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# WomEn Empowerment

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# Book Title: Women Empowerment

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# Introduction

Community-driven development (CDD) interventions rest on the principle of empowering communities. Yet, the gender-specific impacts of CDD, especially on empowerment, have not received due attention in evaluation and, more generally, in the theoretical and empirical literature. There are several reasons for this. First, programs may not have gender-specific outcomes as explicit objectives. Second, even when they do indicate that they want to increase women's participation and inclusion, programs are not very specific about which dimensions of female empowerment they can plausibly affect, which activities need to be implemented to make a difference (and in what sequence), and in which timeframe one can reasonably expect results. Finally, there are few impact evaluations that measure the effects of CDD on various dimensions of empowerment in a sex-disaggregated way.

This report explores evidence of how the CDD approach can create and enhance participationand decision making when women, as well as men, are to be included in the "community" voice and choice. It reviews the theoretical and empirical literature and analyses World Bank–supported CDD projects. Its intent is to help practitioners who implement CDD interventions more explicitly define, discuss, and integrate gender-relevant elements in the design of CDD projects; be more effective in implementing and monitoring features that may affect men and women differently; and identify meaningful indicators and information to assess gender impacts.

The available evidence discussed in this report shows that CDD projects typically mention womenamong their intended beneficiaries and succeed in engaging women through participation. Projects increasingly respond to the findings of social assessments and gender assessments inthe project design. They commonly include activities to engage women, particularly to support their participation in project activities. They are less likely to take steps to ensure that women's participation improves their standing in the community and contributes to overcoming the specific obstacles they face in the rural space (chapter 3). CDD projects track mostly output, not intermediate or development outcome indicators. This limits the evidence about their impact onthe economic, political, and social empowerment of women (chapter 4).

As a result, evidence, where it exists, is mostly about the immediate impacts of the project on the inclusion of women and on some of the economic benefits from the

project's activities. Positive impacts are documented on outputs such as participation and engagement, and in some caseson intermediate outcomes such as social capital and women's increased confidence. These results are mostly restricted to the CDD project sphere. Very little information is found on impacts of CDD on the economic, political, and social empowerment of women at the level of broad development outcomes. Where it exists, evidence is mixed on effects on women's political participation and attitudes and behaviour change with respect to gender roles within formal and informal institutions. It is unclear if this is because such effects are negligible or because they haven't been properly measured and documented.

It is important to recognise that CDD projects by themselves cannot be expected to easily changesocial norms, perceptions, and attitudes that have been in existence for generations, especially when it comes to women's empowerment. CDD projects are only one element in the broader country context. Yet, addressing empowerment more explicitly in the results chain and documenting evidence even when it is about contribution and not causation can help define the potential role of these projects and learn about their impact.

**Methodology**

This report uses evidence from 20 longstanding rural CDD programs1 that have received sustained support from the World Bank (the list is presented in Appendix 1, Table A.1). The analysis was guided by the following key questions:

Do CDD interventions result in women's economic, social, and/or political empowerment, as well as men's? And what are the conditions (including contextual elements) and the design elements that enhance or hamper these impacts?

Specifically, the report aims to address:

- Design elements: How are CDD projects designed to enhance women's economic, political,and social empowerment?
- Indicators: How do CDD projects measure women's economic, political, and social empowerment?
- Outputs, intermediate outcomes, and outcomes: What are the outputs, intermediate outcomes, and outcomes of CDD projects for women's economic, political, and social empowerment?

To answer these questions, the report:

- Reviewed gender dimensions of CDD projects, using project documents and other project- specific analysis, as well as IEG evidence, particularly from project

performance assessment reports (PPARs)( eight of the programs reviewed had a PPAR); and

- Reviewed the theoretical literature on female empowerment and on gender impacts on CDD (including, when available, impact evaluations).

**Organization**

The report is organised as follows: chapter 2 reviews the concept of empowerment, presents the CDD approach, and discusses its potential to affect women's empowerment. This section analyses the narrative around empowerment in project documents and how it is reflected in the results framework—and links these with the broader theoretical literature on women's empowerment. Chapter 3 discusses gender features of selected World Bank–supported CDD interventions and how they relate to women's constraints to economic, political, and social empowerment, especially in rural areas. Chapter 4 presents the available evidence on women's economic, political, and social empowerment. Chapter 5 discusses the findings and their implications.

# 1. The Community-Driven Development Approach and Women'sEmpowerment

This chapter reviews the concept of empowerment, and how it applies to CDD. It makes a distinction between empowerment as a process and empowerment as a goal, and organise the potential impacts of CDD projects in three domains—economic, political, and social. It proposes a results chain for CDD that explicitly incorporates empowerment dimensions at the level of outputs, intermediate outcomes, and development outcomes, and identifies empowerment indicators at those levels.

Community-driven development (CDD) is "an approach to local development that gives control over planning decisions and investment resources to community groups (including local governments)."1 The approach has been widely used at the World Bank and elsewhere in differentcontexts, including fragility and conflict.2 CDD interventions are based on the principle that community involvement in identifying needs and priorities, making decisions about investments, and managing investment funds can produce better development outcomes than more centralised, top-down approaches. Moreover, involving communities is also an end in itself—the "bottom-up approach" to poverty reduction that CDD projects embed has been promoted on the grounds that it makes development more inclusive and responsive to the real needs of the poor, because it has the potential to empower poor people, improve governance, build social capital, strengthen communities' collective action, and shift public spending to represent the needs of theexcluded.

Although specific CDD objectives may differ, empowerment is a foundational element of all CDD projects. CDD objectives can include expanding access to services by strengthening education, health, and access to markets; public infrastructure projects; increasing collective or individual income and consumption through micro finance and skill development; supporting local governance or decentralisation; and helping the government to reconnect with its citizens and rebuild trust after a period of conflict. Irrespective of the specific objective, though, there is a common CDD approach, which consists of empowering communities by giving them more control over development resources and strengthening their ability to identify priorities and manage development activities directly. Because of the specific modality used to achieve these various objectives—through direct community involvement—empowerment is central to the CDD approach.

Communities are diverse—made of different groups with different preferences and goals, facing different constraints and responding differently to incentives. In most communities poor women are likely to be more disempowered than their male neighbours. CDD projects often recognise this explicitly and, to increase the agency of disempowered people in these communities, they seek to make specific efforts to reach and empower women.

By giving voice to women, CDD provides an opportunity for women to influence local decisions so that they more closely reflect their preferences and their needs, as stressed by the recent World Bank Group Gender Strategy. CDD projects may also generate indirect positive impacts to the extent that they succeed in decreasing poverty and boosting communities' well-being. The strong link between poverty reduction and gender equality (World Bank 2011a) thus provides a rationale for an additional focus on women's empowerment (World Bank 2007). Moreover, because most CDD projects are implemented in rural areas, they can drive change where women tend to be at greater disadvantage and gaps are wider. Investing in rural women was, indeed, identified as one of the priority areas for "global action" in the World Development Report 2012 on Gender Equality.

Even when CDD projects are successful in increasing women's participation in project activities, they may not succeed in achieving sustained and lasting change in local decision-making or on shifting social norms. This is because CDD projects may not have changing power relationships as their main and explicit goal, or they may not recognise that the project could be an opportunity to do so. Furthermore, empowering communities, especially traditionally excluded groups, takes time and cannot be accomplished simply by a project. Encouraging communities toward greater inclusion may not necessarily change power brokers within the communities. Finally, specific CDD interventions may be more successful in effecting some specific types of empowerment than others. One research study on Sierra Leone "GoBifo" project found the distribution of benefits within a community to be more equitable for local infrastructure projects, while no fundamentalchange was achieved at the political or social level.

**Empowerment and CDD: A Process and an Outcome**

Involving communities and empowering them to take control of decisions regarding their own development is both the means to achieve better development outcomes and an outcome in its own right. Empowerment is embedded in the whole approach and at all stages of the CDD results chain: "targeted community-driven approaches devolve control and decision making to poor women and men, which empowers them immediately and directly.". It is both a final objective anda functional one to achieving other project objectives—for example, to increase income and access to services (Jorgensen 2005). Thus, it is a process—to achieve other outcomes—and an outcome in itself. This distinction is important as we assess empowerment in relation to CDD projects.

Empowerment has different interpretations. The World Bank, defining its approach to empowerment for economic growth and poverty reduction, describes empowerment as "... the expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives". This definition highlights the dimensions of choice, action, and ability to influence institutions. Empowerment is about strengthening individuals' asset-based agency and their ability to change the institutional rules that shape human behaviour and social interactions. Community members who are able to participate in making key decisions and effectively exercise their voice and choice are empowered

—and this is an outcome that CDD interventions have the potential to pursue for the community as a whole, for its male and female members, and for the poor and other traditionally excluded groups, such as ethnic minorities.

Because it is complex and multifaceted, measurement of empowerment presents several challenges.

First, the multidimensional nature of "empowerment" makes it difficult to measure with simple metrics (for example, being empowered in one dimension does not necessarily imply being empowered in another dimension).

Second, as mentioned earlier, empowerment is both a process and an outcome. Finding an indicator able to capture the process of empowerment as opposed to a (static) outcome has proven difficult. Outcomes can be more easily expressed using

quantitative data, but measuring processes requires (participatory) qualitative data collection and analysis. Balancing the use of quantitative versus qualitative data to measure empowerment is challenging, but necessary to capture its many facets.

Third, empowerment is highly contextual, because social, cultural, political, and economic conditions vary across societies and over time, as do institutions. Empowerment also depends on the characteristics of the groups that are part of the population.

Fourth, comparing different groups, such as men and women, requires a deeper analysis than solely looking at averages and sex-disaggregated indicators. Men and women face different constraints which are also based on age, race, social status, education, and other socioeconomic characteristics; hence, both individual-level "absolute" indicators and relative measures are needed to assess empowerment and capture the power dynamics within the community and the household. All these difficulties explain why thus far, despite the existence of multiple indicators and indices, there are no universally agreed measures or indicators of female empowerment.

**Empowerment: Economic, Political, and Social Dimensions**

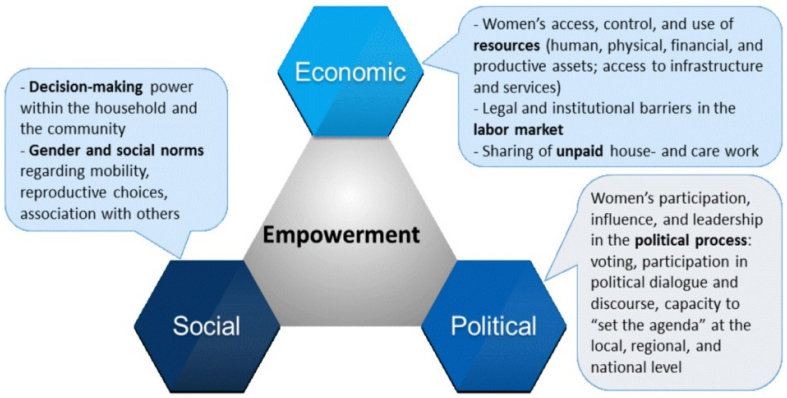
Empowerment is typically conceptualised in three domains: economic, political, and social. Economic empowerment refers to the market domain, in which a person is an economic actor. Political empowerment refers to the state domain, in which a person is a civic actor. Social empowerment refers to the society domain, in which a person is a social actor.

The manifestations and measurement of what empowerment is about, however, depend on the context and on the characteristics of each group in the society. Changes in empowerment for one person or group cannot be assumed to apply to other individuals or groups. Furthermore, little is known about whether changes in one realm of empowerment (such as economic) could have negative repercussions in another realm of empowerment (such as social).

Women's empowerment means creating the conditions for women to be able to make choices, which implies that women may have different preferences than men, but also different abilities to make choices because of gender inequalities in bargaining power and access to resources . Economic empowerment involves

improving the ability of women to access resources and employment, higher productivity and earnings, and increases in the income, assets, expenditure, and consumption they control. The legal and institutional barriers in the labor market and the way unpaid domestic work and care work are shared at the household and societal levels heavily influence this domain. Political empowerment is about participation and decision making in formal institutions, including local government, interest groups, and civil society and women's ability toset and influence the political discourse. Social empowerment refers to women's status in society,which depends on social norms, gender roles within the household and the community, and social capital. Figure 2.1 summaries the main components of female empowerment; Appendix Cpresents a list of dimensions and indicators in the three domains.

**Figure 2.1. Dimensions of Women's Economic, Political, and Social Empowerment**




**How Is Female Empowerment Integrated in the CDD Results Chain?**

Figure 2.2 summarises the main elements of CDD projects and proposes a theoretical results chain that reflects the different stated objectives that CDD interventions may have for men and women (individual CDD projects may only have one or some of them). It also applies the broader empowerment framework to the specific case of CDD projects and identifies the manifestations ofempowerment under the economic, political, and social domains that are pertinent to CDD.

To achieve their objectives, CDD projects include a number of activities (these may vary depending on the specific goal of the CDD intervention). They support training and facilitation activities aimed to strengthen the community organization and its

decision- making role and capacity (Institution building), as well as assets creation through block grants provided to the communities (Asset creation) and income generation programs to individuals (Livelihoods support). Program conditions are meant to ensure greater inclusion and citizens' engagement.

CDD projects include activities aimed to strengthen community participation, decision making, and control of resources to enable communities to build assets and infrastructure and support income-generating activities. At the Outputs level, projects aim to ensure that community members are involved in choosing, planning, implementing, participating in, and monitoring sub projects. These outputs are meant to generate several Intermediate outcomes, which may include increased skills and capacity and improved livelihoods (at the economic level); increased voice and decision making in project activities and better ability to relate with local authority structures (at the political level); and increased social capital, social cohesion, and improved attitudes regarding the role of women in the household and the community (at the social level). The ultimate Development outcomes may include economic empowerment, in terms of higher income, consumption, productivity, assets and financial stability, as well as positive outcomes from better access to services (improvement in education, health, time savings, better quality of life); political empowerment, in terms of greater participation in the local political decision-making process; andsocial empowerment, in terms of positive changes in social relationships and gender norms. The conditions, design, outputs, and outcomes of each specific CDD intervention are influenced by formal and informal institutions, community characteristics, and social norms, including attitudes toward women's participation and empowerment (Context).

Figure 2.2 shows explicitly that the CDD approach has the potential to empower women as much as men in the economic, political, and social domain.

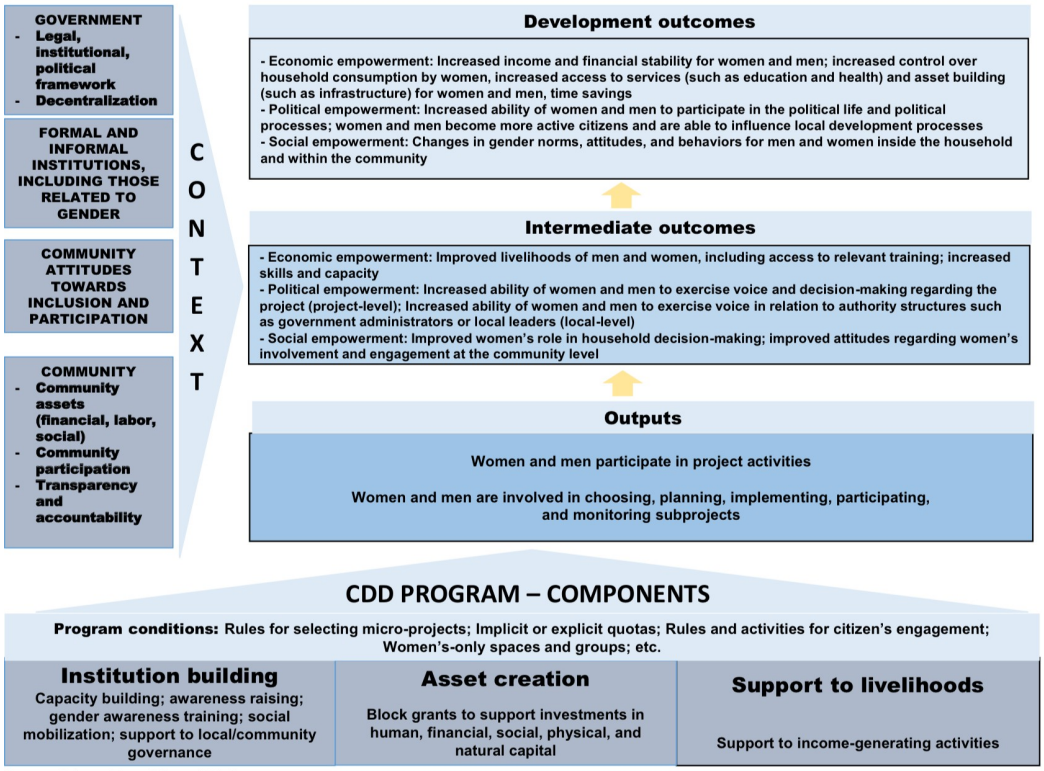
By increasing access to livelihood opportunities, jobs, and income, CDD projects can increase women's economic empowerment, to the extent that the choices regarding infrastructure, assets, and income-generating activities respond to the needs of both men and women. CDD projects can also improve access to services such as education and health, in ways that are particularly beneficial to women and girls and generate substantial time savings for women thanks to rural infrastructure, water in particular.

CDD projects can enhance women's political empowerment at different levels. Strengthening women's participation in decision making with respect to project activities is crucial if CDD projects want to be inclusive of all community members. Although fundamental, this "lower-level" exercise of voice is not yet defined as political empowerment. At a higher level, though, women's increased participation and decision making regarding project activities may translate into an increased ability to engage in public debate and in a more assertive relationship with power authorities, such as government administrators and local leaders. An even higher level impact could be the increased ability of women to be active participants in the formal political process,which has been more typically considered as political empowerment.

Finally, women's increased ability to access social services and participation in community decisions can enhance their social empowerment or confidence and autonomy. Social empowerment, which involves a change in gender norms and increased voice and bargaining power of women in the household and the community, is—like political empowerment—an impactthat is rarely identified as an explicit result of the project.

Impacts at the level of political and social empowerment may occur even if they are not made explicit within the results framework of the project, though deliberate support may be needed togenerate positive change. For example, impact evaluations of the Afghanistan National SolidarityProject have documented impacts on women's political and social empowerment. As women's needs, preferences, and constraints generally differ from men's, CDD interventions that explicitly recognise the critical gender gaps and adopt approaches to address them may be less likely to leave women behind.

Figure 2.2 Community-Driven Development Results Chain, with Reference to Empowerment Dimensions




*Source:* Adapted from Wong (2012).

**How Do World Bank CDD Projects Address Women's Empowerment?**

This report reviews major long-term community development programs in rural contexts. All projects reviewed, explicitly or implicitly, emphasise their empowerment potential and include an empowerment component or some indicators of empowerment. Specifically, of the 20 programs reviewed for this report, eight explicitly include empowerment in the project development objective (Malawi, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Uganda, and Yemen), mostoften as "empowering the community," not necessarily women. In some cases, earlier projects did not have an empowerment goal (Pakistan, Philippines, Yemen), but this was added later in the program. In one case (Tanzania) empowerment as an objective disappeared over time from the Project Development Objective, but not from the intent of the project.

Empowerment means different things in different projects. An analysis of the narrative around empowerment in project documents reveals that most programs refer to a dimension of empowerment that relates to the definitions provided in the general literature even if the emphasis is on a few specific dimensions (most

frequently the economic one, especially when it comes to indicators included in the results framework), not all of them. For example, in the Nepal Poverty Alleviation Fund project, empowerment is interpreted as voice, decision-making, ability and opportunity for poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, and control the institutions that affect their lives and livelihoods. it is about empowering communities to take charge of their own development agenda. In Indonesia, an Implementation, Completion, and Results (ICR)observes that "the PNPM has empowered people, made them more independent, capable of collective action, and has developed behaviour and mindsets to be involved in solving their development problems compared to before." Afghanistan and Morocco emphasise aspects related to local governance, decentralisation, and representativeness. In a few cases the interpretation is narrower and empowerment is intended primarily as the ability to manage project activities.

All programs specify women as beneficiaries, and several refer directly to the empowerment of women (Afghanistan, Andhra Pradesh, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan. Yet few projects are clear about the specific empowerment aims as they relate to gender. Only in a few instances do project documents clarify the sense in which the project aims to empower women (for example, Sri Lanka and Tanzania emphasise women's economic empowerment; Azerbaijan specifically refers to an economic leadership program for women).

Although they refer to women and women's empowerment, projects do not commonly make explicit the gender-specific outputs and outcomes in the results chain. When they do, they do not link output to outcomes to explain how the components they integrate are expected to change the lives of women. Indicators of empowerment are typically limited to outputs of project activities (for example, the percentage of community-based organizations functioning well, or the numberof sub projects implemented at the community level, or the number of sub projects proposed by women, and so on). At this level, a distinction is normally made between results achieved "within the project boundaries" and those "outside the project" or "spillovers." The latter are frequentlyoverlooked, but may nevertheless be important.

Table 2.1 presents examples of indicators of empowerment—at the levels of process and outcomes—that can be mapped to Figure 2.2.1 The indicators are heterogeneous. Some are quantitative, others are qualitative and better expressed by

text (narratives). Some indicators measure observable traits, others measure perceptions and opinions. The sources of information are also different. Some indicators can be easily included in the project's monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework; others require household, individual, or community (quantitative) surveys or qualitative methods, such as participatory assessments, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews (on the use of mixed methods to measure empowerment, with applications also to CDD interventions.

**Table 2.1. Indicators of Empowerment in CDD Projects**

| Empowerment as a process (outputs) | Empowerment as an outcome (intermediate* and development outcomes) |
|---|---|
| • Women and men participate in decision making at the community and district levels *(frequency, quality of participation, influence, knowledge)* | *Economic Empowerment*<br>• Women and men receive credit or get jobs in public workfare schemes*<br>• Women and men receive vocational or entrepreneurship training* |

# CHAPTER 3 GENDER

# FEATURES IN CDD

The constraints to economic, political and social empowerment that place rural women at a disadvantage are especially relevant for CDD projects aiming to empower all members of a community. These constraints have been extensively documented in the literature (World Bank 2011a; World Bank, FAO, and IFAD 2009). If they are ignored, CDD projects can have the undesirable effect of leaving women behind and exacerbating gender gaps. If instead they are understood and addressed through the adoption of specific strategies and design elements, CDD projects have the potential to effectively include women and contribute to their empowerment.

Constraints related to women's economic empowerment have to do with women's limited access to resources and women's domestic responsibilities. Women's economic potential is not fully realised in most countries because women are often prevented from participating in the labor market to the same extent that men do. Women tend to work in subsistence agriculture and low- productivity jobs because they have limited access to land; insecure property rights or none at all;low access to credit, agricultural inputs, and extension services; and limitations in physical mobility and in accessing networks and information. When women engage in non farm activities, these are often concentrated at the lower end of the market and tend to be less profitable than men's work. In addition, women spend a larger proportion of time on domestic tasks than do men, leaving less time for income-generating activities, leisure, and education. If women's responsibilities increase, the burden of domestic tasks often falls on their daughters, keeping them out of school.

Constraints related to women's political empowerment have to do with restrictions in access to decision-making power and women's low levels of literacy, confidence, and leadership. At the project level, women are less likely to be substantively involved in community projects because they have less skills and experience than men do. The complexity, criteria, time, and difficulty of applying for funds all affect women's ability to participate. At the level of local government, women are very often excluded from collective decision-making processes, often because of the inability to speak against the powerful. Moreover, women's mobility restrictions and lack of experience may prevent their engaging with high-level political processes. At the higher politicallevel, women are underrepresented in the formal political sphere everywhere in the world. Patriarchal structures and norms mediate women's ability

to access formal, local, and higher-levelgovernment fora.

Constraints related to women's social empowerment have to do with patriarchal attitudes and social norms regarding women's roles that persistently limit women's ability to participate in community life. In some cultures, women's mobility is restricted, they are expected to stay at home, keep quiet in public meetings, and agree with decisions made by men. Attitudes of local male leaders may be particularly problematic (World Bank 2007). In the home, women typically do not have the same decision-making power as men do—and differences exist also among women with different rank (for example, among wives in polygamous households, or between the daughter-in-law and the mother-in-law).

The literature reviewed for this report suggests that CDD interventions have the potential to address some of these mentioned constrains to women's economic, political, and social empowerment.

At the level of economic empowerment, for instance, CDD investments in infrastructure can improve women's physical access to markets and resources, and sub projects providing micro finance and livelihoods support can increase women's income- generating activities and access to credit. Also, by improving rural infrastructure, such as water supply, CDD can reduce the amount of time women spend fetching water, which in turn could allow them to spend more time in alternative activities—potentially productive ones. By providing training through livelihoods interventions, CDD can increase the quality of goods for market and increase good business practices.

In terms of political and social empowerment, CDD can make it easier for women to access decision-making arenas by decentralising power to the community level. CDD can also enable women's voices to be heard, and establishes precedents for women's participation in planning and decision-making which may be replicated in other fora (World Bank 2007). Participation in CDD can build women's skills and confidence through training and capacity-building so that they can take up greater roles in community life. Women-only spaces and groups in CDD projects can encourage women to put forward their ideas and voice their needs in a supportive environment. CDD can support women's groups to present, defend, and lobby for their priorities in the community.

As existing power structures can disadvantage women, not explicitly addressing power relationships does not result in a neutral outcome. Working with existing institutions, such as local government or traditional authorities, risks to mimic discriminatory power structures and may not lead to improvements for the poorest people.

By providing gender awareness training to local leaders and community members and allowing women to prove their capabilities through participating in decision-making, CDD projects can help change traditional perceptions about gender roles. The approach needs to be very strategic, because the active promotion of women's involvement and empowerment can meet with resistance from local (male and female) elites if it is perceived as a threat to the established way of doing things.

**Do World Bank–Supported CDD Projects Address Constraints to Women's Empo**werment?

Several toolkits and reports acknowledge that CDD interventions should take the above discussed constraints to women's empowerment into consideration. Only a few projects, however, include in official project documents a comprehensive and context-specific discussion of these constraints and their causes to motivate the activities they propose. Projects more and more frequently refer to social or gender assessments, but normally these documents are not easily accessible.

Furthermore, the findings of social assessments that explore the constraints or needs of women are not always reflected in project documents (Azerbaijan, Uganda). Gender "responsiveness" is often found as a guiding principle in operational manuals1 and gender strategies are sometimes part of implementation plans but little is said in available World Bank documents as to how these are operationalised. This is not to say that CDD projects do not include strategies to "include women" and facilitate women's participation. They often do, but they do not necessarily build these design features to address specific constraints and gender gaps identified in the local context.

Strategies used in World Bank–supported CDD projects have evolved over time; more recent projects tend to be more explicit and deliberate in referring to context-

specific gender and otherconstraints. For example, the first Azerbaijan project's social assessment acknowledged women'sneeds but made no mention of specific activities in the project document; however, the second Azerbaijan project not only explicitly supported women's empowerment but also included specific indicators in its monitoring and evaluation framework to track gender-relevant outputs and outcomes.

Recently approved projects provide some insights on how project design has absorbed thelessons and built on them.

**Strategies to include Women in World Bank–Supported CDD Projects**

CDD projects commonly use diverse strategies to ensure women's participation in the needs identification process and in sub projects' selection stages. Strategies adopted by World Bank– supported CDD projects include women's quotas in community forums and project selection committees; women-only meetings; separate voting for men and women; minimum thresholds orearmarked allocations for the percentage of sub projects coming from women's groups; recruitment of women's facilitators and community mobilises; gender training and support to women beneficiaries and project staff.

The most common strategy found in the projects reviewed for this study is the use of quotas. Almost all projects reviewed include quotas or targets to increase women's participation in project selection committees (Yemen is among the few exceptions).1 They are set between 30 percent and 50 percent and are generally reported as met in project documents.

A number of other strategies have been used. A common one is the recruitment of female mobilisers and facilitators to raise awareness among women about the project, increase women's participation in project's activities, and help identify women's priorities (Andhra Pradesh,Azerbaijan, Indonesia, the Kyrgyz Republic, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Philippines,). Projects often utilise separate meetings for men and women to ensure that women's priorities are addressed and to assess their needs and priorities. Several projects also provide training for women to facilitate needs identification and prioritisation. In the Kyrgyz Republic, the project delivered specific support to women to increase their confidence to lobby for their

own needs at broader community events. In the Lao PDR Poverty Reduction Fund project a clever votingsystem was introduced to make it easier for everybody to vote, including illiterate villagers (disproportionately women). Villagers were invited to deposit in a box three seeds for the most preferred option, two seeds for the second best, and one seed for the third best.

Limited evidence is available on the effectiveness of these strategies, however. Despite the widespread use of women quotas in World Bank–supported CDD projects, no assessment is available on whether quotas have a positive impact on subproject selection or women's (active) participation. Similarly, there is no evidence on the impact that a higher percentage of female facilitators can have on women's participation in the project's activities. The only study found onthe effect of the sex of the facilitator on the percentage of proposals coming from women's groups, and the type of proposals submitted (infrastructure vs. economic activities), is a bit outdated and shows no effect.

CDD projects try to ensure women's presence in the community needs assessment and prioritisation exercise (Table 3.1). They pay less attention to women's participation in the implementation, operation and maintenance, and monitoring of sub projects. Yet, there are notable exceptions. For example, Fadama in Nigeria and the Rwanda Rural Sector Support projects made training compatible with women's daily schedules so as to encourage women to participate (none of the two projects measured the impact of this design feature on female participation, however). As with assessing the evidence, newer projects seem to be doing a betterjob at this. In Bangladesh and Indonesia a quota for women's participation in village monitoring teams was recently introduced.

Table 3.1 provides an overview of project design features intended to improve women's participation. These features have been identified based on projects documentation and on studies and assessments commissioned by projects. Features more commonly found in projects are listed in the first column, emerging examples of promising practices are listed in the second.The former were discussed earlier in this section; the latter are only found in very large and longstanding projects, with several gender studies (such as Indonesia and the Philippines) and maybe more opportunities to experiment.

Projects recognise the importance of including excluded groups and support female participation, but do not always articulate the benefits of their increased participation.

They do not explicitly link women's participation (and therefore women's empowerment) to other project elements or specific outcomes. Sometimes projects refer to "plausible" impacts, such as "more inclusive decision-making processes," which however are generally not tracked or evaluated. Women's participation, for example, is not seen as functional to strengthening the mix and impact of basic infrastructure and social services delivered by the project—or of the outcomes expected from higher social services. When participation is not functionally linked to specific outcomes, it is hard to determine whether it is meaningful, whether it influences decisions regarding sub projects, and whether, as a consequence, it can bring actual benefits to women (or men).

An exception is represented by livelihoods programs, which have been able to document the positive impacts that group membership have on social capital and various dimensions ofwomen's economic, political, and social empowerment.

**Table 3.1. Design Elements for Improving Women's Participation in World Bank–Supported CDD Projects**

| Activity | Common Practices | Promising Practices |
|---|---|---|
| **Gender-informed social analysis** | • Refer to key constraints and general assumptions about women's roles | • Include detailed discussion of context-specific constraints and vulnerabilities, practices related to women's **participation, women's** access to resources, etc. (Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Kyrgyz Republic)<br>• Include detailed discussion of the implications of a gender study for project design and document, including clear articulation of women's needs and priorities (Afghanistan, Andhra Pradesh, Kyrgyz Republic) |
| **Community mobilization** | • Use female facilitators<br>• Provide capacity building/training to female facilitators<br>• Provide capacity building through the form of gender sensitization training to community leaders, project or government officials<br>• Set quotas for women's participation<br>• Monitor sex-disaggregated data on attendance to community meetings | • Include gender awareness modules in ongoing training for district- and project-level facilitators (male and female)<br>• Ensure ongoing capacity building for supervision and mentoring on facilitator role<br>• Provide ongoing capacity building for gender sensitization to religious or community leaders<br>• Use media for outreach<br>• Use women's traditional meeting places (Vietnam)<br>• Engage existing women's groups<br>• Create optimal conditions for women to participate (meetings location, timing, child care)<br>• Assess the quality of women's participation in meetings (Andhra Pradesh)<br>• Offer incentives at the local level for innovative ideas to improve women's participation (Indonesia, Sri Lanka) |
| **Needs assessment/ Prioritization exercise** | • Create separate meetings and voting<br>• Set quotas for women in project selection committees;<br>• Set a minimum number of proposals coming from women's groups | • Create optimal conditions for women to participate (meetings location, timing, child care)<br>• Train or coach women to actively participate and lobby/defend their priorities (Kyrgyz Republic)<br>• Use creative ways of voting/expressing preferences that do not require participants to read or write (Lao PDR, Vietnam)<br>• Ensure that goods and services offered addresses women's constraints and livelihoods (Vietnam) |
| **Implementation (including Operations & Maintenance)** | • Identify specific activities for women (social infrastructure, microcredits)<br>• Set quotas for women recipients<br>• Provide training for specialized positions/specific skills | • Create optimal conditions for women to participate (meetings location, timing, child care)<br>• Provide equal opportunities to work on project activities, including equal pay (Uganda, Vietnam)<br>• Support women's participation in nontraditional roles/activities (Afghanistan)<br>• Provide skills training for all, including for project planning and management (Sri Lanka) |
| **Monitoring, supervision, and evaluation** | • Plan for sex-disaggregated data collection | • Gather women's feedback independently (Kyrgyz Republic)<br>• Consult women when developing indicators for impact, performance, and process monitoring<br>• Collect and report on sex-disaggregated indicators |

# 4. Did World Bank–Supported CDD Projects Empower Women?

This chapter organises and summarises the evidence available for the World Bank's funded projects (the sources and the approach are discussed in Appendix B). The results are organised under general outputs (mostly related to women's involvement in the project's activities) and the specific intermediate and development outcomes for economic, political, and social female empowerment.

**Women's Empowerment as a Process: Outputs Achieved by Project's Activities**

CDD interventions aim at increasing women's participation in project activities and generally succeed in achieving it. All projects reviewed aimed to increase women's participation and integrated some mechanisms for this purpose, such as community outreach to women, quotas in meetings, separate meetings for men and women, female facilitators, and so on, as documentedin the chapter 3. All projects monitored and reported women's participation, and generally succeeded in mobilising women to attend community meetings. This is probably the most clear- cut, across-the-board positive result.

Attention has been drawn to the need for more evidence on the quality of participation. Participation is often interpreted as attendance at meetings, which projects regularly track in a sex-disaggregated way. Projects may also track the share of women in community committees or in formal leadership roles. However, especially when women's attendance is mandated as a requirement of the project, it is unclear whether participation can be considered anything other than compliance with the rules of the project. A question arises with respect to quality of participation—are women merely present? Do they speak? Are the conditions 'right' for them to speak freely? Is their opinion taken into consideration? Does their participation have impact?

Increasingly projects recognise that it is important to assess quality of participation. So far reporting is mostly anecdotal and there is no agreed-upon way to measure it. Already in 2002, Wong observed that quality of participation was an issue in the early implementation of Indonesia Kecamatan Development Program (KDP): in that study quality of participation was reported by facilitators and was interpreted as "activeness" or "ability to lobby for their own group's proposals." Problems with the quality of participation were not unique to KDP. A gender assessment of all

Indonesian CDD interventions,1 prepared to facilitate the integration of gender features in the Indonesia National Program for Community Empowerment (PNPM) (World Bank 2007) recognises that, although all Indonesian CDD projects had strategies to support women's participation in meetings they all struggled in improving the quality of women's participation. It noted that women lacked confidence and experience in speaking out at meetings and were not comfortable in expressing their opinions in the presence of their husbands or male relatives, which in turn reinforced the stereotype of women being unable or unwilling to participate.

Despite the difficulties, there have been some promising approaches to understanding quality of participation. For example, the Brazil Rio Grande do Norte Regional Development and Governance project uses social experts to assess whether women are truly participating in subproject eligibility and selection, or whether their participation is merely pro-forma. A workingdefinition of quality of participation was proposed by the 2012 PNPM Gender Study (World Bank 2012). It was defined using a combination of output indicators ("Projects proposed by women are funded and funded projects respond to women's need as defined in the local context") and process indicators ("Women are actively involved in every stage of project planning and implementation, as well as in every level of program implementation and management. Moreover all women are heard and involved, not just elite women"). While the approach has potential, no project has adopted a definition of quality of participation to be monitored through the monitoringinformation system and there is no evidence that this has been solved for Indonesia or for any other of the CDD projects reviewed.

Women's participation may favour elites, which needs to be explicitly recognized when designing and implementing projects. Women are often considered a homogeneous group, but they are not; some of them are in more powerful and privileged positions than others. Elite dominance and elite capture are very possible among women. Indeed, it has been noted that some women, thanks to the status they enjoy in the community, are better able to take advantage of CDD sub-projects and activities. In Bangladesh, the project provided financial skills training to women but the training was mostly limited to the leader and cashier of each institution and therefore skills were transferred to a very limited group of women (IEG 2016a). In Indonesia, more educated and affluent women were likely to get to elected to leadership roles within community organizations and have access to credit groups.

IEG field assessments in Lao PDR, Malawi, Nigeria, and Tanzania have shown that some women have more influence than others, within the group of women and in the community. The IEG project evaluation of the Tanzania Social Action Fund (TASAF) II found that women's increased participation made them more self-assured in their interactions within the household and in the community. Interviewees pointed to the increasing number of women who were entering local and even national political life as an effect of this kind of participation. However, it was also noted that this is a small minority of better-off women, not poor women. A similar phenomenon was observed in Malawi. In Nigeria, only a few women are actually offered the chance to participate in the Fadama User Groups, because group access is highly correlated with interpersonal networks and men's support. 1 In the Lao PDR Poverty Reduction Fund this was the case for women who were very active members of the Lao Women's Union, but also for older women (for example, at meetings the daughter-in-law spoke after the mother-in- law, if she spoke at all). This aspect of "capture" within groups of villagers was not recognized by the Poverty Reduction Fund project— and it is not frequently recognized by CDD projects in general.

Project requirements may sometimes inadvertently restrict women from participating in a more meaningful way; these restrictions may be easier to overcome for certain types of women. A review of the Indonesian CDD projects (World Bank 2007) revealed that women from the poorest households were less likely to participate in the project activities because the only individuals eligible were those who were part of groups established for at least a year and, in some cases, individuals who already had a small business. These requirements clearly biased the selection of beneficiaries toward the better off.2 In other cases, women's participation was limited because it entailed certain tasks requiring women to be literate (this is the case of Indonesia, Malawi, Morocco, Nigeria, and Tanzania). In Nigeria's Fadama project, for example, it was found that women's education affected the extent to which women could participate in the project. Women's lower literacy and education (common in rural, low-income countries) are constraints that can generate asymmetric benefits from CDD. Other factors were also important, such as gaps in land ownership and social capital (e.g., networks, connection to power holders and communityleaders).

**Women's Economic, Political, and Social Empowerment: Intermediate and Development Outcomes**

**DO CDD PROJECTS INCREASE WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT?**

Projects document increased access to livelihoods and services by tracking the number ofbeneficiaries, disaggregated by sex. Projects that do include a component to support livelihoods and income-generating activities, such as, for example, a micro finance or public workfare component, report the percentage of women recipients of these activities. This is the case, for example, in Tanzania and Malawi (where about half of the temporary jobs created went to women,according to the project-reporting documents), Bangladesh, Andhra Pradesh, and the Kyrgyz Republic. The CDD projects that support the creation of public goods—investments in wells and water points, roads, classrooms, and health centres—typically track the type and number of sub projects and the size of the population living in the villages where the infrastructure was built (theassumption being that all benefit from it).

There is less evidence, however, on the impacts of infrastructure on the lives of men and women.For example, little information is found on the gender-specific impacts of having a water point inthe community, or more classrooms, or living close to a new health centre. More classrooms and health centres are meant to generate higher enrolment (as well as attendance and retention) rates, which ultimately affect children's levels of education and learning. Better access to health centresshould increase (to the extent they are able to offer a basic package of services) health outcomes (vaccinations, assisted deliveries, etc. Of the projects reviewed, only a few provide some evidence of improved health outcomes and improved education for girls. In Afghanistan, the National Solidarity Project (NSP) increased girls' school attendance and learning, but there was no impact on boys' school attendance. It was not fully clear what drove this result, because NSP did not fund access to education. In Pakistan, theImplementation and Completion and Results report of the second phase of the project reports that better access to education—thanks to greater geographical proximity, affordability, and quality of service—has led to increased enrolment and retention rates of students, especially girls, and better learning outcomes (stronger literacy and numeracy skills). In Afghanistan and Yemen, better access to maternal and prenatal care has been reported.

Although most projects provide anecdotal evidence that investments in water are particularly beneficial to women, only a few reported the time gains in fetching water thanks to the project. InAzerbaijan, better access to water did indeed benefit women, in terms of time saved, according tothe Implementation Completion and Results report. The Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF) Implementation Completion and Results report mentions the positive results of an impact assessment, which found that, thanks to the provision of water, women experienced a reduction in the time spent fetching water. In Afghanistan, the ICR mission's field visits to NSP communities found that women's time in employment was freed up due to mechanised threshing of wheat; moreover, time savings were achieved also in fetching water, owing to the provision ofhand pumps for drinking water.1 In Brazil, quite interestingly, the project produced time savingsmostly for young men, because they were (along with women) in charge of fetching water. This case is very instructive because it challenges assumptions that are commonly made about women.

Some livelihood interventions indicate that women can especially benefit in terms of higher employment and earnings. For example, the impact evaluation of Uganda's NUSAF II found that both young men and women receiving vocational training and support to business startups experienced a similar increase in business assets, work hours, and earnings after four years. However, the impacts were stronger for women, because they were poorer than men at the startof the program. The intervention also played a more important role for women; it was found that their earnings and participation in employment would have stagnated without the program. After four years, the income gain of those receiving the intervention was, in percentage, much larger forwomen than for men.

In Brazil, it was found that women's participation in income-generating activities increased (as did their income relative to men's) in communities that received both water supply and productive gardens (although it was impossible to isolate the individual effects, owing to small sample size). Moreover, households' income from agricultural activities increased, as did women's income frompaid work; but whether women spent more time in off-farm work could not be determined. In Sri Lanka, according to the findings of focus groups discussions conducted for IEG's PPAR, participation in Village Savings and Credit Organizations supported "enhanced financial literacy, confidence with regard to the use of money, and greater unity

owing to the transparency of the process about who received funds and their intended purposes."

Public work programs do measure how many men and women were employed, but not necessarily how this was beneficial in terms of greater earnings, assets, or consumption for women (or men). For example, the Tanzania TASAF does not measure whether the women who got employed through the public work scheme were able to increase their savings, assets, and control over economic resources.

By contrast, in Malawi, where women's participation in public works schemes and savings- investment groups was relatively high, the program was able to document immediate benefits in terms of higher earnings (from public works) and long-term benefits in terms of asset building through participation in saving-investment groups.1 It appears that saving-investment groups offered a rare opportunity to directly empower women. The beneficiary assessment found that small business development in savings groups was primarily driven by women. Surveyed villages saw a 55 percent increase in women engaged in business as a result of participating in those groups.

Some dimensions of female economic empowerment are not measured. This is the case, for example, for income stability, employment stability, or changes in the level of control over household income and household consumption. Moreover, in some cases outcomes that could be measured at the individual level (such as increase in assets, savings, and income) aremeasured only at the household level, and not separately for men and women, which could provide more meaningful information.

**DO CDD PROJECTS INCREASE WOMEN'S POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT?**

Projects can provide the right conditions for women to successfully exercise voice and decision making with respect to project activities. In the Indonesia KDP, an early analysis of the breakdown of proposals by sex (Wong 2002) showed that women's groups overwhelmingly chose economic activities over infrastructure. Specifically, women were more likely to choose loans and savings (51 percent of all proposed activities), while clean water projects represented only a tiny minorityof all women's proposed activities. According to the author, this was probably because women, who run the majority of small businesses in the village were quite familiar with loan programs. Moreover, Wong notes, women may have preferred loans because they

needed not only to finance their business but also some of the household expenses. However, men and women may indicate similar preferences, even when projects are designed so that both men and women can have an independent voice in community decisions. In the Lao PDR Poverty Reduction Fund project, nine times out of 10 men and women were expressing the same priorities for subprojectselection, according to the monitoring and evaluation data. It is not clear whether this is becausepreferences coincided, because community needs transcended gender (given the very limited set of options offered to villagers), or because men were able to influence women's preferences. Thiswas the case in the Philippines too.

Sometimes external circumstances, rather than genuine differences in preferences, can make the project more appealing to women than to men. According to the IEG project evaluation of the Bangladesh Social Investment Program (IEG 2016a), when measures were taken at restructuring to increase community participation of women and youth by integrating them in local rural institutions, women became the de facto participants in the project because many of the men residing in these areas were too busy or too uninterested in joining once the project was geared tobeing truly pro-poor.

Higher participation of women does not necessarily translate into greater control of project resources—frequently a reflection of engrained gender roles that are hard to change. In the Indonesia PNPM, high rates of participation still resulted in dominance of men within the project.The Lao PDR Poverty Reduction Project is one of the very few projects that set a threshold of a minimum percentage of proposed sub projects that need to come from women, in an attempt to explicitly address gender asymmetries in decision-making power. It is also the only project that reports the percentage of approved proposals coming from the women's list.1

When it comes to higher-level impacts on political empowerment, mixed evidence was found by those projects that measured the impact of participation "outside the project boundaries." In Afghanistan, the National Solidarity Project (NSP) increased women's participation in the 2010 parliamentary elections, and in dispute mediation and aid allocation decisions. However, the project did not change the way women viewed democratic elections or participatory decision- making. In India, the ICR for the Andhra Pradesh Rural Poverty Reduction Project noted that the political voice of the poor and the number of women leaders of the community-based organizations (CBOs) increased. According to the ICR, many CBO leaders from the poorest

households contested and won local government elections, and CBO women leaders made up 25 percent of Panchayat (local government) seats at all levels.

In Bangladesh, the Asian Development Bank's Country Gender Assessment Report (ADB 2010) revealed that women who have been integrated into community institutions have gone on to participate on elected local government councils. In Azerbaijan, women were found to participate increasingly in national multidisciplinary forums on investment, not just in gender sessions. In Vietnam, while women's participation in village meetings ranged between 45 percent and 67 percent, they still remained underrepresented in decision-making bodies such as the Commune Development Boards and Commune Supervision Boards.

Change in the political sphere requires time, but in certain contexts even small changes can represent substantial progress. In Afghanistan, the first NSP program created- women only Community Development Councils which provided the first opportunity for women to meet and discuss shared concerns. The 2009 midline survey of the NSP found that the program increased the engagement of women across a number of dimensions of community life, while also increasing respect for senior women in the village and making men more open to female participation in local governance. The interim evaluation of the second phase of the NSP reports that the project increased the participation of women in local governance and their awareness of village leadership and local governance services. An impact evaluation found that women in the villages where the NSP was implemented were more frequently meeting women from other villages, as well as district government officials. The NSP increased men's openness to female electoral participation, national candidacy by women, and women holding positions in the civil service and working with nongovernment organizations. The NSP also increased the acceptance of female membership in village councils and of female participation in the selection of the village headman. However, although the role of women in village life had increased, there was no impact on women's position within the family—for example, on women's decisions regarding money and assets that women identify as their own.

**DO CDD PROJECTS INCREASE WOMEN'S SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT?**

Although changing attitudes takes time, and this is not an explicit development goal of CDD interventions, some projects report change in gender roles, when it comes to household decision-making and women's role in society.

With respect to household decision making, improvements over the evolving societal trends at the time regarding a woman's ability to leave the home without permission, to disagree with her husband, and to participate in village meetings. In Nepal, although the impact evaluation did not find any statistically significant impact on social capital or female empowerment, the ICR suggests that women gained greater voice in the household as a result of the project, measured by the number of husband-wife joint decisions made in the household (as reported by women). In Yemen's Social Fund for Development 3, women were the majority of multilateral financial institution clients, and they expressed a high level of satisfaction with micro finance programs, recognising several benefits from their participation, namely greater independence and self- confidence, greater respect and decision making in the household, improved economic situation, and the opportunity to have a home-based job.

With respect to the role of women in society, some projects report, anecdotally, that women have become more vocal and confident in public decision-making fora, and claim that women's status has been elevated thanks to their participation in the program. Several projects also report increased empowerment based on women's self-assessment, but do not discuss how this information was collected (for example, Rwanda). More robust evidence on the benefits of participation is available for Andhra Pradesh. In Andhra Pradesh, women's participation in self- help groups led to a greater voice in decision-making within and outside the household. Moreover, the Impact Assessment found that the percentage of women marrying below the legal age was reduced among project participants.

CDD may contribute to increasing women's social capital by strengthening networks of trust and reciprocity among women, but evidence is more anecdotal and less systematic. The ICR for Rwanda's Rural Sector Support Project I states that the project has played a key role in creating social capital in the areas where it intervened, and because of the strong participation of women in project-financed activities, it has been instrumental in mainstreaming gender and social equity in the local development agenda. The IEG evaluation of Bangladesh Social Investment Program I (IEG 2016a) indicates that women's active participation in the project after midterm, in accessing savings and credit activities, had positive impacts in the community and the households. The findings from the field research suggest that the

formation of women- only community institutions, their access to credit, and livelihood interventions helped build women's capacity to make collective decisions and take action. It also helped to strengthen social capital as measured by community cohesion and inclusion in the community institutions, which categorically enhanced women's empowerment—in the form of participation in community decisions and social and legalawareness.

Stronger evidence is emerging for self-help groups. Women from JEEViKA self-help groups in Bihar experienced significant improvements in empowerment dimensions such as mobility, decision making in the household (regarding, for example, the primary livelihood activity and their own work), and propensity toward collective action (Datta, 2015). A more recent mixed-methods evaluation, Datta and others, confirms that participation in self-help groups has dramatically increased and so did savings, but found more muted impacts on empowerment.

Some indicators of women's empowerment show improvement: for example women in self-help groups have higher mobility to places that are important for the project (such as group meetings and banks) but not to other places. Women are more likely to discuss problems and potential solutions with social contacts outside of their families (with regard to food or health emergencies) and are more likely to participate in decision making within their households (this latter is true also of women in control areas).

Sometimes the projects themselves may inadvertently reinforce traditional gender roles. In the Indonesian CDD program it was observed that the type and size of activities women were engaging were limited and unable to change the traditional economy of the family. They were small in scale and with low returns. Moreover, they reinforced women's traditional roles (such as preparing cakes and snacks, or sewing), which limited the new opportunities that could have made a difference sufficient to lift the household out of poverty. The IEG PPAR assessment of the Gemi Diriya project in Sri Lanka (IEG 2014c) found that loans were often taken by women for needs other than their own, suggesting that more research is needed on intrahousehold decision-making and its effect on women's welfare. According to an assessment by the Asian Development Bank (ADB 2012), women's significant involvement in the Philippines KALAHI-CIDSS project increased their self-confidence and enhanced their analytical, management, and leadership skills. However, men still outrank women in leadership positions of the various KALAHI-CIDSS volunteer

committees. In many instances, women are assigned such roles as documenter, treasurer, cook, record keeper, and other traditional roles that are, in effect, extensions of their responsibilities ashousehold managers. More generally, women do not have primary roles in CDD and tend to be in traditional supporting roles. In almost all projects men outnumber women in positions of power and responsibility. These findings led to modifications in the design of the National Community- driven Project.

CDD may produce unintended impacts, including negative spillovers. Changing gender norms may require time and adjustments at the household and community levels. The potential negative behavioural responses to project activities and requirements introduced with good intentions neednot be overlooked and, if possible, anticipated, given the context. In Uganda, the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund I ICR mentions that increased women's participation in projects may place an increased demand on their time: "In order to strengthen its gender outcomes, implementation of NUSAF should have taken into consideration the fact that women experience difficulties combining responsibilities in the projects with their other household responsibilities and chores. This was not sufficiently addressed in the project design." The IEG evaluation of the Bangladesh Social Investment Program noted that the original community groups were notprovided with basic gender awareness training, knowledge, and understanding on prevention of violence against women. This was a missed opportunity to raise awareness around such issuesas the dowry, early marriage, women's health, pregnancy, and hygiene, as well as violence againstwomen.

# 5. Discussion and Lessons Learned

This report analysed the gender features of CDD projects, the extent to which they respond to women's specific constraints, and their impact on women's empowerment, in the economic, political, and social domains. The key findings and lessons learned are summarised as follows:

## Key Findings

CDD projects aim to empower communities and traditionally excluded groups. Women areincreasingly recognized as a group that CDD interventions need to reach out to with specific activities to ensure that they fully benefit.

The review of project objectives, indicators, and results documented in project documents indicates that World Bank-supported CDD projects actively pursue and generate high female participation at the level of specific project activities. Women's attendance at meetings is actively supported. Quality of participation and women's involvement in implementation, management, and maintenance of sub projects is less well understood. Project teams increasingly recognise that they need to pay more attention to these dimensions.

CDD programs track outputs of project activities, such as the number of sub projects proposedby women or the number of women who received credit. Very few projects identify and measure outcomes in their results frameworks to explain how project activities can change the lives of women. Results at this level are measured by those evaluations that focus on both impacts "beyond the project boundaries" and expected impacts. Evaluations of CDD, especially rigorous ones, are, however, still very few, particularly when compared with other interventions (such as,for example, cash transfers).

Most activities included in CDD projects support economic empowerment, and this is the focus of the majority of indicators in results frameworks. Little information is collected on how CDD affectpolitical and social empowerment, though the principles at the basis of the approach mostly speak to these two dimensions of empowerment.

Impacts of CDD projects on women's economic empowerment that are frequently documented include access to credit and training; the ability of women to choose sub

projects that address their needs; the number of jobs that went to women in projects that include a public works component. Most projects show improvements in these output-level indicators. Higher-level impacts on economic empowerment, such as changes in women's income and control of resources, and changes in education and health outcomes, are virtually never tracked. The few existing impact evaluations were able to document some positive results for women at this level (especially in Uganda; in Afghanistan and Andhra Pradesh results were more mixed).

In the realm of political and social empowerment, most impacts occur "beyond the project's boundaries" and are therefore rarely identified and measured.

Positive impacts on political empowerment have been documented at the level of higher voice and decision-making in project activities (especially when a share of sub projects is reserved to women), but women's participation in the formal political process is not normally contemplated. The Afghanistan impact evaluation is the only one to measure the impact of the project on women's voting behaviour and attitudes to the political system, and this is because political empowerment was part of the project's objective.

Positive impacts on social empowerment have been measured in rural livelihood programs and self-help groups, which appear to strengthen trust and solidarity among group members. Little is known about changes that occur at the community level, beyond participation in project committees, and at the household level. It is unclear how these projects change traditional genderroles in society. This is obviously highly contextual; in some environments merely participating inproject activities can challenge the traditional position of women (a typical example is Afghanistan, where women's physical mobility is severely restricted).

## Lessons Learned

Because empowerment is a key element of the CDD approach it is important to bring it out explicitly in the results chain of the project. Recognising explicitly the power relationships among groups and individuals in the community helps to understand how project activities can support the inclusion or reinforce the exclusion of specific groups, even inadvertently, and address inequalities; for example through the use of quotas or other design elements. Evidence on empowerment impacts of CDD is thin largely because CDD projects rarely discuss in a systematic way which dimensions of empowerment they aim to affect, directly or indirectly, and how.

The design of CDD projects could benefit from being informed by gender-specific needs assessments to identify the constraints that women face in the rural space. If these constraints are ignored, CDD projects can have the undesirable effect of leaving women behind andexacerbating gender gaps. Conversely, a good contextual analysis of women's needs and constraints can indicate where and how to strengthen the design of project activities to potentially produce positive impact on women's empowerment.

It is useful to think of empowerment along the three categories of economic, political, and socialempowerment to identify the mechanisms CDD interventions can leverage, and to identify direct and indirect effects. Economic empowerment can be more directly supported by project activitiesthat are intended to strengthen livelihoods or provide infrastructure to improve access to services. Impacts on political and social empowerment are generally more indirect and more likely to be part of the spillover category, but these can nonetheless be transformational. By increasing women's participation, decision making and control of resources, CDD interventions may strengthen women's voice and self-confidence, increase their ability to engage with localauthorities, and even contribute to changing perceptions about gender roles in the community. These processes require time, are heavily influenced by the context, and generally need to be deliberately supported to generate positive change.

CDD projects cannot be expected to affect all dimensions of empowerment; hence the importance of defining which dimensions can be affected, through which channels, and how these effects can be measured. Empowerment is both a process and an outcome; it requires both qualitative and quantitative indicators to measure its progress and achievements. In addition to outputs and intermediate outcomes achieved through project activities, it is important to measure change in power relationships, including those affecting women, because these will be altered by the project.

Participation needs to be measured in a comprehensive way by the use of multiple indicators. Participation in community meetings and village committees, which projects increasingly measureseparately for men and women, is only one dimension of engagement. Quality of participation andconsequences of participation need also to be understood and measured to assess whether and how participation generates empowerment "outside of the project boundaries" (increased voice,social cohesion,

women's decision-making power, and sense of citizenship).

CDD interventions should better frame what they can impact both in the short and the long term. It is simplistic to assume that CDD interventions can—easily, in the short term—"empower communities" and "empower women." Impacts at the higher level, "beyond the project's boundaries," are more meaningful and lasting, because they are about deeper change in people's lives; but they depend on elements beyond the project's span of control, such as context, community characteristics, and other existing policies and interventions. Moreover, they can emerge only in the longer timeframe. Projects need to be aware of what can be achieved in their timeframe and in the longer time horizon of the program (what the outcome and what the trajectory toward that outcome is). Projects need to specify the more immediate achievements, such as increased participation in meetings, more active decision making regarding sub projects, and increased capacity to manage funds and activities, but also longer-term and higher-level impacts—increasing the voice and the agency of communities, women, and disadvantaged groups.

The learning potential of what works to increase women's empowerment can be improved through more systematic assessment, reporting and evaluation. Although there has been increasing attention to monitoring and evaluation of gender impacts, especially for recent projects, the analysis of project documentation produced a relatively small and scattered amount of statements, facts, and evidence as to the gender dimensions in CDD and the impacts of these projects on women's empowerment. Project staff indicate that projects do much more than what they report, and produce impacts that are not documented, but this information is lost if it is not systematically recorded. Increased awareness, better reporting, and more assessments and evaluations are fundamental to increasing knowledge and learning.

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