

Gender equality and rural development—a stocktake of AusAID’s approach and progress

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Executive 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 Policy and Rural Development 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*¹ states that empowering women to participate in the economy is critical to opening up development opportunities for all. The rural development portfolio aims to improve incomes, employment and enterprise opportunities for poor women and men, so both objectives are linked. This stocktake:

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

This report summarises the stocktake findings and includes recommendations to improve outcomes for women and their families. Detailed analysis is included as annexes.

Consideration of gender was often stronger in the management arrangements and work in the field than what AusAID's quality reporting systems captured and reflected. While gaps and weaknesses exist, the rural development portfolio of work demonstrates that its programs have lifted poor women and their families out of poverty. Some programs have also empowered women socially through changes to their status in communities.

The rural development portfolio makes an important contribution to the delivery of AusAID's gender thematic strategy, *Promoting opportunities for all: Gender equality and women's empowerment*² and with some additional resourcing is positioned to deliver much more on the Agency's commitment to being a firm and persistent advocate for gender equality.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

That the Food Security Policy and Rural Development Section³ 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.

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

² This thematic strategy was released in November 2011.

³ AusAID's Food Security Policy 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.

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 Policy 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.

Recommendation 8

That the Food Security Policy 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.

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).

Recommendation 10

That the Food Security Policy 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.

1. Methodology

1.1 Methodology—introduction

Gender equality is a critical crosscutting theme across the Australian Government's aid program. Three of the 10 development objectives of *An Effective Aid Program for Australia: Making a real difference—Delivering real results* specifically address gender equality and the empowerment of women.⁴ Indeed, nearly half of Australia's total aid program expenditure is on activities with the primary or secondary objectives of promoting gender, to provide equal opportunities for women, men, girls and boys.

AusAID, as the government's main implementer of the aid program, conducted this stocktake to determine the extent to which rural development programs advance gender equality.

The stocktake originated from the results of AusAID's 2009 Annual Thematic Performance Review of rural development which found that the extent to which sector programs advanced gender equality remained challenging. The Agency's annual QAI reports that formed part of the thematic review rated gender equality lower than expected.

On the basis of these results, AusAID decided greater clarity was needed on how to meet the needs of women and men, and how and when to focus on women as participants in or beneficiaries of rural development.

The Food Security Policy and Rural Development Section decided to conduct a stocktake of the Agency's rural development work to further assess the extent to which gender equality was incorporated into it and to develop strategies for how to improve in this important area.

The stocktake assessed the capacity of programs to address gender equality issues. It provides advice on ways to enhance gender equality and thereby improve development outcomes for poor women and men, girls and boys. This is important given that gender equality is central to economic and human development and to women's rights. Equal opportunity for women and men supports economic growth and helps to reduce poverty.

The important relationship between rural development and food security is highlighted in Box 1.

Box 1: Rural development and food security

Rural development approaches are key to Australia's implementation and delivery of essential food security policies. Improving food security by investing in agricultural productivity, infrastructure, social protection and the opening of markets is one of the 10 development objectives for the aid program. Food security underpins all other development, as without it, food insecure populations prioritise food and sustaining their own lives and those of their families over everything else. Australia's approach to food security is centred on increasing the availability of food through production and improving trade, while also increasing the poor's ability to access food.

⁴ The three development objectives are: empowering women to participate in the economy, leadership and education; saving lives of poor women through provision of quality maternal health care services; and enabling more girls to attend school.

A small research team conducted the stocktake.⁵

The stocktake's methodology was based on one earlier developed by AusAID's Gender Adviser to assess gender equality within country programs. In line with this, the stocktake research team conducted:

- a literature review of gender in rural development against the three pillars of AusAID's food security thematic strategy (Annex A for summary)
- a desktop review of selected programs⁶ using information in Aidworks, such as gender ratings of program designs, results of quality at implementation reports and results of gender- marker questions⁷ (Annex B for detailed discussion)
- an analysis of programs against AusAID thematic strategies for rural development and gender to test alignment with the policy environment (Annex C for main findings)
- interviews with a range of stakeholders working in selected programs using a standardised questionnaire (Annex D for full interview findings).

The team structured their stocktake research around three main topics:

1. management arrangements of gender equality—setting policy, designing programs, arranging contracts and selecting program staff
2. work in the field—program implementation
3. monitoring and evaluation (M&E)—reporting on development impacts on females and males.

These three topic areas were chosen because of their relationship with the stages of AusAID's program cycle—analysis, design, implementation and measuring change. AusAID's policy is to explicitly integrate gender equality into each stage of the cycle to ensure all programs include women, men, girls and boys and ensure these groups benefit from them at an acceptable level. This also ensures that programs meet the diverse needs of females and males.

Each of the topic areas are outlined further in this section along with key findings.

The stocktake assessed the quality of gender work that sat within each of these three pillars of the rural development portfolio:

1. lifting agricultural productivity through agricultural research and development
2. improving rural livelihoods by strengthening markets and market access
3. building community resilience by supporting the establishment and improvement of social protection programs.

⁵ The team was led by the Gender Adviser (Susan Ferguson), with expertise from the Food Security Policy and Rural Development team (Robert Tulip, Alison De Luise and Ben Hiron). Jacqui Thomson, Jane Hardy and Fiona Johnstone from the Gender and Policy Section helped out from time to time. From June 2011, a consultant, Bronwyn Wiseman of Kalang Consultancy Services, was contracted to draw together the myriad findings and collate them into this report. Another consultant, Joanne Prindiville of Cowater International Inc., was contracted to conduct a literature review of gender equality and rural development. This group of people are referred to in this report as the stocktake team.

⁶ Programs were selected to ensure a cross section of initiatives across the rural development portfolio.

⁷ Gender-marker questions are designed to fulfil AusAID gender reporting obligations to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assessment Commission. The commission collects this data recognising that gender outcomes require financial allocation and that funds spent are one way to assess the degree to which aid programs are focusing on gender outcomes.

Limitations of the stocktake and other issues identified are noted throughout this report. These relate to the complexity and size of rural development programs, availability and quality of data, understanding of what AusAID was specifically funding, availability of relevant people to interview and variation in interview style between team members.

1.2 Literature review

The literature review was the starting point of the gender stocktake. It was commissioned to identify what should be expected as good practice within each pillar. This information was used to inform the analysis of the work being conducted across the three pillars of the rural development portfolio.

The prevalent gender issues that affect all rural development pillars include:

- the heavy burden of domestic and productive responsibilities borne by women that inhibit their ability to participate in productive work outside the home
- women's relative invisibility in the formal productive sphere
- women's limited participation in public decision making that could improve the impact of programs
- cultural constraints on women's ability to exercise their rights and claim the benefits offered by policies and development programs.

Another common issue affecting all rural development pillars is the importance of applying local knowledge and gender analysis to each context to ensure women can participate and benefit, and to improve outcomes for all.

1.3 Aidworks desktop review

The stocktake's desktop review analysed information from Aidworks, selecting a workable number of programs that had adequate available information and represented countries and/or regions, rural development pillars and different ways of working in delivering aid.

The stocktake team short listed 46 programs were based in 14 countries. These included some global and regional programs.

The desktop review collated key data on these programs from QAIs, designs and other reviews available online. This data was sorted by date, value, pillar, QAI gender score and text.

The desktop review also included a report of the gender markers used by AusAID to report on the extent of funding for gender equality to international partners.

Overall, AusAID's QAIs tell an underwhelming story about how gender equality is being addressed within its rural development programs. Interviews with people delivering these programs tell a much richer picture than does AusAID staff reporting through QAIs.

Twelve of the rural development programs reviewed had the same gender reporting over multiple years. This may indicate a low level of staff awareness of the gender dimensions of programs or, of

greater concern, no activity over many years. In one case, a program cut and pasted the same gender report into QAIs for four consecutive years.

1.4 Interviews

The stocktake team made considerable efforts to schedule phone interviews with representatives from all rural development-focused programs. Representatives from 23 programs were interviewed and representatives from three other programs completed questionnaires. In all, 32 women and 38 men were interviewed.

The aim was to interview whole program teams to gain a cross section of perspectives from AusAID managers at overseas missions and in Canberra, gender and rural development focal points, managing contractors (including from the management team, key advisers such as gender specialists or generalists with a proven interest in gender, and M&E experts), development partners running programs, government officials and civil society partners.

2. Findings

2.1 Lack of outcome data—too process based

The desktop review discovered that data could be too process based, instead of outcome based. For example, by far the most commonly reported aspect of improving women's participation in or benefits from programs was to conduct some research, write a report or develop a gender strategy. QAI reports mentioned these actions 33 times. Linked to this was the need to contract a gender specialist because program staff believed they did not have the skills or funds to integrate gender equality.

Seventeen responses in the QAIs referred to the need to conduct better M&E or collect sex-disaggregated data and 10 noted the need to contract a gender adviser or that one had been contracted. Thirteen responses noted, sometimes over multiple QAIs, that gender equality was not being adequately addressed and that help was needed to correct this by, for example, conducting research to inform programs what to do, sourcing technical expertise and securing additional resources.

One program, which is not an isolated example, illustrates how problematic lack of outcome data can be. In 2007 this program reported that it 'had started an impact assessment of key gender issues relating to the program'. In 2008, and again in 2009, it noted 'more involvement and work on gender equality'. In 2010 the program cut and pasted the same information from its 2008 report but added that 'mainstreaming gender is progressing' and that 'gender equity will be part of research about all components'. In 2011 the program reported that 'it needed a better M&E framework to collect better information about impact' and noted that two out of five recipients of post graduate degrees had been women—the only information that women had benefited from the program at all.

This example demonstrates the need for AusAID staff to better recognise and document gender outcomes as oppose to processes. It also demonstrates lack of clarity over what to do about gender issues within programs. This is not surprising given the lack of in-depth analysis incorporated into the designs logged in Aidworks. One key finding of good practice from the literature review was the imperative for good gender analysis up front so programs are designed to improve women's access to activities and exercise their leadership within them.

On the flip side, the desktop review encountered seven cases that recognised how and why gender equality was being addressed and the outcomes being achieved. One case was this entry from the Rakhine Rural Household Livelihood Security Project in Myanmar:

Involvement in [village decision-making groups], agricultural and vocational training, and as health educators has had positive social impacts in terms of raising the status of women within their households and communities.

2.2 Alignment with rural development program pillars

The stocktake assessed the extent of gender work across each pillar of the rural development portfolio. It found that the focus was stronger within Pillar 2—improving rural livelihoods by

strengthening markets and market access—but this was partly because more programs from this pillar were included in the stocktake. Lack of upfront gender analysis, clear objectives, clear deliverables, coherent M&E systems and adequate resourcing have all contributed to gender equality being inadequately addressed in AusAID-managed programs—especially those funded in previous years. More recent programs have recognised this but the need remains to increase gender technical expertise within these programs to ensure better outcomes.

Box 2: Good practice—examples from Pillar 2

Out of the 160 gender activities found under all pillars, 113 were found under Pillar2. Three examples are briefly described here.

The Cambodian Agricultural Value Chain Program, funded by Australia, has a gender specialist who has worked at village level with families to encourage changes to women's and men's roles to help women spend more time in work outside the household and ensure men take more responsibility for household chores.

The Fiji Rural Economic Development Program is renovating produce markets and has built a women's resource centre that includes accommodation for women. The centre has an industrial kitchen so women can add value by using their raw produce to produce other products (such as jams). Better accommodation for women vendors recognises that safety will improve women's ability to earn incomes.

Laos – Australia NGO Cooperation Agreement staff believe construction of special wheelbarrows that more efficiently transport household water has been the single most effective way of improving women's incomes. The women can spend far more time working for money rather than carting household water.

Pillar 3—building community resilience by supporting the establishment and improvement of social protection programs—could demonstrate the most direct benefits to poor women. This could be because financial inclusion and social protection programs have a long history of focusing on poor women. One example is the BRAC⁸ programs set up in the mid-70s to meet the basic needs of the poorest people in Bangladesh, mostly women. Such programs also lend themselves to hard gates or specific targeting to meet the needs of the poor, in a way that more generalist livelihood programs do not easily do. Pillar 3 programs had more explicit gender objectives articulated up front and better measurement of the impact on women differentially. Much could be learned about gender mainstreaming from these programs.

⁸ The world's largest non-government development organisation, based in Bangladesh.

Box 3: Good practice—women’s voice

In Myanmar, the Rakhine Rural Household Livelihood Security Project mandates women’s participation in village grant management committees to ensure the best decision making to meet all needs.

In Nepal, the Micro-Enterprise Development Programme (MEDP) has set up district associations to guide the work of the program. Seventy-eight per cent of key positions in MEDP committees are occupied by women.

Pillar 1 programs—lifting agricultural productivity through agricultural research and development—could have demonstrated that gender equality had been considered at strategy level (for example, encouraging research partners to institute gender policies), but they seemed to have trouble converting these aspirations into direct benefits for women.

2.3 Alignment with the pillars of AusAID’s gender thematic strategy

The findings of the desktop review and interviews were assessed against the four pillars of *Promoting opportunities for all—Gender equality and women’s empowerment* to assess the extent that this thematic strategy provides a policy driver to improve equality and benefit both women and men within the rural development portfolio.

The four pillars are:

1. advancing equal access to gender-responsive health and education services
2. increasing women’s voice in decision making, leadership and peace-building
3. empowering women economically and improving their livelihood security
4. ending violence against women and girls at home, in their communities and in disaster and conflict situations.

Most of AusAID’s rural development activities sat under Pillar 3. Of particular interest is that nearly one-third of the activities under rural development pillars 1 and 2, value women’s voice in decision making and try and create opportunities for this to occur. This is a good outcome as women’s voices in decision making, not just men’s voices, improves the ability of programs to meet the needs of women as well as men and their children. Improving women’s voices is therefore an important outcome and it is consistent with the good practice identified in the literature review.

Emphasis on women’s leadership and gender role changes may also help gradually alleviate some barriers to greater equality across the rural development portfolio that programs noted in increasing the level of the work, including cultural and traditional ideas of gender roles. Women demonstrating effective leadership in AusAID-funded programs may help shift persistent social norms that prevent women from participating equally in roles outside of their households.

3. Overall analysis

3.1 Strength of allocating funds to benefit women directly

The rural development programs reviewed did well in allocating funds to benefit women directly. Sixty two per cent reported they could track money spent on measures to benefit women. Programs with structured or specific requirements for women's involvement better demonstrated direct benefits.

A significant number of programs have instituted special measures to include women as decision makers and beneficiaries. The stocktake found 28 such measures, mostly with improving rural livelihoods (Pillar 2) and community resilience (Pillar 3). A fewer number were found under agricultural productivity (Pillar 1) to increase support for poor women.

However, the need to institute special measures goes back to the importance of robust analysis in designs. Hard gates are senseless, and can cause harm, if not properly thought through and carefully handled. They can miss their mark. For instance, some financial inclusion or social protection programs targeted towards women have added to women's domestic burdens or the level of violence against them from male family members.⁹

Many programs used 'softer' approaches to benefit women and girls. These can be classed as inclusive practices. Examples are gender training for program staff and developing gender mainstreaming strategies within programs. While these approaches are commendable, more is needed to ensure women benefit and participate, including through carefully challenging the cultural practices preventing women's empowerment and development for all.

Box 4: Good practice—special measures

The Indonesian Smallholder Agribusiness Development Initiative (SADI) gives special consideration to women's proposals and holds separate meetings with women to help them develop good quality proposals. The initiative also trains women and men on the importance of women's participation.

The Micro-Enterprise Development Programme in Nepal has a 60 per cent target of women beneficiaries. The target has made the program innovate new ways of including women—that is, it has provided incentive to improve practice.

The Pacific Financial Inclusion Programme has specific gender targets. All delivery partners must demonstrate that at least 50 per cent of beneficiaries are women to receive their full fee. Partners have exceeded this target with 70 per cent of funds allocated direct to women.

Recommendation 1

That the Food Security Policy and Rural Development Section advocate greater use within rural development programs of special measures that ensure women benefit and are included in decision making over programs. 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.

3.2 Lack of effective gender technical expertise

The stocktake concludes that good practice dictates that sound gender analysis is imperative upfront so programs are designed to improve women's access to activities and enable them to participate in decisions that affect their lives. Lack of measureable outcomes for women in the analysis of designs risks programs falling into the trap of 'policy disappearance'—a phrase coined by United Nations (UN) Women to describe how programs may start with good intentions but how, over time, their gender dimensions disappear. While many program designs available in Aidworks *considered* gender equality, they did not analyse it in-depth or link it to resources and outcomes that could be measured over time through sound M&E systems.

Although many programs included in QAIs that they had contracted gender advisers to help develop a mainstreaming plan or conduct research about why women were not benefitting (or how they could benefit more), few could demonstrate that these plans, strategies and research had been implemented. Translating technical skills into practical responses seems to be a gap in programs, especially since programs reported regularly in QAIs that the main reason they were not delivering more was because of lack of technical expertise, time and money.

Recommendation 3

That AusAID increase the level of gender technical expertise within its Food Security Policy and Rural Development Section and regions or country programs to translate gender politics or strategies into practical and measureable 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.

3.3 Arrangements for women's leadership within programs

The literature review found that promoting women's leadership—especially local leadership—within programs is important across all pillars. This directly mirrors the requirements in AusAID's gender thematic strategy, Opportunities for All, to improve women's leadership opportunities.

Leadership for women in rural development involves:

1. the ability to participate in decision making at community and program levels
2. employment within programs at all levels.

Indeed, women's employment and decision making in programs is important as an end in itself—women have a right to such participation.

Both aspects are also important because women's input and advice on how programs can better meet the needs of other women will improve program effectiveness. Research shows that benefitting women economically is more likely to meet the needs of the whole family as women invest earnings in household matters more than men (for example, on children's education, health provision and upgrading household infrastructure like toilets).

Women's ability to influence community decision making through program activities, such as representation in village decision-making committees, is progressing well in some programs but not in others. Some are struggling because they do not have the technical skills, time or money to try and others have not yet thought about it.

There are very important examples of programs working to address discrimination and improve women's equality and power, through such decision-making mechanisms, through engaging with men to reduce barriers for women's empowerment and through providing informal child care to allow women to spend more time in economic activities outside the household.

Box 5: Good practice—women's leadership

The Cambodian Water Resources Management Research Capacity Development Programme has achieved gender equity in the program team and actively encourages women's participation in farmer water usage groups.

Seven out of 21 research assistants in Timor Leste's Seeds of Life Program are women.

The Pacific Forum Fisheries Agency is focusing on increasing the percentage of women it recruits, including women members of recruitment panels, to demonstrate that these jobs are appropriate for women.

The Vietnam P135 Phase 2 Program has women meeting facilitators and 70 per cent of the 9000 people trained in marriage law, gender equity law and women and children's health are women. Women members of local-level community planning processes have changed the kinds of infrastructure funded. The program has found that male-only committees prioritise roads and irrigation whereas committees with at least 30 per cent female representation prioritise child care and local water and sanitation to enable women to work more outside the house.

The Solomon Islands Rural Development Program mandates that women make up at least 30 per cent of the ward committees that allocate funds for local village economic infrastructure development.

Women's employment through programs is not progressing well. The literature review and AusAID's gender thematic strategy draw attention to the fact that women's caring responsibilities often inhibit their chances of seeking and gaining employment. Unequal access to education to develop the skills to step into professional roles also inhibits their chances.

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.

3.4 Weak use of partner government and AusAID strategic drivers for change

Overall, the rural development programs reviewed did not effectively use partner governments or AusAID gender policies to enhance gender outcomes. Reinforcing government policies can build ownership for strengthening gender work and enable programs to tackle cultural restrictions to improving women's participation. A sharper focus on women's participation, for example, can help shift cultural norms supporting men's power. This is critical since achieving equality is crucial to reducing poverty. Using locally developed gender policies helps demonstrate to partner governments that AusAID takes country context seriously. It also helps build the confidence of partner governments when these governments see their own policies translated into action and better understand the importance of implementing the aid effectiveness principles outlined in Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, Accra Agenda for Action and the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation. One strength of the rural development portfolio is its support for activities that benefit poor women and men living in rural areas. This is more challenging to achieve than it is in some other sectoral programs aligned with partner government initiatives at central agency level. This is because national government initiatives may not be able to stretch beyond a country's capital city. In fragile states, for example, government legitimacy is frequently contested, making it difficult for programs to balance supporting government initiatives in large urban areas with initiatives outside of these areas.

Box 6: Good practice—direct economic benefits to women

The Rural Development Program in Solomon Islands has supported 300 women to establish viable cut-flower businesses. The program tries to conduct most training in the field so women farmers can learn while working. Training is also conducted at times when women can attend (not in the afternoons when women have to cooking for their families). Two thousand women have also received marketing skills training.

The Phase 2 of the Agriculture Sector Linkages Program in Pakistan has targeted the dairy industry as this is an industry where women have traditionally participated.

The Cambodia Smallholder Agriculture and Social Protection Program has offered stipends to 3000 poor pregnant women.

The BRAC Extreme Poverty Program in Bangladesh has benefited more than 40 000 'ultra poor' rural women through intensive two-year support to establish micro-enterprises. This includes: providing stipends while businesses are being set up; providing weekly education and empowerment sessions with women; transferring cattle and small livestock as the basis for the business; and building household infrastructure such as toilets, wells and stables. Longitudinal research shows the program has a 98 per cent success rate in lifting women out of poverty and keeping them out of poverty.

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.

3.5 Need for more accountability within AusAID to manage gender equality outcomes

QAIs are a strategic tool AusAID staff use when managing and evaluating programs, including activities addressing gender equality. The stocktake's review of QAIs highlighted the need to improve the quality of the gender information captured and how it is used to improve outcomes for women within rural development programs. The amount of repeated content, sometimes over multiple years, and the focus on process (such as appointing a gender adviser or developing a plan) rather than outcomes are evidence of this.

M&E systems need to be improved, reflecting in part the overall evaluation challenges across AusAID. Other AusAID gender stocktakes found similar results.¹⁰ The literature review draws attention to the importance of collecting data on the differential impact of programs as a key to improving outcomes for all, and women in particular. The interviews uncovered many innovative and valuable gender practices but these were not consistently captured well or shared across programs to produce better outcomes.

Few programs, if any, have baseline data to measure changes over time and very few know exactly what kind of data shows beneficial impact differentially for women and men. In some ways, this goes back to weak upfront analysis about how programs will benefit women, men, girls and boys.

However, some programs perform exceptionally well in measuring impact. Box 7 includes several good-practice examples. Such good practice could be showcased through a communication process. More long-term research like this, revealing the impact of practices uncovered by the stocktake, would be valuable in understanding the drivers of change for poor women, through the rural development program. The glimpses of innovation across the rural development portfolio could have implications for other sectors within AusAID, so investment in key areas of research would help improve AusAID-funded programs more widely.

Box 7: Good practice—monitoring, evaluation and research

¹⁰ There have been 11 other gender stocktakes within AusAID.

BRAC's ultra-poor Extreme Poverty Program in Bangladesh has developed indicators to measure whether women are less poor during and after the program. BRAC combines the data collected with longitudinal research to demonstrate change.

The Cambodian Water Resources Management Research Capacity Development Programme commissioned a social assessment of the key issues women face in water resource management. The program also ensured that 80 per cent of 220 surveys conducted about economics at household level were with women.

The Rakhine Rural Household Livelihood Security Project in Myanmar conducted an action research study on the impact of women in decision making in public life.

The Nepal Micro-Enterprise Development Programme has demonstrated that women's traditional roles have changed as they have gained more control over productive resources such as land.

The Pacific Financial Inclusion Programme is conducting 'financial diaries for the poor' research to understand how economic decisions are made at household level and what kinds of products women and men use to meet their financial needs.

Timor Leste's Seeds of Life Program has conducted research to better understand the roles of women in household food production, processing and storage.

Box 8: Good research practice—identified in the literature review for Pillar 1

The literature review identified that good practice gender-responsive research for Pillar 1 should include:

- good quality sex-disaggregated agricultural data (quantitative and qualitative)
- research that can form the basis for gender-sensitive policy and program delivery
- ways to strengthen women's voice and introduce gender-sensitive accountability mechanisms in agricultural extension
- application of a gender lens to the execution of large-scale land deals
- gender-sensitive approaches to technology development and introduction
- research illuminating the links between the feminisation of agricultural wage labouring and women's empowerment
- investigation of the benefits and limitations of women-only groups.

Programs interviewed for the gender stocktake embraced the chance to talk about their work and ways of improving it. Discussions helped people on the front clarify focus on gender equality and raised their interest in delivering more and better results. This demonstrates that interactive ways of assessing programs can help build capacity in program delivery and gain a better understanding of how programs are tracking. Sharing what lessons learned will help other AusAID programs understand how to improve their work also.

Robust, upfront analysis, is the first key to useful M&E systems. Such analysis was identified in the literature review as the foundation for programs to meet the needs of women and men effectively. This was found to be essential for all three rural development pillars.

The picture of analysis is mixed, with the desktop review highlighting lack of analysis at design stage as a major impediment to delivering outcomes for all but the interviews with delivery partners pointing to quite a high rate of designs that discussed gender issues.

The stocktake reviewed all designs available on Aidworks and found that many mentioned gender equality. The problem was more that the level of analysis lacked quality and how outcomes linked to analysis could be measured by good M&E systems. This analysis is seen as a victim to ‘policy disappearance’ through, a lack of translation into measureable outcomes that make a difference to women’s lives.

Recommendation 7

That AusAID staff use evaluation processes—including QAI processes—more strategically to manage poor performance and use lessons to improve outcomes for women.

Recommendation 8

That the Food Security Policy and Rural Development Section and 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 on the job.

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).

Recommendation 10

That the Food Security Policy 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.

4. Conclusion

The stocktake revealed that poor women and their families are benefitting from the rural development work that AusAID funds but that there are challenges to systematically improving the visibility of the work and understanding its value.

The rural development portfolio is demonstrating in some cases that poor women are being lifted out of poverty and being empowered, both economically and socially. These are important policy imperatives within AusAID. The extent of the program's focus on increasing women's power and decision making is an unexpected positive outcome. This outcome shows that managers understand the importance of increasing women's decision-making options as an end in and of itself and because of its value in improving the quality of program outcomes for all.

The rural development program will be able to strengthen participation and benefits by building on existing good work, especially in improving leadership and decision-making opportunities for women and by implementing special targeted measures to ensure their involvement.

Better AusAID staff management of programs (analysis, design, implementation and measurement of change) will enable better rewards from investments. An increase in program resourcing (money allocated to gender outcomes, practical technical skills to translate strategic frameworks into practical responses, and the time to concentrate on gender issues) will also improve outcomes over time.

Actual program results are stronger than at initial assessment as captured within existing systems, so more thought is needed on how to enrich the picture in a more meaningful way and then how to take some elements of it to scale.

The rural development portfolio makes an important contribution to AusAID's delivery of its gender thematic strategy and its commitment to being a firm and persistent advocate for gender equality.

Appendix A: Literature review—overview

The literature review of gender in rural development was conducted against the three pillars of AusAID’s food security thematic strategy:

1. lifting agricultural productivity through agricultural research and development
2. improving rural livelihoods by strengthening markets and market access
3. building community resilience by supporting the establishment and improvement of social protection programs.

This section covers:

- common barriers to women’s participation and/or inclusion
- good gender equality practice worldwide
- gender equality results to expect
- extent of gender analysis and key gender themes in AusAID materials
- comparative advantage on gender equality that AusAID may bring to rural development work.¹¹

The appendix ends by including the extensive list of references examined during the literature review.

Common barriers to women’s participation and/or inclusion

There is considerable overlap across the three pillars of rural development in the prevalent gender equality barriers affecting women’s participation and/or inclusion in rural development, including their:

- heavy burden of domestic responsibilities which inhibits their ability to participate in productive work outside the home
- relative invisibility in the productive sphere
- limited opportunity to participate in public decision making that could improve program impact
- constraint on their ability to exercise their rights and benefit from policies and programs.

The literature review also pointed to the importance of local knowledge and gender analysis to each context to ensure women can participate and benefit and to improve outcomes for all.

Good gender equality practice worldwide

The literature review concluded that good gender equality practice in rural development requires sound gender analysis of local contexts and practical recognition of gender-specific opportunities and constraints. This applies across all three pillars.

¹¹ This aim is noted but not fleshed out in this stocktake report in the interests of report length.

Pillar 1—enhancing agricultural productivity

The range of good practices that emerged for this pillar includes the need for:

- research that increases the availability of quality, sex-disaggregated agricultural data (quantitative and qualitative)
- research that forms the basis for gender sensitive policy and program delivery
- initiatives that strengthen women's voices
- initiatives that introduce gender-sensitive accountability mechanisms in agricultural extension activities such as training
- gender to be applied to the execution of large-scale land deals
- gender-sensitive approaches to developing and introducing technology
- research on the links between women's empowerment and more women being involved in paid agricultural work
- research on the advantages and disadvantages of relying on women-only groups.

Pillar 2—strengthening markets and market access

The range of good practices identified as appropriate for this pillar drew heavily on a handbook produced by the United States Agency for International Development on promoting gender equitable opportunities in agricultural value chains.¹² They include:

- encouraging equitable participation and membership
- supporting women's leadership
- increasing access to markets
- integrating financial and business development services
- increasing access to market information systems
- fostering trust and collaboration
- promoting a business enabling environment
- strengthening public-private sector coordination
- improving conditions of work environments
- increasing employment opportunities
- increasing financial options for women entrepreneurs.

The importance of beginning by analysing household income and the impacts of planned initiatives are especially relevant to this pillar.

¹² United States Agency for International Development (2009), *Promoting Gender Equitable Opportunities in Agricultural Value Chains: A Handbook*. Washington DC.

Pillar 3—building community resilience through social protection programs

The range of good practices identified for this pillar, with respect to establishing and improving social protection programs include:

- investigating the gender-specific impact of social protection instruments
- reviewing and amending social protection legislation
- linking social protection for women to complementary services
- incorporating gender in mapping the complex interactions among social protection instruments.

The 2009 discussion paper by the United Kingdom's Commonwealth Secretariat—Gender and Social Protection—provides useful guidance on these good practices and other related issues including the importance of political will and robust M&E.

Gender equality results to expect

The literature review concluded that a range of gender equality results should be expected when good practice is applied in rural development projects, across all three pillars. Some of these results are listed below.

Pillar 1: Lifting agricultural productivity through agricultural research and development

The range of results to be expected under this pillar include:

1. women's agricultural productivity should be increased and workload decreased through access to affordable and appropriate gender-sensitive technology
2. more equitable delivery of extension services through more effective exercise of women's voice and accountability mechanisms
3. more equitable access to productive resources, particularly land.

Pillar 2: Improving rural livelihoods by strengthening markets and market access

The range of results to be expected under this pillar include:

1. improved access to and benefits from markets for women through strengthened participation in horizontal and vertical linkages between value chains
2. enhanced resilience and empowerment of women in responding to emerging global/macro trends at all levels of the value chain.

Pillar 3: Building community resilience by supporting the establishment and improvement of social protection programs

The range of results to be expected under this pillar include:

1. more gender equitable resource allocation and reduced vulnerability of women through improved, more gender-sensitive targeting
2. strengthened economic and political position of women in households and within communities

3. greater ability of women to manage vulnerability and risk through an effective combination of social protection instruments addressing needs by improving predictability without adding burden or risk.

AusAID material—extent of gender analysis and key gender themes

The literature review found that AusAID material relevant to rural development, including some strategies and frameworks, consistently refers to the Agency's gender policy and articulate sound gender principles. However, this tends to be confined to overview statements and sections dedicated to the topic of gender equality. It also tends to stop at simply providing examples of activities in which rural women are involved, such as training courses. While helpful to a degree, this approach is not as in-depth as it needs to be. Indeed, strategies and frameworks tend to include superficial directives that take for granted the commitment and capacity to conduct and effectively apply good practice gender analysis.

AusAID material therefore needs to include:

- brief statements strategically placed throughout, indicating key gender dimensions and how they will be addressed
- examples of how gender equality could be indirectly supported by creating an environment for improved gender outcomes
- indications of the role men could play
- indications of how gender equality could intersect with other crosscutting themes of importance to AusAID and its development partners, such as anti-corruption and the environment.

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Appendix B: Aidworks desktop review

This section gives an overview of the results of the desktop review of material available in Aidworks on gender in rural development. It then provides more details on QAI report results and gender-marker question results.

Overview

Across the 46 programs involved in the desktop review, 98 QAIs, 11 Quality at Entry reports, 3 program designs and 10 reviews were assessed. Gender-marker question results were available for 33 programs, and these were also assessed.

The desktop review found many examples of innovation and success with gender in rural development. However, these examples need to be better captured and communicated and lessons learned need to be shared across AusAID. For example, staff needs to use QAI reports to better capture the complex breadth of activities and challenges instead of mostly reporting process matters that do not demonstrate effectiveness or outcomes. M&E frameworks and their use in informing programs need to be improved significantly and programs need to collect at least a bare minimum of sex-disaggregated data.

The desktop review also concluded that more dedicated resources and expertise on gender are needed, as well as associated technical skills, so program staff can better engage and follow up on gender-related issues.

The gender-marker questions in Aidworks need to be more accurately and consistently completed if they are to be a valuable and accurate reporting tool. When the data captured in Aidworks on actual practice is compared with the good practice outlined in the literature review it becomes clear that more sound gender analysis is needed during design and implementation of rural development programs. Performance here varies somewhat. For example, while the activities supported under Pillar 2 (rural livelihoods) align with good practice, only limited information on achievements was gathered. The limited range of Pillar 3 (building resilience) programs also align well with good practice and tend to be better informed by sound analysis.

QAI report results

Overall, QAIs tell an underwhelming story about how gender equality is being addressed within rural development programs. In some cases only a score was provided but no supporting text. In other cases, the same, or very similar, text was used over multiple reporting cycles. This may indicate a low level of staff awareness of the gender dimensions of programs or, of greater concern, no activity over many years.

The spread of 2009 and 2010 QAI scores were similar to those described in the 2009 Annual Thematic Performance Report with approximately 80 per cent of gender scores satisfactory and 20 per cent unsatisfactory. No very high quality scores were achieved in 2009–10 but one was in 2010 (BRAC).

Gaps in reporting and lack of outcome data caused by an approach that is too process-based were two main issues relating to QAIs. These two issues are discussed below.

Gaps in QAI reporting

The desktop review discovered significant gaps in available data and the analysis reflects this. QAIs were not available for 12 of the 46 programs selected for the stocktake which contributed to difficulties in comparing programs. The level of content included in the QAIs also varied between programs. Factors contributing to gaps in reporting include:

- length of time a program had been operating
- exemptions to QAIs reporting (for example, if a project was less than \$3 million)
- multiple versions (sometimes incomplete) of a QAI being uploaded in one reporting cycle
- QAIs completed but not uploaded
- information not being accessible while the desktop review was being conducted.

Lack of outcome data—too process based

The desktop review discovered that data could be too process-based, instead of outcome-based. By far, the most commonly reported actions around improving women's participation in or benefits from programs were to conduct some research, prepare a report or develop a gender strategy. For example, QAI reports mentioned these three actions 33 times. Linked to this was the need to contract a gender specialist because program staff believed they did not have the skills or funds to integrate gender equality.

Seventeen responses in the QAIs referred to the need to conduct better M&E or collect sex-disaggregated data and 10 noted the need to contract a gender adviser or that one had been contracted. Thirteen responses noted, sometimes over multiple QAIs, that gender equality was not being adequately addressed and that help was needed to correct this by, for example, conducting research to inform programs what to do, sourcing technical expertise and securing additional resources.

One program, which is not an isolated example, illustrates how problematic lack of outcome data can be. It noted in 2007 that a social assessment of gender issues had begun. In 2008 and 2009, it noted that 'more involvement and work on gender equality' was needed. In 2010, it noted that a social assessment had been completed but not disseminated and that a mid-term review had been completed. The same examples were used in 2008, 2009 and 2010 to demonstrate how gender was being addressed. The need to respond to the mid-term review recommendations was noted in 2010 and 2011.

This example demonstrates the need for AusAID staff to better recognise and document gender outcomes, as opposed to just gender processes. It also demonstrates the need for M&E processes to provide more fulsome guidance beyond, for example, 'commission a report' or 'contract a gender adviser'. Finally the example demonstrates lack of clarity over what to do about gender issues, which is perhaps not surprising given the lack of in-depth gender analysis generally included in program designs.

On the flip side, the desktop review encountered cases that recognised how and why gender equality was being addressed and the outcomes being achieved. The Rakhine Rural Household Livelihood Security Project in Myanmar, is an example, reporting as outcomes:

... involvement in [village decision-making groups], agricultural and vocational training, and as health educators has had positive social impacts in terms of raising the status of women within their households and communities.

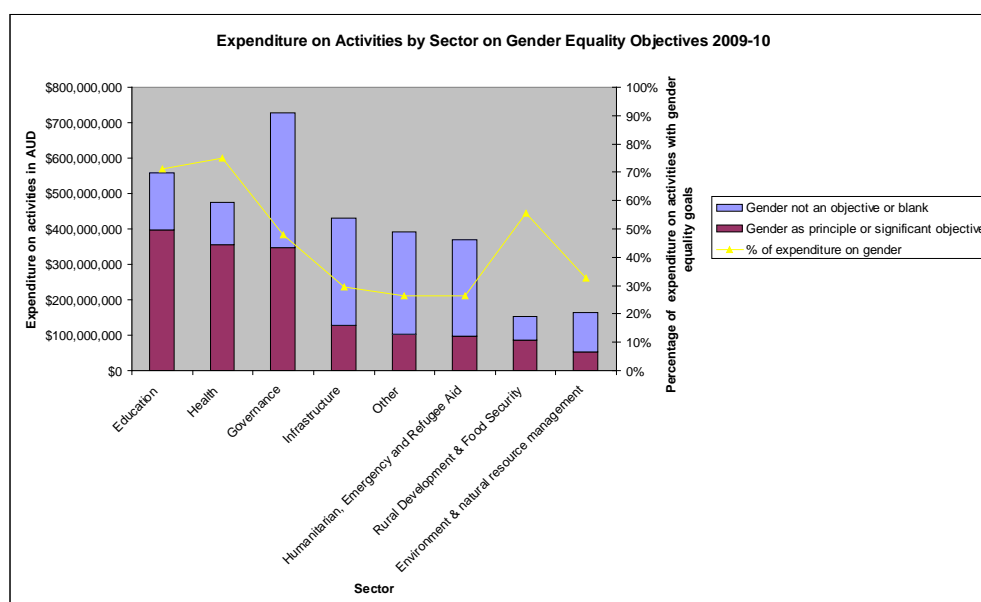
Gender-marker question results

Gender-marker questions are designed to fulfil AusAID gender reporting obligations to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation – Development Assessment Commission. The commission collects this data recognising that gender outcomes require financial allocation and that funds spent are one way to assess the degree to which aid programs focus on gender outcomes across aid programs.

AusAID also has gender-marker questions to determine how to help the Agency assess the extent to which its programs align with these four pillars of the gender thematic strategy.

The desktop review analysed the scores and answers to the gender-marker questions within the rural development portfolio to assess the extent of gender focus and alignment with the four gender pillars. Overall, the outcome is positive—Graph 1 shows the overall amount AusAID spent on gender spend within rural development and compares it to other sectors. Nearly 60 per cent of the program believes gender equality is a principle or significant objective.

Graph B.1: AusAID’s overall sectoral spend on gender equality



The results of gender-marker questions were scored for 33 of the programs included in the stocktake. Of these, gender equality was scored¹³ to be a significant objective for about half of initiatives and the principal objective for three (Timor Leste’s Seeds of Life Program; Laos – Australia

¹³ Options are: principle objective, significant objective, not an objective.

NGO Cooperation Agreement; and the AusAID – NGO Cooperation Program). Unsurprisingly, economic empowerment was the most frequently selected marker for¹⁴ promoting gender equality. About half of initiatives were scored as having measures to promote gender equality and empower women. Just less than a third were scored as having a budget for promoting gender equality and empowering women with the estimated percentage ranging from 5 per cent to 60 per cent.

The Aidworks desktop review (supported by stocktake interviews) found that choice of program classification did not consistently relate to what was involved under the program. For example, gender equality was classified as not an objective for Cambodia's Smallholder Agriculture and Social Protection Program but it involved a conditional cash transfer to improve the nutritional status of poor pregnant women which is an objective. Similarly, gender equality is classified as not an objective for Burma's Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund yet it targets provision of financial services for women.

Conversely, gender is classified as a significant objective for Timor Leste's Seeds of Life Program, yet this program has struggled to significantly increase the inclusion of women—a critical need as 80 per cent of farmers in-country who will be responsible for using new and improved crop varieties are women.

¹⁴ Options are: economic empowerment, education, health, leadership and decision making, other.

Appendix C: Assessment against the food security rural development and gender equality thematic strategy pillars

This section assesses the rural development program against AusAID's food security and gender equality thematic strategies.

Food security thematic strategy

Australia's strategic approach to food security is outlined in *Sustainable economic development—Improving food security* (November 2011).¹⁵ This strategy describes Australia's three rural development pillars of action to improve outcomes in food security:

1. lifting agricultural productivity through agricultural research and development
2. improving rural livelihoods by strengthening markets and market access
3. building community resilience by supporting the establishment and improvement of social protection programs.

The strategy notes that Australia's approach to food security is through the:

... twin strategies of increasing the availability of food (by increasing production and improving trade), while also increasing the poor's ability to access food (by increasing incomes).

Australia's food security and rural development programs aim to jointly contribute to these three development outcomes:

1. more food available in markets and poor households
2. increased net income of poor women and men
3. increased employment for poor women and men.

The program outputs to help increase:

- access to agricultural technologies by poor women and men (leading to increased productivity of poor women and men farmers)
- prices for goods sold by poor women and men
- access to financial services by poor women and men
- access to social transfers by poor women and men.

The analysis from the desktop review and the interviews was assessed against the food security thematic strategy for trends against the three pillars. No clear trends were observed from the QAI scores.

¹⁵ <http://www.ausaid.gov.au/keyaid/pdf/thematic-strategies/food-security-strategy.pdf>

The challenges identified in the desktop review and interviews apply across all three pillars but the opportunities for the Australian Government to overcoming them vary. More and better ways to address gender equality under Pillar 1 are needed from within the research portfolio managed by Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research as it takes on more responsibility for this area of work. There may also be an opportunity for Australia to be a more active gender advocate in global programs, such as on the steering committee for the Global Agricultural and Food Security Program, where significant AusAID and broader donor investment is being made.

As identified in the food security strategy, the financial services focus under Pillar 2 provides an opportunity to address women's economic empowerment. Increased support to financial services is positive but adequate resourcing and attention, including through targeted approaches, will be needed so AusAID is actively engaged in influencing approaches being taken and ongoing performance assessment. Programs to strengthen the functioning of markets are also good opportunities to address gender equality. However, lack of upfront gender analysis, clear objectives and deliverables, coherent M&E systems, and adequate resourcing preventing gender equality from being inadequately addressed in previous AusAID-managed, market-based programs. More recent programs have recognised this but the need remains to support the capacity of programs to address gender and improve how M&E systems capture and use appropriate data.

The types of programs under Pillar 3 tend to have more explicit gender objectives and recognised ability to achieve gender outcomes, so the potential increased support for this pillar has positive gender implications. Depending on available opportunities, balancing the provision of core support to existing programs and identifying new components and/or additional parallel support for particular aspects of design and review are needed.

Gender equality thematic strategy

The stocktake assessed Australia's strategic approach to gender equality and women's empowerment against the government's *Promoting opportunities for all—Gender equality and women's empowerment*.¹⁶ This strategy describes four pillars around which AusAID's work on gender equality and women's empowerment will be organised:

1. advancing equal access to gender-responsive health and education services
2. increasing women's voice in decision making, leadership, and peace-building
3. empowering women economically and improving their livelihood security
4. ending violence against women and girls at home, in their communities and in disaster and conflict situations.

¹⁶ AusAID's gender thematic strategy, November 2011, <http://www.ausaid.gov.au/keyaid/pdf/thematic-strategies/gender-equality-strategy.pdf>

The strategy also notes that:

Australia will continue to invest strongly in improving gender equality across the aid program with a focus on what works, is effective aid and achieves results. This will include a more strategic and targeted focus in the areas where progress has been slow: women's economic empowerment, women's leadership, and ending violence against women.

The area of economic empowerment (Pillar 3) aligns directly with all three pillars of the food security strategy and the approach it describes is a useful basis for recognising how rural development programs can address gender equality.

- open employment opportunities for women outside of the agriculture sector, in the formal and informal sectors, by working with entrepreneurs—especially women entrepreneurs—and the public and private sector, and by supporting business development
- improve access to financial services (savings, credit, insurance and financial literacy) by helping providers expand coverage and develop new financial instruments that respond to women's needs, as well as by improving financial literacy
- work with partner governments, private sector, and research institutions to improve women's agricultural productivity through access to productive resources, machinery, inputs, markets, and new technology
- provide an enabling environment for women to compete equally with men through improved policies and access to training, rural roads, transportation, electricity, information and digital technology
- look for innovative solutions to providing care for children, the elderly, and infirm, including by expanding pre-primary education
- support social protection instruments that meet the needs of women and children, including those protecting women in the informal sector and other vulnerable occupations.

Alignment with the gender thematic strategy

Program activities were assessed against the four pillars of the gender thematic strategy to see if they aligned (Table C.1). While most rural development activities are economic development activities, individual activities can also support other pillars of the thematic strategy. It was useful to assess alignment to see if the gender thematic strategy can strengthen the participation of women overall.

Table C.1: Alignment of individual rural development activities against the gender thematic strategy pillars

	Pillar 1	Pillar 2	Pillar 3	Pillar 4	Total by activities
Total rural development activities	3	11	17	0	31
Total rural development activities	4	39	69	1	113
Total rural development activities	4	1	9	0	14
Total rural development activities	2	0	0	0	2
Total by pillar	13	50	95	1	160

The majority (95) of the 160 rural development activities aligned with Pillar 3 (empowering women economically and improving their livelihood security). Fifty aligned with Pillar 2 (increasing women's voice in decision making, leadership and peace-building). A much smaller number (14) aligned with Pillar 1 (advancing equal access to gender responsive health and education services). Only one activity aligned with Pillar 4 (ending violence against women and girls at home, in their communities and in disaster and conflict situations). This was Fiji's course on addressing domestic violence in relationships, held for male farmers and their female partners. Nearly one third of the activities under pillars 1 and 2 value women's voice in decision making.

This emphasis on women's leadership and gender role changes may gradually alleviate some barriers to greater equality across the rural development portfolio that programs noted in increasing the work (for example, cultural and traditional ideas of gender roles).

Overall, the rural development program makes a significant contribution AusAID's support of economic empowerment of women and improving women's leadership opportunities. This reflects good practice as identified in the literature review as well.

Table C.2 lists all activities by programs.

Table C.2: Programs included in desktop review and/or interviews grouped by rural development pillar

Country name	Initiative name	Pillar	Promoting equality between women and men is ...	Activities	Gender thematic strategy pillar 1	Gender thematic strategy pillar 2	Gender thematic strategy pillar 3	Gender thematic strategy pillar 4	Total activities
CAMBODIA	Cambodia Development Resource Institute Water Resource Management	1	a significant object	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • program requires equal men and women's participation in activities • social assessment of key issues for women in irrigation and water resource management • gender equity incorporated within implementation team • women's participation in farmer water usage groups • 2 of the 5 scholars for masters studies are women • 50% of people in group discussions for participatory learning and action research were female • 80% of interviewees in economic component of household surveys (220 households) were women • tried to support female staff in the agency 	3	3	1	0	7
GLOBAL	Global Crop Diversity Trust	1			0	1	0	0	1
PAPUA NEW GUINEA	PNG – Australia Agriculture Research and Development Support Facility	1	a significant object	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gender equity was part of National Youth Affairs Research Scheme's (NYARS) needs assessment • tried to encourage women in decision making at different levels • 30% of membership of boards of research institutes are women • working groups established in NYARS in 2008 created a process to identify, implement and monitor gender mainstreaming initiatives • gender-awareness session held with NYARS staff • gender mainstreaming strategy developed for NYARS • gender workplace strategy developed for NARI • projects piloted to address women's access to funding • strategic plans for some NARS incorporated gender considerations • projects funded through grants scheme included gender activities in plans and implementation was monitored 	0	3	8	0	11

EAST TIMOR	Seeds of Life Program	1	the principal object	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> grants secretariat completed gender training women's participation as field workers actively sought 20% of attendance at field days are women women's education and training at all levels aimed for communication strategy developed as a tool to focus on women's roles in agriculture women encouraged to apply for project positions 7 out of 21 research assistants are women similar ratio achieved for agronomy graduates as for research assistants research completed to better understand the roles of women in household food production, processing and storage cropping calendars developed women proactively targeted for testing new varieties report produced (2010) on women's involvement in Seeds of Life 	0	4	8	0	12
CAMBODIA	Cambodia Australia Value Chain Program	2	not an objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> gender strategy developed for Seeds of Life atmosphere created in Seeds of Life to address gender effort made to change gender relations at household level gender indicators developed to measure impact gender adviser engaged to review the program and advise on integration 	0	2	2	0	4
FIJI	Rural Enterprise Development Facility	2	a significant object	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> flower project developed (although it failed) financial assistance provided to women courses at a rural training centre held for young farmers (men as they own the land) with one looking at healthy relationships (anti-violent) and encouraging female partners to attend 	0	0	2	1	3
FIJI	Fiji Rural Economic Development Program	2	significant objective or not an objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 markets being renovated to be women friendly spaces local male leaders consulted and included in market renovations best practice tool kit developed to make markets work better for women women's resource centre developed with safe accommodation for 150 women industrial kitchen included in women's resource centre to enable food 	1	0	5	0	6

				production for markets						
				<ul style="list-style-type: none">women’s training (for example, in small business and on hygiene) held at women’s resource centre						
GLOBAL	Enterprise Challenge Fund Pilot	2		<ul style="list-style-type: none">women’s resource centre provides advice and support on gender to grant applicants and implementersresearch paper published on gender in challenge fundscountry manager provides advice on how to change behaviour to encourage a focus on women’s employment	0	1	2	0	3	
INDONESIA	Australia – Indonesia Partnership for Reconstruction and Development Smallholder Agribusiness Development Initiative	2	not an objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none">women’s proposals given special considerationwomen facilitators contractedwomen’s leadership training heldgender specialist contracted to help develop a strategy to mainstream genderM&E system inclusive of gender developedseparate meetings for women held to develop proposalsbaseline study run by International Finance Corporation included gender assessments	0	2	5	0	7	
LAOS	Laos – Australia NGO Cooperation Agreements	2	principal objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none">separate meetings held for men and womenwomen trained to better participate in meetingspriority as it plays such a key role in women’s liveswheelbarrows constructed for women to carry water and free them up for other activitiesAusAID mission overseas assessed performance on gender and inclusive developmentbaseline data that included women collectedfield staff code of conduct mainstreams gendergender and ethnic sensitive behaviours among project staff promotedM7E included gender indicatorsfemale small business operators and micro trained.	1	5	3	0	9	
LATIN AMERICA	Business Training for Women (Inter-American Development Bank,; Peru)	2			0	0	1	0	1	

BANGLADESH	BRAC Extreme Poverty Program	3		as women play a pivotal role in managing family incomes	2	1	6	0	9
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • poorest of the poor targeted, mainly women • stipends offered for two years • access provided to free health care and education • asset transfers provided • weekly training on social and economic matters held • water supply and toilet built • community leaders mobilised to support the BRAC process • women's voice in decision making realised in community committees • household level enterprises established 					
VIETNAM	Implementation Support Program—P135 Phase 2 Program in QN	2	not an objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women's Union one of 13 agencies on provincial steering committee • training held on marriage law, land law, gender equity law, women's and children's health to more 9000 people (70% women) • gender strategy to strengthen mainstreaming completed • equal opportunities for capacity building established • 4 components include small scale infrastructure developed by supporting sustainable small scale infrastructure investments which meet the needs of women • participation by poor women in socio economic planning process increased • gender awareness training held for ISP managers • women meeting facilitators established 	1	3	4	0	8
SOLOMON ISLANDS (from the Solomon Islands stocktake)	Solomon Islands Rural Development Program	2 5	a significant objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural Development Program • runs in villages in every province • community meetings held on needs and intended and actual participation of women monitored • focus groups run at village level to map out roles and responsibilities and needs • village needs go to ward committees to make decisions about allocating funds—committees have 30% female members • man and woman sent to the province review committee to allocate funds post ward committee meetings (women's participation still passive) • tracks women's participation and observes actual participation 	1	6	11	0	18

- encourages separate meetings between women and men at village level
- the presence of livelihood program staff does influence participation from women
- 30% to 40% of projects funded are about water supply, which has a strong gender aspect
- in two places provincial women's centres were refurbished based on community choice (communities felt they could help trigger income-generating activities and discussions between women)
- Agriculture Livelihoods Program
- indirectly benefits women through a number of priorities
- agricultural work and gender roles being mapped
- women always included in training programs, some of which insist that men bring female partners along
- crops used by the widest number of people on a daily basis targeted (for example, food crops, better processing methods and improved varieties that feed more people)
- cocoa program has participatory action learning training that involves 3000 families (if a man turns up by himself for training, he is sent to get a woman to participate with him)
- women introduced into coconut selling and markets
- focus maintained on cut flower businesses, which directly benefits women who are main growers and sellers (For example, Orchid Art sources flowers from 300 growers in Guadalcanal, Malaita and Renbell and sells to customers mostly in Honiara, as bundles or arrangements. The growers organised training for Orchid Art on flower production and floral art display, resulting in an immediate increase in sales of arranged flowers. The business is moving to arrange direct sales to businesses such as tourist resorts outside of Honiara)
- they try and conduct most of their work in fields where women and men gather, not in centralised locations
- they run training at times when women can come (for example, not when women are preparing dinner)
- they consult with women before each training session to agree on the best time and place to conduct training so women can attend,

				<div>recognising the high demands placed on women's time</div> 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IRAQ	Australia – Iraq Agricultural Scholarships Program	4	a significant objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> problems around married female students not having adequate contact with husbands resolved through an improved family reunification policy concerted effort made in selection process 	2	0	0	0	2
					13	51	92	1	157

Appendix D: Interviews across programs

This section presents the results of the interviews conducted for the stocktake on gender in rural development.¹⁷ It starts with overall findings and discusses results under the three topic areas dealt with by the stocktake (management arrangements, work in the field and M&E processes). The section then details the benefits of gender activities overall and finishes by summarising responses to open-ended questions.

Four programs interviewed sat under Pillar 1 (agricultural productivity), 18 under Pillar 2 (rural livelihoods) and three under Pillar 3 (building resilience). One program was allocated to 'other'.¹⁸ It is important to note that there is overlap between the three pillars with many programs having elements that cover all three.

Overall findings

Overall, interviews illustrated depth of effort and progress being made on the ground to address gender equality and the need to strengthen and adequately resource M&E processes. Some excellent work is underway, particularly with specific measures for women's leadership and as beneficiaries. Lessons learned should be applied more broadly across other AusAID-funded programs. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some work is leading to transformational changes in gender roles and power so it is important to learn more about what conditions and mechanisms can bring about such improvements.

More is happening on the ground than is captured in Aidworks which means AusAID staff should flesh out reporting on progress.

The interviews revealed that programs are providing access to gender expertise and program managers are taking an active role and maintaining momentum where there is traction. Interviewees indicated that the training and input provided by AusAID gender specialists (including expert panels) is beneficial and in great demand.

Those interviewed agreed that gender equality needs to go beyond being a broad principle or objective. It needs to be carefully analysed in the design phase and formalised, including in program deliverables and terms of reference.

Increased effort is needed to build the gender awareness and capacity of partner governments and agencies. The potential benefit of this approach was raised especially for the Pacific region.

The interviews also concluded that strategies for increasing the number of women involved in managing and implementing programs should be considered. The benefits and challenges in attracting female staff were raised by several programs. These actions need to improve women's voice within programs and contribute to their economic empowerment through more job opportunities.

¹⁷ Note: Not all questions were relevant for all programs so results are often reported both as total numbers of programs and percentages to adjust for this.

¹⁸ Separation into pillars was done when preparing the rural development Annual Thematic Performance Report.

Opportunities to increase the recognition and formal involvement of women in the agricultural sector (for example, in partner government agencies and industry) should be considered. This includes through targeted scholarships, training, as well as employment policies and practices in partner governments.

Management arrangements

The interviews provided a wealth of information on management arrangements, all discussed below. Findings are presented under these seven aspects:

1. need for good upfront capacity
2. requirements to contract female staff
3. alignment with policy environments
4. women's leadership
5. specific budgets to ensure women benefit
6. technical skills
7. ability to consider gender equality (self-rating).

Need for good upfront capacity

The findings of this section) agreed with the desktop review in demonstrating how broad the range of support is in the rural development portfolio and the complex arrangements a single initiative can represent. Following good practice, programs used one or multiple delivery arrangements. A third involved a multilateral partner and about a quarter involved an NGO or other development partner, or a managing contractor.

Other evidence of good upfront capacity relates to gender objectives. Twenty-one (81 per cent) programs had explicit gender objectives in their design, including many targeting women. Interviewees noted where objectives had been enhanced from earlier phases in response to shortcomings (for example, Agricultural Sector Linkages Program in Pakistan and Seeds of Life Program in East Timor).

Targets for female participation were frequently mentioned during the interviews with some objectives strongly gender-targeted (for example, with financial services for women in Burma and Latin America). Not all programs need gender objectives, however. The Global Crop Diversity Trust, for example, has a purely scientific mandate which does not require such objectives.

A total of 21 (81 per cent) of programs had gender equality mechanisms¹⁹, although these were not always translated into policy partly because program staff were not enthusiastic about or committed to doing so (for example, the Micro-Enterprise Development Programme in Nepal). Some staff from larger organisations described their structured corporate mechanisms for gender (for example: equal opportunity aspects of managing contractors' corporate codes of conduct; corporate-level gender requirement monitoring; and gender equality aspects of employment and training for staff in NGOs and regional organisations).

¹⁹ For example, policies for equal employment opportunities or other gender policies.

One notable example of contractual gender requirements was the Pacific Financial Inclusion Programme. All partners have performance-based agreements with gender targets (50 per cent of all beneficiaries need to be women) which must be reached for the full fee to be paid.

Overall efforts with good upfront capacity in management arrangements align with the good practice outlined in the literature review. They also contradict the information captured in Aidworks which reports that few programs had conducted gender equality analysis or included specific measures including women that could be measured over time. This points to the need to talk to the staff principally involved in implementing programs and the need to increase AusAID staff capacity to identify and report on gender practice.

Requirements to contract female staff

Overall, the requirement to contract female staff is weak within the rural development portfolio.

Interviewees revealed that only 10 (40 per cent) programs reported including gender objectives in the terms of reference set for projects and/or advisers. Detailed interview responses reflected variation between this and actual arrangements. Gender objectives ranged from being included as specific parts of adviser contracts (for example, the Vanuatu Land Program) or in project terms of reference (for example, Women's World Banking) to being broad (for example, Timor Leste's Seeds of Life Program).

Interviewees also revealed that while a gender objective may be emphasised it was not necessarily a specific deliverable (for example, the Cambodia Agricultural Value Chain Program).

Another issue was the need to consider the entire adviser team when assessing gender objectives. For example, Cambodia's Smallholder Agriculture and Social Protection Program has two gender advisers but no gender objectives in its terms of reference.

Overall, indicative numbers showed that programs had more male staff than female staff. However, the stocktake could not form a complete picture of the gender balance of advisers and program staff because of the different levels of detail provided through the interviews on the context of initiatives. For example, some programs comprised a small number of head office staff and others (such as BRAC) involved hundreds of field staff. However, interviewees commonly noted the difficulty in attracting and retaining female staff and how successfully attracting female staff varies between international and local situations (for example, Timor Leste's Seeds of Life Program had greater success in attracting female foreign staff).

Interviewees highlighted the value of having women involved in program implementation and raised specific examples. Having women working in the Pacific's Forum Fisheries Agency, for instance, helped the Agency reach communities. Having female staff on Seeds of Life enhanced the effectiveness of activities related to working with women.

Alignment with policy environments—AusAID and partner governments

Overall the interviews concluded that aligning gender in rural development to policy environments is weak, both with AusAID and partner governments.

With AusAID, most staff interviewed (69 per cent or 18) said they had seen the Agency's gender policy. Slightly fewer (58 per cent or 15) had read it and slightly fewer again (50 per cent or 11) used

it in their work. Those using the policy indicated they had done so in several ways, including helping develop gender strategies, develop guidelines for project proposals, evaluate projects and conduct training.

When asked if they had a partnership for development, country or delivery strategy, respectively 33 per cent (8), 54 per cent (13) and 36 per cent (9) of interviewees said they did. In the end, however, this question was interpreted in a broader context than whether these types of strategies existed in AusAID's planning context (for example, equivalent strategies of implementing agencies, in-country partners). Nevertheless a third then said these strategies did not effectively refer to gender equality which indicates a need to improve them or their link them to others where gender equality is better referenced.

Most interviewees were not aware of counterpart government gender commitments or did not consider them to be relevant to their program (each 27 per cent; 7). Forty six per cent (12) were aware of gender commitments and 38 per cent (10) used them in their work. A small 15 per cent (4) of interviewees did not use the commitments and 46 per cent (12) considered they were not relevant to their work.

With partner governments, interviewees indicated that more could be done to support partner governments to implement their own gender policy requirements to strengthen the focus on women's involvement. This often reduces risk in discussing equality requirements where cultural contexts make gender discussions more sensitive.

Women's leadership

Overall interviews pointed to a mixed picture on women's leadership.

Fifty-eight per cent (14 of 24) of those interviewed considered that women and men were equally involved in running and managing their program. Responses to this question required deeper probing on issues such as the influence of women in managing the program. The interviewee from Strengthening Women Entrepreneurship project in Peru, for example, responded 'no' to the question because more women than men were involved in running and managing the program. This illustrated the levels of understanding of addressing gender issues, with some considering it to be just a simple headcount of women versus men and others considering it to be a more in-depth level of influence.

Overall, interviewees felt more is needed to focus on women's leadership opportunities which the literature review reported as essential to designing better approaches for meeting the needs of women and men. Focusing on women's leadership is also an AusAID policy imperative since it improves women's empowerment and respects their fundamental right to participate equally.

Specific budgets to ensure women benefit

Interviewees pointed to the good work underway in developing gender-responsive budgeting, reporting that it existed in 62 per cent (16) of programs, compared to only 15 out of the 46 programs included in the desktop review. Once more this shows discrepancies between information captured in Aidworks and information provided in interviews.

The question on specific budgets to ensure women benefit was not altogether clear and was interpreted in different ways and with different levels of complexity. Examples of the various ways programs designated budgets to ensure women benefit include:

- percentage of funds provided to women (70 per cent, Fiji Rural Economic Development Program)
- budget components supported women's involvement and participation (10 per cent, Women's World Banking program)
- percentage of budget allocations aimed at women (45 per cent for the future of the Burma Rakhine Rural Household and Livelihood Security Project)
- set allocations for female-targeted conditional cash transfers (Cambodia's Smallholder Agriculture Program and Social Support Operation)
- stipends for household daily needs such as food, school and health which women generally have to manage, and targets (including 100 per cent) for female beneficiaries (BRAC).

It appeared from the interviews that targeting specific budgets to ensure women benefit occurred within the financial inclusion programs (Pillar 2) and social protection programs (Pillar 3) more regularly. This may indicate that targeted approaches improve program effectiveness or that programs lend themselves more easily to targeted approaches.

Importance of gender expertise

The importance of having access to gender expertise at all stages of the program cycle was commonly raised during the interviews and was a conclusion of the desktop review. Sixty two per cent (16) of programs had a gender adviser or someone with gender expertise and several programs noted they required or were seeking specific gender expertise for later phases (examples include Burma's Rakhine Rural Household and Livelihood Security Project, Pacific Financial Inclusion Programme and Vanuatu Land Program).

However, even where this expertise exists, it does not necessarily translate into better reporting of gender outcomes. As the desktop review revealed, very little is captured about benefits to women across programs.

Ability to consider gender equality (self-rating)

During interviews, programs self-rated their ability to consider gender equality within their contracting and management arrangements. Overall ability to do so was satisfactory.

Table D.1 shows that the ratings ranged from 3 to 6 with a median of 4, an average slightly over 4, 79 per cent satisfactory (4 to 6) and 21 per cent unsatisfactory (1 to 3). This is the same overall ratings as for the QAI scores for gender equality for these initiatives but four programs self-rated as 6 compared to no QAI scores of 6 (Cambodia's Smallholder Agriculture and Social Protection Program; Nepal's Micro-Enterprise Development Programme; Peru's Strengthening Women Entrepreneurship project; Women's World Banking).

The review team accepted that the self-ratings generally reflected management arrangements for the programs.

Table D.1: Self ratings for management arrangements

Rating	Count (total = 29)	%
1	0	0
2	0	0
3	5	21
4	10	42
5	5	20
6	4	17

Work in the field

This section focuses on work in the field. The interviews captured extensive information on what is being done in the field to address gender equality, highlighting progress and areas to strengthen.

Pillar 2 (rural livelihoods) programs had the highest number of activities addressing gender equality (113), compared to Pillar 3 (building resilience) with the lowest (14). However, 18 of the 26 programs sat under Pillar 2 and so this result does not necessarily reflect better practice or more work.

This section concentrates on summarising stocktake findings under the 10 themes that emerged for work in the field. It next mentions barriers to women's involvement and then focuses on self-rating of the ability to meet the needs of women and men. Table D.2 provides totals for the number of activities addressing gender equality by rural development pillars and other programs.

Table D.2: Number of activities addressing gender equality by rural development pillar and other programs during interviews

Theme of activity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total by pillar
Pillar 1 programs	11	5	4	4	0	2	1	0	3	1	31
Pillar 2 programs	31	6	6	9	2	21	9	11	9	9	113
Pillar 3 programs	1	0	1	1	0	5	1	3	1	1	14
Other programs	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Total activities	45	11	11	14	2	28	11	14	13	11	160

Some of the 10 themes are closely related and have been joined for reporting purposes.²⁰ The themes are:

Theme 1: Inclusive practices (gender equality mainstreamed into ordinary activities)

Theme 2: Specific research on women's needs

Theme 3: Appointment of women staff

Theme 4: Promotion of women's leadership

Theme 5: Women's projects

Theme 6: Services for women

Theme 7: Specific access to projects by women (activities designed to measurably open up programs to women's participation or access)

Theme 8: Structural change (activities aimed at changing gender roles or discriminatory practices in private or public life)

Theme 9: Training activities to improve equality or increase women's participation

Theme 10: M&E processes that measures differential impact.

Theme 1: Inclusive practices

Inclusive practices involve mainstreaming gender equality into all ordinary activities. This was a strength and weakness of rural development program work in the field according to the interviews.

By far, most activities could be classed as having inclusive practices.

Examples of mainstreaming gender activities include the:

- Cambodian Water Resources Management Research Capacity Development Programme that seeks women's involvement in all activities—for example two of the five scholars chosen to study through the program were women.
- PNG – Australia Agriculture Research and Development program that supports research institutes to develop mainstreaming plans to support women's inclusion.
- Timor Leste's Seeds of Life Program that has developed a communication strategy to increase focus on women's roles in agriculture.

The three other themes that closely relate to inclusive practices are: Theme 2—Specific research on women's needs; Theme 9—Training activities designed to increase women's involvement; and Theme 10—M&E processes that measure differential impact. Theme 2 is dealt with immediately below and themes 9 and 10 further in this section.

²⁰ Specifically themes 3 and 4 but also themes 5, 6 and 7.

Theme 2: Specific research on women's needs

This theme covers the specific research on women's needs conducted to enable programs to work out why they could not benefit women and how to better respond.

Eleven examples of specific research conducted were mentioned during the interviews, including the:

- Cambodian Water Resources Management Research Capacity Development Programme where a social assessment was conducted of the key issues for women in irrigation and water resource management
- Timor Leste's Seeds of Life Program where research was conducted to better understand the roles of women in household food production, processing and storage
- Pacific Financial Inclusion Programme where specific research was conducted on financial literacy and a study conducted on female market vendors.

Despite these examples, research on efforts to include more women reveals the difficulty programs have had thus far in doing so. It is problematic that a number of programs already operating struggle to include women. This shows either a lack of capacity in the implementing team, or designs that did not do the background research and analysis to understand how to include and benefit women—a factor drawn out in the desktop review of material in Aidworks, but contradicted by stocktake results covering management arrangements.

Theme 3: Appointment of women and Theme 4: Promotion of women's leadership

Theme 3: Appointment of women and Theme 4: Promotion of women's leadership are closely related and dealt with in this section together. These themes cover efforts to create more jobs for women in developing countries and engage more women as staff members so they can influence overall program decision making. This important imperative creates direct economic benefits through salaries.

Eleven examples of appointing women or promoting women's leadership were mentioned during the interviews, including:

- BRAC, which influences its recruitment process for its massive workforce to employ more women
- Indonesia Smallholder Agribusiness Development Initiative, which directly contracts women facilitators at community level
- Solomon Islands Rural Development Program, which funded the establishment of women's resource centres in two locations in response to community belief that such infrastructure would enable women to set up their own small businesses.

Fourteen examples of programs establishing management processes that women could take part in were mentioned during the interviews. These programs benefit from improved decision making as a result. They range from one-off, ad hoc participation in village meetings, to large efforts that insist women participate on village level committees, set up to protect beneficiaries and support their inclusion in village activities overall (BRAC).

Specific examples that demonstrate how women's involvement can fundamentally change the kinds of services delivered include:

- Solomon Islands Rural Development Program, which mandated a percentage of women on all decision-making committees, from village to provincial level, to improve prioritisation of funds for developing village infrastructure.
- Vietnam's P135 Program, which sees a percentage of women on the committees that choose village infrastructure. This has resulted in a clear change to the kinds of infrastructure selected. When committees comprised all men, they usually prioritised roads and irrigation, but once women were involved, they prioritised childcare (so women could be freed up to work in economic endeavours outside the house) and village water and sanitation provision.

Theme 5: Women's projects, Theme 6: Services for women and Theme 7: Specific access to projects by women

Theme 5: Women's projects, Theme 6: Services for women and Theme 7: Specific access to projects by women, are closely related. This group of themes essentially deals with good practice in providing special measures to ensure women benefit from rural development programs. They demonstrate the need to go beyond general inclusive practices to specific actions and cover activities designed to measurably open up programs to women's participation or access.

Two programs funded to specifically target women only were mentioned during the interviews, both of which fall under Pillar 2:

- Women's World Banking receives core funding to support its entire suite of activities, from research to piloting new products, all of which are designed to meet the needs of poor women and girls and all of which can be taken to scale by other parties.
- Peru's Strengthening Women Entrepreneurship project has been funded to run business training for women entrepreneurs. The rationale for supporting such a targeted approach is based on the wide range and large amount of evidence documenting those financial services targeting women benefits families and communities to a higher extent than if loans are given to men.²¹

The catalytic nature of access to financial services for the poor, many of whom are women, also justifies specific targeting. The hard evidence within the financial service sector that backs this also demonstrates the importance of collecting robust data to improve benefits for all.

A positive characteristic of the rural development portfolio is that many programs can provide specific examples of direct services for women (28, 21 of these in Pillar 2 programs), indicating that many delivery partners understand the need to go beyond general inclusive practices and target women beneficiaries. Examples raised during the interviews included:

- Laos – NGO Cooperation Agreement, which included the invention and construction of a special wheelbarrow for women to carry household water more quickly and easily, freeing up more time for them to work in income-earning jobs outside the house. This program also

²¹ Armendariz de Aghion, B, Morduch, J, 2005, 'Subsidy and Sustainability', *The Economics of Microfinance*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, pp. 231–255.

focused on water supply since providing clean water, closer to the back door of the home, benefited everyone but especially women.

- Solomon Islands Agricultural Livelihoods Program, which supported the cut-flower industry in-country in part because it was an industry dominated by women. This was taken up by the Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market Access Programme.
- BRAC's Extreme Poverty Program, which offers a complete package of support for ultra-poor women for two years to start a sustainable livelihood business, at which point they can graduate to accessing microfinance and continuing their small businesses independently. The support includes stipends, transfer of productive assets (often livestock) and vet services, one-on-one training and education about social, economic and health issues, medical care for the family and schooling for children. It also includes providing household infrastructure such as toilets, water pumps and secure stables for cattle. This package of support has resulted in 99 per cent graduation from ultra-poor status to above the poverty line.

The interviews also revealed a number of positive activities under Theme 7—specific access to projects by women—with some of the strongest performing including:

- Pacific Financial Inclusion Programme, which has a 'hard gate' in its contracts with partners requiring them to demonstrate that 50 per cent of financial service clients are women before funds are released (in tranches).
- BRAC's Extreme Poverty Program, which targets the poorest of the poor; mostly women female heads of households.
- Nepal's Micro-Enterprise Development Programme, which ensures 60 per cent of its participants are women and has consistently met this target as a minimum, enabling 40 000 women and their families to benefit.

Theme 8: Structural change

This theme relates to structural changes that reduce inequality and increase women's power and impact over programs and outcomes. These activities are aimed at changing gender roles or discriminatory practices in private or public life.

Eleven examples were raised during the interviews, including nine under Pillar 2. Excellent examples include the:

- Cambodia Agricultural Value Chain Program, which changed gender relations at household level, recognising that such change is required for women to fully participate and make the most of program opportunities.
- Fiji Rural Enterprise Development Facility, which supported a healthy relationship course embedded in an agricultural school, attended by 100 per cent young men as landowners. The course focused on educating men to include their female partners in decision making and promoted violence-free relationships recognising the negative economic impact such violence has on women, children and ultimately the whole family.
- Rahkine Rural Household Livelihood Security Project, which engages with religious leaders (Mullas) to seek agreement for women to be involved. Asking permission does not constitute changes to power relations but women's involvement changes cultural norms

that preclude such involvement. This program also runs sessions with community members on the importance of women's participation. This addresses the cultural barriers to women's involvement rather than putting the onus on women to change male powerbroker opinions.

- Vietnam's P135 Phase 2 Program, which has trained male community leaders on the importance of women's involvement in agricultural training. The program only trained men, since community leaders did not allow women's involvement. There was an assumption that men would educate their wives about the new practices but it became clear that men were not passing on their newly acquired skills, so the program changed its approach and found new ways to get agreement for women to attend.

These excellent practice examples are important for demonstrating how rural development programs can work to get men to changing gender roles and the balance of power to enable greater participation of and benefits to women.

Theme 9: Training activities to improve equality or increase women's participation

This theme involves training women so they can participate more equitably in program activities and increase their opportunities to participate. This includes training to enhance the ability to manage programs to ensure access by women.

Thirteen examples of training activities were mentioned during the interviews, including the:

- Laos – Australia NGO Cooperation Agreement, which trains women in communities to better raise their voices in mixed meetings about agreement initiatives
- Pacific's Forum Fisheries Agency program, which has increased the number of women accessing training funding
- Vietnam Implementation Support Program (P135 Phase 2), which has run gender awareness training for program managers to increase their ability to more equally include women.

Theme 10: M&E processes that measures differential impact

This theme measures the M&E processes that measure the differential impact of inclusive practices on women, men, girls and boys. This includes, as a minimum, sex-disaggregated data.

Eleven examples of M&E work were mentioned during the interviews, including the:

- Pakistan Agriculture Sector Linkages Program, which completed a baseline survey specifically including women in agriculture so it can measure change over time in women and men's economic benefits.
- Australian Non-Government Partnership program, which resulted in most NGOs collecting sex-disaggregated data (although there were few examples of using this data within the overall strategic direction).

Barriers to women's involvement

A wide range of barriers to women's involvement in rural development projects, including meeting their needs, were described during the interviews. The categories raised are listed below and will all be used by AusAID to consider how to improve management arrangements, work in the field and M&E:

- cultural and/or religious barriers and stereotypes
- lack of access to resources, training and expertise in gender equality
- difficulties in identifying suitable female staff or beneficiaries
- lack of interest by partners in gender equality
- lack of access to land and finance for women
- inadequate capturing of gender data through M&E systems
- lack of suitable infrastructure, which inhibits female participation.

Mainly satisfactory self-rating of ability to meet the needs of women and men

Programs self-rated their ability to meet the needs of men and women (results are in Table D.3). Ratings ranged from 2 to 6 with a median of 4 and an average slightly more than 4. In terms of separation into 'satisfactory' (4 to 6) and 'unsatisfactory' (1 to 3), 70 per cent were satisfactory and 30 per cent unsatisfactory. This is a higher percentage of unsatisfactory scores than for management arrangements and the QAI scores for gender equality for these initiatives. The review team accepted that the self-ratings generally reflected good practice in addressing gender equality during program implementation.

The programs that self-rated as 6 were 3 of the 4 that also self-rated as 6 for management arrangements (Peru's Strengthening Women Entrepreneurship Project, Nepal's Micro-Enterprise Development Programme and Cambodia's Smallholder Agriculture and Social Protection Program).

Table D.3: Self ratings for work in the field²²

Rating	Count (total = 23)	%
1	0	0
2	1	4
3	6	26
4	6	36
5	7	30
6	3	13

M&E processes

The interviews captured extensive information on what is being done in the field to address gender equality through M&E processes. Overall interviewees indicated that M&E needs strengthening. This finding is also reflected consistently in program QAI reports.

²² Ratings are from QAIs: 1 = Very poor quality; needs major overhaul; 2 = Poor quality; needs major work to improve; 3 = Less than adequate quality; needs work to improve in core areas; 4 = Adequate quality; needs some work to improve; 5 = Good quality; needs minor work to improve in some areas; and 6 = Very high quality; needs ongoing management and monitoring only. The same ratings apply to Table 4.4.

Gender equality outcomes were measured in 73 per cent (19) of program M&E processes and sex-disaggregated data collected in 76 per cent (19). Findings on M&E processes are presented here, divided into general themes, including use of M&E data to inform program development, use of government systems to monitor impact or rural development work and self-ratings of M&E processes.

Use of M&E data to inform program development

Based on the interviews it was not evident how the information collected by M&E systems was being used to inform rural development programs. Interviewees raised challenges, including the need to adequately resource M&E, practical difficulties in conducting valid household surveys, the time needed to integrate data into programming decisions, and women's work often not being recognised (it is informal and unpaid).

Only half (13) of programs had baseline data on gender equality available. Interviewees also indicated that the quality of the data varied greatly.

Use of government systems to monitor impact of rural development work

Using and building government systems to monitor impact of rural development projects is important. Overall the program has a weak focus on this and, over time, government monitoring systems need strengthening.

Interviewees considered that only 33 per cent (7) of programs were building the capacity of government to capture sex-disaggregated data, but it is not known how many were meant to be capturing such data.

Several programs that did not support this capacity development noted that this type of support was being or would be provided elsewhere (for example, through Pakistan's Agriculture Sector Linkages Program and the Pacific's Forum Fisheries Agency due to greater focus on monitoring in-country service level agreements, as well as Vanuatu Land Program once their M&E adviser has started). Cambodia Agricultural Value Chain Program interviewees said that while they had discussed the importance of building capacity for M&E, little progress had been made.

Only 37 per cent (7 out of 19) of partner government representatives interviewed considered they had M&E processes in place to measure gender outcomes on any level. This interview question received a relatively low response rate, perhaps indicating lack of knowledge on what government processes were.

Self-ratings of M&E processes

Programs self-rated M&E processes for gender equality measurements (the results are in Table D.4). Similarly to the self-rating for meeting the needs of men and women, the QAI ratings ranged across the 1 to 6 range with a median of 4 and an average slightly under 4. A total of 61 per cent (4 to 6) were rated satisfactory and 39 per cent (1 to 3) unsatisfactory. This is a higher percentage of unsatisfactory scores than for other self-rating questions posed during interviews. The review team accepted that the ratings generally reflected the M&E of gender equality.

Table D.4 provides the self-ratings for M&E systems. Programs rating themselves as unsatisfactory included those in their early stages (for example, the Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market

Access Program and Vanuatu Land Program), those with no framework (for example, the Fiji Rural Enterprise Development Facility) and those with inadequate monitoring systems (for example, Cambodian Development Resource Institute's Water Resources Management Research Capacity Development Programme and the Pacific's Forum Fisheries Agency program).

Table D.4: Self ratings for monitoring and evaluation systems

Rating	Count (total = 22)	%
1	2	9
2	3	13
3	4	17
4	7	30
5	6	26
6	1	4

The one rating of 6 was for Cambodia's Smallholder Agriculture and Social Protection Program. The research team considered this rating to be too high given the results of its latest QAI showing that the M&E indicators for design were not feasible and reporting that the World Bank would revise the indicators after the program's mid-term review, to be completed in mid-2011.

Benefits of gender activities overall

Interviewees were asked to describe the difference (benefits) that gender activities were making. They consistently reported that their activities increased the awareness and consideration of gender equality issues by partners and/or other stakeholders. Indeed, interviewees felt that gender could become a niche role for AusAID in rural development work.

Specific responses are listed below under the two themes of AusAID's gender thematic strategy—women's economic empowerment and women's leadership.

Women's economic empowerment

Responses on direct benefits to women's economic empowerment included:

- ensuring women do not remain marginalised from project activities and economic and social development processes generally (Transformation, Empowerment, Advocacy, Relief activity implemented by India's development agency) under the AusAID – NGO Cooperation Program)
- women producing honey and a rural training centre supporting graduation of young women (Fiji's Rural Enterprise Development Facility).

Women's leadership

Responses on direct benefits to women's leadership and ability to have a voice are illustrated by the programs listed in Table D.5. These important examples illustrate changes to women's status and show how the rural development program makes a valuable and unique contribution to better equality for women and improvements to their sphere of influence.

Table D.5: Programs with benefits to women's leadership

Program	Benefit
Laos – Australia NGO Cooperation Agreement	Opportunities to participate and benefit from livestock and other agricultural activities and increased confidence to speak up.
Nepal – Micro Enterprise Development Programme	Transformation of roles, as exemplified by this interviewee quote: 'Roles are transformed ... women were proud of having their own business and ability to use money from it—using money to improve livelihood and for families to access services; housing conditions have improved.'
Women's World Banking	Explicit gender focus considering gender equality and female empowerment in all areas of work and influence sectors focusing on women and girls (say they are the only microfinance network to do so).
Vanuatu Land Program	Consider gender so women have a voice in land activities (they would only have a minimal voice without the program).
Myanmar Rakhine Rural Household Livelihood Security Project	Increased status and decision-making power of women as a result of microfinance, as well as increased self-confidence from being trained in the project's health component and through acting as peer educators.
Vietnam Implementation Support Program (P135 Phase 2)	Changed profile of infrastructure investments due to women's influence to include more on water and sanitation and childcare and less on roads.

Responses to open-ended question

Interviewee responses to the open-ended question were valuable. Short summaries of some responses are outlined here, grouped under the themes that emerged.

Value of the stocktake

Interviewees reported that being involved in the stocktake was useful for discussing gender issues and helping uncover some of what is going on at community level. Also, AusAID's gender-marker questions acted as an impetus for program managers to oversee and push for greater equality.

This indicates the importance of valuing, monitoring and reporting on gender work and points to the need for more dedicated effort and resourcing (currently not a feature of the rural development program).

Interviewees also indicated it was useful professionally to have the opportunity to discuss their work and how to improve it. Opportunities such as this will help AusAID staff and implementing partners focus on gender equality and raise their interest in achieving more results.

Limitations due to resources and time

One of the biggest barriers to conducting more gender work was lack of resources and time. Burma's Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund, for example, reported that lack of time results in program staff prioritising more pressing concerns in areas other than gender, even though staff feels responsible for gender as part of AusAID's role on the trust fund board. This shows the important role AusAID staff has in raising the consideration and incorporation of gender concerns.

In Fiji, AusAID program staff working in the Rural Enterprise Development Facility said lack of time reduces their ability to consult Canberra for input, direction and advice on how to build stronger projects and incorporate gender elements.

Need for gender training and learning

Some interviewees suggested AusAID could provide training in gender analysis or run workshops on gender and rural development for gender focal points. There is a thirst for increased sharing and for building awareness of the Agency's lessons, priorities and policies.

Need for closer partnerships with partner governments

Only one program raised the need for closer partnerships with partner governments and the research team agrees that this is an important issue. The (Secretariat of the Pacific Community) noted how the motivation for addressing gender is often seen as being donor driven in Pacific countries and it would be helpful if some of this work started to come from partner governments. This reflects a recommendation of the 2009–10 gender Annual Thematic Performance Report to move to a more strategic approach, including through policy discussion with partner countries and partner organisations.