

## **Results of the Implementation of the DISCAP Gender Strategy**

### **1. Introduction**

This internal monitoring effort complements a number of initiatives deployed by DISCAP stakeholders and aimed at assessing the progress of the project. This work has been carried out by Grace Yennah, DISCAP Gender and Organizational Development Specialist, and Denise Beaulieu, DISCAP Gender Advisor in July 2005.

The main result expected from this work was to gain a better understanding of the conditions under which activities and output-level results transform into outcomes and on the obstacles faced by stakeholders in ensuring that results attained will be sustainable. The results will provide useful information to better focus the implementation of the gender strategy until the closing of DISCAP.

This monitoring work entailed the collect of secondary and primary data. Secondary data were obtained from several sources, namely internal project documents, the external evaluation report, external literature. Primary data were collected through field visits in three districts chosen on the basis of their different levels of progress with respect to the implementation of district gender equality strategies: Bongo (UER): high integration; Lawra (UWR): average integration; Savelugu-Nanton (Northern Region): low integration<sup>1</sup>. It is interesting to note that Lawra was rated low and Savelugu average before the visits. The visits involved lengthy discussions with the stakeholders and have allowed us a better understanding of the progress, assessed on the basis of conditions and environment. This has led us to modify the rating of these two districts.

In each district data have been collected through focus group discussions with three stakeholders' groups, namely the District Core Staff (DCD, DCE, DPCU); the District Gender Network; and the Water Board. A total of about 50 representatives from DISCAP partner organizations took part in the discussions.

The data analysis was guided by the following issues:

- Sustainability of the results: the transformation of activities and short term results into mid-term results and particularly the use of the individuals' skills acquired through training at organizational level and the capacity of the organizations to absorb and use gender-sensitive frameworks and tools, particularly the issues pertaining to the use of sex-disaggregated data;
- Multiplier effects: a change attributed to DISCAP occurring within organizations or settings that were not targeted by the project;
- Strategies used by stakeholders to address women's basic needs and to promote their strategic interests.

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<sup>1</sup> While before the visits Lawra was rated low and Savelugu average, the visits have led the team to modify the rating and to rate Lawra as average and Savelugu as low.

## **2. Overview of the Key Results Achieved**

This section begins with a reminder of the project's expected gender equality results at outcome and output levels, followed by an overview of key results achieved. The results are presented under each of the four DISCAP components.

### **Expected Outcomes**

- Increased **participation** of women and integration of gender equality concerns in relation to potable water and sanitation decision-making
- Increased **capacity by regional and district level institutions** to incorporate gender-sensitive policies and programs in the planning and delivery of water and sanitation programming.

The results of DISCAP's efforts in mainstreaming gender are presented under each of the four project components.

### **2.1 Strengthen Capacity in Water Supply and Sanitation Management (Series 1000)**

Under this component the members of the Water Boards and of DWST/DWD of the three regions took part in the initial gender training delivered in each participating district. The support provided by DISCAP included coaching to the Water Boards for the recruitment and training of female water operators and for promoting women's participation. The Lawra District (UWR) presents an example of a district where the Water Board has successfully recruited and trained two female water operators (there is a total of five water operators in the district). The female water operators are now perceived as very competent and effective by the users.

This Water Board also implemented some of the learning of the training through the recruitment of seven women to be part of the 15-member board. Each woman is also a member of one of the four committees (finances, utility, administration, education).

In the other districts sampled for the internal monitoring effort, the DWST and Water Board representatives met had taken part in DISCAP training and provided examples of efforts to carry out gender analysis with the community water and sanitation committees and water users.

Overall gender equality issues have been mainstreamed into the training and capacity building activities in which water sector stakeholders took part. Since a large number of training activities have taken place it has proven difficult to track changes in all districts. This precise level of monitoring is part of the challenges of a full gender mainstreaming approach. Ways to overcome these difficulties might include specific questions incorporated into the internal monitoring work or measures aimed at reporting on specific gender results.

## **2.2 Develop District Institutional and Governance Capacity**

### **2.2.1 Gender Desk Officers**

Gender Desk Officers have been appointed in all 16 initial districts and in the 8 expansion districts. They all have attended two gender equality courses: the initial gender equality course and the two-week course on Gender Mainstreaming in Local Government. Overall their level of expertise is perceived as being relatively good by district-level partners.

The GDOs have faced numerous difficulties in establishing themselves in their role:

- Lack of support from administrative and political staff;
- Ambiguous status of their position as the stakeholders are trying to design ways to institutionalize their positions;
- Limited access to funding to support the implementation of the district gender strategies; and
- Limitations related to their lack of influence within government structures.

Our analysis of the sixteen districts initially targeted by DISCAP shows that six districts provide high administrative and political support to the implementation of the GDO model, while support was average in three districts and low in the seven remaining districts. The recent appointment of the DCEs following the last general elections indicates that the political leadership will remain stable for some time while the administrative leadership remains subject to transfers.

The creation of the District Gender Networks has greatly contributed to support the establishment of the GDOs and, in turn, has assisted the members of the network in furthering the implementation of their gender strategies. More than half of the districts have active gender networks and, sometimes, in spite of low support from administrative and political leadership.

### **2.2.2 Development and Implementation of District Gender Strategies**

The adoption of gender strategies by districts has been completed for 22 districts and will be completed in the 24 districts by the end of July 2005. Whereas some progress has been identified with respect to gender mainstreaming into stakeholders' programmes and projects, progress has been slow and uneven in the implementation of the same by district organizations (DPCU and DA, sub-committees etc). This is where the limited influence of the GDOs over decision-making is showing the most. The districts where support is high from administrative and political leadership usually fare better than the others with respect to gender mainstreaming by district organizations. However, in some districts progress in mainstreaming gender has been identified even in the absence of support from the administrative and political leadership. This progress is mainly due to the work of the network. This is true for Lawra and Savelugu-Nanton where the level of administrative and political support is low but where members of the gender networks have been able to make progress, albeit limited and somewhat uneven, in the application of the contents of

the gender training. This progress is reflected in the use of gender-based analysis and in attempts to gather and utilize sex-disaggregated data for some projects.

The use of sex-disaggregated data is restricted to a few organizations applying it to a limited number of their programs. It is a necessary step to institutionalizing gender and its limited use constrains progress with respect to gender equality. This situation is due to a number of factors: lack of incentives, limited resources, limited demand for the sex-disaggregated information, no organizational and administrative framework (policies, rules, tools, routines) to support the collect and use of sex-disaggregated data for decision making purposes.

With respect to women's participation in district assemblies, a number of districts have reported an increased number of assembly women as a result of last elections. Some stakeholders attribute the change to DISCAP's interventions. In a number of districts the GDO and Gender Network have provided support to female DA candidates and members. In Bongo, the GDO has been influential in the appointment of three women to the DA whom had been unsuccessful in their attempts to be elected.

### **2.3 District and Regional Monitoring and Evaluation Capacity (Series 3000)**

Gender considerations have been incorporated into district and regional level monitoring tools.

### **2.4 Support Decentralisation Policy (Series 4000)**

Our ongoing contacts with MOWAC and support to their strategic planning exercise will contribute to this activity as well as the best practices conference planned for October.

The course on Gender Mainstreaming in local government is completed and has been delivered twice and will be delivered again over the next few months. Discussions are currently held to find an organization that could offer the course on an ongoing basis after the end of the project. ILGS has expressed an interest in offering it as part of its regular course offerings.

## **3. Analysis**

### **3.1 Sustainability of Results Achieved**

#### **Impact of Training**

A notable difference was identified between the stakeholders that had completed the two rounds of gender training and those that had completed only the first one or none at all. In the first group it was obvious that individuals had a better understanding of the contribution of gender analysis to their own work and, more generally, to district plans. This was particularly obvious in the case of the district core staff members (budget officers, finance officers, planners, engineers) who attended gender training. The fact

that representatives of a wide range of stakeholders completed gender training has generated broad support for gender mainstreaming at district level and remains key in ensuring the sustainability of our results. There is still a great demand for training on the basic gender concepts from the district leadership, their staff and from the gender network members.

The use of skills acquired through training is constrained by a number of organizational limitations: limited support to staff, limited tools and procedures incorporating gender analysis and lack of organizational incentives. As a result the individuals having attended training try, at their level, to use the new skills but the impact remains a bit limited.

The next phase of capacity building will most likely entail the delivery of on-the-job training in the form of working or coaching sessions on specific topics (use of sex-disaggregated data, programming themes, basic needs and strategic interests approaches to gender equality) or specific support provided to gender networks members to deepen their skills.

### **A Multi-Pronged Approach to Capacity Development**

The multi-pronged approach to capacity development related to gender equality presents heightened potential for sustainability. Such an approach would include building support from core staff, stronger incentives to use gender-based analysis, additional resources to the GDOs for the conduct of key gender-related activities, support to the integration of gender into the medium term district plan. Approaching gender from a variety of angles would distribute responsibility among key stakeholders (GDO, District Assembly members and staff, other departments and NGOs) and as such, would be more reflective of the requirements of sustainable gender mainstreaming. To that effect the sustainability of the District Gender Networks is a key contributing factor to the sustainability of district-level results. The contribution of the network assists in establishing the GDO position as well as in the implementation of district gender strategies. This is critical in several ways: it can provide impetus, support and motivation in the absence of strong support from core staff.

Thus it is key that the training provided be combined to organizational development work to ensure that a conducive environment to the use of those skills will be created and maintained.

### **The GDO Model**

Notable variances have been identified in the level of effectiveness of the GDOs. This is explained by a number of factors. First, as the GDOs all come from other departments they all have to assume another position as they were trying to establish themselves in their GDO role. Several GDOs are teachers, one is a planner and other occupy various positions within the district-level structures (departments, district assemblies) etc... Maintaining two positions is very demanding. The previous position seems to determine the level of support available to the GDO. The establishment of the GDO position relies, at the moment, very heavily on the capacity of each individual to advocate for gender equality. This capacity to influence the course of things is derived from the

relative level of influence that she or he had in a previous position before being appointed as a GDO. In Bongo District there has been notable progress in the mainstreaming of gender into district-level structures. The GDO is a man and is part of the DPCU as a planner. His influence over district plans and budgets is therefore considerable. The fact that the position is occupied by a man also influences positively the progress towards gender mainstreaming. In Lawra the GDO is a teacher. She has been able to reach and engage the network members even in the absence of financial resources to fund meetings. The network members see her as a resource person and they appreciate the support that she is providing to them. In Savelugu-Nanton the GDO was part of the Department of Welfare and she is still occupying that position. As a result, other departments come to her to seek assistance to solve welfare-related problems.

As we can see, the three GDOs visited exercise different levels and types of influence over the implementation of the gender strategy in their districts.

### **3.2 Multiplier Effects**

Multiplier effects resulting from increased expertise of the GDOs have been identified. Other donors and departments and international NGOs are asking for support to mainstream gender and for training their staff and counterparts.

In addition, the development of district gender strategies has created potential opportunities for accessing additional support by the districts for the promotion of gender equality. Several members of gender networks and GDOs have requested help from DISCAP to write proposals seeking external support for the implementation of components of the gender strategies.

### **3.3 Basic Needs and Strategic Interests**

The dominant approach to gender equality in the northern regions districts is one focused on basic needs. Those are the three poorest regions of Ghana and the basic needs and welfare-related problems are enormous. Hence the tendency of district organizations to perceive the GDO as a children and women's issues officer rather than as an officer in charge of promoting women's strategic interests. A number of individual problems are submitted to them which relate, for instance, to child protection and domestic violence issues. This trend is more pronounced in districts where the GDO also occupies the function of welfare officer, teacher or girl child education officer.

There have been some instances where GDOs have addressed such problems through a mix of basic needs and strategic interests intervention. In Lawra the GDO coordinated a brief information campaign on domestic violence with the members of the gender network. In Savelugu-Nanton, the Girl Child Officer involved members of a community in resolving the case of a teenager who had become pregnant and wanted to quit school. If we look carefully we will find many other examples of such creative approaches to very acute social problems. The issue is not how to move from basic needs to strategic

interests but rather, how to incorporate a strategic interests perspective into current approaches.

#### **4. Recommendations**

This internal monitoring work has inspired some recommendations that could be applied to the implementation of DISCAP gender strategy over the last months of the project.

1. The multi pronged approach described above must be pursued whereby support is provided in a number of areas so as to create a conducive environment where results achieved will reinforce each other;
2. Training, coaching and other individual capacity building activities would generate more sustainable results if and when focused:
  - on specific groups of participants;
  - on priority issues such as sex-disaggregated data; basic needs/strategic interests for each sector; how to assist senior staff in providing support to the implementation of gender strategies.
3. Efforts should be made to assess the results of our gender strategy on water sector stakeholders. Since the gender equality aspects have been incorporated into sector-specific activities and given the large amount of training activities implemented, it is somewhat difficult to assess the results of these efforts. However ways must be found to have at least a general idea of such results as it can lead to some under-representation of our efforts.
4. As all GDOs are in different situations it might be a good idea to offer tailor made support to them for the implementation of the district gender strategies. This issue has been discussed during the mission and assistance offered could consist of coaching in the form of district visits conducted by DISCAP Gender Specialist.
5. Assistance offered to MOWAC could be in the form of focused training for specific professional groups, offered in connection with help provided for the implementation of the Three-Year Strategic Plan.