engendered participatory processes did not result in engendered PRSPs because there has usually been a disconnect between participatory processes and writing teams. In most cases, PRSP writers have scarcely integrated participatory inputs into PRSPs. This probably reflects their lack of understanding of the importance of reflecting citizen's inputs and mainstreaming gender into the PRSP.

PRSP writers have consisted mainly of government finance and economics ministry staff. Often these staff include men who are insensitive to gender issues. In a few countries external consultants have played key PRSP writing roles. Sometimes the same external consultants draft the PRSPs in more than one country.² Former socialist country PRSP writers tend to assume that gender equality exists because there are gender-equal laws. Also there is a widespread misperception that gender refers only to women.

While writing teams need to be more respectful of citizen's participatory inputs and more gender-sensitive, gender advocates also need to promote gender mainstreaming into key PRSP entry points such as grassroots participatory and writing processes. They also need to ensure the former feeds into the latter.

Lack of Gender Mainstreaming Skills. A number of PRSP stakeholders interviewed stated they think gender mainstreaming is a "mysterious" process and they need to learn gender mainstreaming techniques. Similarly, interviewees said they find gender discussions tend to be conceptual rather than practical. Clearly, there is need to demystify gender mainstreaming through information campaigns about their social and economic gains and straightforward implementation techniques.

The PRSP Sourcebook. The World Bank spent an enormous amount of resources on producing the PRSP sourcebook to guide PRSP country writers (World Bank 2001b). Originally conceived as a toolkit, the PRSP Sourcebook is supposed to provide practical tools to PRSP writers. However, the hefty four-volume Sourcebook is impractical to use. The detailed chapter on how to mainstream gender into PRSPs alone is almost 100 pages. The gender chapter is very strong on diagnostic and monitoring indicators and tools but does not discuss critical needs like gender advocacy and barely mentions the need for gender analysis of macroeconomic issues including the national budget so central to the PRSP. Education, the environment, health and transport and other chapters include gender mainstreaming approaches. Nevertheless, stakeholders interviewed confessed they did not use the Sourcebook. Some questioned why a supposedly country owned PRSP would use a World Bank guide.

The considerable investments of many CSOs into ensuring a dynamic and gender-inclusive PRSP participatory process has not paid off so far in most countries. Rwanda is an exception since it mainstreams gender, with few missed opportunities (Rwanda 2002).

Why Did Rwanda Succeed in Engendering its PRSP?

Rwanda succeeded in engendering its PRSP because it initiated a series of deliberate steps, backed by strong moral and financial commitment, described below:

1. The Ministry of Gender and the Promotion of Women (MIGEPROFE) hired a gender expert to facilitate the process. The expert analyzed the Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper's failure to mainstream gender issues in detail and suggested how this could have been done.
2. The expert held meetings with women's civil society groups to discuss the role of the PRSP and PRSP engendering entry points and with the PRSP writing group at the Ministry of

² The author found the same expatriate consultant playing a key PRSP writing role in at least two African PRSPs.

Economics and Finance (MINECOFIN) to ensure its members were committed to mainstreaming gender into the PRSP.

3. PRSP stakeholders including MIGEPROFE, community organizations and PRSP writing team members tried to persuade the participatory exercise facilitators of the importance of soliciting women's as well as men's views.
4. MIGEPROFE and MINECOFIN co-sponsored a gender mainstreaming workshop. Fifty representatives from a broad range of sectors participated. Two dynamic civil society activists co-facilitated it. The MIGEPROFE and MINECOFIN ministers opened and closed the workshop, giving it a high profile. The gender expert's presentation focused on the importance of integrating gender into the PRSP in order to achieve poverty reduction, and tools available to do this. Participants practiced using the tools in teams, integrating gender issues into the IPRSP, sector by sector. Teams formulated recommendations on how best to engender the PRSP using the tools provided.
5. An inter-agency PRSP Engendering Committee was established at the expert's suggestion to promote PRSP gender mainstreaming. Committee members consisted of the Director of the PRSP writing team, the MIGEPROFE Gender and Development Department Director, and a representative of Pro-Femmes – the umbrella organization of Rwandan women's civil society groups.

In the Rwanda example, it helped that the PRSP writing team director was previously the MIGEPROFE Director of Administration. It was easy to remind him to promote gender equality. It was also critical to convince other PRSP writing team members and stakeholders of the importance of mainstreaming gender to achieve poverty reduction goals, and to provide mainstreaming gender tools through the workshop training practice.

Conclusions

The PRSP experience to date demonstrates that PRSP writing teams have hardly used the PRSP Sourcebook and have rarely incorporated participatory inputs, engendered or not. Many PRSP writers have not been gender-aware. While engendering the participatory process and ensuring participatory inputs feed into PRSPs is important, it is also critical to ensure all stakeholders including writing teams understand the importance of mainstreaming gender to achieve poverty reduction goals.

Rwanda has so far proved the validity of this approach. Rwanda showed that an effective way to transmit gender mainstreaming techniques to PRSP stakeholders including writing teams is through workshops where participants practice engendering PRSP contents sector by sector and issue by issue.

Rwanda and Uganda provide two contrasting models of how to and how not to mainstream gender into a PRSP. In Rwanda, the engendering steps were organized a priori, paying off in the most engendered PRSP to date. In Uganda, despite the intensively engendered participatory process the PRSP was hardly gender sensitive. This outcome has mobilized the citizens' sector including women's groups to ensure the next PRSP mainstreams gender. Only the results will tell but there is good reason for optimism. However, the Uganda learning process has been much costlier than in Rwanda.

It is strongly recommended that all future PRSPs mainstream gender through methodical planning. An action plan to mainstream gender into PRSPs should be formulated and backed by resources. Without planning to engender every step of the PRSP process, PRSPs are unlikely to become engendered. Unengendered PRSPs not only reinforce gender-unequal relations but deepen them to the extent that project benefits accrue more to males than to females. Moreover,

without engendering PRSPs, development is perceived as a process which does not have to alter unequal gender relations. Unengendered PRSPs also undermine the central PRSP poverty reduction goal. Once PRSPs mainstream gender, how they are implemented will make the pivotal difference in progressing toward gender equality and poverty reduction goals.

Strategizing Beyond PRSPs. Beyond PRSPs, gender equality has to be promoted in implementing PRSP agendas. Governments, civil society advocates and development cooperation agencies must mainstream gender into all development investments. In the new PRSP framework, Bank Poverty Reduction Support Credits (PRSCs) -- a new name for structural adjustment loans (SALs), and IMF Poverty Reduction and Growth Facilities (PRGFs) -- Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility (ESAF) reincarnations, must also be engendered. Since mandatory PRSPs legitimize borrowing from the Bank and the Fund, while PRSCs and PRGFs are the lending instruments for implementing economic, financial and trade liberalization regimes, all three instruments as well development projects in all sectors -- agriculture, health, water etc. -- must mainstream gender to promote women's rights and achieve poverty reduction goals.

While ensuring PRSPs address poverty and gender, implementing engendered contents is what counts for poverty reduction, development and growth. For example, if all PRSPs incorporated gender budget analyses as this primer recommends, the critical follow up would be financing interventions targeting men and women as necessary to eliminate gender inequalities and poverty. Implementing such programs to improve poor women's and men's lives is the critical process flowing from PRSPs.

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