

DFID

Department for
International
Development



GENDER EQUALITY AT THE HEART OF DEVELOPMENT

Why the role of women is crucial to ending world poverty



Women and girls carry water from a well, Mali. Dieter Telemans/DFID

This publication is about making a difference. It's unacceptable that women and girls continue to face discrimination in their everyday lives; discrimination limits the choices they have, the freedoms they enjoy, and the contribution that they can make.

I want the UK to be at the forefront of putting women's rights and their freedoms at the heart of development. We know from experience, and from the UK's own history, that where women have equal chances in education, work or in politics, they make a real and lasting difference, one that benefits us all. This booklet sets out what we'll do and invites you to help us.

Hilary Benn
Secretary of State for
International Development

Unequal and unfair

The world is unequal and it is most unequal for women and girls. Most of the poorest people in the world are women and part of what makes them poor is the discrimination they face purely because of their gender.

These are the girls whose brothers go off to school in the morning while they stay at home to fetch water or work around the house.

They are the women who do the same jobs as men but get paid less, or whose wages go direct to a husband or a father. Or the women who are not allowed to get a job at all.

They are the women who are beaten, raped and infected with HIV and AIDS, the mothers who die in childbirth, the girls who are trafficked to be sold as a sexual commodity.

And they are also the activists who long to change the laws and traditions that deny them their rights, but are forbidden from taking part in any decision-making.

The dice are loaded against half the human race.

In rural Africa it is women – not trucks, not trains, not planes – who carry two-thirds of all goods that are transported.

In Southeast Asia, women provide up to 90% of labour for rice cultivation.

In India, Nepal and Thailand, fewer than 10% of women farmers own land.

In sub-Saharan Africa, women produce up to 80% of basic foodstuffs. But a survey of credit schemes in five African countries found women received less than 10% of the credit given to male smallholders.

This is the reality of a world that is too often stacked against women.

Equality is right *and* it works

But just as real is the fact that we cannot end poverty until women have equal rights.

Because, while the argument for gender equality is a moral one – the denial of human rights because of a person's gender is wrong – it is also a pragmatic one.

That's because whenever there is progress in rights for women other things change for the better. For example, when a girl is able to go to school, she transforms her future prospects for employment and earning money. But she also

learns about hygiene and disease, lessons she can take home to her family. She learns to wash her hands before cooking or that water must be boiled, at a stroke reducing the everyday incidence of disease and death.

And we need faster progress on equality for women if we are to achieve the Millennium Development Goals – equality has to reach into education and employment, into health-care, and politics and it has to challenge traditions that expose women to disadvantage, disease and violence.

Gender equality can and must reach into all communities in all countries. This booklet tells the story of what the UK is doing to help bring about equality for women and, in the process, hasten the end of poverty.

Equality – a right not a luxury

Gender equality is not a complicated idea. It's simple: women must have the same rights as men and discrimination has to stop.

To people in the UK it is unthinkable that a local authority could tell us there was no place at a school for a child of ours, simply because she was a girl. It is hard to imagine being turned away from an election voting booth on the grounds of our gender. And, just as such discriminatory practices are unacceptable to

us in the UK, they cannot be acceptable in countries with whom we are working to support development.

The stability, growth and sustainability of economically prosperous countries depends on equal rights. But cultural and social traditions bolster everyday discrimination in developing countries. The end result is that women, who could be helping to overcome poverty in country after country, are denied the opportunity to make that difference.

There is no doubt that when women gain equal rights with men, development is transformed. For example, educated girls have better opportunities to earn higher wages and to participate in community life and in decision-making. They are better informed about health risks such as HIV and AIDS. They tend to marry later, have fewer, healthier and better-nourished children and are more likely to send those children to school.

“Gender equality is not a complicated idea. It's simple: women must have the same rights as men and discrimination has to stop.”



Woman and child outside maternity clinic, South-eastern Ghana. James McNulty/DFID

Learning curve

40% In Africa, children of mothers who have spent five years in primary education are 40% more likely to live beyond the age of five.

50% An educated woman is 50% more likely to have her children immunised.

7 YEARS In Africa, Asia and Latin America, women with seven or more years of schooling have between two and three fewer children than women with less than three years of education.

Power and politics

Democracy promotes development. It gives a voice to the poorest people and it gives them a say in political and social reform. And women play a critical role not just in promoting human rights and fighting poverty but in peace-building.

Elections are the best chance to hear the voices of women and boosting the number of elected women helps improve the quality of political decision-making. Maybe this is not surprising; after all including women brings greater diversity and experience to the decision-making process. Conversely, politics is devalued without women.

Moving towards democracy without moving towards equal representation of women is not becoming democratic. When groups are discriminated against and denied access to politics, they and their communities are liable to abandon hope in the possibility of political change.

A power for peace

Research in central Africa shows that peace agreements, post-conflict reconstruction, and governance do better when women are involved. Women adopt a more inclusive approach toward security, and address social and economic issues which would otherwise be ignored. In Uganda, the women's peace movement uses networking to share common experiences among disparate regions. They also offer training in conflict resolution and trauma counselling within families and in community disputes – which has successfully reduced violence.



Women calling for international help outside the US embassy, Monrovia, Liberia. Jacob Silberberg/Panos Pictures

How the UK Government is working to promote gender equality

The UK Government has had a longstanding commitment to working towards gender equality. Our detailed approach is set out in the document *Poverty Elimination and the empowerment of women* and in our new *Gender Equality Action Plan*, but what we are doing is also explained in a range of other policy documents such as those on conflict, girls' education, maternal health, conflict and HIV and AIDs¹.

The 2006 Department for International Development (DFID) White Paper, *Eliminating World Poverty: making governance work for the poor* commits DFID to do more to promote women's rights. It recognises how critical it is to help women fulfil their economic potential, to help girls enrol and stay in school, and to tackle the social and cultural discrimination that prevents women accessing health care. It builds on existing commitments in our strategies on girls' education, HIV and AIDS, and maternal mortality by committing greater spending to improve women's access to services.

And we are improving the support we provide to developing country partners so that they can ensure that the rights of women are integrated

in national plans. Partner governments need to understand the impact of gender inequalities and commit to positive change.

DFID: making gender equality a priority

DFID is making progress in making gender equality a priority across its work. From girls' education to microfinance, from HIV and AIDS to conflict resolution, and from maternal health to boosting the political participation of women, equality for women is at the heart of our work.

There have already been some real successes and millions of women and children have transformed their own lives, and those of their families and communities. From simple things like putting toilets in schools so that girls are able to get an education, to supporting projects that get more women into positions of political power so that they can be part of making the decisions that affect them.

But we need to do more and we need to do it now. We will build on these successes to make sure that women and girls are at the heart of all of our development work – where they should be.

¹ *Preventing Violent Conflict (2007); Girls Education: a better Future for All (2005); Reducing Maternal Deaths: evidence and action (2004); Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (2004); Taking Action: the UK's strategy for tackling HIV and AIDs (2004)*



Girls sit in a classroom in the village of Koutagba. Jacob Silberberg/Panos Pictures

Education gap

1/2

More than **half** of the world's out-of-school children are girls, and seven out of ten live in sub-Saharan Africa or South and West Asia.

76%

Literacy levels in developing countries have increased from 70% to **76%** over the past decade and the gender gap is narrowing. However, women still account for almost two-thirds of the estimated 780 million people in the world who are illiterate.

96%

Girls' enrolment in primary school (as a proportion of boys') improved from a global average of 88% in 1991 to **96%** in 2004, and in 100 countries gender equality has already been achieved at primary level.

77m

But more than 77 million children of primary school age do not attend school and for every 100 boys not attending primary school, there are **133 girls** in the same situation.

Educating girls

DFID has pledged to take an international lead on girls' education in our strategy paper *Girls' Education: towards a better future for all* (2005).

We are supporting countries so that they can:

- make primary education free (a significant factor in getting girls into school);
- train teachers;
- develop curriculum;
- tackle abuse and violence towards girls;
- provide clean water supplies and sanitation facilities.

DFID is working with UNICEF as a part of the UN Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) to ensure stronger collaboration and co-ordination between all those governments and organisations working for this at both international and country level.

Power and politics

DFID's £26 million support in Nigeria for the UNICEF Girls' Education project in six northern (predominantly Muslim) states, where girls were less likely to go to school than boys, has increased girls' enrolment by 10-15% in just one year. Success was boosted by including ways for communities to become involved in their children's education. The Nigerian Government regards this as a flagship project and intends starting similar projects in other states where girls miss out on education.

Growth in Ghana

Ghana has almost achieved gender equality in primary schools and is working towards similar levels in secondary schools. DFID has provided financial support to the Ministry of Education for seven years, leading to a jump in the enrolment of girls in primary schools. We are committed to supporting Ghana's ten-Year Education Strategic Plan with £105 million.

Yakuba grew up in a large, polygamous family in Ghana. Her father had 11 children by five women. Her mother paid her school fees by working as a woodchopper but could not afford to buy her a uniform. After her mother lost her job, her father, a mechanic could not afford to pay the fees. But after learning about a vocational school run by CAMFED International (an NGO with whom DFID works), Yakuba began carrying firewood herself, providing the money to pay fees and buy a uniform.

Poverty, she says, is a fundamental factor in access to education. In her last school "Out of 56 students only 15 were able to complete school due to a lack of teachers and equipment".



Newborn baby, Orissa, India. Ami Vitale/DFID

Life and death

99%

Somewhere every minute a woman dies from complications in pregnancy or childbirth. Of these deaths **99%** are in developing countries.

15-19

Complications in pregnancy or childbirth are the main cause of death for girls aged **15-19** in the **developing world**.

600

A woman in Sierra Leone is **600** times more likely to die in childbirth than a woman in the UK.

Improving maternal health

DFID's Country Assistance Plans include a commitment to reduce the risk of death of mothers in childbirth and to improve sexual and reproductive health.

DFID also makes significant contributions to the maternal health programmes of the European Commission, the World Bank and international and national civil society groups. And we collaborate with UN health and development agencies such as the WHO, UNFPA and UNICEF.

Thirteen per cent of all maternal deaths are a result of unsafe abortion. In February 2006, DFID committed £3 million to the Safe Abortion Action Fund developed by the International Planned Parenthood Federation which aims to reduce these deaths. We have also encouraged other donors to contribute.

DFID support to maternal health services through its partners in government, the UN, civil society and the private sector contributes to lasting improvements in women's health. Countries know what to do. We need to assist them to do more.

“Thirteen per cent of all maternal deaths are a result of unsafe abortion.”

Safety first

In Bangladesh, improving maternal health is one of the main objectives of a new £2.2 billion health programme, to which DFID is contributing £100 million over five years.

At the Matero Health Clinic in Zambia, DFID funds have been used to extend existing facilities – two wards have been built. It is one of eight clinics in the capital city Lusaka where DFID money has been used in this way. Despite a very high national maternal mortality rate and a chronic shortage of midwives, the clinic has recorded great success in keeping women alive both during and immediately after giving birth.

With midwives handling an average of 50 births a week at the clinic, there was only one death in 2004, and none in the first half of 2005. This remarkable success has been achieved by providing extra training for midwives and putting in place a computerised wireless system that links the clinic to Lusaka's main hospital, ensuring that patients' records travel with them to the hospital.

DFID has committed up to £90 million over five years for a new National Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health Programme in Pakistan which will expand maternal and newborn care and support family planning services. DFID is also providing £7.5 million (2003-08) to a programme providing contraceptives. Our support has been instrumental in securing approval for the Government of Pakistan's own investment in this programme, and helped get agreement from the Norwegian Government to invest in the programme.

“DFID is also providing £7.5 million (2003-08) to a programme for the provision of contraceptives in Pakistan.”



An HIV positive AIDS counsellor advises an HIV positive mother about pre-natal healthcare. Andhra Pradesh, India
Chris Stowers/Panos Pictures

Women bear the brunt

17.3m

About 17.3 million of the 38.6 million people living with HIV are women, more than ever before. And women are now infected at a higher rate than men.

15-24

In sub-Saharan Africa, women aged 15-24 are more than three times as likely to be infected with HIV as young men.

Fighting HIV and AIDs

The UK approach for tackling HIV and AIDS in the developing world puts women, young people, children and orphans at its heart.

We aim to prevent infection among women and girls, reduce violence against women, ensure equal access to treatment and care, promote access to new prevention options, and ensure women's access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, education, employment and social protection.

Education of girls is vital and is sometimes overlooked: education is like a 'social vaccine' against HIV. Girls who stay in school are more likely to know about condoms, persuade their partners to use them and less likely to become HIV positive. In Swaziland, for instance, two-thirds of teenage girls in school are free from HIV, while two-thirds of girls out of school have HIV.

The UK is working to get more money channelled towards tackling HIV and AIDS, and to get better policies and co-ordination among donors with:

- **One** agreed HIV and AIDS action framework;
- **One** national AIDS coordinating authority;
- **One** agreed country-level monitoring and evaluation system.

Investment in prevention

Microbicides – Since 1999 the UK has committed £50 million to support research into the development of microbicides. These are substances which women can apply in the form of a cream or gel before they have sex and which protect against sexually transmitted diseases. Microbicides could be particularly useful for women who are unable to insist that their sexual partner wears a condom.

Vaccines – In 2004, the G8 group of developed countries endorsed the Global HIV Vaccine Enterprise to accelerate research and development of an effective HIV vaccine. Since 1998 the UK has committed £18 million to the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative. In December 2005 an additional £20 million was made available over the next three years.

“Education of girls is vital and is sometimes overlooked: education is like a 'social vaccine' against HIV.”

South Africa – breaking the 'triple threat' to development

IMAGE is a groundbreaking DFID-supported trial programme which combines microfinance with gender and HIV education. It has contributed to a 55% drop in violence by men against their partners, a key factor in HIV transmission, among a group of poor South African women.

South Africa has some of the highest rates of HIV infection in the world – over 22% of sexually active adults. It also had the highest burden of rape in the world – with over 55,000 reported cases last year alone. Rural women are at high risk of HIV because their social and economic circumstances limit their opportunities and life choices.

The women are offered access to microfinance, so they can set up businesses and become economically self-sufficient, and gender and HIV education, to help them better negotiate sexual relationships and challenge negative attitudes within the community. This is the first time that the links between poverty, violence and HIV – the so-called 'triple threat' to development – have been explored in this way. The trial is the first in Africa to have found a link between this approach and a reduction in levels of intimate partner violence.

The IMAGE Project, South Africa





Market day in rural Tanzania. James Hole/(DFID)

Women at work

Women play a pivotal role within local and family financial networks. DFID's experience – backed by worldwide evidence – shows that investing in women with low incomes results in significant social and economic benefits for everyone.

DFID helps women access financial services including savings accounts, small loans, insurance and remittances. Savings can help women to invest in productive assets like livestock; loans can help them develop business activities; and insurance can provide income for a family if the breadwinner becomes sick. Women often lack access to cash and therefore find it difficult to access formal financial services such as banks. In many cases they are forced to rely on money-lenders and other unregulated sources of financial services, which can be extremely costly and may result in exploitation. DFID works to improve the regulations for financial services to make sure poorer customers are not exploited, to encourage banks and other organisations to provide services to poor communities, and to educate women to better understand financial services.

As many as eight out of ten people who benefit from microfinance are women. DFID supports four large microfinance projects specifically designed to benefit women, as well as an additional ten large microfinance projects providing loans and other financial services to both men and women.

Reaping rewards

8%

In India, if the ratio of female to male workers were increased by 10% GDP would go up by **8%**.

20%

In Sub-Saharan Africa it has been calculated that agricultural productivity could increase by up to **20%** if women's access to such resources as land, seed and fertiliser were equal to men's.

BEST

Poor women usually have the **best** credit ratings. In India, women are less likely to default than men.

Prosperity in Pakistan

Kashf, the only microfinance institution in Pakistan focused on women is a shining example of what can happen when women are given even small economic opportunities. Kashf, a DFID-funded NGO, has 125,000 female customers. It aims to alleviate poverty through micro-loans to low income households, increasingly giving women more power over money and decision-making. Nine out of ten women interviewed by Kashf felt they had achieved equal participation in decision-making, and most put this down to having their own income and increased mobility.

Rasheeda Bibi and her family of nine children had no stable source of income until they joined Kashf, a DFID-funded NGO linked with the World Banking network.

As Rasheeda and her husband and sons' daily wages could not keep her family in food and clothing, they often had to borrow money.

But after joining up with Kashf and receiving her first micro-loan, Rasheeda was able to buy the cloth to begin what has become a successful embroidery business, providing a stable income for her family.

With her savings, she recently helped her husband purchase his own shop – and can now send her only daughter to school. The loan has become a means of her gaining control over her own destiny. "Now I have money and savings, I do not need to ask my husband for anything," she explains. "In fact I sometimes am in a position to help him!"

“Now I have money and savings, I do not need to ask my husband for anything.”

Advance in Afghanistan

Thanks to a micro loan, provided by BRAC – a microfinance investment scheme supported by DFID – Kahnom has been able to establish a small sewing business from home, selling the clothes at local shops. Now president of her village organisation in Charikhar Province,

Afghanistan, Kahnom has encouraged other women in her community to start small economic activities that will help support their families. This is generating more employment opportunities in the community.



An office dealing with child abuse and violence against women at a police station, Mombasa, Kenya. Jacob Silberberg/Panos

Violence, conflict and security

1 in 3

Studies from around the world have found that at least **one in three** women has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime. An estimated one in five women will be a victim of rape or attempted rape.

1 in 4

One in four women are likely to experience violence during pregnancy which can cause foetal injury, miscarriage and stillbirth.

1,000

The UN reports that more than **1,000** women are killed in Pakistan in the name of 'honour' every year. While in India, it is estimated that there are close to **15,000** dowry murders a year: when a woman is killed by her husband or in-laws because her family can't meet their demands for her dowry – money given as a gift to the new family on engagement or marriage.

Violence, conflict and security

Violence against women and girls occurs in all social classes, but those living in poverty are more likely to experience violence and are less likely to be able to escape it. Gender-based violence is the most widespread and socially tolerated way in which women and girls are denied their basic rights, it shames us all and is totally unacceptable.

The physical and psychological damage inflicted by violence against women, including wife-beating and rape, is impossible to calculate. DFID works with many organisations that are campaigning against it such as FORWARD, WOMANKIND Worldwide, UNIFEM and many local organisations.



Mother with daughter, Guatemala. Adam Hinton/DFID

Violence and lack of security prevents women and girls from benefiting fully from healthcare, education and other services; it also increases the risk of maternal death and vulnerability to HIV and makes women more vulnerable to exploitation.

Rape and forced pregnancy as a tool of war and retaliation have been documented in Bangladesh, Chechnya, Guatemala, Korea, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Darfur. It is estimated that 2,000-5,000 children were born in Rwanda as a result of rape during the genocide. Many thousands of women were also infected with HIV as a result of rape, and DFID has provided £4.25 million to a five-year programme that gives access to antiretroviral treatment to 2,500 women survivors who were raped and infected with HIV/AIDS in Rwanda.

The UK has been a major supporter of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, which calls for the protection of women in conflict and the participation of women in peace-building.

“Gender based violence is the most widespread and socially tolerated way in which women and girls are denied their basic rights.”

Helping women in the Democratic Republic of Congo

Giving communities security and restoring the rule of law is the only way to stop the scourge of sexual violence. DFID is working on this with the government of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). It has a long-term plan including: reform of the justice sector; support for human rights training for members of the new DRC army; and training for justice sector workers such as magistrates and the police in order to deal with cases of sexual violence.

DFID also supports Panzi Hospital which is building a special wing to treat women with fistula – a debilitating genital injury that can be caused by prolonged or obstructed labour, or by rape. It can leave women in terrible pain and incontinent, and often stigmatised by their communities. The hospital has treated over 3,000 women victims of sexual violence since 1999,

providing medical and psychological support, and helping women re-integrate into their communities through training in new skills such as sewing.



Edos Nziavake in her workshop, where she sells material and makes clothes. She has managed to keep her business going despite the war in Eastern Congo. Sven Torfinn/ Panos Pictures

“Giving communities security and restoring the rule of law is the only way to stop the scourge of sexual violence.”

Shelter in Moldova

DFID is providing support to the Centre of Assistance to Women in Crisis which helps 400 women a year who have been harmed by violence in their own homes. The shelter is a safe place where women and their children can stay without fear of further abuse. It provides material and social assistance, judicial support, help in finding a job and housing, and psychological counselling.

Teenage girls at an orphanage for abandoned children, Moldova
Andrew Testa/Panos Pictures



DFID supports the effort to eliminate female genital mutilation (FGM) and provides funding to the FGM eradication programmes of UNICEF, UNFPA and WHO. By bringing together organisations working on FGM, DFID helped produce a best practice guide for civil society

organisations to campaign for greater protection for girls from FGM. DFID is also providing £700,000 to NGOs in Africa working on obstetric fistula (a condition that is often linked to FGM).

Fighting female genital mutilation

"I never had the opportunity to go to school" explains Aberash, 15, from Ethiopia. "My family never sent me. I was three when I was circumcised. There was so much bleeding. I did not recover for a long time. The pain went on and on.

"My parents arranged a marriage when I was 12 to a man of 30. I cried at the ceremony. My family shouted and told me I had reduced my family's honour. They made me go to my husband's house. He forced me to have sexual intercourse, but not where it is usually done. Even a week later blood was pouring through my clothes. My relatives saw this but told me to go back to my husband."

Today Aberash tours villages in her country with the support of the NGO, WOMANKIND Worldwide, which helped her to escape from a life of rape and beatings by helping her obtain a divorce.

She explains to people that they have a choice, that while it will not be easy to challenge tradition they do not have to have a daughter circumcised or married at 12 years of age by the man who will rape her.

DFID funds a number of WOMANKIND Worldwide projects throughout the world.





A woman voting in the Palestinian presidential election. Chryssa Panoussiadou/Panos Pictures

17%

As of July 2006, women accounted for just under **17%** of all parliamentarians worldwide – around one in six.

2068

At current annual rates of progress, gender parity in national legislatures won't be achieved until 2068.

HALF

Women continue to face discrimination at the ballot box: more than **half** those of surveyed in selected countries in East Asia and the Pacific, South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa believe that men make better political leaders than women.

Women and political representation

There are many women the world over who long to change the laws and traditions that deny them their rights and to play a wider role in political life. But too many of them have limited opportunity (and sometimes are forbidden) to take part in decision-making and denied the chance to run for political office, even at a local level.

But women in politics is not only women's business – it is everybody's business. Increasing the number of elected women leads to better and more representative decision-making. Where there are higher numbers of women in political office then the concerns of a broader range of people receive more serious treatment. For example, in Rwanda – where 49% of parliamentarians are women, compared to 19% in the UK's House of Commons – women parliamentarians successfully argued for increased spending on health and education and special support for children with disabilities.

Representation also plays a key symbolic role, illustrating to voters that decision-makers are truly representative – at the same time enhancing their effectiveness in office.



Communist demonstrators protest, Nepal. Piers Benatar/Panos Pictures

“Many women the world over long to change the laws and traditions which deny them their rights.”



Women dressed up in their finest clothes stand in line to cast their vote during elections, at a polling station just outside Freetown, Sierra Leone. Fredrik Naumann/ Panos Pictures

Growing confidence in Sierra Leone

Women in Sierra Leone are traditionally seen as an appendage to their husbands – certainly incapable of doing anything as important as getting involved in local government. That's why DFID supported an Oxfam project in the country to do something about the poor representation of women in leadership and decision-making positions. At the time, the Government of Sierra Leone was looking to breathe new life into democratically elected local government – making it an ideal moment to tackle the issue. Local council elections took place in May 2004 – the first since local government was abolished in 1972.

The Women in Leadership project (WIL) supported the 50/50 Group, a national organisation promoting women in leadership. Before the elections, 370 women were trained in leadership, communication, and Campaign skills. A total of 58 women Councillors were elected, 53 of whom had been on the training programme.

"I broke the rule and with the support of my husband decided to contest the elections. However, local authorities were not in favour of this idea and asked me to step down for a male contestant. I refused and decided to take the opportunity of attending the 50/50 training. I became more confident in speaking out and also campaigning boldly during the elections. I might have still won, but the training gave me added advantage, courage and the confidence to contest as a woman in my Ward."

Moijsama Combay, successful female Councillor.

Wise council in Pakistan

Haseena Begum was a housewife living in the remote village of Shigar in the Northern Area of Pakistan. In the 2005 local government election, when women were given a reserved quota of 33% of seats, several women asked her to represent them as their political leader in the Skardu District Council. She agreed to contest the election, won it, and became a District Councillor.

The first time Haseena visited the District Council Office, she was told that she should not attend meetings as there was nothing she could do there. Not knowing any better, Haseena accepted that women councillors could not attend meetings and stayed at home.

Later that year, the Agha Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) organised a workshop for newly elected female

councillors, as part of a DFID-sponsored project. The objective was to make the women aware of their role and responsibilities as elected representatives. From that day on, Haseena and her colleagues insisted on attending council meetings. She demanded her share of the development budget, was given training in leadership and conflict management and taken on familiarisation visits to ministries at national level.

Haseena has now become one of the most active members of the Skardu District Council and recently filed a case against the Chairman of the District Council for discrimination against women councillors. She has been the driving force behind water supply projects, vocational centres and the first road infrastructure project by a woman councillor.

What next? DFID's plans for the future

Putting women and girls at the heart of development

For many years DFID has focused on promoting the equal rights of women and girls – and we've had some success particularly in education and health. Now we plan to build on those successes to meet new challenges in areas such as climate change, governance, migration and economic growth, where equality is just as important, but less obvious. We must ensure that all our policies and programmes consider the impacts they have on women and girls.

DFID's *Gender Equality Action Plan* sets out our aim to ensure that gender equality and women's rights are central to development, and that we are able to meet the challenges ahead. So putting the Plan into action means that from now on we will look at everything we do – and ask this question:

what does this mean for women and for girls?

We are committed to making sure that the Plan marks a real change in the way that we do all our work – and that the end result is real difference for women and girls.

“We must ensure that **all** our policies and programmes consider the impacts they have on women and girls.”



Village Savings and Loan Association meeting, Kasese district, Uganda.
Adrian Stone/(DFID)



Women dance to celebrate new well, Mali. Dieter Telemans/DFID

We will:

- improve the way in which we help developing countries achieve gender equality and women's empowerment;
- work in partnership with others;
- focus sharply on delivery, evidence and outcomes;
- support best practice, identify success and build on our strengths;
- be practical, work through systems that exist, not invent new ones;
- strengthen our accountability for delivery and rigorously measure our performance; and
- build our skills, knowledge and leadership on gender equality and women's empowerment.

Getting the knowledge right – and using it

We will develop the best possible understanding of all the problems and all the opportunities for women and girls in each of the developing countries in which we work. We will always try to do this with others: with our partners in government; with colleagues in the United Nations and other donor governments; with the private sector; and with civil society. In 2007, we and our partners will assess the relationship between gender equality and economic growth in five African countries so that we can argue for better access to finance and employment

for women. We will share and spread knowledge – we want the case to be made so convincingly that no-one can afford to ignore it.

We will use this knowledge whenever we make decisions about our aid programmes in developing countries: decisions about who to work with, how to support them or where to focus our effort. And we will encourage others to do the same. So we will be clearer with ourselves and with all our partners on exactly how all our work contributes to improving the situation and rights of women and girls.

We will help our partner governments and civil society in developing countries to get the information they need to track progress on improving the lives of women and girls. We will help them use this information to develop the right policies, backed up with the right sort of spending, so that women and girls can do better, in all stages of their lives.

“ We will develop the best possible understanding of all the problems and all the opportunities for women and girls in each of the developing countries in which we work. ”



Grandmother, mother and daughter, Guatemala. Adam Hinton/DFID

Getting ready for the future – now

We will develop our understanding of how the new challenges and opportunities that face us all, such as climate change and migration differently affect women and girls – and how they and we can best respond. We will also focus on the challenges that are specific to women and girls, in particular the high levels of violence against them, which undermines their rights and all our achievements. And we will focus on the situation of women and girls in conflict situations. We've got a good framework in the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security – and we need to make sure it works.

Getting our partnerships right – delivering change

By making our own position more clear, using our influence and building knowledge, we will encourage our international donor partners to give far greater priority - in their words and in their actions - to promoting gender equality. We will push for a stronger United Nations response to gender equality – one that makes more difference on the ground. We will make sure that when we decide our strategy and objectives with organisations like the World Bank or the UNDP, we closely examine their contribution



A five-a-side women's football team, Tehran, Iran. Caroline Penn/Panos Pictures

to gender equality. Where organisations like the African Union have made excellent commitments on gender equality, we will help them and their members to meet that commitment by supporting plans and action in specific countries.

We will strengthen the emphasis on gender equality through our funding of civil society and to research centres. We will look at how equality and rights for women have been improved when we assess the success of long-term agreements with UK NGOs like Oxfam. Our Governance and Transparency Fund (GTF) will fund civil society organisations, including those focusing on gender equality, to support people in developing countries to make sure their voice is heard and their governments are better held to account.

Getting DFID's staff and knowledge right – making it happen

Making gender equality happen means our staff making it happen – and that means who they are and what they know. Having women in senior positions is important – the percentage of

female staff in our Senior Civil Service has more than doubled in the last three years to 37%.

Knowledge is also vital and so we will invest heavily in new learning and development programmes for our staff that help them to know better what to do and why it matters. We will examine all our regular business practices to see how they can support gender equality. We will make sure that our Corporate Plan, which will show how we will deliver on our objectives and commitments over the next three years, is clear on both the great importance we attach to gender equality and how we will build it into our work.

And finally we need leadership. So in our most senior positions and right across DFID we have appointed 'Gender Equality Champions' to challenge us and to help us make the biggest difference possible. They will meet every six months and report on successes and obstacles as we move forward.

“The percentage of female staff in our Senior Civil Service has more than doubled in the last three years to 37%.”



An anti-globalisation campaigner attends the 2007 World Social Forum (WSF). Sven Torfinn/Panos Pictures

Some examples of activities in different countries under the Gender Equality Action Plan:

- DFID will support Mozambique’s ten-year education plan with up to £150 million: this aims to allow all boys and girls to complete a full seven-year cycle of primary education.
- DFID Tanzania is providing advice to improve the way in which the budget process in Tanzania considers women and girls. This is building on similar work in Uganda which resulted in changing spending to better meet women’s needs.
- In Nigeria, DFID’s £26 million support for a three-year Girls’ Education project has increased enrolment by up to a quarter in the six states where the programme operates.
- DFID’s Africa Division is providing advice to the African Union’s Gender Commission to help African countries measure improvements made in the lives of women and girls.
- DFID’s Policy and Research Division is funding two five year research programmes to better understand what women’s empowerment means and how to achieve it. One of these is focusing on women in Muslim countries.
- DFID Vietnam is helping the government to make land titles for women possible, to develop and pass laws on violence against women and to promote women into senior decision-making positions.
- DFID Zimbabwe has agreed to develop programmes with five other international agencies in Zimbabwe to improve the situation for women and girls in the country.



Malalai a journalist in Afghanistan. Nick Danziger/nbpictures



A woman who was the recipient of a Grameen Bank loan and purchased a rickshaw to earn a living, Bangladesh. Zed Nelson/Panos Pictures

- DFID Pakistan is focusing on improving women's health through a £90 million investment in Improving Maternal and Newborn Health. Its £18 million programme, Improving Citizen's Engagement through Devolution will examine the opportunities for women to get involved with local government and to help set local development priorities.
- DFID's new Country Governance Analysis, now essential in every country where we have a large programme, will routinely assess how gender equality influences the quality of governance – that is how well the government of a country works for its people.
- DFID South Asia contributes £3 million per year to UNIFEM's Regional Programme on Empowering Women Migrant Workers in Asia which argues for better measures to protect women migrants, and we are supporting ILO's programmes that combat the trafficking of women and children.
- DFID Ghana's support to the Ministry of Education has helped Ghana take up several policies, such as the Free Compulsory Universal basic Education (FCUBE) programme which have led to an increase in girl's enrolment in primary schools.

Our *Gender Equality Action Plan* is about change – both in how DFID addresses these issues across its work, and in encouraging change in those countries with which we work. We need to be clear that discrimination against women – denying them opportunities – is fundamentally about human rights and is unacceptable, and we must bring this into sharper focus across all our activities. This demands not only being honest about our expectations, but sharing our hopes and collective successes with one another.

We want the UK to take a lead in helping secure women's rights, because this will be the single most effective way of eliminating poverty. There is a gathering international consensus that gender equality is a goal that the human race can achieve in the near future. And that it will be a giant step on the path to defeating poverty. The UK is committed to making this happen.

It is difficult to exaggerate how vital gender equality is. It has nothing to do with political correctness, but everything to do with justice. It is not about tinkering with social conventions, but about unlocking more than half the world's poorest people from being trapped in poverty. It is much more than giving poor women the chance to earn money. It is about empowering the most effective weapon we have against poverty.

All the evidence we have says that gender equality reduces poverty. Once women are given the rights that men take for granted, progress can be rapid and dramatic. But we have waited for too long to see this happen on a global basis.

The time to take action is now.



Muslim woman at a World Aids Day rally in Nairobi, Kenya.
Sven Torfinn/Panos Pictures

At DFID – along with our colleagues in the international community, in civil society and developing country partners – we will step up our efforts. Together, we must ensure that the voices of women are heard and that women take their rightful place in making the decisions that affect them, their communities and their countries. Ultimately this is the way that poverty will be defeated.

How to get involved

- **Get informed** – read our publications and check aid agency websites.
- **Spread the word** – get people talking, start discussions with your friends.
- **Write to your MP or MEP** – tell them your ideas or let them know when you feel strongly about an issue.
- **Explore school linking** – if you're at school, look into our school linking project so that you share ideas with children in developing countries.
- **Buy fairly traded goods** – this helps guarantee that workers are not exploited.
- **Give money to charities** – there are many agencies working to combat poverty.
- **Give your time** – think about volunteering here or overseas through an organisation such as VSO.
- **Protect the environment** – climate change presents the most serious threat to development and could potentially reverse many of the gains that have been made.
- **When disaster strikes** – give money, volunteer if you have specialist skills, or help raise funds.

More Information

- **Eliminating World Poverty: Making Governance Work for the Poor** (the UK Government's new White Paper on International Development) www.dfid.gov.uk/wp2006
- **The Rough Guide to a Better World** www.roughguidebetterworld.com
- **The World Classroom** – developing global partnerships in education www.globaldimension.org.uk
- **Developments Magazine** – a free magazine every three months of real life stories from developing countries www.developments.org.uk
- **Trade Matters** – to find out why trade is so important for people living in poverty www.dfid.gov.uk/tradematters
- **Disasters and Emergencies Overseas: How you can help** www.dfid.gov.uk/emergencies
- **DFID, the Department for International Development:**
Call **0845 300 4100**, email enquiry@dfid.gov.uk or visit www.dfid.gov.uk

Other resources

To find out what aid charities are doing, contact **BOND**, a network of UK-based charities at www.bond.org.uk

Gender and Development Network www.gadnetwork.org.uk

Action Aid www.actionaid.org.uk

One World Action www.oneworldaction.org

Oxfam www.oxfam.org.uk

WOMANKIND Worldwide www.womankind.org.uk

UNIFEM www.unifem.org

Women and Equality Unit, Department of Communities and Local Government
www.communities.gov.uk

DFID, the Department for International Development: leading the British Government's fight against world poverty.

One in five people in the world today, over 1 billion people, live in poverty on less than one dollar a day. In an increasingly interdependent world, many problems – like conflict, crime, pollution, and diseases such as HIV and AIDS – are caused or made worse by poverty.

DFID supports long-term programmes to help eliminate the underlying causes of poverty. DFID also responds to emergencies, both natural and man-made. DFID's work forms part of a global promise to:

- halve the number of people living in extreme poverty and hunger
- ensure that all children receive primary education
- promote gender equality and give women a stronger voice
- reduce child death rates
- improve the health of mothers
- combat HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- make sure the environment is protected
- build a global partnership for those working in development.

Together, these form the United Nations' eight 'Millennium Development Goals', with a 2015 deadline. Each of these Goals has its own, measurable, targets.

DFID works in partnership with governments, civil society, the private sector and others. It also works with multilateral institutions, including the World Bank, United Nations agencies and the European Commission.

DFID works directly in over 150 countries worldwide, with a budget of some £5.9 billion in 2006.

DFID's headquarters are located at the addresses below:

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