THE ADVOCATE’S GUIDE TO PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY AT THE WORLD BANK

BY

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April, 2003

Special thanks to Oxfam America for their generous support
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The genesis of this paper was a request in 2000 by John Ruthrauff of Oxfam America to Women’s Edge to take up advocacy on gender integration at the World Bank after the U.S. Coordinator of the Women’s Eyes on the World Bank Campaign left her position at Oxfam for a job elsewhere. Women’s Edge is very grateful to Oxfam America for its generous financial support for this project. Thanks also go to Inji Islam, who prepared an assessment report, which was a precursor to this paper.

The author expresses her appreciation to all those interviewed during the preparation of this paper, including gender specialists and NGO advocates for World Bank reform from Southern and Northern countries, and World Bank staff who provided documents, interpreted events, verified information and helped to describe as fully as possible internal efforts thus far to promote gender equality at the World Bank. Thanks also to Elaine Zuckerman of Gender Action for her thoughtful review of the paper.

Finally, many thanks go to the board of Women’s Edge, especially its Co-Founder and President, Elise Smith, and the Women’s Edge staff, especially Ritu Sharma, its Co-Founder and Executive Director, for continuous encouragement, support and guidance throughout the preparation of this paper.
# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

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<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>AWID</td>
<td>Association for Women’s Rights in Development</td>
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<td>BIC</td>
<td>Bank Information Center</td>
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<td>CAS</td>
<td>Country Assistance Strategy</td>
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<td>CGA</td>
<td>Country Gender Assessment</td>
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<td>ED</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
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<td>EGCG</td>
<td>External Gender Consultative Group</td>
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<td>GERA</td>
<td>Gender and Economic Research in Africa</td>
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<td>IBRD</td>
<td>International Bank for Reconstruction and Development</td>
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<td>ICSID</td>
<td>International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes</td>
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<tr>
<td>IDA</td>
<td>International Development Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>IFC</td>
<td>International Finance Corporation</td>
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<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
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<td>LAC</td>
<td>Latin America and the Caribbean</td>
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<td>LAC-WEOB</td>
<td>Latin America and the Caribbean Women’s Eyes on the Bank</td>
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<td>MENA</td>
<td>Middle East and North Africa</td>
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<td>MIGA</td>
<td>Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental organization</td>
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<td>OED</td>
<td>Operations Evaluation Department</td>
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<td>PREM</td>
<td>Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Network</td>
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<td>PRS</td>
<td>Poverty Reduction Strategy</td>
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<td>PRSP</td>
<td>Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper</td>
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<td>SAPRI</td>
<td>Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Initiative</td>
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<td>SAPRIN</td>
<td>Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Initiative Network</td>
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<td>TA</td>
<td>Technical assistance</td>
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<td>UNIFEM</td>
<td>United Nations Development Fund for Women</td>
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<td>WEDO</td>
<td>Women in Environment and Development Organization</td>
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<td>WEOB</td>
<td>Women’s Eyes on the Bank</td>
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<tr>
<td>WGG</td>
<td>Multi-Lateral Development Bank/International Monetary Fund Working Group on Gender</td>
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<tr>
<td>WICEJ</td>
<td>Women’s International Coalition for Economic Justice (WICEJ)</td>
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<td>WID</td>
<td>Women in Development</td>
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Executive Summary

During the past twenty-five years, donor agencies and other development organizations have worked to promote gender equality in their programs, with varying degrees of commitment and success. One of the most important public donor agencies is the World Bank. Its record thus far in promoting and institutionalizing gender equality in its policy and operational initiatives has been less than satisfactory. However, by the Bank’s own admission, the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, and, in particular, NGO advocacy efforts, which were launched there, motivated the Bank to increase its efforts to promote gender equality. Within the past two years, it has taken three important steps to increase its commitment to gender equality.

1. Public release in 2001 of a critical evaluation of the Bank’s efforts to promote gender equality during the previous four years, carried out by the Operations Evaluation Department (OED), an internal but autonomous part of the Bank.

2. Publication of a major policy research report which documents the pervasiveness of gender discrimination and defines a three-part strategy to promote gender equality. *Engendering Development Through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources and Voice* proposes a strategy to reform institutions to establish equal rights and opportunities for women and men; foster economic development to strengthen incentives for more equal resources and participation; and to take active measures to redress persistent disparities in command over resources and political voice.

3. Adoption by Bank management and endorsement by its board of Executive Directors of a new gender mainstreaming strategy, a central component of which is a country gender assessment (CGA) to be prepared for all active borrowing countries. The results of these assessments will be used in dialogue with borrower governments to identify priority gender-responsive policies and interventions in high-impact sectors important for poverty reduction and economic growth.

This paper is intended to be a “primer” on World Bank efforts to promote gender equality for all those interested in advocating for women’s rights in Bank-funded initiatives. It provides a brief history of Bank efforts to promote attention to gender equality in policies and projects, an assessment of how well the Bank has done in these activities thus far, current thinking at the organization and a description of advocacy efforts previously undertaken by women’s organizations and other external actors. The report includes current views of a number of Southern and Northern women’s organizations on gender advocacy at the Bank and their recommendations regarding the most important steps to take to promote gender equality in Bank-funded initiatives.

The Bank began its work on gender equality in 1977 by appointing a Women in Development advisor, followed by the establishment of a WID Unit in 1986. In 1994, the Bank’s board endorsed the first gender policy paper from which the Operational Policy statement on the gender dimension of development (Operational Policy 4.20) was derived. In 1995, with the arrival of James Wolfensohn as Bank president, his statements of support for gender integration,
and his attendance at the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Bank began to increase its emphasis on gender equality. Since the conference, the Bank has provided approximately $US5.3 billion in lending for girls’ education. The Bank also became the largest provider of external funds for health, population and nutrition in low and middle-income countries, and since the Beijing conference over two-thirds of Bank loans in these three areas have included gender-specific objectives. In spite of this progress, an OED evaluation in 1997 noted several problems with the Bank’s efforts to incorporate a gender focus. Another OED evaluation in 2000 indicated that the same problems persisted, revealing little progress in the intervening years. The 1994 policy was seen as poorly understood and open to wide interpretation by staff. No clear plans had been made to implement the policy. There were no effective systems in place to institutionalize the policy, nor were there adequate resources, capacity or incentives to integrate a gender focus.

Published Bank reports indicate that Bank-funded projects, which included some consideration of gender, issues rose from a low of ten percent prior to 1985 to more than forty percent as of 2000. However, the 2000 OED evaluation showed that at least sixty percent of all projects did not explicitly consider gender issues in a meaningful way during preparation, and less than fifteen percent used gender disaggregated data in preparation. In 1997, in response to intense advocacy by NGOs around the world, the Bank began to invite civil society organizations to some of its consultations regarding formulation of the country assistance strategy (CAS) but women’s groups were not systematically included. These consultations have often been fraught with problems. Such is also the case with the poverty reduction strategy process (PRSP), which began in 1999, and requires governments to involve civil society organizations in its development. To date, gender issues are not adequately dealt with in Bank policy formulation processes. Historically, promotion of gender equality has been largely dependent on the individual initiative of regional gender specialists as well as on the willingness of country directors to fund gender work.

Evidence shows that advocacy by women’s organizations around the world has helped to promote the gender advances that have occurred so far in the Bank. Significant advocacy work by NGOs only began with the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. There, representatives of women’s organizations presented President Wolfensohn with a letter signed by over 800 people urging the Bank to increase participation of grassroots women in Bank-funded initiatives, to institutionalize a gender perspective in Bank programs, to increase Bank investments in women’s health, education, agriculture, land ownership, employment and financial services, and to increase the number and diversity of women in senior Bank management. This action launched the Women’s Eyes on the Bank Campaign (WEOB) which took root in the US and Latin America and the Caribbean. Advocacy efforts by this campaign, coupled with work by other gender advocates outside and inside the Bank, resulted in several important actions:

- Calls for a gender framework resulted in the policy research review completed in 2001 (“Engendering Development…”);
- The Gender and Development Unit was restructured and placed within the Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Network (PREM), a more strategic location than where the Unit had been previously;
- Creation of the External Gender Consultative Group by Bank president Wolfensohn in 1995 helped to strengthen dialogue on gender-related issues between the Bank, its partners and certain sectors of civil society;
- The new gender mainstreaming strategy was adopted by Bank management and endorsed by its board;
- The Country Assistance Strategy formulation process was opened up to participation by civil society, including women’s organizations (the result of advocacy by many NGOs around the world, not just women’s organizations);
- Significant increases were made in the Bank’s investment in girls’ education and health, population and nutrition.
- Between 1995 and 2001, the proportion of women in Bank management increased from 12 to 22 percent; and in professional positions, from 28 to 39.5 percent. In addition, efforts were begun to reduce gender barriers in the personnel process, to eliminate sexual harassment, and to help balance work and life responsibilities;

The most influential voices regarding gender issues at the World Bank must be those of Southern women, themselves. However, historically, women in borrower countries have not been given the opportunity to participate adequately or appropriately in Bank policy and project formulation, design, implementation and evaluation. The recent positive steps taken by the World Bank may represent an opportunity to redress this situation.

Women’s Edge conferred with several Southern NGO gender specialists in preparing this report. Women from Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean provided their views regarding the most urgent issues on which to focus regarding the promotion of gender equality at the Bank. These are:

A. The Bank’s promotion of gender equality within the prevailing paradigm of economic reform and globalization;
B. The technical compartmentalization of gender efforts rather than viewing them within the political context of structural inequalities and patriarchy;
C. The Bank’s support of privatization and its impacts on women’s labor, their roles as household consumers, and their well being;
D. The Bank’s focus on economic efficiency rather than empowerment and rights;
E. The emphasis on women as mothers, not as workers;
F. The role of the US in maintaining the current World Bank approach to economic reform and globalization.

Southern gender specialists think advocacy efforts should start by questioning the assumptions and values that form the basis of the Bank’s policies, as well as its system for delivering loans to Southern countries. This includes economic conditionality and the process of negotiation of macro-economic policies. Several Southern gender specialists with whom Women’s Edge conferred consider the PRSP to be an example of a Bank-led initiative to continue imposition of liberal economic reforms. The PRSP process couples official claims for poverty reduction goals and broad-based public participation with conditionality likely to conflict with national development imperatives and long-term poverty reduction. Thus far, the negotiation process has
been conducted for the most part without the full knowledge and participation of affected citizens including women.

Many Southern gender specialists also think that the Bank is promoting gender mainstreaming while it supports macro-economic policies that further the interests of transnational corporations in search of new markets and new sources of cheap labor, thus reinforcing the exclusion of disadvantaged social groups, especially women. Southern women also noted that these policies have led to the removal and/or de-legitimization of public policy instruments for the implementation of social development policies and affirmative action policies, including the Beijing Platform for Action.

Southern colleagues recommended that advocates based in the US focus their efforts on the six problems noted above. In particular, advocates should consider undertaking the following tasks:

A. Focus on what is wrong with the US position at the World Bank and work to change it;
B. Educate and mobilize significant constituencies in the North in support of issues important to Southern women’s organizations;
C. Lobby for full information disclosure, transparency and genuine participation; help with women’s actual participation in the formulation of the PRSP and the CAS, not limited to their monitoring and implementation;
D. Help women’s groups make the connections between macro-economic policies and gender impacts by making the language of macro-economics more accessible and analyzing how the policies affect women in practical terms; capacity building via information exchange, joint efforts to develop simple guidelines or courses on a gendered analysis of macro-economic policy; workshops and joint research; send researchers to particular countries to help document what is going on regarding a particular policy (e.g. privatization);
E. Share important information regarding the Bank with Southern women’s organizations;
F. Help Southern women have access to key staff and Executive Directors at the Bank.

Recent steps taken by the Bank are encouraging. It is critically important that gender advocates seize this opportunity to monitor the implementation of the new gender mainstreaming strategy, both at the country level and globally, to analyze gender impacts of Bank-funded initiatives and to promote as vigorously as possible gender equality and equitable access to resources and power.
Introduction

During the past twenty-five years, donor agencies and other development organizations have worked to promote gender equality in their programs with varying degrees of commitment and success. As time has gone by, research and actual experience have shown that gender equality is essential to development effectiveness. In order for countries to grow and prosper, all human resources must be maximized. If left unaddressed, gender disparities undermine otherwise well-conceived policies and programs.

One of the most important public donor agencies is the World Bank. Its record thus far in promoting and institutionalizing gender equality in its policy and operational initiatives has been less than satisfactory. However, by the Bank’s own admission, the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, and, in particular, NGO advocacy efforts which were launched there, motivated the Bank to increase its efforts to promote gender equality within its initiatives.\(^1\) Within the past two years, the World Bank, has taken three important steps to increase its commitment to gender equality. These are:

1. Public release in 2001 of a critical evaluation of the Bank’s efforts to promote gender equality during the previous four years. The evaluation was carried out by the Operations Evaluation Department (OED), an internal but autonomous part of the Bank.

2. Publication of a major policy research report which documents the pervasiveness of gender discrimination and defines a three-part strategy to promote gender equality. *Engendering Development Through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources and Voice* proposes a strategy to reform institutions to establish equal rights and opportunities for women and men; foster economic development to strengthen incentives for more equal resources and participation; and to take active measures to redress persistent disparities in command over resources and political voice.

3. Adoption by Bank management and endorsement by its board of Executive Directors of a new gender mainstreaming strategy, a central component of which is a country gender assessment (CGA) to be prepared for all active borrowing countries. The results of these assessments will be used in dialogue with borrower governments to identify priority gender-responsive policies and interventions in high-impact sectors important for poverty reduction and economic growth.

This publication is intended to serve as a “primer” on World Bank efforts to promote gender equality for all those interested in advocating for women’s rights in Bank-funded initiatives. The report provides a brief history of Bank efforts to promote attention to gender equality in policies and projects, an assessment of how well the Bank has done in these activities thus far, current thinking at the organization and a description of advocacy efforts previously undertaken by women’s organizations and other external actors. The report includes current views of a number of Southern and Northern women’s organizations on gender advocacy at the Bank and their recommendations on the most important steps to take to promote gender equality in Bank-funded initiatives.
The World Bank: Organization, History and Assessment of Gender Efforts

1. Organizational Snapshot of the Bank

The World Bank was established in 1944 at the end of the Second World War to facilitate the flow of international capital as a key element in the reconstruction of Europe and subsequently the economic development of countries often referred to as the “Third World”. The World Bank Group is comprised of: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), the International Development Association (IDA), the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) and the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID). The IBRD and IDA share the same staff and facilities. The IBRD works primarily with middle-income countries, and IDA, with the poorest countries. The IBRD and IDA have three related functions: to lend money, to provide economic advice and technical assistance, and to serve as a catalyst to investment by others. The term “World Bank” refers specifically to the IBRD and IDA. The IFC works directly with the private sector in borrower countries, and MIGA encourages direct foreign investment in member countries by protecting investors from non-commercial risk. ICSID provides for conciliation and arbitration of disputes between member countries and investors who qualify as nationals of other countries.

Over the years, the vast majority of NGO advocacy has been carried out toward the IBRD and IDA although in recent years, NGOs also have worked to convince the Bank to “harmonize” IBRD and IDA policies with the IFC and MIGA that relate to such topics as information disclosure and the environment.

Since its inception, the Bank’s mission has been to promote economic growth in middle and low-income countries through loans to client governments. During the 1980s, especially following the Bank’s introduction of structural adjustment programs for client countries, which came to have such negative impacts on the poor, NGOs and others, inside and outside the Bank, began urging it to pay more attention to alleviating poverty. By 1990, the Bank had announced that its major objective would be poverty reduction. However, given its primary focus on lending for economic growth, the Bank encountered serious difficulties in attempting to redirect its energy to reducing poverty. The organizational ambivalence about a focus on poverty meant that emphasis continued to be placed on efficiently preparing and making loans. The shift in emphasis to poverty reduction has been very long in coming, and only in recent years has the rhetorical commitment increased. The Bank’s present mission is stated quite forcefully with regard to poverty: To fight poverty with passion and professionalism for lasting results.2

In 1999, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) decided that nationally-owned participatory poverty reduction strategies (PRS) prepared by borrower governments with broad participation of stakeholder groups should provide the basis of all their concessional lending and for debt relief under the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative. Poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs) are now prepared for non-HIPC countries as well. There are six core principles underlying the development and implementation of poverty reduction strategies. The strategies should be: 1) country-driven, involving broad-based participation by civil society and the private sector in all operational steps; 2) results-oriented...
and focused on outcomes that would benefit the poor; 3) comprehensive in recognizing the multidimensional nature of poverty; 4) prioritized so that implementation is feasible in both fiscal and institutional terms; 5) partnership-oriented, involving coordinated participation of development partners (bilateral, multilateral, and non-governmental); and 6) based on a long-term perspective for poverty reduction. The launch of the PRS process by the World Bank and IMF was a significant step in the right direction. Thus far, however, PRSPs haven’t addressed economic policy concerns, and Southern NGOs in many countries report that they have not been effectively involved in the development of the PRSP.

Member governments are the Bank’s shareholders, and the Bank’s governance structure is two-tiered. At the top is a Board of Governors comprised of one governor from each member country, usually the Finance Minister. This Board meets once a year. For the remainder of the year, the board delegates its authority to a group of Executive Directors based at Bank headquarters in Washington, DC, which approves all projects, policies and changes to the Bank itself. Votes by Executive Directors are weighted in proportion to their country’s contribution to the Bank’s capital. Power rests inordinately with donor countries (USA, Canada, Japan, the Western European countries and Scandinavia). For example, the US has approximately 17 percent of the votes as compared with Afghanistan with .02 percent and Burkina Faso, .06 percent. Certain important borrower countries such as India and China have influence beyond their voting power. It may appear that the desires of borrower governments always come first but, in reality, when important issues are considered, the interests of the industrialized countries take precedence. These interests are primarily stability in the global economy and self-interest for the industrialized countries. For the borrower governments, priority issues are over-all economic growth, major infusions of capital, and large-scale development. Below these come issues of equity, participation, the environment, gender and other social concerns.

The most recent re-organization of the Bank took place in 1996-97 when the Bank created a matrix organization, and began to decentralize its operations to borrower countries. As of July, 2002, there were four managing directors, six regions, each headed by a vice president, and five substantive networks, also headed by vice presidents. These networks are Poverty Reduction and Economic Management (PREM), Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Development (ESSD), Human Development (HD), Financial Sector (FSI), and Private Sector and Infrastructure (PSI). The role of the networks is to provide corporate and human resources functions, knowledge management, quality control and technical assistance to the regions.

As part of the decentralization process, the Bank began to move staff to the field. As of early 2003, 2,000 of a total of 10,000 Bank employees are based in borrower countries. The decentralization plan also gave country directors control over their budgets, previously not the case.

2. Where Gender Staff is Situated in the World Bank

The PREM network houses the Gender and Development Unit (also called the “anchor”) which has 14 staff members. The PREM network has a Gender and Development Board (a “sector” board) chaired by Karen Mason, the Unit’s director. Members of the board currently include
representatives from each region as well as several sectors and networks across the Bank. Examples of sectors and networks represented in the Gender and Development Board include the World Bank Institute, the legal department, transport, human development, social development and human resources.

The sector board functions as a board of directors for the gender anchor, and as such, determines the over-all approach to be taken to promote gender concerns (subject to approval by management and the Executive Directors). Unlike most sector boards, which are made up of managers with budgets, the Gender Sector Board’s members are primarily gender specialists who are not managers and, in most instances, have no budgets.

Each region has a gender coordinator. The effectiveness of these specialists varies considerably, depending on their particular approaches to their task and ability to influence their regions or to raise money from donor trust funds.

3. Philosophical Approach to Gender Issues at the World Bank

First and foremost, gender issues at the World Bank are analyzed within the organization’s prevailing paradigm of economic reform and globalization. Although in recent years social inclusion, empowerment and good governance have come to be seen by the Bank as essential elements of development, the core of the paradigm continues to be economic reform and globalization. Bank staff members striving to promote gender equality do not question whether this emphasis, itself, contributes to the continuing marginalization and impoverishment of women in their societies. For example, the Bank’s efforts in privatization have had serious deleterious effects on poor women, but there is no effort by Bank insiders to challenge these major economic strategies.

Within the Bank’s economic paradigm, gender equality is promoted primarily through an “economic efficiency” argument, i.e. that attention to gender concerns is important so as to develop better projects and policies in order to achieve economic growth and reduce poverty. A different philosophical approach -- which feminists around the world espouse -- is that women have the right to equality, and they should be assisted in standing up for their rights vis-à-vis their husbands and families, communities, local government and the state. Many in the Bank do not voice this second argument because it implies that women’s rights are human rights. The Articles of Agreement that established the Bank specify that the organization is not to engage in politics. Therefore, historically, the Bank has not taken stands on human rights issues but under pressure from civil society groups and UN organizations, it is beginning to consider a human rights approach. The Bank is sensitive to the potential charge by some borrower governments that in promoting women’s rights, it would be imposing culturally inappropriate ideas on them. Therefore, there is no framework within which to raise the issue of women’s rights as an organizational goal.

The Bank’s recently completed policy research review (see page one) should help advance the debate in the direction of gender equality as a woman’s right. For now, gender specialists in both the anchor and the regions still primarily use the efficiency argument and see their task being to win the “hearts and minds” of Bank staff regarding the importance of gender concerns.
Many, perhaps even most, staffers interpret the Bank’s gender policy as representing a Women in Development (WID) rather than a gender-analysis approach. A WID strategy involves efforts to incorporate or include women and their concerns in development initiatives. A gender-analysis approach examines both women’s and men’s roles to determine how they contribute to development, the constraints each faces in striving to be productive members of society, and appropriate interventions to enable each to achieve a higher level of well being. This may explain partly why girls’ education is an area where the Bank has vastly increased its investments over the past several years. Clearly, the Bank increased its investments as a response to research evidence showing the great benefits of closing the gender gap in school. But as one staffer put it, “The Bank seems to have done very well in girls’ education because it didn’t threaten anyone.”

Bank staff may also be more comfortable with a WID approach in terms of their interactions with borrower governments since the Bank maintains that it cannot impose actions on governments. However, as signatories to the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action from the Fourth World Conference on Women, governments have already espoused gender equality. By promoting attention to concerns of gender equality, Bank staff would simply be encouraging and assisting governments to implement these commitments.

4. Brief History of Promotion of Gender Equality at the World Bank

In 1977, the Bank appointed a Women in Development advisor and in 1986, established a WID Unit. According to a 1996 joint analysis of Bank efforts toward gender equality done by the International Center for Research on Women and the Overseas Development Council, “Serious momentum in the Bank began in the mid-1980s.” However, the report also states “...The Bank has done significantly more on behalf of women as mothers than as workers….There is in the Bank an intellectual consensus surrounding the importance of investing in women in the social sectors that does not exist with regard to women’s roles in economic development.”

In 1994, four years after the Bank adopted poverty reduction as its over-all mission, the Bank’s board endorsed the first gender policy paper from which the Operational Policy statement on the gender dimension of development (Operational Policy 4.20) was derived. The Bank’s policy was focused operationally on five sectors (agriculture, education, health, financial services and labor) and did not – and still does not – require that all investment and structural adjustment programs address gender issues. It is important to note that structural adjustment programs – representing at least one-third of total Bank commitments – were not included under Operational Policy 4.20.

After the arrival of James Wolfensohn as Bank president in 1995, and his statements of support for gender integration into Bank work, including his attendance at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, the Bank began to increase its emphasis on the promotion of gender equality. Persuaded by the importance of girls’ education for advances in family health and well being, the Bank has lent approximately US $5.3 billion for girls’ education since the Beijing conference. Bank-funded projects seen as most successful have aimed to reduce direct costs of schooling as well as opportunity costs. In the areas of health, population and nutrition, the Bank is now the largest provider of external funds for such programs in low and middle-income countries. Since Beijing, two-thirds of these loans have included gender-related goals. In terms
of the future, a report prepared by the Bank in early 2000 for the Beijing Plus Five meeting reinforces the Bank’s over-all commitment to gender equality, at least rhetorically, when it says “Recently the Bank has renewed its focus on poverty reduction as its primary mission and adopted a broad definition of poverty that includes empowerment, opportunity, and security as well as income as necessary to the fight to end poverty. These changes have set the stage for the Bank to sharpen its focus on gender equality.”7

Assessment of Progress on Gender Equality at the World Bank Through 2000

A. Mainstreaming A Focus on Gender Issues. According to the *Evaluation of the Gender Dimensions of World Bank Assistance’s Phase I Report*, prepared by the OED and reviewed by the Bank’s Executive Directors in October, 2001, certain basic steps are necessary to successfully mainstream a focus on gender issues in any institution. These include:

- Clear instructions to staff;
- Measures to institutionalize and operationalize the policy; and
- Monitoring and evaluating the policy and its implementation.8

Measured against these criteria, the Bank still has a great deal to do to systematically integrate gender concerns into its initiatives. In the OED evaluation, the following reasons are given for such limited progress:

- The 1994 gender policy is seen as poorly understood and open to wide interpretation by Bank staff, even among staff who work on gender issues;
- There have been no clear plans set in place to implement the gender mainstreaming strategy;
- There are no effective systems in place to institutionalize the policy;
- Resources for gender mainstreaming have been inadequate;
- No time-bound benchmarks were set to measure the degree of mainstreaming nor has implementation of the strategy been rigorously monitored;
- There are not incentives for staff to integrate gender issues, nor are there mechanisms in place to determine accountability;
- The Bank has not built the necessary capacity among its staff to mainstream gender issues.9

These very same issues were noted in OED’s evaluation of gender dimensions of Bank assistance done in 1997, an indication of little, if any progress on mainstreaming in recent years!
B. The Bank’s Gender Policy. As an operational policy, the gender policy is required to be followed by staff. However, because it is vague, it is open to wide interpretation, and can be safely ignored by staff without consequence. The gender policy can be contrasted with “safeguard” policies, a group of ten individual polices which cover such issues as environmental assessment and protection, involuntary resettlement, indigenous peoples, and dam safety. Bank Procedures (which specify procedures and documentation required for Bank-wide consistency and quality) and Good Practices (statements containing advice and guidance on policy implementation based on experience) are both prepared for safeguard policies but not for the gender policy. The absence of these for the gender policy further undermines its effectiveness since the Bank Procedures provide the framework and detailed requirements of a policy, which then can be monitored for compliance.

Historically, even in cases where staff has genuinely wanted to pay attention to gender equality in projects and policy formulation, such efforts have been dependent on approvals by country directors or project task team leaders for funding. (As noted on page 3, since 1996, country directors have controlled the budgets for their country programs. It has been only when these directors agreed to specific requests that gender-related activities have been funded.) This has been a major impediment to gender mainstreaming. Beyond one’s own interest, there have been no incentives for including gender-related activities or sanctions for not doing so. Indeed, trust funds provided by donors (e.g. the Scandinavians and the Dutch) have financed at least a portion of gender-related work done by the Bank over many years.

C. Gender Issues in Bank-Funded Projects. Given the Bank’s limited monitoring of its own work to incorporate gender issues into its initiatives, it is difficult to give an accurate portrayal of the extent of mainstreaming. The data that exists indicates the following.

The Bank’s published reports include these results:

- From 1965-85: less than 10 percent of Bank-funded projects included specific gender-related actions.

- From 1988 to 1994: the percentage increased to 30 percent, with the strongest efforts made in improvements to women’s health and education, and to increase their options in agriculture.

- As of 2000: the percentage of projects, including some consideration of gender issues in their design, had almost doubled since 1995, climbing to more than 40 percent of all Bank projects.

- The percentage of projects that finance gender-related activities or support policy changes designed to reduce gender inequalities averaged 26 percent in 1995-99.10

Although these statistics show a slow, steady progression, internal Bank evaluations reveal a somewhat different story. The most recent evaluation by OED, completed in late 2000, indicates:
- Between 1988 and 1999, only 38 percent of the Bank’s investment projects have any meaningful reference to gender issues;
- Less than 28 percent of these projects included gender action plans or components;
- At least 60 percent of all projects didn’t explicitly consider gender issues in a meaningful way during preparation;
- Less than 15 percent of projects used gender disaggregated data in preparation.\(^{11}\)

The 1994 gender strategy emphasized efforts five sectoral areas: education, health, agriculture, financial services and labor. In the areas of financial services, attention seems to be largely limited to micro-credit for women, and statistics are not readily available regarding attention to gender issues in labor-related projects.

**D. Women’s Participation in Policy Formulation.** Starting in 1997, NGOs around the world began an effort to promote participation of civil society organizations in the formulation of the Bank’s country assistance strategy (CAS) in borrower countries. As part of this larger effort, Southern women’s organizations began to be invited to meetings held by the Bank. The OED evaluation found that all CASs reviewed, which were prepared after 1997, were rated satisfactory as regards gender awareness. However, the evaluation states, “…even in CASs with good gender analysis, the link with recommendations is weak.”\(^{12}\)

NGOs have done extensive work to promote systematic and genuine participation of civil society in formulation of the CAS, and the Bank has developed guidelines for staff members to promote such involvement. Nevertheless, it is still only occasionally that NGOs are involved seriously in the formulation of the CAS. The more common experience is that NGOs are consulted, and their views may or may not be taken into consideration when the CAS is finalized. Bank systems and procedures that ensure that real participation happens should be enforced more strongly and need to ensure that women’s organizations are always included.

The Poverty Reduction Strategy process, launched in 1999 by the World Bank and the IMF, requires governments to carry out a participatory process with civil society in its formulation. However, according to available reports, gender concerns have been largely overlooked in the first 33 interim PRSPs and while certain gender issues were addressed for the first time in some of the first nine final PRSPs completed in November, 2001, they were not treated in the depth necessary.\(^{13}\) One exception is Rwanda whose PRSP does mainstream gender issues with very few exceptions and treats gender concerns in some depth.\(^{14}\)

The promotion of gender equality in Bank project and policy initiatives has been largely dependent on individual initiative by gender specialists working in the Bank’s regional offices and in the gender “anchor”. Therefore, success in integration of gender concerns into projects and policy formulation varies considerably by region, depending on the particular gender specialist, the regional vice president, the regional chief economist and the individual country directors and their willingness, or lack thereof, to promote gender equality.
The Latin America and Caribbean region is considered by many to have been successful in its approach to gender mainstreaming, largely due to the efforts of the regional gender specialist there. She defines her work as providing services to task managers based on an efficiency model. She believes that the majority of task team leaders are willing to incorporate gender concerns in their projects if they are given the proper help. She raised money from donor trust funds to underwrite her work and has had good results in having gender issues addressed in project formulation and design. She also determined implementation constraints with clients. Because very little technical assistance is provided to borrowers during the implementation phase of projects, she piloted a technical assistance (TA) facility in Ecuador with a gender specialist available to coordinate assistance to projects in several countries. The coordinator identifies providers of TA (either consultants or NGOs) in the countries themselves. When the TA facility was first set up, the regional gender specialist sent an e-mail to 11 Bank task team leaders to ascertain their interest in using it. Nine responded positively within a week!

According to some Bank staff members, successful work in gender mainstreaming is also being done in other regions. However, in Europe and Central Asia, the gender coordinator post remained vacant for well over a year before being filled in 2002, and task team leaders in Africa express little interest in promoting gender equality.

**Current General Atmosphere at the World Bank**

The Bank went through a difficult period between July, 2000 and June, 2001. A three-year infusion of money from 1997 to 2000 had been provided through the Strategic Compact to re-organize and decentralize the Bank’s operations. When the Strategic Compact ended, there were two significant budget cuts in July and December, 2000. Staff reductions following the budget cuts numbered well over 600. In addition, the Bank over-ran its budget in Fiscal Year 2000, adding to the belt-tightening. Discretionary spending on such items as travel and training was cut significantly during FY 2001, and staff morale was quite low. While Fiscal Year 2002 has not seen the same kind of budget pressure and morale has improved somewhat, many staff now carry a heavier workload as a result of the earlier cuts.

The matrix organization, which was instituted in 1997, with the networks and sector boards, is unpopular, and is perceived as confusing, time consuming and cumbersome. Many staffers also feel burdened by the need to incorporate environmental safeguards -- which are mandatory -- into formulation and design of projects, let alone incorporating gender awareness and stakeholder participation, which are voluntary. Since early 2000, staff and management have also experienced the increasing hostility around the world directed toward World Bank policies and investments through large street demonstrations and media reports.

Lastly, several events have combined to create a more difficult environment for Northern NGOs advocating change at the Bank. The decentralization efforts, which the Bank has undertaken in recent years, have put the organization in closer touch with civil society organizations at national levels. Many Bank staffers want to limit engagement with civil society to the country level in order to link it as much as possible with operations and to avoid broader engagement with NGOs on matters of general policy. The large street demonstrations in Washington, DC during the 2000 spring meetings, plus the demonstrations at the Annual Meeting in Prague, Czech Republic in September, 2000 – with their intense media coverage – infuriated many in the Bank who felt
unfairly attacked at a time when they had begun focusing more on poverty reduction and increasing efforts to engage with civil society in borrower countries.

Some of the Southern Executive Directors, who are resistant to engagement with civil society in their own countries, have pointed to the April, 2000 demonstrations in front of Bank headquarters as the logical result of a government’s willingness to allow expression by citizens groups. Approximately twenty-five percent of the EDs came into the Bank since 2000 and have little understanding of the long engagement of NGOs with the Bank, dating back to the early 1980s.

The desire by many Bank staffers to limit engagement with civil society to the country level and the resistance of some Southern Executive Directors to civil society advocacy may make advocacy at headquarters in support of gender equality more difficult in the future.

**Current Thinking and Action on Promotion of Gender Equality at the World Bank**

Specific work being carried out in the Bank at present is encouraging. The policy research review noted on page one, which was completed in 2001, makes the case as to why gender equality must be viewed as an integral part of development initiatives that aim to reduce poverty and encourage economic growth. Other research done earlier by the Bank within the context of the Special Program of Assistance to Africa shows the linkages between gender inequality, growth and poverty and concludes that reducing gender-based asset inequality increases growth, efficiency and welfare.17

Undoubtedly the most important decision taken recently regarding gender equality was the Bank Board’s endorsement on September 18, 2001 of a new gender mainstreaming strategy. Under development for much of the previous year, the new strategy has as its centerpiece a Country Gender Assessment (CGA) to be completed in all active borrowing countries. The CGAs are to be based on analysis and inclusive consultations at the country level and are to identify gender-responsive policy and operational interventions important for poverty reduction, economic growth and sustainable development.

The Bank’s Gender and Development Board developed the new strategy, which was written by a team headed by the Director of Gender and Development. Consultations held during the strategy’s development in the six regions where the Bank works included civil society groups and government officials, and informal discussions were held with bilateral and multilateral donors. The External Gender Consultative Group (see page 13) commented on several drafts.

The gender mainstreaming strategy is being made operational through a basic three-step process:

1) “Prepare, for each country in which the Bank has an active lending program, a periodic Country Gender Assessment analyzing the gender dimensions of development across sectors and identifying the gender-responsive actions that are important for poverty reduction, economic growth, human well-being and development effectiveness, and use it to inform the Bank’s country assistance program;
2) Develop and implement, as part of the country assistance program, priority policy and operational interventions (if any) that respond to the CGA; and

3) Monitor the implementation and results of these policy and operational interventions.18

Expectations, based on the diagnosis carried out through the CGA, are that a gender dimension will be integrated into relevant analytical work and lending instruments. For example, this would include analytical work in high-priority sectors and social impact analysis associated with adjustment lending, including Poverty Reduction Support Credits, among others.

In early drafts of the gender mainstreaming strategy, significant training was proposed for Bank staff throughout the organization. However, the final strategy limits training to incorporating gender and development content into staff orientation courses and existing core courses. As an alternative to extensive training, adaptable tools and good practice examples will be developed and disseminated to be used in operations.

An important part of the strategy is the revision of the Bank’s gender policy, Operational Policy 4.20 (see pages 5 and 6). As noted earlier, the policy is vague and has no accompanying procedures which staff are expected to follow. Because of these weaknesses, a goal was set to re-write the policy and prepare a procedures statement by June, 2002. As of February, 2003, the new policy and procedures statement were not yet finalized. As an interim measure, an Operational Memorandum was issued in December, 2001 which supplanted Operational Policy 4.20. This memorandum focuses primarily on the Country Gender Assessment and how it is to be carried out. It contains only very brief references to the need to discuss the findings of the CGA with borrower countries and to develop policy and operational interventions for inclusion in the CAS.

In terms of accountability, regional vice presidents are expected to submit annual gender mainstreaming plans and to prepare year-end reports outlining fulfillment of these plans. The Gender and Development anchor undertook the preparation of a new monitoring and evaluation system to track and evaluate implementation of the strategy in Bank work. The annual plans and reports are to be important components of this system in addition to reports on benchmarked statistics about regional actions and outputs. Actual on-the-ground results will be evaluated at longer intervals. The new monitoring and evaluation system was completed in October, 2002.

The Bank estimates that in order to implement the new mainstreaming strategy, incremental costs of approximately $2 million are needed in the first year, $3 million in each of the second to fourth years, and approximately $2.5 million per year thereafter. For Fiscal Year 2002, corporate incentive funds of $600,000 were designated and these were matched by the regions at more than a two to one ratio.19 Given these estimates, the total incremental costs for the first five years of the mainstreaming effort would be $13.5 million.

The new gender mainstreaming strategy, with its emphasis on country gender assessments, represents a new level of seriousness in how the Bank is to examine gender status and gender disparities in specific countries. Whether the assessments will result in any significant increase in incorporation of gender-responsive actions into policy and operational interventions remains
to be seen. The strategy states that while the process should be led by the specific country(ies), the Bank will play a supportive and proactive role.

The mainstreaming strategy has been adopted at a time when traditional pressures on staff remain, i.e. to formulate, prepare and bring loan proposals to the EDs for approval and to get money disbursed to borrowers. While personnel evaluations have been changed somewhat in the recent past to encourage teamwork and a client orientation, staff are still rewarded primarily for getting loans approved. There are no specific incentives offered to encourage Bank staff to embrace this strategy other than the research evidence stated earlier in this report. As noted earlier, accountability for implementation of the strategy is to be through the annual plans and reports of the regional vice presidencies. However, adherence in the past to accountability mechanisms for gender, participation and other social issues has been quite unsatisfactory. There is even some difficulty achieving compliance with the safeguard policies, which are considered absolutely mandatory. Therefore, successful mainstreaming will depend in large measure on the ability of gender advocates within the Bank to persuade their colleagues to embrace this plan and on the commitment of the country directors and regional vice presidents to ensure implementation. External monitoring of the strategy’s implementation, both at headquarters and in borrower countries, by gender advocates in the US and by Southern gender activists and others will be essential.

In terms of other gender initiatives with potential to contribute to change, an inter-agency gender group recently has been created, comprised of staff from the World Bank, the IMF, and the regional development banks. Called the Multi-Lateral Development Bank/IMF Working Group on Gender (WGG), the group is focusing on exchange of information to enable well-informed co-operation based on full knowledge of each institution’s policies, resources and constraints. The WGG has two subgroups, focused on operational and institutional gender issues respectively.

As regards the board of the Bank, some progress has been made regarding attention to gender. At the present time, those countries whose Executive Directors are most attentive to gender concerns are the Netherlands, the Nordic countries, Germany, the United Kingdom, France and Canada. While in the past, there was a definite split between North and South regarding support for gender equality, the situation among the Southern EDs is becoming more encouraging, with support having been expressed by at least a few of the EDs from borrower countries.

**Bank Mechanisms for Expanded Consultation on Gender Issues**

Since the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, the Bank has created two important mechanisms to increase consultation with gender specialists and women’s organizations around the world.

**1. External Gender Consultative Group.** In 1996, President Wolfensohn created the External Gender Consultative Group, composed of 14 gender specialists from around the world. Its purpose is to assist the World Bank in the design and implementation of its gender policies, and to help strengthen dialogue on gender-related issues between the Bank, its partners and interested sectors of civil society. The members of the EGCG were chosen by the Bank based on their expertise, experience and geographical representation. Initially, the Bank’s EGCG budget paid
for the travel and per diem expenses of the annual meeting but did not include any funds for
communication between meetings or a secretariat to coordinate the activity of the EGCG.
Subsequently, some money was added to create a small secretariat housed with the NGO Co-
Chair and provide for communication between meetings.

The EGCG has succeeded in raising important issues for consideration by the Bank such as the
need to approach gender from a rights perspective rather than simply for efficiency, and to
address the harmful effects of structural adjustment and globalization on women. They also
provided important input to the policy research report and to the gender mainstreaming strategy.
However, the group is a set of individuals who do not represent their organizations in their
capacity as members of the EGCG. The group has no formal advocacy program, extremely
limited funds, and a once-a-year encounter with the Bank at headquarters. Therefore, their
influence is limited.

In 2000, the Bank reduced the EGCG membership from fourteen to nine people, most likely as a
cost-saving measure. The EGCG is an important reference group for the Gender and
Development anchor and provides a sounding board for internal gender advocates as they
consider how to increase attention to gender at the Bank. However, some gender-focused Bank
staffers perceive the orientation of the Bank towards the EGCG as a sort of “firefighting”
exercise, i.e. Bank management listens to the EGCG in order to keep a positive public relations
profile on the topic but the group does not significantly affect Bank behavior toward gender
issues.

It is important for advocates for gender equality to maintain close contact with the EGCG,
channel information to the members, and assist them as possible in their monitoring and
advocacy work. The coordinator of the US Women’s Eyes On the Bank campaign (US WEOB)
(see page 15) had been given a place on the EGCG in 1999 but could not establish a strong
linkage since she left her professional position later that year.

2. Consultative Council on Gender for the Middle East and North Africa. The Bank created
this group in January, 1999 largely as a result of the commitment and dynamism of the MENA
gender coordinator to enable it to consult with members of civil society in countries of the
region. Gender specialists were chosen from individual countries representing a variety of
development fields for terms of 2-3 years. According to the Bank, the group has positively
influenced its work; for example, based on council recommendations, gender training is now to
be provided to all MENA Bank staff. No other region has such a council although some have
regional advisory councils that cover all aspects of development.

NGO Advocacy Efforts on Gender Equality at the World Bank

Shortly before she left the Bank in 2001, Jan Piercy, the former US Executive Director, said
“Having an external constituency on gender is indispensable.” She noted how struck she had
been by how priorities of the Bank shift depending on advocacy by external groups. In the
months preceding the adoption of the new gender mainstreaming strategy, comments expressed
by several Bank staff regarding the status of gender promotion in the Bank revealed the current
dearth of external advocacy as well as the work needed to be done inside the Bank. “Gender is
nowhere here,” said one high-placed female manager who doesn’t work on gender at the Bank
but who did in another development organization. “Gender is not even on the radar screen,” said another Bank staffer familiar with social development issues in the Bank. “No one cares about gender here,” said another.

Evidence shows that advocacy by women’s organizations around the world has helped to promote the gender advances that have occurred so far in the Bank. While some advocacy work had been carried out subsequent to the imposition of structural adjustment policies in the early 1980s and in the decade following the establishment of the Bank’s WID Unit in 1986, efforts began to intensify at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women where Bank President James Wolfensohn made a speech indicating the Bank’s commitment to promote gender equality. He was the first Bank president to attend any of the United Nations conferences on women.

1. **Women’s Eyes on the Bank.** At the Beijing conference, representatives of women’s organizations presented Wolfensohn with a letter signed by over 800 people urging the Bank to take the following four steps:

   1. To increase the participation of grassroots women in the Bank’s projects and economic policy making;
   2. To institutionalize a gender perspective in all Bank policies and programs;
   3. To increase Bank investments in women’s health services, education, agriculture, land ownership, employment and financial services;
   4. To increase the number and diversity of women in senior management positions within the Bank.\(^{22}\)

   This action launched the Women’s Eyes on the Bank Campaign (WEOB), which took root in the US and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). Following the Beijing conference, 8-12 organizations based mainly in Washington created the campaign’s US chapter. The only other region where an active campaign ensued was in Latin America and the Caribbean, which has continued to have a group of women involved in advocacy in 10 countries. In 1997, the US campaign produced an excellent assessment of the Bank’s work in the four areas noted above. As a result of efforts by the WEOB campaign in the US and LAC, coupled with work by other gender advocates outside and inside the Bank, progress was made in the following key areas:

   1. Calls for a gender framework at the Bank resulted in the policy research review completed in 2001 ("Engendering Development…");
   2. The Bank prepared gender action plans for the regions (although these do not seem to be in evidence now);
   3. The Gender and Development unit was restructured and placed with the PREM network, a more strategic location than where the Unit had been previously;
   4. The new gender mainstreaming strategy was adopted by Bank management and endorsed by the board in 2001;
   5. Creation of the External Gender Consultative Group by Bank president Wolfensohn in 1996 helped to strengthen dialogue on gender-related issues between the Bank, its partners and certain sectors of civil society;
6. The Country Assistance Strategy formulation process was opened up to participation by civil society, including women’s organizations (the result of advocacy by a large number of NGOs around the world, not just women’s organizations);

7. Between 1995 and 2001, the proportion of women in Bank management increased from 12 to 22 percent; and in professional positions, from 28 to 39.5 percent. In addition, efforts were begun to reduce gender barriers in the personnel process, to eliminate sexual harassment, and to help balance work and life responsibilities;

8. Increases were made in the Bank’s investment in girls’ education and health, population and nutrition as noted on page six.

Three or four individuals in Washington-based NGOs became the backbone of the US campaign, with most working on WEOB in addition to their regular professional responsibilities. When they left their respective NGO jobs in 1999, work on the WEOB essentially stopped.

2. Women’s Edge. In 2000, Oxfam America asked Women’s Edge to consider taking up advocacy on gender equality at the Bank after the US coordinator of the Women’s Eyes on the Bank Campaign left her position at Oxfam for a job elsewhere. Through support provided by Oxfam America, Women’s Edge thoroughly researched this topic and began a dialogue with Southern gender activists about advocacy topics of importance to them. This report is the result of that work. The focus of the Women’s Edge coalition is women and macro-economic issues, and it works to ensure that complex international trade agreements do not harm people living in developing countries. Its constituency includes more than 65 member organizations and 2000 individuals on campuses and other key places around the country. The coalition’s diverse membership – from the Christian Children’s Fund to the Feminist Majority – have come together around a common mission to inject women’s economic, social and political rights into US interactions with developing and transitional countries. The organization defines and targets US action broadly; Women’s Edge advocates for women’s rights in global trade, official development assistance and US participation in multilateral organizations. It has established relationships, and the potential to create more, with Southern women’s organizations interested in and active on macro-economic issues.

3. Gender Action. Gender Action is a nonprofit organization established in 2002 to ensure multilateral organizations promote gender equality and women’s rights in all their investments worldwide. Gender Action’s strategies include (1) partnering with Southern civil society groups to convince their governments to mainstream gender concerns into MDB investments in their countries; (2) persuading donor governments to hold the MDBs accountable on gender issues; (3) monitoring and reporting on multilateral progress in mainstreaming gender issues; and (4) conducting gender advocacy directly on the multilaterals. During its initial months, Gender Action has concentrated on engendering PRSPs because of the critical role PRSPs play in country eligibility for multilateral investments and in national planning and budgeting. Gender Action has undertaken PRSP fieldwork collaboratively with Southern partners and direct advocacy with bilateral agencies and other nonprofits. Gender Action has actively participated in the Coalition for World Bank Reform’s advocacy campaign by engendering proposed US World Bank (IDA-13) funding replenishment legislation and conditions. Gender Action also contributed to the Coalition report, “Responsible Reform of the World Bank”.

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4. Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Initiative (SAPRI). This is the most ambitious research and advocacy effort launched by NGOs regarding the Bank’s structural adjustment policies since SAPs were introduced 20 years ago. Immediately after James Wolfensohn became Bank president in 1995, a group of NGOs proposed that a review of SAPs be carried out jointly by the Bank and civil society organizations (CSOs) in the South to help bring them and their constituencies into the economic decision-making process at both the national and global level. SAPRI was run by a global network of NGOs (SAPRIN) and managed by The Development Group for Alternative Policies (D-GAP) based in Washington, DC. SAPRI, which was launched with a global forum at the World Bank in July, 1997 and concluded in 2001, was carried out in six countries (Bangladesh, Ecuador, Ghana, Hungary, Mali and Uganda) and was undertaken in all countries on a tripartite basis by local NGOs, the national governments and the Bank. Several other country studies were done without the Bank’s or national governments’ involvement. (These included El Salvador, Mexico, the Philippines and Zimbabwe.) Joint research in each country was preceded and followed by public fora in order that citizens’ organizations could present their experience with, and analysis of specific adjustment policies that had directly affected their lives and then assess the research undertaken to deepen the understanding of the issues originally raised.

Issues analyzed were chosen by local civil society organizations and then negotiated with the Bank. These included trade liberalization, privatization of public utilities, financial sector reform, labor market reform and impact on workers’ rights, wages and employment security, public expenditure policy, especially health and education, agricultural sector policy, and deregulation in the mining sector. While not specifically focused on gender concerns, the program involved many women in their countries. Reports on the results of the SAPRI work are available, including detailed summaries of participatory analyses of three to four issues in each country in local languages. These reports are an important resource with regard to women. In discussions undertaken in July, 2002 with SAPRIN representatives regarding how the Bank would implement the findings of the research, Bank president Wolfensohn indicated the value of immediately beginning to incorporate a fundamental analysis of the Bank’s economic paradigm in PRSP discussions in the six countries in which the SAPRI process was carried out. As of March, 2003, such a step had not yet been carried out.

5. Work by Women’s Organizations at National Level. Although at present there is no way to systematically catalogue or analyze advocacy by women’s organizations at the national level, Southern women’s groups have been promoting gender concerns to the Bank for many years. Southern women’s groups have long been among those civil society organizations working to convince the Bank to end or significantly alter structural adjustment policies imposed on their countries. They have also been in the forefront of groups urging an end to user fees in health, water and education, which governments have imposed as conditions of certain World Bank lending. ISAAF International in India and the Tanzania Gender Networking Program are two of many women’s organizations advocating these changes. In many instances, women’s groups have been included in the consultative processes with civil society conducted for the formulation of the CAS in borrower countries.

The LAC-WEOB campaign has been the most active effort in a Southern region in recent years. In 2000, the group produced “Equity, Participation and Consistency? The World Bank at Beijing + 5” based on an assessment of 11 Bank-funded projects – primarily in health and
education -- in ten countries of the region. The projects were analyzed in terms of their consistency (World Bank rhetoric as compared with the reality of projects on the ground), gender equity, and participation. The report delineated eight recommendations which then were synthesized as follows:

“In sum, we recommend that the Bank incorporate gender equity into the concept of social equity that it promotes in its reform projects. This requires the development of a standard, well-founded, theoretical framework for gender issues; clear measures to support the advancement of women; and an increase in resources to achieve this. It also requires measures to ensure women’s interactive and informed participation as well as the creation of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure that governments comply with the Bank’s recommendations on gender.” 26

The advent of the Poverty Reduction Strategy process has meant that women’s organizations have begun to be involved in these efforts although, as noted on page 9, participation by women’s groups and attention to gender issues have been inadequate thus far. According to a Bank staffer, the Bank, itself, is precluded from helping civil society groups become involved in the PRSP process.

The UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) analyzed the treatment of gender concerns in the PRSP as part of a comprehensive review of this process undertaken by the Bank and IMF in late 2001. UNIFEM’s comments were drawn from assessments done by NGOs, consultants and national women’s machineries in particular countries, and noted these six points:

- One of the key areas where there is a singular lack of gender dimension in the PRSPs is that of data collection to inform poverty diagnoses, policy development and monitoring and evaluation.

- Gender is not addressed as a crosscutting issue; instead it is often limited to a few specific sectors such as health and education where gender issues are traditionally addressed.

- Gender is rarely addressed in relation to macro-economic and structural policies. These are assumed to be gender-neutral when in fact they are not.

- PRSPs emphasize the market economy at the expense of the household economy, which is mostly female-dominated, based on unpaid labor and has direct contributions to the market economy, especially during business cycle downturns.

- Participation of civil society in the development of PRSPs is often limited, without institutionalized mechanisms that can ensure the views of all groups are actually reflected in the various stages of a PRSP.

- One important omission in PRSPs has been the very limited discussion on violence against women.” 27
Other research undertaken has uncovered additional reasons why gender concerns have not been included in PRSPs thus far:

- Although some participatory processes undertaken to ensure civil society input into preparation of PRSPs have considered gender concerns, the final reports or workshops obscured gender differences by aggregating previously sex-disaggregated data.

- Participants in PRSP writing teams most often include staff from government finance and economics ministries and external consultants, many of whom are insensitive to gender issues.

- Many PRSP stakeholders lack gender mainstreaming skills; they see the process of engendering the PRSP as mysterious; and they find gender discussions largely conceptual rather than practical.

- The PRSP sourcebook, prepared by the World Bank, is seen as impractical to use. The gender chapter, while very useful in terms of diagnostic and monitoring indicators and tools, does not deal with gender advocacy and gives little attention to the need for gender analysis of macroeconomic issues including the national budget which is central to the PRSP.28

Views Expressed by Southern NGO Gender Specialists Regarding Advocacy on Gender at the World Bank

The most influential voices regarding gender issues at the World Bank must be those of Southern women, themselves. However, historically, women in borrower countries have not been given the opportunity to participate adequately or appropriately in Bank policy and project formulation, design, implementation and evaluation. The recent positive steps taken by the World Bank may represent an opportunity to redress this situation.

Women’s Edge conferred with several Southern NGO gender specialists while preparing this publication. Women from Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean provided their views regarding the most urgent issues on which to focus regarding the promotion of gender at the Bank.

These are:

A. The Bank’s promotion of gender equality within the prevailing paradigm of economic reform and globalization;
B. The technical compartmentalization of gender efforts rather than viewing them within the political context of structural inequalities and patriarchy;
C. The Bank’s support of privatization and its impacts on women’s labor, their roles as household consumers, and their well being;
D. The Bank’s focus on economic efficiency rather than empowerment and rights;
E. The emphasis on women as mothers, not as workers;
F. The role of the US in maintaining the current World Bank approach to economic reform and globalization.

Southern gender advocates indicated that the way in which the Bank deals with gender concerns is the most fundamental issue. There are two primary concerns.

1) Most importantly, gender analysis is undertaken within the Bank’s overall strategy to promote the prevailing economic paradigm. Gender concerns are disconnected from the political context, particularly the relations of domination and structural inequalities, including patriarchal structures.

2) The Bank deals with gender concerns in a compartmentalized and technical way.

Southern gender specialists think advocacy should start by questioning the assumptions and values that form the basis of the Bank’s policies, as well as its system for delivering loans to Southern countries. This includes economic conditionality and the process of negotiation of macro-economic policies. In the view of Southern gender specialists, the PRSP is an example of a Bank-led initiative to continue imposition of liberal economic reforms, with official claims for poverty reduction goals and broad-based public participation, coupled with conditionality likely to conflict with national development imperatives and long-term poverty reduction. The negotiation process is conducted for the most part without the full knowledge and participation of affected citizens including women.

Many Southern gender specialists also said that the Bank is promoting gender mainstreaming while it supports macro-economic policies that further the interests of transnational corporations in search of new markets and new sources of cheap labor, thus reinforcing the exclusion of disadvantaged social groups, especially women. Southern women also noted that these policies have led to the removal and/or de-legitimization of public policy instruments for the implementation of social development policies and affirmative action policies, including the Beijing Platform for Action.

Several Southern gender specialists noted Diane Elson’s research regarding the prevailing biases toward male bread winners, the failure to include the reproductive economy within a country’s gross domestic product, and the need to redefine the context for economic planning.

Southern colleagues recommended that US-based advocates need to focus efforts on the six problems noted above. In particular, advocates should consider undertaking the following tasks:

A. Focus on what is wrong with the US position at the World Bank and work to change it;

B. Educate and mobilize significant constituencies in the North in support of issues important to Southern women’s organizations;

C. Lobby for full information disclosure, transparency and genuine participation; Advocates could help with women’s actual participation in the formulation of the PRSP and the CAS, not limited to their monitoring and implementation;
D. Help women’s groups make the connections between macro-economic policies and gender impacts by making the language of macro-economics more accessible and analyzing how the policies affect women in practical terms; capacity building via information exchange, joint efforts to develop simple guidelines or courses on a gendered analysis of macro-economic policy, workshops and joint research; send researchers to particular countries to help document what is going on regarding a particular policy (e.g. privatization);

E. Share important information regarding the Bank with Southern women’s organizations;

F. Help Southern women have access to key staff and EDs at the Bank.

Summary

As detailed in these pages, during the past twenty-five years, the record of the World Bank in promoting gender equality in its policy and operational initiatives has been less than satisfactory. However, the recent steps taken by the Bank, which have been described in this publication, are encouraging. Gender activists in the US and around the world need to seize this opportunity to monitor the implementation of the new gender mainstreaming strategy, both at the country level and globally, to analyze gender impacts of Bank-funded initiatives and to promote as vigorously as possible gender equality and equitable access to resources and power.
Endnotes


2. World Bank webpage, About Us, What is the World Bank?

3. Karen Mason, notes to author, July 18, 2002

4. Ibid, About Us


6. Karen Mason, *op cit*, page 1

7. World Bank, *op cit*, page vi


9. Ibid, page 5 Note: Although Karen Mason, the current director of the Bank’s Gender and Development Unit, indicated in July, 2002 that the 1994 gender policy paper was not a mainstreaming strategy, ‘mainstreaming strategy’ was the term used in the OED evaluation cited here

10. World Bank, *op cit*, page 9

11. World Bank, *op cit*, page 17

12. Ibid, page 24


15. Interview with Maria Correia, January 24, 2001

16. Personal communication from World Bank staff person, March 19, 2002


20. Karen Mason, *op cit*, page 4

21. Interview with Jan Piercy, January 25, 2001


23. Karen Mason, *op cit*, page 1

24. World Bank, *op cit*, page vii

25. Wolfensohn, James, transcript of “Mr. James D. Wolfensohn’s Meeting with SAPRIN Representatives”, July 23, 2002 (Washington, DC, World Bank webpage)

26. Frade Rubio, Laura (ed) “*Equity, Participation and Consistency? The World Bank at the Beijing + 5*”, Women’s Eyes on the World Bank Campaign, Latin American Region, (Alcadeco, A.C., Mexico, June, 2000), page 122


INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED

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