

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

GENDER

Background

The National Gender Policy defines gender as an analytical concept, which focuses on women's roles and responsibilities in relation to those of men. In economic development these roles and responsibilities explain existing income disparities between sexes. This is also related to the differential impact on women and men. All the outlined deprivations in the definition of poverty are experienced more by women than men because women have limited access and control of reproductive resources, thus making them more vulnerable. In addition to economic factors, the socially and culturally ascribed gender roles have contributed to high poverty among women. Women are usually not part of decisions made on resource allocation at household and other levels.

Situational Analysis

According to the report "Evolution of Poverty in Zambia" CSO (1996), 89 percent of the people in rural areas were extremely poor compared to 56 percent in urban areas. There were only 8 percent of the people who were above the poverty line in rural areas compared to 30 percent in urban areas. Female-headed households, which account for about 30 percent of total households, were among the poorest. In comparison with the male-headed households, there were 70 percent extremely poor households among females as opposed to 57 percent among the males. This is a confirmation that poverty affects women and men differently, hence the terminology "feminisation of poverty."

In terms of food poverty, 61 percent of female-headed households faced food shortage compared to 52 percent of male-headed households. Moreover, female-headed households more often have longer spells of food shortage. This has a differential impact on child malnutrition in female-headed households compared to male-headed households. The proportions of stunting and underweight are higher in Female headed households (54 percent and 29 percent) than in male-headed households (49 percent and 29 percent) correspondingly.

Zambia recognises that the full participation of women and men in development is cardinal to achieving sustainable development. This recognition is founded in the empirical realisation that restricted participation of women in socio-economic activities has had a negative impact. Government is therefore committed to making deliberate efforts to facilitate the removal of existing gender imbalances. To buttress this, the Gender in Development Division at Cabinet Office and Gender focal points in all ministries, specialised agencies and provincial administration have been set up to facilitate the mainstreaming of gender in national planning and programming. The Government has also formulated a National Gender Policy to address among others problems of poverty, co-ordination among various implementing actors, harmonisation and streamlining of gender and development activities.

Constraints

Despite the many efforts for improvement it has been found that, most of the gender programmes lack in-depth analysis and adequate resources. Measures to alleviate and reduce poverty have not fully addressed differential impact of poverty on men and women. Gender differentials have persisted at all levels of these programmes, suggesting that social and cultural factors, which play a stronger role, are not taken into account during the design and implementation of the programmes.

The lack of gender specific targeting of poverty programs influence women and men's life and opportunities. They may not be male biased by design, but could well be male biased by omission of a gender-differentiated assessment of the programmes. This could be related to the lack of gender disaggregated data required for such assessment and the lack of recognition of women's role and skills in the poverty reduction programs. At the same time, there has been lack of effective co-ordination among various institutions involved in poverty alleviation, leading to reduced impact on the intended target group.

Policy Measures And Strategies

Poverty Reduction Goal and Objectives

The GOAL is to eliminate the gender imbalance that places heavier burden of poverty on women at the household, community and national levels. The following objectives have been identified to re-dress the constraints that have been outlined earlier on: -

1. To enhance access to and control of opportunities in economic structures, policies, and factors of production;
2. To develop specific strategies regarding women's access to and control over land;
3. Promote and facilitate women's access to information and economic resources;
4. To eliminate gender imbalances in access to and opportunities for financial resources;
5. To enhance women's participation in employment and income generating activities.
6. To enhance women's participation in decision-making processes

Strategies

Access to productive resources

This program proposes to remove barriers to women's economic participation, to design special economic schemes and to reduce women's workloads through the provision of appropriate technologies. Emphasis will be placed on the combination of access to assets and increasing of returns. In order to ensure access to productive resources, the following strategies are proposed: -

1. Enact and/or enforce laws that will remove barriers to the economic participation of women particularly relating to property rights, asset holdings, inheritance laws and credit policies;
2. Provide women with the necessary means to participate in the process of economic growth by ensuring access to assets and increasing returns on those assets through land reforms and enforcement of related legislation;
3. Design special economic schemes for poor women and men taking into account the multiple responsibilities of women;
4. Reducing women's and girls workloads through, amongst others, provision of appropriate technologies for all aspects of farming and household tasks;

5. Analyse from a gender perspectives policies, programs and plans with respect to their impact on poverty on equality between women and men adjusting them, as appropriate, to promote more equitable distribution of productive resources;
6. Formulate and implement policies and programs that enhances women's access to financial, technical, extension and marketing services;
7. Provide access to and control of land, appropriate infrastructure and technologies which enhances women's income and promotes household food security; and
8. Design and promote environmental sound technologies in consultation with women.

Access to land

Land is one of the productive resources of particular relevance to poverty alleviation programmes. The Government and stakeholders are aware of the benefits resulting from women's securing access to land in terms of family and national food security. Therefore, there is need to develop specific strategies regarding women's access to and control over land:

1. Provide land rights on an equitable basis for women and men in terms of ownership and utilisation and monitor implementation;
2. Introduce legal reforms that protect women's rights and that ensures women's access to natural resources;
3. Guarantee the right of all women to buy, sell, own, inherit and administer property and absolute right to work;
4. Enable women to obtain affordable housing among other things, removing all obstacles to access, with special emphasis, on meeting the needs of women, especially those living in poverty and female headed households; and
5. Undertake legislative and administrative reforms to give women full and equal access to economic resource, including the right to inheritance and to ownership of land and other property, credit, natural resources and appropriate technologies.

Access to Information

Knowledge is an important productive resource in any production process. The Government, in the National Gender Policy acknowledges the potential value of knowledge systems, including the understanding of environment as well as their traditional production techniques. In addition, the Government recognises the need to diversify training, to improve the attendance of girls and women in education and vocational training, to encourage the inter-sectoral institutions to increase the proportion of women extension workers, to develop training programmes in environmental management, to empower women as producers and consumers and to develop methodologies for training, research and resource centres. In this regard, the following strategies are proposed: -

1. Promote the training and recruitment of female teaching, administrative and technical staff achieving gender equity and adopt favourable administrative measures and incentives to encourage them to work in rural areas;
2. Legitimise and promote women's understanding and knowledge systems on the environment as well as their traditional techniques for resource utilisation in support of their productive and reproductive functions;
3. Promote women's role in food and agricultural research, extension and education programmes;

4. Establish appropriate mechanisms that promote women's access to necessary services;
5. Make available basic, civic functional literacy and life skill programmes for women and girls; and
6. Integrate women's traditional knowledge and practices of sustainable resource use and management in the development of environmental management and extension programmes.

Financial Resources

The financial resources available to women, to a large extent, determine the productive opportunities they can potentially undertake. In this regard, the following strategies are proposed:

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1. Strengthening and/or establishment of appropriate institutional frameworks on financial schemes to support programs for the poor, especially women;
2. Enhance the access of disadvantaged women, especially those in rural areas to financial services through strengthening linkages between formal and informal lending institutions;
3. Promote and strengthen women's micro-enterprises and expand markets and other opportunities; and
4. Support credit networks and innovative ventures, including traditional saving schemes.

Work and Income Generating Opportunities

The Government recognises the importance of the informal sector for income generating opportunities. It also recognises the importance of training as a means to increase women's income as well as their economic decision-making. Emphasis should be placed on the recognition of women's needs when promoting income-generating activities. Therefore, the following strategies are proposed: -

1. Recognise the importance of the informal sector and ensure that support is rendered to it as a major source of economic activity for women;
2. Promote and strengthen micro-enterprises and expand markets and other employment activities and facilitate, where appropriate, the transition from informal to formal sector;
3. Provide public infrastructure to facilitate equal market access for women and men entrepreneurs;
4. Provide outreach programs to inform low-income and poor women of opportunities for market and technology access; and
5. Create non-discriminatory support services, including investment funds, and target poor women, in trade promotion programmes.

Participation of Women in Decision-Making Processes

The Government is committed to promoting women's participation in decision-making at all levels to promote sustainable development. Therefore, the following strategies are proposed: -

1. Undertake measures to enhance the full participation of women and men at all levels of decision-making;
2. Adoption of specific measures to ensure equal participation of women and men in decision making at community level; and

3. Promote the equal right of women to be members of trade unions and other professional and social organisations.

Gender Disaggregated Data and Analysis

There is a need for gender-disaggregated data and analysis to enable gender targeting of poverty alleviation programme. There is need for strengthening the data gathering capacities. The following strategies are proposed:

1. Strengthen the data gathering capacities of Gender National Machinery and the gender focal points in line ministries, provinces and other government institutions’;
2. Improve concepts and methods of data collection on the measurements of poverty among women and men, including their access to resources;
3. Strengthen vital statistical systems and incorporate gender analysis into publications and research and give priority to gender differences in research design;
4. Develop gender sensitive data bases, information and monitoring systems and participatory action oriented research, methodologies and policy analyses, with collaboration of learning institutions and local researchers;
5. Provide training in gender analysis and gender planning to enable gender responsible policy and programming;
6. Encourage broad based sustained economic growth, address the structural causes of poverty which are geared towards eradicating poverty and reducing gender based inequalities within the overall framework of poverty reduction programmes and strategies.

Institutional and Legal Framework

Government has recognised the need for equal rights and full participation of women in the development process. Therefore, there is already an integrated institutional mechanism for policy formulation; co-ordination; resource mobilisation and utilisation; implementation; monitoring and evaluation. Currently, the structure exists at three levels namely: - National, Provincial and District.

At national level, there are various actors involved in gender mainstreaming activities. These include the National Gender Machinery namely, Gender in Development Division (GIDD), sector ministries, Parliament and civil society organisations.