Women Men and Development

U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Contents

Introduction 1

Women's Participation and Development Effectiveness—USAID'S Efforts 3

- Education: Creating Opportunities And Choices 4
- Economic Growth 7
- Women's Health 12
- HIV/AIDS 14
- Trafficking In Persons 15
- Violence Against Women 17
- Women's Legal Rights And Political Participation 19

Lessons Learned And Challenges Ahead 20

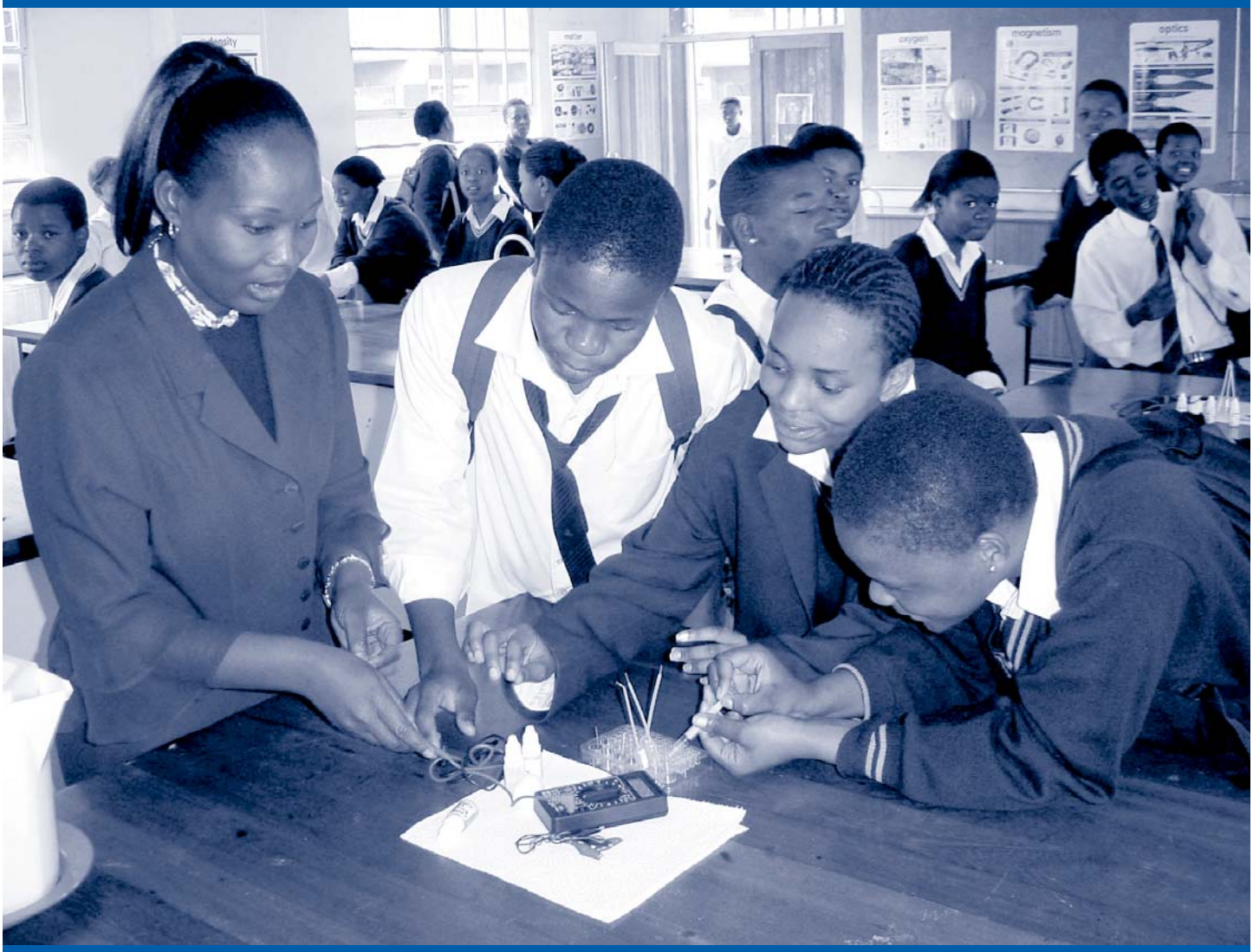
Photos: USAID

Introduction

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is committed to providing development assistance that improves the lives of women, men, and children around the world. USAID has a special interest in the advancement of women worldwide. Women's health, education, economic opportunity and human rights are at the core of successful, stable societies and economic growth. One of the fundamental principles of the new Department of State/USAID strategic plan is that "all citizens, men and women, are vital to meeting the critical challenges of today and reaching the goals of equality, peace and security."

USAID's commitment to the full inclusion of women dates back to 1973, when the United States Congress passed the "Percy Amendment" to the Foreign Assistance Act, requiring that particular attention be given to integrating women into national economies to improve the status of women and to assist the overall development effort. Today, USAID embraces this goal, and seeks to understand the different needs of men and women, to improve the efficiency and overall impact of its programs, and to ensure that both women and men have equitable access to development activities and their benefits.

This document profiles USAID efforts to address barriers to full access to opportunity for women and men throughout the developing world. The success stories are a testament to the progress women and men have made. The selected examples illustrate the many efforts made by the USAID field missions, the Office of Women in Development, and other operating units in USAID to fully integrate women into development programs and policies throughout USAID. It is important to note that women's leadership is not treated as a separate category in this report, but is reflected in all the examples. Women are becoming political leaders, grassroots leaders, leaders in their professions, leaders in their communities, heads of households, especially in regions ravaged by HIV/AIDS and conflict, and are growing into leaders in many other ways. As a result, all USAID efforts to support women's skills, opportunities and rights contribute to "women's leadership".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Women's Participation and Development Effectiveness—USAID'S Efforts

One of the fundamental principles of the new Department of State/USAID strategic plan is that "all citizens, men and women, are vital to meeting the critical challenges of today and reaching the goals of equality, peace and security."

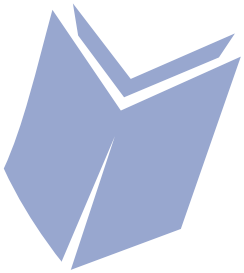
Education

Creating opportunities and choices

Education is a powerful tool for reducing poverty, redressing inequality, improving health and social well-being and creating a foundation for sustained economic growth. World leaders have consistently supported the goal of universalizing basic education, which was first identified as a human right in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)[1] and later reaffirmed in the international Education for All Conferences held in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990 and Dakar, Senegal in 2000.[2]

Educating girls, according to the World Bank is a "top-ranked social investment" since girls' education results in reduced birth rates, higher education levels for their children, increased agricultural productivity, and higher family incomes.[3] However, the promise education holds remains an elusive dream for too many children. Worldwide over 104 million children of primary school age are not in school, and 57 percent of these children are girls.[4] In the least developed countries, 45 percent of girls are not enrolled in classes, and of those that are, nearly 40 percent will drop out before completing fifth grade.[5]

Experience shows that strategies and practices that make schools more attractive to girls and their parents create better learning environments for boys as well. A multi-country study funded by USAID concluded that boys consistently benefited from initiatives aimed at meeting girls' educational needs and that no negative effects for boys were evident.



Basic education,[6] with a special emphasis on improving opportunities for girls, women and other underserved and disadvantaged populations, is a priority for USAID. Of the 20 USAID missions implementing education programs in 2002, 19 are paying particular attention to women's and girls' opportunities to learn and apply new skills in their daily lives.[7]

Even when there is equal access to schooling, the different expectations society has for girls and boys can still shape educational outcomes. This impact on education is most readily seen in differences in enrollment, drop out, and completion rates for boys and girls. For example, in Pakistan girls are expected to stay home and take care of their siblings and do other household chores, resulting in a 24 percent difference between girls' and boys' enrollment in primary school. In Lesotho, boys are disadvantaged by having to look after cattle since men must seek wage-earning work away from home.[8] As a result, boys form the majority of dropouts from primary school.

Experience shows that strategies and practices that make schools more attractive to girls and their parents create better learning environments for boys as well. A multi-country study funded by USAID concluded that boys consistently benefited from initiatives aimed at meeting girls' educational needs and that no negative effects for boys were evident.[9] When an educational system is unresponsive to girls and blind to differences between the two sexes, boys tend to benefit more than girls.

Following are examples of how basic education has transformed girls' and women's lives. These snapshots also underline the impact of the mother's educational status on that of her children since educated mothers are more likely to ensure their children go to school.

After participating in USAID-funded women's leadership training activities for over a year, Encarnación and the other women from her small village in Guatemala decided that they most needed to learn to read and write. USAID helped set up a literacy program using a newly developed integrated community literacy model. Three times a week mothers of school-age children attended classes with their sleeping infants on their backs, and their pre-school sons and daughters at their sides. The women decided that their children should have their own classes, tailored to their age and interests. So, while mothers attend literacy classes, their children are learning skills that will better prepare them for primary school. Encarnación and her young daughter now practice their letters together each morning.[10]

In Benin, USAID funded the Community Action for the Education of Girls project, which mobilized local committees to

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promote the importance of educating girls. Last year Ayékoffe was the only girl enrolled in the sixth grade at the public school in the village of Ganhounmé, Benin. Committee members followed up with Ayékoffe at home and at school, requesting that her parents not overwhelm her with domestic chores since this would interfere with her ability to attend class and do her homework. The testimony of her father, Koudaissi Epkebi, a 37-year old farmer, shows the need for such community outreach: "I participated in the third meeting held by the project in Ganhounmé. My wife, Ayékoffe's mother, participated in the two prior meetings during which she became convinced that girls' education could greatly benefit both parents and their daughters. For my wife it was a relief to hear this, because before these meetings she did not see the need to educate girls." As a result, her mother became more willing to reduce Ayékoffe's chores so that she could focus on her education. Ayékoffe became the first girl in Ganhounmé to obtain her primary school certificate in the school's 20-year history. She is happy to have made education history in her community, and she wants to go much further. Her aspirations hold no bounds—when asked what she would like to do after her studies, she responded "to become President of the Republic of Benin!"[11]

Economic Growth

Of the world's 6 billion people, 2.8 billion live on less than $2 per day, and 1.2 billion people live in absolute poverty, defined as living on less than $1 per day.[12] Although there is extensive evidence that persistent gender inequities affect the relative abilities of women and men to participate in and benefit from economic development, identifying the percentages of men and women who live in poverty is difficult. There is, however, widespread consensus that women, ethnic and racial minorities, and the elderly are among the most disadvantaged, and that development policies and activities that fail to take gender inequality into account will have limited effectiveness and serious cost implications.[13]

"Men and women often are poor for different reasons, experience poverty differently, and have differing capacities to withstand or escape poverty."[14] Limited access to resources, including physical and financial capital, insufficient market knowledge, lack of skills and labor saving technologies seriously constrain one's ability to effectively participate in economic growth. Systematic exclusion of individuals from access to resources, public services, or productive activities based on gender diminishes an economy's capacity to grow and to raise overall living standards.

Globalization has helped to raise incomes and reduce poverty worldwide. However, the impacts of globalization are complex and multifaceted, with women facing some of the most serious challenges. In the last decade, globalization has brought employment in manufacturing and assembly to poor women in developing countries, and with it increases in women's share of non-agricultural wage employment. Although this trend has benefited women quantitatively, there are drawbacks because these positions can be characterized by poor working conditions, low wages, long hours and with few social welfare services.

Microenterprise Development

For the past several decades, USAID has been working to expand opportunities for the hundreds of millions of people who rely on microenterprises for their livelihoods. Extending improved and expanded services to the poor allows them to acquire access to a variety of sources of capital, information, inputs, technologies and markets. Linked to these resources, poor entrepreneurs are better able to seize opportunities not available to them in the past and to create better lives for themselves and their families.

USAID works in partnership with international and local nongovernmental organizations to extend much-needed services to an increasing circle of underserved clients—especially women, the rural poor and smallholder farm families. USAID's track record shows that, despite the challenges of extending services to poor people, microenterprise development can be carried out effectively and sustainably. Women received 69 percent of the microloans under programs supported by USAID in 2002.

In Mali, USAID helped 50 women begin a small produce operation, enabling them to pay for school fees, medicines and clothes for their children. Numerous previous attempts had failed because the women were unskilled and without the resources to begin operations. As a result of a USAID microfinance project, the women secured funding for the construction of a concrete irrigation system, a fence, seeds, and a motor pump for 2.5 hectares. The women were also provided with technical training on how to cultivate vegetables, enabling the production of high-value agricultural commodities. After only three months of production and marketing of horticultural products, the women's incomes grew significantly. "We were living in hardship and hope, but today, USAID has given us a chance for better life," said the Djenne village chief.[15]

In Azerbaijan, with USAID funding, Mercy Corps is working to boost incomes of rural poor and women microentrepreneurs by facilitating the availability of high-quality and reasonably priced veterinary and animal husbandry services in the livestock and poultry subsectors. Mercy Corps is stimulating demand for veterinary services by organizing clients into groups and building awareness of available services, and providers. Training and networking are also strengthening the business and marketing capabilities of veterinarians. The program will enable networks of trained veterinarians to expand their client base and improve services through production know-how with disease diagnosis and treatment.[16]

Trade

The President's Trade Policy Agenda for 2003 states that the "United States is committed to expanding the circle of nations that benefit from global trade... [and] to help[ing] developing economies build the capacity to take part in trade negotiations, implement the rules, and seize opportunities." As testament to this commitment, the United States is the largest provider of trade capacity building assistance in the world, funding 70 percent of all such assistance in various regions of the world in recent years. USAID, as the principal U.S. agency charged with extending assistance to countries trying to escape poverty, plays a major role in the provision of this support.

Trade and investment are the principal mechanisms through which global market forces—competition, human resource development, technology transfer, and technological innovation—generate growth in developing and developed countries.[17] Nevertheless, inadequate education and limited access to resources such as credit and land place the poor, and in particular poor women, in a weak position to benefit from the economic opportunities offered by trade. This reality has highlighted the importance of investments in human capital in the form of education and training so that women can also participate in the opportunities generated by increased trade.[18]

In Peru, a group of small entrepreneur weavers, primarily women, joined together to form the company Royal Knit. USAID's Regional Economic Service Center provided business management training and worked with Royal Knit to improve their designs, resulting in the creation of over 5,000 jobs and annual sales of approximately $500,000. In a region with 43 percent of the population living in poverty, Royal Knit has shown that it is possible for poor hand weavers to compete in high-technology markets.[19]

In West Africa, the West African Women's Regional Trade Facilitation Program identifies and reduces administrative and procedural barriers that constrain the creation, operation and expansion of women's businesses. Created with the support of the USAID West Africa Regional Program and the Office of Women in Development, the activity includes registered business owners from 10 national chapters throughout the region. It provides technical assistance to women traders in the region and brings together a broad range of stakeholders to identify ways to reduce policy and procedural barriers to women's economic activities.[20]

Information and Communication Technology

The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) revolution is creating a global information society, transforming social, economic, and political life around the world. The "digital divide" between developed and developing nations in access to the benefits of ICT is recognized as a major problem, and within developing nations there is often a gender dimension to the digital divide. Access to ICT is critical to further worldwide progress in education, health, economic development, natural resource management, governance and civil society. For USAID, ICT is a tool for development and a theme that cuts across all USAID programs. USAID is working to close the "digital divide" between and within countries by promoting policy and regulatory reforms, expanding community ICT access centers, and improving educational materials to meet the needs of both men and women. USAID is a leader among donors in incorporating an explicit gender dimension in over 85 percent of its ICT activities.

USAID partners, in cooperation with the African Businesswomen's Information Service, brought Guinean women entrepreneurs into a cyber café to learn the basics of computer use, and how to access the Internet to improve their businesses. This training is being provided to women business owners and managers in rural and urban areas in eight countries in West Africa, including Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Sierra Leone, Togo, and Guinea. One of the workshop trainers said, "As soon as you open the information technology door to the women, you just see their faces light up—you see the difference, and you see their confidence grow as they begin to understand. They see that something they thought was for other people and not them is accessible to them, too."

This training will enable them to use ICT to access critical market information, identify prospective business opportunities, increase sub-regional information flows, engage in cross-border trade linkages with other regional and U.S. business partners, and become a greater advocacy voice for domestic trade and investment policy reform.[21]

An example of the use of ICT to promote governance and civil society is a USAID-sponsored ICT training program to enhance the political participation of Moroccan women, and to build their capacity to use ICT. The women learned how to use ICT to enhance political campaigns, strengthen advocacy skills, carry out Internet research for informed decision-making, and better serve their communities. In addition, the women participated in discussions around broad issues of ICT, gender, and policy-making.[22]

In Brazil, USAID is integrating ICT training and employability activities for at-risk youth. Many of those at risk are young women, and this ICT technical training program enrolled 60 percent girls. The initiative will prepare the participating youth for employment opportunities as ICT technical support staff in small and medium enterprises, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the public sector. Women were recruited and trained as ICT trainers, employment counselors, and e-mentors in commensurate numbers as men.[23]

Agriculture

The vast majority of the poor live in rural areas where the primary income and livelihood sources are subsistence and smallholder agriculture. In developing countries, women comprise approximately 67 percent of the agricultural labor force and worldwide are responsible for more than 55 percent of food production.[24] Female farmers receive only 5 percent of all agricultural extension services worldwide and own less than 2 percent of all land.[25] Their productivity in agriculture is further constrained by lack of access to formal and informal education, as well as difficulty in securing land and other forms of collateral that would enable them to access credit and increase their productive capacity. Within the agricultural sector men most often are focused on large-scale and typically highly mechanized cash cropping, while women are primarily responsible for subsistence farming utilizing low levels of technology which limits their productivity and aggravates their already enormous workloads.

Although many challenges remain, success stories from USAID assistance in agriculture abound. In Ethiopia, women form the majority of direct participants and beneficiaries of USAID's rural economic programs. Of the farmers reached by agriculture research and extension services between 54 and 60 percent were women. Of the 1,600 households adopting better technologies such as fuel-efficient stoves, improved crop varieties, bee-keeping, and soil and water conservation, 75 percent were women-headed, as were 78 percent of the 3,600 households that began income-generating activities. Twelve savings and credit cooperatives are providing financial services to 2,100 households, 86 percent of them women-headed.[26]

In Moldova, USAID's Farmer-to-Farmer program assists individual farmers and farmer cooperatives in grassroots initiatives that impact agribusiness development. Moldovan farmers receive support in strategic marketing, the development of budgets and work plans. The program includes a component focused on training local trainers in financial management and record-keeping. Close ties are also maintained with the American Farm Bureau Federation and its Women's Committee in order to strengthen the representation of women in agriculture and agribusiness.[27]

In Afghanistan, agriculture employs 70 percent of the labor force and Afghan women play a large part in it, especially in raising livestock. The Rebuilding Afghanistan's Agricultural Markets and Production program will improve the technical capacity of Afghans to raise livestock. It will also provide women entrepreneurs with innovative opportunities for credit and business training, benefiting women-headed households in particular. USAID is also training

Afghan women to improve the quality of their poultry business.[28]

In West and Central Africa, building on the women's experience as the primary cultivators of upland rice, the West African Rice Development Association (WARDA) asked women farmers to test new rice varieties. Using participatory field tests of new varieties created with the tools of biotechnology, WARDA scientists sought to identify the most desirable features to combine from two types of rice, *Oryza sativa*, an Asian variety, and *Oryza glaberrima*, an African variety. The result was the NERICA variety, combining the taste of African rice, its higher protein content and drought tolerance, and lower weeding requirements, with the higher yields of the Asian type.[29]

Natural Resources

The scarcity of water and forest resources is increasing worldwide, particularly in developing countries. From 1992 to 2002, forest resources equivalent to about 94 million hectares, an area larger than Venezuela, were lost.[30] Serious shortages of fresh water affect more than 30 developing countries, and more than one billion people do not have access to clean water. Biodiversity is declining, and land use is increasingly impaired.

In order for developing countries to manage their natural resources wisely, they need to take into account that men and women approach natural resource use differently, have different levels of access to and control of resources and differing priorities and concerns. In addition to the commercial activities that women undertake, women have to meet daily household needs for food, water and fuel. Men generally focus more on commercial uses of natural resources. USAID helps developing countries take both women's and men's concerns into account in large natural resource programs. USAID also supports smaller community-based efforts specifically targeted at engaging women in sustainable commercial and household use of natural resources.

The West Africa Water Initiative began in 2003 as a public-private partnership to provide potable water and sanitation to rural villages in Ghana, Mali and Niger. Its aims are to "increase the level of access to sustainable, safe water and environmental sanitation services among poor and vulnerable populations, reduce the prevalence of water-borne diseases, including trachoma, guinea worm, and diarrheal diseases; and ensure ecologically and financially sustainable management of water quantity and quality."[31] Acknowledging the important roles of women and girls in the development and management of water resources, sanitation, and hygiene activities, project sponsors are taking steps to engage women and girls in planning and implementation.

The U.S.- Asia Environmental Partnership has called on Indonesian women for help in strengthening the linkages between consumers of water and municipal water enterprises. The Women's Institutions for Local Development Project inspired the participation of more than 100 volunteer local women's groups, including moderate Muslim groups, in the provision of piped water, through seven water forums. Additional forums will be established, leading to a network of as many as 500 provincial women's groups. The result—thousands of Indonesian families will benefit from more reliable access to water.[32]

USAID has supported a number of interventions to encourage women or women's groups to increase their incomes and better manage the natural resources on which they depend. For example, in 2002, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador and Peru were among the countries receiving USAID small grants to support Conservation-Based Economic Opportunities for Women. The grants funded income-generating activities that expanded or added new processes, products or markets to effective existing projects. In Brazil, for example, a grant to the Anapu Women's Movement supported local efforts to recover degraded agricultural areas by re-introducing native plant species. A male and a female agricultural technician worked with both men and women in 50 families to conserve their land, which in turn will help prevent further migration and forest degradation.[33]

In Kenya, USAID's support of the Wasini Women's group on the coastal island of Wasini has conserved biodiversity and profited the group and its members. USAID joined forces with the Kenyan Wildlife Service and the women's group to create a one-kilometer boardwalk over ancient coral gardens and mangrove marine parkland. After learning financial management and leadership skills, the women now manage and maintain the boardwalk. The profits from tourism have been used to build a curio shop, pay off their loan, and provide income to members of the group.[34]

Women's Health

Every minute a woman dies needlessly from complications related to pregnancy. Each year more than 50 million women experience pregnancy-related complications, many of which lead to long-term disability or illness. Each year more than 500,000 women, 99 percent of them in developing countries, lose their lives to preventable complications of pregnancy and childbirth.[35] The majority of these maternal deaths are preventable with currently available technology.

Research indicates that gender inequality contributes to these tragic statistics. Men often make the decisions about sexual relations, when to have a child and whether to seek health care. Women's lack of decision-making power, control over household resources and ability to travel outside their homes can lead to inadequate health information and care during pregnancy and childbirth. Men are less likely to interact with healthcare providers, to be given information about the risks and complications of pregnancy, or to believe that the family's financial resources should be allocated to health.

Countless women and children are alive today as a result of USAID efforts to improve the health and quality of life of millions of women and children worldwide. Improvements in maternal health help not only the mothers, but also increase child survival, decrease health care costs, and improve productivity and household incomes. As a result of years of innovative programs and field experience, the Agency remains at the forefront of global efforts to reduce maternal mortality.

USAID's flagship initiative to reduce maternal and newborn deaths in the developing world, the Maternal and Neonatal Health Program, was established in 1998.[36] The program is actively engaged in identifying and addressing gender-related barriers to care. In Zambia, through this program, USAID worked with staff from five midwifery schools and the General Nursing Council to revise

the midwifery curriculum which now addresses topics such as how to involve men in maternal health and how to manage clients with gender-and health- related concerns such as gender-based violence.

In Guatemala, USAID works with community leaders, pregnant women and their families to develop plans involving men and women in recognizing danger signals and mobilizing resources to ensure that each pregnant woman reaches an appropriate health care facility. Health providers are adapting their health facilities to meet their community's cultural preferences.[37]

Childbirth is the leading cause of death of women in Afghanistan, where the lifetime risk of maternal death is 1 in 15, compared with 1 in 3,500 in the United States.[38] USAID aims to reduce Afghanistan's high maternal mortality rate by building 400 new clinics that will provide basic health services particularly in rural areas. A major component of the program is to increase women's access to skilled birth attendants and essential obstetrical services through training programs.

USAID recognizes Female Genital Cutting (FGC) as a serious human rights violation of women and girls that has grave health consequences. The practice usually is performed without anesthetic on infants and girls by medically unqualified persons. Female cutting may cause massive and fatal bleeding. It can also lead to chronic infections, sterility, and serious complications in childbirth.[39]

Recent locally led efforts in Africa, supported by USAID, help persuade mothers not to allow the traditional cutting of their babies—a practice that they believe will prevent their daughters from being unfaithful to their future husbands. To help convince villagers that FGC must cease, several African countries are combining an official "zero tolerance" stance with theater and poetry.[40] The Senegalese Parliament recently passed a resolution declaring "Zero Tolerance to FGC." It states that Senegalese should not tolerate or be indifferent to the practice, regardless of its type, justification, or location.[41] More than 1,200 villages in five Senegalese regions recently declared an end to FGC and to marriages for very young girls.

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HIV/AIDS

Globally, 50 percent of the estimated 40 million adults living with HIV/AIDS are women. The United Nations estimates that 6,000 young people aged 15 to 24 years become infected with HIV every day.[42] Most are adolescent girls. Of young people aged 15 to 24 living with HIV/AIDS, nearly two-thirds are female.[43] A contributor to the spread of HIV among adolescent girls is cross-generational sex, between adult men and girls aged 15 to 19. The age difference contributes to the girl's limited power to avoid high-risk behavior and can double her risk of HIV infection.

In sub-Saharan Africa where 62.5 percent of HIV-infected people live, HIV/AIDS is striking women with a vengeance. Women in Africa are significantly more likely by at least 1.2 times to be infected with HIV than men. Among young people aged 15 to 24, this ratio is even higher. A recent study estimates that among 15 to 19-year-old South African adolescents, girls have an HIV infection rate of 15.64 percent compared to 2.58 percent for boys.[44]

The U.S. Government is a world leader in the fight against HIV/AIDS and USAID has been, and continues to be, in the frontlines. USAID-supported activities pay special attention to the gender dimensions of the disease. USAID has been working to involve men in improving health outcomes, including HIV/AIDS prevention. The global Men as Partners program, an initiative supported by USAID in several countries of West Africa, as well as Egypt, Mexico, Pakistan, Kenya and South Africa, works to positively involve men in health and family planning. The South Africa program has used this approach to address the interrelationship between gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS. The objectives are to mobilize men to become actively involved in countering the two epidemics of HIV/AIDS and gender-based violence, and to transform the attitudes and behaviors that negatively affect the health and well-being of men, women and children. An evaluation of the program showed that 71 percent of participants believed that men and women should have the same rights, compared with 25 percent of the men in the control group; and 82 percent of participants believed that it was wrong to beat their wives as compared with 38 percent of the men in the control group.[45]

In southern Africa, where life expectancy has dropped from 57 years to 33 due to HIV/AIDS, a recent USAID intervention in Swaziland is designed to focus on the health and family planning needs of HIV-positive women. USAID was successful in bringing together Swaziland's Ministry of Health, the National AIDS Commission and HIV-positive women, to define issues for consideration.The list of issues being addressed may include property rights, prioritization of care when the whole family is infected, resource distribution in families where the woman is HIV-positive, and access to nutrition for HIV-positive women.

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Trafficking in Persons

Trafficking of women and children is fueled by a complex set of factors including the low status of women, the prevalence of violence against women, poverty and unemployment, susceptibility to false promises of a better life abroad, the demand for cheap labor and sex, corrupt officials, organized crime networks and porous international borders. Although its criminal nature masks the scope of trafficking in persons, the U.S. Government estimates that 800,000 to 900,000 people are trafficked annually across international borders in all regions for sexual or economic exploitation.[46] These statistics do not reflect the whole story, since an additional and significant number of individuals never cross a border, but are trafficked within a country. USAID accords very high priority to combating trafficking in persons through prevention programs, protection and treatment of victims, and prosecution of perpetrators.

The problem of trafficking in persons is both a development and a criminal justice problem. Victims may be deceived by false promises of legitimate work, otherwise defrauded or tricked, or they may be threatened with force, coerced, abducted, or even sold by their parents. Women are often more vulnerable to traffickers because they lack education or access to work near their homes, or due to the prevalence of gender-based abuse and violence. Parents and communities may entrust, or even sell, their children to strangers, in hope of a better future, or perhaps just survival. Victims are exploited sexually for prostitution or pornography, or economically for labor without compensation in homes, farms, factories or other businesses. Official corruption and weak local law enforcement contribute to traffickers' ability to operate with impunity in many places.

The U.S. Government has made the battle against trafficking in persons a high priority, through legislation, a Presidential Directive and an Anti-Trafficking Presidential Initiative. USAID has issued a Trafficking in Persons Strategy[47] to guide its programs toward common goals: to prevent trafficking of persons for sexual or economic exploitation, to protect trafficking victims and support their recovery and reintegration into their societies, and to support anti-trafficking legislation and the prosecution of traffickers.

USAID's experience with anti-trafficking programs began in the mid-1990s with activities in South and Southeast Asia and in Ukraine. Today USAID is playing a critical role in the expansion of overall U.S. government assistance to committed governments, NGOs and international organizations to combat and eliminate trafficking, and USAID supports anti-trafficking programs in more than 40 countries.

Examples from USAID's long-running anti-trafficking efforts as well

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as newer programs illustrate the range of the USAID work on this issue. Since 1998, USAID's Trafficking Prevention Project in Ukraine has addressed two key factors that contribute to the susceptibility of Ukrainian women to trafficking: lack of economic opportunity and violence against women. Activities are grounded in the assumptions that in order to improve trafficking prevention efforts in Ukraine: women in the at-risk group need training to recognize and create viable economic opportunities for themselves; and crisis prevention services for at-risk women and returned trafficking victims need strengthening. Interventions are aimed at women and girls between the ages of 12 and 40, the group at greatest risk of being trafficked. Seven Trafficking Prevention Centers working across Ukraine in Lviv, Donetsk, Dniepropetrovsk, Zhytomyr, Chernivtsi, Rivne, and Kherson, provide job skills training, counseling, legal, and hotline services.

In India, USAID is working with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and numerous Indian NGOs active in anti-trafficking throughout the country. Activities include information centers and shelters, psychological counseling, and educational and vocational opportunities, including for children of prostitutes, in order to prevent them from falling victim to traffickers. Training helps communities advocate against trafficking and reach at-risk groups with prevention efforts. Support is also provided for information-sharing networks between NGOs and local law enforcement, and training for judiciary and law enforcement officials on the causes, nature, and magnitude of trafficking. Awareness campaigns are underway at state and national levels using a variety of media.

In Brazil, USAID's At-risk Youth and Child Labor Program has provided a springboard for creative collaboration with the Government of Brazil and local NGOs in the battle against trafficking in persons, particularly for children and adolescents trafficked for purposes of sexual exploitation. In 2003, the Government of Brazil formed a network of public and private sector victim assistance providers in seven municipalities with high incidences of trafficking. With USAID support, the government held workshops to develop anti-trafficking plans for 1,200 professionals from diverse governmental and social service organizations in seven municipalities. USAID will support expansion of training to cover a broader range of topics and will extend it to victim assistance providers in the Northeastern states of Maranhão, Paraíba, and Rio Grande do Norte. The USAID Mission will also help strengthen training for government officials who directly assist trafficking victims.

Violence Against Women

Over the past two decades violence against women has moved gradually from a hidden epidemic to a public issue. It is now viewed as both a human rights and a development issue, with negative consequences for men and women.

Over the past two decades violence against women has moved gradually from a hidden epidemic to a public issue. It is now viewed as both a human rights and a development issue, with negative consequences for both women and men. Gender-based violence is physical, sexual, and psychological; it cuts across the public and private spheres of home, school, and work, and takes place during peacetime and during conflict. It is also an important means through which inequalities between men and women are maintained.

Recognizing the devastating social and economic impact of violence against women, USAID is working to address and deter its effects on health, lost worker earnings and productivity, impact on children and costs associated with the criminal justice system. Domestic violence, perhaps the most pervasive and entrenched abuse of women, is known to result in significant health impacts, and it is increasingly recognized as a major economic concern, as well as an impediment to women's full participation in society. A recent Inter-American Development Bank study of domestic violence in Chile and Nicaragua found that all types of domestic violence reduced women's earnings by $1.56 billion in Chile, which is more than 2 percent of the 1996 gross domestic product, and by $29 million in Nicaragua, about 1.6 percent of the 1996 gross domestic product.[48] In India, studies on the estimated cost of domestic violence found that 42 percent of women who reported injury also reported that their husbands missed work after an incident of violence, and 57 percent reported health care costs due to violence-related injuries. Even more significant, the results underscored a critical dimension of domestic violence: the impact of violence on the household economy is long term.[49]

Equally striking is the impact violence has on girls' education. Gender-based violence in schools recently has been recognized as a barrier to girls' educational achievement, according to several studies, and a serious health risk for girls. Addressing power imbalances between men and women is central to preventing gender violence, and this process must begin in schools.[50] USAID has begun a major effort to develop new programmatic approaches to improve the safety of schools, especially for girls in Ghana, Malawi and Ethiopia.

A better understanding of the complexities of violence and its impact on social and economic progress is necessary to increase the benefits of development assistance to those men, women and children in all regions of the world. USAID has long supported local women's groups in combating domestic violence, and recently has begun working with men's groups as well. These groups are formed to confront the problem and raise men's awareness and change their behavior. An innovative local campaign against gender-based violence was organized by The Association of Men Against Violence with the support of USAID in East Timor.[51] The campaign, in collaboration with women's organizations, raises men's awareness of gender issues, and conducts rural workshops about ending violence against women. Also in East Timor, USAID is supporting efforts to draft anti-violence legislation, to hold anti-violence campaigns and to research the effect of domestic violence on women.

In Cambodia, USAID has supported The Asia Foundation's programs that mobilize men against domestic violence by distributing information and educational materials on combating domestic violence during village presentations and radio programs. USAID and The Asia Foundation also supported The Cambodian Women's Crisis Center in advocating for passage of the Domestic Violence Law.

The issue of violence against women and children in conflict and transition countries has emerged as priority for USAID in recent years. At the end of the Rwanda genocide in l994, USAID was the first donor agency to organize emergency development assistance and training specifically designed for women. Today, ten years later in Afghanistan, USAID is working with the World Food Program to provide women with a means of income and an important source of nutrition for the country's capital after a decade of civil wars and Taliban rule.

Although men and boys as well as women and girls are targets of violence during conflict, gender-based violence is most often aimed at women. According to Save the Children's *State of the World's Mothers Report 2003*, trafficking of women and girls was reported in 85 percent of conflict zones, and violence against women and children was reported in over 95 percent of conflict zones. Women and children who experience conflict-related violence often show signs of extreme stress and anxiety, leading to a host of psychological and physical problems if left untreated. The situation is especially difficult for refugees and populations displaced by conflict, the majority of whom are women and children. USAID and its partners support research on violence against women, psycho-social counseling, shelters for women and children, and anti-violence training for young boys and men.

USAID recently carried out an on-the-ground assessment of the post-war situation in Liberia, where women and children were abducted or forced into the conflict in great numbers as front line fighters or sex slaves. This assessment will be the basis for future programs to address the needs of these severely traumatized populations so that they have a chance to contribute positively to their families, communities and country.

Women's Legal Rights and Political Participation

Today, political leadership positions still are occupied largely by men, although women have increasingly provided dynamic leadership in the non-governmental and small enterprise sectors. Women's representation in national congresses and local assemblies is rising slowly, but parliamentary seats occupied by women remain at about 15 percent worldwide.[52] Legal restrictions on women's land and property ownership continue to hamper their ability to acquire productive assets and to mitigate their vulnerability in the face of family or other crises.

Legal rights and protections are important to women's ability to access economic opportunities that are open to men. In each region of the world, USAID works with local cultural and legal systems to shape human rights legislation and economic governance structures that give women the same rights and protections offered to men.

USAID works alongside non-governmental partners and other organizations to heighten awareness of the importance of broad participation in the political process; to strengthen advocacy groups working on behalf of women; to expand access to political positions and processes; promote equitable laws, regional and international policies and practices; and encourage networking among women. USAID supports this through a wide variety of initiatives, including: the promotion of women candidates for elected offices; women's leadership in legislative, judicial and local governance reform; strengthening of civil society organizations and independent media outlets to improve transparency, accountability and inclusiveness; women's participation in conflict mediation efforts through tolerance education campaigns; human rights education and training, and anti-trafficking and enforcement programs. Increasing women's political participation at the local level is a key entry point from which women can gain experience and training to reach the national level.

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Prior to the 2002 elections, Morocco ranked last among Arab nations in terms of women's participation in parliament.[53] USAID partnered with NGOs to target potential candidates within the political parties, run campaign schools for more than 100 women, provide public speaking consultations, and organize a nationwide voter education campaign that targeted women. Thirty-five women won seats and the election helped change the attitude of Moroccans about women in leadership positions. Some gains have been made, but continued investments are needed to consolidate and expand women's political skills.[54]

In Colombia, outreach activities to increase knowledge of and receptivity to women's legal rights reached over a million people.[55] In Nigeria, research was carried out and legislative sponsorship was obtained for a domestic violence bill.[56] In Tanzania, an intense campaign to secure enactment of a bill to provide equal inheritance rights to women was continued, with the bill scheduled for tabling in Parliament.[57] In Bangladesh, Cambodia and Nepal, USAID has actively supported efforts to strengthen the capacity of women to work for greater economic and legal rights; and strategic alliances between non-governmental organizations and private sector groups to ensure women's economic rights.[58] As a result of training given to police and justice sector officials in Ghana, there was also an increase in the number of cases being pursued through the legal system.

Lessons Learned and Challenges Ahead

"Women's contributions are essential whether it's stemming the HIV/AIDS pandemic, lifting populations out of poverty, or helping regions recover from the ravages of conflict."

Secretary of State Colin Powell,
Remarks to Mark International
Women's Day, March 8, 2002

Lessons Learned

USAID, in partnership with women and men in developing countries, and with governmental and non-governmental organizations, has worked to bring women and men together as equal partners in the social, economic and political lives of their countries. These efforts have brought results, hope, and lessons for the future. As in all development, lessons are learned from success and from failure.

Women are often strong and vulnerable at the same time. They are not only victims, but also determined survivors and actors. The tendency to see women as either weak or strong ignores their multi-dimensionality, and leads to missed opportunities to facilitate real change. Women who have been victimized, for example, in conflict or post-conflict situations, after being trafficked, by poverty, or by lack of rights to property, are often extremely strong and resourceful survivors, taking care of their children first of all, and helping others as well as themselves.

Women are not a special interest group, but half the population of the world. Women do not constitute a homogeneous group, but reflect the ethnic, religious, educational, economic and political diversity found in their societies. Women and children should not be seen or addressed in the same way because, however limited women's options may be, women have agency[59] that children do not possess.

Development projects have often focused on women as the key to solving their own problems. Women are critical to effecting changes in access to opportunities and new roles, but men also are important and must be involved in all our efforts to change the lives, opportunities, and prospects for women. Improvements in women's opportunities have been shown to lead to improvements in the lives of their whole families and communities. There are no sectors or issues faced by women in which men are not important, or should not be involved as part of the solution.

The dynamics of women's and men's relationships as well as the complexities and interrelatedness of their roles in a given culture and socio-economic situation must be understood before development solutions can be planned. The fabric of society and male and female and intergenerational dynamics are so intertwined that it is difficult to separate out one element without addressing the others. In societies, communities and families, any change, positive or negative, has second and third order effects that must be taken into account.

The developed and developing worlds have changed significantly with regard to women's rights and capabilities in the past decade. Many women and men, NGOs and governments in developing countries are demanding more and faster change in the situation of women. Finally, and perhaps most powerfully of all, women have begun to be seen and to see themselves not just as victims, but as actors with strength and resilience, with capabilities and aspirations for their children, their families, their societies and themselves.

Challenges Ahead

Despite progress in many areas, new challenges to development continue to emerge, and some threaten to overshadow achievements already attained. Most have critical gender dimensions. As problems are solved, new issues and new possibilities arise. In looking ahead, USAID will continue to take into account the gender dimensions of long-standing and persistent challenges to development, as well as still-emerging issues that may undermine or complicate the achievement of long-term development success. Progress in girls' education, maternal health, legal reforms and rights, economic opportunities and women's participation in politics and government is often overshadowed, even overtaken, by relatively new challenges such as HIV/AIDS; rapidly moving globalization; continual internal and regional conflicts; and, trafficking in persons.

HIV/AIDS

Despite progress made against the HIV/AIDS pandemic in many developed and in some developing countries, the epidemic has not yet crested in some very large poor countries where an explosion of HIV infections is expected in the next few years. The face of HIV/AIDS is becoming female, and the unequal status of women is an inadvertent, but powerful factor in the spread of the infection. Teenage girls in Southern Africa are becoming infected by their teachers or by "sugar daddies". Women in conflict situations are being raped repeatedly by guerrillas as well as by soldiers who, in many countries, have very high infection rates. Women and girls trafficked into prostitution may be exposed to HIV and other sexually transmitted infections many times each day. Their youth, low status, and vulnerability and susceptibility to the coercion of their traffickers and pimps make it difficult for them to protect themselves against infection. Widespread violence against women is contributing to the spread of HIV/AIDS. Women may be faithful in relationships, but if men are not equally faithful, their wives will be at risk. The public health efforts to fight this pandemic are critical, but they will not be as effective without complementary efforts to address the power imbalance between women and men that can place women in high risk sexual situations over which they have little or no control. This means the involvement not only of women, but also of men in creating an environment of tolerance, safety, and respect for women.

Violence Against Women

Much more needs to be done to understand violence as a multidimensional issue with a variety of causes, many of which are embedded in men's and women's socially imposed roles. An increased understanding of how a culture of violence subordinates and injures both men and women is necessary to develop strategies to include both men and women in anti-violence programs. Successful efforts must also include both boys and girls; working only with girls, is at best, only half a solution. Framing the issue in the polarizing language of girls versus boys, victims versus perpetrators, only exacerbates an already difficult situation and masks the complexity of the dynamics of gender and power.

Conflict, Post-Conflict and Peace.

From Rwanda and the Balkans through Liberia and Afghanistan, the world heard and saw reports of women being abducted, raped, mutilated and tortured. Trafficking and sexual slavery are part of the climate of conflict. *The State of the World's Mothers Report* states that trafficking of women and girls is present in 85 percent of the conflict countries in the world. Refugee situations are beset by gender-based violence, and even by demands by camp administrators for sex from women in exchange for their food rations.

The past decade exposed the need to address gender-based violence during and post-conflict. Crimes against women in wartime need to be further codified, reported, prosecuted, and remedied. Social services need to be provided to victims and survivors of conflict. Clear patterns have begun to emerge that can help emergency aid agencies prepare gender-related responses in post-conflict situations. We know that women and children are the majority of displaced persons. Given the space to voice their needs and expectations, women themselves can best determine their needs and their role in building the peace.

Globalization

The global landscape can change swiftly with new trade agreements and the entry of large poor countries into global markets. ICT has revolutionized the way the world does business. Trade liberalization and the transfer of a large portion of manufacturing and assembly to the

developing world have brought new opportunities to men and women. However, inadequate education and limited access to resources such as credit and land place the poor, and in particular poor women, in a weak position to benefit from the economic opportunities offered by trade. This reality has made it ever more imperative that USAID investments in trade capacity building be inclusive of women and focus on human capital investments so that men and women are able to enter the global economy and benefit from the opportunities generated by increased trade.

Demographic Shifts — An Older and Younger Population

The largest cohort of youth the world has ever known is heading into reproductive age. At the same time, the populations not only of developed countries, but also of developing countries, are aging. Societies are unprepared to cope with the tremendous growth in the numbers of the young and old and the relative shrinking of the productive age population. Where is the support for the education of youth and care for the elderly to come from? How are the growing number of widows to support themselves when property laws do not ensure them ownership of land they have worked for a lifetime? In the face of HIV/AIDS, how are youth to stay healthy, and widows of AIDS victims to cope with the survival of their children when they may have no assets or inheritance rights? All countries must face the implications of these demographic shifts, but in infrastructure and resource poor developing countries the challenge will be that much more difficult.

Concern for youth is a priority for USAID. Among the many initiatives, in late 2003, USAID started Safe Schools, a groundbreaking new program to address school-related gender-based violence. USAID supported a successful program called New Visions in Egypt for boys and young men associating messages of gender equality and masculinity, human relations, health, and providing life skills in dealing with anger and violence.

The increase in the numbers of the elderly is also a serious concern. USAID helped a group of elderly South Africans explore ways to make communally-owned tribal land more productive. As a result, these older South Africans now rent out the land that they are too old and frail to tend themselves. Widows and the elderly had land use rights, but often lacked either the money or the ability to farm the land. Now that they are able to rent out their land, these impoverished people have enhanced their incomes and the food available to the community has increased.[60]

In all of these challenges, both ongoing and new, USAID is guided by the U.S. Department of State/USAID *Strategic Plan*. The strategy states that: "The broad aim of our diplomacy and development assistance is to turn vicious cycles into virtuous ones, where accountable governments, political and economic freedoms, investing in people, and respect for individuals beget prosperity, healthy and educated populations and political stability." Such a goal will not be achieved unless the contributions, needs and rights of women are taken into account in all of USAID's programs and policies.

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LESSONS LEARNED AND CHALLENGES AHEAD

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"The broad aim of our diplomacy and development assistance is to turn vicious cycles into virtuous ones, where accountable governments, and economic freedoms, investing in people, and respect for individuals beget prosperity, healthy and educated populations and political stability."

U.S. Department of State/USAID *Strategic Plan*

USAID Office of Women in Development

1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20523 USA

www.usaid.gov keyword: wid

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