

## GENDER ASSESSMENT: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The USAID program in Nigeria since 1999, under the Transitional Strategy, has included explicit attention to women and gender issues under each of the four strategic objectives. In addition to the inroads these programs have made in defining and confronting the gender gaps across sectors, the programs and partner organizations have established a base for gender mainstreaming in the 2004-2009 Country Strategic Plan. With the attention in the new strategy to civil society organizations as key to strengthening democratic governance and as partners in program implementation in local communities, the activities initiated during the transition period with women's organizations and leadership training have particular significance.

The assessment notes the overriding importance of the diversity in the country – ethnic, religious, geographic, class – as a factor in defining gender issues. Although some generalizations are possible, particularly in reference to formal government and legal institutions, the impact of gender relations on activities and on the status of women and vice versa is constructed by a web of diverse economic, social, religious, and cultural factors. The highly publicized events in the northern states and the impact of Shari'a Law are a case in point (see Annex 5). The focus on implementation at the community level and the recommendation in the assessment for activity-specific "social assessments" are in response to this diversity.

A second overriding factor identified in the gender assessment is the continuing increase in levels of poverty, especially in rural areas. Approximately 40 percent of the population is classified as living in extreme poverty, and estimates show women as 70 percent of those in this category. The disproportionate impact of poverty on women and their children underlines the importance of explicit attention to gender-based constraints and barriers women face in accessing economic opportunities and social services. Women's access to power and participation in decision-making are essential to getting key human rights issues on the national agenda, such as those that negatively affect women's capacity to access opportunities and protect their personal well-being. Increasing women's access to public arenas was a focus of the USAID Transitional Strategy and will continue to be emphasized and monitored in the future.

Nigeria has a policy environment with the potential to support gender equity. It is a signatory to international conventions pertaining to the status of women, has a Ministry of Women's Affairs and Youth Development with desk officers for each sector, and recently adopted a National Policy on Women. At the same time, these institutions have been largely ineffective through lack of funding and political support. The assessment suggests several potential areas for USAID collaboration, including support through training and information-sharing with the gender officers for each sector and assistance in generation of sex-disaggregated data and indicators in government databases, for use in policy reform and monitoring the status of women.

The assessment also examines key gender constraints under each Strategic Objective of the new Strategic Plan, and provides broad brush recommendations that may guide specific applications as the process of gender mainstreaming moves forward in program implementation.

- **SO 11. Good Governance through Transparency, Participation and Conflict Management.** The achievement of gender equality in democratic participation in Nigeria involves two essential processes, equity in participation and voice within civil society and the community, and equity in participation in the formal structures of the democratic state. The assessment recommends pursuit of initiatives on both levels, through support for women's civil society organizations and advocacy training, NGO networks, and media access, and through efforts to increase women's representation in legislature, election, and government positions of authority.
- **SO 12. Sustainable Agriculture and Diversified Agricultural Growth.** Building on the successes under the Transition Strategy, the assessment urges attention to products and processes that will provide income to rural women. Key to these efforts is assuring

women's access to productive resources, especially security of land tenure. Increased emphasis on trade and export production, access to market information, and recognition of the role of women traders and inclusion of their organizations in policy discussions are essential for women to benefit equally from these programs.

- **SO 13. Improved Social Sector Service Delivery.** The principal problem posed by the assessment is how to achieve equity between men and women in access to services. In all three sectors included in this SO, family planning and reproductive health, child survival, and basic education, indicators show that on average, females benefit less than males, although there is substantial variation across regions. The assessment confirms the steps outlined by the Mission to affirmatively counter the gender gaps in access to services.
- **SO 14. Expanded Response to HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis.** The spread of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Nigeria and of the number of people affected prompted USAID to create a new SO for the next strategy period focused directly on HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis (one of the most frequent opportunistic infections among AIDS patients). The gender assessment focuses on factors that make women particularly vulnerable to infection, and also on the impact of HIV/AIDS on women as the principal care providers in the population. Recommendations discuss ways to counter this vulnerability, giving particular attention to empowerment of women and the importance of building linkages across the SOs to reinforce SO 14. The assessment also points to youth programs and negotiation skills between boys and girls as a key focus. Gender issues also increase the vulnerability of men who have sex with men (MSM).

The Mission has identified gender as one of six crosscutting themes that affect and are affected by all aspects of the strategy. USAID directives (ADS) cite two criteria with which to assess the importance of gender in USAID programming: the effect of gender relations on program results; and, the effect of the program on the status of women. Guided by these two criteria, gender analysis serves as the basis for building gender considerations into all aspects of the program, starting with the assessment, as a part of the strategy development process, and proceeding through the design and implementation of activities, selection of indicators in the performance monitoring plan, and ongoing monitoring and evaluation. The assessment states that in the Country Strategic Plan for Nigeria, gender relations are not only a vital consideration in each program area but also a key factor in building linkages across program areas. Increasing women's access to power and decision making is identified as the central underlying theme across all programs, with a particular emphasis on strengthening civil society organizations and participation in the community. A second key recommendation that cuts across all aspects of the program is the necessity of building on the broad gender assessment with narrower social/gender assessments that are region and activity specific.