



ADB



Gender Equality Results

Case Studies: Sri Lanka



Asian Development Bank

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Aquatic Resources Development and Quality Improvement Project Loan Nos. 1910/1911

Key Points

Development aims and impacts:

- Women are rarely involved in inland aquaculture-related activities in Sri Lanka and hence direct impact from this project could have been limited. In fishery communities, women's participation is low. There are community-based organizations registered with local government and through which state support programming to improve fishery production is delivered. However, women from target communities expressed great interest in accessing the means to expand potential income-generating activities outside the fisheries sector—women actively sought access to benefits from the project.
- The project has expanded women's involvement in fisheries in some areas, for example, as treasurer of some fisheries societies, and found ways to improve their contribution to household incomes by diversifying their income-generating activities.
- Taking a broader view of livelihood requirements within fishery communities, women's needs can be identified and met, even if they are not directly involved in the sector.

ADB processes and management tools:

- Gender design features were integrated in the project, and a commitment was made to seek ways for women to benefit from the project. A gender focal point responsible for coordinating gender-related activities was designated on the project team.
- Women were encouraged to participate in project activities relevant to areas with potential to strengthen their contribution to the fisheries sector. Commitment to gender was fulfilled by facilitating linkages with non-fishery services and supplemental support for income-generating activities to improve women's contribution to household livelihood.

Project Basic Facts

Loan number: 1910/1911
Loan approval: September 2002
Loan effectiveness: November 2003 and May 2003
Loan closing: June 2010
Loan executing agency: Ministry of Fisheries and Ocean Resources
Overall project costs: \$20M
Financing: ADB/ADF – \$13.8M, ADB/OCR – \$6.2M
Sector: Natural Resources Management, Rural Infrastructure
Gender classification: Effective Gender Mainstreaming

What are the main project aims and approaches?

Fish play a vital role in meeting basic nutritional and livelihood needs in Sri Lanka. Extensive inland water bodies¹ constitute a rich source of food and income for the rural population living in their proximity. However, in 2000, only 12% of the country's fish production came from inland fisheries and aquaculture. The production potential of the freshwater and brackish² water resources had not been optimized due to several factors, including lack of (i) fish seed³ for stocking, (ii) trained extension staff and outreach, and (iii) medium-term credit to finance increased production. An analysis of consumption trends shows a growing demand for fish in both rural and urban markets. Significant opportunities for sale of freshwater fish and aquatic products (such as fish prepared for the export market, ornamental fish, and plants) are therefore emerging.

The approach of the project has been to overcome bottlenecks in fishery production by encouraging community-based management for the improvement of fish stocks and quality as well as marketing through fisheries societies. This should increase incomes and any surplus fish can be consumed by fisher families, thus increasing nutrition levels.

This approach relies on delivery of new aquaculture management technologies and skills through existing and strengthened community-based organizations (CBOs) or groups. In the project region, surveys demonstrated that 91% of households had at least one member in a voluntary organization.⁴ Most full-time fishers are members of fisheries societies already supported by the Small Fishers' Federation with training. Other nongovernment organizations (NGOs) are active in providing services and support to fishing communities, particularly in the areas of small-

¹ Inland water bodies are those not connected to the ocean. In Sri Lanka these may be permanent or seasonal (i.e., accumulate during rainy periods).

² A water body is termed "brackish" when it has more salinity than freshwater, but not as much as seawater.

³ Fish seeds are fertilized eggs, spawn, fry (smallest sized immature fish), and fingerlings (small fish ready for release—usually size of a finger), of quick-growing species of warm and cold freshwater fish meant for development of inland aquaculture.

⁴ ADB. 2002. *Report and Recommendation of the President to the Board of Directors: Proposed Loans to the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka for the Aquatic Resource Development and Quality Improvement Project*. Manila. pp. 42–43.

scale credit, employment generation, and welfare activities. Some provide income improvement activities to women in fishing communities. Fishers using seasonal ponds on their agricultural land tend only to be members of farmers' societies that may have subcommittees dedicated to supporting aquaculture activities.

While membership in a fisheries society provides access to government and NGO-sponsored support, many community members complained in pre-project surveys about not receiving specific support a fisheries society might need such as credit or other subsidies. Concerns about the financial management and leadership of fisheries societies were also expressed.⁵

The goal of the project therefore is to improve food security and reduce poverty, especially in rural areas. The project was structured into five components:

- (i) *inland fisheries and aquaculture development* focusing on expanding the availability of brood stock,⁶ fry, and fingerling through aquaculture and CBO-managed development centers, and hence increasing production of freshwater fish and other aquatic products for the rural, urban, and export markets;
- (ii) *fish quality improvement and marketing* through the introduction of models for processing fish (drying and salting) and developing markets resulting in improved quality and increased consumption of inland fish;
- (iii) *facilitation of increased access* to credit for both larger and smaller fishery operations;
- (iv) *institutional strengthening* of CBOs for co-management of resources and sector-related government agencies (particularly National Aquaculture Development Authority [NAQDA]) to improve the design and delivery of appropriate aquaculture services; and
- (v) *project management*.

What are the key gender equality issues related to project aims?

In Sri Lanka, women are seldom involved in inland fisheries. Only a few women are engaged in capture fishery and, in these cases, only because of their special situations either as female heads of households or because they come from very marginal communities. As there is seldom a surplus of fish, women are not even involved in processing or marketing, as in coastal areas.

With such limited involvement in the sector, women's participation in fisheries societies is low. Some women join or attend meetings to access government benefits that are not necessarily related to fishery activities. As this project strengthened the functioning of fisheries societies, more women expressed interest in attending these meetings. An opportunity for engaging more women in fisheries society management was also identified by encouraging women to collect fishery data and administer the society's finances. Women went on to demonstrate the kind of contributions they could make to improving the functioning of the society and hence achieving project results.

⁵ Ibid., p. 42.

⁶ Brood stock is a group of sexually mature individuals of a cultivated species that is kept separate for breeding purposes.

What was the project plan for involving women and addressing gender disparities?

Given the limited involvement of women in the fisheries sector, only a few gender design features were incorporated in this project. Targets were established for the proportion of women to be encouraged to participate in training activities. Gender-awareness training was provided to staff of NAQDA (the project implementing agency), other sector-related government agencies, and some CBOs. The training with NAQDA encouraged project staff to conduct participatory needs assessments for fisheries societies and other existing CBOs⁷ that included the needs and priorities of women as social mobilization was started.

Implementing NGOs were selected based on a proven track record of gender inclusion in project activities. NAQDA was also encouraged to fill vacant positions by giving preference to hiring women. Three training programs were conducted for NAQDA and other project staff to build awareness of gender dimensions of this project. A staff member of the project management office was designated as the gender focal point responsible for organizing training, coordinating gender-related activities, and advising and monitoring that gender concerns were incorporated into project activities.

Participatory needs assessments conducted in early implementation demonstrated that even among those families living below the poverty threshold, women had time available for additional income-generating activities, but in several areas were unaware of the kinds of activities they could undertake. There was potential for gardens to be used and grasslands were available for livestock, but no extension services had been offered to assist these women. Fisheries societies' members requested that consideration be given by the project to how women could use this available time and available non-fishery resources to bring in additional income for the household.

The project staff encouraged more women to join fisheries societies in a sub-committee, a new idea for fisheries societies. Separate groups were considered best for discussing non-fishery issues, such as potential income-generating activities. Before the project suggested this, women did not attend fisheries societies' meetings regularly, which tended to be dominated by males. Meeting separately gave women more confidence to speak up in public, something they found hard at first when many men were present. With few women interested, the project staff had to come up with topics for discussion that would be seen as immediately useful for women to put time aside to attend.⁸ These fisheries society subgroups have been linked to women development officers who can offer ongoing support for income-generating and other new activities.

The project also encouraged women to assist at the landing sites when large-scale harvesting is taking place, for example, around seasonal tanks or ponds when all fish are harvested at one time. Women can contribute to processing and were given training on drying and salting techniques.

⁷ Many tanks and ponds are primarily used for irrigation purposes, managed by farmers organizations. Where these existed, project activities were coordinated through both fisheries societies and farmers organizations to ensure full community support.

⁸ The staff member responsible for gender activities noted that women were not necessarily interested in attending meetings if they had sufficient income or were from regions where taboos on women going to tanks or ponds remain strong.

With financial management training, women turned out to be fine bookkeepers and data collectors for the fisheries society and now spend time at the fish landing areas recording catches and allocations for fish caught (proportion of surplus to be sold, consumed within the community, and what is processed). Many fisheries societies have appointed women as treasurers where they have proved to be more systematic and accurate in maintaining financial records than men. The project has also encouraged the appointment of at least one woman in each executive committee of the fisheries society.

Early on in implementation, the project team proposed that the target for women's participation in project training be reduced. With limited involvement in fisheries, the training on offer was of little or no interest to women.

By the end of the project, at least 10% of members in fishery CBOs were women. These female members have received training to ensure that they participate actively in tank bund⁹ preparation, pond preparation, fingerling harvesting, and community-based fisheries management. NAQDA and other project partners were also encouraged to run training and other meetings at times convenient for both men and women, boosting the proportion of women attending. Notably 23% of the total number of aquaculturists trained for this project are women, and 25% of them have been sent abroad for further training. Training offered to women (13% of total participants) includes entrepreneurial skills development, inland fishery and aquaculture production and management techniques, simple record and bookkeeping, credit and debt service management, and leadership formation. In total, 21% of those receiving credit through the fisheries society are women.

Despite some success in engaging women in selected aquaculture activities and fisheries societies, the project staff were increasingly faced with demands from women for training in alternative income-generating activities, such as poultry rearing, cattle rearing (where grassland is available), apiary, and sewing. Value chains¹⁰ for these activities were investigated by the project, and potential markets confirmed.

Separate subcommittees for women were formed within 55 fisheries societies (38%) out of the total 145 fisheries societies strengthened by the project, where discussions were held regarding such alternative income-generating activities. However, with no funds allocated within the project budget for these non-fishery activities, support could not be provided. NAQDA staff did assist these subcommittees to apply to other government departments for extension and other support for income-generating activity inputs. However, such support from the government is limited in this region.

After discussions with ADB, an additional Gender and Development (GAD) Cooperation Fund grant was approved to respond to these requests from women, with implementation starting only in 2010. This grant will be used for capacity development and livelihood support for the women's subcommittees of fisheries societies. This demonstrates the willingness of the executing agency to extend its commitment to gender dimensions within project communities, and to seek alternative means to ensure women benefit from investments in the development of their communities.

⁹ A bund is an embankment constructed to control water flow.

¹⁰ Value chains can be defined as interlinked value-adding activities associated with a product or related products that convert inputs into outputs, adding potential return on inputs (value) and help create competitive advantage.

What are the key achievements and lessons?

The experience of responding to the needs of women and men in this project has demonstrated some design features for consideration in new aquaculture projects:

- Specific needs assessments carried out in each region ascertained the potential for women to participate in fishery activities and to identify other needs;
- CBOs need training for recordkeeping to increase the chances of sustainability once a project is completed;
- Gender-sensitive monitoring indicators can be added to assess strength of CBOs and subgroups as they are established, e.g., proportion of women on executive committees making decisions at the district and village levels; viability of income-generating activities at the end of the project;
- Other skills beyond aquaculture need to be offered in training for the executing agency and other partner organizations—especially on social mobilization to strengthen CBOs; and
- A separate portion of the budget can be reserved for gender-related activities to facilitate meeting the needs of women following needs assessments.

North East Coastal Community Development Project Loan No. 2027

Key Points

Development aims and impacts:

- The reduction of poverty and meeting basic needs in conflict-affected coastal regions in the North East through sustainable livelihood support and small-scale infrastructure is the main aim of the project. After the tsunami in 2004 additional grant funds were utilized by the project to reach affected areas using the North East Coastal Community Development Project implementation mechanisms already in place.
- A participatory approach was taken with involvement of small, community-based groups of women and men in the identification of village development plans and the design and construction of small-scale infrastructure.
- Livelihood strengthening was supported through basic inputs (plants, technologies), skills training, and microcredit, primarily for women.

ADB processes and management tools:

- Special measures were taken to ensure women's participation in community-driven planning and decision making. A process monitor tracked this approach to ensure village development plans and small-scale infrastructure selected for support by the project reflected the needs of women as well as men.
- The project's structure of an equal balance of male and female groups within communities, and a target of 30% women participating in district-level steering committees was to ensure women's voices were heard in decision making.
- A gender action plan (GAP) was included in the project design with support provided by the ADB resident mission gender specialist to monitor GAP components during early implementation. The project's commitment to incorporate gender dimensions to their work was strengthened through gender awareness training in all components and through opportunities for project team members to participate in ADB lateral learning events.

Project Basic Facts

Loan number: 2027
 Loan approval: November 2003
 Loan effectiveness: November 2004
 Loan closing: December 2010
 Loan executing agency: Ministry of National Building and Estate Infrastructure
 (formerly Home Affairs, Provincial Councils and Local Government)
 Overall project costs: \$20M
 Financing: ADB/ADF – \$20M
 Sector: Rural Development (multisector)
 Gender classification: Gender and Development (GD)

What are the main project aims and approaches?

The Sri Lanka North East Coastal Community Development Project (NECCDEP) aimed to reduce poverty and meet basic needs in three conflict-affected provinces, by improving sustainable livelihoods and the management of natural resources. The most vulnerable communities were prioritized for support early in the project. The focus was particularly on women, given the high number of households headed by females in the conflict-affected region.

The project has five components:

- Sustainable livelihood improvement component with two major elements. First, sustainable **livelihood improvement** with support such as skills training and microcredit equally accessible to men and women. Second, support at the community level to **meet basic needs through small-scale infrastructure**. Community infrastructure interventions eligible for funding include the construction and rehabilitation of minor roads, culverts, drains, small-scale water supply and sanitation facilities, simple solid waste management schemes, and community buildings (e.g., multipurpose buildings that might include preschool or day care, and space for health clinics and for group meetings). The recipient communities themselves manage and maintain the facilities financed directly by the project.
- Resource management in three special management areas (SMAs)¹ providing assistance to carry out resource mapping and to identify resource management problems (i.e., environmental hot spots) that affect livelihoods and the quality of life at the community level within the SMAs.
- Coastal resource planning component under which a coastal resource management plan for the Eastern Province will be prepared to establish a consistent framework for provincial coastal resource planning and management with relevant local government agencies.
- Fisheries development component supporting the development of a more efficient and productive fishing industry on the east coast by rehabilitating the two major fishery harbor facilities.
- Project implementation support component.

¹ Special management areas have been identified as particularly vulnerable ecological zones requiring specific sensitive environmental planning to promote resource sustainability.

Following the tsunami disaster in 2004, additional Tsunami-affected Areas Rebuilding Project (TAARP) grant funds (approved in early 2005) were also channeled for disbursement through several existing and planned projects in affected districts of Sri Lanka, including NECCDEP under TAARP Component B.

The coastal and SMA resource management and fishery development components were delayed due to the security situation. The focus of this case study therefore is on the design, implementation, and outcomes from the sustainable livelihood improvement component, which illustrates several good practices with potential for replication.

What are the key gender equality issues related to project aims?

The conflict intensified the existing inequitable division of labor in this region, as women have had to take on previously male roles when male family members were forced away from communities. Women noted in pre-project discussions that they feel they are working 15%–25% longer hours than men (taking unpaid household work into account).² Many women are compelled to leave the country to take up employment in the Middle East, but are often stigmatized upon return to their communities. This pressure on women's time and energy was exacerbated by the impact of the tsunami that further destroyed economic resources in this region.

In conflict-affected areas there was a high proportion of households headed by females, with an average of 16% of total households, but up to 54% for individual divisions in Ampara district.³ Widows are particularly vulnerable to poverty in Sri Lanka as they have limited access to economic resources and face social stigmatization as well as personal trauma. Disrupted social relationships and displacement have also increased the incidence of abandonment by men of their families. Many women have been left to support entire families alone without being able to obtain a legal divorce contributing to their instability and vulnerability.

Wage disparities between men and women are marked, due to women being paid less than men for similar tasks, and women not having skills for higher wage activities, such as masonry and carpentry. Women have been encouraged over recent years to undertake home-based enterprises through microfinance-based development programs, but there has been little encouragement to take up skills with a good return on their labor inputs.

Under these difficult circumstances, many women remain primary caregivers for all family members and are responsible for managing household water and food resources. While there is a high level of basic literacy among women in Sri Lanka, in practice traditional patriarchal attitudes limit the interaction of the vast majority of women in the public world of community decision making or commerce. Many women in rural areas have very basic levels of literacy and most women rarely or never frequented local government offices or interacted directly with officials before their involvement in this ADB-supported project.

² ADB. 2003. *Report and Recommendation of the President to the Board of Directors: Proposed Loan to the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka for the North East Coastal Community Development Project*, Appendix 3, p. 25.

³ Ibid.

What is the project plan for involving women and addressing gender disparities?

Social mobilization was a core strategy for the sustainable livelihood improvement component and the most vulnerable communities were targeted. There was an explicit focus on women in the loan design, an acknowledgment that women and men had been affected by the conflict in different ways and recognition of the high numbers of households headed by females in project areas.

A comprehensive gender action plan (GAP)⁴ was included in the loan design with provisions for each component and most outputs. Several strategies were included to facilitate women's participation and ensure that activities identified and responded to their needs. Targets were set for women's participation in all activities including decision making. At least 50% of civil and small-scale community infrastructure activities were to meet women's needs, based on priorities to be identified by women and incorporated in the village development plan (VDP). The GAP required all project-related training to include a module on gender awareness to create a supportive environment for women's participation. Implementation of the GAP was covered in the loan covenants. The GAP also identified gender-sensitive selection criteria for project specialists, implementing partner nongovernment organizations (IP-NGOs), and service providers for the livelihood program.

In addition to special measures to encourage women's participation in planning subprojects funded under the project, voluntary labor was structured so that women could adjust timing around other responsibilities. This meant that women were not sidelined because of domestic responsibilities.

A gender specialist contracted by the project strengthened the capacity of stakeholders to implement the GAP by facilitating gender awareness training and other key measures set out in the GAP. A process monitor was also contracted, and during the first year of implementation identified several communities where women had not fully participated in planning activities. Communities were in great need at the start of the project and initially it was hard to encourage villagers to attend planning meetings. Construction of houses and other basic infrastructure had to be completed before communities could find time to attend meetings. Thanks to reports from the process monitor the gender specialist was able to return to villages with low participation by women to revise the VDPs.

The GAP was revised during implementation because some project activities were delayed due to the impact of the conflict, and because the project team needed to respond flexibly to community needs due to considerable displacement and upheaval. Although not all GAP targets were met, good results were achieved for women especially in the sustainable livelihood improvement component.

What are the key achievements and lessons?

The gender results achieved directly address factors contributing to the gender disparities noted above that have limited women's participation in and benefit from community development activities in the past. The gender results include the following:

⁴ Ibid.

- Of the total 661 community-based groups formed or strengthened under the sustainable livelihoods improvement component, 277 or 42% are women's groups. Where women's groups were formed, they have been registered with the local government so that further support can be sought once the project is closed. The 30% target for the representation of women on district level steering committees was not met, as only 9% of representatives are women. It was suggested that more focused leadership training for women would have been necessary to encourage more women to take up what is considered as nontraditional roles in decision-making positions at the community level.
- Participatory needs assessments were conducted separately for women and their priority concerns brought into discussions regarding VDPs. Of 26,372 beneficiaries participating in developing VDPs, 32% (8,415) were women. During the recent assessment of gender equality results in this project,⁵ women beneficiaries noted that they felt their needs had been reflected in the VDPs.
- Livelihood improvement activities were planned to meet women's needs, although opportunities to introduce women to new less traditional skills were not necessarily taken up by implementing NGOs. A total of 21,539 loans have been processed through groups with 96% (20,790) given to women. A total of 2,552 households headed by females have received credit. Livelihood opportunities have increased incomes for women using the revolving loan funds from the project. The importance of any additional cash income should not be underestimated. Before displacement, these families did not purchase food for household consumption and sold any surplus from their home gardens. Now they cannot feed themselves from household gardens until they are reestablished. Many widows and abandoned women benefited significantly from this component.
- Overall 13,546 people have attended livelihood and enterprise development training programs, of which 57% (7,761) were women.
- Thirty-two percent of the 2,517 civil and small-scale infrastructure projects have addressed women's specific needs (e.g., common wells with easy access to clean water, production centers for new livelihood activities, multipurpose buildings, markets, preschools, and women's shopping complex).
- Women's groups have carried out 171 of 1,987 infrastructure works. Women have even applied new skills from the project to develop and cost bids on other contracts tendered by the local government for small-scale infrastructure. Women's groups now directly take new project plans outside the scope of NECCDEP for consideration by local government offices themselves. Women regularly attend local government planning meetings. These are new opportunities for women, which are highly appreciated. Imbalances between men and women in how decisions are made are therefore being addressed because of project inputs.
- Gender modules were included in all training: with implementing NGOs, project implementation unit staff, local government officers, and village committee members. This training should make it easier for women to bring their needs to community decision-making forums in the future and encourage government officers to continue to prioritize supporting project proposals brought forward by women's groups.

⁵ ADB. 2010 (forthcoming). *Gender Equality Results in ADB Projects: Sri Lanka Country Report*. Manila. Based on fieldwork conducted in September 2008.

What project features contribute to its gender equality performance?

- Close monitoring is necessary during social mobilization to ensure time is taken to encourage women to attend meetings. Other special measures might also be necessary to create a gender-friendly environment so women feel confident to put their ideas forward in public discussions. Awareness raising for men and women within communities may be necessary and additional training for implementing NGOs to make sure that this foundation process is fully implemented and that equal participation brings forward contributions from all members of a community. A process monitor can be instrumental in ensuring participatory objectives are fully met.
- Gender awareness and training conducted for all involved in project implementation have encouraged strong commitment to gender aspects of the project. The GAP itself identifies steps for each project component to maximize women's participation. A few model villages were established early on where a complete set of committees and subcommittees were organized with balanced participation by women and men. A consensus approach was used to ensure needs of both men and women were fully integrated in the VDPs. These villages were used to demonstrate to other communities what full participation by women could produce in terms of information for the VDP and decision-making procedures. This process also demonstrated to project team members the potential effectiveness of full participation in achieving results for the project as a whole.
- Regular support from the ADB resident mission gender specialist also solidified the commitment to the GAP by project team members. Senior project team members attended gender mainstreaming lateral learning events organized by ADB within the region, providing opportunities to present their achievements as well as learn from other similar projects about how to overcome challenges.

Secondary Towns and Rural Community-Based Water Supply and Sanitation Loan No. 1993

Key Points

Development aims and impacts:

- Improved access to safe water and sanitation through a process that actively involves women as well as men and can promote human development as well as poverty reduction is the main aim of the project.
- Social mobilization is structured to develop active male and female community-based organizations (CBOs) within each village, through which leadership and other skills can be developed for both women and men in separate groups. Within groups, needs and options were debated and decisions brought to a village-wide executive body where investments in new infrastructure that directly met their needs were effectively planned and construction managed within the community. Government officers can now facilitate the delivery of programs and services through these groups in response to their specific needs beyond the scope of the project.
- Women have built on skills provided through social mobilization and other project activities to access wider benefits beyond water and sanitation investments, e.g., income generation, and ongoing active engagement in community improvement planning and implementation.

ADB processes and management tools:

- Special measures were taken to ensure women's participation in community-driven planning and decision making. Established targets for women's participation in CBOs were closely monitored and any variation in anticipated gender balance was followed up by implementing nongovernment organizations (NGOs) and project implementation unit staff.
- The project's structure of CBOs (male and female) selecting leading members to sit on apex village decision-making executive committee encouraged the emergence of a new layer of community decision makers that includes women.

- A gender action plan (GAP) was included in project design with training provided by the ADB resident mission gender specialist to elaborate the GAP components during early implementation. This provided impetus for strong commitment to achieving gender-related targets. The commitment was evidenced by the high percentage of women staff in project teams, implementing partner NGOs (IP-NGOs) selected with proven gender experience, and the requirement that IP-NGOs reside within communities to ensure a strong understanding of the social context framing gender issues within each community.

Project Basic Facts

Loan number: 1993
Loan approval: December 2002
Loan effectiveness: August 2007
Loan closing: June 2010
Loan executing agency: National Water Supply and Drainage Board
Overall project costs: \$60M
Financing: ADB/ADF – \$36.5M, ADB/OCR – \$13.5M
Sector: Rural Infrastructure (water supply and sanitation)
Gender classification: Gender and Development (GD)

What are the main project aims and approaches?

The Secondary Towns and Rural Community-Based Water Supply and Sanitation Project aimed to reduce poverty and promote human development by improving access to safe water and sanitation for poor populations in both urban and rural areas.

There were two main project components:

- (i) Urban component: rehabilitated and upgraded drainage systems in several urban areas in Sri Lanka. This component focused on large-scale infrastructure development with little direct involvement with local government or communities. Hence, with no community participation, gender design features were not considered necessary.
- (ii) Rural component: the project financed a demand-driven and community-based program to provide water and sanitation in 124 selected areas of North Central Province. This component provides 322,000 people with safe water and 138,000 with latrines. The following steps were taken:
 - IP-NGOs and local government technical officers provided training and information to communities regarding water source availability, initial capital investment required, and expected operation and maintenance (O&M) costs for each option for investment.
 - The beneficiaries were organized into village-wide CBOs to decide upon the type of system best suited for their respective communities. These

CBOs contributed a minimum of 20% of the construction cost or the entire unskilled labor component, whichever was higher. Special arrangements were made for monetary contributions from poor households to ensure their inclusion in new schemes.

- Following initial meetings, subgroups within the village were organized separately for women and men. These groups reviewed their own water and sanitation needs and debated the options available. These single-sex smaller groups appointed a spokesperson to represent their needs in the larger village-wide (or “apex”) CBO. Hence, a balance of men and women would be involved in the final decision making at the apex CBO level.
- Subprojects covering each small infrastructure were identified, costed, and presented to the local government for approval by the beneficiaries themselves, based on extensive community debates, enhancing ownership of the project investments. O&M plans were also put in place with individual village members appointed and trained for specific tasks.
- This component also included institutional support for the government and CBOs to facilitate planning and implementation in a sustainable manner.

What are the key gender equality issues related to project aims?

In Sri Lanka, women are assumed to be the main beneficiaries of projects improving the supply of water and management of sanitation.

- Women are “traditionally responsible for cooking, cleaning, and taking care of the family and are highly affected by problems associated with water supply...”¹ During dry periods, women have to manage limited resources between household needs and for gardens surrounding their houses. Produce from gardens is an important contribution to food security. Women in the project communities complained that they would have to share water available with other households or walk great distances to find alternative sources.
- Reducing the time women spend fetching water, the burden of carrying heavy loads, and the time spent taking care of children suffering from waterborne diseases are further anticipated benefits.
- For these benefits to be maximized, women should be actively engaged in decision making as the “providers, users, and managers of water at the household level.”²

The rural component of this project, with its community-driven approach to improving water-related infrastructure, particularly lends itself to the full involvement of women. However, given women’s limited experience, it is necessary to facilitate a social mobilization approach that creates a secure environment for debate that includes women’s voices. Therefore establishing separate CBO subgroups for women was important to build their confidence in identifying their needs and prepared women to present their views at the community level.

¹ ADB. 2002. *Report and Recommendation of the President to the Board of Directors: Proposed Loan to the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka for the Secondary Towns and Rural Community-Based Water Supply and Sanitation Project, Report and Recommendation of the President.* Appendix 5, Manila. p. 14.

² *Ibid.*, p. 33.

How did the project plan to involve women and address gender disparities?

ADB has supported three previous water and sanitation projects in this region, and this experience demonstrated the importance of involving women in planning and implementation to improve water demand management and asset maintenance. A concise gender action plan (GAP) was included in the project design with targets and strategies to ensure the full participation of women as implementers, beneficiaries, and decision makers for the rural component as follows:³

- Project facilitators will emphasize the need to have active participation of all at community meetings, which will include 50% participation by women.
- 50% participation in small group activities will be by women.
- Executive committees of the CBOs will be at least 50% women.
- Separate discussions with women's groups will take place regarding the level of technologies and services of the water supply facilities built by the project. If major differences occur between women's groups and mixed or men's groups, the project facilitators will take an active role to prevent women's decisions being overshadowed.

The executing agency was further required to actively recruit qualified women in all levels of the project implementation structure, especially in the rural component. Targets established were as follows:

- 25% of professional and technical level staff working in the project, project management unit (PMU), project implementation unit (PIU), *pradeshiya sabhas*, and counterpart NGOs will be women.
- On the institutional strengthening component, at least 20% National Water Supply and Drainage Board (the executing agency) professionals who participate in the training subcomponent will be women.
- In designing awareness campaigns about water supply and sanitation, the role of women in the household for most of the provision and use of water will be taken into account.

Following a capacity-building workshop by the ADB resident mission gender specialist, a more detailed GAP was developed by the PIU project teams early in implementation.

There was no specific provision for a gender specialist as the staff of the executing agency and PMU/PIU had experienced social and community development staff from previous ADB-supported phases. Nevertheless, the executing agency demonstrated its commitment to the GAP by effectively ensuring a gender mainstreaming approach that incorporates the following features:

- Community organizers and sociologists with gender expertise ensured that participation targets were met, that needs assessment and other activities included women, etc.

³ Ibid.

- The structure of CBOs promoted broad-based participation, with smaller, sex-specific subgroups used to allow individuals to express their concerns and to appoint a spokesperson to participate in the village-wide apex CBO. This apex group made final decisions and submitted water and sanitation subprojects to the local government for approval. Monitoring indicators were developed to track CBO mobilization through various stages, and to ensure women's voices were reflected in decisions made. These indicators were based on securing a gender balance at the apex level executive committee.
- Women's groups—women's development societies—organized through the project were registered with the local government, enabling support to be provided beyond the lifetime of the project.
- Where there was no gender balance in CBO mobilization or decision making, this was followed up assertively by PIU staff at the village level with IP-NGOs and community members.
- Care was taken to ensure that IP-NGO staff included a high proportion of women.
- IP-NGO staff were required to reside in target communities for at least 18 months and carry out detailed analysis of the social and gender factors framing relationships among all community members. This allowed IP-NGOs and PIU staff to anticipate opportunities for and constraints on women's participation within each specific community.
- Income-generating savings and credit programs targeting poor women were instigated so that women could maximize their benefits from time savings and interaction with project initiatives.

Overall, the executing agency demonstrated a commitment to ensuring that women participated fully in the rural component and significant gender equality results were achieved.

What are the key achievements and lessons?

The rural component of the project has completed most of its activities as anticipated.

- Water and sanitation facilities have improved for communities, saving time, improving health, and increasing access to rainwater for food gardens.
- The participation of both women and men under the leadership of the CBO structure mobilized by the project has increased social capital and enhanced the sustainability of infrastructure investments.

The recent ADB Rapid Gender Assessment – Phase II (RGAI)⁴ conducted interviews with selected communities, and women noted that participation in project activities has enhanced their participation more generally in community decision making. Confirming this change, local government officials have been impressed with how women are continuing to come forward and request support for other infrastructure and community improvement schemes. Government officers also noted that one or two women's subgroups have even submitted and won a bid to complete other infrastructure, using their new construction skills.

⁴ ADB. 2010 (forthcoming). *Sri Lanka Country Report for Rapid Gender Assessment Phase II*. Fieldwork was conducted in September/October 2008.

Targets from the detailed GAP were all achieved and qualitative benefits for women and men were noted in all rural components.

- *CBO membership*: From 36,282 members, in one district 45% were women compared to 51% men, and in another, slightly more women were mobilized with 52% women compared to 47% men. The CBO executive committees also met gender balance targets. Women continue to attend local government meetings to voice concerns as programming and budgets are discussed.
- *Infrastructure completed* have improved the quality of life for families, particularly for women who report more access to safe water, and more time to care for families and generate income. No data on changes in health status following project activities are yet available.
- *Women's participation in project activities*: 65% women participated in 400 health and hygiene programs, 98% in 350 income-generating programs, and 60% in construction training.
- *Forum of women's associations*: To enhance sustainability of women's CBOs, these associations were formed in each local council area, and support through this mechanism was encouraged from various government agencies sitting on a task force chaired by the National Water Supply and Drainage Board. As women's CBOs are now all registered with the local government, they can continue to access government anti-poverty and other programs and services.
- *Income-generation schemes*: The project staff noted the importance of offering additional support to women to maximize their benefits from additional time available. Small revolving loan funds were made available to interested women's subgroups and some skills and business training was offered. Women noted that this was a useful additional component to the project, but that the scope of the funds available did not offer potential for more than small-scale, household-based income generation. More consideration might be given in the future to making such an add-on component more viable. This might require accessing additional microfinance programs from the local government, or monitoring more closely how income activities are progressing.

Power Sector Development Program Loan 1929/1930

Key Points:

Development aims and impacts:

- Rural electrification has the potential for whole communities to benefit from improved incomes, time savings, and overall improved living conditions (less airborne pollution, longer study times, and improved nighttime security in communities through public lighting).
- Potential benefits for women can be even greater such as significant time savings and reduced work burden freeing up time to improve women's quality of life by improving skills, relaxing with family, and generally reducing daily stress.
- While basic rural electricity coverage has to be expanded through investment in transmission and distribution networks, it is important to "go beyond the meter" to ensure connectivity of poor households including households headed by females.

ADB processes and management tools:

- Accompanying Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction (JFPR) grants (Power Fund for the Poor and Post-Tsunami Utility Connections for the Poor) ensured that the poor and marginalized—including households headed by females—could access electricity services.
- Awareness programs and training sessions with the Ceylon Electricity Board and nongovernment organizations in the region were used to build the capacity of key institutions to ensure that the poor and marginalized can access connections and means to sustain connectivity despite low incomes.

Project Basic Facts

Program and project loan: 1929/1930	Financing: ADB/ADF – \$70M;
Loan approval: October 2002	government, CEB, and consumers
Loan effectiveness: November 2002	– \$37.9M
Loan closing: April 2010	Sector: Energy
Overall loan totaling: \$130M	Gender classification: None

Program loan

Executing agency: Ministry of Finance (MOF)
 Program loan costs: \$60M (from OCR)
 Sector: Energy
 Gender classification: None

Associated with:

JFPR 9045: Power Fund for the Poor
 Financing: JFPR – \$1.5M
 Grant approval: April 2004
 Grant closing: 31 March 2008

Project loan

Executing agency: Ministry for Power and Energy (MOPE) and implemented by Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB)
 Overall project costs: \$107.9M; \$70M from Special Funds resources

Associated with:

JFPR 9077: Post-Tsunami Utility Connections for the Poor
 Financing: JFPR – \$2.0M
 Grant approval: October 2005
 Grant closing: November 2007

What are the main project aims and elements?

The poverty reduction framework¹ of the Government of Sri Lanka notes the importance of rural electrification: “Without access to electricity, rural areas cannot host the industries and other off-farm income-generating activities that are essential to a pro-poor process of structural change.” Electrification has the potential to enhance the scope for productive off-farm income-generating opportunities enabling the poor to diversify income sources, reduce risks, and benefit from other development inputs important for poverty reduction, such as clean water, sanitation, health, and education. Electricity means longer business hours for the local stores, improved security with public lighting, and enhanced social interaction in the village.

In response to the government’s electrification objectives, the goal of the Power Sector Development Program (cofinanced by the World Bank and ADB among others) is to provide 80% of the country’s population with electricity by 2010. ADB is supporting two main aspects.

First, the program loan will

- establish an independent regulatory and tariff-setting mechanism;
- enhance sector efficiency by introducing competition and commercialization; and
- encourage private sector participation in the sector by developing an enabling, transparent business environment.

¹ Government of Sri Lanka. 2002. *Connecting to Growth: Sri Lanka’s Poverty Reduction Strategy*. June.

Second, it will also address the drain on national resources arising from the financial deterioration of the state-owned utility, Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB).

The project loan provides assistance to investments in rural areas in the form of new distribution lines and connections as well as improvements in the existing rural transmission and distribution network through three components:

- Part A: 600 rural electrification subprojects all over the country that will provide or expand electricity supply in about 820 villages housing 112,500 consumers.
- Part B: Strengthen CEB's distribution networks including 33-kilowatt development lines and express lines.
- Part C: Transmission lines and substations to transport electricity from the generation stations to the rural areas.

While all households benefit from the potential higher economic activity in each community, many poor households miss out on the direct benefits because of their inability to afford the up-front connection charges and internal wiring costs. The rural electrification component of this project offers the potential to incorporate pro-poor, social and gender equity-related aspects as it concerns distribution activities. Steps can be taken to ensure all households can access electricity through targeted support for those who might otherwise be marginalized.

To address equity concerns, the ADB loan was complemented by two associated Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction (JFPR) grants for Sri Lanka: Power Fund for the Poor and the subsequent Post-Tsunami Utility Connections for the Poor.

The Power Fund for the Poor piloted a sustainable microfinance revolving fund that allowed poor households to amortize the up-front capital costs required to electrify their homes. A training and public awareness program supported the microfinance scheme helping the CEB and participating microfinance institutions to better address the needs of poor rural clients in obtaining and maintaining electricity services. The lending arrangements between the microfinance institutions and the target communities were tailored to local conditions. For example, flexible repayments were arranged taking into account seasonality or group lending arrangements to guarantee individual loans.

Following the tsunami, the Post-Tsunami Utility Connections for the Poor grant was also put in place to assist poor households reconnect to the grid and water services once their homes were repaired or rebuilt. This grant consisted of two main components:

- Part A: Grant to households; and
- Part B: Awareness creation to enhance targeting and sustainability of connections, and to establish a grant structure and criteria for beneficiary selection.

What are the key gender equality issues related to project aims?

While the direct benefits of access to electricity services may appear to be gender-neutral, impacts are intrinsically biased in favor of women as primary managers of traditional energy sources. Women benefit in terms of reduced workloads and more

secure incomes, time savings from no longer seeking traditional biomass sources, improved security, and reduced exposure to indoor air pollution. Modern energy services can therefore potentially impact on gender imbalances if access to destitute and marginalized households, such as those headed by women, is assured.

In conflict-affected areas in Sri Lanka, where access to electricity is lower than the national average,² women disproportionately head households either as war widows or where male family members have left to seek work or have disappeared. In these regions, compared to national averages, incomes are lower, unemployment is higher, as are rates of child and maternal undernutrition rates. Women, particularly as household heads, bear a disproportionate share of the burden of ensuring household survival under these conditions.

A 2003 World Bank-funded study of the impacts of rural electrification in Sri Lanka on poverty and gender found that the major benefit for women was in time saved—80% of those women interviewed reported to have saved 1–2 hours a day on household activities and travel related to meeting energy needs.³ The JFPR Post-Tsunami Utility Connections for the Poor Implementation Completion Memorandum noted that in project areas, most households depend a good deal on the incomes of women because fishery activities are unreliable.⁴ Other potential benefits include children being able to study for longer hours.

However, given the high proportion of female heads of households living below the poverty line, the overall economic and human development resulting from electricity services will benefit women favorably only if they can meet costs for initial connection. Households with low cash resources may be more reluctant to fall into debt to finance connection charges. Given the pressure on the time of many poor and marginalized women in these communities, it may be difficult for them to attend meetings and to become aware of the programs available to assist in connection. Furthermore, awareness regarding potential benefits, safety standards, and broader benefits may be lower among women in such communities.

What plans were incorporated in project and related grants for involving women and addressing gender disparities?

Although there is no specific gender strategy, initial poverty and social assessment for the proposed project studied how benefits of electrification would flow to nonpoor, and less directly to poor, consumers. Poor households were unable to connect largely because they could not finance the up-front connection charges and internal wiring costs. The CEB offers an amortized loan scheme to encourage poor households to connect but proof of ownership and other criteria can block access for the most marginalized, including women. Formal requirements to access loan facilities, transaction costs, and other social obstacles tend also to restrict poor households from obtaining funding through commercial banks.

² 65% of households are connected to the grid in the Eastern Province compared to the national average of 73% of households.

³ Energia 2002: *Asia Alternative Energy Program of the World Bank: Energy, Poverty and Gender Work*—Sri Lanka. From Energia News Volume 5, number 3, 2002. p. 5.

⁴ ADB. 2008. *SRI: Post-Tsunami Utility Connections for the Poor*, Implementation Completion Memorandum. para. 19.

To help poor households obtain access to electricity services, the Sri Lanka JFPR Power Fund for the Poor established a revolving fund to finance the electricity connection costs for poorer households. The fund has re-lent at interest rates that encourage poor people to avail themselves of electricity. A sustainable microfinance scheme that allowed poor households to amortize the up-front capital costs was designed to encourage access to the potential benefits from electrification. Training and public awareness programs were also held to strengthen the capacity of participating microfinance institutions and the CEB to ensure those more in need of assistance could access the credit.

A publicity consultant was also part of the team tasked to design an awareness campaign that considered gender aspects when developing and carrying out direct campaigning to female heads of households and female users of utilities. The public awareness campaigns and participatory strategy were covenanted under the loan agreement.

What are the key achievements and lessons?

As a supplement to the achievements of the main project, the accompanying JFPR grants contributed the following pro-poor results addressing potential marginalization of women:

- (i) JFPR 9045: Power Fund for the Poor disbursed SLR90.0 million enabling 6,690 village households to complete their house-wiring and obtain CEB grid wire connection. A further SLR3.9 million was also disbursed for the benefit of 262 households. Based on monitoring after electrification from a baseline survey, households demonstrated that the quality of life, social status, security, and economic conditions of families were improved.⁵

Key lessons of the project include

- nonparticipation of some eligible households point to the need for improved pro-poor targeting;
- need for demand-driven interventions focusing on end users; and
- importance of involving experienced NGOs in project implementation and to promote civil society partnerships with government agencies and power utilities in the energy sector.⁶

- (ii) JFPR 9077: Post-Tsunami Utility Connections for the Poor completed 9,415 utility connections (both water and electricity). The target was 8,812.⁷

The lesson of the project was that the financial assistance instruments to improve affordability and increase access to energy services should be context-specific. In disaster-affected areas, as was the case with the Post-Tsunami Utility Connections project, grant funding for the utility connections of poor households, especially those headed by women, have proven to be necessary and successful. In the context in which the Power Fund for the Poor project

⁵ ADB. 2007. *JFPR Power Fund for the Poor, Project Administrator's Final Report*. July, p. i.

⁶ A final report on benefits and impact assessment has been prepared by the Energy Forum for ADB.

⁷ ADB. 2008. *JFPR: Post-Tsunami Utility Connections for the Poor, Implementation Completion Memorandum*. p. 5.

was implemented, the low-credit revolving fund was appropriate, a finding also supported by reports that loan repayment rates were high.

In post-project/grant survey reports, beneficiary satisfaction included the following:

- improved living conditions as some wells had been contaminated by saltwater prior to the tsunami;
- improved standard of living with support for small household industries, better utilization of productive time, more study time for students, and increased safety in the home as kerosene lamps were no longer a hazard;
- improved working conditions for women;
- decreased cost of living as using electricity than kerosene was cheaper to meet energy needs; and
- reduced illegal tapping of electricity.
- both JFPR grants reported unmet demand from the project villages due to the small size of the grant, the limited period, and non-availability of mainline supply in some areas.⁸

Other critical pro-poor, social, and gender-related aspects of recent projects include the following:

- (i) Clean Energy and Access Improvement Project and the attached technical assistance on Rural Household Connectivity (piggy-backed to loan 39419-01) that build on the results from JFPR 9045 by expanding the outreach of the microfinance revolving fund;
- (ii) JFPR: Promoting Improving Gender-Inclusive Access to Clean and Renewable Energy with respect to the Sri Lanka–financed activities. This grant reiterates the need for “free connection” for targeted households in the conflict-affected Ampara district, especially households headed by women, disabled people, and other vulnerable groups while at the same time introducing the need to enhance CEB training skills and service delivery in the Eastern Province through additional activities. The strategy will include (i) electricity-related skills training for 450 women, (ii) energy-related livelihoods training for local communities with a target of 30% women’s participation, and (iii) a gender-sensitive user-education program with women motivators to raise the awareness of newly electrified households (estimated at 12,000) on the safe and efficient use of electricity. The national NGO will support the implementation of these activities.

What else could we look at when assessing results?

- Women make a vital contribution to household incomes, particularly in the case of households headed by females. At the same time, women are vulnerable to being marginalized from development activities. Tracking whether women are able to access electrification inputs can ensure equitable economic benefits from such projects and maximize the effectiveness of investments.
- Other benefits for women (improved security, improved safety for children, more time available, and improved health) are assumed, but if tracked through indicators in a project design and monitoring framework any constraints on results could be promptly addressed.

⁸ Ibid., p. 7.

About the Asian Development Bank

ADB's vision is an Asia and Pacific region free of poverty. Its mission is to help its developing member countries substantially reduce poverty and improve the quality of life of their people. Despite the region's many successes, it remains home to two-thirds of the world's poor: 1.8 billion people who live on less than \$2 a day, with 903 million struggling on less than \$1.25 a day. ADB is committed to reducing poverty through inclusive economic growth, environmentally sustainable growth, and regional integration.

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