The Policy and Evaluation Committee met on October 28th and November 2nd to discuss the revised draft of the Operational Policy on Gender Equality in Development (GN-2531-5 and GN-2531-6). A first draft of this policy was presented to the PEC on June 3rd 2010. The revised draft reflects the comments and recommendations received at that meeting and during the second round of external public consultations (June 4th and July 19th).

The new policy replaces the Operational Policy on Women in Development (OP-761) approved by the Board in 1987. The new policy establishes a shift in perspective from women in development to gender equality. It emphasizes the need for continued gender mainstreaming and puts in place specific mechanisms such as direct investment, safeguards, and indicators to help ensure the effective implementation of the policy.

During the Committee’s deliberations on October 28th, a series of issues were raised by Directors including: (1) the need for more assertive language in the policy (including striking the phrase, “if relevant” from a series of references in the document); (2) the importance of indicators for monitoring in order to measure the success in applying the policy; (3) the requirement for institutional incentives to encourage staff and Management to apply the policy; (4) the need for more specificity in the action plan to address many of the implementation issues raised by Directors; and (5) the need for flexibility in applying policy so as not to introduce rigidities in loan development and implementation.

In the meeting of November 2nd, Management presented a revised Policy to reflect comments made on October 28th. This revision (GN-2531-6), in which the changes are marked, strengthens the document’s language. Management also presented a preliminary summary of the gender policy implementation plan. At the November 2nd meeting, the majority of Directors supported the policy with one additional change to paragraph 4.16 where, following the words ‘civil society organizations’, the words ‘that focus on gender issues’ would be eliminated. Most Directors also agreed that implementation of the policy should be reviewed after two years.

In summarizing the November 2nd meeting at its conclusion, I noted that while some Directors were not completely satisfied with language changes, a majority of Directors agreed to move the policy forward to the Board for approval.

As Chairperson of the PEC, I recommend that the Board approve the Gender Policy as set forth in document GN-2531-8.