

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the incorporation of gender into the Higher Education Links (HEL) scheme. The scheme is funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID), managed by the British Council, and supported by UK universities. Links are established between UK and overseas universities, primarily to enhance research and teaching capacity. The gender sector has additional access to the Gender and Development Small Projects fund, which supports short-term projects with a Higher Education component.

This paper draws on information gathered for a large-scale consultancy conducted for the DFID by the Institute for Development Policy and Management, University of Manchester. Data was gathered through questionnaires distributed to UK and in-country co-ordinators, and field visits to 8 countries, which included workshops with participants, stakeholder meetings, and project visits.

In assessing gender, there were three areas for examination:

1. Projects specifically focused on DFID objectives for gender.
2. Mainstreaming of gender within other projects.
3. Integration of gender within the design, planning, implementation and management of individual links.

The main findings were:

- link proposals generally reflected DFID gender objectives, but some failed to deliver.
- UK and in-country co-ordinators indicated that a minority of projects overall had gender sensitive research
- a minority intentionally targeted women beneficiaries
- nevertheless both UK and in-country co-ordinators considered that half of all projects had a substantial or moderate impact on women, demonstrating mainstreaming
- the Small Projects fund stimulated innovative ways of meeting gender objectives
- there were differing views from UK and in-country link co-ordinators as to the extent to which gender considerations were integrated into the design, planning, management and implementation of the scheme

INTRODUCTION

The integration of gender into projects has become a sine qua non in development. More difficult however is the integration of gender into the management and running of development projects. This paper examines how, and to what extent, gender is incorporated into the Higher Education Links (HEL) scheme, at both project and management levels.

The HEL scheme is funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and has been in existence since 1981. It has been operating in its present form since 1992, when the Fund for International Co-operation in Higher Education (FICHE) was established. It is managed by the British Council (BC) centrally and through its offices overseas, and supported by the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals (CVCP), the third member in a tripartite agreement with DFID. Links are established between UK and overseas universities and other research institutions, primarily to enhance research and teaching capacity. Usually lasting three years, link participants have access to support for travel, modest subsistence and small infrastructure costs. Visits take place in both directions, usually once a year each way. Following publication of the White Paper *Eliminating World Poverty* in 1997, DFID and the BC have focused the activities of the scheme on the objectives outlined in that paper, that is, improving the quality of life of poor people, and promoting sustainable development.

This paper draws on data gathered for a large-scale consultancy conducted for the DFID in summer 2000 by the Institute for Development Policy and Management (IDPM), University of Manchester. IDPM was contracted to establish whether the scheme makes a meaningful contribution to DFID's objectives by producing outputs that bring benefits to poor people and promote sustainable development. There were two main foci to this evaluation, institutional and societal. First was to evaluate the contribution that the scheme had made to overseas higher education institutions in enhancing teaching and research capacity, staff development, resources, institutional/departmental administration, and any other aspects of institutional life. Second was to evaluate the impact of actual or potential outputs of links on wider society. This included women, the environment, education, human rights, economic stimulation and poverty alleviation. The consultants were also asked to assess the actual or potential impact of links on longer-term economic and social development through their influence on policy, practice and decision making at the highest levels. DFID selected eight countries in three continents for the evaluation: Ghana, South Africa, Kenya, Brazil, Mexico, Thailand, Bangladesh, and China.

Gender is one of the over-arching considerations highlighted in DFID's (1997) strategy for development (see Appendix 1), and is the subject of a further policy document (2000) which elaborates gender targets (see Table 1). In assessing gender, there were three overlapping areas for examination in the HEL scheme:

- Projects specifically focused on DFID objectives for gender.
- Mainstreaming, that is integration of a gender focus, within projects primarily focused on other sectors.

- Integration of gender within the design, planning, implementation and management of individual links.

Each of these areas is discussed in detail below.

METHODOLOGY

The main data gathering instruments for this paper were two questionnaires, distributed respectively to UK and in-country co-ordinators, and analysed using QSR NUD*IST. Distribution was by email or mail to UK co-ordinators, and to their opposite numbers by email, mail or fax via BC managers overseas. Thirty-six out of 120 UK link co-ordinators contacted completed the questionnaire, a response rate of 30%. Seventy-two out of 120 in-country link co-ordinators contacted completed the questionnaire, of which 60 were used. One was unusable, and 7 out of 17 from Mexico were selected (in order not to over represent one country), which made a sample size of 50%.

Additionally data were gathered from documentary evidence in the UK and overseas, and by field visits to the sample countries. Visits included workshops with link participants, meetings with stakeholders, interviews with BC and DFID officers, and project visits. Additionally there were meetings in the UK with DFID and BC managers, and a workshop for UK co-ordinators and other stakeholders at which preliminary findings were discussed.

FINDINGS

Gender as a primary objective

DFID strategy papers for the countries sampled varied in the extent to which gender was detailed as a primary concern, or linked to other objectives. At the time of the evaluation there were seven extant links primarily focused on DFID objectives for gender, out of 120 links in the eight countries, approximately 6% or between 0 and 2 per sample country. Relevant country reports from the sample countries for the previous three years indicated that this was typical. Links focusing primarily on gender fell into two categories, with respectively direct or indirect effects:

- those that were essentially practical links with a strong focus on ultimate beneficiaries, such as reducing gender violence.

Gender issues are at the heart of the link topic (gender and the labour market, more specifically laid-off women workers in Shanghai), and we have attempted to maximise involvement of female staff and students on both sides. The Chinese side is run from a Women's Studies Centre with strong gender interests. (UK co-ordinator, male, gender and development project in China)

- those that supported Womens Studies or Women and Development programmes, usually at Masters level, aiming to build up a cadre of informed professionals.

The link aims to format a culture of gender equity, it has attempted to create a critical mass of individuals who will contribute to the incorporation of women in development through teaching, research, the design of governmental policy and grass root

organising. (in-country co-ordinator, female, gender and development project in Mexico)

Table 1 indicates the objectives that specific links addressed.

Table 1: Current links in 2000-1 and DFID objectives for gender

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Greater equality				√			
Livelihood security		√					√
Close human development gap, especially health and education	√	√		√			√
Decision making and leadership roles							
Reduce gender based violence					√	√	
Government and civil society				√			?
Equality under the law							
Reduce stereotyping and change attitudes				√	√	√	
Gender aware approaches to environment			√				
Uphold rights of girls					√	√	

Sources: objectives taken from DFID (2000), information from application forms.

As can be seen in Table 1, most DFID objectives for gender were covered, the two exceptions being decision making and leadership; and equality under the law. A close analysis of application forms for individual links indicated that all but one could be considered close to DFID gender objectives, the latter being a Masters programme in Womens Studies, which appeared insufficiently focused. However, a different picture was revealed by the annual country reports, as it appeared that a number of links had failed to meet their objectives, including the most innovative, a gender and environment project.

The gender sector is unique within the HEL scheme in having access to two funds, the general fund, and the Gender and Development Small Projects fund. The latter

has a budget of £100,000 pa. Projects must contribute to DFID objectives, have a higher education component, and a practical outcome. Innovation is encouraged, and projects must be completed within the calendar year. Table 2 indicates the extent to which this fund appeared to meet DFID gender objectives for 1999-2001.

Table 2: Gender and Development Small Projects 1999-2001 and DFID gender objectives

Objective	Projects meeting this objective
Greater equality	√√√√
Livelihood security	√√√√
Close human development gap especially health & education	√√√√√√ √√√√
Decision making and leadership roles	
Reduce gender based violence	√√√√√√
Government and civil society	√
Equality under the law	
Reduce stereotyping & change attitudes	√√√√
Gender aware approaches to environment	√√
Uphold rights of girls	√√√

Note 1: There are 25 projects but 3 were extensions, and are not double counted.

Note 2: Some projects cover more than one objective

As in the main HEL scheme, the two objectives not represented were decision making and leadership, and equality under the law. Examples of two small projects in Brazil are detailed below in the case study.

Mainstreaming gender into projects primarily focused on another sector

Mainstreaming, that is integration of a gender focus within projects primarily focused on other sectors, is illustrated in Table 3 below, which examines the impact of links on a number of DFID objectives not merely in the gender area. It should be noted that all proposals are screened by the BC in relation to their gender focus and classed as acceptable, non-acceptable, and neutral. The non-acceptable do not proceed. A series of questions focused on topics derived from DFID priorities and targets for impact on development in wider society were asked of respondents, as follows:

You will be aware that DFID expects link projects to make a contribution to the wider development of host countries. What impact do you consider your project has had on wider society outside your partner institution in relation to the following items? (This could be direct or indirect e.g. producing better graduates, relevant research.)

Respondents were asked to cite whether there had been substantial, moderate, little, or no impact, and then write an explanatory sentence. The opinion of the respondent has been recorded, except in a few cases where it seemed completely at odds with the question being asked. Generally respondents did not record where there was no impact. In those few cases where there was a response to 'no impact' this was generally because they had expected an impact that had not transpired. As can be seen in Table 3, most of the areas investigated through the questionnaire were considered by respondents to have had a substantial impact, a total of 54 mentions

by UK co-ordinators, more than the 36 questionnaires returned. More impressively, in-country co-ordinators estimated there had been 153 substantial impacts.

Table 3: Effect on development in country concerned: views of UK and in-country co-ordinators (June 2000)

	Substantial impact		Moderate impact		Little impact		No impact	
	UK	IC	UK	IC	UK	IC	UK	IC
<i>Views of co-ordinators:</i>								
Sustainable livelihood	11	21	10	24	5	3	1	3
Good governance	2	4	1	18	4	8	-	8
Human rights	2	9	6	15	3	5	-	5
Conflict resolution	3	2	-	6	3	4	-	4
Emergencies	1	4	4	5	3	3	-	3
Education	7	17	5	21	4	3	-	3
Health, inc. reproductive	4	15	8	9	2	5	-	5
Food security	5	10	2	13	5	5	1	5
Safe water	-	6	3	10	4	5	-	5
Environmental protection	9	18	5	11	3	5	-	5
Appropriate technology	6	23	6	14	1	4	-	4
Women in development	8	15	10	15	4	2	1	2
Other	1	9	-	9	1	1	-	1
Total mentions	54	153	60	170	42	53	3	53

Note: these categories were not exclusive

Note: total no. of respondents was 36 UK and 60 in-country

Focusing specifically on gender impacts, according to the UK co-ordinators' responses, there were ten links that had a substantial impact; however two of these referred only to link participants, so the number recorded is eight. Five links referred to both beneficiaries and participants. All of the eight appeared to have a good understanding of the significance of gender in development and most referred either to the important role of women in the activity concerned, to their purposeful inclusion, or to both. For example:

The focus on craft and design, by the nature of these activities, ensured that the economic empowerment of women, particularly the rural poor was a primary concern. The gender balance was given due attention in promoting staff development, research activities and opportunities for advancing qualifications / expertise to female staff. (UK co-ordinator, female, enhance productivity project in South Africa)

One link had been awarded a DFID Gender and Development grant for 2000-2001 for further research. Although 14 UK respondents appeared to identify moderate impacts, on closer examination four of these referred only to female link participants. Therefore the figure recorded is 10 links with moderate impact. Of these perhaps five could be considered as integrating gender, and concern for women in development, into the link. Some cited indirect benefits:

Women are the principal users of health care and the least likely to have highly developed skills in English or Afrikaans; therefore, it is essential to enhance their role in development through the increase of provision of public service interpreters. (UK co-ordinator, male, education project in South Africa)

A number of the remainder could only be described as indulging in wishful thinking, with the vague idea (contrary to the literature) that benefits would accrue equally to men and women.

Both men and women are benefited by the provision of clean food and a safe working environment. (UK co-ordinator, female, enhance productivity project in Mexico)

There was a similar range of explanations in relation to those identified as having little impact on women.

The following comment speaks for itself:

I do not know what 'women in development' means. (UK co-ordinator, male, environment project in Mexico)

Turning to in-country respondents, the question relating to women in development was similarly misunderstood by a number of the coordinators, some of whom also answered solely in terms of the number of female participants. However impact areas included gender-sensitive research, the deliberate or chance inclusion of women beneficiaries, and the use of female intermediaries to target women. Nine of the substantial impact comments and 11 of the moderate impact comments related solely to female participation, and therefore the numbers in Table 3 have been amended accordingly.

The following illustrates a direct focus on women:

RMMRU organized a Regional Conference on Women and Children in Refugee and Refugee Like Situations in South Asia. (in-country co-ordinator, male, good government project in Bangladesh)

The next comment indicates an indirect effect:

In the short course about 50% of the participants from the ministry of agriculture have been women. During the farmers' training sessions (with min. of agriculture)

more than 50% of the participants have been women. (in-country co-ordinator, male, enhance productivity project in Kenya)

Comparing the responses from the two groups of link co-ordinators indicates that in-country co-ordinators were more likely to consider that there had been a substantial impact on gender issues. It could be that they were more aware of impacts, or were relating to a different selection of links, or simply made different judgements.

Looking at the scores for the UK and in-country co-ordinators respectively, 8 out of 36 (22%) and 10 out of 60 (17%) were considered to have had a substantial impact on women in development. If the substantial and moderate scores from the UK and in-country co-ordinators respectively are combined, then 18 projects out of the 36 (50%), and 30 out of 60 (50%) were considered to have had a significant impact. Although overall women in development did not score as significantly as, say, sustainable livelihood, the findings appear to indicate that gender mainstreaming has been successful within the HEL scheme, particularly bearing in mind that only seven were specifically gender projects..

Integration of gender considerations into the design, planning, management and implementation of the link

Respondents were asked the following question:

It is DFID and British Council policy to promote the status and involvement of women. In what way have gender considerations been integrated into the planning, design, implementation and management of the link?

Thirty-three out of 36 UK respondents, and 56 out of 60 in-country respondents answered this question. In some cases it appeared that they felt perhaps obliged to offer some comment. The breakdown of the content of their responses is shown in Table 4.

Table 4: integration of gender considerations into the design, planning, management and implementation of the link: views of UK and in-country co-ordinators

	<i>UK</i>	<i>IC</i>
Gender sensitive research	3	11
Women beneficiaries intentionally targeted	7	15
Women beneficiaries included by chance	2	9
Deliberately included female link participants	15	14
Included female link participants by chance	12	9
Use of female intermediaries	5	5
Total number who responded to question	33	56

Note: Some respondents made more than one point.

Answers fell into different areas. Three UK co-ordinators referred specifically to gender being included in the research design, whereas 11 in-country co-ordinators did so. UK respondents cited women as beneficiaries intentionally in 7 cases and by chance in 2 cases; the respective figures for in-country co-ordinators were 15 and 9. Similarly both groups identified female participants being included by design or by chance. The category of female intermediaries was where gender appropriate (only female were mentioned) workers or volunteers were used for dissemination. These could be, for instance, female health auxiliaries or extension workers.

Comments therefore ranged from those where gender was clearly to the fore, to those where it was incidental. The following remarks illustrate this.

... through the clear and explicit involvement of women researchers in the Link and the promotion of gender sensitive research questions (eg the successful DFID GAD research proposal). (UK co-ordinator, male, environment project in South Africa)

Women are the section of the population mostly affected by poverty, and any impact on that will benefit more than men. (in-country co-ordinator, female, environment project in Brazil)

In rural Bangladesh women are involved in the plinth construction and overall maintenance of rural huts. The link activities are helping women to do their job more effectively. (in-country co-ordinator, male, poverty alleviation project in Bangladesh)

However the majority of comments related to the inclusion of female link participants:

It was intended from the very start that female members of staff of the (partner institution) should be intimately involved in the link. (UK co-ordinator, male, enhance productivity project in Mexico)

The few women on the Institute's staff have been given the opportunity to participate and benefit from the link projects of the Institute (in-country co-ordinator, male, health project in Ghana)

One scheme could potentially fall foul of UK sex discrimination laws:

We did not consider male candidates. (UK co-ordinator, male, education project in Ghana)

However there is still a long way to go in promoting gender awareness:

Has not been an issue as more than half the Chinese group has been female (UK co-ordinator, female, education project in China)

Overall analysis of mainstreaming

Because of the obvious overlap of data from the questions discussed above, it was decided to pool the data from both questions which related to gender, and analyse all information together, in particular to avoid the double counting of similar comments from the same co-ordinator twice. This is shown in Table 5 below. In general the results indicate close correspondence between the two groups of co-ordinators, the exception being on the inclusion of female link participants. UK co-ordinators were more likely to consider this as deliberate, whereas in-country co-ordinators were more likely to consider this happening by chance; the difference could be accounted for by each relating to their own team of participants.

Table 5: analysis of all comments relating to women in development and gender integration of projects

	UK no.	UK %	IC no.	IC %
Gender sensitive research	9	25	14	23
Women beneficiaries intentionally targeted	16	44	22	37
Women beneficiaries included by chance	6	18	10	18
Deliberately included female link participants	18	50	21	35
Included female link participants by chance	12	33	32	53
Use of female intermediaries	6	18	7	12
Total respondents	36	100	60	100

Note: Some respondents made more than one point.

An examination of BC country reports for the year 2000 of male and female participation in links indicated variations from 27% (Ghana) to 46% female (South Africa). However the categories ‘women beneficiaries included by chance’ and ‘included female link participants by chance’ in Table 5 indicate possibly that respondents were trying (too hard?) to find some gender and development evidence, as these comments illustrate:

Since approximately half of English department students are women, and since they will go on to get jobs in education and government, it can be said that the link will lead to promoting women in development. (in-country co-ordinator, male, education project in Bangladesh)

The link has enabled at least two women members of staff to travel to the UK and work in a UK research institute, and to take expertise gained during their visits back to Mexico. (UK co-ordinator, male, enhance productivity project in Mexico)

Statistics for the scheme as a whole indicate that in-country co-ordinators are 73% male and 27% female, and that UK co-ordinators are 75% male and 25% female. The reasons for the disparity between these global figures and those indicated by this study may be accounted for in the following ways. First, the sample countries may not be representative of the general level of gender participation, and second, respondents may have been more optimistic in their answers. Although the gender of co-ordinators and visitors is requested for inclusion in country reports, this information was not forthcoming in some of those examined; gender monitoring did not appear a high priority for some BC link managers.

Of particular significance in relation to mainstreaming are the comments relating to gender sensitive research, and the targeting of women beneficiaries. Of the responses from in-country co-ordinators, five came from projects whose primary sector was gender and development. A further 19 were projects where health was the principal or one of the principal components. An obvious example of gender sensitive research and/or the targeting of females is reproductive health. The following quotation offers a picture of integration of gender within a health project:

A heavy bias towards women has emerged naturally as it was implicit to the very nature of the project: 1. Women professionals have envisaged the initial project both in Bangladesh and in the UK. 2. Women have come forward to take training as child psychologists, therapists, social workers, play stimulators, doctors, counsellors etc, perhaps because the nature of the work with children, families and community attracts women more than men. 3. Empowering families has mainly involved working with mothers. (in-country co-ordinator, female, health project in Bangladesh)

Case studies: Brazil and Mexico

At the time of the evaluation Brazil had no main scheme gender sector links.

However it had had a number of small projects funded. Mexico had only one gender link.

Academics and NGO personnel involved in two projects supported by the Gender and Development Small Projects fund were visited in Brazil. The 8 March Collective works on gender-based violence, cancer, and empowerment in relation to public health services for poor women. Cunha focuses specifically on reproductive health and sex education for adolescent boys and girls. One project involving both NGOs had used a series of radio programmes to educate women on their rights and challenge gender stereotypes. The second project had focused on building up a small library. Whilst both were modest projects, for which the impact on ultimate beneficiaries is difficult to measure, they were clearly valued by those involved.

Within the Mexican link, which involves three HEIs, particular mention should be made of PUEG (the University Programme of Gender Studies) at UNAM (the Autonomous University of Mexico). UNAM has 300,000 students and 50,000 staff, and so PUEG rejects teaching traditional courses in favour of supporting academic colleagues, providing a resource centre, republishing work on gender for the Spanish speaking world, and extension work with policy makers and NGOs. Link members stated that the link with a UK university was particularly helpful in enhancing their legitimacy and status. PUEG is consulted by the Mexican government, in a climate

in which women’s rights are increasingly championed. From a small start, this link has helped build a network of 35 womens studies courses in Mexico.

For the future, in both countries there are obvious sector priorities that the link scheme could address. Both countries could be classed as intermediate in development terms, but have huge income differentials that adversely affect women. Links focusing on sustainable livelihood, with a particular focus on gender, would be welcome. Both countries have a women’s movement and emerging political participation by women, alongside gender based violence, blamed on the traditional Latin American ‘macho’ culture. In both countries there is enabling legislation for women’s rights in various fields, but weak implementation. Supporting civil society, and challenging stereotyping are therefore apposite. Both countries have a critical mass of educated women ready to take on leadership roles, as managers and politicians, and some are doing so.

Potential link topic areas for DFID gender objectives are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: DFID gender objectives: potential link areas for Brazil and Mexico

<u>DFID objective</u>	Brazil	Mexico
Greater equality		
Livelihood security	✓	✓
Close human development gap especially health & education	✓	
Decision making and leadership roles	✓	✓
Reduce gender based violence	✓	✓
Government and civil society	✓	✓
Equality under the law		
Reduce stereotyping & change attitudes	✓	✓
Gender aware approaches to environment	✓	
Uphold rights of girls	✓	✓

CONCLUSIONS

The main findings of this study were:

- link proposals generally reflected DFID gender objectives, but some failed to deliver.
- UK and in-country co-ordinators indicated that a minority of projects overall had gender sensitive research
- a minority intentionally target women beneficiaries
- nevertheless both UK and in-country co-ordinators considered that half of all projects had a substantial or moderate impact on women, demonstrating mainstreaming
- the Gender and Development Small Projects fund met gender objectives, often in an innovative way
- there was awareness among co-ordinators of the desirability of increasing female participants in links programmes
- understanding of gender as a key variable in development varied
- Country strategy papers sometimes failed to explain the relative priority of gender as a sector for development.

Note

The evaluation of the HEL scheme was funded by the UK Department for International Development, which has given permission for the wider dissemination of the findings.

REFERENCES

DFID Publications

Country strategy papers for (Ghana, South Africa, Kenya, Brazil, Bangladesh, and China).

(2000) Poverty Eradication and the Empowerment of Women

(1997) Eliminating World Poverty: A Challenge for the 21st Century: a summary

DFID Documents

Application forms for currently active links in the eight countries (Ghana, South Africa, Kenya, Brazil, Mexico, Thailand, Bangladesh, and China)

Annual Country Reports for the eight countries for 1997/8, 1998/9, 1999/2000 (no report for Kenya 1999/2000)

Higher Education Links Annual country reports 1998-9
Gender and Development Task force documentation:

(untitled) Statistics for gender of co-ordinators by country

Higher Education Gender and Development Small Projects - Guidelines for Applicants, application form, report on activity, summary of activities 1998/9, summaries of approved bids 1999/2000.

Appendix 1: DFID Targets

Economic Well-being

- *a reduction by one-half in the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by 2015*

Human Development

- *universal primary education in all countries by 2015*
- *demonstrated progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women by eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005*
- *a reduction by two-thirds in the mortality rates for infants and children under age five and a reduction by three-fourths in maternal mortality, all by 2015*
- *access through the primary health care system to reproductive health services for all individuals of appropriate ages as soon as possible and no later than the year 2015*

Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

- *the implementation of national strategies for sustainable development in all countries by 2005, so as to ensure that current trends in the loss of environmental resources are effectively reversed at both global and national levels by 2015*