



# Smart economics: evaluation of Australian aid support for women's economic empowerment

Office of Development Effectiveness  
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For further information, contact:

Office of Development Effectiveness  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade  
GPO Box 887  
Canberra ACT 2601  
Phone (02) 6178 4000  
Facsimile (02) 6178 6076  
Internet [www.ode.dfat.gov.au](http://www.ode.dfat.gov.au)

**Cover photo:** Diesel fitters Michelle Araea and Elva Churem were among the first students of the Asia Pacific Technical College when classes began in Port Moresby in 2007.

**Photo:** Rocky Roe, for the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

**Authors:** Payal Patel, Katherine Fritz, Rekha Mehra, Anne Golla, Anna Clancy and Helen Cheney

#### **Office of Development Effectiveness**

The Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE) at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade builds stronger evidence for more effective aid. ODE monitors the performance of the Australian aid program, evaluates its impact, and contributes to international evidence and debate about aid and development effectiveness.

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# Foreword

This ODE evaluation is timely, with Australia and other donors increasing their focus on women's economic empowerment. In many developing countries, women's rights are not protected, and their economic potential to accelerate development has not been recognised. The World Bank, where I worked for much of my life, has demonstrated that women's economic empowerment leads to faster and broader-based economic growth.

I enjoyed reading the report. It is thorough in discussing each of the key topics and contains a lot of useful information and analysis on the state of DFAT's gender work. I hope that the evidence provided will give readers a clear sense of strengths and weaknesses of programming approaches. The evaluation shows where improvements can be made and should be used to guide decisions about the focus of future efforts in the economic sectors.

The report affirms that Australia is a leading donor in promoting gender equality in its economic programs. However, it also concludes that Australian aid is not harnessing women's full economic potential. Many of the reasons why Australia and other donors find it difficult to ensure that economic benefits of aid are shared equitably among women and men are addressed in the report. These include the entrenched cultural and social barriers in countries where aid is delivered; capacity shortages in gender expertise in Australian staff, as well as in developing countries and implementing partners; inadequate aid program accountability; and a lack of strategic investment in gender analysis, design and monitoring, and evaluation of economic aid programming. Importantly, there is not yet a whole-of-government approach to women's economic empowerment in development, including in Australia's economic diplomacy.

A key finding of the report is that Australia, like many donors, is not adequately engaging the private sector in economic development. A more convincing business case needs to be presented to private-sector investors and partner governments to hire, train and promote women in business, accommodate their roles as carers, and invest more in industries that benefit women and men. To secure real economic progress of women, donors need to more actively engage in public dialogue concerning economics as well as human rights in pursuing gender equality. While both are critical elements of women's empowerment, my experience is that economic justifications will be more relevant and effective in mobilising private-sector businesses.

Change related to women's economic empowerment has moved at too slow a pace. Hopefully, the report recommendations will create greater momentum towards more effective Australian assistance to women engaged in the economic sectors. In terms of development, empowering women is not just the fair thing to do, it is the smart thing to do.



Jim Adams  
Chair, Independent Evaluation Committee



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# Acknowledgments

This evaluation was commissioned by the Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE) and managed by Anna Clancy, with direction and oversight provided by Helen Cheney, and advice and analysis provided by David Slattery. The evaluation was conducted by the International Center for Research on Women (Payal Patel, Katherine Fritz, Rekha Mehra, Anne Golla, Adithi Shetty, Kirsty Sievwright) and written in collaboration with ODE.

The evaluation was undertaken from October 2012 to February 2014. The field work, research and analysis were largely completed before the announcement of the integration of AusAID with the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). Any references to AusAID in the report relate to the former agency; however, to the extent possible, the report has been modified to reflect the new, integrated DFAT.

The evaluation team would like to thank the governments of Laos and Vanuatu, local project management staff, project participants, project implementing partners, and DFAT staff in Canberra, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Fiji, Indonesia, Laos, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu and Vietnam for their collaboration and cooperation throughout the evaluation process. The team would also like to thank DFAT gender advisers, gender focal points and other DFAT staff, who generously provided input on early drafts, as well as Gillian Brown, the independent technical appraiser, who provided many valuable insights.

# Executive summary

*The Asia-Pacific region loses up to \$47 billion per annum as a result of women's limited access to employment opportunities. And we know that we lose around \$16 billion each year as a result of gender gaps in education. So gender equality is good development and it's also smart economics.*

Natasha Stott Despoja  
Australian Ambassador for Women and Girls<sup>a</sup>

Promoting women's economic empowerment is 'smart economics'. When women are fully involved in economic development, countries become more equitable and prosperous. Worldwide, there has been steady progress for women and girls in the key sectors of health and education. However, Australia—like most donors—has had limited success in achieving gender equality outcomes in economic development programs.

Last financial year, approximately 25 per cent of the Australian aid budget was invested in the economic sectors, ranging from primary industry through to the production of goods and provision of services. Australian aid support for economic development is mainly concentrated on agriculture, rural development and transport. Smaller, but still significant, amounts of aid focus on energy, trade, and business and banking. Less than a third of this economic sector investment can demonstrate an explicit focus on gender equality. This is a concern, especially given Australia's longstanding policy of 'mainstreaming' gender equality in its aid program.

This evaluation shows that the aid program has missed opportunities to help women in developing countries improve their economic status, and thereby contribute to local, national and regional economies. Women's economic development is especially critical in the agricultural sector, in which up to 80 per cent of women in low-income developing countries work. At the same time, increasing women's access to credit, energy supply and transportation can open up both existing and new markets, and bring new, less labour-intensive business and trade opportunities.

On the positive side, this evaluation found that Australian aid gender equality policies, including the Women's Economic Empowerment and Livelihoods Strategy, are very good. Moreover, recent policy statements from the Hon Julie Bishop MP (Australia's first female foreign minister) have elevated gender equality and women's economic empowerment in the Australian aid program. An integrated foreign affairs, trade and aid department, together with a new policy agenda (focused on economic diplomacy, the private sector and aid for trade), also presents unique opportunities for Australia's aid program. There has never been a better time for Australia to marshal its resources in support of women and girls in our region.

The evaluation also discovered good-practice examples in all economic sectors examined. These include the Solomon Islands roads project, where women represented 40 per cent of hired labour; the Laos power to the poor project, through which electrification rates for female-headed households in

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<sup>a</sup> Speech by Ms Natasha Stott Despoja AM, Australian Ambassador for Women and Girls, address at the International Women's Day Parliamentary Breakfast, Canberra, 4 March 2014.

the pilot area increased from 63 to 90 per cent; the Vanuatu technical and vocational training program, where 91 per cent of women who completed training reported increased profits after one year; and the Bangladesh microfinance project, which reached more than 52 000 women and resulted in greater control over assets, increased household decision-making and reduced violence against women.

However, examples such as these were the exception, rather than the rule. The evaluation shows that, despite sound policy settings, Australian aid is not yet delivering consistent and strong outcomes for women in its economic investments. In addition to the systemic and persistent barriers facing women globally (outlined in Chapter 1), the evaluation identifies other, closer-to-home issues that can be addressed by the Australian aid program. The evaluation recommendations have been developed to ensure that the Australian Government's women's economic empowerment policy agenda achieves more significant and sustainable outcomes for women, men, girls and boys.

The objectives of this evaluation were to:

- › assess the relevance and effectiveness of the aid program's support for women's economic empowerment
- › identify factors that have facilitated or constrained the effectiveness of the aid program's support for women's economic empowerment
- › generate lessons that will improve the aid program's ability to translate its gender equality strategy into good development practice and gender equality outcomes.

Following these objectives, the evaluation examined the Australian aid program in the following areas.

- › Global **policy and strategy** on women's economic empowerment, including alignment with best practice of peer institutions.
- › Integration of gender policy into economic sector programming; **28 individual investments** (valued at approximately \$867 million) were examined from the five top-spending economic sectors
  1. Agriculture and rural development
  2. Business and banking
  3. Energy
  4. Trade
  5. Transport and storage.
- › Successes and challenges in **country program support** for gender equality and participation in economic programming. Seven country programs were selected: Indonesia, Laos, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Vietnam.
- › **Monitoring and evaluation** systems to track gender equality progress in the economic sectors.

The evaluation adopted a mixed-method approach, comprising document reviews, country field visits, interviews, group discussions and quantitative analysis. The scope of the evaluation was limited to the economic sectors. Initiatives in other sectors that contribute to women's economic empowerment were not the focus of this evaluation.

## Key findings and recommendations

**Australia's policy approach is aligned with global best practice.**

Australia's policy approach to women's economic empowerment is based on the principle that empowering women in the economic sphere is 'smart economics' and a matter of basic human rights. The Australian aid program's policies and strategies for achieving women's economic empowerment

are well aligned with global best practice. Emphasis is given to improving women's access to a range of crucial economic resources, while also mitigating the underlying social and legal barriers faced by women.

**Economic sector investments with a gender focus have had limited funding and have not specifically focused on established pathways for women's economic empowerment. This appears to be improving with new policies and gender capacity.**

Historically, the Australian aid program has spent fewer aid dollars on programs focusing on gender equality in the economic sector than in other sectors. Recent data (2012–13) show that less than 30 per cent of economic initiatives had a specific focus on gender equality, compared with approximately 60 per cent of non-economic initiatives.

A strategic focus on women's economic empowerment has been limited across the economic sectors, although it has recently been improving. This likely reflects the influence of international evidence on what approaches, or 'pathways', are most effective. In addition, the Australian aid program's gender policies, advisory capacity and guidance on women's economic empowerment have been influential. Gender specialists and advisers have been well used by country programs to inform designs and strategies, but implementation has been weak.

**Most economic sector investments demonstrated some effort to consider gender equality in their design or implementation, although results are mixed.**

The majority of initiatives reviewed (70 per cent) made basic attempts to promote gender equality in their design or implementation. In each of the five sectors examined, the Australian aid program had designed or implemented initiatives that addressed issues related to gender equality and women's economic empowerment. On the whole, however, these efforts were piecemeal, and the trade sector presented particular challenges.

Of those initiatives that promoted gender equality, the main focus was on the pathways that:

- › improved women's access to, and control over, economic resources and opportunities
- › increased women's participation and power in decision-making.

Both these pathways are critical for women's empowerment. Other critical pathways for women's economic empowerment—less common in Australia's economic sector program—include mitigating the burden of unpaid care work, improving social protection from economic shocks, and improving legal rights to property, employment and protection from violence.

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## **Recommendation 1 Strategic economic sector investments**

The Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) should invest more strategically in all economic sectors, specifically by:

- i allocating specific resources for activities to address gender inequality within initiative budgets, and undertaking gender analysis with local gender consultants and local women's organisations to ensure an appropriate combination of approaches; this includes exploring approaches less commonly seen in Australia's aid program, such as child care support
- ii building on promising gender equality approaches in private sector-dominated areas, such as roads, agriculture and microfinance
- iii promoting innovation (including research and pilot programs) in challenging areas, such as trade and energy infrastructure.

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### **Country programs are pursuing gender equality, but not all programs are underpinned by gender analysis and the range of pathways to support this objective.**

All seven country program strategies reviewed in the evaluation were largely aligned with the gender policy guidance on how to build women's economic empowerment. Each has pursued gender equality to varying degrees in its economic sector programming. Country programs have focused on the areas of women's business development, agricultural productivity, and expanding access to training, transportation and electrification. Most country programs have gender strategies or action plans that guide programming on gender equality. Very few countries have undertaken the context-specific gender analysis required to identify barriers to women's economic empowerment, or articulated explicit objectives, program pathways and policy dialogue to address these barriers. However, there are examples where the Australian aid program has successfully engaged with implementing partners and national governments in support of gender equality in economic programming.

The consideration of gender in country program strategies is not currently an explicit aid management requirement, although it is implied in various guidance and policy documents. Better economic outcomes for women will require high-level commitment and leadership within DFAT, and more dedicated engagement with partner governments, the private sector and civil society.

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## **Recommendation 2 Gender equality strategies and economic diplomacy**

DFAT should articulate clear commitments for gender equality and women's economic empowerment in its program strategies, program designs and economic diplomacy efforts, specifically by:

- i clearly identifying women's economic empowerment objectives (underpinned by relevant gender analysis) in country, regional and sectoral program strategies
- ii ensuring that staff at Post and in Canberra are familiar with context-specific evidence on gender to support economic diplomacy, and proactively identify investment opportunities relating to gender equality in dialogue with public, community and private-sector stakeholders.

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### **A lack of staff skills and resources remains a barrier to effective programming.**

Only about one-third of Australian aid staff felt confident about how to incorporate gender within a project cycle. Many staff pointed to a need for more sector-specific gender advice. Country programs continue to cite limited staff capacity as a major barrier to effectively incorporating gender equality in programming. Staff should have the ability to conduct relevant gender analysis, and to design and implement appropriate pathways to women's economic empowerment across the economic sectors. They should also be equipped to implement effective policy dialogue to influence partners, and to establish effective monitoring and evaluation systems.

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## **Recommendation 3 Capacity, resources and incentives**

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DFAT should build the capacity of the Australian aid program to implement existing policy relating to the inclusion and empowerment of women in the economic sectors, specifically by:

- i strategically deploying sector-specific gender technical assistance and outreach, especially in design and monitoring activities (giving priority to staff at Post and in-country support)
- ii ensuring that basic gender awareness skills are a minimum requirement in the recruitment of technical advisers and consultants involved in designing, implementing and monitoring economic sector programs
- iii delivering training to program managers on the Women's Economic Empowerment and Livelihoods Strategy, and expanding opportunities for gender and economics training
- iv incorporating gender equality modules and resources within economic diplomacy training
- v introducing incentive mechanisms and other rewards for undertaking and communicating innovative gender equality practices in the economic sectors.

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**Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of gender outcomes is weak.**

Strong M&E systems, capacity and oversight are an essential element of ensuring the relevance and effectiveness of women's empowerment initiatives in the economic sectors. However, evidence of gender-related results in the economic sectors is weak or non-existent. Only one-quarter of the initiatives reviewed in this evaluation reported on any gender-related outcomes. Improvements in this area will require broader efforts, because other work by the Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE) has found that gender equality performance is an ongoing area of weakness across the Australian aid program.

Economic sector initiatives and country programs are not helped by a lack of department-wide guidance on how to structure or implement a quality M&E plan to assess gender outcomes. Most initiatives only conducted M&E at the simplest level: sex-disaggregated data on participation in training and workshops, and uptake of services. These data are important, but insufficient for improving performance on gender equality outcomes. Furthermore, this lack of evidence is reflected in country program-level reporting. This is the case even in country programs that have strong mechanisms for addressing gender equality.

The Australian aid program has embarked on efforts to diagnose and address problems with its current M&E system. It is critical that any subsequent reforms strengthen the integration of gender into the overall M&E system to improve the ability of staff to report on results from gender-focused investments across the portfolio.

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**Recommendation 4      Performance and evaluations**

DFAT should improve monitoring and evaluation in the economic sectors to capture results for women's economic empowerment, specifically by:

- i strengthening the gender requirements in departmental performance systems, including policy, guidance and results relating to gender equality
  - ii improving use of quality at implementation (QAI) reporting to track gender-related results and increase QAI gender ratings of satisfactory and above from 73 to 80 per cent by 2015–16
  - iii selecting a small number of high-potential programs for rigorous mixed-method evaluation
  - iv designing evaluations to include a strong gender equality component, and then using evaluation evidence to improve existing programs and inform future designs.
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# Management response

DFAT welcomes the findings of this evaluation on women's economic empowerment.

The release of this evaluation coincides with DFAT's development of new policy and strategy papers for the aid program, to reflect the government's priorities. This evaluation provides DFAT with clear affirmation of the twin-track approach of mainstreaming gender equality and women's empowerment throughout all its work while also targeting investments specifically at closing gender gaps in areas where progress has been slow and where women face binding constraints. In particular, DFAT's approach aims to support women's economic empowerment, promote women's leadership and participation in decision-making, and eliminate violence against women. The evaluation also affirms the important roles played by gender equality specialists in the department.

DFAT agrees with all four recommendations of the evaluation report.

Two large-scale investments on women's economic empowerment—in Indonesia and the Pacific—have recently started. The design of these investments has taken into account many of the issues raised in the evaluation, and we expect these efforts to improve outcomes for target groups such as women in the formal private sector, women who work in informal market places, women entrepreneurs and women migrant workers. DFAT has invested in several programs in other sectors which also make an important contribution to women's economic empowerment, such as in education and human resource development, health, elimination of violence against women and girls, and leadership (which are not covered in the terms of reference of this evaluation). DFAT will continue to review and learn from these and other investments, to further improve its capacity to design and implement investments that will result in better economic outcomes for women and girls.

DFAT recognises that the private sector can contribute more effectively and more sustainably to poverty eradication if women are provided with equal rights and opportunities—in law and in practice—to start and expand enterprises and to get safe jobs with adequate payment. Effective approaches to working with the private sector and promoting women's economic empowerment will feature strongly in all sector and thematic policy papers under development by the department. The findings of the evaluation will help DFAT to improve the quality of its aid investments, through the identification of what we already do well and what we need to do better. We recognise that the percentage of investments in some economic sectors that focus on gender equality is low compared to other sectors, and we aim to improve on this in the coming years.

## Response to evaluation recommendations

<p><b>Recommendation 1 Strategic economic sector investments</b></p> <p>The Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) should invest more strategically in all economic sectors, specifically by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. allocating specific resources for activities to address gender inequality within initiative budgets, and undertaking gender analysis with local gender consultants and local women's organisations to ensure an appropriate combination of approaches, including exploring approaches less commonly seen in Australia's aid program, such as child care support</li> <li>2. building on some promising gender equality approaches in private sector-dominated areas, such as roads, agriculture and microfinance</li> <li>3. promoting innovation (including research and pilot programs) in challenging areas, such as trade and energy infrastructure.</li> </ol>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>DFAT has clearly articulated how, where and why aid program managers need to consider gender equality concerns. Gender equality and women's empowerment are a key aid investment priority and have been integrated clearly and explicitly into the new aid management system.</p> <p>The new aid policy requires that we will invest strongly where there are persistent challenges and slow progress towards equality, including to improve women's economic empowerment.</p> <p>The Australian aid program will focus particularly on private sector engagement and on expanding infrastructure. Gender equality will be mainstreamed in these and other sectors.</p> <p>The new benchmark around the quality of our aid program's work on gender equality and women's empowerment is expected to lead to a gradual increase in resource allocations for activities to address gender equality within initiative budgets.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 2 Gender equality strategies and economic diplomacy</b></p> <p>DFAT should articulate clear commitments for gender equality and women's economic empowerment in its program strategies, program designs and economic diplomacy efforts, specifically by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 clearly identifying women's economic empowerment objectives (underpinned by relevant gender analysis) in country, regional and sectoral program strategies</li> <li>2 ensuring that staff at Post and in Canberra are familiar with context-specific evidence on gender to support economic diplomacy, and proactively identify investment opportunities relating to gender equality in dialogue with public, community and private-sector stakeholders.</li> </ol>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>DFAT encourages country, regional and sector programs to identify specific objectives on women's economic empowerment and to integrate these into their strategies. DFAT is committed to the requirements around gender equality integration in the new aid management system.</p>

<p><b>Recommendation 3 Capacity, resources and incentives</b></p> <p>DFAT should build the capacity of the Australian aid program to implement existing policy relating to the inclusion and empowerment of women in the economic sectors, specifically by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3 strategically deploying sector-specific gender technical assistance and outreach, especially in design and monitoring activities (giving priority to staff at Post and in-country support)</li> <li>4 ensuring that basic gender awareness skills are a minimum requirement in the recruitment of technical advisers and consultants involved in designing, implementing and monitoring economic sector programs</li> <li>5 delivering training to program managers on the Women's Economic Empowerment and Livelihoods Strategy, and expanding opportunities for gender and economics training</li> <li>6 incorporating gender equality modules and resources within economic diplomacy training</li> <li>7 introducing incentive mechanisms and other rewards for undertaking and communicating innovative gender equality practices in the economic sectors.</li> </ol>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>DFAT will endeavour to retain in-house expertise on gender equality and women's empowerment and to support gender focal point staff members in Canberra and at Posts.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 4 Performance and evaluations</b></p> <p>DFAT should improve monitoring and evaluation in the economic sectors to capture results for women's economic empowerment, specifically by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8 strengthening the gender requirements in departmental performance systems, including policy, guidance and results relating to gender equality</li> <li>9 improving use of quality at implementation (QAI) reporting to track gender-related results and increase QAI gender ratings of satisfactory and above from 73 to 80 per cent by 2015-16</li> <li>10 selecting a small number of high-potential programs for rigorous mixed-method evaluation</li> <li>11 designing evaluations to include a strong gender equality component, and then using evaluation evidence to improve existing programs and inform future designs.</li> </ol>		<p>DFAT has adopted a benchmark for the aid program around improved effectiveness of strategies at the investment level to address gender inequalities. This will provide impetus for program managers to review how investments can more effectively promote women's empowerment and overcome gender inequalities. DFAT already has in place a number of requirements around reporting on performance in relation to gender equality.</p>

# 1 Introduction

*Gender equality and women's empowerment remain overarching objectives of the [Australian] aid program ... The Australian aid program is therefore well positioned to promote gender equality in the difficult and varying contexts in which it operates, from the Pacific islands and the Philippines to Afghanistan.*

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development,  
Development Assistance Committee Peer Review of Australia, 2013

## 1.1 Introduction

The Australian aid program is committed to promoting gender equality across the many sectors in which it works. The Australian aid program's 2007<sup>1</sup> and 2011<sup>2</sup> gender policies have provided specific policy and operational guidance to country and sector-level initiatives. The 2011 gender policy calls for a 'strategic focus on results' around four themes: 1) equal access to gender-responsive health and education services, 2) expanding women's voice in decision-making, leadership and peace building, 3) empowering women economically and improving their livelihood security, and 4) ending violence against women and girls.

According to the Australian aid program's gender policy, health and educational attainment for women and girls has steadily improved in recent years. Much work remains to be done, especially in the Pacific region, where gains have been slow. In many other parts of the world, however, trends over the past two decades have been encouraging. In 2010, east Asia saw the highest female-to-male primary school enrolment ratio in the world, and it ranked second highest in secondary school enrolment.<sup>3</sup> Maternal mortality rates have been declining steadily since 1990 across the globe. Improvements in south Asia and the low-income countries of South-east Asia have been particularly dramatic: south Asia saw a 42 per cent decline in maternal mortality, and South-east Asia saw a 49 per cent decline.<sup>4</sup>

At the same time as international reports conclude that promoting women's economic participation in developing countries is 'smart economics', indicators of women's economic empowerment show halting progress.<sup>5</sup> In Australia, the aid program acknowledges that its development programs have made less progress in improving women's economic status.<sup>6</sup> Given the important role that women's economic productivity plays in advancing other development outcomes, this trend needs to be reversed if the aid program is serious about gender equality and development effectiveness. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC):

*The economic empowerment of women is a prerequisite for sustainable development, pro-poor growth and the achievement of all the Millennium Development Goals.<sup>7</sup>*

This evaluation was commissioned to explore and address barriers to women's economic empowerment within economic sector programs. The economic and productive sectors, as defined by the OECD, include primary industry, the production of goods and the provision of services (for further details, see Appendix 1).

The objectives of this evaluation were to:

- › assess the relevance and effectiveness of the aid program's support for women's economic empowerment
- › identify factors that have facilitated or constrained the effectiveness of the aid program's support for women's economic empowerment
- › generate lessons that will improve the aid program's ability to translate its gender equality strategy into good development practice and gender equality outcomes.

## 1.2 Importance of women's economic empowerment in development

Within the field of international development, gender equality is seen as both a fundamental human right and a basic building block of economic prosperity for women themselves, families, communities and nations. Diverse and growing international literature on the topic clearly demonstrates that reducing poverty and improving family wellbeing critically depend on women's economic productivity. In India, for example, states with the highest percentage of women in the labour force showed the fastest economic growth over a 15-year period and had the largest reductions in poverty.<sup>8</sup> Research in 17 countries of the Americas showed that rural poverty would have increased by more than 10 per cent if households had not had access to women's income.<sup>9</sup> Evidence from many different countries shows that women's control over income leads to greater investment in children's human capital and has positive effects on economic growth.<sup>10</sup> In China, increases in women's income are correlated with the survival of female children, and educational attainment for both girls and boys.<sup>11</sup>

## 1.3 Barriers to women's economic empowerment

The development gains promised by women's full and equal participation in local and national economies are not being realised. Everywhere in the world, women face significant and persistent barriers to achieving their economic potential.

- › **Restriction to low-income activities:** In low-income countries of the Pacific, for example, gender norms mean that women's economic activities are largely confined to small-scale agriculture, petty trade, domestic work and microenterprises, where earnings are low, work is uncertain and social protection is rare.<sup>12</sup>
- › **Lack of ownership:** In Asia and the Pacific, as elsewhere in the world, more women earn income from farming than any other form of labour. However, women are less likely than men to own land or farming equipment, or to have access to credit and other agricultural inputs that could make farming a more stable and lucrative livelihood.<sup>13</sup>
- › **Inaccessibility of high-income jobs:** Formal wage labour opportunities in Pacific countries are very limited. Where they do exist, they often require tertiary skills. Paid work can also be physically demanding or involve migration, such as logging, mining and construction work. Moreover, many jobs tend to be classified as 'men's work' according to conventional gender divisions of labour. Women's work remains largely in subsistence agriculture and informal small business, such as market gardening and handicrafts.<sup>14</sup>
- › **Lower wages:** When women do find formal employment, as is increasingly the case in the industrialising economies of east Asia, their wages are often lower than men's for comparable work, and they lack opportunities to advance professionally.<sup>15</sup> Worldwide, women's wages are, on average, between 70 and 90 per cent of men's wages.<sup>16</sup> In many countries, the gender wage gap is more pronounced. In Melanesia, for example, women earn 50 to 80 per cent of men's wages.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to these barriers, beliefs and practices related to gender may limit opportunities for women. Women are often prevented from participating in economic activities because of their caring and cultural responsibilities. High levels of violence against women may prevent them from accessing public facilities such as transport and market places. Women may also experience violence in the home and/or an increased work burden because of their economic empowerment.<sup>18</sup> The 2012 World Bank *World development report* argues that corrective policies are needed where there are persisting gender equality gaps. This evaluation seeks to identify the specific barriers facing the Australian aid program in addressing these gaps.

## 1.4 Key evaluation questions

To examine the successes and challenges of the Australian aid program's strategic approach and program implementation in women's economic empowerment, this evaluation asked the following key questions, each of which is addressed as a chapter of this report.

- › **The Australian aid program's global policy and programming:** What are the Australian aid program's global strategies, policies and frameworks for achieving gender equality and women's economic empowerment, and how do they relate to external (donor and academic) conceptualisations of women's economic empowerment? How does the distribution of initiatives in different sectors align with the global strategy?
- › **Economic sector policy and programming:** For selected initiatives, how were the Australian aid program's gender equality policies translated into practice? How effective have these initiatives been in promoting gender equality and women's economic empowerment?
- › **Country strategies and practice:** How effectively have country programs integrated gender into their economic empowerment programs, adopted gender strategies into country portfolios, and promoted women's economic empowerment among other stakeholders in the country?
- › **Monitoring and evaluation (M&E):** Are M&E systems providing the right information to effectively track and measure progress towards the goal of women's economic empowerment?

The evaluation also looked briefly at the future of Australian aid programming in women's economic empowerment, and how current and planned initiatives may affect results.

## 1.5 Evaluation approach

The evaluation used a mix of methods to answer the evaluation questions. These included document reviews, country field visits, interviews, group discussions and quantitative analysis. We briefly describe the scope of the evaluation here, and provide a full description of the methods of data collection and analysis in Appendix 1.

### Geographic focus

The evaluation focused on seven countries. These included the top five countries in terms of Australian aid expenditures between 2005 and 2012 (Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Solomon Islands and Vietnam). Laos and Vanuatu were also included, because they had substantial economic programming and recent evaluations, and staff were also available to arrange visits to sites where initiatives of interest were being implemented. Samoa was originally included in the sample; however, it was removed from the analysis because a cyclone precluded a site visit. A brief visit to the Pacific Regional Office in Fiji was added to study the dimensions of the aid program's regional program. Details of the macroeconomic and gender context, and economic programming priorities in each country are captured in separate working papers.

## Choice of economic sector initiatives

The evaluation selected 28 initiatives from the top five economic and productive sectors in terms of expenditure: agriculture and rural development, banking and business, energy, trade, and transport and storage (referred to as the economic sectors in this report). Initiatives sampled for the evaluation were valued at approximately \$867 million. They were largely concentrated in the seven countries chosen for the country program assessment, and favoured older initiatives that had an established record of documentation, including evaluations. Many of these initiatives preceded the Australian aid program's gender equality guidance and policies, and therefore may not reflect current trends. For the energy, and business and banking sectors, the pool of initiatives contained only one and two initiatives, respectively. To provide sufficient initiatives for analysis within these sectors, a further five were selected from Bangladesh, Cambodia, Samoa and Tonga to provide a balance of geographic location, initiative size and focus on gender. For further information on the sample, see Appendix 1, Section A1.1.

## Country field visits

The evaluation team made field visits to Fiji, Laos and Vanuatu. The field visits provided the opportunity to supplement information obtained from country program and initiative documents through interviews and discussions with Australian aid program staff, stakeholders and program participants. The visits were invaluable for direct observation of program implementation and interaction with participants. The evaluation team and the Post jointly selected people for interviews and discussions. They included senior Post staff, sector managers and gender focal points (staff who are contact points for gender issues and help promote gender equality); government officials; staff of donor, multilateral and civil society organisations; and program staff and participants. The team met with 60–70 people in each of Laos and Vanuatu, and 10 people in Fiji. For further information, see Appendix 1.



The owner of Lakatoro Palm Lodge on Malekula island, Vanuatu. This bungalow owner, like many others, has received training and support from the DFAT-funded technical and vocational education and training program. *Photo: Ashleigh Connor, DFAT.*

## 2 Australian aid program's global policy and strategy

### Key questions

- › What are the Australian aid program's global strategies, policies and frameworks for achieving gender equality and women's economic empowerment?
- › How do these policies relate to external (donor and academic) conceptualisations of women's economic empowerment?
- › How does the distribution of initiatives in different sectors align with the global strategy?

### Key findings

- › The international development community realises that low- and middle-income countries cannot thrive economically without the full inclusion of women as earners, producers and consumers. Furthermore, it is widely accepted that this inclusion is a basic human right and must be pursued as a matter of urgency.
- › Australia's gender strategy aligns well with recent trends in the field of gender and development.
- › The Australian aid program currently combines gender mainstreaming and programs specifically focused on overcoming specific gender-based constraints. This approach is well aligned with recent research showing that strategically combining these approaches has the highest potential for success.
- › Historically, economic sector aid has focused less on gender equality than other aid sectors, with just over one-third of expenditure in this category assessed as having a gender focus.
- › When compared with other sectors, the economic sector has lower performance in relation to gender.
- › A focus on gender equality in program designs appears to be related to higher ratings for quality in implementation reports regarding gender.

### 2.1 Australian aid program's approach to gender equality

#### Policy

Gender equality is a cross-cutting theme in Australia's aid policy. Empowering women to participate in the economy is a strategic goal to strongly establish that 'equal opportunity for men and women is central to economic and human development'.

Gender equality was elevated to an overarching principle of the Australian aid program with the release of the 2007 gender policy. This policy formally advanced the idea that gender inequality is both a human rights violation and a barrier to good health, safety, effective governance, poverty reduction and economic growth. The 2007 policy included a program of action that aimed to improve the economic status of women, promote women's equal participation in decision-making and

leadership, support equitable health and education outcomes, and advance gender equality in regional cooperation.

The 2011 gender policy reiterated the 2007 commitment to achieving gender equality and advances four interlocking themes, which each have specific goals and objectives (Figure 1).<sup>19</sup>

**Figure 1** Actions in the 2011 Australian aid program gender policy



The 2011 policy improves on the 2007 policy by adding the prevention of violence against women to the high-level themes, reflecting the increased attention and understanding that this issue has received since 2007. In doing so, the 2011 policy is aligned with current international thinking on women's equality. This emphasises the need for integrated models that concurrently address multiple facets of empowerment. As UN Women puts the case:

*For gender relations to be transformed, the structures that underpin them have to change: women and girls should be able to lead lives that are free from violence; they should see the expansion of the full range of human capabilities and have access to a wide range of resources on the same basis as men and boys; and they should have a real presence and voice in the full range of institutional fora (from private to public, from local to global) where decisions are made that shape their lives and the functioning of their families and societies.<sup>20</sup>*

The 2011 gender policy takes this approach and provides a robust framework within which staff can improve existing gender-responsive programs and develop new programs.

Australia's progress in promoting gender equality is reflected in the 2013 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC) peer review of Australia.<sup>21</sup> The review states that gender equality and women's empowerment remain overarching objectives of the aid program and are promoted at the highest political level. It found that 3 of the 10 development objectives of Australia's aid policy address gender equality and the empowerment of women. In addition, Australia is one of the top supporters of UN Women, the lead global agency on gender equality, and co-chairs the OECD DAC Gendernet (where Australia is a lead funder of the initiative to improve the availability and use of statistics that capture gender gaps in economic activity).

## Support and advocacy for gender equality and women's economic empowerment

*It is wonderful to see the Australian Government place economic diplomacy, specifically women's economic empowerment, at the centre of its foreign policy and aid program.*

Natasha Stott Despoja  
Australian Ambassador for Women and Girls<sup>a</sup>

The Australian aid program has increased institutional support for gender equality issues since 2007,<sup>22</sup> when a Gender Advocate position was created at senior executive level to promote gender equality and empowerment, internally and externally, as a critical development aim. In 2011, gender advocacy was elevated through the appointment of an Ambassador for Women and Girls, whose mission is to engage in high-level government-to-government advocacy. There has also been an increase in resourcing for gender, including the establishment of a principal gender adviser, a violence against women adviser and a dedicated Gender Equality section.<sup>b</sup> More than 100 aid program staff have taken on additional responsibilities as gender focal points to help promote gender equality areas across the aid program. These resources support capacity to address gender issues at the country level, through gender analysis to support country strategy development, country-level gender action plans, gender stocktake reports and monitoring.

Large global programs outside the country and economic sector initiatives (covered in this report) that engage in policy dialogue to promote gender equality are also supported by the Australian aid program.<sup>c</sup> This support includes Australian contributions to, and engagement with, the multilateral development banks and the United Nations. In the case of multilateral banks, the Australian Government worked with other donors to influence and advocate for greater attention to gender equality in the economic sectors. This led to both the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank introducing additional gender requirements in their 2012–13 funding rounds for concessional loans and grants. Australia, together with other donor governments, also lobbied for improved monitoring of gender results, targets and strategies.

The Australian aid program has revised questions relating to gender in its peer review process for quality at entry, and increased the involvement of gender advisers in peer reviews. This is reported to have improved the integration of gender into the design, review and evaluation of initiatives. At a strategic level, the principal gender adviser is a member of the aid program's Strategic Programming Committee, which considers and assesses aid investments that are high risk or more than \$100 million.

Gender results have been included in Australia's Annual Review of Aid Effectiveness. These include three agency-level 'women-specific' targets: equal representation by women on water and sanitation committees, attendance at births by skilled birth attendants, and support for women survivors of violence to receive services such as counselling. There are only 11 sex-disaggregated indicators that track whether women and girls benefit from Australian aid investments.

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<sup>a</sup> Speech by Ms Natasha Stott Despoja AM, Australian Ambassador for Women and Girls, reception to welcome Australia's Ambassador for Women and Girls, RG Casey Building, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 3 March 2014.

<sup>b</sup> In 2013, this section included a director and six gender policy positions.

<sup>c</sup> For example, specific global initiatives to improve women's economic empowerment include the M Women initiative, which aims to reduce the gender gap in mobile phone ownership and explore innovative ways for women to exploit mobile phones, including through mobile banking. In addition, the Women's World Banking program is developing financial instruments tailored to the needs of women.

In addition to existing indicators, internal reports note a need to more systematically address, monitor and report on Australia's progress towards gender equality results.<sup>d</sup> This finding is in line with a recent African Development Bank working paper,<sup>23</sup> which concludes that the Australian aid program had taken steps towards a more consistent response by improving accountability in initiative and country programs. As with other donors, however, Australia needs to strengthen internal accountability and field-level incentives to systematically address gender in the implementation and monitoring of investments.

## Global approaches to gender equality

Over the past decade, leading economic institutions, such as the World Bank, OECD DAC, the Asian Development Bank and the African Development Bank, have honed the message that women's equality is essential to moving low-income nations out of poverty and improving the efficiency of development programs. This perspective argues that gender equality improves economic productivity, makes for healthier families, and contributes to smarter and more inclusive laws and policies. These global institutions have also noted that women's empowerment should be considered an inherent right, regardless of its potential to improve development effectiveness.

The Australian aid program's 2011 gender policy echoes this sentiment and notes that 'gender inequality denies individuals their human rights'.<sup>24</sup> It also points out that Australia is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

## 2.2 Australian aid program's approach to women's economic empowerment

The Australian aid program has adopted the OECD's definition<sup>25</sup> of the economic empowerment of women, which emphasises both equitable distribution of resources and women's rights and autonomy:

*Economic empowerment is the capacity of women and men to participate in, contribute to and benefit from growth processes in ways which recognise the value of their contributions, respect their dignity and make it possible to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefits of growth ... Women's economic participation and empowerment are fundamental to strengthening women's rights and enabling women to have control over their lives and exert influence in society. It is about creating just and equitable societies.*

The aid program's approach to achieving women's economic empowerment and livelihood security reflects this orientation. As articulated in the 2011 gender policy, the program aims to:

- › open employment opportunities for women outside the agriculture sector, by working with entrepreneurs and supporting business development
- › improve access to financial services (savings, credit, insurance and financial literacy) by helping providers expand their coverage and develop new instruments that respond to women's needs, as well as by improving financial literacy
- › improve women's agricultural productivity through access to productive resources, machinery, inputs, markets and new technology

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<sup>d</sup> This includes annual thematic performance reports on gender, country program gender stocktakes, and the Office of Development Effectiveness annual reviews of development effectiveness and performance reporting.

- › provide an enabling environment for women to compete equally with men through improved policies and access to training, rural roads, transportation, electricity, information and digital technology
- › look for innovative solutions to provision of care for children, the elderly and the infirm, including through expansion of pre-primary education
- › support social protection measures that specifically meet the needs of women and children, including those that protect women in the informal sector and other vulnerable occupations.

To provide staff with guidance on these approaches, the Gender Equality section produced a ‘how-to’ guide on programming for women’s economic empowerment and livelihood security (WEELS).<sup>26</sup> The WEELS guide provides practical examples of programming under each strategy (see Box 1).

The 2011 gender policy is not explicit regarding the need to improve women’s legal protection and rights. The mention of providing ‘an enabling environment for women to compete equally with men’ hints at the possibility of legal reforms to facilitate women’s employment in infrastructure projects, although the exact meaning of this is not elaborated. This topic is taken up in greater detail in the WEELS guide, which explains the need to ‘support change to legislation, policy and government or private-sector capacity that enables women to earn a living’ and provides several examples of Australian aid activities that do so.

The topic of women’s voice and participation in decision-making—a key element of women’s economic empowerment—is also addressed more explicitly in the WEELS guide.

### **Box 1 Good practice: internal guidance provides ideas for programming approaches**

The Australian aid program’s 2011 gender policy and *Promoting economic opportunities for all: a how-to guide for AusAID staff on programming for women’s economic empowerment and livelihood security (WEELS)* provide a robust framework that programmers can use to design context-appropriate activities in their communities. Key approaches might include:

- › maintaining a combination of approaches at the community level, where mainstreamed strategies are used to reach large numbers of women, and more focused strategies target harder-to-reach women and/or tackle specific gender inequality challenges
- › improving the gender policy and WEELS guide with more content on how to expand women’s legal protection and rights as a critical component of economic empowerment programming—in particular, including violence prevention as a key approach in supporting women’s economic inclusion
- › exploring strategies for increasing expenditure in the economic sector where programming has gender equality as a principal or significant objective; this can be accomplished without allocating new resources by working with initiative managers to develop gender-focused objectives for existing activities.

## 2.3 Global approaches to building women's economic empowerment

Strong consensus emerges from the international literature on the pathways that lead to women's economic empowerment. Across bilateral and multilateral development agencies, we see the following investments consistently articulated, with varying degrees of emphasis.

### Pathway: education and training

Investment:

- › building women's capacity so that they enjoy higher returns for their labour efforts.

### Pathway: participation

Investments:

- › strengthening women's participation and power in decision-making (in public and private realms)
- › reducing the burden of women's unpaid care work (taking care of children, the elderly and the infirm).

### Pathway: institutions

Investments:

- › improving women's access to, and control over, economic resources and opportunities
- › strengthening women's legal status (including rights to property, employment and protection from gender-based violence)
- › instituting or improving social protection mechanisms to protect women from economic shocks.

The Australian aid program's approaches to women's economic empowerment are broadly consistent with these global approaches. Box 2 provides an example of how international guidance can provide ideas for achieving measurable gender outcomes.

### Box 2 Good practice: international guidance provides ideas for achieving measurable gender outcomes

A recently published guide from the United Nations Foundation provides insights into how different approaches can map onto measurable outcomes.<sup>27</sup> For example:

- › large capital transfers paired with livelihoods training and follow-up support can transform occupational choices of very poor women and can be cost-effective
- › programs that give women formal control over farmland increase the productivity of women farmers and enhance their economic security
- › farmer collectives can increase women's access to markets and improve their involvement in agricultural supply chains
- › rural electrification increases women's productivity and earnings. Access can be improved by providing loans or subsidies to women-headed households to connect to existing electricity grids
- › access to high-quality, affordable child care increases women's employment and earnings, and is cost-effective.

## 2.4 Mainstreaming and targeted approaches

The commonly accepted definition of gender mainstreaming is that adopted by the United Nations Economic and Social Council:<sup>28</sup>

*Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equality and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.*

Gender mainstreaming has been the norm in most countries and institutions since the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. However, some research has recently shown that gender mainstreaming as a stand-alone approach has not performed as hoped in producing results for women.<sup>29</sup>

The Australian aid program acknowledges that mainstreaming gender into existing development processes alone cannot produce results in all circumstances. It must be combined strategically with more targeted approaches designed to reduce specific constraints to women's equality and participation in economic activities. The WEELS guide recommends 'increased investments in women's economic empowerment as stand-alone programs where there are areas of entrenched disadvantage that will not respond to mainstreaming'.<sup>30</sup>

With this combination approach, the Australian aid program is aligned with current global trends. Increasingly, experts call for targeted approaches for high-priority development issues where gender equality is lagging (e.g. overcoming wage inequality, increasing women's access to finance and preventing violence). These approaches require investment in research and analysis of gender issues (e.g. opportunities and constraints), and deployment of gender expertise to map out a course of action and provide hands-on technical assistance. Simultaneously, attention to mainstreaming gender at the institutional level is essential to ensure that appropriate financial resources will be allocated, and that systems of accountability are created to monitor whether the goals of targeted activities are being met.

## 2.5 Gender equality focus in Australian aid programs

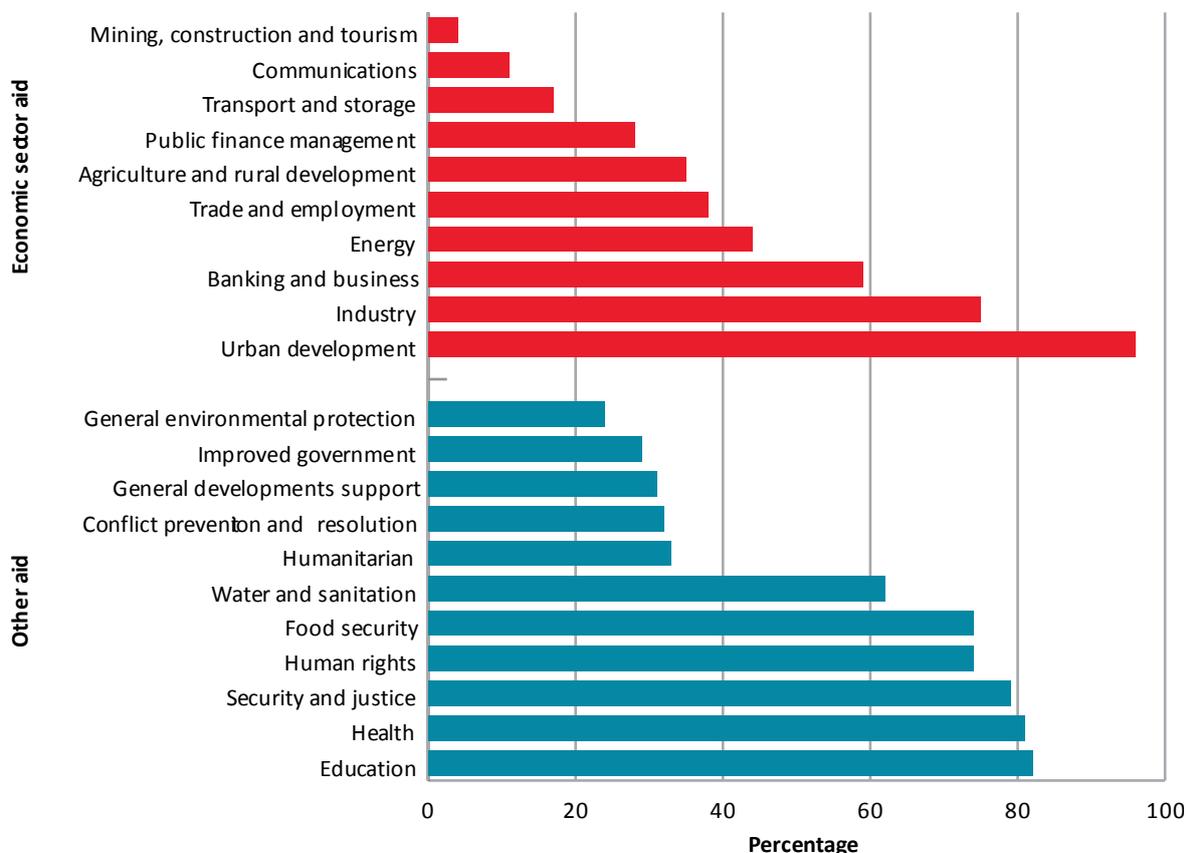
Statistics on aid that focuses on gender equality and women's empowerment are compiled by Australia with the help of the OECD DAC gender equality marker. Australia's efforts compare well with other OECD DAC donors in promoting gender equality in the economic sectors.<sup>31</sup>

Every aid activity is screened and marked in the Australian aid database, AidWorks, as one of the following:

- › not focused on gender equality
- › having gender equality as a 'significant objective'
- › having gender equality as a 'principal objective'.

Expenditure on activities marked in AidWorks as gender equality focused (principal or significant) accounted for more than half (55 per cent) of investments in 2010–11 and 2011–12, with significant variations between sectors (Figure 2). The focus on gender equality in the economic sectors is significantly lower than in the non-economic sectors. Over recent years, between 25 and 30 per cent of economic sector investments had an explicit focus on gender.

**Figure 2 Proportion of Australian aid expenditure that focuses on gender equality by sector, 2010–11 to 2011–12**



There are also differences between countries. For example, more than 80 per cent of economic sector aid in Laos, Latin America, Timor-Leste, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu was principally or significantly focused on gender,<sup>e</sup> but this was less than 20 per cent in Afghanistan, Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines and Vietnam.

## 2.6 Relationship between gender equality focus and performance

The performance of aid initiatives is assessed annually through the aid program’s quality reporting system. This requires initiative managers to submit quality at implementation (QAI) reports for all monitored aid initiatives annually.<sup>f</sup> These reports assess the performance of initiatives against a number of criteria, including gender, on a six-point scale, with 4–6 being satisfactory and 1–3 being unsatisfactory. ODE reviews of QAI reports have found that scoring for the gender equality category has received the second-weakest rating by initiative managers (after monitoring and evaluation) for the past three years.<sup>g</sup>

<sup>e</sup> An activity should be classified as gender equality focused (score *principal* or *significant*) if it is intended to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment, or reduce discrimination and inequalities based on sex. Gender equality is explicitly promoted through measures that a) reduce social, economic or political power inequalities between women and men, and girls and boys; ensure that women benefit equally with men from the activity; or compensate for past discrimination; or b) develop or strengthen gender equality or antidiscrimination policies, legislation or institutions.

<sup>f</sup> At the time of the evaluation, those initiatives in excess of \$3 million or high risk.

<sup>g</sup> QAI ratings for gender equality were also assessed as the least robust of other QAI criteria in 2013—only 75 per cent of the 79 initiatives reviewed were found to have robust gender equality ratings.

Close to 90 per cent of performance scores given to initiatives where gender equality is the principal objective in a two-year period between 2010–11 and 2011–12 were satisfactory, compared with just over 70 per cent for initiatives where gender equality was not an objective (Table 1). Initiatives where gender was the principal objective were almost three times more likely to be assessed as very high quality (6) or good quality (5) on gender performance as initiatives where gender was not an objective.

**Table 1 Relationship between gender marker and gender quality scores**

Gender	Unsatisfactory (1–3 points)	Satisfactory (4 points)	High performing (5 or 6 points)
Not an objective	29%	47%	24%
A significant objective	17%	38%	46%
The principal objective	12%	27%	61%

The weaker focus on gender in the economic sectors is reflected in lower-quality scores on gender compared with aid in other sectors. Specifically, initiatives in the economic sector generally receive lower scores for gender equality in annual QAI reports. Analysis of QAI scoring shows that only 70 per cent of QAI reports covering economic sector initiatives assessed their performance as satisfactory on the gender criteria, while 80 per cent of reports for all other sectors assessed their performance as satisfactory. In addition, within those assessed as satisfactory, economic sector initiatives are more likely than other sector initiatives to be assessed as marginally satisfactory (4). Other sector initiatives were twice as likely to be assessed as high performing on gender (5 or 6) as economic sector initiatives.

In Chapter 3, this analysis is extended beyond QAI scores to look in depth at the strength of initiatives to address gender across the program cycle. Of the 13 initiatives marked as having gender as a principal or significant objective, the vast majority (11) were evaluated as being *very good* or *good* on gender design and implementation. Only two received an *adequate* score, and none of the 13 received a *poor* score. We conclude that the OECD DAC gender markers seem to broadly capture the strength of an initiative’s focus on gender.



Light vehicle mechanics students repair a vehicle at the Tonga Institute of Science and Technology. *Photo: Ashleigh Connor, DFAT.*

## 3 Economic sector policy and programming

### Key questions

- › For selected initiatives, how were the Australian aid program's gender equality policies translated into practice?
- › How effective have these initiatives been in promoting gender equality and women's economic empowerment?

### Key findings

- › The strategic focus on women's economic empowerment has been limited across the economic sectors, although it has been recently growing. This likely reflects the expanding influence of the Australian aid program's gender policy and gender-related sector guidance in the area.
- › Most initiatives (70 per cent) made some attempt to promote gender equality in some aspect of programming; however, only a quarter identified gender-related barriers to economic development and designed activities to reduce these barriers. Only one program achieved a *very good* rating for gender impact.
- › Systems for monitoring gender equality outcomes in economic sector initiatives were non-existent or weak. Only a quarter of initiatives could report on any gender outcomes and impacts. Where systems existed, the quality of reporting over time was typically poor.
- › Economic sector programs that promoted gender equality were mainly in the areas of improving women's access to, and control over, economic resources and opportunities, and increasing women's participation and power in decision-making.
- › The most notable design and implementation gaps in economic investments were in mitigating the burden of women's unpaid care work, and improving women's social protection from economic shocks. Activities to improve women's legal rights to property and employment were not common.
- › Initiatives that delivered services directly to people in their communities presented more obvious opportunities to integrate gender equality activities. These were most common in the agriculture, business and banking sectors. Gender equality activities in more macro-level sectors, such as trade and infrastructure, were emerging and provided opportunities where efforts were made.
- › The Australian aid program has demonstrated that it can influence partners to support new approaches and strengthen the focus on gender equality.

The evaluation analysed 28 initiatives from the top five economic sectors in terms of expenditure: agriculture and rural development, business and banking, energy, trade, and transport and storage. These initiatives represent a significant investment, with a combined total value of almost \$870 million. More detail of the initiatives can be found in Appendix 1.

### 3.1 Agriculture and rural development

Globally and historically, agriculture has been an engine for poverty reduction and economic growth.<sup>32</sup> This is especially true in low-income developing countries, where 44–80 per cent of economically active women are employed in agriculture. However, rural women often lack access to economic opportunities and resources such as land, credit, information and technology.<sup>33</sup> Women's limited time

(as a result of unpaid household work) and constraints on their mobility in many cultural contexts (including risk of violence) also restrict their access to markets compared with men.<sup>34</sup> This gender gap limits women's ability to increase agricultural productivity.<sup>35</sup> Closing the gender gap would result in significant gains for the agricultural sector.<sup>a</sup> International donors and development agencies have pursued a range of programming in agriculture and rural development to promote women's economic empowerment. Policies have largely focused on reforms to strengthen women's land tenure rights. Related interventions to strengthen women's engagement in commercial agriculture have centred on supporting farmer groups and collectives in order to build savings, improve production and facilitate greater market access.<sup>36</sup>

The various entry points to support agricultural production and women's productivity ultimately rely on markets to drive agricultural activity. This includes access to, and provision of, credit and inputs, and the sale of agricultural outputs. Market access needs to be enhanced and gender-related barriers mitigated if aid investments are to sustain gains for women and men smallhold farmers. Strengthening the economic case for supply chain actors, such as seed developers, agriculture dealers, input supply companies and microfinance institutions is an important aspect of this work. These market institutions need to view both women and men farmers as potential clients, and target and provide them with tailored products and services.

Agriculture and rural development form a critical part of the Australian Government's efforts to reduce poverty and spur economic growth. The thematic strategy *Sustainable economic development: improving food security*<sup>37</sup> acknowledges the importance of women's role in agriculture and rural development. It articulates a broad mandate that women and men should benefit equally from activities such as extension services, farmer field schools, marketing and finance. It also emphasises the need to strengthen agricultural productivity by increasing women's access to technologies and inputs. This aligns closely with the 2011 gender policy. Neither strategy adequately addresses the complex interplay between markets, industry, financing, the private sector, the public sector, and other institutions and incentives to promote gender equality in economic investments.

## Overview of initiatives

The evaluation examined six initiatives in the agriculture and rural development sector:

- › Cambodia Agricultural Value Chain Program
- › Indonesia Small-holder Agribusiness Development
- › Laos–Australia Non-government Organisation (NGO) Cooperation Agreement
- › Papua New Guinea (PNG) Agricultural Research and Development Support Facility
- › Solomon Islands Rural Development Project
- › Vietnam Collaboration for Agriculture and Rural Development.

## Gender-responsive design and implementation

**There is little analysis or integration of gender approaches in agricultural program design; however, there are some examples of effective approaches.**

Only one initiative, the Cambodia Agricultural Value Chain Program (Box 3), addressed gender from the design phase onwards and attempted to overcome gender-related barriers to women's participation. Another four initiatives implemented gender-responsive activities (Indonesia; Laos, see Box 4; PNG,

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<sup>a</sup> If women had the same access to productive resources as men, total agricultural output in developing countries could increase by 2.5–4 per cent and reduce the number of hungry people by 12–17 per cent (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *The state of food and agriculture 2010–11*, FAO, 2011).

see Box 5; and Solomon Islands). However, none of these carried out gender analysis to inform their approaches, thereby missing opportunities to overcome context-specific constraints to women's agricultural activity. This resonates with the findings of a rural development gender stocktake that few sector initiatives had conducted strong analysis at the design stage.<sup>38</sup>

### **Box 3 Good practice: integrating gender in agricultural program design**

From the design phase, the Cambodia Agricultural Value Chain Program's market-based approach to strengthening smallholder rice and vegetable production explicitly addressed opportunities for women farmers. It conducted analysis to identify impediments to women's ability to participate in agribusiness and water-use associations, assess effective channels for disseminating information to men and women farmers, and better understand gender dynamics in agricultural activity and decision-making in target communities.<sup>39</sup> This analysis found that women's heavy household and care-giving duties, as well as more limited access to credit, skills, information and technology, hindered their success in commercial agricultural activity. The initiative developed a gender strategy that helped to identify activities to support women's engagement. Activities included:

- › using extension materials and media messaging tailored to women farmers
- › providing skills training and credit to women and men members of agribusiness groups
- › involving women and men farmers in field research
- › incentivising private contractors to employ women and men extension workers
- › addressing gender relations at the household level,<sup>40</sup> including by promoting communication between husbands and wives about extension services
- › providing gender training to provincial government officials working on irrigation.

Activities from other initiatives that delivered products and services to women and men included:

- › promoting women's participation in skills training, planning processes and livelihood activities
- › distributing time-saving agricultural technologies for women
- › providing agribusiness support to women farmers via women's resource centres
- › delivering gender training to community facilitators or recruiting women facilitators
- › setting targets for women's participation in community decision-making
- › using gender selection criteria to assess project proposals
- › strengthening gender capacity in the national agricultural research centre.



Phoune, 30 years old, waters her vegetable plot close to the river in Taoun Village, Laman District, Laos PDR. These gardens are vital to an otherwise river-based diet. DFAT is supporting CARE Australia to assist Phoune and others in her community. *Photo: Jim Holmes, DFAT.*

#### **Box 4 Good practice: women's time burden can be addressed through technologies and gender training**

The Laos–Australia Non-government Organisation (NGO) Cooperation Agreement initiative in Laos began with somewhat limited attention to the design. It was not clear how implementing organisations would specifically pursue gender equality approaches. A gender specialist reviewed partner NGO design documents and provided recommendations on how to improve attention to gender within their activities. Over the course of the project, Australian managers also developed higher expectations of how gender should be addressed in programming. They recognised that the implementing NGOs needed to do more than increase women's participation in activities.

Subsequently, CARE (partner NGO) took a more proactive approach to addressing women's time burden by improving women's access to simple, time-saving and appropriate agricultural technologies, such as wheelbarrows. It also piloted gender training among couples that in part encouraged them to analyse unequal gender divisions of labour, including women's disproportionate share of household responsibilities and care work. The training also aimed to promote greater cooperation between husbands and wives in household decision-making.

#### **Box 5 Good practice: working with men and women**

One of the grantees funded by the Agricultural Research and Development Support Facility in Papua New Guinea supported women's control over resources within cocoa farming cooperatives. The grantee, Adventist Development and Relief Agency, operates on the principle that membership in cooperatives should be a household partnership. Thus, it registered both husbands and wives as

cooperative members, and ensured that both women and men participated in training and discussions. An evaluation found that women participated actively in the group, and this was accepted among male farmers. Women also reported that, for the first time in the cooperative's history, income was shared more equally among family members.<sup>41</sup>

In this initiative, the stronger attention to gender after implementation began was due to the appointment of a new team leader who was personally committed to promoting gender equality.<sup>42</sup>

## Gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation, and impact achieved or reported

**Most agricultural initiatives included sex-disaggregated and gender-sensitive data in their monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks. However, reporting on outcomes relating to women's economic empowerment was weak.**

There is a substantial gap in integrating gender into M&E. Considering that almost all of the initiatives reviewed have delivered services directly to women, this seems particularly remiss. The rural development gender stocktake similarly found that, while many programs directly engaged with women beneficiaries at the community level, reporting on gender-related outcomes was weak overall.<sup>43</sup> In the initiatives reviewed, this remained the case even when M&E systems included indicators on gender equality.

The Laos rural development initiative's experience with M&E offers useful insights into how attention to gender in M&E can be improved over time. Its results on women's economic empowerment have focused on women's participation in activities and reduced domestic workloads. The initial M&E frameworks of the NGO partners did not uniformly address gender. Some, but not all, NGOs collected sex-disaggregated data on participation in livelihood activities. About midway into the initiative, an M&E consultant was brought in to develop a new M&E framework, which required all NGOs to collect the same types of data. The highlight of the new framework was that it called for data to be collected from women and men beneficiaries through participatory consultations, to understand how they experienced project activities.<sup>b</sup> However, NGO field staff found this process of collecting data to be challenging and time-consuming.<sup>44</sup>

Although the M&E framework of the Solomon Islands agriculture initiative included gender-sensitive impact indicators, it did not report on outcomes relating to women's empowerment beyond levels of participation in activities. This shortcoming may be rooted in the broader challenges it experienced in implementing its M&E system. For example, the capacity of field staff to accurately complete monitoring forms was weak. The decentralised database was also complex and difficult to grasp, and support from M&E specialists in implementing data collection and entry processes was regarded as insufficient.<sup>45</sup>

Box 6 contains an example of good gendered outcome indicators in Cambodia.

### Box 6 Good practice: gendered outcome indicators

The Cambodia value chain initiative's monitoring and evaluation framework is strong in its inclusion of gendered outcome indicators. It calls for sex-disaggregated data on a comprehensive set of outcomes, including access to information, adoption of new agronomic practices, ownership of new small to medium enterprises (SMEs), SME earnings, employment, and diversification of women's sources of

<sup>b</sup> A gender evaluation of the Laos Australia NGO Cooperation Agreement was conducted in 2011 to assess the effectiveness of its gender approaches. It highlighted key challenges for implementing gender strategies that do not appear to have been resolved in later stages of the initiative.

income. Although this is promising, it is too early to judge whether results are being tracked, as two years of implementation remain.<sup>c</sup>

The above examples underline the importance of building in resources for M&E early in project design, and continuing to review gender-related results during implementation. The limited economic outcomes resulting from these initiatives highlight that approaches such as setting targets for women's participation, or using gender criteria to select projects, as some initiatives did, are insufficient alone to economically empower women and/or monitor progress towards economic empowerment. The 2012 rural development gender stocktake also found a need for more targeted efforts to overcome gender inequalities and more gender-sensitive M&E.

## 3.2 Business and banking

### Overview of initiatives

The evaluation examined six initiatives in the business and banking sector:

- › Indonesia Public Enterprise Partnerships
- › Pacific Private Enterprise Partnerships
- › Tonga Business Recovery Facility
- › Bangladesh Northwest Microfinance Expansion Project
- › South East Asia and Pacific Enterprise Challenge Fund
- › Pacific Region Financial Inclusion Program.

Private-sector development and entrepreneurship are critical drivers of economic growth. Entrepreneurship represents a substantial proportion of the economic engagement of women and men worldwide.<sup>46</sup> Finance and banking are central to the development of countries' business environments, providing the capital necessary to enable business of all sizes to operate and grow.

Globally, there are substantial gender inequalities in entrepreneurial engagement and success, and in access to finance. Women entrepreneurs are more likely to be owners of small enterprises or microenterprises, and their businesses tend to perform less well than men's in terms of earnings and growth.<sup>47</sup> Women in many countries and regions face greater constraints to registering their businesses<sup>48</sup> and have less access to financial services.<sup>49</sup> A World Bank study in the east Asia and Pacific region estimated that output per worker would increase by 7–18 per cent if female entrepreneurs had the same access to productive resources as men.<sup>50</sup>

The empirical evidence on the impact of financial services on women's economic empowerment is mixed. There is limited evidence that financial services alone will support women's economic empowerment, given other gender-based constraints that affect women's businesses and limit their control over resources. Further, the use of financial services is not without economic risks. Taking out business loans can lead to indebtedness, which can be particularly detrimental for low-income women.<sup>51</sup> In some instances, poor women borrowers are not able to exercise agency over the use of loans, as husbands and other family members may decide how to use credit and earnings.<sup>52</sup>

Donors, governments, financial institutions and NGOs pursue a wide range of both policy and service interventions to support women's entrepreneurship and access to finance. On the policy side, general

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<sup>c</sup> The initiative is reporting on gendered outcomes and using sex-disaggregated data—for example, an estimated equal number of women and men farmers (70 000 each) gained access to improved agricultural technologies in 2012 (senior program officer, personal communication, 13 August 2013).

reforms that streamline the process of registering businesses and help to improve the investment climate can benefit both female and male entrepreneurs. Programming to support women's entrepreneurship may entail expanding access to financial services and products, grants and physical asset transfers; training and mentoring in business, entrepreneurship and financial literacy (e.g. see Box 7); expanding women's business networks; and facilitating access to information and communication technologies.

Banking and business is a sector of growing strategic importance to the Australian aid program, as noted in two recent thematic strategies. *Financial services for the poor: a strategy for the Australian aid program 2010–15*<sup>53</sup> views financial services as a means to promote the Millennium Development Goals of women's equality and empowerment. It links access to financial services with the potential to increase women's self-confidence, decision-making power, control over assets and mobility. The strategy calls for gender equality to be considered throughout the project cycle, both to maximise benefits and to safeguard against unintended harm. This strategy integrates gender equality concerns well, but would be more useful if there were also examples of negative impacts to help program managers better consider and mitigate risks in designing programs and M&E systems.

*Sustainable economic development: private sector development: thematic strategy*<sup>54</sup> argues that markets do not work efficiently where women face barriers to access. The strategy recommends that targeted interventions be pursued within private-sector programming in fragile states and the Pacific region.

Both strategies stress the importance of measuring gender-related progress, but provide little guidance on how to do this.

## Box 7 Good practice: grassroots action can address barriers to women's participation

Public Enterprise Partnerships in Indonesia strategically sought to increase the participation of women farmers. The Farmer Training Centre for Coffee project integrated gender in extension training approaches. It proactively sought to increase women's representation by allowing women who were not members of the farmer associations to attend. It also designed training sessions in ways that met women's scheduling and learning preferences. For example, it held training at times that were more convenient for women, used female trainers, and incorporated videos and other imagery to overcome low levels of literacy.

### Gender-responsive design and implementation

**The six initiatives in the business and banking sector made some attempt to address gender in design or implementation. None of the initiatives explicitly identified barriers to women's participation through gender analysis or effectively implemented activities to overcome them. Only one initiative paid attention to overcoming gender-related barriers to women's participation.**

The Pacific Region Financial Inclusion Program and the Indonesia Public Enterprise Partnerships both set targets for women's participation.<sup>d</sup> They also demonstrate how targets may have limited effectiveness without other strong approaches to promote women's engagement. The Pacific program sought to ensure that women made up 40–50 per cent of grantees' clients.<sup>55</sup> It also negotiated targets with each grantee to ensure that they were achievable, and linked contract payments to progress towards the targets, resulting in a high-quality rating.<sup>56</sup> However, it is not clear in reporting whether either initiative used strategies to help ensure that these targets were met.

The South East Asia and Pacific Enterprise Challenge Fund encouraged project proposals to identify ways to address gender and ensure that women would be able to benefit.<sup>57</sup> However, it did not conduct any gender analysis to help inform potential approaches to support women's economic engagement. Rather, it funded several initiatives that were expected to employ women, create business opportunities for women or provide services more relevant for women.<sup>e</sup> The midterm review and quality at implementation (QAI) reports noted that stakeholders and applicants often lacked strong understanding of the criteria, and thus did not select projects that actually promoted women's economic opportunities.<sup>f</sup> This reporting of gaps in implementing gender equality prompted initiative managers to consult a gender expert to determine how to strengthen approaches.

Box 8 contains an example of improving women's access to, and success with, financial services, while Box 9 provides an example of how gender barriers can be tackled in vocational and skills training.

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<sup>d</sup> The Indonesia Public Enterprise Partnerships set a target of 30 per cent for women's participation in training (Public Enterprise Partnership Aceh-Nia QAI reports for 2009–12). Australia and the International Finance Corporation have formed a new Pacific Partnership (2013–18) that sets targets for women's access to finance.

<sup>e</sup> Examples include funding for the purchase of factory equipment that allowed women to take on jobs that previously required heavy lifting, and providing women with the option of using mobile phones owned by someone else to carry out financial transactions (K Nethercott, M Jago-Bassingthwaight & A Jupp, *Women's economic empowerment—practice and policy implications from the Enterprise Challenge Fund*, Coffey International Development, 2013).

<sup>f</sup> There has been some improvement over time in this area. The 2011 QAI noted that a gender expert had provided input in areas where gender considerations could be strengthened (Australian Agency for International Development, *Southeast Asia and Pacific: Enterprise Challenge Fund QAI report*, AusAID, Canberra, 2009).

## Box 8 Good practice: a focus on women's agency can improve women's access to, and success with, financial services

The Bangladesh Northwest Microfinance Expansion Project (BRAC) is a strong example of how a financial services agency can address both the economic advancement and agency dimensions of women's economic empowerment. BRAC addresses context-specific gender barriers at the community level. The project targeted women as new customers of microfinance services and implemented gender-responsive approaches to support women's agency, including:

- › training project organisers on issues of gender equality, dowry and domestic violence
- › engaging with men and women beneficiaries on these issues in village-level meetings
- › providing female microfinance clients with access to BRAC's Legal Aid Clinic, where they could seek support relating to domestic violence.<sup>58</sup>

## Box 9 Good practice: gender barriers can be tackled in vocational and skills training

Although technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is not a part of the business and banking sector, it has important implications for women's capacity to access and successfully engage in entrepreneurship and employment opportunities. In Vanuatu, technical and vocational training is critical, given that women's labour force participation is high (61 per cent), but women lag behind men in tertiary education and have lower levels of earnings.

The TVET Sector Strengthening Program (TSSP) phase II in Vanuatu aims to strengthen vocational training through a decentralised approach in two provinces. This approach has enabled the managing contractor to consult with civil society and the local businesses to assess training needs. Training has focused on business development, financial literacy and a range of technical areas, such as tourism and raising livestock. The project has effectively addressed gender in design and implementation through some creative and innovative gender-responsive approaches. The strong commitment of the TVET leadership team to pursue gender equality was a critical feature in the program's success, despite a lack of strong gender equality objectives in the original design.

The initiative has:

- › promoted women's involvement in nontraditional vocations, such as tiling and grouting
- › actively sought to attract women applicants, including by engaging a women-centred microfinance provider, VANWODS Microfinance, to help recruit women
- › held modular and flexible delivery strategies that allow multiple entry and exit points, enabling women to balance training with employment and domestic responsibilities, and work towards a certified qualification in a timeframe responsive to the demands on their time
- › promoted women's representation in training for occupations with a high gender imbalance
- › trained all program staff in gender and actively sought to promote women into managerial positions to challenge cultural stereotyping
- › invested time in developing male gender champions, within both the project staff and local civil and government counterparts, to facilitate social norm change in a highly patriarchal context
- › offered trainees gender-responsive employment counselling and mentorship
- › paid for child care services in some instances, to enable women to attend savings training
- › placed a strong emphasis on accessible and popular program communications, including dissemination of DVDs, posters and illustrated short reports that project strong, positive images of women in nontraditional vocational and leadership roles.

The program has contributed to women's economic empowerment, and captures these contributions through a strong monitoring and evaluation system. Women made up 32–62 per cent of trainees in

accredited and business development courses. One year after receiving training, 91 per cent of self-employed women interviewed reported increased profits, and 70 per cent had introduced new business services. Women who were trained in tourism were particularly successful in business.<sup>59</sup>

## Gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation, and impact achieved or reported

**Bangladesh Northwest Microfinance Expansion Project's (BRAC's) strong attention to gender-responsive implementation was complemented with a sound M&E system. Other initiatives have simple M&E systems that capture sex-disaggregated data on participation in training and workshops, and uptake of financial services (South-east Asia and Pacific, and Indonesia). M&E data at this level can be useful; however, several initiatives missed opportunities to measure higher-level outcomes and impacts on men and women at the community level (Tonga and the two Pacific regional programs).**

BRAC's M&E system included an impact evaluation that incorporated strong gender analysis. The evaluation was planned from the beginning of the project and collected both baseline and endline data at the household level. It assessed results for women clients in a number of domains, including agency, ownership of assets, control over loans and effectiveness of financial services in meeting women's needs. The evaluation found that BRAC reached 52 646 new female clients, who experienced gains over time in empowerment and social indicators. These included increased control over assets, including loans; reduction of child marriage, dowry and violence against women; and an increase in women's decision-making.<sup>60</sup>

The Enterprise Challenge Fund initiative collected sex-disaggregated data from its grantees on women's participation in projects, access to finance, and outcomes such as employment.<sup>g</sup> However, collecting data relating to employment and the number of women in supply chains proved to be difficult, given that many private enterprises did not have the capacity or resources to collect data on some indicators. The available data indicate that projects funded by the initiative across Asia and the Pacific reached more than 22 000 women, or 51 per cent of total beneficiaries. An independent progress report found that projects varied considerably in terms of how they affected women's access to, and control over, resources, decision-making and capacity.<sup>61</sup> The results indicate that some firms have hired women for new jobs.

A grantee of the Indonesia Public Enterprise initiative analysed women's participation in coffee value chains and found that women were actively engaged. This finding motivated project training staff to further increase women's participation.<sup>62</sup> Ultimately, women's representation increased from 18.5 to 43 per cent.<sup>63</sup> The initiative also used the 30 per cent target for women's participation as a benchmark against which to report progress in QAI reports.<sup>h</sup>

Although the Pacific Region Financial Inclusion Program had planned a midterm evaluation to assess the 'appropriateness and relevance' of financial products and services for women, it is not clear whether the evaluation actually incorporated any gender analysis. The initiative only reported data on the number of female microfinance clients who gained access to financial services or mobile money. It faced challenges in collecting these data from all grantees, despite the use of gender targets.<sup>64</sup> This highlights that the challenge of monitoring gender equality is also intricately linked with the broader challenges of M&E.

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<sup>g</sup> The 2011 QAI gender equality section for the Enterprise Challenge Fund noted that the Australian aid program would seek to improve sex-disaggregated data collection among partners, highlighting some gaps in the actual performance of the M&E system.

<sup>h</sup> The overall level of female participation in training as reported in the 2011–12 QAIs was lower than the 30 per cent target.



A female roads maintenance worker talks to an Australian Government representative in Malekula, Vanuatu, 2011. Australia's support for rural road improvements uses local contractors, and is providing much-needed skills and jobs for women and men. *Photo: Simon Cramp, DFAT.*

### 3.3 Energy

Modern energy services are critical to economic development and improving living standards. However, the lack of access to energy services is widespread. Approximately 2 billion people around the world do not have access to modern sources of energy, such as electricity or liquid fuels.<sup>65</sup> Access to modern energy services can enable women and men to save time and resources, increase their productivity, and pursue new economic opportunities.<sup>i</sup> In parts of sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, a large portion of rural women's time is spent collecting wood and other biomass to serve as fuel, which, in turn, can limit their engagement in income-generating activities.<sup>66</sup> The energy sector provides important entry points for supporting women's economic advancement.

Programming and interventions in the energy sector that can contribute to women's economic advancement have largely focused on national efforts to expand grid access to electricity. In recent years, donors and governments have made greater investments in using renewable energy sources. Over the past decade, gender mainstreaming in this area has been pursued by donors and governments. These efforts include considering women's energy needs and preferences in formulating energy policy, ensuring women's representation in energy policy decision-making, and promoting women's employment in the energy sector.

The Australian aid program's sustainable economic development policy<sup>67</sup> includes energy as one of its pillars, and recognises the critical interrelatedness of infrastructure development, poverty reduction and strengthening the economic activity of the poor. Australia's support in this sector focuses on collaborating with multilateral development banks and the private sector to expand national grid infrastructure, improve energy service delivery, and promote cleaner and more efficient energy technologies. Australia is able to influence these multilateral implementation arrangements through policy dialogue.

The policy appropriately notes the gender implications of energy poverty on women's time. It recognises that women and children disproportionately bear the burden of time-intensive tasks to provide biomass energy. Building on this, it states that an intended outcome of the aid program's investments in the energy sector is to reduce women's and girls' time constraints so that they have more time available for productive and other activities. The women's economic empowerment and livelihood security (WEELS) guide provides helpful suggestions on ways to consider women's economic empowerment within infrastructure programs. This includes setting targets for women's participation as workers or business owners relating to service delivery, or as participants in decision-making processes relating to infrastructure. However, outcome-related indicators are necessary to measure results for women's economic empowerment.

#### Overview of initiatives

The evaluation examined four initiatives in the energy sector:

- › Tonga Energy Roadmap Institutional and Regulatory Framework Strengthening Project
- › Tonga Outer Islands Renewable Energy Project
- › Samoa Power Sector Expansion Project
- › Vietnam Rural Distribution Project
- › Laos Rural Electrification Project.

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<sup>i</sup> Evidence from South Africa and India demonstrates that rural electrification led to increased female employment (United Nations Foundation, *A roadmap for promoting women's economic empowerment*).

## Gender-responsive design and implementation

Three of the five energy initiatives reviewed performed moderately well in addressing gender equality (Tonga and Laos, see Box 10; and Samoa). However, none of them addressed barriers that might constrain women's ability to benefit economically from electricity.

The initiatives pursued various strategies to improve women's access to electrification, involve women in processes relating to electrification development and mitigate gender-related risks. These include:

- › setting targets for women hired as contractors in energy expansion activities
- › involving women in community-level consultations and project planning
- › including both spouses' names on land titles issued as part of the resettlement process<sup>68</sup>
- › targeting women-headed households to help increase access to electricity.<sup>j</sup>

Although the initiatives focus on improving women's access to electricity, which can help to increase economic productivity, they do not consider how to directly support women's and men's economic engagement in a more strategic way. This area of work is often considered to be outside the scope of macro-level electrification initiatives, but, in most cases, there will be avenues for the aid program to support programming that more directly promotes women's economic empowerment. For example, small grants or loans could be made to individuals or groups of women entrepreneurs to purchase electric-powered machinery that would enable them to carry out new or existing economic activities more efficiently.

### Box 10 Good practice: facilitating women's access to electricity in Laos and Tonga

In the **Laos** Rural Electrification Project, the Australian aid program was integral to supporting the piloting of interest-free loans to enable electricity connection among poor households, particularly women-headed households. Research funded through the World Bank's Gender Action Plan, before Australia joined the project, revealed that poor and women-headed households (who made up one-third of poor households) had been excluded from attempts to increase electricity access.

This research helped to motivate the development of the Power to the Poor (P2P) pilot, which sought to increase electricity access among the poorest households, particularly women-headed households. The pilot did this by providing interest-free loans to pay for electricity connections. The Australian aid program provided the necessary funding to pilot the newly devised subsidised loan component. P2P made efforts to use gender-sensitive eligibility criteria to identify and reach beneficiary households. It also instituted monitoring that included sex-disaggregated data on access to electricity by men- and women-headed households. On this indicator, an early assessment found that electrification rates among women-headed households increased from 63 to 90 per cent (68 of 537 total households) in a relatively short time.

Australian aid program staff at the **Tonga** Post encouraged the World Bank to implement some energy-related activities with an explicit gender focus. The World Bank is currently planning to work with two women's centres to assess how to reduce their electricity costs. This effort is likely to involve installing solar photovoltaic systems at the centres and connecting to the electricity grid.<sup>69</sup>

## Gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation, and impact achieved or reported

Good attention to gender within the Laos and Tonga renewable energy initiatives was complemented by some gender responsiveness within their M&E systems. The M&E system in the Laos initiative has

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<sup>j</sup> A midterm assessment of the pilot found that inability to repay the loans was a key barrier preventing poor households, particularly those headed by women, from participating. However, the pilot's activities did not directly address this challenge.

**generated useful lessons on barriers to reaching women and captured some initial results relating to women's economic advancement.**

In Laos, aid program support was critical not only in the testing of the pilot Power to the Poor (P2P) program, but also in focusing on gender in the M&E system.<sup>70</sup> The M&E framework for P2P called for sex-disaggregated data on access to electricity by men- and women-headed households.<sup>71</sup> Other results beyond electricity connection were not disaggregated by sex, making it difficult to understand if and how the benefits and challenges of participation differed between women and men.<sup>k</sup>

The assessment also found that the poorest households, among them women-headed households, were still excluded from electricity access because they did not meet eligibility criteria such as expected ability to repay the loan. This finding is particularly important, given that the pilot was aimed at increasing inclusion of the poorest households and sought to test the gender-sensitivity of eligibility criteria. The assessment report rightfully concluded that loans may not be the most appropriate scheme to reach the poorest households, given the high risk of exacerbating poverty, and noted that more flexible repayment schemes or fully subsidised connections were alternatives.<sup>l</sup>

The Tonga initiative's M&E system includes sex-disaggregated data on output and outcome indicators relating to performance targets, such as women's participation in consultations and women's employment. The initiative is therefore well positioned to report on results relating to new economic opportunities for women.

### **3.4 Trade**

International trade policies and reform regimes shape countries' economic integration and growth trajectories, and can have significant positive and negative implications for poverty reduction, private-sector development and gender equality.<sup>72</sup> While often considered to be 'gender neutral' by donors and governments, trade-related strategies—such as greater regional integration, trade liberalisation and foreign direct investment—in fact have potentially far-reaching implications for women's economic empowerment. These strategies relate to markets for agricultural and non-agricultural exports, small to medium enterprise (SME) development opportunities, new employment, cross-border trade and transportation links, among other things.

Trade activities may create new markets or expand existing industries in ways that increase employment and entrepreneurship opportunities. Recent research has demonstrated the interrelatedness of economic integration and women's empowerment. For example, a background study to the *World development report 2012*<sup>73</sup> found that indicators of women's empowerment are higher in countries whose export sectors rely more intensively on female labour. In east Asia and the Pacific, there is some evidence that increased trade has helped to expand employment opportunities, particularly for women in the export-oriented manufacturing sector. This has been correlated with higher levels of women's empowerment.<sup>74</sup>

On the flip side, international trade and investment may negatively affect women's and men's economic livelihoods. Consequences may include products and services becoming less competitive in local and international markets, poor working conditions in new places of employment, and greater employment and wage instability.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>k</sup> For example, the assessment reported on evidence of early benefits at the household level, such as more time to engage in income-generating work. It did not report on the extent to which women and men differentially experienced these benefits.

Donors, multilateral development banks and governments largely address gender in trade-related activities by mainstreaming gender in macroeconomic and trade policy. A range of other interventions can promote gender equality through more targeted approaches. For example, the support of multilateral development banks to promote SME development may be directed to industries in which women are concentrated. It may also be accompanied by schemes that provide women entrepreneurs with access to credit, training and other enterprise development services, and ensure that their voice is heard and their interests are represented in trade planning and negotiation meetings.

The Australian Trade and Development Statement articulates the importance of international trade for economic growth and poverty reduction.<sup>76</sup> It acknowledges that export-led economic growth may exclude or disadvantage women and marginalised groups. However, the statement does not provide guidance on how gender can be integrated with efforts to support trade. Trade is not a priority sector in other aid policy or program documentation, including the Gender Thematic strategy and WEELS guidance. The aid program would be improved by stronger attention to addressing gender-related issues in trade, as well as practical guidance on how to identify entry points to pursue gender equality.

## Overview of initiatives

The evaluation examined four initiatives in the trade sector:

- › Pacific Placer Plus Support
- › Laos Trade Development Facility Multi-Donor Trust Fund
- › East Asia Regional Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) – Australia – New Zealand Free Trade Area
- › East Asia Regional Trade Analysis and Reform Project.

## Gender-responsive design and implementation

**Most trade initiatives did not take steps to explore entry points for gender equality in design or implementation. This is not surprising, given the absence of guidance or focus by the Australian aid program on gender equality in this sector. However, sound gender analysis at later stages of implementation did sometimes identify effective entry points to tackle gender and trade issues.**

The challenges faced in the trade sector are complex, because of the multiple interests at play (public, private, bilateral, regional and global) and because gender has not traditionally been a focus. Both east Asia regional initiatives did little to integrate gender in macro-level policy interventions. The Australian aid program's management responses suggested that avenues should be discussed with the trade adviser. It was not clear if this was pursued.

The Economic Cooperation Support Program of the Agreement Establishing the ASEAN – Australia – New Zealand Free Trade Area made some effort to think about gender in the design phase. This involved supporting the ASEAN partner countries to collect sex-disaggregated data. Beyond this focus on data collection, the approach to promoting gender equality in the trade sector has been 'limited and ad hoc'.<sup>77</sup> This can be explained in part by the difficulty in identifying entry points to pursue gender in programs that are focused on regional integration and involve multiple bilateral partners. The Australian aid program was also constrained in its ability to pursue gender more broadly by some of the ASEAN countries limited interest in gender-related issues. . There were few channels through which to promote gender beyond the ASEAN Secretariat, and ASEAN member states were sensitive to

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<sup>1</sup> The subsequent phase of the initiative did not change the nature of the loan offered to participating households as a result of this finding.

encroachment on their policies.<sup>78</sup> With little guidance on how to approach gender equality in the trade sector, program managers have had difficulty determining how it may be relevant.

It is clear that the aid program's ability to influence regional bodies may be limited; however, there are opportunities to address gender equality in macro-level initiatives. For example, the East Asia Regional Trade Analysis and Reform Project could have used its mandate to conduct research supporting trade reform to investigate gender constraints in particular sectors.

### Gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation, and impact achieved or reported

**Integrating gender in M&E of trade initiatives is challenging, especially when there is limited clarity in design and implementation plans about how, if at all, gender equality will be pursued.**

Two of the three initiatives that took gender into account in their M&E frameworks collected sex-disaggregated data on participation in workshops and other activities (Pacific and East Asia Regional Trade analysis). For trade-sector initiatives, collection of sex-disaggregated data may only be relevant and meaningful for a small proportion of activities. In such cases, it might be more valuable to analyse gender in specific sectors that are likely to be influenced by, or promoted in, trade policy.

The Laos trade initiative (Box 11) collects data on women's participation in various activities. The direct service delivery to women and men through the Garment Skills Development Centre provided an opportunity to measure some gender-related outcomes. Specifically, the initiative measures knowledge and skills gained by women and men participants of the centre's training courses. Recent QAI reports note that 31 female supervisors and 100 female sewing operators had been trained, and that they increased their knowledge and skills in technical areas related to their work.<sup>79</sup>

## Box 11 Good practice: gender and trade research can translate to effective action

The Laos trade initiative—Laos Trade Development Facility Multi-Donor Trust Fund—is a strong example of how the Australian aid program can promote and fund new areas of gender-related work, supported by partners' own internal policies on gender equality. In Laos, Australia collaborated with the World Bank to strengthen the gender focus of activities. Australia and the World Bank co-supported several gender-analytical research studies a year after the initiative began.

The project had started without any focus on gender in its design and early implementation, evident in interviews and documents.<sup>80</sup> One factor contributing to this was that initiative managers had difficulty in finding resources or guidance on how to identify entry points for doing work on gender equality.<sup>81</sup>

The Laos Gender Stocktake reported that the research did not immediately translate into gender-focused approaches taken up by the initiative as a whole.<sup>82</sup> Rather, it enabled World Bank and Australian aid program managers to identify relevant entry points to address gender through new activities. The stocktake reported that these gender-focused studies and the aid program's support for them were 'important and timely'.

Phase 2 of the initiative, which began in early 2013, developed a new enterprise funds scheme that offers finance and business expansion services to both male and female entrepreneurs in small to medium enterprises. It sets targets for reaching women. Two senior managers at the World Bank and the Australian aid program said that they were motivated to establish this scheme by some Australian analysis on gender and entrepreneurship in Laos.<sup>83</sup> This analysis found that women represented a substantial proportion of formal business owners in Laos, but were less likely than their male counterparts to have access to formal financial services.<sup>m</sup> Laos Trade Development Facility senior managers who were interviewed cited Australia's commitment to gender as a major factor in motivating them to pursue the new areas of gender-related work, followed by support from the World Bank's Gender Action Plan.

### 3.5 Transport and storage

Transportation infrastructure is critical to supporting the economic activity of the poor. Improved access to transportation can strengthen women's and men's ability to access markets. It can also save time and increase productivity. Worldwide, in both urban and rural areas, women generally have more limited access than men to transport.<sup>84</sup> Factors that contribute to this gender gap include:

- › the cost of transport services and women's ability to control income
- › geographic reach of transportation services
- › context-specific cultural norms that may affect women's mobility<sup>85</sup>
- › concerns about personal safety risks and violence relating to transportation.<sup>86</sup>

Transportation initiatives can also directly influence women's economic status—for example, by creating new employment opportunities in infrastructure construction and maintenance.<sup>87</sup> Unfortunately, women are poorly represented in transport sector employment.

Within the past decade, national ministries and development banks have devoted increasing attention to addressing gender concerns within policies and programming relating to transportation and roads. More recently, transportation projects, particularly those funded by the Asian Development Bank, have considered opportunities to provide women with employment. They have set targets for women's participation in road construction or rehabilitation works, based on assessments of women's interest in such work.<sup>88</sup>

Transport is one of the four key pillars of the Australian Sustainable Economic Development policy, which recognises the interrelatedness of developing infrastructure, reducing poverty and strengthening the economic activity of the poor. The policy does not, however, give much specific attention to gender, in terms of either economic opportunities that may benefit women and men as a result of transport infrastructure expansion, or the associated gender-related risks.

## Overview of initiatives

The evaluation examined seven initiatives in the transport sector:

- › Indonesia infrastructure
- › Laos Northern Transport Network Improvement Project
- › PNG Key Roads for Growth Management Project
- › Philippines Partnership for Economic Governance Reforms
- › Solomon Islands Road Improvement Project (see Box 12)
- › Vanuatu Transport Sector Support Program
- › Vietnam – Mekong Transport Infrastructure Development Program.

## Gender-responsive design and implementation

**Initiatives in the transport sector varied considerably in how well they addressed gender equality in design and implementation. None of the initiatives conducted gender analysis to identify constraints to women’s ability to access and benefit from transportation services, or directly sought to overcome these barriers.**

Three initiatives (Indonesia, PNG, Vanuatu) addressed gender in design and/or implementation plans reasonably well. The Laos initiative articulated activities to promote gender equality during design at the urging of the Australian aid program (e.g. raising awareness in communities on HIV/AIDS and trafficking, and ensuring women’s representation in resettlement decision-making). However, until recently it fared poorly in implementing these activities.<sup>89</sup> Similarly, the Vietnam transport initiative’s focus on social safeguard procedures in resettlement, and community awareness of HIV/AIDS were not implemented until later stages.<sup>90</sup> The aid program’s engagement in joint supervision missions with the World Bank was key to improving the mitigation of gender-related risks.

In some cases, initiatives had a weak focus on gender equality in the initial design phase, but strengthened these approaches after implementation began. Three of these initiatives were subsequently rated as *good* in this category. Approaches included:

- › providing clearer guidance on how to integrate gender, largely by assessing gender impacts, raising gender issues with the ministry, and involving women in consultation and decision-making
- › providing guidance on how to integrate gender in worker recruitment processes
- › providing guidance on collecting sex-disaggregated data on outcome indicators
- › encouraging women to become contractors for road maintenance and to participate in road crews, and requiring contractors to hire women.

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<sup>m</sup> The study found that women constituted 31 per cent of business owners of enterprises with more than five employees. The analysis did not specify what factors contributed to women’s lower access to financial services.

Although the attention to gender in three initiatives was encouraging, the delayed focus resulted in slow and incomplete implementation.<sup>n</sup> This, in turn, contributed to weaker gender-related outcomes and missed opportunities to learn and do more in this sector.

Most initiatives did not identify and address factors that limit women's ability to safely use and benefit from roads and transport. The Philippines' governance reform initiative did, however, require gender analysis to be conducted in national transport policy planning, and encouraged the use of gender diagnostics in assessing new project proposals. These efforts may have contributed to policy planning that considered some of the gender-related barriers to women's ability to access safe and reliable transport services. It is not known if, or how, subsequent national policy addressed gender issues.<sup>o</sup>

## Box 12 Good practice: effective entry points for integrating gender equality in roads projects

The Solomon Islands Road Improvement Project systematically addressed gender equality from the design phase to completion by promoting women's employment. The project achieved impressive results in creating economic opportunities for women within road maintenance as both contractors and labourers. Women represented 40 per cent of the labour hired, and were among the managers of lead business partners that were contracted.

The initiative implemented a number of effective gender strategies that contributed to these results. The project:

- › included gender as a key element of both design and planned activities, as well as goals and objectives on women's employment
- › conducted gender analysis to inform the design of a gender action plan
- › provided equal wages to women and men workers
- › required women's participation in community consultations
- › required contractors to provide HIV/AIDS awareness training to men and women
- › used a gender awareness checklist to ensure that contractors carried out gender awareness activities in communities
- › required contractors to hire a minimum of 30 per cent women on road maintenance crews
- › encouraged contractors to rebid for contracts in different locations
- › provided skills training to women's groups
- › developed strategies to encourage women's involvement in business opportunities relating to roads maintenance
- › included gender-sensitive indicators on employment and income in the monitoring and evaluation system.

A gender stocktake of Australian aid programming in Solomon Islands largely credited the strong performance of the roads initiative on gender to the Asian Development Bank's (ADB's) internal policies and procedures on gender, and to follow-through by ADB initiative managers. This resulted in strong frameworks for addressing gender equality throughout the project cycle. A combination of ADB managers' commitment to promoting gender equality and the presence of staff with skills in gender 'translated into actual benefits for women and men that could be quantified'.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>n</sup> For example, the *Key Roads for Growth Management Project 2010 independent completion report* criticised the initiative's lack of attention to 'identifying and addressing the different needs and situations of males and females in the design, planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of activities'.

<sup>o</sup> Australian aid program staff believe that the government favourably considered these recommendations (personal communication, 13 August 2013).



Women employed to maintain roads, Auki-Malu'u, Solomon Islands, 2007. Photo: Rob Maccoll, DFAT.

## Gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation, and impact achieved or reported

**Transport initiatives that had good attention to gender in design and implementation also had a similar degree of focus within their M&E systems. These M&E systems were integral to demonstrating positive results in supporting women’s economic empowerment.**

The strong gender-responsive design of the Solomon Islands initiative was matched with a sound M&E system that captured the positive results relating to women’s employment. The design document outlined several ways in which gender should be addressed within M&E, including by collecting sex-disaggregated data on employment and income.<sup>92</sup> <sup>p</sup> Women’s perspectives were sought in data collection during pre-feasibility and feasibility studies. The initiative succeeded in generating employment for women and men as contractors and labourers. Of 22 maintenance contracts in place at the project end, 14 had a lead business partner who was a woman, and 8 had a woman as a day-to-day manager.<sup>93</sup> Women represented about 40 per cent of the labour employed through maintenance contracts.<sup>94</sup> Qualitative data were not collected on the experiences of women workers and entrepreneurs in a traditionally male-dominated sector. Such data might have provided insights into how participation affected women’s agency, or how women balanced this work with their domestic responsibilities.

The PNG initiative also had a strong M&E system that collected sex-disaggregated data on performance indicators. These include the number of people employed in road maintenance, participation in training and workshops, the level of women’s participation in community consultations, and use of gender-sensitive recruitment and employment procedures by contractors.<sup>95</sup> When the initiative’s monitoring data revealed a decline in women’s employment in a particular geographic area, staff took steps to rectify this. The initiative achieved good results in employing women as workers in road maintenance crews: by 2010, women represented 25–30 per cent of workers.<sup>96</sup>

The Indonesia and Vanuatu transport initiatives both revised their M&E systems and gender strategies midway through implementation to better capture sex-disaggregated data on outcomes such as road maintenance employment (Vanuatu) and leadership roles in the initiative (Indonesia).<sup>q</sup> The Vanuatu initiative produced some results in women’s employment: 14 per cent (10 200 of 68 000) of employment days generated went to women, and four women were employed in leadership positions by contractors. Women’s participation declined over time, which raises questions about the sustainability of this form of employment and the ability of the involved government agency to ensure compliance by private-sector contractors.<sup>97</sup> The second phase of the Vanuatu transport initiative made some modifications that might address this weakness, such as requiring managing contractors to report gender equality data on a quarterly basis.<sup>98</sup> In both initiatives, the gender strategies formulated during implementation may have better enabled or motivated staff to support women’s employment. Results might have been stronger had there been more guidance at the outset on how to pursue gender equality in this sector.

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<sup>p</sup> A challenge was that data on incomes ultimately had to be estimated, because they were difficult to obtain.

<sup>q</sup> The Indonesia phase II initiative’s revised (2012) M&E plan also called for an assessment of progress against gender targets, although it is not clear what these targets related to.

## 3.6 Cross-sectoral synthesis

**Strategic focus on women's economic empowerment has been limited across sectors and initiatives, although later and new phases of initiatives are giving more attention to economic outcomes for women as well as men. This likely reflects the growing influence of the Australian aid program's recent policy objectives and guidance on women's economic empowerment.**

Many initiatives did not aim to promote economic outcomes for women. Others began with little focus on gender equality in terms of their goals and objectives, but identified some entry points for activities in this area over time. The limited number of initiatives that deliberately addressed women's economic empowerment can largely be explained by the fact that all but two of them (Tonga energy initiatives) began several years before the Australian aid program developed its strategic focus on women's economic empowerment, as articulated in the 2011 gender policy and the subsequent WEELS guide. There are currently no economic sector-wide guidelines or explicit benchmarks for addressing women's economic empowerment in broader aid programming. Thus, the limited extent to which these longstanding initiatives have supported women's economic empowerment can be viewed as a good starting point to strengthen programming that contributes to this development goal.

**Efforts to support gender equality and women's economic empowerment are not systematic within economic sector initiatives and have relatively low levels of impact.**

Overarching principles of gender equality articulated in the aid program's gender strategy and economic sector-specific policies are not being translated consistently at the initiative level into gender analysis that informs the design, implementation plans and M&E systems of economic programming. The majority of initiatives made good efforts to address gender equality in design and planning of activities, but translating plans and gender strategies, where they existed, into practice was weak. Across the initiatives we analysed, just over half (16 of 28) reported results that related to women's economic empowerment in terms of increased participation in activities and/or improved access to resources such as capital, skills training and time-saving technology. Although some initiatives' achievements in increasing women's access to resources are an important early outcome, results that signify the onset of deeper social change processes are now needed.

**The majority of initiatives made some attempt to address gender equality in their design or activities, however only a quarter (seven)<sup>r</sup> specifically identified and attempted to overcome barriers to women's economic empowerment. Many of these efforts produced good results, supporting the idea that more explicit approaches are needed to successfully address gender-related constraints.**

The evaluation found that approaches that directly tackle barriers to women's economic participation have greater potential for success in increasing access to economic opportunities. This finding aligns with insights from the rural development gender stocktake, which found that more direct efforts were needed to overcome barriers to women's participation.

**Across the economic sector, initiatives were supported in all three pathways necessary for promoting women's economic empowerment (education and training, participation, and institutions, discussed in Chapter 2). Support for education and training, strengthening women's participation and improving women's access to, and control over, economic resources were commonly pursued. The gaps were in addressing the burden of women's unpaid care work, social protection and women's legal status for property ownership.**

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<sup>r</sup> The initiatives that pursued some activities to overcome gender inequality and barriers to women's participation are the Cambodia Agricultural Value Chain Program, the Laos rural development initiative (the CARE component that delivered gender training to couples), the Laos trade initiative, the BRAC project, the Laos P2P pilot, the Solomon Islands roads project, and the Vanuatu initiative on technical and vocational education and training.

The three pathways most often addressed to promote gender equality and women's economic empowerment were:

1. building women's capacity so that they enjoy higher returns for their labour efforts
2. increasing women's access to, and control over, economic resources and opportunities
3. supporting women's participation in decision-making (Table 2).

Several initiatives established training or communication efforts to build women's capacity. Initiatives largely supported women's decision-making and participation at the community level in terms of project planning and consultation, rather than at the household level. Given that household dynamics not only affect women's ability to make decisions about how to engage in paid work and use earnings, but are also linked to violence against women, future emphasis on supporting women's household decision-making is warranted.

One initiative in each of the transport and energy sectors (Laos and Samoa, respectively) supported women's legal recognition on land titles as part of social safeguard and mitigation efforts. None of the agriculture initiatives pursued opportunities to strengthen women's property rights. The most notable gap in supporting women's economic empowerment across initiatives was the lack of strategic attention to addressing constraints arising from women's care work. The barrier of women's heavy share of household and care work restricting their ability to effectively engage in paid economic work is well documented in international literature. It is also known that new economic opportunities can exacerbate the burden of women's domestic workloads.

More evidence on policy approaches and programming models that work in various contexts is crucial. In the informal sector and in rural areas, there are some potentially promising options. The World Bank<sup>99</sup> finds that feasible approaches vary by financing and delivery models. These range from publicly run child care centres to private providers, government-funded private providers, and publicly funded vouchers to subsidise the cost of private services. These models can be designed to provide low-cost or free services to low-income households. In contexts where public financing of care facilities is not feasible, civil society organisations can sometimes fill the gap. For example, several NGOs and a women's trade union in India have partnered with employers in the construction industry to address child care constraints. Solutions have included establishing crches near work sites, and creating home or community-based centres that rely largely on community contributions and resources.

This is an area that deserves further consideration in Australian aid programming. Selectively trialling and testing approaches to the provision of care facilities in high-priority contexts may facilitate women's participation in paid productive activity.

**Table 2 Pathways and investments to support women’s economic empowerment across sectors**

	Agriculture and rural development	Business and banking	Energy	Trade	Transport and storage
<b>Education and training</b>					
Building women’s capacity so that they enjoy higher returns for their labour efforts	✓	✓		✓	✓
<b>Participation</b>					
Strengthening women’s participation and power in decision-making	✓	✓	✓		✓
<b>Reducing the burden of women’s unpaid care work</b>					
Improving women’s access to, and control over, economic resources and opportunities	✓	✓		✓	✓
Strengthening women’s legal status and rights to property and employment			✓		✓
Instituting or improving social protection mechanisms to protect women from economic shocks					

**Initiatives that delivered community-level services, in the agriculture, and business and banking sectors, often presented clearer opportunities to integrate gender-responsive programming (e.g. the Cambodia agricultural and Bangladesh financial initiatives).**

The entry points for promoting women’s economic empowerment at the community level in the business and banking sector initiatives offer more tried and tested approaches than in areas such as trade or energy. These initiatives set targets for women’s participation in grantees’ activities and actively sought to fund projects that supported women’s economic engagement, and/or carried out research to identify relevant barriers and entry points.

**Initiatives that deliver more indirect economic benefit to women (e.g. electrification) can have wider-ranging implications for women’s and men’s economic activity than more direct investments. It is important to consider what opportunities exist to pursue gender equality (either targeted or mainstreamed) and to provide economic benefits to women as well as men, as good-practice examples from the Australian aid program have done.**

The evaluation team identified several examples of good efforts to address gender equality and enhance women’s economic empowerment in the energy (Laos and Tonga), trade (Laos) and transport (Solomon Islands) sectors. This was promising to see, because there are fewer international good-practice models in these macro-level sectors. While initiative managers found these areas particularly challenging, research indicates that policy and programming in these sectors can have far-reaching economic impacts for women and men.

**Shortcomings in the inclusion of gender-sensitive indicators in M&E systems and evaluations, and in implementing M&E systems, limit opportunities to understand whether and how gender strategies are reaching and benefiting women and men.**

There were numerous examples of initiatives across the sectors that did well at articulating objectives or activities that were relevant to promoting gender equality and women's economic empowerment, but that did not succeed in carrying through a strong gender focus within M&E systems. Moreover, only one impact evaluation conducted among the initiatives used baseline and endline data to systematically measure economic outcomes for women. As a result, strong evidence of women's economic empowerment was limited. Overall, evidence of impact was scarce, beyond women's increased participation and access to economic resources. This overall finding is substantiated by conclusions in the aid program's rural development stocktake<sup>100</sup> and the 2009–10 performance review of gender equality programming.<sup>101</sup> The small evidence base within the Australian aid program limits knowledge of effective strategies across different aid contexts to empower women economically.

M&E also faces operational challenges. For example, many initiatives that had done well at conceptualising how gender issues would be considered within M&E systems were not able to collect and report results on relevant sex-disaggregated and gender-sensitive outcome indicators (e.g. the Solomon Islands agriculture and the South East Asia and Pacific Enterprise Challenge Fund). A few initiatives had gender targets for participation, but did not systematically report on progress made towards achieving these targets (e.g. the Pacific Region Financial Inclusion Program). The specific challenges that program staff and implementing partners faced in effectively implementing M&E systems are mostly unknown, as initiatives did not provide detailed narratives. However, some identified factors included limited field staff capacity to effectively collect and enter data, and databases that were too cumbersome to use effectively. This highlights the problem of weak M&E capacity, as well as weak gender capacity.

**A number of internal and external factors help explain shortcomings in approaches to, and results on, gender equality and women's economic empowerment, as well as why some initiatives have been more successful.**

As discussed above, one of the key reasons for the limited strategic focus and results on women's economic empowerment is that economically targeted gender policy guidance was developed years after most of the initiatives examined here had begun. In addition, within the field of development, progress in advancing gender equality within the economic arena has been slower than in other sectors. This is partly a reflection of the relative difficulty of overcoming gender inequalities relating to economic activity at various levels within households, community, and public and private sectors. It is also indicative of the wider challenges associated with combating income poverty. As a result, there are fewer global good-practice models on promoting women's empowerment and gender equality in a number of economic sectors. In recent years, more research on policy and programming for women's economic empowerment has added to the body of knowledge and resources available on effective approaches. It is likely that more time is needed to fully understand how the aid program's economic sector initiatives use internal and external guidance to strengthen their efforts to address gender equality. As discussed above, limited incentives and expectations to date on addressing women's economic empowerment within the Australian aid program have also contributed to the limited results.

On an operational level, internal factors help explain weaknesses in implementing gender equality. These include inadequate funding for gender (often because gender analysis was not adequately included in the design, and so insufficient funds were allocated to gender-related interventions), delays in hiring gender specialists, limited gender expertise or guidance relating to the technical areas of economic sector programming, and inadequate detail in design and implementation documents.

The above issues are compounded by external factors related to partner government policies and capacity, as well as discriminatory institutions, social norms and gender stereotyping. Specific 'how-to' knowledge and experience in implementing strategies to support women's economic empowerment was often limited among implementing agencies, such as national research institutes, NGOs and, in some cases, initiative managers. This was particularly evident in initiatives that focused on institutional or macro-level activities such as policy reform.<sup>s</sup>

**The Australian aid program has demonstrated that its gender equality policies and programming mechanisms can influence development partners to support new approaches and strengthen the focus on gender equality. However personal commitment to gender equality was a key factor.**

The presence of sector-specific gender skills, both among initiative staff at partner organisations and in the aid program, contributed to stronger attention to gender equality. Australia's participation in joint monitoring missions did increase attention to gender equality. Where partner organisations, including governments, have gender equality policies and mechanisms in place, the Australian aid program has clearer avenues for engaging in gender equality which facilitates stronger Australian efforts in this area.. The evaluation found that, in the absence of clear incentives or department-wide mechanisms to address gender equality, the personal commitment of initiative managers and partners was a key factor in how well initiatives actually pursued gender equality. This point came up repeatedly in discussions with Australian aid staff.



**Mr Bowling Saengsouliya (left) and Vanny Southasy (right) setting off a charge that will destroy dangerous, live unexploded ordnance (BLU 26 antipersonnel devices), Taoun Village, Laman District, Lao PDR, 2009. Photo: Jim Holmes.**

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<sup>s</sup> In the gender equality sections of QAI reports, managers of these initiatives often cited challenges in identifying how to implement gender strategies or in following through with implementation.

## 4 Country program strategies and practices

### Key question

- › How effectively have country programs integrated gender into their economic empowerment programs, adopted gender strategies into country portfolios, and promoted women's economic empowerment among other stakeholders in the country?

### Key findings

- › Country program activities reviewed are largely well aligned with the priorities of the Australian aid program's 2011 gender policy for building women's economic empowerment.
- › These country programs are strongest in expanding women's non-agricultural employment opportunities, increasing agricultural productivity, and improving access to infrastructure and training.
- › A gap in the alignment between country program activities and the gender policy is in reducing women's care work burden. None of the country programs have implemented activities in this area. Few countries had projects to improve access to financial services.
- › Most country programs have gender strategies or action plans that guide programming on gender equality. However, very few countries have undertaken analysis to identify gender-specific barriers to women's economic advancement and to formulate objectives to address them.
- › Results on women's economic empowerment are limited overall, even in country programs that have strong mechanisms for addressing gender equality. To some extent, this may be related to the low levels of attention given to gender equality within host governments.
- › The Australian aid program has successfully engaged with implementing partners and national governments in support of gender equality in economic programming.
- › Gender specialists and advisers have been well used by country programs to inform program design and develop sector-level strategies. However, country programs continue to cite limited staff capacity as a major barrier to effectively promoting gender equality in their programming.

Seven country programs (Indonesia, Laos, Papua New Guinea(PNG), the Philippines, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Vietnam) were assessed in four areas:

- › alignment with Australian aid global policy on gender equality
- › gender equality strategies and analysis
- › gender resources
- › gender reporting and results.

In addition, the evaluation assessed the Australian aid program's ability to influence partners on gender equality and women's economic empowerment.

### 4.1 Country program strategies and the macroeconomic context

The seven selected country programs were from a range of geographical contexts. Table 3 provides an overview of the macroeconomic and gender contexts, and economic programming priorities in each

country examined. Table 4 outlines country program practices on gender equality and women's economic empowerment.

**Table 3 Summary of country contexts**

Country	Economy	Poverty	Human development index	Gender equality	Gender inequality development index	Main aid investment areas: % of investment going to initiatives with a gender equality focus
Indonesia	Rapid economic growth in 2011 (exports & services)	Poverty rate: 12.5% Health & education facilities lacking in most regions	121 out of 187 countries	Improving in education, literacy & female labour force participation High representation of women in informal & marginal work	106 out of 148 countries	Education, infrastructure (transport, water & sanitation), governance, social protection: 65%
Laos	High levels of foreign investment (mining & hydropower)	Poverty rate declining Rural poverty still a challenge 13% of population has food insecurity	138 out of 187 countries	Poverty & wellbeing very gendered Rural & ethnic-minority women lag in economic status, health & education	100 out of 148 countries	Education, rural development (energy & transport infrastructure, rural livelihoods): 86%
Papua New Guinea	High levels of economic growth in the past decade	Economic growth has not affected development outcomes	153 out of 187 countries	Status of women low Maternal mortality & sexual violence rates among world highest	134 out of 187 countries	Transport infrastructure, workforce skills: 56%
Philippines	Steady rise in economic growth rate over the past two decades	High levels of social & economic inequality	121 out of 187 countries	Rates well on gender equality & women's empowerment High levels of maternal mortality & violence against women Women concentrated in informal economy Women's wages ~55% of men's	78 out of 138 countries	Education, transport infrastructure, public finance management: 62%
Solomon Islands	Economic progress since 2003 (log exports, gold)	One of the poorest countries in the Pacific	143 out of 187 countries	Low levels of secondary school enrolment for girls High rates of violence against women Women concentrated in informal economy	129 out of 177 countries	Economic infrastructure (transport & energy), supporting livelihoods: 58%
Vanuatu	Growing steadily since early 2000s (tourism, construction & commodities)	13% of population below poverty line Most lack access to employment, education & health services	124 out of 187 countries	Women disadvantaged Women underrepresented in technical & tertiary education High rates of domestic violence Women mostly self-employed in microenterprises or agriculture	Not available	Education, health services, infrastructure development, reform on economic governance issues & legal institutions: 89%
Vietnam	Two decades of economic growth, then high inflation & declining productivity	Progress in reducing poverty Income disparity & poverty in rural & ethnic communities	127 out of 187 countries	Women's wages ~75% of men's Women concentrated in low-wage employment High levels of poverty & low levels of primary education for rural & ethnic-minority women	48 out of 148 countries	Infrastructure, sustainable agriculture, forestry & fisheries, water & sanitation, climate change adaptation, human resources: 38%

**Table 4 Country program practices on gender equality and women’s economic empowerment**

Area of evaluation	Question	Indonesia	Laos	Papua New Guinea	Philippines	Solomon Islands	Vanuatu	Vietnam
Alignment with Australian aid global programming on gender equality	Is there programming that addresses gender in the following areas:							
	› non-agricultural employment, including women’s business development?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	› access to financial services, financial literacy?	✓				✓		
	› access to productive agricultural resources, markets, technology?	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
	› access to training, rural roads, transportation, electricity, information, digital technology?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	› provision of child, elder and infirm care?							
	› social protection measures?	✓	✓		✓	✓		
Gender equality strategies and analysis	Are gender equality goals discussed in country program strategies?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Has the country program:							
	› undertaken a gender stocktake?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	› developed a gender strategy/action plan?	✓		✓	✓			✓
	› stated in its strategies an objective to promote women’s economic empowerment?			✓	✓			✓
Gender resources	Has the country program used a full-time or part-time gender expert in recent years to help develop country or sectoral strategies?	✓		✓	✓	✓		
Gender reporting and results	Do the country program performance frameworks include sex-disaggregated indicators and other indicators related to gender equality?		✓	NA		✓	NA	✓
	Are results related to women’s economic empowerment reported in country annual program performance reports?		✓		✓	✓	✓	

NA = not available; ✓ = part of the country strategy

## 4.2 Alignment with Australian aid policy on gender equality

There is a good degree of congruence between the approaches for supporting women's economic empowerment articulated in the Australian aid program's gender policy and those taken in the country programs that have attempted to consider gender equality. This is a good base from which to strengthen country-level economic programming that contributes to gender equality and women's economic empowerment.

The greatest alignment between the gender policy and on-the-ground programming is in improving women's non-agricultural employment opportunities, agricultural productivity and infrastructure investments, largely focused on the transport and energy sectors.

As discussed in the sectoral analysis in Chapter 3, transport initiatives in Solomon Islands, PNG and Vanuatu have addressed women's economic empowerment by considering opportunities to employ women. Vanuatu's Governance for Growth initiative (not among the initiatives reviewed) also addressed priorities for men and women in governance reforms relating to infrastructure, and supported targeted gender research.<sup>102</sup> The initiatives implemented in these sectors by the Philippines and Indonesia have largely ignored gender,<sup>103</sup> but this has improved in recent years. Each has pursued new (or new phases of) transport initiatives that have either incorporated gender analysis in the design stage (the Philippines) or developed a gender strategy to guide subsequent gender-sensitive activities (Indonesia). Similarly, the Australian aid program in Laos has recently pursued gender equality through its support for the targeted component of the Rural Electrification Project, and by improving implementation of gender-focused social mitigation activities in its transport initiative.<sup>104</sup> The Vietnam program addresses gender equality to a lesser degree in both its energy and transport programming by carrying out social safeguard measures and including a component to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS.

Six of the seven country programs (all but PNG)<sup>a</sup> include agriculture and rural development programming that supports women's access to productive resources. Activities that have the potential to improve women's agricultural productivity include researching gender issues in agriculture and rural business development (Vietnam), promoting labour-saving agricultural technologies for women (Laos), delivering agricultural and agribusiness training to farmers (Laos, Indonesia, Solomon Islands), and supporting women's access to land (the Philippines, Vanuatu).

Six of the seven country programs (all but Vietnam) also invest in non-agricultural employment opportunities that benefit women and men. Activities to pursue gender equality include promoting women's employment in roads construction (Solomon Islands, the Philippines, PNG, Vanuatu), providing technical and business training (Laos, Vanuatu), and conducting research on the gender dimensions of private-sector development (Laos).<sup>b</sup>

The country programs' investment in financial services for women and men is relatively weaker. Only Indonesia and Solomon Islands have such programs. However, several regional initiatives promoting financial services and entrepreneurship in the Pacific and east Asia reach most of the countries reviewed here.

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<sup>a</sup> The PNG agricultural research initiative (reviewed in Chapter 3), ended in 2012. At the time of investigation, the country program no longer included agriculture and rural development programming. The Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research now delivers programs in these sectors.

<sup>b</sup> The Pacific and South-east Asia regional initiatives in business and banking also supported research and gave grants to businesses that could benefit women, but are not considered here as part of Australia's country aid programs.

**None of the country programs examined have implemented approaches to address women’s care and work burden.<sup>c</sup> This represents a substantial gap within broader aid program efforts to support gender equality and women’s economic empowerment.**

Demands on women to care for children and the elderly may prevent them from participating in paid economic work or limit the extent to which they can meaningfully engage in this work. This means that creating economic opportunities for women without either providing them with options for seeking care-related assistance or directly promoting a more equitable division of care-related responsibilities in the household will likely increase women’s work burdens. As discussed in Chapter 3, this is an economic empowerment pathway that Australian aid is yet to address.

## Gender equality strategies and analysis

**All seven country programs have some focus on gender equality in their overall country strategies, but strategic focus on women’s economic empowerment in programming is limited.**

Three country programs (Laos, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu) have pursued gender equality as a cross-cutting theme across their programming. Vanuatu, together with Solomon Islands and PNG, will also be the focus of a new Pacific regional gender initiative. Three other country programs (Indonesia, the Philippines, PNG) have more explicit goals or objectives relating to gender equality. For example, the program in Indonesia considers gender equality to be a core objective (see Box 13). Similarly, the PNG program regards gender equality as a key focus in its priority sectors.<sup>105</sup> Although programming in Vietnam has treated gender equality as a cross-cutting issue, it has received little attention. The country program has, however, recently articulated gender objectives in its 2013–16 Gender Action Plan.<sup>106</sup> The country programs’ efforts to address gender equality are complemented by moderately strong national frameworks on gender equality in all but one (Vanuatu) of the seven countries.<sup>d</sup>

Gender strategies developed by four of the seven country programs (Indonesia, the Philippines, PNG, Vietnam) serve as valuable, high-level documents that articulate the importance of pursuing gender equality priorities within country programming. They also provide some guidance on internal arrangements. For example, Indonesia’s 2012 Gender Strategy and Action Plan, and Vietnam’s recent gender action plan both provide guidance on gender-related responsibilities among senior management and gender focal points. This is a good first step in establishing mechanisms to help ensure follow-through and accountability in integrating gender equality. For the Australian aid program in the Philippines, the 2008 Gender Action Plan<sup>107</sup> aimed to build staff capacity to integrate gender equality at the sector and initiative levels. The 2009 gender stocktake found that the Philippines country program had made early progress in strengthening internal capacity on gender.<sup>108</sup> For example, many portfolio and initiative managers used the plan when developing concept papers and sector strategies. The Philippines program is finalising a new gender policy. Despite the focus on gender equality and the presence of gender strategies among the country programs reviewed, only two of them—PNG and Vietnam—have articulated explicit objectives relating to women’s economic empowerment. PNG’s gender equality strategy states an intention to develop a new strategy on women’s economic empowerment.<sup>109</sup> Notably, the stocktake of PNG found that programming had done little to address women’s economic empowerment. This finding motivated subsequent attention to this area in the gender strategy. Vietnam’s gender action plan states that the aid program will

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<sup>c</sup> The Vanuatu Technical and Vocational Education and Training Sector Strengthening Program initiative provides allowances to women for child care in some cases, to facilitate their participation in training. However, this is not a specific strategy and is not pursued more broadly in the work of the Vanuatu country program.

<sup>d</sup> The Vanuatu Government does not have clear policies in place on gender equality. Interviews with in-country stakeholders also revealed that doing work to directly address gender equality was very difficult.

'pursue a more strategic and targeted focus in areas where progress has been slow', including in women's economic empowerment. In spite of this attention, neither country program has yet articulated any specific approaches for women's economic empowerment, or directly pursued gender equality in more than a few economic initiatives.

As noted in Chapter 3, the overall limited strategic focus on women's economic empowerment in country programming can, to a large degree, be explained by the fact that the Australian aid program's policy guidance in this area was developed after most of the country program strategies had begun. More time will be needed to assess country programs' adoption of Australia's global guidance on women's economic empowerment within new country and sector plans, and section-level planning. One important factor in improving the relevance and effectiveness of Australian aid programs, and the level of gender awareness of staff is to engage local gender consultants, women's civil society organisations, research institutions and gender equality activists. The experience and knowledge of these stakeholders will help improve the analysis of in-country gender issues to develop better informed country program strategies and program design.

### **Box 13 Good practice: Indonesia provides examples of mechanisms to address gender equality**

The Australian aid program in Indonesia has a strong commitment to addressing gender equality. This is demonstrated by the substantial progress it has made in recent years to improve processes for addressing gender in its programming. Noteworthy mechanisms include:

- › a gender strategy and action plan developed in 2012 to guide staff on pursuing gender equality
- › establishment of a new initiative, Empowering Indonesian Women for Poverty Reduction, that aims to overcome barriers to women's employment opportunities, institute social protection, improve reproductive health, protect migrant workers and end violence against women
- › strong requirements on gender in the current Australia–Indonesia Partnership Country Strategy
  - gender analysis to inform design and implementation of all initiatives
  - a gender specialist to provide input during all peer reviews
  - gender to be incorporated in the monitoring, evaluation and reporting of all initiatives
  - gender integration efforts to be considered in management performance appraisals
- › a gender unit created in 2010 to implement the gender strategy and action plan by building staff capacity.

These initiatives have produced a number of outcomes for gender equality and women's economic empowerment. For example, Australia's assistance to the education sector in Aceh is reported to have supported the passing of a mayoral regulation on gender-responsive budgeting and to have increased incomes for 32 786 poor women and men in 2012–13 through investment in rural livelihoods and agribusiness.<sup>110</sup> The most direct investment in women, the Empowering Indonesian Women for Poverty Reduction, is working with groups of home-based workers and with major firms that employ large numbers of women. This includes work in the garment and footwear sectors, and with the Indonesia Employers' Association to improve systems and processes to encourage female participation, improve women's working conditions and wages, and boost productivity.

**Despite the absence of specific goals and strategies on women's economic empowerment, several economic sector initiatives in the country programs have the potential to address barriers to women's economic empowerment. Greater focus is needed in these sectors to identify and directly address such barriers.**

Vanuatu's country programming has systematically considered gender equality in its economic governance, infrastructure, and technical and vocational programming. Vanuatu's economic governance initiative has undertaken gender analysis on the potential impacts of policy reform in particular sectors.<sup>111</sup> These efforts have translated into meaningful results for women's economic empowerment: a substantial number of women have completed training, and have experienced growth in incomes from entrepreneurship and employment.<sup>112</sup> The expansion of mobile phone coverage has been accompanied by a reduction in the gender gap in phone ownership over a four-year period.<sup>113</sup> While the initial design of the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) initiative was not strong on gender equality, interviews with aid program staff reveal that it has subsequently focused on gender equality throughout implementation. This includes efforts to overcome time-related and social barriers to women's participation in training and entrepreneurship in nontraditional fields.

The Laos program (see Box 14) has addressed gender equality within programming and research on trade, energy and rural development. Components of a few initiatives have attempted to overcome barriers to women's economic advancement. The Australian aid program's commitment to pursuing gender equality has been a key enabling factor, although the effects on women's economic empowerment are not yet clear. The aid program funded the subsidised loan component of the electrification project, which aimed to reach poor, female-headed households. In the trade portfolio, it supported capacity-building programs for female garment workers and factory supervisors to help improve labour conditions. The rural development initiative's work to promote labour-saving technologies for women helped to reduce women's workload—a first step to supporting their economic advancement. Rural development portfolio managers said that a new phase of programming will use a targeted approach to improve women's economic livelihoods through training in business planning, financial literacy, asset transfers and mentoring.<sup>114</sup>

In the Solomon Islands aid program, although overall progress on gender equality has been limited,<sup>115</sup> some of its approaches to pursue gender equality in infrastructure, for example, have recognised barriers to women's ability to participate and benefit. As discussed in Chapter 3, the roads initiative integrated gender analysis and implemented strategies to encourage contractors to hire women.

#### **Box 14 Good practice: gender research and learning can support women's economic empowerment**

Laos has recently carried out strong gender-analytical research, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in its economic sector programming. This has led to greater understanding of relevant gender needs

and how they can be addressed in implementation. Through this research, programming has evolved to have stronger potential to economically empower women.

**Rural development:** In the Laos–Australia Non-government Organisation (NGO) Cooperation Agreement initiative, the Australian aid program in Laos strengthened the focus on gender-responsive M&E by commissioning an independent gender evaluation and integrating gender into a new participatory M&E system for the whole initiative. These efforts helped to raise NGO partners’ awareness of differential gender impacts on men and women participants, as well as to develop a stronger understanding of how to pursue gender-responsive strategies in community-level activities.

**Energy** sector: The Australian aid program and the World Bank supported assessments and evaluations to determine how successful the Rural Electrification Project’s Power to the Poor pilot was in increasing women-headed households’ access to electricity. Results from these M&E efforts helped to demonstrate success in benefiting women and men, as well as to identify areas of improvement to better reach poor women.

**Trade** programming: Laos’s urging to take up gender issues resulted in several streams of gender-analytical research on trade, entrepreneurship and labour standards in the national garment industry. These studies encouraged new activities aimed at women and addressing gender, including skills training for garment workers, and an enterprise funds scheme to support women and men entrepreneurs.



Joygum Begum, a graduate of the BRAC Special Targeting Ultra Poor (STUP) program. Joygum now works with BRAC, helping people currently taking part in the two-year STUP program. Joygum was just 13 when she was married to her husband, and has three children. *Photo: Ashleigh Connor, DFAT.*

Five of the seven country programs examined (all but Vanuatu and Vietnam) have undertaken a gender stocktake. These reviews have strengthened understanding of the aid program's progress in promoting gender equality overall, although more analysis that focuses on the economic sector would be valuable.

The effort in producing gender stocktakes indicates a strong willingness to examine and improve approaches to pursuing gender equality across country programs. The gender stocktakes have explored a wide range of issues, including:

- › performance of initiatives in addressing gender equality in the initiative cycle, including in monitoring and evaluation (M&E)
- › internal systems and processes to address gender equality
- › staff capacity to address gender
- › barriers and enabling factors to promoting gender equality
- › the aid program's ability to work with governments and other partners on gender equality.

While the stocktakes assess progress across all sectors of programming, any future stocktakes might benefit from more disaggregation of data and analysis by sector, as some stocktakes have already done. This would highlight effective approaches and challenges to addressing gender equality. For example, in the case of PNG, its 2008 and 2009 gender stocktakes helped to inform the development of the aid program's strategy on gender equality and women's empowerment.<sup>116</sup>

**To be effective, country program activities relating to women's economic empowerment must be relevant to the local context and women's needs. However, gender analysis is often not used or is weak in country programs, and there is limited discussion of local contexts in planning documents.**

In many instances, the gender analysis presented in country strategies and annual program performance reports (APPRs) is very general, and economic context is either absent or not particularly nuanced. For example, the Philippines program's earlier country strategy<sup>117</sup> makes almost no mention of gender concerns in economic development, except for a passing mention of the percentage of women involved in the agricultural sector. When gender issues in the economic sector are mentioned, the programs do not focus strongly on these areas, in most cases.

The Australian aid program's recent review of country APPRs also found limited discussion of local development contexts. It notes that 'most reports had insufficient rationale and explanation of why the objectives of country or regional programs were the most appropriate responses in the given contexts'.<sup>118</sup> In terms of attention to gender, the review also found that only 11 out of the 26 APPRs examined discussed gender in a comprehensive way.<sup>119</sup> The evaluation found a few examples of economic sector priorities that directly addressed gender-specific needs and opportunities. For example, Indonesia's gender strategy refers to gender gaps in the labour market, such as women's disproportionate concentration in low-paid sectors. As mentioned in Box 13, its recently launched Empowering Indonesian Women for Poverty Reduction (MAMPU) initiative appears well positioned to address these inequalities. The PNG country program's gender equality strategy mentioned addressing the situation of women in the mining and extractive industry as part of its efforts to promote women's economic empowerment. This addresses an area of important need, given that women are known to face substantial disadvantage in this sector.<sup>120</sup> The strategy also noted that economic programming would consider relevant linkages with violence against women, another major area of gender inequality in the country context. It remains to be seen how future economic programming will actually address these issues.

Although our review of country and initiative strategies in Laos revealed that little gender analysis was documented in the delivery strategies and initiative designs in the economic sector, interviews with stakeholders during case-study field visits indicated that some of their economic work was well targeted to areas of need for women. For example, interviews with managers at the aid program and the World Bank indicated that the aid program's support to improve garment factory productivity, worker advancement and labour standards could help to support gender equality aims, given the predominance of women workers in the sector.

## Gender resources

**It is promising that four of the seven country programs (Indonesia, the Philippines, PNG, Solomon Islands) have used a gender adviser or specialist in recent years to help inform the design of country or sector-level strategies.**

The gender experts in three of these programs (Indonesia, the Philippines, PNG) helped to devise gender strategies or action plans. In Indonesia, they assisted in developing a comprehensive set of measures to strengthen internal capacity on gender equality. The Philippines gender stocktake found that the presence of a gender expert from the beginning of an initiative helped to ensure that the initiative identified specific strategies to pursue gender equality.<sup>121</sup> Because of the limited documentation on the inputs that gender experts have provided, it is not possible to determine the impact they have had on addressing gender equality in economic programming. However, the sector analysis in Chapter 3 shows that there is a positive correlation between the presence of inhouse gender expertise and economic sector programming that included gender in design and implementation.

**In all the country programs, limited staff capacity is a major barrier to the Australian aid program's ability to effectively promote gender equality in its programming.**

An external review conducted in 2012 by the University of Queensland on the Australian aid program's gender training system found substantial gaps in gender capacity among staff. Survey data indicate that only about one-third of staff feel confident about how to incorporate gender within the project cycle.<sup>122</sup> Although the level of preparedness was slightly higher among gender focal points than among other country-based staff, many gender focal points also reported having insufficient knowledge on how to integrate gender. Staff expressed the greatest need for more training and hands-on support in gender analysis. Several gender stocktakes further substantiate this finding. In the PNG country program, staff reported that limited gender skills were a key constraint in the aid program's ability to deliver results on gender equality.<sup>123</sup> In Laos, the absence of strong technical skills relating to gender contributed to less upfront gender analysis in the design phase.<sup>124</sup> Similarly, both the Laos and Solomon Islands gender stocktakes concluded that limited gender skills among staff make it difficult to translate design into effective implementation strategies on gender.<sup>125</sup> In contrast, sufficient training and tools on gender in the Philippines facilitated the country program's work on gender equality.<sup>126</sup>

Efforts made by country programs to bolster inhouse gender expertise could be an important first step to help strengthen staff capacity on gender. However, without clear mechanisms in place to ensure that gender experts engage with other staff to carry out work on gender, the presence of gender experts alone is insufficient to improve staff capacity. There is a need for broader systems on how, when and by whom gender will be addressed. The Indonesia and Vietnam country programs, as mentioned previously, have made progress in this area and begun to outline such mechanisms in their gender strategies.

## Gender reporting and results

**Gender reporting in country programs is weak, and results on women's economic empowerment are limited, even in country programs that have strong mechanisms for addressing gender equality.**

Only four of the seven country programs (Solomon Islands, the Philippines, Vanuatu and Laos) report on progress towards supporting women's economic empowerment in their 2011 APPRs. Most of this progress relates to women's participation in activities, improved access to productive resources, or process-oriented results in terms of mainstreaming gender. In all seven country programs, it was found that reported results are not always sex-disaggregated. An example of this was an APPR that reported on the number of smallholder farmers with improved access to markets, but did not mention the number of female farmers.<sup>127</sup>

One of the factors contributing to limited gender outcomes is weak M&E. In addition, limited strategic gender analysis at the country level and in the economic sectors translates into interventions that are not meaningfully addressing gender barriers. This in turn limits women's participation and ability to derive economic gains. This point is also noted in the rural development gender stocktake.

Sex-disaggregated indicators are a starting point for reporting gender-related results, but only three country programs (Laos, Solomon Islands and Vietnam) include sex-disaggregated or gender-sensitive indicators relating to economic outcomes in their performance assessment frameworks. Five of the country programs have already developed frameworks, but the remaining two are still in the process of finalising their frameworks. Given that the requirement of developing performance assessment frameworks is new, it will be important to observe how country programs progress over time in their inclusion of gender considerations. Developing frameworks that are gender sensitive may motivate greater attention to gender equality and women's economic empowerment, not only in measurement and reporting on programs, but also in design and implementation. Potential challenges that staff may face when integrating gender in the frameworks are discussed in the next chapter.

For further details on M&E, see Chapter 5.

### 4.3 The Australian aid program's influence on partners

**The country programs' limited focus on women's economic empowerment may be attributable to some extent to low levels of attention within national government policy frameworks. However, there may be good opportunities for the aid program to effectively engage in policy dialogue or support programming that contributes to this goal.**

Although most of the governments of the countries examined have a strong emphasis on gender equality, the evaluation found that, for the most part, this commitment does not extend to a strong focus on advancing women's position in the economic domain. The lack of national policies or strategic priorities on advancing gender equality in the economic sphere may obscure clear entry points for the Australian aid program. However, this should not preclude the aid program from engaging in policy dialogue on women's economic empowerment, or actively supporting approaches that have strong potential to promote gender equality. For example, in Vanuatu, there are no strong national policies on gender equality, and discussion with stakeholders revealed that addressing gender equality or women's economic empowerment head-on was very difficult. Despite this, the Australian aid program has been able to incorporate gender into all of its key areas of work, including economic sector initiatives. The TVET Sector Strengthening Program is a good example of programming that was not designed to explicitly target barriers to gender equality but has subsequently pursued creative approaches to facilitate women's involvement, engage with male leaders and convey social messages that support women's participation in new occupations.

In Laos, interviews with government stakeholders revealed commitment to supporting women's economic participation, largely through a focus on strengthening women's skills and capacity. This did not necessarily translate to addressing more entrenched social norms and barriers that constrain women's economic participation, although a number of government officials did raise the issue of violence against women. Encouraging more attention to addressing barriers is therefore an important strategic area of policy dialogue for the aid program to pursue. Only the Philippines government's policy on gender equality specifically refers to promoting women's economic empowerment. This supportive policy environment presents a good opportunity for the Australian aid program in the Philippines to direct more investment in economic sector programming with the specific aim of economically empowering women.

**Although the Australian aid program's ability to influence partner organisations and governments during implementation may be limited, there are channels through which it can support work and engage in policy dialogue on gender equality.**

The Laos and Indonesia gender stocktakes found that the aid program's ability to influence its partners, particularly multilateral development banks, on gender equality is weaker during implementation. The Laos stocktake noted that the Australian aid program has more influence on partners in addressing gender equality at the design stage. Both stocktakes also found that the program has influence in other mandatory processes, such as midterm reviews.<sup>128</sup> One issue may be that implementing partners already have policies to address gender equality and women's economic empowerment, and are less likely to take account of Australian guidance.<sup>129</sup> The Australian aid program still has opportunities to advocate for more explicit or innovative approaches, even when partners (especially multilateral development banks) have their own mechanisms and capacity on gender. This is particularly the case in sectors such as infrastructure and trade, where less work has been done by partners to promote women's economic empowerment.

As a bilateral organisation, the Australian aid program can play a complementary role in supporting targeted studies and pilot activities on gender equality, which governments may be initially reluctant to invest in.<sup>130</sup> This was the case in the Laos trade initiative, where the Australian aid program’s persistence in engaging in policy dialogue on gender equality with ministry officials helped raise awareness of the importance of addressing gender equality. A senior aid program manager expressed the view that government officials had difficulty understanding the relevance of gender equality as a priority in trade and private-sector development. Despite limited early progress, Australian aid program staff continued to regularly raise the issue of gender equality with ministry officials, and encouraged them to attend gender training. These efforts, together with the gender and trade studies that the aid program helped to fund, have begun to generate greater understanding in the ministry of the relevance of gender equality and can act as a catalyst for better performance on gender.<sup>131</sup>

By clarifying its expectations, the Australian aid program may be able to bolster its ability to engage in policy dialogue on gender equality and women’s economic empowerment. Staff at the Laos Post and implementing non-government organisations in the Laos rural development initiative said that simply including gender equality in the design phase and requiring partners to report on gender were not enough to ensure that it would actually be addressed in implementation. They suggested that the Australian aid program should explicitly communicate its expectations on incorporating gender at the outset.

The aid program’s ability to clarify its expectations on gender equality in economic sector programming depends on staff capacity on gender and in technical areas. For example, the gender stocktake of the Laos program found that some staff wanted to have more support for how to raise gender with partners. It also concluded that the aid program could ‘clearly add value in keeping gender on the table’, but that its ‘ability to influence ... depends on [its] capacity to contribute technical resources’ in a particular sector.<sup>132</sup>



**Gail Waki (right) a trailblazer in taking on nontraditional gender roles, teaching tiling at the Vanuatu Institute of Technology in Port Vila, Vanuatu.**

## 5 Monitoring and evaluation

### Key question

- › Are monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems providing the right information to effectively track and measure progress towards the goal of women's economic empowerment?

### Key findings

- › The requirement to measure gender objectives and goals signals their importance and helps ensure that they are given sufficient weight in implementation. The gender equality ratings that are part of the quality at implementation (QAI) monitoring and reporting system ensure that the Australian aid program's gender policy remains clear for economic sector initiatives.
- › Overrated self-scoring of gender equality within the QAI system accounted for about one-quarter of all ratings in 2012. Training is needed for staff to conduct good-quality gender analysis and incorporate this into design, M&E and reporting.
- › Initiatives were not helped by a lack of department-wide guidance on how to structure or implement a quality M&E plan to assess gender outcomes relating to the economic sectors. The recently developed Gender Equality Performance Assessment Framework represents a great step forward, but requires the addition of a theory of change and indicators for measuring program impact. The current efforts to improve the Australian aid program's M&E system for women's economic empowerment are commended.
- › Most initiatives only conducted M&E at the simplest level: sex-disaggregated data on participation in training and workshops, and uptake of services. These data are important, but insufficient for improving the sectors' performance on gender equality outcomes.
- › Only one initiative was assessed as *very good* on M&E. Dissemination of this example and examples of best practice from other sectors (gathered from international sources) may provide needed capacity-building opportunities for initiative managers and staff who want to learn more about gender-responsive M&E.

In this evaluation, we found that three-quarters of the initiatives collect sex-disaggregated data, but these data were not used systematically to improve programs. In addition, half the initiatives did not have baseline data against which to measure progress over time. Not surprisingly, and consistent with findings in Chapter 3, very few initiatives can point to evidence that women are benefiting from economic sector initiatives, beyond increased participation and access to economic resources. In this chapter, we build on other components of the evaluation to analyse the key elements of the aid program's monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system, and identify areas where its mechanisms could be improved.

### 5.1 Importance of monitoring and evaluation

M&E systems are universally recognised as essential to achieving excellence in development practice. Over the past decade, growing interest in the effectiveness of international aid has renewed the focus on M&E and heightened efforts to create robust systems for measuring progress and impact.

A new performance framework for the Australian aid program aims to ensure ‘a stronger focus on results and value-for-money ... [and] enhanced monitoring of the progress of our aid investments’.<sup>133</sup>

The 2011 Australian aid program’s gender policy stresses the importance of articulating Australia’s contribution to higher-level gender equality and women’s empowerment goals.<sup>134</sup> In addition to showing the value of aid for gender equality and women’s empowerment, measuring results means that donors can invest resources in the most successful approaches. Requiring that gender objectives are measured through performance indicators signals their importance and helps ensure that they are given sufficient weight in implementation. Moreover, the process of integrating gender into M&E frameworks provides program designers, managers and implementers with the opportunity to think critically about their targets in gender and women’s empowerment, and whether the planned activities will enable them to achieve these targets. For these reasons, it is important to retain a separate and explicit focus on gender equality in quality at implementation (QAI) and other performance reports.

However, designing and executing effective M&E systems is challenging. Many bilateral funding agencies have conducted a variety of audits to diagnose weaknesses and make improvements in M&E systems. The Australian aid program’s 2013 M&E standards state that the aid program has been reviewing and exploring factors that account for the quality of M&E products over the past four years, and that these ‘have been highly variable’.<sup>135</sup> It concludes that staff do not share an understanding of basic concepts of M&E or have a consistent view of what constitutes quality within M&E. These larger challenges are mirrored within the system for monitoring and evaluating results of the aid program’s gender policy. In the Gender Equality Performance Assessment Framework (PAF), it is acknowledged that ‘recent gender stocktakes ... identified significant gaps in capturing results relating to gender equality and women’s empowerment at the strategy and program levels’.<sup>136</sup> The 2012 stocktake of the rural development portfolio concluded that M&E systems were not well designed to track progress that the sector has made in improving women’s lives.<sup>137</sup>

## 5.2 Gender within monitoring and evaluation systems

Until recently, Australia’s attempts to measure results across the entire Australian aid program<sup>138</sup> included five ‘headline’ results relating to achieving sustainable economic development, with three of these promoting gender equality. These were expanding access to agricultural technology for 750 000 farmers, 40 per cent of whom should be women; increasing access to financial services for 2.3 million poor people, of whom 50 per cent should be women; and providing social protection support to at least 4.2 million vulnerable women, men and children. From 2012, all Australian development aid activities were required to report progress towards these headline results. These results are still being reported, together with a new set of targets and benchmarks contained within the new performance framework (released in June 2014).

All of the programs and initiatives reviewed for this report preceded the earlier policy framework. Annual progress towards achieving results on gender equality was primarily monitored and reported using the QAI report, itself a main source of information for the annual program performance report.<sup>139</sup> The QAI report is required for all monitored initiatives,<sup>a</sup> and gender equality is one of six quality criteria. The criteria are largely drawn from international standards, as articulated by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC), but also include two criteria that the Australian aid program believes are crucial for measuring development

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<sup>a</sup> In 2013, a ‘monitored’ initiative was one in which the expected funding over the life of the initiative is greater than \$3 million; or the value is less than \$3 million, but the initiative is significant to country or corporate strategies, or key relationships with other development partners, including other government agencies.

success: sustainability and gender equality. In the QAI, initiative managers are asked to assess their progress on integrating gender equality into the design and implementation of programs, and on producing results for women. They may write up to 300 words of narrative and must provide a numerical rating of 1–6 (see Section 2.6 for discussion of ratings).<sup>140</sup>

The aid program's M&E standards provide guidance on completing the QAI reports and outline best practice for achieving quality M&E processes.<sup>141</sup> Although they do not specifically address best practice in evaluating progress on gender equality results, they provide a comprehensive overview of the overarching principles and good practice that are applicable to any development theme or activity. The standards address how M&E can be incorporated into program design, what the key elements of a good evaluation design are, how progress can be reported, and what constitutes quality in an independent evaluation.

Specific guidance regarding the evaluation of gender-related programming is provided in the Gender Equality PAF. The PAF provides a theory of change that illustrates the gender strategy's conceptual framework, and an accompanying menu of outcomes, outputs and indicators that program managers may use to measure results. Implementation of the M&E standards and the PAF is left to the discretion of staff members.

### 5.3 Findings

**QAI gender equality ratings are crucial performance management tools. Their value as M&E indicators could be improved, as ratings do not always accurately reflect achievements. Training for staff will improve understanding and consistency, and reduce this gap.**

The gender equality ratings that are part of the QAI system are crucial for ensuring that the focus of the Australian aid program's gender policy remains clear for economic and other sector initiatives. As discussed in Chapter 2, gender equality is less a feature of economic sector aid than other aid. In particular, the public finance management, mining, communications, construction and tourism, and transport and storage sectors have little emphasis on promoting gender equality compared with other sectors. For initiatives that do not include specific gender objectives at inception, the QAI becomes one of the few places where gender is discussed or considered. In some cases, the QAI rating process is a mechanism for triggering consultations on gender. For example, in the Laos Enhanced Integrated Framework and Trade Development Facility, implementers gave themselves a low rating of 2, noting that gender had not been featured in the initiative's original design. Linked to this rating is a comment from the manager that advice should be sought from the aid program's gender unit to identify relevant gender analyses that could be conducted under the facility. Similarly, a gender stocktake conducted in Laos revealed that 'QAIs are seen by some programs as a way to motivate or negotiate with partners to try to improve gender in implementation of projects. This is positive, and could perhaps be used by more activities as the beginning of more structured gender analysis in the program'.<sup>142</sup>

In many other cases, however, it was clear that gender equality ratings were inconsistent with the activities described or impacts achieved. In some cases, initiatives had scored themselves highly, even when our analysis revealed little in the way of attention to gender equality. This finding is consistent with the Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE) annual QAI spot checks. In 2012, nearly one-quarter of QAI reports overrated their initiatives against the gender equality criteria.<sup>143</sup> Problems included shortcomings in presenting credible data on gender outcomes, and unsupported claims that, simply because a program has the potential to benefit women, it actually does. The 2012 stocktake of the rural development portfolio notes that QAI reports on gender equality featured a great deal of 'repeated text, sometimes over multiple years, and focus on process (such as appointing a gender adviser, or developing a plan) rather than outcomes'.

These findings are consistent across other evaluations, and show staff members' incomplete understanding of the aid program's approach to gender in economic development, and what would constitute appropriate and valuable M&E of related activities. A recent needs assessment conducted by the University of Queensland demonstrates this gap.<sup>144</sup> It revealed that, while 70 per cent of survey respondents were aware of the Australian aid program's gender policy, levels of understanding of the overall strategy and each of its four pillars were low. Only 35 per cent of respondents felt confident in completing the gender section in QAI reports. The greatest self-identified need for training was in gender analysis and gendered aspects of M&E, with staff expressing the need for practical, tailored and sector-specific gender training.

**Despite significant challenges, some program initiatives improved their performance over time in reporting on gender equality in the QAIs.**

Although a significant number of initiative staff tended to overstate their achievements in gender equality, we saw several encouraging cases where staff were making progress in developing plans and assessment frameworks to capture gender equality results. This was particularly evident when initial high ratings on gender in the QAI report fell during a program's implementation—not because the initiative was addressing gender less effectively over time, but because the implementing and management team had gained a better understanding of gender, or had raised the bar on expectations. For example, the staff of the Laos–Australia Non-government Organisation (NGO) Cooperation Agreement reduced their gender rating from a 5 in 2009 to a 4 in 2010, and a 3 in 2011. The 2010 QAI report noted that 'the rating for gender is being reduced from 5 to 4 not because of declining or poor performance but due to adjustments to a higher level of program expectations on gender outcomes'.<sup>145</sup>

**Lack of adequate guidance for M&E on gender equality has hindered efforts to document whether and how gender strategies are benefiting women.**

The initiatives we reviewed were not helped by a lack of department-wide guidance about structuring or implementing a quality M&E plan to assess gender outcomes of economic sector initiatives. The Gender Equality PAF therefore represents a great step forward for the aid program in providing staff with a set of guidelines that will fill a notable gap in the 'how-to' of conducting M&E with a gender focus. The PAF is a first attempt to translate the Australian aid program's 2011 gender policy into a much-needed indicators framework. It is outside the scope of this evaluation to assess how well the PAF is functioning, because it was developed well after these initiatives were implemented. However, we offer some observations on how it could be further refined to be of maximum use in the future.

- › The PAF proposes a conceptual model, or 'theory of change'. This crucial element of building a robust M&E system explains what impacts are expected from a project and, more importantly, how the changes will be generated. Theories of change are typically accompanied by a set of indicators to measure key steps in the progression towards change. It is essential that these indicators be simple to collect and interpret.
- › In its current form, the theory of change in the PAF simply reiterates the key approaches put forward in the Australian aid program's gender policy for achieving women's economic empowerment and livelihood security. It does not further clarify the multifaceted causal mechanisms that link the approaches with the hypothesised outcomes.
- › The proposed outcome and output indicators, and key assumptions that underlie the theory of change lack simplicity and clarity. For example, in relation to supporting women to move towards non-agricultural work opportunities, the assumption reads 'better work for women leads to a reduction in poverty and more ability to make choices over their lives'. However, it is not clear what 'better' means in this context, or how exactly the job shift produces more choice for women. The

outcome indicators listed in relation to this point do not include measures of women's agency or choice.

- › Other quantitative outcome indicators listed in the framework would be difficult to collect. These include 'number of women who have been able to access better income-generating opportunities due to better infrastructure including better roads, transport and communication facilities' and 'number of women who have been able to access better income-generating opportunities due to access to affordable childcare'. Meanwhile, other measures that are listed as qualitative are easy to collect quantitatively and would be informative; these include 'types of employment offered in the formal and informal sectors for women and men', and 'type, level and remuneration of work undertaken by women and men on Australia-funded infrastructure projects'. No outcome indicators aim to measure improvements in women's agricultural productivity or expanded access to financial services.

Almost no initiatives were collecting robust outcomes data, and most did not go beyond measuring women's access to resources or uptake of services. The Vanuatu Governance for Growth initiative, however, made efforts to link sex-disaggregated information from its different programs. Working with the National Bank of Vanuatu to support the roll-out of its national financial inclusion strategy, Australia, through policy dialogue, negotiated with the bank to include a new system capable of producing gender- and geographic-disaggregated data. This enabled the tracking of new bank accounts opened by women and men in different regions. The initiative is now using this information to analyse correlations in the increase in the number of women opening bank accounts in locations where Australia also has programs supporting small business development.

In the absence of a well-articulated theory of change, and clear and simple indicators for measuring processes and impacts, most programs and initiatives understandably found it difficult to move beyond the simplest measures of success: sex-disaggregated data on participation in training and workshops, and uptake of services. These data are important to understand the scale and reach of a project. However, they can only hint at the social dynamics underlying a high or low uptake number, and provide no information about how a program may have affected women. The absence of good-quality impact evaluation also makes it difficult to measure the unintended consequences of a project. Was anyone worse off because of the project? Was there any participant or community backlash against the project or its beneficiaries? Because women's economic empowerment programs can often work against deeply held social norms, information about potential negative outcomes is important to track.

A variety of tools, frameworks and sample indicators are readily available in the international literature to help improve the Australian aid program's M&E process. A separate resource paper has been developed to accompany this evaluation (see ODE website).

Box 15 provides an example of an effective M&E system in Bangladesh.

### **Box 15 Good practice: rigorous evaluation in the Bangladesh Northwest Microfinance Expansion Project**

The monitoring and evaluation system for the Bangladesh Northwest Microfinance Expansion Project (BRAC) included an impact evaluation that incorporated strong gender analysis. The evaluation, which was planned from the beginning of the project, collected both baseline and four-year follow-up data at the household level, and included both beneficiaries and a comparison group that had not received microfinance. It assessed results for women clients in domains that were critical to the project's theory of change, which emphasised women's agency in controlling economic resources as a key indicator of empowerment. The project also measured potential negative impacts of the program on

women who participated, most notably women's experience of violence from their husbands or partners. Impact measures included:

- › participation in household decision-making
- › asset ownership and control over loans
- › violence and controlling behaviour in relationships
- › perceived effectiveness of the program in meeting women's needs.

The evaluation found that BRAC's activities reached more than 52 000 women who experienced gains in empowerment, as measured by control over assets, reduction of child marriage, reduction of dowry and intimate partner violence, and increase in household decision-making.



Students at the Hohola Youth Development Centre, Papua New Guinea, learning vocational training skills.  
*Photo: Ness Kerton, DFAT.*

## 6 Next steps

The evaluation found a great many examples of missed opportunities to contribute to women's economic empowerment in country programs and sector initiatives. Although there was evidence that the Australian aid program is on a trajectory towards improving and expanding its focus on the economic empowerment of women, this was not sufficient. The scale of commitment should be strengthened, along the lines of the following major new initiatives in Asia and the Pacific.

The Empowering Indonesian Women for Poverty Reduction (MAMPU) program reflects the commitment of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) to alleviating the specific burdens of poor women by taking a multisectoral approach.<sup>146</sup> MAMPU is a \$60-million program that began in 2012 and is expected to complete its first phase in 2014. It will expand women's access to employment, while also addressing a range of social and legal issues that block women from moving out of poverty. In addition to expanding Indonesian women's access to employment, MAMPU aims to reduce workplace discrimination, improve women's access to government social protection programs, improve conditions for women involved in overseas labour migration, and support women's leadership to improve maternal and reproductive health and reduce violence against women.

The new Strategic Partnership Arrangement between DFAT, the United Kingdom Department for International Development and the Bangladesh Northwest Microfinance Expansion Project (formerly the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, BRAC) builds on past work and was found to be a bright spot among economic initiatives that address gender inequality. The arrangement, worth \$200 million over five years (2011–16), will allow DFAT to contribute to BRAC's overall strategic direction and provide institutional support to expand its multisectoral programs to alleviate extreme poverty.

In the Pacific, a \$320-million, 10-year commitment to women's empowerment began in 2012. Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development is designed to tackle key development constraints for women, and help improve the political, economic and social opportunities of Pacific women. It will provide practical support for change at national and local levels, and will work in partnership with governments and civil society groups across the region to develop policy changes that support gender equality.

In December 2013, the government appointed a new Ambassador for Women and Girls, Natasha Stott-Despoja. Together with strong policies, the gender focal point network, and committed gender advisory capacity and resourcing, DFAT is well positioned to implement recommendations from this evaluation. This will help enable the necessary leadership, effective programs and positive results needed for women's economic empowerment.



Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop (left), Ms Merilyn Taho, Coordinator of the Australian Government-funded Vanuatu Women's Centre (centre), and Ms Natasha Stott Despoja, Australia's Ambassador for Women and Girls (right). Ms Taho is one of the most active women leaders in the Pacific and works tirelessly to end violence against women in Vanuatu. *Photo: Graham Crumb, DFAT.*

## Appendix 1 Evaluation scope and methods

The scope of this evaluation was restricted to the economic and productive sectors, as defined by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), following the OECD Development Assistance Committee report *Aid in support of women's economic development*. The OECD report limited its consideration to 11 economic sectors: agriculture and rural development, business and banking, communications, construction and tourism, employment policy, energy, industry, mining, public finance policy, trade, and transport and storage.

The economic sector was chosen as a focus of the current evaluation, primarily because substantial gender gaps persist in employment and wages in most countries. In contrast, sectors such as health and education, although important areas of investment for promoting gender equality and women's economic empowerment, have made greater strides in decreasing gender inequalities in access to services and outcomes. For example, the gender gap in access to primary education has closed in almost all countries, and, since 1980, women are living longer than men in all parts of the world.<sup>147</sup>

The scope of the evaluation covered seven countries: five in which we conducted desk reviews of country programs and initiatives (Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Solomon Islands and Vietnam) and two in which we conducted field visits (Laos and Vanuatu). Economic sector initiatives that were included in the analysis were predominantly chosen from these seven countries. Where sufficient numbers of initiatives were not available from these countries, initiatives from other countries (Bangladesh, Cambodia, Samoa and Tonga) were also included. We also visited Fiji to review selected aspects of the Pacific regional program.



Yolanda in grade 10 uses the computers at Wan Smol Bag youth centre in Port Vila, Vanuatu. Photo: Ashleigh Connor, Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

## A1.1 Sampling procedures

Table A1 summarises the key criteria used in selecting the focus and field visit countries, and the economic sector initiatives reviewed. Further details of the selection process and aims are presented below the table.

**Table A1 Summary of selection criteria for evaluation focus countries and initiatives**

Countries and initiatives	Selection criteria
Five focus countries (Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Solomon Islands, Vietnam)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› The top five countries in terms of Australian official development assistance expenditure from 2005–06 to 2011–12</li> </ul>
Two field visit case-study countries (Laos, Vanuatu)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Selected from the top 20 country programs in terms of expenditure</li> <li>› Selected 6 from the 20 that had substantial economic programming</li> <li>› Selected 3 from the 6 because they had recent evaluations, field visits were possible and staff were available</li> <li>› One country (Samoa) was not visited because of a cyclone, so additional focus on selected dimensions of the Pacific Regional Program on gender was added</li> </ul>
20 economic sector initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› The top five sectors in the economic sector by Australian expenditure from 2005–06 to 2011–12; these sectors, as defined by the OECD DAC, were agriculture and rural development, banking and business, energy, trade, and transport and storage</li> <li>› In the top five countries in terms of Australian expenditure from 2005–06 to 2011–12, as above</li> <li>› Five additional initiatives in banking and business, and energy to balance the sectoral focus from the Asia and Pacific regions (Bangladesh, Cambodia, Samoa, Tonga)</li> <li>› Includes only monitored initiatives that have at least four years of expenditure and at least \$3 million in expenditure from 2005–06 to 2011–12</li> <li>› Does not include initiatives in which Australian expenditure provided core funding to NGOs or multilateral organisations as a significant proportion of total spending</li> </ul>
Eight initiatives for case-study countries (Laos, Vanuatu)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Selected from case-study countries based on selected sectors for initiative analysis: agriculture and rural development, banking and business, trade, infrastructure, energy, and skills training</li> <li>› Potential to meet stakeholders, appropriate logistics to visit project sites, and Post willingness and feedback</li> </ul>

NGO = non-government organisation; OECD DAC = Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Development Assistance Committee

### Selection criteria for initiatives analysis

Data for the global analysis of programming came from the Australian aid database, which provides the initiative names and codes, the type of funding the initiative represents, total approved initiative size in Australian dollars, the OECD five- and three-digit codes of initiative activities, and expenditure per initiative activity from 2005–06 to 2011–12.

Twenty initiatives were selected for analysis from the subset of initiatives included in the global analysis. These initiatives were selected to represent the economic sector and countries/regions in which Australia has the largest aid expenditure.

The pool from which the sample of 20 initiatives was drawn is as follows.

- › The five economic sectors with the highest level of total expenditure from 2005–06 to 2011–12. These are agriculture and rural development, banking and business, energy, trade, and transport

and storage. This provides multiple initiatives within each sector, allowing comparisons of different approaches and contexts within the same broad type of aid.

- › Monitored initiatives that had expenditure in at least four years for which data are available (from 2005–06 to 2011–12) and that had spent at least \$2 million in the same period. This was done to ensure that a suitable body of evidence and documentation would be available for review. Monitored initiatives are those that have a total approved value of at least \$3 million over the life of the initiative. These initiatives are required to submit annual quality at implementation (QAI) reports and have at least one evaluation during the initiative’s life cycle.
- › The top five countries and two regional programs in terms of total economic sector expenditure from 2005–06 to 2011–12. These were Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, the Philippines and Vietnam, and the Asia and Pacific regional programs.<sup>a</sup> The goal was to allow for triangulation of results with the country strategies and annual country program report, as well as to better understand program-level factors that influenced initiative design and implementation.

The resulting pool contained 38 initiatives. From this pool, initiatives were chosen to provide a sample that was balanced in terms of geographic focus between the five countries and two regions, initiative size,<sup>b</sup> and whether the initiative was identified as primarily focused on gender equality, secondarily focused on gender equality or not focused on gender equality. This provided a sample of 15 initiatives.

For the energy, and business and banking sectors, the pool of initiatives contained only one and two initiatives, respectively. To provide sufficient initiatives for analysis within these sectors, a further five were selected from outside the top five country and two regional programs with the highest expenditures, again to provide balance in terms of geographic location, initiative size and focus on gender. Initiatives were chosen from Bangladesh, Cambodia, Samoa and Tonga.

The resulting sample of 20 initiatives is broadly representative of all aid program initiatives in the economic sector in terms of sector, main geographic areas and stated focus on gender.

The sample does not represent initiatives that:

- › are categorised as small in size; since these are non-monitored, obtaining documentation may not have been possible
- › started after 2008, because initiatives with less than four years of expenditure in the available timeframe are excluded; 18 initiatives in the sample started before 2008
- › are located outside the Pacific and Asia regions; the sample includes only one initiative from south Asia (Bangladesh) and none from Africa, the Middle East or Latin America.

### Selection criteria for field visit countries

We selected three countries for case-study visits. We started with a list of the top 20 recipients of Australia’s economic sector aid in 2010–11. Countries were removed from consideration for the case-study visits based on the following factors.

- › Past or intended evaluation coverage: Five countries either were already included or were going to be included within Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE) or other evaluations, and were thus excluded. These were Cambodia, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste.

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<sup>a</sup> For calculation of the rank of country programs in terms of expenditure, only expenditures on country program-specific initiatives were used. Expenditures on regional initiatives were counted towards ranking of the regional programs.

<sup>b</sup> Initiatives are categorised by size as *very large* (total value greater than \$20 million), *large* (total value greater than \$10 million and less than \$20 million), *medium* (total value greater than \$3 million and less than \$10 million) and *small* (total value less than \$3 million).

- › Level of economic sector aid: Six countries were excluded because the total amount of aid investments in their economic sector was small. These were Egypt, Fiji, India, Iraq, Nepal and Sri Lanka.
- › Security considerations: Afghanistan and Pakistan were excluded because security considerations would have made field visits unfeasible.
- › Lack of a government-to-government aid program: Burma was excluded because it had no such aid program and therefore offered limited potential for cross-program learning and comparability.

After excluding these countries, six countries were left: Laos, the Philippines, Vanuatu, Samoa, Tonga and Vietnam. The final selection of case-study countries was made to balance geographic areas and development contexts, based on:

- › the location of new women's economic empowerment initiatives
- › economic and human development contexts, which are based on income levels and the Human Development Index
- › extent of focus on gender, according to information tracked in the aid program's database
- › the upcoming launch of the Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development initiative.

The ability of the Post to participate in the evaluation and host the evaluation team in the time available was also taken into consideration. Based on these factors, the three selected countries were Laos, Samoa and Vanuatu. Because of a cyclone in December 2012, the visit to Samoa was cancelled, and the decision was made to focus on Laos and Vanuatu. In addition, a short trip to the regional headquarters in Fiji was added to the Vanuatu trip. This was to collect more information relevant to the launch of the Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development initiative.

Within each case-study country program, the following criteria were used to select initiatives.

- › Ability to access key stakeholders and field sites: The pool of initiatives was limited to those where the evaluation team could speak with relevant stakeholders and, if possible, visit field sites.
- › Sector: To find areas for comparison between the different countries, we proposed initiatives within four key economic sectors: agricultural and rural development, business and banking, infrastructure, and trade. In addition, the team wanted a balance between sectors where an individual or community-level activity and a gender focus is more common (such as agriculture and rural development, and business and banking), and sectors that tend to have macro-level activities and impact and generally do not have a gender focus (such as trade and infrastructure). We also took into account feedback from Post and the feasibility of field visits. The final sample contained initiatives from agriculture and rural development, business and banking, education, energy, trade, and transport and storage.
- › Feedback from Post: The Posts recommended initiatives that they felt were more relevant to women's economic empowerment in their program. In Laos, the Post provided a list of initiatives that addressed the approaches to women's economic empowerment listed in the Australian aid program's 2011 gender policy. A specific suggestion was made to include the Power for the Poor pilot of the Rural Electrification Program in Laos, which they suggested replace the Laos Northern Greater Mekong Subregion Transport Network Improvement Project. The latter project was left in the sample for document review, but field visits to the initiative were not carried out. In Vanuatu, the Post strongly suggested a review of the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) Sector Strengthening Program (TSSP). Given that the education and training sector has a high degree of relevance to women's economic empowerment, and that job skills training had also been reviewed in Laos under the trade portfolio, we decided to include the TSSP initiative as well.
- › Availability of documentation: The team wanted initiatives that had been active for some time, so that results would be available. This limited the pool to initiatives that were primarily in the final

stages of implementation (as well as an initiative that had recently ended), although, in several cases, follow-on initiatives were being planned.

With the exception of education, the sectors from which case-study country initiatives were drawn mirror the sectors in the sample for the global analysis. One difference between the two samples of initiatives was in the proportion of those that had a gender focus. Almost all initiatives from the country case studies have a primary or secondary gender focus, compared with just 40 per cent of those in the sample selected for the global analysis. Moreover, the sectoral criteria for selecting initiatives were more flexible for the case-study countries. The selection included some initiatives outside the top five sectors for the global analysis where there was evidence of a focus on women's economic empowerment. No small initiatives were included in the sample.

## A1.2 Methods

A mix of methods was used for this evaluation: document reviews, quantitative analysis, and interviews and group discussions conducted during field visits. The use of each method for data collection and analysis is described below.

### Document review

The team used document review as the main method for this evaluation, relying primarily on three sets of documents.

- › At the global level: overarching policies such as the global aid policy, and global gender and sectoral strategies. Policy-level documents reviewed were those suggested by the ODE as relevant.
- › At the country level: country and gender strategies, partnership documents, economic sector strategies, gender stocktakes and the latest annual program performance reports.
- › At the initiative level: documents pertaining to design, implementation and assessment. Design documents included the program design and/or appraisal, quality at entry report, and minutes of the approval review meeting. Implementation documents included delivery schedules or work plans, gender analyses and strategies, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks or plans, and annual QAI reports. Program assessment documents included the midterm, activity completion and independent completion reports.

Documents were obtained from the AidWorks database or from the Post in question. We searched for any missing documents on the aid program website and by a Google search on the project name. Content from the review for each initiative was analysed and coded.

In addition, we reviewed specific international literature or research on gender gaps in the economic sector, and, in the selected countries, we reviewed women's economic empowerment in local contexts or specific sectors. We identified this literature through Google searches, from our own specialised library at the International Center for Research on Women, and from the centre's publications on gender in the economic and other sectors. Data were used selectively where they complemented or supported analysis for the research questions in the evaluation.

Document review is an appropriate method for an evaluation such as this, which seeks to assess implementation and outcomes of policies and plans. However, there are limitations if the documented information is incomplete or inaccurate. Triangulation of information from various sources is therefore important, and we attempted to do this wherever possible. In the cases of Laos and Vanuatu, data from interviews and discussions added depth and provided the opportunity for verifying information and asking questions about missing data.

## Quantitative analysis

Building on a preliminary analysis by the ODE, the evaluation team analysed the distribution of Australia's official development assistance funding for gender by considering initiative start dates, duration and sectors, and whether the initiative had expenditures of more than \$3 million. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC) gender marker was used to determine whether or not an initiative focused on gender. The Stata software package was used for data analysis.

## Country field visits, interviews and group discussions

The team made field visits to Laos, Vanuatu and Fiji, and met with Australian aid program staff and stakeholders in each country. We also visited program implementation sites and met with program participants in Champassak and Sekong Provinces in Laos, and Malekula in Malampa Province in Vanuatu. The field visits provided the opportunity to supplement information obtained from country program and initiative documents through interviews and discussions with staff, stakeholders and program participants. For some issues, such as donor, government and civil society perceptions, in-country discussions were the sole source of information, and thus this information was only obtained for Laos and Vanuatu. The visits were invaluable for direct observation of program implementation and interaction with participants. In Vanuatu, for instance, team members stayed in a cottage in Lakotoro run by a participant in the TVET program and met with other cottage owners on-site.

The team collected primary data from internal and external stakeholders through semi-structured interviews and group discussions. The team and the Post jointly selected people for interviews and discussions. They included Post senior staff, sector managers and gender focal points; government officials; staff of donor, multilateral and civil society organisations; and program staff and participants. The team met with about 60–70 people in both Laos and Vanuatu, and 10 people in Fiji. Interviews and meetings depended on people's availability, and the team adapted to some last-minute changes and substitutions. Some meetings were planned as group discussions; in other cases, intended key informant interviews became group discussions. In one case, in Malekula, a group discussion was held with members of a women's savings group at their rural roadside produce stall.

The team prepared and used interview and discussion guides for three categories of respondents: Australian and partner government policy-level leaders, program managers and program participants.

For each interview, the team was introduced, the evaluation purpose was described, and the consent process was explained for taking notes and using quotes from interviews. The interviews focused on understanding the person's role in the organisation or project, and their priorities.

Interviews with program participants were conducted in English and interpreted to Lao or a third local language in Laos, and Bislama in Vanuatu. Thus, questions and responses may have lost some of their intended meaning in the course of interpretation. Also, during many interviews and discussions, people other than respondents were present, such as village heads or program staff. It was also not always possible to separate men and women for discussions. These factors likely affected how open respondents felt they could be in their responses. Program participants interviewed were selected either by implementing organisations or through convenience sampling; thus, they may not have been representative of the overall profile of program participants. The team considered these limitations when analysing data and, where possible, triangulated information from different sources.

Interview and discussion data contributed in-depth information on the challenges in addressing gender, particularly within the set of eight initiatives examined in Laos, Vanuatu and the Pacific region. They provided detail on the challenges faced in addressing gender issues during program implementation and insights into effective strategies for resolving them. However, the quality of the

information varied, depending on the particular initiative. For instance, for the Laos–Australia NGO Cooperation Agreement program in Laos and TVET in Vanuatu, we spent several days on-site and met with a wide range of program staff and participants. In contrast, we were unable to meet with anyone from the Enterprise Challenge Fund, and the program manager was not on-site. In addition, among those people met, the quality of information varied, depending on factors such as their personal knowledge and length of association with the program.

Following the evaluation team’s internal policy requirements, this evaluation was submitted to the institutional review board for research involving human subjects. The board determined that the evaluation did not fall under the United States federal definition of human subjects research. Nonetheless, we followed ethical guidelines in conducting interviews by obtaining informed consent from all people we interviewed and photographed, explaining the purpose of the evaluation, and making clear that the information provided could be included in a report and/or published.

Below are summary respondent and question categories for each respondent group.

## [Interview guide for policy-level leaders at Australian and partner organisations](#)

### **Gender strategy within organisation and priorities**

- › Understanding of the Australian aid program’s gender policy, and main factors or institutions influencing decisions to focus on gender.
- › Influence of the Australian gender strategy on practice of partners.
- › Approaches to implementing gender in programs/initiatives (mainstreaming and targeting).
- › Policies and systems for implementing the Australian aid gender strategy through the project planning and implementation cycle.
- › Approaches to gender analysis and M&E.
- › Resourcing and training to address gender issues.
- › Role of the Australian aid program in supporting gender equality in partner organisations.
- › Examples of programs or areas of work intended to economically empower women that have been particularly successful: what factors made them successful?
- › Lessons learned from successful and not so successful programs.

## [Interview guide for program/initiative managers at the Australian aid program and partner organisations](#)

### **Implementing gender in the program**

- › Consideration of gender in the design and implementation stages of the program, including gender analyses and how this informs programming.
- › Factors influencing the program to address gender considerations, and strategies used to address specific barriers to participation that women might face.
- › Use of targets or quotas for women’s or men’s participation.
- › Program relevance for increasing or supporting women’s economic participation.
- › Partners’ responses to focus on women and gender within the program.
- › Successful program elements, and constraints to increasing women’s participation or benefiting women economically.

## **Monitoring and evaluation for M&E staff**

- › Does the program have any requirements for the inclusion of gender in the M&E or reporting of the project?
- › For what types of indicators are sex-disaggregated data collected?
- › What types of gender-related indicators are used?
- › What types of challenges, if any, have you faced in collecting data or reporting on gender?

## **Interview guide for project participants**

### **Earning a livelihood**

- › Types of paid and unpaid work in the community for women, men and children.
- › What challenges are faced to earn a living? Are there specific challenges that women face?

### **Experience with the project**

- › Have you been involved in the project? If so, how?
- › How did you hear about the project?
- › Why did you choose to participate? What did you expect to gain?
- › Do you know other people who participated? Who? How were they involved? Why did they want to participate?
- › Do you know of others who wanted to participate but were not able to do so? What prevented them from participating?
- › Was there anything that would have made it easier to participate?
- › Benefits/learning from the project?
- › How were other participants in the project (men and women) affected during or after the project? Did the project help any groups of people more than others? Did it negatively affect anyone?
- › Did the project address any things that could help men/women in terms of business and work? What were the most important issues for men and women that the project addressed?
- › How could the project have better benefited the community? Women? How could it be improved?

### **Resources**

- › Types of support that program staff received for addressing gender issues.
- › Additional support that would have been useful.
- › Ways in which the Australian aid program supported your work on gender.

## **Qualitative data analysis**

Thematic analysis was used to analyse data from documents, key informant interviews and focus group discussions conducted during case-study field visits. This approach involved identifying and interpreting patterns and themes within the data, and using them to draw conclusions in relation to the evaluation questions.

The team constructed analytic matrices for each initiative and country program, into which data were condensed and systematically categorised by key fields/codes pertaining to the evaluation questions and subquestions. The key fields and codes align with the types and fields of analysis outlined in Table A2. Data from all sources contributed to the matrices, which enabled the team to triangulate

information from different sources for each initiative or country program. The data captured in these matrices were then used to assess how initiatives and country programs fared (see Section A1.3 for further details of assessment methods).

To ensure quality and consistency of the coding process, initial coding was done by one person, and was then reviewed and checked against the source documents by an additional reviewer. The team worked closely during the coding process to ensure that codes were interpreted in the same manner by all coders, and to clarify any questions that arose during the coding process.

### **A1.3 Methods for each evaluation question**

Table A2 summarises the data sources, analysis and strength of evidence for each of the evaluation questions.

**Table A2 Summary of key questions, methods, data sources, types of analysis and strength of evidence assessed**

Key evaluation questions	Methods	Data sources	Types of analysis	Strength of evidence
<b>1. Global policy and programming for the Australian aid program:</b> What are the Australian aid program's global strategies, policies and frameworks for achieving gender equality and women's economic empowerment, and how do they relate to external (donor and academic) conceptualisations of women's economic empowerment? How does the distribution of initiatives in different sectors align with the global strategy?				
How does the Australian aid program address gender equality and women's economic empowerment in its policies, guidance and reporting? What is Australia's framework for women's economic empowerment?	Global policy review	Australian gender and economic empowerment sectoral policy documents (global aid policy, Delivering Real Results; relevant global economic empowerment sector and gender strategies; instructions for reporting; gender issues paper) AidWorks database Technical appraisal from the aid program's gender advisers	How Australian policies address dimensions of the women's economic empowerment framework  How guidance for reporting on gender and women's economic empowerment aligns with global policies; potential gaps	Strong
How does the Australian aid program's conceptualisation of women's economic empowerment relate to that of other researchers, donors and organisational practice?	Review of external literature	Current international literature on women's economic empowerment, and strategic documents of other organisations	How Australia's approach to women's economic empowerment differs from, or converges with, other conceptualisations	Moderate
How does the global distribution of types of initiatives and sectors of work align with Australia's framework for women's economic empowerment?	Analysis of database	Extract of economic programming	Analysis in Stata of distribution of initiatives focusing on gender by sector, size, type and location  Mapping of detailed sectors to Australia's women's economic empowerment approaches, building on ODE's preliminary data analysis	Moderate
<b>2. Country strategies and practice:</b> How effectively have country programs integrated gender into their economic empowerment programs, adopted gender strategies into country portfolios, and promoted women's economic empowerment among other stakeholders in the country?				
How do country gender strategies and/or approaches align with Australia's global policy and strategy? How have country programs adapted their approach to women's economic empowerment to fit the local gender context?	Analysis of case-study country programs  Analysis of programs in top five countries in terms of expenditure	Program gender and sector delivery strategies Program gender analyses Program and global performance reports: APPRs, ATPRs and gender stocktakes External gender research in key countries For case-study programs: KIs with senior leaders and portfolio managers	Whether countries have a gender or women's economic empowerment strategy/approach and/or have undertaken a gender stocktake Which sectors and issues countries have prioritised and why; how this aligns with the approaches outlined in the global policy How the economic sector and issues prioritised in programming are influenced by/adapted to local gender context  For case-study programs, staff's understanding of global strategy on gender equality and women's economic empowerment	Moderate-strong
How do key stakeholders (e.g. governments, donors, civil society) understand Australia's gender equality and women's economic empowerment		KIs with internal and external stakeholders in case-study countries Gender stocktakes from case-	Analysis of similar and different themes from interviews with Australian staff and external stakeholders in case-study	Strong

policies? How successful or unsuccessful have Australia's country programs been in promoting these policies among key stakeholders?	study and top five country programs	countries Analysis of themes from gender stocktakes across countries Triangulation, where possible, with findings from gender stocktakes and gender thematic ATPRs		
What global guidance and support have been most useful to country programs? How could support for country offices be strengthened?	For case-study programs: KIs with program managers and implementation staff Gender stocktakes from case-study and top five country programs	Synthesis of direct feedback from country Post staff on support received and used, complemented with findings from gender stocktakes and the evaluation's experience on gender training and gender integration	Strong	
<b>3. Integration of women's economic empowerment in initiatives:</b> For selected initiatives, how were the Australian aid program's gender equality policies translated into practice? How effective have these initiatives been in promoting gender equality and women's economic empowerment?				
Have initiatives effectively addressed opportunities and needs related to women's economic empowerment in their design and implementation?	Analysis of case-study initiatives	Initiative design documents Initiative reports, including QAI reports Initiative evaluations Gender analyses and evaluations APPRs for case-study and top five country programs	Whether initiatives have specific gender goals Whether design and implementation planning incorporate gender/women's economic empowerment How approaches and activities align with the women's economic empowerment framework Whether and how gender analysis was used	Moderate-strong
Is there evidence that initiatives have made progress towards improving gender equality and women's economic empowerment?	Initiative midterm and final evaluations Gender analyses and evaluations APPRs for case-study and top five country programs For case-study programs, KIs with key stakeholders, focus group discussions with beneficiaries	Whether initiatives' reporting claims effects on women's economic empowerment, and by level of impact (output, short-term, long-term impact) How types of impacts align with the women's economic empowerment framework Methodologies used to measure impact	Moderate-strong	
What has contributed or been an obstacle to initiatives' ability to address women's economic empowerment in implementation?	Initiative evaluation reports Gender analyses, evaluations and stocktakes, as available Initiative design documents For case studies, KIs with key stakeholders	Analysis of factors/themes explicitly cited as contributing to, or constraining progress towards, women's economic empowerment For case-study programs, consideration of rationales given for not focusing on women's economic empowerment	Moderate	
What lessons can be drawn about effective approaches and practices to achieve women's economic empowerment?	Initiative evaluations Gender analyses, evaluations and stocktakes, as available Initiative design documents For case studies, KIs with key stakeholders	Evidence of effective practice will be based on 1) approaches explicitly mentioned in reporting as effective; 2) our own analysis, supported by initiative documentation on results and/or external literature on effective practices in the field	Moderate	
<b>4. Monitoring and evaluation (M&amp;E):</b> Are M&E systems providing the right information to effectively track and measure progress towards the goal of women's economic empowerment?				

What is being reported to measure women's economic empowerment?	Analysis of case-study initiatives Review of global policy documents and reports on M&E	Australian aid program guidelines on QAI reports and M&E Gender section and ratings in QAI reports and QAI spot check reviews Evaluation reports APPRs Initiative design documents, log frames, M&E plans and indicators Comprehensive aid policy Framework headline results Gender stocktakes	Whether initiatives measure and report sex-disaggregated data, and indicators of participation and take-up; outputs, outcomes and impact; gender safeguards; and economic advancement and empowerment Type of information and results in QAI reports How QAI gender ratings change over time Whether and how gender is addressed and analysed in evaluation reports	Strong
How useful are the measurements in the reporting systems to understand women's economic empowerment?		Same as above, plus previous Australian aid program reports on reporting effectiveness; and, for case-study programs, KIIs with managers and implementers	Review of methodologies used for M&E Comparison of gender ratings in QAI reports and APPRs with initiative gender activities and results from detailed initiative reports Analysis of how OECD DAC gender markers reflect inclusion of gender in the initiative	Strong
What lessons can be derived to improve M&E related to programming in gender equality and women's economic empowerment?		Same as above and, for case-study programs, KIIs with gender focal points and other staff	Synthesis of M&E findings, particularly any gaps/discrepancies in reporting, along with findings from reports and KIIs with staff	Strong
<b>5. Synthesis, conclusions, key findings and recommendations:</b> How and to what extent is the Australian aid program meeting needs and filling gaps at the global, country and initiative levels to achieve women's economic empowerment? How can these efforts be strengthened?				
What lessons can be drawn about effective approaches to supporting women's economic empowerment?	Synthesis of analysis from previous sections	All previous data Recommendations workshop held with gender advisers, sector specialists and other stakeholders	Extracting common themes and findings from all data sources in previous sections	Strong
To what extent are the findings context specific or relevant for wider gender programming?				
What are examples of good practice and lessons learned?				
What are recommendations for addressing gaps and constraints, and what are emerging opportunities?				

APPR = annual program performance report; ATPR = annual thematic performance review; KII = key informant interview; M&E = monitoring and evaluation; ODE = Office of Development Effectiveness; OECD DAC = Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Development Assistance Committee; QAI = quality at implementation

## Application of the evaluation methods to the evaluation questions

### Question 1: Global review of Australian aid policy and programming

We conducted:

- › a desk review of policy documents and reports
- › a review of international literature, which mainly involved a web-based search to obtain literature on definitions of women's economic empowerment and actions taken by other organisations

- › analysis of the AidWorks database, as explained above.

The information was used to provide context, determine how the aid program's work compares with that of other organisations, and assess the extent to which actual investments aligned with the gender equality and women's economic empowerment strategy.

## **Question 2: Country programs**

We conducted:

- › a desk review of country-level program and strategy documents, including the gender equality ratings that initiative managers gave on QAI reports
- › interviews and group discussions with aid program staff, stakeholders and program participants in Laos and Vanuatu.

The information contributed to the assessment of how country programs aligned with global policy and strategic guidance, and local country gender policies, contexts and needs; the extent to which the program focused on the economic sector; and results of country program efforts on gender equality and women's economic empowerment. It did not provide enough information on internal systems and practices, such as types and quality of support that Post staff receive to help them fulfil gender mandates. This information will be helpful to implement recommendations emerging from this report and should be obtained through a future survey of Post staff.

We used a checklist to help assess each of the seven country programs' experiences in pursuing gender equality and women's economic empowerment within their economic sector programming. The assessment was based on documentation and information available to the team, which, in some cases, may not have been up to date. Some verification was undertaken by asking relevant sections to review the assessment.

The checklist indicates the presence or absence of certain practices in four areas.

- › Alignment with Australian aid global policy on gender equality: whether country programs have pursued gender equality in areas of economic programming that align with the approaches for women's economic empowerment in the aid program's gender strategy.
- › Gender equality strategies and analysis: whether the country programs have pursued gender equality broadly and/or specifically within economic programming, formulated guidance on promoting gender equality and women's economic empowerment, conducted gender stocktakes to review their progress on gender equality, and adapted economic programming to the local gender context.
- › Gender resources: based on available information, whether the country program has recently employed a full-time or part-time gender adviser or specialist to help inform gender strategies pursued at the country or sector level.
- › Gender reporting and results: whether countries include indicators relating to gender equality within the country program's performance assessment framework, and the extent of reporting on women's economic empowerment outcomes in the 2011 annual program performance report (APPR).

In addition, we assessed the Australian aid program's ability to influence partners on gender equality and women's economic empowerment.

## **Question 3: Economic sector initiatives**

We:

- › conducted a desk review of initiative documents, including all those available related to design

- › held interviews and group discussions with government and program staff, and participants, as explained above
- › examined information from other components, such as a review of country program-level documents.

Interviews and group discussions were especially useful to supplement and enrich the data from written reports and to triangulate information, particularly for the six initiatives in Laos and Vanuatu. Country program-level documents also contributed to analysis at this level, in some cases.

We developed a scoring guide to assess each initiative's experience in addressing gender equality and women's economic empowerment in three categories or phases of the project cycle:

- › gender responsiveness in design and implementation
- › gender in M&E
- › gendered impact achieved or reported.

We rated the initiative as having 'poor', 'adequate', 'good' or 'very good' performance in each category, using a descriptive assessment guide (Table A3).

**Table A3 Performance assessment guide**

Rating	Description
<b>Gender responsiveness in design and implementation (activities planned and implemented)</b>	
Poor	Gender is not reflected in the initiative's design or implementation (i.e. no gender analysis informs the initiative design, implementation plans or actual activities carried out; no gender strategies are pursued)
Adequate	Mention of gender-related barriers/opportunities or gender-related goals/objectives, but either little actual integration of gender in initiative's design/activities, or late integration of gender in implementation. An <i>adequate</i> rating indicates that the initiative has met the bare minimum of quality and attention to gender. It does not signify that the initiative has reached a level of success commensurate with the goals and objectives of the aid program's strategy on women's economic empowerment, only that it is on the road to doing so
Good	Some form of gender analysis informs the initiative design or implementation, or the initiative attempts to increase gender inclusiveness/women's participation
Very good	Gender analysis substantially informs the initiative's design/implementation; gendered barriers are identified, and specific efforts are made to try to overcome them
<b>Gender in monitoring and evaluation</b>	
Poor	No consideration of gender in monitoring and evaluation framework; no inclusion of sex-disaggregated or gender-sensitive data on reach/participation and outcomes/impact
Adequate	Collection of some sex-disaggregated data on reach/participation and/or specific process indicators related to addressing gender within activities. An <i>adequate</i> rating indicates that the initiative has met the bare minimum of quality and attention to gender. It does not signify that the initiative has reached a level of success commensurate with the goals and objectives of the aid program's strategy on women's economic empowerment, only that it is on the road to doing so
Good	Collection of some sex-disaggregated data on reach/participation and outcomes/impact
Very good	Collection of substantial sex-disaggregated and gender-sensitive data on reach and impact; gender analysis included in initiative assessments/evaluations
<b>Gendered impact achieved/reported (individual, household, community, firm, institution or society)</b>	
Poor	No data on gendered economic impact reported
Adequate	Some impact on women's economic advancement through higher participation of women beneficiaries, improved access to resources (e.g. credit, education/skills training, networks, physical capital) or increased self-efficacy. An <i>adequate</i> rating indicates that the initiative has met the bare minimum of quality and attention to gender. It does not signify that the initiative has reached a level of success commensurate with the goals and objectives of the aid program's strategy on women's economic empowerment, only that it is on the road to doing so
Good	Moderate impact on women's economic advancement (e.g. increased productivity, new employment or entrepreneurship opportunities, access to new markets, changes in institutional policies/norms that support women's economic engagement) or enhanced agency (e.g. increased decision-making or bargaining power, increased women's leadership roles in groups/institutions that affect economic activity)
Very good	Substantial impact on women's economic advancement (e.g. increased revenues/earnings/profits, improved livelihoods) or agency (e.g. increased control over resources and earnings, increased economic independence)

#### **Question 4: Monitoring and evaluation**

The M&E analysis drew on the review of global, country and initiative-level documents, particularly QAI reports and APPRs. Data from interviews also contributed to this analysis, but to a lesser extent than anticipated. In most cases, it was not possible during the field visits to have detailed discussions with M&E staff or to review M&E systems in detail.

#### **Question 5: Synthesis of key findings and recommendations**

This section drew on the information and findings that emerged from examining the four questions above. We triangulated themes that emerged from different data sources and across all research questions. Recommendations were developed from these findings.

### **A1.4 Analysis tables for economic sector initiatives**

#### **Overview**

The following tables (A4–A8) contain information about the individual initiatives that were assessed. Each initiative was assessed for evidence of gender-responsive design and implementation plans, M&E, QAI scores and reported results. The OECD DAC gender policy marker is also noted for whether or not the initiative was marked as principally or significantly focused on gender.

## Agriculture and rural development

**Table A4 Gender responsiveness in agricultural and rural initiatives**

Initiative and goal	Description	Design & plans	M&E	QAI	Gender results	Gender policy marker
1. Cambodia Agricultural Value Chain Program (2009–15; \$43 million): to reduce rural poverty	Took a multistakeholder and market-oriented approach to rice and vegetable farming systems in four provinces: 1) supported small-scale irrigation rehabilitation; 2) improved supply of agricultural inputs and farm practices; 3) research and development	Very good	Very good	2009: 4 2010: 4 2012: 4	Adequate*	Other
2. Indonesia—Small-holder Agribusiness Development Initiative (2006–10; \$34.8 million): to increase rural growth and household incomes	Pursued agricultural commercialisation using public and private approaches in three subprograms: SP1, enhance smallholder production and marketing; SP2, strengthen private-sector agribusiness and small and medium enterprise; SP3, support market-driven adaptive agricultural research	SP1: good SP2, SP3: adequate	Adequate	2007: 5 2008: 3 2009: 3	Adequate**	Other
3. Laos—Australia NGO Cooperation Agreement (2007–12; \$14.4 million): to reduce the impact of disasters	Builds community resilience in poor communities by: integrating disaster risk reduction, UXO clearance and community livelihood strategies	Good	Good	2007: not rated 2008: not rated 2009: 5 2010: 4 2011: 3	Adequate	Principal
4. Papua New Guinea Agricultural Research and Development Support Facility (2006–12; \$38 million): to increase income and food security opportunities for rural smallholders	Three components: (1) strengthening the National Agricultural Research Institute; (2) capacity building National Agricultural Research Systems; (3) establishing competitive grants to support innovative products and services to farmers	Good	Good	2007: not rated 2008: 3.5 2009: 4 2011: 5	Good	Significant
5. Solomon Islands Rural Development Project (2007–12; S\$30 million): to raise rural living standards	Supported three components: (1) local infrastructure and service delivery; (2) improved agricultural services; (3) rural business development	Good	Good	2009: 4 2010: 4 2012: 4	Adequate	Principal
6. Vietnam: Collaboration for Agriculture and Rural Development Program (2004–10; \$20 million): to increase productivity and competitiveness	Developed and applied agricultural knowledge and technologies to address constraints to productivity and competitiveness of smallholder agriculture and rural enterprises: (1) implementation of collaborative research; (2) program management and governance	Adequate	Adequate	2008: 5 2009: 2	Poor	Significant

\* The initiative has not reported on many outcomes in general, given that there are still more than two years remaining in the life cycle. Thus, the rating should be viewed within this context.

\*\*Although the initiative helped to support the creation of group-based women's enterprises in the short term, overall the project was unsuccessful in its approach of pursuing market-based strategies within the context of a government program (email communication, Gillian Brown, 9 October 2013).

## Business and banking

**Table A5 Gender responsiveness in banking and business initiatives**

Initiative	Description	Design and plans	M&E	QAI	Gender results	Gender policy marker
1. Indonesia: Australia–Indonesia Partnership for Reconstruction and Development: Public Enterprise Partnerships Aceh/Nias (2006–13; \$6.5 million): to increase rural and peri-urban worker incomes	An International Finance Corporation (IFC)-operated program to enhance farmers' ability to participate in medium-scale enterprises. Includes activities to strengthen business climate, access to finance and a productive economic sector	Good	Adequate	2007: 5 2008: 4 2009: 4 2010: 4 2011: 4 2012: 3	Adequate	Principal
2. Pacific Region: Private Enterprise Partnerships Pacific (2006–12; \$16 million): to improve the conditions for small to medium enterprises (SMEs) across the Pacific region	An IFC-operated funding mechanism to promote private-sector development by increasing access to finance and improving business climate. Includes activities to simplify business entry process, promote investment in specific sectors, and establish or strengthen public- and private-sector dialogue and women's business councils	Good	Adequate	2008: not rated 2010: 2 2011: 3 2012: 3	Poor	Significant
3. Tonga Business Recovery Facility (2007–22; \$6 million): to facilitate short-term business recovery	A 15-year Tongan Government-operated fund to assist firms affected by 2006 civil unrest. Has three separate funds: Business Recovery Facility, Business Hardship Fund and Private Sector Reconstruction Facility	Poor	Poor	Not available	Poor	Other
4. Bangladesh: Northwest Microfinance Expansion Project (2001–09; \$4.6 million): to expand BRAC's reach	An 8-year initiative to expand BRAC's infrastructure, institutional capacity and facilities, and expand the client base to serve more of the rural poor in the north-west	Very good	Very good	2006: not rated	Very good	Significant
5. Southeast Asia and Pacific: Enterprise Challenge Fund (ECF) (2007–13; \$20.5 million): to increase access by the poor to commercially sustainable jobs and services	A pilot program encouraging private sector-led growth in poorer regions of Asia and the Pacific. Includes funding for cost-sharing grants to commercially viable private-sector projects delivering benefits for the poor	Good	Good	2008: not rated 2009: 4 2011: 4	Good	Other
6. Pacific Region: Pacific Financial Inclusion Program (2009–13; \$5.3 million):* to increase access to quality financial services for low-income, rural household and small enterprises	A multidonor initiative developed by the United Nations Capital Development Fund to improve macro-level regulations and policy in the financial sector. Also funds projects delivering scalable and sustainable financial services to low-income people and microenterprises	Good	Adequate	5	Adequate	Significant

\* \$5.3 million represents Australia's commitment; the total budget to 2013 is \$10 million. The initiative began in 2008, but Australia's involvement began in 2009.

## Energy

**Table A6 Gender responsiveness in energy initiatives**

Initiative	Description	Design and plans	M&E	QAI	Gender results	Gender policy marker
1. Tonga Energy Roadmap Institutional & Regulatory Framework Strengthening Project (2012–15; \$3.9 million): to increase access to modern energy services	World Bank–funded project that aims to strengthen the energy sector framework and prepare the national power company to integrate renewable energy within the grid.	Poor	Poor	2012: 2	NA	Other
2. Tonga Outer Islands Renewable Energy Project* (pending final agreement; proposed US\$6.8 million): to expand access to energy through solar photovoltaic power	Asian Development Bank–funded initiative to install 1.25 megawatts of solar energy with storage in the outer islands of Tonga. It will include an operation and maintenance program	Good	Good	NA	NA	NA
3. Vietnam Rural Distribution Project (2008–13; \$3.5 million): to rehabilitate and expand medium-voltage electricity distribution systems in rural areas	World Bank–funded initiative that provides technical assistance, constructs new electrification infrastructure and improves existing infrastructure	Adequate	Poor	2008: not rated 2009: 2 2010: not rated 2011: 4	Poor	Other
4. Samoa Power Sector Expansion Project (2007–16; \$15.8 million): to improve the efficiency and reliability of the power sector. Includes promotion of renewable energy	Asian Development Bank–funded initiative supporting the Samoan Government to establish a regulatory framework and improve electricity infrastructure	Good	Poor	2009: 3 2010: 5 2011: 5 2012: 5	Poor	Other
5. Laos Rural Electrification Project (2008–13; \$13 million): to increase rural electricity access by expanding grid and off-grid electrification	World Bank–funded initiative to improve financial performance of the power sector. Included a Power to the Poor (P2P) component providing interest-free loans to poor households to uptake new connections	Good	Good	2008: 4 2009: 5 2010: 5 2011: 5	Adequate	Significant

\* The Australian aid program's agreement with the Tonga Outer Island Renewable Energy Project has not been finalised.

NA = not available

## Trade

**Table A7 Gender responsiveness in trade initiatives**

Initiative	Description	Design and plans	M&E	QAI	Gender results	Gender policy marker
1. Pacer Plus Support Initiative (Forum Island countries [FICs] regional initiative) (2007–14; \$9 million): to help FICs participate in and benefit from the Pacer Plus trade agreement with Australia and New Zealand.	Provided support to the FICs leading up to Pacer Plus regional free trade agreement negotiations. Strengthens FICs' negotiation capacity, facilitates trade, and conducts policy analysis on Pacific trade	Poor	NA*	2009: 4 2010: 4 2011: 4 2012: 3	Adequate	Other
2. Laos Trade Development Facility Multi-Donor Trust Fund (2008–12; \$4.5 million): to support establishment of a national integrated trade governance structure, and increase Laos's capacity to benefit from economic integration	A World Bank–led multidonor initiative in partnership with the Ministry of Industry and Commerce; focuses on strengthening regional and global trade facilitation, policy, export competitiveness, and national trade governance structures	Very good	Good	2008: 2 2010: 5 2011: 5	Good	Other
3. AANZFTA (ASEAN–Australia–New Zealand Free Trade Area) Economic Cooperation Support Program (2005–14; up to \$30 million): to support the ASEAN Secretariat implementing AANZFTA	Main components are funding: 1) the ASEAN Secretariat to oversee and implement activities that promote AANZFTA, and 2) to build ASEAN countries' capacity to implement AANZFTA	Adequate	Adequate	2010: 4 2011: 3	Adequate	Other
4. Trade Analysis and Reform Project (2005–08; \$5.6 million): east Asia regional initiative promoting economic integration policies supporting effective engagement in World Trade Organization and bilateral and regional trade agreements	Strengthened government and academic capacity for trade-related research and analysis through delivering training workshops in the Mekong subregion	Poor	Adequate	No ratings given	Adequate	Other

\* Limited information available

ASEAN = Association of Southeast Asian Nations

## Transport and storage

**Table A8 Gender responsiveness in transport and storage initiatives**

Initiative and goal	Description	Design and plans	M&E	QAI	Gender results	Gender policy marker
1. Indonesia Infrastructure Phase I Facility (2008–11; \$64.8 million) and Phase II Project (extended to 2015; \$332 million): to enhance the economic and social impact of infrastructure projects by stimulating increased local government investment in transport sector service delivery	Provides technical assistance on policy reform and project planning, and management in water and sanitation, and transport sectors. Also funds the trialling of new approaches in 'results-based' financing from the central government to local governments	Phase I: adequate Phase II: good	Phase I: adequate Phase II: good	2008: 2 2009: 3 2010: 5 2011: 4	Phase I: poor Phase II: not available*	Principal
2. Laos: Northern Transport Network Improvement Project (2007–13; \$18.8 million): to improve rural access roads	Has six components: four relate to construction and procurement, one to safety, and one to reduce the risk of HIV and other sexually transmissible infections, and human trafficking	Adequate	Adequate	2008: 4 2009: 4 2010: 3 2011: 3	Poor	Significant
3. Papua New Guinea: Key Roads for Growth Management Project (2002–10; \$25 million): to support highway maintenance	Facility supporting PNG government to undertake reform in public finance and transport infrastructure	Good	Very good	No ratings given	Good	Other
4. Philippines: Partnership for Economic Governance Reforms (2005–10; \$42.5 million): to enhance economic growth and ensure more effective service delivery to the poor	Economic governance facility supporting Philippines Government to implement public financial management and transport infrastructure reforms	Adequate	Adequate	2009: 4 2010: 4 2011: not rated	Poor	Other
5. Solomon Islands Road Improvement Project (2007–12; US\$8.7 million): to improve market and service access through transport improvements	Donor partnership funded largely by the Asian Development Bank to rehabilitate and maintain roads and bridges, and build the Infrastructure Ministry's capacity	Very good	Very good	2009: 4 2010: 4 2011: 4 2012: 4	Good	Significant
6. Vanuatu Transport Sector Support Program, phase I (2009–12; \$19.3 million): to support a reliable, maintained transport system	Promotes sustainability of transport systems, and uses local contractors and labour to maximise affordability and local benefits. Provides government capacity building in planning and financial management	Good	Good	2009: 5 2010: 4 2011: 5	Good	Significant
7. Vietnam–Mekong Transport Infrastructure Development Program (2007–13; \$33 million): to improve access to markets by alleviating physical bottlenecks in roads and water infrastructure	Primarily funded by the World Bank. Four components to improve main and feeder roads, and waterways, and institutional support to the Ministry of Transport	Adequate	Adequate	2009: 3 2011: 4	Poor	Other

\* Not enough time has elapsed to assess the results of the initiative, given that phase II does not end until 2015.

# Acronyms and abbreviations

APPR	annual program performance report
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BRAC	Bangladesh Northwest Microfinance Expansion Project (formerly the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee)
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DFAT	Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
MAMPU	Empowering Indonesian Women for Poverty Reduction initiative
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
NGO	non-government organisation
ODE	Office of Development Effectiveness
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAF	performance assessment framework
PNG	Papua New Guinea
QAI	quality at implementation
SME	small to medium enterprise
TSSP	TVET Sector Strengthening Program
TVET	technical and vocational education and training
WEELS	women's empowerment and livelihood security

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