1. In a nutshell: the Ghana Decent Work Pilot Programme

Working out of poverty
Four of every ten Ghanaians still live in poverty. Many of them work in agriculture, mostly as food crop farmers. Others are engaged in micro and small enterprises, or finding a survival income as daily casual labour. Today, two thirds of the working population outside agriculture in Ghana is active in the informal economy.

The diagnosis is aggravated by the trends in economic structure and income generation patterns. While the share of households whose main source of income is agriculture has been declining, the proportion of those depending on the informal economy has been rising by about 1 per cent per year. It has probably exceeded that of agricultural households by now. More than 25 per cent of these households are poor. Many of the individuals are persistently poor, particularly women. The Government of Ghana realizes that there are no alternatives to gainful employment for a livelihood. What people need to move out of poverty is a decent job.

National ownership
The Government and the social partners have taken up the challenge. The blueprint for growth and prosperity is the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy. The national partners have designed the Decent Work Pilot Programme through which the ILO helps them to strengthen the potential of the GPRS to generate more and better jobs.

The Programme addresses key policy areas selected by the national partners: skills development, employment-intensive infrastructure, persons with disabilities, productivity improvement, wages and income distribution. The focus is on the potential of the informal economy. Informality is often an expression of weak or inappropriate governance as well as the result of market forces. In turn, informality keeps people poor. To break this cycle, governments can improve laws and regulations, and increase access to productive resources and market opportunities for the poor. To make headway, the right policies and programmes need to be adopted and built into the Poverty Reduction Strategy.
Building partnerships
Formulating, testing and implementing policies and programmes that will produce more and better jobs for poverty reduction requires a variety of partners. Local and national government need to work with the social partners and the private sector. The Programme is assisting in the creation of partnerships between public, private and social society institutions. These new partnerships also link local actors with national and international ones.

Adding-value to the poverty reduction strategy
The value-added by the Programme includes a novel approach that connects national policy targets to action at the local level. In the Central Region, two Districts with a high incidence of poverty are testing a local economic development strategy that creates and improves jobs for the poor. Committees for productive and gainful employment have been set up, bringing together local government, elected Assembly members and local business and social groups. They consult broadly about the economic potential and social needs of the people living in the Districts. The Committees then work with local and national government and the private sector to take forward concrete proposals to access new markets, to expand businesses, involve local contractors in road construction, strengthen women entrepreneurship, upgrade skills in small enterprises, and to improve working conditions and productivity.

The goal
By the end of 2005, the lessons from the Districts will be built into a revised Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy. This will include a strategy for the informal economy, new approaches to vocational training and to job creation through procurement policies. Together with innovative ways and greater capacity to deliver development programmes at the local level, these policies for decent work will translate into real benefits, enabling many more men and women in Ghana to work themselves out of poverty.

More information

2. Gender in the GDWPP

Problem analysis
The gender dimensions of poverty and of the informal economy were examined together with the constituents and with representatives of women workers in the informal economy and small-scale women entrepreneurs. They participated in the initial scoping and feasibility study as well as during the participatory planning of the programme.
The Ghana Trade Union Congress (TUC) organizes part of the informal economy, including professions dominated by women like the hairdressers. One of the TUC participants in all stages of the Programme has been a female member of their Research Department. Women entrepreneurs were represented by the Ghana Women Entrepreneurs Association (GAWE).

There is a clear gender-dimension in poverty, as relatively more women are underpaid and working in precarious conditions. There are 2.3 million small businesses operated by 1.9 million households, and women operate over 66 per cent of these small businesses. Women are more likely to be in the smaller micro-enterprises, particularly single owner-operator firms. These generate the lowest and most unstable income. Access to education and skills is one factor. With 32 per cent of adult Ghanaians never having been to school and a high number of drop-outs, literacy rates for persons aged 15 and above are 79% for men and only 59% for women. For a more detailed analysis of conditions see: P. Morton (2004) ‘Job Quality in Micro and Small Enterprises in Ghana: Field Research Results - SEED Working Paper No.68’

As one of its first outputs, the Programme produced a decent work profile of Ghana that presents gender disaggregated data to the extent that they were available. The document is available at: http://www.ilo.org/intranet/english/bureau/integration/download/publicat/4_3_129_ghana.pdf

**Design of the programme and interventions**

**Gender mainstreaming strategy:** Since March 2004 the main financial support for the GDWPP has been provided through a TCRAM project ‘Working out of poverty’ from the Netherlands. The project has won a financial contribution (20 per cent of the total budget) from the gender allocation under the NPP in view of its mainstreaming strategy, which covers objectives, process, outputs and indicators.

The GDWPP has been implementing the gender mainstreaming strategy as laid out in the project document. Rather than relying on gender-specific activities, it has endeavoured to ensure that gender dimensions are reflected in all activities and outputs as appropriate. Accordingly, the gender allocation has been distributed on a pro-rata basis over the different budget lines. The gender specialist of NPG was consulted on the draft of the project document and the one of the SRO Harare participated in the inception meeting of the project in Accra. Gender aspects have been regularly discussed by the technical support team before, but the project has only recently started to involve the gender specialist of the Employment Sector in its meetings on a regular basis.

Terms of reference for training and consultancy assignments under the project explicitly require attention to gender dimensions. The brochure ‘Working out of poverty in Ghana’ which is the main tool for presentation of the programme and the project also points out the gender dimensions of poverty and of the informal economy.
In terms of governance, it may be noted that two of the three top-level representatives of ILO constituents on the projects Steering Committee are women (Initially the Minister of Manpower, until May 2005 the Deputy Minister and the Chief Executive of GEA). The situation is less favourable at the district level where women are not well represented in the district assemblies, a situation that is reflected in the Sub-Committees for Productive and Gainful Employment (SPGEs, a local social dialogue forum under the District Assembly established under the GDWPP). The project’s efforts to include women in the SPGE work have only partially redressed this imbalance.

**Capacity building:** Capacity building of national constituents and partners has been one of the priorities of the programme from its inception. Deliberate efforts have been made to include gender dimensions in the programmes, to reach women as beneficiaries and to use female trainers.

While capacity building activities have numerically reached more men than women, the latter occupy senior positions (Deputy-Minister, senior staff STEP, see below). The training received has significantly improved their leverage in policy formulation and management. For the delivery of capacity building and advisory services both senior national female consultants (Dr. Ester Offei, Director ILGS) and international ones (Susanne van Lishout, Carlien van Empel) have been called upon.

In order to support the Ministry in its efforts to promote a more central role for more and better employment and income opportunities in the GPRS and to include programmes for skills development and improvements in the informal economy, the project organized a personalized briefing for the Dr. Angela Lamensdorf Ofori-Atta, the Deputy-Minister for Employment. This briefing motivated and enabled the Ministry to engage effectively in the revision of the GPRS.

Major gender-related activities that are in progress or to be undertaken in the first half of 2005, include:

- the formulation of a skills development programme (STEP II) for inclusion in the revised GPRS
- policy guidelines and operational programmes as inputs into the GPRS concerning employment and incomes (see below)
- the implementation of the district action plans with income generating activities benefiting primarily women.

**Outputs:**

Important outputs and products reflecting gender mainstreaming include:

- Monitoring system for the ‘Skills Training and Employment Placement’ (STEP) programme
- A manual for Small Business Associations (SBA)
- Action plans of the two districts
- Policy inputs into the GPRS (analysis of poverty, access to productive and gainful employment)
STEP: The project assisted the Ministry of Manpower Development and Employment to complete the monitoring system for its ‘Skills Training and Employment Placement’ (STEP) programme and provided support for engagement in the review of the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy. Monitoring software for the STEP programme has been installed, and data entry clerks as well as managers who use the database have been trained. Three of the six managers are women. The database enables the Ministry to report on the STEP programme with gender disaggregated data.

SBA manual: In preparation for capacity building of the Small Business Associations (SBA) which organize most of the micro- and small enterprises in Ghana, the project has assisted the informal economy desk of the Ghana Trade Union Congress (TUC) and the Ghana Employers’ Association (GEA) in the adaptation of an ILO Training Manual for SBAs. The manual includes a module on gender issues. Eight women participated in the field validation of the manual. The female representative of the National Board for Small Scale Industries (NBSSI) in Ajumako had been tasked with check the material concerning gender aspects.

Action plans for Local Economic Development: have been drawn up in both districts identifying priority economic activities for job creation and poverty reduction. Gender considerations were cardinal in the selection process. Both SPGEs have identified activities dominated by women workers among their top priorities (Winneba: fish processing and textile and garment; Ajumako: palm oil extraction). The other activities employ both sexes. In the case of Winneba the plan is expected to also include the provision of a childcare facility for women fish mongers.

Monitoring and evaluation:
The impact assessment system designed for the project (based on a household sample survey in the districts using decent work and poverty-related indicators) also generates data disaggregated by gender.

Outcomes:
The programme has made significant headway with influencing policy agendas and perceptions of priorities. In January 2005 in his first state of the nation address after re-election, the President of Ghana called for ‘turning around the informal sector’ as one of the five priorities for his second term.

The ultimate goal of the programme is to build on this and to influence the revision of the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy 2006-2009. The revision is underway. ILO constituents have made a concerted effort to insert the policy elements and programmes, which they have formulated with the assistance of the GDWPP. This is mostly reflected in the (draft) text of the GPRS chapter on productive and gainful employment.

The text contains a number of specific references to gender dimensions, including:
- The prevalence of women in the informal economy and the need for equality in job opportunities and conditions of work for men and women
The promotion of women entrepreneurship
- The need for gender disaggregated indicators for GPRS outcomes in terms of employment and income
- Skills shortages affecting women more than men and the need to provide opportunities for skills acquisition that overcome gender-stereotypes
- Strengthening of the analytical capacity of the Ministry of Manpower Development, Youth and Employment.

3. Comments on integrating the gender dimension into a DWPP

Identifying the gender dimension:
The gender dimension in the GDWPP, was not identified in isolation. It was an integral part of the national development priority to which decent work and the programme are contributing. This puts gender analytically and operationally into an analytical and policy framework, rather than converting it into a separate set of ‘decent work deficits for women’. Gender mainstreaming flows rather naturally from that. It is part of doing justice to the subject and to the intended group of beneficiaries.

As a result, the gender dimension is very prominent in the programme in spite of it not having been singled out at the start. This experience concerning gender is in keeping with the lessons about effective decent work programmes at the country level in general. They are more effective when integrated into a broader policy context rather than attempting to roll out a stand-alone decent work agenda. This approach is also consistent with the aspiration to national ownership of programmes, including of their gender dimension.

Gender as an assessment criterion for ILO projects and programmes:
The fact that this was going to be one of the criteria of assessment in a competitive process of resource allocation has been an incentive to cover the gender dimension well. The effectiveness of this could be enhanced if criteria were stated clearly and in sufficient detail for programme and project designers to work towards meeting them. Finally, they should remain reasonably stable. We had at times the impression that the ‘goalpost’ was being moved.

The requirement to report separately on gender aspects runs contrary to the very notion of mainstreaming and is impracticable without extensive repetition. It should be replaced by adequate coverage in the context (mainstream) of the programme or project in question.

Assistance with gender dimensions:
For local project staff, constituents and other national partners practical guidelines on ways to meaningfully and effectively address gender dimensions would be helpful. The ‘Gender mainstreaming’ note recently released by the Gender Bureau is a good step. It could be clearer on some of the notions (mainstreaming is defined as mainstreaming).
Gender specialists have not contributed much. The main reason would seem to be that the basics had been taken care of by gender sensitive officials participating in programme/project design and implementation. Improving on that would have required specific, and rather hands-on advice. This supposes in-depth knowledge of the programme as a whole and of some of the technical issues: informal economy, entrepreneurship, vocational training etc. In the event, too many different gender specialists were involved for too short a time each and with too little depth to add value.