

Gender Balance and Bias:

An initial analysis of gender disaggregated data in social accountability activities

Gender disaggregated data from the Non-State Actors (NSAC) component of the DFGG Project indicate that men and women are engaged in sub-projects in fairly equal numbers. This does not imply however that the engagement of men and women in the subprojects is the same, or that their participation is equal. Men tend to attend more activities which require representation and decision, whereas women participate in, and are often over-represented in, less consequential meetings and events – often more passive in nature. Different types of projects also lead to different levels and quality of participation by men and women. This learning note provides an initial analysis of gender disaggregated data from the activities led by NGOs during 2011.

During the fourth quarter of 2011, gender disaggregated reporting from the grantees of the DFGG NSAC component indicate that 39,709 citizens participated in activities supported and organized by implementing NGOs (gender disaggregated data was reported for 76 activity/sets). Activities varied substantially, including village meetings, trainings, citizen government inter-face meetings, talk-back radio shows, and information campaigns.

Of the total number of registered participants in NSAC activities, 44.5 percent were men and 55.5 percent were women (17,641 men and 22,068 women). Overall, this indicates a satisfactory gender balance, and suggests women were well represented. This representation is generally consistent with NSAC secretariat monitoring of sub-grants, while noting that there is some degree of variation between quarters and that variations are likely in those activities that are not reported.

While this disaggregated data is encouraging, at least in so much as women attended events, the data does not immediately reveal the nature of this participation and how this differs between men and women. When the information reported by NGOs is analyzed more deeply, a number of characteristics and patterns of participation – by men and women – are discernible.

Findings

Levels of attendance of men's and women's participation vary considerably depending on the focus of the social accountability activity. Typically, men's participation is higher in projects that address natural resource management (e.g. fishery, access to water) and conflict resolution, while the rate of attendance by women is

higher for health, education and civil registration related activity. This aligns with understanding of traditional male and female domains. Given that the second grants round (launched after this data was collected) included a particular focus on the monitoring of health and education services, it is reasonable to expect that the percentage of women participating in the projects during 2012 will increase.

The analysis also noted that the gender of the organizers had only a marginal effect on the gender balance of participants. With the exception of the Women's Media Center, which targeted women in their operations, the women organizers of the four organizations in the sample did not appear to attract or encourage greater numbers of women participants.



Because the activities reported by the NSAC grantees are diverse, the nature of participation in different events is not easily compared. In some events, participation equates to "receiving information", while in others participation is more active and requires participants to represent the community in the public sphere. Nevertheless, four broad categories of participation could be identified.

- **Participants as receivers/sources of information.** Women were considerably over represented in activities where they participated as passive recipients of information or passive sources of information (e.g. outreach activities, dissemination meetings, awareness raising campaigns, surveys, and larger trainings). In these types of events, 62.5 percent of the reported participants were women, while 37.5 percent were men (sample 27,758). Of



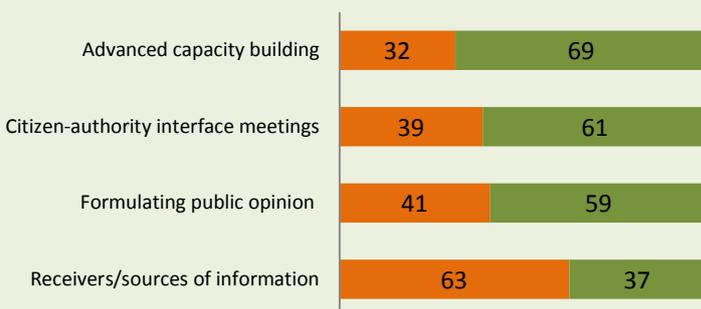
the 16 types of activity sets, women were in the majority in 13.

- Participants formulating public opinion and citizen demands. The balance between men and women shifts when the participation becomes more active and participants had the chance to voice an opinion and/or formulate community responses (e.g. community forums, civil society network meetings, community scorecard rating meetings). Of the 15 types of activities, women were in the majority in only two. Overall, 59 percent men were engaged in this type of event and 41 percent women (sample 2,477).

Participation in DFGG Activities

Component 2: Q4, 2011.

■ Women ■ Men



- Participants in citizen-authority interface meetings. In activities where citizens met with government officials, women were less represented: 39 percent of the participants were women (sample 8,552). Women were in the majority in only four of 29 activities such as community scorecard interface meetings, commune council meetings, public forums.
- Participation in more advanced capacity building of citizens. In the twelve in-depth capacity building events primarily targeted at project volunteers and community leaders, 68.5 percent men and 31.5 percent women participated (sample 787). Although this sample is small and may vary between reporting periods, the data indicates that opportunities to improve skills are dominated by men.

While more women attend less empowering activities requiring less engagement, the proportion of women participating in more empowering activities is still significant, at about 40 percent. Although we should be cautious about drawing general conclusions on the basis of the data examined, the analysis strongly suggests that women's participation is more passive and possibly less

empowering in the first round of NSAC activities. Male participation is clearly in the majority in activities where participation denotes more active citizenship. This finding held even for those activities traditionally considered to be a women's interest and more likely to attract women's participation, such as health and education. Despite these findings, it should be noted that although men are in the majority in activities that involve more active participation (categories 2 and 3), representation of women is still quite high in these types of activities – at 40 percent. Considering the limited role traditionally played by women in public affairs in Cambodia – reflected in the low number of women holding public office – it is still highly likely that the NSAC projects have increased women's access to public spaces and enhanced women's voice in local decision making.

Actions proposed

The analysis also points toward a number of simple strategies that can be adopted to expand the opportunities for women's participation in citizen-government interfaces, in meetings where women are empowered to speak on behalf of the community, and in more in-depth capacity building. These strategies could also encourage men in awareness building activities and surveys to improve the gender balance of dissemination and feedback activities. Four key steps are now envisaged: (i) raising awareness among NGOs regarding the gender imbalances in these projects, and in different kinds of project activities, (ii) providing opportunities for organizations to reflect and share experiences, (iii) promoting the identification of strategies on how to address the bias in active roles for women, and (iv) monitoring and measuring change.

While practical strategies to correct imbalances in representation are important to enhance women's engagement in social accountability activities – they will not on their own ensure empowered and equal engagement. Action is also needed to increase our understanding of the incentives and disincentives that determine the qualitative differences in men's and women's participation – including practical and cultural obstacles. We also need to improve how we measure gender impacts of different approaches to engagement, noting any activity that reinforces existing inequalities. These issues will be addressed in future lesson learning and NGO network meetings in Cambodia.

The DFGG Learning Note Series provides quick summaries of lessons learned in the DFGG reflected in progress reports, workshops and World Bank Implementation Support missions. End evaluations will provide further reflection on these issues.

DFGG Learning Note 4 reflects lessons from the Non State Actor's Component. Written by Andreas Dolk, Program Manager, The Asia Foundation. Janelle Plummer (Series Editor)