



Helpdesk Research Report

Gender in community-driven development

Evie Browne

03.02.2014

Question

What is the evidence on gender considerations in community-driven development programmes? Where possible, provide information on the impact of gender on achieving programme objectives, examples of community-driven development impacting gender relations, good practice and challenges in including gender in programme design, implementation and evaluation.

Contents

1. Overview
2. Obstacles for women in community-driven development
3. Strategies to overcome obstacles
4. Case studies
5. References

1. Overview

The World Bank defines community-driven development (CDD) as programmes which “operate on the principles of local empowerment, participatory governance, demand-responsiveness, administrative autonomy, greater downward accountability, and enhanced local capacity.”¹ In practice, donors often provide direct funds to village development associations, for them to distribute among projects suggested and managed by community members.

This report reviews some of the gender considerations inherent in CDD programmes. It briefly reviews the obstacles to women’s equal participation in CDD and obstacles to achieving gender equality outcomes. It then presents some of the strategies used by CDD programmes to overcome gendered obstacles and the lessons learned from these. The World Bank (2011a) suggests some monitoring and

¹ <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/communitydrivendevelopment/overview>

evaluation indicators which can help track gender equality outcomes and women's equal participation. The second half of the report presents CDD case studies which have explicitly included gender goals or a gender strategy. The case studies show both positive and negative outcomes for gender equality.

CDD is strongly supported by the World Bank and much of the literature comes from the World Bank's reports and publications. There is a reasonable amount of evidence and rigorous research conducted on gender outcomes, although this could be strengthened.

Key lessons from the literature are:

- Elite capture is a significant concern. The evidence is clear that 'uncontrolled' CDD will not necessarily benefit women, the poor and other disadvantaged groups.
- Women's participation is a central problem as they do not usually have the time and/or confidence to contribute to village planning processes.
- To reach women and other disadvantaged groups, CDD needs to have explicit targets for them or mandatory participation requirements. Programmes with an explicit gender strategy are more likely to impact on women's empowerment than programmes without clear gender equality goals.
- Programmes which allow women-only space appear effective in enabling women's voice and developing projects that respond to women's needs.
- CDD programmes struggle to change attitudes and norms around women's social position. They are often successful at engaging women in projects, but fail to make significant changes in the long-term.
- Examples of positive gender outcomes are improved women's participation in village-level meetings and processes; personal empowerment and voice; women's access to services; increased skills and independent income.
- The literature does not present evidence on whether gender inclusion strategies make CDD programmes more effective, as this is not usually included in evaluation outcomes.

2. Obstacles for women in community-driven development

Fonchingong and Ngwa (2006) outline some of the **contextual issues for women** in north-west Cameroon in a study of women's roles in community development and village development assistance committees (VDAs). They note that men greatly outnumber women in executive positions (around 80 per cent, compared with 20 per cent) (p.70). Women participate more in project execution than planning, meaning their needs are not well-represented. In implementation, women's involvement is highly visible, for example in fundraising, mobilising resources, clean-up of project areas, providing food and so on. Women's jobs within CDD in Cameroon appear to reflect traditional gender roles, revolving around women's ability to mobilise community members and their social organisation positions, and the lighter manual tasks. Fonchingong and Ngwa highlight some of the barriers to women's participation, which are borne out in the Haiti World Bank CDD project (Nadelman, nd).

- Time constraints due to heavy domestic and agricultural workload.
- Cost of travel to meetings and lost income. This is worse for women because women are dependent on their husband's resources and permission.

- Low levels of representation in village bodies.
- Low levels of education and literacy, hampering women's ability to get elected in VDAs.
- Inability to challenge male domination, due to lack of finance, education, and lower social status.

The World Bank notes that CDD can produce excellent empowerment opportunities for women, but that **untargeted projects often bypass women** (World Bank, 2011a, p.vii). Their voices are less likely to be heard, they have less access to decision-making, and less time to participate (World Bank, 2011a, p.ix). It is particularly noted that men's and women's community priorities are likely to be different. A review of a World Bank CDD project in Haiti (Nadelman, nd) shows that mixed-sex project groups tended to put forward infrastructure sub-projects, while women-only groups favoured productive sub-projects. The reasons given were that both men and women viewed construction as men's work; and that productive projects offered women the most direct way to improve their family's wellbeing.

The comprehensive 2012 report from the World Bank, 'Localising Development' (Mansuri & Rao, 2012) reviews nearly 500 studies on participatory development, many of which can be classed as CDD. It reports that participants in development projects tend to be male, more wealthy and educated, and with better connections (p.5), and that these people are the most likely to benefit from development (p.6). This problem of **elite capture** is well documented across the literature on both participation and gender. This report suggests that the risks of elite capture may outweigh the opportunities given by local control (p.146).

An older review of IFAD and World Bank CDD programmes (Lubbock & Carloni, 2008) concluded that sole community control, or 'unfettered', CDD did not usually result in positive outcomes for women and poor households. This is attributed to elite capture of resources and decision-making. 'Unfettered' refers to CDD which does not try to change the local bottom-up planning systems and hierarchies but simply utilises them. There is also some evidence that this kind of CDD may have negative rather than neutral outcomes. This is because unfettered CDD can disempower voiceless groups, sideline their priorities, and undermine democratic governance. There is a strong line of analysis which shows that CDD without a gender strategy does not automatically reach or benefit women, suggesting that programme objectives will only be reached with an explicit focus on women's inclusion.

One of the most common challenges mentioned in the literature is **securing women's attendance and meaningful participation** at meetings. The World Bank programme in Haiti identified target percentages for women's enrolment, but the operational guidance documents did not contain strategies for facilitating and ensuring women's inclusion (Nadelman, nd). Thus gender equality is often stated as a goal and is tracked in the monitoring procedures, but there is no overarching strategy to improve or ensure this.

The World Bank notes that participation goes beyond mere attendance, and measures of women's participation must look at how well they are able to contribute and lead (World Bank, 2011b, p.12). This may speak to levels of confidence and understanding the processes (World Bank, 2011b, p.14). Fonchingong (2013) highlights that women in Cameroon do not participate at the top levels of leadership. Within VDAs, men are more likely to hold powerful positions, while women do not compete for these. Women in Haiti felt that they stood less chance of election as delegates if in direct competition with men (Nadelman, nd). This is borne out by the quantitative data which shows that women from mixed-sex groups are rarely elected as the group's delegate.

A DFID review of twenty years of CDD in Pakistan frames this problem as choosing between WID and GAD² in operations: between women's practical needs and their strategic needs (Ahmed, et al., 2009, p.38). These programmes are successful at improving women's immediate livelihoods, but struggle to connect this to political and social empowerment, which is seen as a step forward. Women are successfully involved in the programme and see short-term benefits, but there has not necessarily been any long-term improvement or change in their social status.

3. Strategies to overcome obstacles

The challenge of elite capture has prompted **donor control of targeting and active gender-equality policies**. If elites control the decisions over which community projects to fund, the overall programme is likely to miss its objective to meet the needs of the poor and under-served (World Bank, 2011a, p.1). Gender indicators and a gender-equality strategy therefore improve project effectiveness and outcomes. The most successful CDD programmes for women are those which include women's quotas or other mandates for women's inclusion. Benefiting the disadvantaged only happens when it is mandated in the project and accountability is enforced (Mansuri & Rao, 2012). However, women's participation must be meaningful and not superficial (Lubbock & Carloni, 2008). The World Bank CDD project in Haiti (Nadelman, nd) shows that implementing partners with an **explicit gender inclusion strategy** were more successful at achieving high rates of women's participation in decision-making than partners without a clear strategy.

Quotas are a commonly used tool to overcome the challenge of women's participation. The World Bank in Lao PDR mandates that women must comprise 25 to 50 per cent of the village, community, and national level representatives (World Bank, 2011b, p.6). The Haiti project aimed to achieve 30 per cent women's representation in high-level decision-making bodies (Nadelman, nd). Women in Haiti felt that where women were better represented in the decision-making structures, their interests were better represented (Nadelman, nd).

A second common strategy is to implement **women-only groups** to discuss, propose and manage CDD projects (Ahmed et al., 2009). These appear successful (Fonchingong, 2013), although these must not be the only vehicle for women's inclusion (Nadelman, nd). Single-sex groups can work by increasing women's skills, bargaining power and respect for them in the community (Ahmed et al., 2009, p.40). An important follow-on from single-sex groups is to ensure that the projects put forward by these groups are considered seriously and adopted by the community. Funders can either prioritise ideas put forward by women's groups or ring fence funding for them. A World Bank-supported programme in Lao PDR now mandates that two of three accepted infrastructure projects, and one of two training projects, must come from women-only groups (World Bank, 2011b, p.6). This ensures that women's concerns are heard and met.

In the Cameroon study (Fonchingong & Ngwa, 2006), NGOs have tackled the obstacles to women's participation by attempting to **free up their time and by capacity building**. Improving water supply can reduce the time needed to collect household water. Agricultural and management training have increased women's economic contribution to community funds, giving them more voice in project planning. Some groups in Haiti (Nadelman, nd) ensured they held CDD meetings on non-market days. One has integrated gender sensitisation training into its programme so both men and women are

² Women in Development (WID) and Gender and Development (GAD) describe particular periods of thought about integrating women and gender in development programmes.

educated on gender equality, with the sub-aim of improving women's confidence and recognising the value of their contributions to the household. A final recommendation from the interviewees was that they appreciated advance notice of meetings, which allowed them time to organise household responsibilities.

The Lao PDR study (World Bank, 2011b, 33) notes that CDD programmes should have a **gender balance in their own staff**, particularly with enough female facilitators to engage effectively with female beneficiaries.

Haider (2012) synthesises some recommendations on gender equality and empowerment from CDD programmes in Indonesia:

- Linking economic enterprises with training and capacity building.
- Quotas for women's participation in meetings and decision-making bodies; women's appointment to monitoring committees.
- Separate women-only meetings.
- Meetings held at appropriate times of day; women encouraged to bring children.
- Invite women by name rather inviting a household representative.
- Seat women in the front rows of meetings.
- Female staff and facilitators as role models.
- Gender analysis activities for men and women in the planning stages.

Monitoring and evaluation

The World Bank (2011a) has produced a comprehensive toolkit on how to include gender indicators in project monitoring and evaluation. This draws on field tests in Lao PDR and the Philippines. The indicators measure such results as how many women participate in project planning; whether women-only groups have projects accepted; percentage change in numbers of boys' and girls' school achievement; men's and women's access to water, health and sanitation, paid work; and changes in women's social status. These indicators assess a variety of gender considerations for CDD programmes across process, outputs and outcomes.

The World Bank also suggests some indicators to track empowerment. A good indicator is whether women have participated in other meetings and decision-making after their involvement with a CDD project (World Bank, 2011b, p.18). In Lao PDR, the Bank found that 92 per cent of women had attended other decision-making fora. It is unclear whether this is a direct result of the CDD programme. This paper also suggests it is possible to measure empowerment by the amount of women's time released by CDD (World Bank, 2011b, p.23). However, time-use does not always go in women's favour – sending older children to school can increase mothers' time burden as they take on tasks previously managed by children (World Bank, 2011b, p.24). This suggests a nuanced gender analysis is necessary.

4. Case studies

Afghanistan National Solidarity Programme (NSP)

NSP is a widely lauded example of a CDD project. It has established 32,000 Community Development Councils across 361 districts (Beath, Christia, & Enikolopov, 2013). Its second phase is rigorously evaluated with a randomised control trial (final report available in Beath et al., 2013). It has a strong gender component and it has had both positive and neutral/negative effects on gender relations.

- The projects indirectly increase women's access to education, health care and counselling, and girls' schooling.
- Women are increasingly optimistic about their economic situation, even though there is no observable increase in economic activity and no enduring economic effects. They also report being happier.
- The number of local assemblies with at least one female member has substantially increased, although this has not happened at the village council level. Local governance services for women have also increased. 10 per cent more women claimed to have voted in the 2010 parliamentary elections, although NSP does not appear to have any effect on their stated views about participatory decision-making.
- Men's acceptance of women in leadership positions at local and national levels has increased, and women's participation in local governance has increased.
- There is no change in attitudes towards women's broader economic and social participation, or girls' education.

The positive results are largely attributed to NSP's mandating women's participation in their supported projects; the platform this provides to engage with men; and this demonstration of women's competence. The study suggests that these positive results are durable beyond programme end. This programme is a strong and well-evidenced example of how and where CDD can impact positively on women.

Haiti

The World Bank funded CDD project in Haiti (Nadelman, nd) has had a consistent gendered approach to its operations. A gender review was commissioned in late 2009 (before the earthquake) to robustly examine the impacts of the project on women. It is an example of how CDD can bring about positive change for women, and details some of the specific impacts that women have experienced. The project includes gender-based performance indicators and a sex-disaggregated monitoring and evaluation system. Women's participation is prioritised throughout. The main findings are:

- Personal and social empowerment has increased; political, social and economic participation has increased.
- Active gender inclusion strategies significantly correlated with higher levels of women's participation.
- Women in women-only groups have greater access to leadership and management than mixed-sex groups.

The project had strong positive impacts on some areas of women's empowerment but there was variability across different contexts. The programme reduced women's time constraints through improved infrastructure and increased their time for other responsibilities or activities. The programme also increased access to independent revenue for women; increased women's skills; and increased women's and children's safety in the community (e.g. through street lighting). Women reported increased confidence; solidarity with other women; increased respect from men and more balanced power dynamics; more support from men; and a greater role in household level decision-making.

Indonesian National Program for Community Empowerment (PNPM)

A previous GSDRC report examined the PNPM and how far it contributed to women's equality (Haider, 2012). The report found that it had positive impacts on poverty reduction, access to services and employment. However, the literature suggests that women's increased participation in village-level meetings and in the programme is not meaningful. Women are more visible in decision-making processes but the quality of their participation remains low, and power remains within traditional structures. Women are instrumental for reaching the programme objectives, so they are included by programmers, but their participation has not addressed underlying empowerment issues. Haider (2012) finds that marginalised groups have little real voice in the programme, and that programme benefits do not always reach them. Additionally, there are little to no spillover effects on other forms of village governance, which are still dominated by traditional power structures.

Haider (2012) also provides a review of previous and other ongoing CDD programmes in Indonesia which have had some impact on women's empowerment. The report finds that women's credit groups had little impact, partly because they rarely included poor women and partly because they focused on women's traditional economic activities. While women participate well in CDD projects, there are few examples of spillover into political participation. Women still do not participate in village planning or elections.

GoBifo in Sierra Leone

The GoBifo programme is evaluated in Casey, Glennerster and Miguel (2011). The evaluation uses a rigorous experimental design and captures subtle changes in social dynamics, four years after programme end. The programme was broadly successful in achieving its stated objectives of establishing management structures and completing small projects, with broad-based equitable benefits. However, its objectives to change norms and practices were not met. The programme aimed to create lasting change in social capital, inclusion, and specifically in women's participation, but the evaluation finds no impacts on these areas. Women were included in the programme and gained experience and skills in project management, but they were no more likely to use these skills outside the programme than the control subjects. The evaluation concludes that CDD is effective for creating small scale public goods, but that it was not an effective means of institutional, social and attitudinal change in this context.

Fadama II in Nigeria

The Fadama project is evaluated in Nkonya, Phillip, Mogue, Pender, and Kato (2012). The programme supports infrastructure and productive assets, and the evaluation looks at income poverty reduction. The paper does not state a specifically gendered approach, but the project disaggregates results by sex and has had a clear history of targeting women. The project prioritises CDD groups composed of disadvantaged people, including women. Its main target was to increase average real income by at least 20 per cent over the baseline, for 50 per cent of male and female resource users. This goal was achieved.

The evaluation showed that the project increased incomes and the value of productive assets for beneficiaries compared to non-beneficiaries. Women and vulnerable groups, however, found it harder to pay their 30 per cent contribution to the project, and this had to be lowered to 10 per cent of the asset price. Nonetheless, women's productive assets increased and consumption inequality decreased. This paper shows the extra level of analysis which can be achieved by monitoring sex-disaggregated indicators.

5. References

- Ahmed, Z.U., Euler, C., Khattak, S.G., Morton, J.F., & Tariq, M. (2009). *Assessing the impact of community-driven development: Twenty Six Years of Pakistan's Rural Support Programmes*. London: DFID.
<http://www.jfmorton.co.uk/pdfs/CommunityDrivenDevelopment.pdf>
- Beath A., Christia F., Enikolopov R. (2013). *Randomized Impact Evaluation of Afghanistan's National Solidarity Programme – Final Report*. Washington, D.C.:World Bank. <http://www.nsp-ie.org/reports/finalreport.pdf>
- Casey, K., Glennerster, R., & Miguel, E. (2011). *The GoBifo Project Evaluation Report: Assessing the Impacts of Community Driven Development in Sierra Leone*. Final report submitted to The World Bank. Washington, D.C.:World Bank
http://cega.berkeley.edu/assets/cega_research_projects/25/The_GoBifo_Project_Evaluation_Report.pdf
- Fonchingong, C. C. (2013). *Citizen Strategizing Amid a Solidarity Economy in Cameroon: Are Village Development Associations (VDAs) Resilient?* Draft paper prepared for the UNRISD Conference Potential and Limits of Social and Solidarity Economy 6–8 May 2013, Geneva, Switzerland.
[http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BCCF9/httpNetITFramePDF?ReadForm&parentunid=4AF4D8FDE03BC22EC1257B5F005D2DE9&parentdoctype=paper&netitpath=80256B3C005BCCF9/\(httpAuxPages\)/4AF4D8FDE03BC22EC1257B5F005D2DE9/\\$file/Fonchingong%20draft%20paper.pdf](http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BCCF9/httpNetITFramePDF?ReadForm&parentunid=4AF4D8FDE03BC22EC1257B5F005D2DE9&parentdoctype=paper&netitpath=80256B3C005BCCF9/(httpAuxPages)/4AF4D8FDE03BC22EC1257B5F005D2DE9/$file/Fonchingong%20draft%20paper.pdf)
- Fonchingong, C. C., & Ngwa, C. A. (2006). Rethinking the Cost–Benefit Equation of Women's Participation in Community-driven Development in North-western Cameroon. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 13(1), 61-82. <http://ijg.sagepub.com.ezproxyd.bham.ac.uk/content/13/1/61.full.pdf+html>
- Haider, H. (2012). *PNPM/Community-driven development in Indonesia* (GSDRC Helpdesk Research Report). Birmingham, UK: Governance and Social Development Resource Centre, University of Birmingham. www.gsdr.org/docs/open/HDQ838.pdf
- Lubbock, A., & Carloni, A. (2008). *Does unfettered CDD hurt women more than it helps them?* Discussion paper submitted by IFAD. World Bank - SDN Week - 22 February 2008.
<http://www.ruralpovertyportal.org/documents/654016/94152/Does+unfettered+CDD+hurt+women+more+than+it+helps+them/f116fb32-31ef-41b9-9e34-624e4f779f27?version=1.5>
- Mansuri, G., & Rao, V. (2012). *Localizing development: does participation work?*. World Bank Publications.
http://www.delog.org/cms/upload/pdf/lgd/Localizing_Development_-_Does_Participation_Work.pdf
- Nadelman, R. (no date). *Haiti Community Driven Development Project Gender Assessment*. Washington, D.C.:World Bank. <http://www.genderinag.org/sites/genderinag.org/files/Wb%20PRODEP%201-31-12.pdf>

Nkonya, E., Phillip, D., Mogues, T., Pender, J., & Kato, E. (2012). Impacts of Community-driven Development Programs on Income and Asset Acquisition in Africa: The Case of Nigeria. *World Development*, 40(9), 1824-1838. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2012.04.028>

World Bank. (2011a). *Gender dimensions of community-driven development operations: A toolkit for practitioners*. East Asia and Pacific Region. Washington, DC: World Bank. <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTEAPREGTOPSOCDEV/Resources/12763RegionGenderWEB.pdf>

World Bank. (2011b). *Measuring the Impact of Community-Driven Development Projects on Gender. A Toolkit for the Poverty Reduction Fund, Lao PDR*. World Bank. <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTEAPREGTOPSOCDEV/Resources/12687LaoGenderweb.pdf>

Key websites

- World Bank – CDD section: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/communitydrivendevelopment>

Expert contributors

Charles Che Fonchingong, Canterbury Christ Church University

Colum Garrity, World Bank

Ghazala Mansuri, World Bank

Rachel Nadelman, Consultant

Kaori Oshima, World Bank

Suggested citation

Browne, E. (2014). *Gender in community-driven development*. (GSDRC Helpdesk Research Report 1079). Birmingham, UK: GSDRC, University of Birmingham.

About this report

This report is based on three days of desk-based research. It was prepared for the Australian Government, © Australian Government 2014. The views expressed in this report are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of GSDRC, its partner agencies or the Australian Government.

The GSDRC Research Helpdesk provides rapid syntheses of key literature and of expert thinking in response to specific questions on governance, social development, humanitarian and conflict issues. Its concise reports draw on a selection of the best recent literature available and on input from international experts. Each GSDRC Helpdesk Research Report is peer-reviewed by a member of the GSDRC team. Search over 400 reports at www.gsdr.org/go/research-helpdesk. Contact: helpdesk@gsdr.org.