



## Review of Gender Equality and Rural Development – A Stocktake of AusAID’s Approach and Progress

### MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

#### Initiative Summary

Initiative Name	
AidWorks initiative number	Identified Rural Development and Food Security Initiatives
Total Australian \$	Approx \$1.25 billion
Implementing and Delivery Partner(s)	Various Private Sector Organisations, Country Programs and Multilateral Partners
Country/Region	Global
Primary Sector	43010 – Multi-sector aid
Initiative goal	Assess the capacity of the programs to address gender equality issues, and Provide advice to improve development outcomes for poor women and men, girls and boys.

#### Review Summary

The Australian Agency for International Development's (AusAID) 2009 Annual Thematic Performance Review for rural development found that the extent to which aid programs advanced gender equality remained a challenge. In response, AusAID's Food Security and Rural Section decided to conduct a stocktake and develop strategies for how to improve.

*An Effective Aid Program for Australia: Making a real difference—Delivering real results*<sup>1</sup> states that empowering women to participate in the economy is critical to opening up development opportunities for all. The food security and rural development portfolio aims to improve incomes, employment and enterprise opportunities for poor women and men, so both objectives are linked. This stocktake:

- assessed the capacity of the programs to address gender equality issues
- provided advice on ways of enhancing gender equality to improve development outcomes for poor women and men, girls and boys.

**Review Completion Date:** June 2012

**Review Team:** Susan Ferguson, Gender Adviser, AusAID, and Bronwyn Wiseman, Consultant with Kalang Consultancy Services. With support from Robert Tulip, Alison De Luise, Ben H irons and Pakwasi Nyamekye, AusAID's Food Security and Rural Development Section, and Joanne Prindaville, Consultant with Cowater International Inc.

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<sup>1</sup> Australia's new aid policy for the aid program, released in July 2011.

## AusAID's response to the specific recommendations made in the report

**Recommendation 1:** That the Food Security and Rural Development Section<sup>2</sup> (FSR) advocate greater use within rural development programs of special measures that ensure women benefit and are included in program decision making. Special measures could include 'hard gates', such as contractual obligations specifying targets for women's access, or allocating a percentage of program funds towards women's participation across the portfolio. These measures are especially important with large mainstream investments and programs in fragile states or conflict zones where benefitting women may be especially hard without such incentives.

**Recommendation 2:** That country programs more often take to scale programs demonstrating good practice in meeting the needs of women and girls through effective targeting and special measures.

**Recommendation 3:** That AusAID increase the level of gender technical expertise within its Food Security and Rural Development Section and regions or country programs to translate gender policies or strategies into practical and measurable outcomes for women. That AusAID also make provision within individual key programs to contract skilled personnel to unlock the potential for women's involvement and convert strategy into action.

**Recommendation 4:** That country programs manage rural development programs within the portfolio to ensure more formal employment opportunities for women.

**Recommendation 5:** That country programs investigate the feasibility of resourcing child care for women who are staff members or targeted beneficiaries of rural development programs, to enhance women's participation.

**Recommendation 6:** That country programs strengthen the use of partner government gender policies, where relevant within initiatives, without trading off benefits for the rural poor.

**Recommendation 7:** That AusAID staff use evaluation processes—including quality at implementation (QAI) processes—more strategically to manage poor performance and use lessons to improve outcomes for women.

**Response: Agreed** – In 2013 AusAID, through the Food Security and Rural Development team (FSR) will work with country programs to prioritise and where possible implement each of the recommendations 1-7 outlined above.

**Action:** FSR will distribute the report to program areas for their exposure and consideration. A workshop will be organised before June 2013 drawing together key country program managers, gender focal points and the FSR/Gender thematic teams to implement an agency wide response to the report's recommendations. As part of this process, short, medium and longer term goals to improve gender outcomes within the food security and rural development portfolio will be identified. The aim will be to address immediate sector requirements, expected results, key performance indicators and next steps.

**Recommendation 8:** That the Food Security and Rural Development Section and the Gender Equality Policy Section support programs to move beyond basic collection of sex-disaggregated data to systems that can measure impact differentially and are based on robust gender analysis in the design phase. This process should be interactive and treated as 'action learning' to help programs improve during implementation.

**Response: Agreed**

**Action:** FSR will work with the Gender Equality Policy Section to promote greater gender analysis within existing and future food security and rural development programs. Particular attention will be paid to the collation of baseline data, and more robust gender input within Country Situation Analyses. This process aims to develop clearly articulated theories of change around gender in delivery strategies targeting food security

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<sup>2</sup> AusAID's Food Security and Rural and Rural Development Section works with Australian and international stakeholders to outline Australia's approach to food security. Improving food security falls under the sustainable economic development strategic goal of Australia's aid policy.

and rural development. **In addition**, the food security and rural development program will proactively utilise all recent AusAID gender training and awareness-raising material. This material now includes guidance on Australia's international obligations under the Millennium Development Goal's (MDGs) to improve gender inclusive practices. AusAID gender focal points have become mandated resources providing programs to advise on gender equality in aid delivery. In addition, the AusAID gender network formally distributes information about gender equality practices. The gender network is more systematically providing advice and sharing lessons that have been learnt between country programs.

**Recommendation 9:** That AusAID resource specific research about the impact of the rural development program on poor women's lives (for example, research on the link between women exercising decision making within programs and broader cultural change that improves their lives and reduces poverty).

**Response: Agreed** - AusAID is investing significant resources in improving performance management and results reporting systems, as part of the Comprehensive Aid Policy Framework and Australia's aid program annual report to Cabinet.

**Action:** Promoting gender equality and women's economic empowerment within AusAID's food security and rural development portfolio will be prioritised and acted upon. FSR will consult with the Research Section to investigate relevant gender research questions through the aid program's Australian Development Research Awards (ADRA) process. The food security and rural development program will also work with country program partners to institutionalise gender analysis to underpin development operations. FSR has also supported the Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE) in its rolling program of gender thematic evaluations. The FSR stocktake has been analysed by ODE as part of its efforts to build an evidence base to improve the aid program's performance in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, particularly in rural development and food security. The ODE aims to use this evidence base to identify what the aid program can do to catalyse outcomes and improvements.

**Recommendation 10:** That the Food Security and Rural Development Section resource and implement a capacity development strategy that includes a range of communications and interactive learning options, to support AusAID to share and learn from good gender practice and to build the skills of staff and delivery partners to practically meet the needs of women and men.

**Response: Agreed** - Building capacity of staff to implement gender sensitive programming will be prioritised as part of FSR future work.

**Action:** FSR will work with the Gender Equality Policy Section to promote the use of the gender expert panel particularly where programs do not have access to their own gender experts. FSR will also explore ways of strengthening internal gender capacity including:

- Development of specific training materials and interactive learning options
- The reviewing of the Terms of Reference of current and future advisers
- Building the capacity of the gender focal point within FSP but also the capacity of other gender focal points in the agency to food security and rural development specific approaches
- Advocate gender sensitive reporting in results, quality assurance and to make mandatory during program implementation processes.